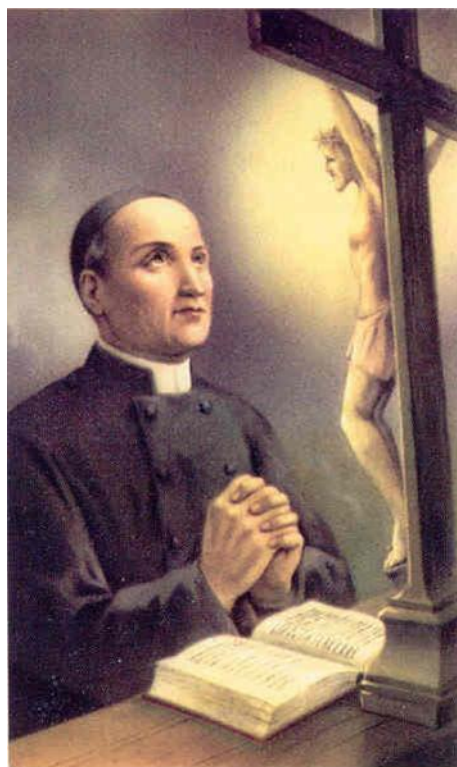


St. Gaspar Bertoni
and
Jesus Christ



Sources and Personal Reflections

[Stimulate Integre]

Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS

2000

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
A Few Preliminary Reflections on the Sacred Stigmata	8
Presentation	
Summary	
PART I	14
The Sacred Stigmata and the Espousals: Celebrations of Holy Abandonment and Total Availability	
Presentation	
1. Fr. Bertoni's Devotion to the Holy Spouses	
2. His Devotion to the Sacred Stigmata	
a. Parish Sermons [1800-1807]	
1.] Good Friday [1801]	
2.] Sunday <i>in Albis</i> [1807]	
b. A Retreat to Priests [September 1810]	
1.] The Passion	
2.] The Resurrection and Ascension	
c. Three Franciscan Panegyrics	
1.] St. Francis of Assisi	
a.] First [Morning?] Reflection	
b.] Second [Evening?] Reflection	
2.] Canonization of St. Veronica Giuliani [1839]	
3. The Sacred Heart	
a. Spiritual Diary [June 2, 1808]	
b. Sermon [1812]	
Summary	
4. Late Letters to Fr. Bragato	
+	
+++	
+	
Part II	32
Special Saints: Thomas Aquinas & Ignatius Loyola - Their Contribution to St. Gaspar Bertoni's Reflections on Jesus Christ	
Presentation	
Section One: Sacred Scripture	34
1. General Sources	
2. F.X. Durwell, CSsR	
3. Redemptive Significance of the resurrection	
4. All the Mysteries of Christ's Life are redemptive	
5. The Synoptics	
6. Earliest Teaching	

7. The IVth Gospel
 8. The Theology of St. Paul
 9. The Theology of St. Peter
- Reflections

+++

Section Two: Saints

42

[A] St. Thomas Aquinas

42

[I] Passion and Death of Jesus Christ [III, qq. 36-52]

Introduction

1. God's Love for His Son and the Son's Redemptive Love
2. The Prayerful Priesthood of Jesus Christ
3. The Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, the Principal Celebrant at Every Mass
4. The Efficiency and Universality of Reparation

+++

[II] Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ

1. Christ's Three - fold Victory: Sin, Devil, Death
 2. Christ's Descent into the Underworld
 3. Christ's resurrection and Ascension
 4. Jesus Christ: King, Judge, Head
- Corrolary: Texts of St. Thomas
- Introduction
- q. 53: The Resurrection
- q. 54: The Qualities of the Risen Christ [the Glorious Stigmata]
- q. 55: The Manifestation of the Resurrection
- q. 56: Christ's Resurrection as 'Cause'
- q. 57: The Ascension

+

+++

+

[B] St. Ignatius Loyola

67

Presentation: The Risen Christ in the *Spiritual Exercises*

[I] A Look at the Text

1. The 4th Week
2. A Few General Reflections on the Text
3. The 4th Week - the Resurrection
4. Structure of Ignatius' Text

+++

[II] Theological Objective of Contemplating the Resurrection

1. To establish a Personal Relationship
2. Ignatius' Choice of 14 Mysteries from Christ's Life
3. An Appearance of the Risen Christ to Paul in Lk

+

+++

+

Part III

104

Writings of St. Gaspar Bertoni:

Sorrowful and Glorious Aspects of the Paschal Mystery

Presentation

104

A. Early Parish Sermons

104

Sermon 4 - The Passion [1801; 1806]

Introduction:

1. Bringing Christ's Passion Close to God's People
 - a. A Prayer
 - b. Ponder Various Aspects of the Mystery
- 2, Judas among the most Cruel
 - a. Was Jesus' Disguise that complete?
 - b. They had just broken Bread together!
 - c. Judas had received Holy Communion
 - d. He had only Known Kindness from Jesus
 - e. He was 'bent' on Betrayal
3. Jesus in the Garden
 - a. David and Absalom
 - b. Total Betrayal by the Apostles
 - c. The Amazing Sweat of Blood
 - d. Judas leads the Assassins to Him
 - e. Overwhelming Commotion
4. Before Pilate
5. The Soldiers
6. Barbaric Punishment
7. His Wounds
8. *Behold the Man!*
9. Dragged to Execution
10. The Crucifixion
11. The Nails
12. Insulting Mob
13. Total Desolation
14. Another Prayer

15. Wound in the Side
16. Let us weep!
17. We continuously wound Him!

SOURCES

+
+++
+

Sermon 38: The Spiritual Life [1807]

Introduction: Newness of Life

1. Seek what is above!
 - a. Be dead to sin!
 - b. No wrong to Others
 - c. Death through Baptism
 - d. Resurrection by Conversion
 - e. Flesh-pots of Egypt!
 - f. Burial of Sins
 2. New Life of Grace, Hidden with God
 3. Life of Grace unseen
 - a. Spiritual Winter
 - b. New Life in Christ
 4. Reasons for Joy
- Conclusion: Onward to heaven!

SOURCES

+
+++
+

Sermon 5: The Ascension [1801]

Introduction: Preparing a Place for us

1. Choices: Time, or Eternity?
 - a. Authenticity over Arrogance?
 - b. Inadequacy, or Perfection?
 2. Counterfeit Gain, or Real Loss?
 3. Present Denial and Eternal Gain
- Peroration: Heaven's Crown Awaits

Concluding Prayer

SOURCES

+
+++
+

B. Three Franciscan ‘Panegyrics’ 143

[I] Vigil [?] of St. Francis [1808] 143

[Three Ages of the Interior Life]

Introduction: Definition and Texts

1. Variations on the Three Ages of the Interior Life
2. An Application of the Three Ages
 - a. The First Part of Perfection
 - b. The Second Part of Perfection
 - c. The Third Part of Perfection
 - d. The Progressive Beatitudes [cf. Mt 5:1, ff.]
3. The Example of Francis and of his First Companions

SUMMARY

+++

[II] Morning [?] of the Feast of St. Francis [1808] 158

[The Joy of the Con-Crucified Spouse of Christ]

Introduction: The Saint’s Life

1. *Let anyone who wishes to come after Me...* [cf. Mt 16:24]
2. *Let him take up his Cross...*
3. *And follow Me...!* - The ‘Espousals Principle’

SUMMARY

+++

[III] St. Veronica Giuliani: On Her Canonization 168

[The Stigmata of Easter and the Eucharistic Espousals]

Introduction

1. The Saint’s Special Graces
2. The Divine Espousals
3. The Wedding ring from the Glorious Side
 - a. Sublime Gifts lived in Charity
 - b. Her Simple Moral Virtues
 - c. Evangelical Counsels and her espousals
 - d. In Fear and Hope in the Cross
 - e. In Penance lived
4. The Experience of the Stigmata and the Divine Espousals
 - a. A Share in the Sufferings of the Passion
 - b. Wound in the Side

CONCLUSION: All in Humility of Word and Deed

+
+++

+

C. Miscellaneous Writings

185

[I] Sermon for the Feast of the Sacred Heart

Introduction

1. Doctrine
2. Brief History
 - a. Saints
 - b. Witnesses
3. Solemn Origin
4. Theology: the Wound conserved in His Risen Body

[II] Sermon on Jesus the Teacher

[incomplete]

+++

[III] A Few Letters to Mother Leopoldina Naudet

Letter 45, June 1, 1814

Letter 92, July-August 1825

Letter 104, May 1826

Letter 130, March 9, 1828

Letter 131, March 18, 1828

Letter 132, March 19, 1828

+++

[IV] A Few Letters to Fr. Louis Bragato

Letter 2, November 18, 1835

Letter 4, December 1, 1837

Letter 5, January 29, 1840

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St. GASPAR BERTONI and JESUS CHRIST - SOURCES and PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Introduction

A Few Preliminary Reflections On the Feast of the Sacred Stigmata

[1] Quite remarkably, the meaning of this Feast in our spiritual lives is brought home to us by one of the Letters - it is numbered the 5th such letter in our collection of his letters ¹ - that Fr. Bertoni wrote - late in his life - on Jan. 29, 1840. It was written to a Fr. Louis Bragato - whom five years earlier, Fr. Bertoni sacrificed at the request of his Bishop, to be transferred far from the Community at the Stimate. The Austrian Emperor of the House of Hapsburgh, had married an Italian Princess - and she asked the Bishops of northern Italy for an Italian Chaplain for her Royal Court- and one who would oversee the royal budget for its charitable purposes. In 1835, there were very few *Apostolic Missionaries* - the Founder was almost in constant ill health - so, in compliance to the Stigmatine ideal of trying to be "Apostolic Missionaries for the Assistance of Bishops" - Fr Bertoni surrendered the one man, who might have been his closest confidant and most valued and perhaps, most competent collaborator, Fr. Bragato - who shortly thereafter, left for the Royal Court in Vienna, and never returned to the Community living in Verona. At this time, the community numbered about 10: compared to St. Ignatius, who saw 1,000 men follow his charism throughout Europe and India; Mother Teresa who would welcome nearly 1,000 Sisters in her life time. However, by the Founder's lived example we learn a very central element of his charism: **ABANDONMENT TO GOD, AVAILABILITY TO THE CHURCH** - we are called to give the best we have, are and do: first to God and then to the Church: to God through the Church.

[2] A second lesson follows from this: our models and Patrons in this endeavor are the **HOLY SPOUSES, MARY & JOSEPH**. As would be noted from the date of this letter - January 29th, 1840 - the Community had celebrated her Patronal Feast on January 23rd, less than a week before the date of this 5th letter. What is also remarkable about this letter is that - as far as I have been able to see so far in all of Fr. Bertoni's writings, this is the first and only time he refers in writing to the Patronal Feast, that was so important to his heart and to the early Community. This is what he wrote in effect to Fr. Bragato:

¹ cf. *Epistolario* pp. 317, ff.

...thank you for your two letters: in the second of these you, Reverend Father, have expressed your sentiments of wanting to be present in spirit to take part in our Feast of the Holy Espousals, with the most tender affections of your heart.

And this is the second lesson regarding our charism: the **HOLY SPOUSES, MARY AND JOSEPH**, will help us to live perserveringly this marvelous definition of Canon Law regarding religious consecration:

Religious life, as a consecration of the whole person, manifests in the Church, the MARVELOUS MARRIAGE established by God as a sign of the world to come. Religious thus consummate A FULL GIFT OF THEMSELVES, as a SACRIFICE offered to God, so that their WHOLE EXISTENCE becomes A CONTINUOUS WORSHIP of God in charity... ²

And this is the second Lesson of the Stigmatine Charism: we are called to live the **PRINCIPLE OF TOTALITY**, following the example of Mary and Joseph.

[3] A Third Lesson is evident in the first letter that Fr. Bragato had written to Fr. Bertoni: our saintly Founder noted that his beloved Stigmatine brother had wished for him in his New Year's letter a few weeks earlier, '...a thousand blessings for that new year, not excluding the crosses...' this is simply the fulfillment of Luke's revelation: Unless you take up your cross daily, you cannot be My disciple [cf. Lk 9:23]. This means to take the **Crosses of life** - those of each day - sickness, failure, loss of loved ones, spiritual and apostolic reverses, apostolic exhaustion - all of these are a participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. This third lesson is that we are to ***offer the oblation of our lives, our work, our very selves, in union with Mary and Joseph, as an obsequium, a kind of Eucharistic offering - for consecration, to establish our communion with Father, Son and Holy Spirit for all eternity.***

[4] A Fourth and Final Lesson from this one remarkable source, can be found in our Founder's conclusion to his letter to Fr. Bragato of over 160 years ago:

"Lastly, be joyful, and when you are in need of some joy in your life, fly with the wings of your spirit over the miles and come to the community here - and fly to the GLORIOUS WOUNDS of OUR SAVIOR!"

This lesson is clearly based on Sacred Scripture, as we read in today's Gospel, as well as that of Last Sunday, "Mercy Sunday": *He showed them His hands and His side - Receive*

² Canon 687 § 1

the Holy Spirit - whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven ... do not be unbelieving, but believe...! [Jn 20].

This fourth lesson is: that by HIS WOUNDS, ALL OF OURS WILL BE HEALED! [cf. Is 53:5].

SUMMARY

[1] In modern theological studies, there has been much development in the understanding of “Form Criticism” - meaning, the pondering of **the different ‘forms’ of writing**: what is the difference between a ‘gospel’, and ‘epistle’ - or ‘canticles’ within the gospels and the epistles, and so on. In the writings that have come down to us still in our Founder’s own hand-writing, he wrote in a number of different ‘forms - from his very earliest years, right up until his death : e.g., from his High School **Poetry**; his Spiritual **Diary**; his **Parish Sermons**; **Priests’ Retreats**; Special **Lectures on the Franciscans: Saints Francis of Assisi and Veronica Giuliani**, Capuchin; **Lectures on the Sacred Heart**; to his last **letters**. From his earliest writings, until almost the very end of his life, Fr. Bertoni was deeply imbued with the one integral Mystery of the Sacred Stigmata of our Lord Jesus Christ - the Sorrowful Wounds inflicted on Good Friday; and the Glorious Wounds, manifested on Easter to His Apostles, sending them on the very Mission He had received from His Father: *As the Father has sent Me, I now send you!* [Jn 20]

[2] This is a bit unusual - in that the great Saint and Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus Liguori, Founder of the Redemptorists - developed very little “resurrection theology” of his own - and that is the way it was in the Church up until Vatican II. Somewhat outside the mainstream of this thought, however, Fr. Bertoni had always relied heavily on **St. Thomas Aquinas** and **St. Ignatius of Loyola**: in the *Summa* of St. Thomas, there is a marvelously resurrection -theology - and in the Spiritual Exercises of the Jesuit Founder, the entire Fourth Week is devoted to the Risen Christ³:

[a]- in his youthful Poetry: Fr. Bertoni refers to the wounded spouse - verses inspired either by the Apocalypse or St. John of the Cross;

[b]- in his Parish Sermons: he spoke of the cruel wounds suffered by Jesus - and on April 5, 1807, *Domenica in Albis*, he wrote:

...after the harsh [spiritual] winter we will come to life again - if you look for me, you will find me in the wound in the side of Christ...;

³ cf. *Symposium Bertonianum*, pp. 143, ff.

[c]- in the Priests' Retreat to encourage them in their struggles - the New Adam has entered His Garden of Agony - Come, my spouse. But, after the resurrection, imagine you see Him with the signs of His wounds: this is new life, this is the price of the kingdom - and it cannot be had for anything less! [in the year 1810];

[d]- The Franciscan Saints: Francis was one with Christ, one with his Stigmata [1808] - St. Veronica was espoused to Jesus Christ on Easter morning, with the wedding ring taken from His wounded side! [1839];

[e] - His Spiritual Diary: our service leads to our oblation [*obsequium*] to the Creator - the object of the Feast of the Sacred Heart, he wrote [in 1812], consists in that wonderful and truly divine union of realities, formed both of that human and wounded heart of Jesus, and His holy soul - the open side, after His death, shows us that heart, wounded by the lance, preserved in His glorious body - the Abyss of Misery calls out to the Abyss of Mercy;

[f]- His Letters: his life-long illnesses were compared to the **Sorrowful Stigmata**: the Lord wanted me wounded, but not dead; my right leg is wounded and swollen, with a dull pain: His will be done!

But, in His **Glorious Wounds**, he left his confreres of 160 years ago - and he leaves all of us today: as he wrote to Fr. Bragato:

... if you cannot come back to our little home bodily, be here in spirit! Be in the clefts of the rock [Ct 2:14], remain in the wounds of our most lovable and humble Savior...

[3] Fr. Bertoni's gift is one of hope in the face of deep adversity - the appeal of this Mass - and every Daily Mass - to us all is: LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS! ALLELUIAH!!!!
...God loved the world so much that He gave up His only Son...! [cf. Jn 3:16] - ***God is LOVE!*** [1 Jn 4:8, 16]

[1] This extraordinary text shed profound light into the Eucharist we celebrate.

[a] One possible description of the Eucharist is **the Covenant of Mercy** in which God gives of Himself in a total manner.

[b] this is the Mystery of:
- Creation
- Revelation

- Incarnation
- The redemptive mysteries of Christ's Life - Hidden and public.
- the Paschal Mystery: IN ALL, GOD GIVES OF HIS SON - SENDS OUT HIS HOLY SPIRIT!

[2] The Mystery sheds special light into the very heart of the Trinity:

- [a] Jesus is the **ICON** of the Invisible God! [Col 1:15].
- [b] Jesus is the perfect copy [**KARAKTER**] of His nature - the radiant light of God's glory [cf Heb 1:3]
- [c] Whoever sees Me, sees the Father - [and the Spirit]. [cf. Jn 12:45; 14:7-9] - If you know Me, you know the Father!

[3] The Great Key the Trinity is not totally comprehended in the Greek brilliant attempts at drawing a triangle on paper - nor is it even Patrick's pastoral approach with the three leaf clover:

[a] A much better look into the sublime Truth of the Trinity is afforded **by the unfolding realities of Holy Week**;

[b] The triumphant Entrance Procession of the Great High Priest toward the altar on Palm Sunday; the struggle over the Offertory Gifts on Good Friday; the separate consecration of the Body and Blood on Good Friday - the Holy Communion provided by Easter Sunday;

[c] The Mystery of the Sacred Stigmata opens up for us these clefts in the Rock from which the Church, her sacraments are born; the Wound in the Side are seen to be the opening of the Tabernacle of the Most Holy Trinity;

[d] As we read in last Sunday's Gospel on "Mercy Sunday" - when Jesus His hands and His feet, he breathed on the Apostles in a new and more sublime act of creation: 'Receive the Holy Spirit...Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them...!'

[e] This is the God of Love Who comes to us in the most sublime way possible to us in Holy Communion: God is love!

[3] In the view of many, the Priesthood was instituted in the same ceremony as the Eucharist.

- [a] The Ritual today still tells us to imitate what we handle.

[b] In receiving Holy Communion, we are not unlike Mary who received Christ into her heart - and like her, we are being powerfully challenged to bring forth Christ into our world.

[c] As the Father so loved the world, He sent His only Son - in our priesthood, we are being challenged uniquely today to live the Principle of Totality - we are called insistently to be 'Seekers of the Absolute'.

[4] Paul is the theologian of the challenge we have all received: God so loved the world that he did not spare His only Son, but offered Him up.

[a] Make of your *bodies* - meaning, your entire lives, ***an oblation to the Mercy of God*** [Rm 12:1,ff.] This is the ***obsequium*** - the life-long challenge of the Priesthood of the baptized, as well as of the Ministerial Priesthood.

[b] Paul would understand his **entire Apostolic Mission as a libation** being poured forth for the Philippians, for us all, to crown the sacrificial faith of the people he served [Ph 2:17].

[5] Christ's Death and Resurrection are the unique cultic event of the New Covenant.

[a] The glory of God goes from angelic choirs on Christmas night celebrating the birth of an infant; to the Lord's washing of dirty feet.

[b] His glory culminates in His Ascension and our reconciliation to God.

[c] Christ's sacrifice is the supreme Gift of Mercy!

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PART I
THE SACRED STIGMATA AND THE ESPOUSALS-
CELEBRATIONS OF HOLY ABANDONMENT AND TOTAL AVAILABILITY

Presentation:

[1] As Vatican II has taught, the Church - a "Second Eve" - is born from the side of the Crucified Christ, "Second Adam":

...The Church - that is, the kingdom of Christ - already present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world. The origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed **from the open side of the crucified Jesus** [cf. Jn 19:34], and are foretold in the words of the Lord referring to his death on the cross: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself' [Jn 12:32, Gk] [LG 3].

...For his humanity united with the Person of the Word was the instrument of our reconciliation came forth and the fullness of divine worship was given to us. The wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ Our Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He achieved his task principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension, whereby 'dying, he destroyed our death, and rising, restored our life.' For it was **from the side of Christ** as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth 'the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church.' [SC 5].

[2] This theme of Christ, Spouse of the Church, was treated in masterly fashion by Fr. Sebastian Tromp, SJ, as ***De Imaginibus parallelis Imagini Corporis Christi Mystici*** ⁴. More recently, the matter was studied as the "Pierced One", according to the writings of the Fathers, by Fr. Alfredo Carminati, SCJ ⁵.

As a young boy, Gaspar had as his teacher, Fr. Joachim Avesani well known professor of rhetoric in Verona at that time, who encouraged his students to express themselves not only in prose, but also in the form of poetry. We learn from one of our Stigmatine historians:

⁴ cf. Sebastian Tromp, SJ, *Corpus Christi quod est Ecclesia*. Roma Gregoriana 1946. Vol. I. Introductio Generalis. Sectio Altera, Caput Primum - pp. 26-52. cf. also Odo Casel, *Il Mistero della Chiesa*. Roma: Citta' Nuova 1965.

⁵ cf. Alfredo Carminati, SCJ, *E' venuto nell'acqua e nel sangue. Riflessione biblico-patristica*. Bologna: EDB 1979, especially pp. 89, ff; cf. also Edward Malatesta, SJ, "Blood and Water from the Pierced Side of Christ", in: *Segni e sacramenti nel Vangelo di Giovanni. Sacramentum* 3. Studia Anselmiana 66. Roma: Anselmiana 1977, pp. 165-182 with bibliography.

...From the years that he was Fr. Avesani's student, there have come down to us a few scraps of his poetic efforts, that are of great interest to us because of their autobiographical content. In the imagery that was much in vogue at the time, we find young Bertoni writing about: ...'the gentle voice of a chaste Spouse ...' Young Gaspar seems to be alluding to a kind of extraordinary experience of his First Communion, that he calls 'a loving wound'... He languishes from an untreatable wound ... and no one could heal him of this other than the One Who had wounded him' [cf. Ps 41:4; 38:3; Rm 12:5]... See that today, there follows the triumph of love.. that sufficed to medicate my wound ... ⁶

1. His Devotion to the Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph:

Another of the great historians of the Stigmatine family, Fr. Joseph Stofella, during the first Marian Year of 1954, wrote:

...Why would Fr. Bertoni decide that his community should have for its heavenly Patrons, Mary most holy, and St. Joseph, and that he proposed them precisely under the Mystery of their Espousals? There will be those who might indeed smile when they hear that under this mystery of the Espousals the Founder wanted precisely to seek out and find their heavenly Patronage for a religious Congregation of priests, apostolic missionaries...⁷.

Fr. Stofella responded, citing St. Thomas ⁸:

...among the various arguments of convenience why Christ should be born of a married Virgin, there is also the following: 'So that by this there would also be implied the universal Church : **while the Church is a virgin, she is espoused to one man, Christ** ' [cf. St. Augustine, *De Virginitate* , c. 12. In this, there is contained in a nutshell **also the nuptial theme of the soul with God**...⁹.

Fr. Stofella went on to say:

⁶ cf. Nello Dalle Vedove, CSS, *La giovinezza del ven. Gaspare Bertoni e l'ambiente veronese dell'ultimo '700*. Roma: Postulazione Stigmatini 1971, pp. 249-255.

⁷cf. P. Giuseppe Stofella, CSS, "Il culto e la Devozione dello Sposalizio di Maria Vergine nei primi Padri delle Stimate", in *Collectanea Stigmatina. Colezione di documenti e di studi riservati agli Stigmatini*. Roma: Curia Generalizia Stigmatini, Vol. I, fasc. III, pp. 357, ff. [CS I].

⁸ cf. III, q. 29.

⁹cf. Stofella, "Lo Sposalizio...", o.c., p. 358.

...the Mystery of this virginal Espousals was embraced by Fr. Bertoni, not partially, nor as a simple addition to some other mystery. Rather, he chose it precisely for itself, and as it is, in all its doctrinal, devotional and practical integrity. There is also the further reason that in this he could contemplate the example - that is beyond all comparison - the example that is the most perfect of what constitutes the very core of his own spirituality: **the spirit of holy abandonment...** The Holy Espousals is the most fitting devotion to draw believers to a total union with Him. This mystery is the most attractive and eloquent example of a total service of God¹⁰.

In one of his most extraordinary letters, the Founder of the Stigmatines offers a sublime description of the Church, and of her "First Rock", as a **Model of Holy Abandonment**. In this ideal of his, Fr. Bertoni surely was much inspired and strongly drawn by the heroic example of His Holiness, Pope Pius VIIth, in the sufferings inflicted on him with his arrest and deportation by Napoleon. This is Fr. Bertoni's description:

...This is how the matter proceeds, as St. Gregory states, that when one does see clearly, he should take the first step - waiting, then, to take the second step only when there is more clarity [cf. In Primum Librum Regum].

The hope that the Lord gives, the attestation of His Charity, in brief, his consolation:

if it is concerning those areas of our activity that we are still in the dark, these keep us firm while waiting for greater clarity, before getting on with the task; whereas, if it is clear, these animate the carrying out of the responsibility.

This seems to be the practice of His Spouse, which is the Church. As she has been assured by the divine promise of the assistance of the Holy Spirit, she never gives up seeking light for her activity, either in the defense of the Truth entrusted to her, or in matters of Discipline. And when she does see her way clearly, she never holds back on her activity, or on her study and consultation, so that she might proceed further in the light and in her task.

And in both of these manners, her abandonment in God is always uniform. Thus, unless I am mistaken, is the perfect model of our abandonment in the Lord.

¹⁰cf. G. Stofella, *ib.*, pp. 361, ff.

To abandon oneself to the omnipotent power of Divine Providence is a beautiful virtue, when we are not able to act on our own - but, it is even a more perfect and consummate virtue when indeed we can act, and - according to the order established by Providence - we should act with our own strength, and yet never cease from being equally and totally abandoned to His power ...

This is what the author of these words seems to have done: 'I live' [and consequently, 'I work'] no longer I, but Christ lives [and consequently, 'works'] in me' [cf. Ga 2:20] ¹¹ .

A few days later, Fr. Bertoni added this paragraph:

...Once one has listened to the counsels of right and healthy reason, there is no further impediment that in writing [your Rule], you submit the slender flame of human reason to the most clear Sun of Divine Wisdom. Then, the finished product results as though we had done nothing, but recognize every inspiration as coming from that source, where, truthfully, it is derived, either immediately, or indirectly.

This is the manner of conduct ing, taking care of very serious matters, practiced by that great Servant of the Lord, St. Ignatius Loyola - and before our very eyes, the Servant of God, Pius the Seventh, His Vicar, and our Father and Teacher...¹²

2. The Devotion to the Five Wounds, the Sacred Stigmata:

Fr. Bertoni had written to His Holiness, Pope Gregory the XVIth, during the year 1844. This is part of his letter:

Most Blessed Father:

The superior of the congregation of secular priests, living at the Church of the Stigmata of St. Francis in Verona, prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, manifests what follows with sentiments of the most profound humility;

¹¹ cf. Gaspare Bertoni, Lettera 39, October 16, 1813, in: *Epistolario del ven. Servo di Dio, D. Gaspare Bertoni, Fondatore dei Preti delle SS. Stimate di N.S.G.C.* Verona: Scuola Tipografica Missioni Padri Stigmatini 194, pp. 99, ff. [Ep].

¹²o.c., p. 100.

In the above-mentioned Church, every Friday of the year, following the suggestion and encouragement of the local Ordinary, towards evening there has been held since 1822, a Pious Exercise which follows this pattern:

First, there are sung the so-called 'Steps of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Then, for about one half hour, there is given an instruction that has for its purpose that of promoting Christian virtue, but especially the veneration and devotion towards our Crucified Lord; there immediately follows the adoration of the Five Wounds, which consists in some appropriate prayers.

Although the Holy See has already granted some Indulgences to the Faithful who take part in these prayers, nevertheless, the following petition is forwarded. Our purpose is so that the piety of the faithful towards the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ [which in our experience seems unfortunately to be waning more with each passing day] might be intensified, and also that the number of the faithful might be increased.

The under-signed, therefore, beseeches Your Holiness to grant the faithful of both sexes, provided they are sorry for their sins, go to confession and receive Holy Communion, and who take part in this pious exercise, and that they pray devoutly for a certain length of time, that the following might be granted:

- that on the First Friday of every month, and on the Friday after the Third Sunday of Lent - i.e., on the Feast of the Five Wounds that these be venerated with such worship -

- that all might gain the Plenary Indulgence and remission of all their sins; and that on all other Fridays of the year - provided that they at least have taken part in adoration of the Five Sacred Wounds, following the discourse - that they might gain an Indulgence of seven years, and as many quarantines.

The under-signed petitions that all these indulgences be applicable to the Souls of the Faithful who have left this world in charity and in the grace of God

13.

¹³ o.c., pp. 345, ff.

As with the devotion to the Espousals, there is also a tradition that would associate Devotion to the Five Wounds with abandonment. The Dominican mystic, Johann Tauler [1300-1361] offers a number of thought-provoking themes:

...Abandonment in Jesus' own poverty and wounds - The reaching of genuine love through the wounds of Jesus - An exercise to reach the divinity through the five wounds of Christ...¹⁴.

As a kind of recurring theme, or 'leit-motif', there may be discerned in the writings of Fr. Bertoni [from his early boy-hood efforts at poetry, until the final letters prior to his death], a genuine fascination for the Sacred Stigmata of the Lord. To present this theme, we will follow a kind of chronological order of his writings that have come down to us:

a. His Parish Sermons [June 1800--December 1807]:

1] Good Friday, April 3, 1801: this sermon was repeated on Good Friday, five years later, **April 4, 1806**¹⁵. On this occasion, the young preacher was living his first Lent as a priest. Quoting from Aristotle, he stated that in order to excite the compassion of others, it is required that the object worthy of pity be near at hand. In this way, he indicated his intention to bring Christ's Passion close to his listeners:

...[O Jesus]... show all who look to you those cruel wounds that the nails earlier made in Your hands and feet... Show that place where Your head reclined, as You expired, being for them a loving Father, even a faithful friend, a very tender brother, a most gentle, most amiable Spouse ... What a blow to the Heart of Jesus must have been [the pact that Judas made]! Does not this move you to compassion toward One Who is so good, so kind, so lovable - and so ungratefully betrayed?

...Just look at Jesus now - the Strong One, rather the Invincible. By His own free choice, in order to make satisfaction for our faults, He subjects Himself as a man to sustain the weight of these afflictions that we, too, experience: and how much more did He not experience them, because of the greater knowledge of His mind, and the greater sensitivity of His heart - He was far more disposed to feel these ...

¹⁴cf. Giovanni Tauler, *Opere*. Alba: Paoline 1977, Lettere, pp. 805, ff.

¹⁵cf. *PVC*, pp. 270, ff.; cf. also *Manoscritti Bertoni* [5 Volumes, cited as *Mss B*,] Vol. I ## 425-498.I

...The shame He felt pierced Him more vividly than did all the wounds and all that pierced His body...He is one great bruise, all one wound ! ... The nails press deeply into His hands and feet ... What an even more bitter wound for His loving heart not only to see His death so ardently brought about, but to hear right up to the moment of death the terrible insults from the very persons He had come to save! What a deep wound in that Heart already saddened and wounded by the sins of all and those that will be committed until the end! In His heart that suffered for all sins in general and those of each in particular ... A literal flood of suffering flowing forth and raining down on every part of His body and soul, that overwhelms His heart ...

...Yet, His enemies even lash out against His dead body. They open with a lance on His right side a large wound that goes through His heart and out the other side ... Would that His bloody body be given to us so that we might make reparation with the fitting oblation [*ossequio*] of our tears for the most atrocious injury inflicted upon Him by all that cruelty ... You are alone now to offer compassion for this Innocent One Who has been betrayed, this Just Man who has been condemned, this Crucified Love ... Look at this body, so lacerated with so many wounds ... Look at .. these hands, these feet, how wounded: this side that is so open, console Your Heart that has been so pierced ... They will now come to kiss Your Wounds...!

2.] The First Sunday after Easter [*In Albis*] April 5, 1807¹⁶: in this Sermon on "The Spiritual Life", Fr. Bertoni emphasizes the life of glory, in the hope of which we glory. Citing St. Paul [cf. Col 3:1-3], he invites his listeners to rise up with Christ to taste the heavenly realities. He directs his Sermon to those who would rise up from earlier fear and contrition, to **confidence in divine mercy** - to those who have experienced a holy and devout exaltation, and come to the vibrant spiritual joy in the Holy Spirit. In this discourse, the preacher developed St. Paul's baptismal theology: having been buried with Christ, let us walk now in the newness of life. In proposing the future resurrection, St. Paul asks of us another resurrection: that is, a new orientation of this present life by a change of habits. All are called to this life of glory:

...In the harsh winter, even the ever-greens might seem dry to the sight. As the summer approaches, the living roots push forth leafy branches and the trees become heavy with fruit. Such is our life that is so like the winter when our sun, which is Christ, us further from us and remains hidden from sight behind clouds. We are like dry plants left outside without leaves, without

¹⁶cf. PVC, pp. 289, ff.; cf. also *Mss B* Vol. I ## 1323-1364.

honor, without appearance, or any resplendent beauty. Deep within, however, there is the living root, which is charity in God, deep within the vital earth, strong and alive. We will come to life again, the leaves will sprout and the fruit will appear - these are the glorious traits of beatitude, both for the spirit no less than for the body... We have all been invited to heaven ... There Christ awaits you, and is preparing a place for you - rather, a throne...

One very interesting phrase in this Sermon of the Stigmatine Founder is taken from Cornelius a' Lapide:

...If you wish to find me, look for me in the Wound in the side of Christ. There I will stay, and there it will be easy to find me. Elsewhere, you will search in vain...

There can be noted in these early Parish Sermons of the young Veronese priest **a particular interest for the Wounds of Jesus Christ, Spouse of the Church** - and a certain fascination for the **open side of Christ**. It is there that he must be sought!

a. **A Retreat preached to young Priests, Confessors [September 1810]**: in these days, perhaps from the 13th - 22nd of the month, young Fr. Bertoni was the Spiritual Father of the Diocesan Seminary of Verona. In this Retreat, he was preaching the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. For the second Meditation for the Eighth Day, Fr. Bertoni spoke about the Passion of Jesus Christ - and on the following morning, he presented the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus.

1.] **The Passion**: Fr. Bertoni pondered on the Garden scene, where Christ enters with His disciples. In the course of this Meditation, he took inspiration from a number of citations from the Song of Songs:

...The New Adam enters the Garden of Agony, to make up for the former Adam and what he ruined in the garden of delights. He comes to pick not a sweet fruit, but one that is most bitter...'Come into the Garden, my Spouse...' [cf. Ct 5:1] ... 'where your mother had been corrupted and the one who gave you life, violated...' [Ct 8:5]. Here the Church has begun to be restored and washed in the sweat of the blood of the Son of God...' If Christ has sweat blood for my sins, 'it is only right that I should at least shed tears ... Draw me after You!' [cf. Ct 1:3]....¹⁷

¹⁷ cf. *Mss B*, vol. II, # 1613.

2.] The Resurrection and Ascension to Heaven: for the second Prelude, Fr. Bertoni offers this:

...Imagine that you see Him, as He appeared to some of His disciples, so full of life, and with the scars of His Wounds, inviting you, too, to heaven, to which He is now going: 'I go to prepare a place for you...' [cf. Jn 14:2] ¹⁸.

In the course of this Meditation, the preacher considers Christ's Resurrection as the model of our sanctification [cf. Rm 4:25]:

...For Christ, it was a victory ... The glorious life, is a new life: to be transformed into that... is achieved by a profound change. 'When Christ was raised from the dead, we might live a new life...' [cf. Rm 6:4]... Christ has entered with the signs of His wounds: 'this is the price,' He says, 'with which I bought this Kingdom. It cannot be had for anything less...' ¹⁹.

c. Three "Franciscan" Panegyrics: on two separate occasions - once in 1808, for the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, on October 4th; and then again, some 31 years later, for the Canonization of St. Veronica Giuliani, Fr. Bertoni was invited to deliver the Panegyrics:

1.] St. Francis of Assisi [October 4, 1808]:

...On October 4, 1808, for the second time, the Feast of St. Francis was solemnized in the Church of St. Firmus Major [Verona] without the presence of any of his sons. The Conventual Friars who had officiated in the Church since the year 1260, had been sent away by government decree... As we review now these writings of Fr. Bertoni, the distinct impression is had that he actually prepared two sermons for this day: one most likely that he would have delivered in the morning at Mass, and the other for the evening services. What has come down to us as the 'rough draft' would really be two complete and distinct panegyrics...²⁰

a.] First [Morning - ?] Reflection: perhaps delivered on the morning of the Feast ²¹, he offers a commentary on a text from St. Matthew [cf. 16:24]:

¹⁸ cf. ib., # 2632.

¹⁹ cf. ib., ## 2635; 2637; 2647.

²⁰ cf. Nello Dalle Vedove, CSS, *Vita e pensiero del Beato Gaspare Bertoni agli albori dell'800 veronese [1800-1816]* . Roma: Postulazione Stigmatini 1975, pp. 645, ff.

²¹ cf. Gaspare Bertoni, *Panegirico di S. Francesco d'Assisi.*, in *S. Fermo Maggiore, 4 ottobre 1808. Verona.* in: **Mss B** Vol. II, ## 1783-1844.

'... let him deny himself... take up his cross ... and follow Me.' We are all called to imitate Christ in His suffering and ignominy: 'with Christ I am nailed to the Cross' [cf. Ga 2:19]. St. Francis manifested a great love for the crucified Christ, and an intense desire to imitate Him. The formula is simply this: to imitate Christ on earth in order to possess Him for all eternity: 'For I bear the Stigmata of the Lord Jesus in my body...' [cf. Ga 6:17, Vulgate]. St. Francis was inserted, planted in the Tree of Life to draw from it its sap, life from the tree. The four effects of this con-crucifixion are: union, mutual inherence, assiduous and loving contemplation, ecstasy. Having become almost a single person with Christ "I live, no longer my own life..." [cf. Ga 2:20], St. Francis is assimilated to his crucified love. In com-passion, in the Stigmata, there he found his every joy.

Perfection consists in conformity with Christ - it is born in charity, and is perfected in charity: it consists in the imitation of Christ. Charity which is nourished, grows up, and becomes adult, transforms one into Christ. In the three degrees of patience: to endure patiently, freely, joyfully - may be discerned three levels of charity: that of necessity, of supererogation and that of plenitude. The Sacred Stigmata in Francis are the testimony of a consummate imitation and evangelical perfection.

b.] Second [Evening - ?] Reflection: ²²: here the Stigmatic Founder develops even more his characteristic sense of "progress" in the imitation of Christ. To speak of St. Francis of Assisi is to speak of the most ardent spirit, on fire with love for the crucified Christ. In this long "journey", there is definite progress:

Let him deny himself	Penance	Principles
Take up his Cross	the Cross	Progress
1st Cross: persecution		
2nd Cross: temptation		
3rd Cross: mortification		
And follow Me	Love	Consummation

This "progress" in the *sequela Christi* is based on the living of this text: "With Christ, I am nailed to the Cross": ingrafted, implanted in the Tree of the Cross, this produces a variety of effects:

- union: one with the Crucified Christ;

²²cf. Gaspare Bertoni, *Testo completo del Panegirico di S. Francesco*, in: *Mss B* Vol. II, ## 1844-1874.

- mutual inherence [cf. Ct 1:12];
- assiduous thought: loving contemplation
- ecstasy

For Fr. Bertoni, St. Francis was a living image of the Crucified, with the Five Wounds of the Savior, almost totally transformed into Christ. The ***sequela Christi*** manifests various aspects of this progress that is so characteristic to Fr. Bertoni: not only to be near, but along-side; not only close, but in union - not only united, but transformed: do not look for Christ's gifts, but for Christ Himself: this is the plan. In this sense, Fr. Bertoni offers an extraordinary **nuptial, Espousals Principle** for the following of Christ:

...There are very many who follow Christ for the temporal reward: but the mercenary, when he reaches the door, is paid, and remains excluded from the house: 'You have received your reward:' [cf. Mt 6:2].

Many follow Christ as slaves, out of fear: they do follow, but at a distance, and remaining distant, they do not share in their master's secrets. 'The servant does not know his master's business.' [cf. Jn 15:15].

Some follow Christ as children, from a somewhat selfish love for their inheritance: but such children are more loved than loving: they even come to the point of disdaining their father, should he command something that goes against their grain, even though he makes reasonable requests, and imposes demands on them for their own good, but they may be difficult. 'I reared sons, I brought them up, but they have rebelled against me.' [cf. Is 1:2].

Few follow Christ as friends, in that they base their love on the sharing of His goods; but should these cease for reasons hidden to them, but always under the direction of a just Providence, and their sweet influence is lost, and there is substituted a rather harsh sharing in the difficulties of the friend: 'Then all the disciples deserted Him and ran away' [cf. Mt 26:56]: these were the very ones who had been declared 'friends' by Christ. 'All the rest seem more interested in themselves than in Jesus Christ.' [cf. Ph 2:21].

But, only very few follow Christ as lovers, who in the youthful ardor of their love follow Christ wherever He may go, whether to Tabor, or even to Calvary. Drawn by the sweet odor of His perfume, by the internal consolations and inspirations, they even run after Him. However, they are not able to keep up to His pace, nor can they maintain His speed. He proceeds not by steps, but

by giant-steps, in running along His way. 'walking deliberately in your footsteps...' [cf. Ps 18:6, Vulg.]

However, only the spouse, the adult in the school of love, is not attracted by the sweet-smelling perfume, but the strong right hand of the Spouse: 'Draw me!' [cf. Ct 1:3]: firmly holding on and finding support in His strength, she proceeds apace, and with Him she not only runs, but floes. 'His left arm is under my head and his right embraces me.' [cf. Ct 8:5, Vulg.].

The whole purpose of this *sequela* as lived by St. Francis, is to become one with Christ, almost a single spirit with Him - so that one might indeed come to the point of being able to say: 'I live, now not with my own life, but with the life of Christ who lives in me' [cf. Ga 2:20] - not 'with' Christ, but rather "in' Christ: disdained, poor, wounded as Christ: DRAW ME! [cf. Ct 1:3].

2.] The Canonization of St. Veronica Giuliani [1839]: a certain honor came to Fr. Bertoni on the occasion of the joyful re-discovery of the body of St. Zeno, Patron Saint of Verona, in the crypt of the grand basilica dedicated to him, that took place on March 22, 1838. Grandiose celebrations were organized, beginning with the First Vespers of August 17, 1839, that would go on for a week: seven solemn days, with seven different invited orators. The day assigned to Fr. Bertoni was August 18th ²³. This honor was to be for him a kind of *Nunc Dimittis*, or final such invitation that he was able to accept. It was in fact, for him, his last such contribution. Later in that same year, he was invited to give the panegyric in honor of the Canonization of St. Veronica Giuliani, and had the discourse all ready ²⁴. From his papers that have come down to us, the actual delivery of this solemn preaching effort fell to his first disciple, Fr. John Mary Marani ²⁵. St. Veronica Giuliani, a Capuchin contemplative, was born December 17, 1660, and died on July 9, 1727; she was declared "Blessed" in 1804, and "Saint" in 1839. Even in our own time, this saint extends a strong appeal ²⁶.

²³ cf. Gaspare Bertoni, *Orazione in lode del s. Martire Zenone, Ottavo Vescovo e principale Patrono della r. Citta' di Verona, recitata nella sua Basilica, il giorno XVIII di agosto MDCCCXXXIX, dal sacerdote Gaspare Bertoni*, in : **Mss B** Vol. II [rough draft, ## 1875-2050; Completed Text, ## 2061-2125].

²⁴cf. Gaspare Bertoni, *Panegirico di S. Veronica Giuliani nella sua solenne canonizzazione recitato nella Chiesa dei RR. PP. Cappucini, in Verona, dal sac. Giovanni Maria Marani, il 29 dicembre 1839*, in: **Mss B**, Vol. II, ## 2126-2172.

²⁵ cf. P. Giuseppe Stofella, CSS, *Il ven. Gaspare Bertoni. Fondatore dei Preti delle Sacre Stimme di N.S.G.C.* Verona: Scuola Tipografica Stimmadini 1951, pp. 204, ff.

²⁶cf. P. Casimiro Luchetti, OFM, Cap., *Itinerario mistico di S. Veronica Giuliani*. Siena: ed. Cantagalli 1983, 205 pp.; cf. Fr. Giovanni Maria Leonardi, cappuccino, *Santa Veronica Giuliani. Clarissa. Cappuccina*. Mercatello sul Metauro {PS}. Monastero di S. Veronica 1983, 62 pp. cf. *Testimonianza e messaggio di S. Veronica Giuliani. Atti del Congresso Internazionale di studi su S. Veronica Giuliani*. Roma: Pontificio Ateneo Antonianum, 27-31 ottobre 1982, 2 volumi. Collana Dimensioni Spirituali.

Following the Capuchin sources, Fr. Bertoni presented the Saint's biography, and then her spirituality. Her dying mother recommended her five surviving daughters to the Five Wounds of the Crucified: to Veronica was assigned the Wound in the side. the Saint is reported to have heard the words: "My Spouse, the Cross awaits you!" Among her singular gifts, her biographers note the following:

- the impression of the Cross on her heart;
- the wound in her heart;
- the stigmata, together with the formal nuptials with Jesus Christ;
- the saint is presented as the Spouse of the Crucified God.

The preacher made every effort to explain these nuptials in some way, and presented them as a most intimate union between the Saint and God, through the living of the most perfect charity:

...With certain extraordinary individuals, it has pleased the Lord to manifest the spiritual nuptials with sensible signs, and with certain formalities that are observed in human marriages, as in the life of St. Catherine of Siena, and a few other saints of the highest sphere. In order to dispose her the more for such an honor, God granted her many graces and visions: of Jesus Christ, who comforted her and stipulated the nuptial pact; of the Virgin Mary, who appeared to her seated on a magnificent throne with St. Catherine and St. Rose, assuring her of her impending nuptials, and showing her the wedding ring, and instructing her on the most sublime virtues. On Holy Saturday, Jesus Christ also appeared to her, informing her of her nuptials on the next day, and showing her also the precious ring ... When the time came for Communion, in which the marriage would be contracted, she was enabled to hear the Angels singing the sweet melody: Come, o Spouse of Christ...!

This ardent sermon then explained that Jesus Christ took the ring out from His own side. The whole experience is but the charity toward which the visions, the ecstasies are ordered, much like the sacraments of the Church, which signify, produce and increase charity. For this saintly Capuchin, the divine espousals were the end result of pure suffering. The wound in the heart gave her such pain that she thought that any moment she would die. Before receiving the stigmata promised by Christ, she was asked what it was she wished most from Him. Her answer was: **the fulfillment of Your will!**

In all her admiration and her descriptions of these extraordinary phenomena in the lives of St. Francis of Assisi and of St. Veronica Giuliani, Fr. Bertoni always **emphasized the perfection of charity, obedience, service, the acceptance of the divine will** - all of which can be realized only progressively, in accord with the normal manner of the activity of divine grace. There can be noted in these saints, as Fr. Bertoni presents them, **an evident harmony between the Espousals and the Stigmata** - with a particular emphasis given perhaps, here and there, to the wound in the side.

3. **THE SACRED HEART**

Before taking formal possession of the house in Verona next to the Church dedicated to the Stigmata of St. Francis, on November 4, 1816 Fr. Bertoni twice noted in his **Spiritual Diary** ²⁷, mystical experiences associated with the Eucharist:

a. **Spiritual Diary**

July [June?] 2, 1808: Feast of the Sacred Heart. At Mass, during the Consecration, the Communion, and all through the time of thanksgiving, there were tears of **compunction and affection**: especially at Communion, I experienced for an instant the detachment of my spirit from every creature, for the oblation [*ossequio*] to the Creator...

May 30, 1812: Praying before Mass, overtaken by a kind of drowsiness, I heard these words from the Crucifix: 'Look at this, My Heart!'. This expression then effused such light into my intellect, **a great and sudden ardor in my heart...** The effect was a most tender devotion to the Sacred Heart, and **great affections** during Holy Mass...

The Paschal Mystery and the Eucharist offer the background for Fr. Bertoni's devotion toward Christ's humanity and toward the Most Holy Trinity. His devotions both developed and expressed his **abandonment to the Trinity**, and his **availability toward the Church**.

²⁷cf. below, Note # 316; CS IV, pp. 1-205. "Appendice" in: *Lo Spirito del B. Gaspare Bertoni*. Verona: Stimograf 1977, pp. 207-242.

b. **Sermon on the Sacred Heart:** A few days after the second citation above, Fr. Bertoni **preached** for the Feast of the Sacred Heart. Among his thoughts, we find the following:

...The humanity of Jesus Christ is not adored separately and for itself; but always as united to the divine Person, and because of this; the Incarnate Word receives with his flesh, a single and identical adoration ...

The object of the Feast of the Sacred Heart consists in that wonderful and truly divine union of realities, formed both of that human and wounded heart of Jesus, as well as of His most holy soul, through which His heart lives, and also by the Person of the Divine word... His heart is the symbol and the seat of those sufferings and the anguish endured by that heart...

The prudent and most wise Spouse of Christ, the Church, made ingenious by her love, most ardently yearns to see her Spouse adored and loved and still seeks more universal and appalling means, as well as simpler and more efficacious incentives to bring this about... such as the Infant in the Crib, the dying Christ on His Cross; but also His Blood, His name, His Wounds ... the Cross...

...It has never been the custom of the Church to solemnize with a proper Mass and Office the divine attributes, the interior virtues and abstract perfections of Christ - but, only under some sensible object that would clearly represent these, or some fact evident to the senses, or some mystery that would impress itself the more vividly. For example, the Church does not venerate the patience of Christ without a symbol, or mystery: as Wounds, the Passion, the Cross...

Jesus' love is much better symbolized by His Divine Heart ... The open side, after His death, customarily shows us that Heart, the same Heart wounded by the lance, that wound preserved in His glorious body make of it such an appealing, evident, divine symbol, that it is impossible to venerate the wounded heart without remembering and venerating His immense love... The Abyss of misery calls out to the Abyss of Mercy...²⁸.

²⁸ cf. Gaspare Bertoni, *Sacro Cuore*.. June 5, 1812, in: **Mss B** Vol. II, ## 1755-1778. For the Italian, cf. Nello Dalle Vedove, *CSS, Vita e pensiero del Beato Gaspare*

SUMMARY

Fr. Bertoni's spiritual journey can be followed rather well, beginning with his early Parish Sermons [1800-1807]; his panegyric in honor of St. Francis of Assisi [in 1808]; the Spiritual Exercises he preached to the priests [in 1810]; his personal Spiritual Diary, called his **Memoriale Privato** [from 1808 - 1813]; his Sermon for the Feast of the sacred Heart [in 1812]. Then follow his Panegyric honoring St. Veronica Giuliani [in 1839], and his **Epistolario** that covers that year from 1812 almost up to his death, June 12, 1853 ²⁹.

In these letters, there also appears the interest for the Espousals of the Church with Christ, and passing references to the Stigmata. The Founder of the Stigmatines refers to his sufferings as "the School of God" ³⁰, and makes use of a terminology that would lead to thinking of the Stigmata suffered by Christ on the Cross, and retained in His glorious body. Throughout his life, Fr. Bertoni suffered various painful and lengthy manifestations of a precarious health, that necessitated many surgical corrections. Here are a few of his passages written to his spiritual daughter, Mother Leopoldina Naudet:

... I am getting better slowly. In your charity please pray that I might draw some fruit from this school that the Lord wants me to attend, that I might be disposed to serve Him...³¹.

...It does not seem that my wound is too bad, if we can trust appearances, that have so many times deceived us...³².

...It has not begun very well; but, He wants me wounded, not dead. All that matters is that I can serve Him and not abuse His graces, and to carry out that penance that is necessary for me..³³.

...My legs are not doing very well; the right one is wounded, a bit swollen, with a certain dull pain, that I would like not to heed. But - His Will be done!

34

Bertoni agli albori dell'800 veronese [1800-1816]. Roma: Postulazione Generale degli Stigmatini 1977, pp. 387, ff.

²⁹This is cited as Ep.

³⁰cf. Nello Dalle Vedove, CSS, *Modello*, o.c., pp. 240, ff.

³¹cf. Gaspare Bertoni, Letter 45, June 1, 1814, in: Ep p. 109.

³²id., Letter 92, Summer of 1828, in: Ep p. 183.

³³id., Letter 104, May 15, 1826, in: Ep p. 197.

³⁴id., Letter 130, March 9, 1829, in: Epp. 225.

From such indications of the Stigmatine Founder, the Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, on the day of Fr. Bertoni's solemn Beatification, November 1, 1975, stated: **...his life was a continuous immolation, even to the extreme purification of his illness....** In Fr. Bertoni's mind, physical suffering, offered to God, was a privileged means of realizing his over-all ideal: **...We are to draw in ourselves the portrait of Jesus Christ** ³⁵.

4. Of great interest in the "Stigmatine tradition" **are the Letters to his beloved spiritual son, Fr. Louis Bragato**, Confessor to the Empress, Maria Anna Carolina Pia of Savoy, at Vienna. In one of these letters, Fr. Bertoni wrote:

...Your debt is to God alone, Who with His gifts - and for these I thank Him - has made you grow 'in wisdom and in strength and holiness and justice in His presence' [cf. Lk 1:75] - and with these gifts of external honor, He wishes to bestow on you prominence in the sight of men. Only remember always, when you wear any external sign of distinction that God does this for you and your Sovereign, and that 'the greater you are, the more you should behave humbly' [cf. Eccles 3:20]. And if you cannot come back to our little home bodily, be here in spirit, 'in the clefts in the rock' [cf. Ct 2:14], in the Wounds of our most lovable and humble Savior, where I leave you now, embracing you with all my heart...³⁶.

In these words, there may be found a gentle reminder of the life lived in the House called the "Stimmate" in Verona, comparing this to the Savior's Wounds. An even more explicit reference to the community life with his confreres was offered by the Founder to Fr. Bragato a few years later:

...So, remain joyful; and when you need a bit of rejoicing, fly in your thoughts to Fr. Michael's small room. If you do not always have the wings ready to fly over the clouds, remain in the bosom of our God, and within the glorious Wounds of your Savior: 'Seek the things that are above, where Christ is' [cf. Col 3:1]. remain there as one of His people, in the beauty of that peace [cf. Is 22:18]: because everything is temporary, and ends soon, but that eternal peace never ends ³⁷.

The mysticism of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni was a "**Mysticism of Ecclesial Service**", expressed through the Pauline [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.] and Ignatian ideal of ***obsequium***. The Stigmatine Founder lived a **consecration of abandonment toward the Most Holy**

³⁵ cf. Gaspare Bertoni, *Memoriale Privato*, [Spiritual Diary], February 26, 1809 [cited as MP].

³⁶cf. Gaspare Bertoni, Letter 2 to Fr. Bragato, November 18, 1839, in: Ep, pp. 311, ff.

³⁷ id, Letter 5 to Fr. Bragato, January 29, 1840, in : Ep pp. 318, ff.

Trinity, and a total availability toward the Church. His “total service of God” in the fulfillment of the divine will, was expressed in the purpose he proposed for the community he founded: **Apostolic Missionaries for the assistance [*obsequium*] of Bishops.** ³⁸.

His charism is markedly “**Trinitarian**”, manifested through the **Crucified** and **Risen** Person of **Jesus Christ**, celebrated in the **Eucharist**, son of **Mary**. Fr. Bertoni made of his entire life an offering to the Father in loving obedience, and in service of the Church, the Spouse of Christ. As the Father did not spare His only Son, but offered Him up for all [cf. Rm 8:32] - God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son [cf. Jn 3:16]. This is paralleled in the life of Jesus:

...follow Christ by loving as He loved you, giving Himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God... Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed Himself for her...this is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church... [cf. Ep 5:2, 25, ff].

In this sense, Fr. Bertoni understood the Apostolic Mission as an *obsequium* :

**...God indeed does merit our oblation [*ossequio*],
 ...We give Him the oblation [*ossequi*] of the tongue, and the more solemn works of our hands...
 ...Give yourself over to God, dedicate yourself to those things that the more pertain to His service: the oblation [ossequio] of our hearts.**

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³⁸*Costituzioni del vev. Servo di Dio, D. Gaspare Bertoni, Fondatore dei Preti delle S. Stimate di N.S.G.C. m June 1950, # 1.*

PART II
SPECIAL SAINTS - GREGORY the GREAT, THOMAS AQUINAS & IGNATIUS LOYOLA,
contributing to
St. GASPAR BERTONI's
REFLECTIONS ON THE STIGMATA

Presentation:

[1] The actual Constitutions of the Stigmatine Congregation note the following:

10: :The confreres live the mystery of Christ's Sacred Stigmata, from which the Congregation takes its name, as a memorial and sign of the Lord's Pasch."

42: "Our spiritual life is characterized by and finds nourishment in our traditional devotions.

"The Stigmata of the Passion is the sign of the Paschal Mystery which is perpetuated in the liturgy and in the life of the Church. We accept the invitation of Christ to contemplate those signs of the Passion retained in glory [cf. Lk 24:39; Jn 19:37; 20:27; Ga 6:17]. to draw from them as the Apostles did a wealth of faith and love.

"Entrusted to the Holy Spouses Mary and Joseph, we implore their help and protection to fulfill our vocation. We see in them a model of intimate union with Christ and the example of a confident and generous availability.

"We show our love and veneration for the Founder by becoming really interested to know his life, to follow his spirit and to spread his teaching [PC 2].

42.1: "In addition to those penances inherent in common life, each community will choose a special mortification to be practiced on Friday, in honor of the wounds of Christ.

42.2: "According to the norms of the Provincial Directory, each community will celebrate and promote in the best possible manner, the Solemnity of the Founder and the Feasts of the Sacred Stigmata and the Holy Spouses."

[2] These Constitutions, considered in a variety of General Chapters, offer the Congregation's repeated efforts to summarize devotions that would help the modern Stigmatine to live the spirit of St. Gaspar Bertoni. It is well worth noting that in his time, before and well after him, the classical theology of the Catholic Church emphasized almost unilaterally the "Theology of the Passion and Death of the Lord", the Cross - **with very little, if any attention being paid to the Resurrection.**

[a] One reads, for example, in a recent theological study commenting on the Christology of St. Alphonsus de Liguori [1697-1787: Gaspar Bertoni was ten years old at his death] ³⁹ notes that for the great Doctor of the Church he saw God as Love, manifested uniquely by the **death** of His Son. This revealed "God as for us". The whole moral theology and spirituality of St. Alphonsus was to move his listeners to respond to **God-love made known to us through the death of the Most Holy Redeemer on the Cross.**

[b] St. Alphonsus had to deal with Quietism in various forms. Hence, there was **much more insistence on the Passion of Christ**, and the reflection on the Resurrection was left more to the religious quest of certain mystics. The Dogmatic Theology of this time, **spoke little on the theme of the Resurrection**. In Alphonsus' times - before and after - the Resurrection was looked upon more as a personal reward, and it was given **no soteriological role** - despite Paul's words to the Romans [cf. Rm 4:25, etc.]. Throughout this entire era, there was hardly any use of the word "resurrection".

[c] For St. Alphonsus and his times, what was of major interest is that the Passion and Death of the Lord manifested to the Church the total love of God. This mystery, that translates to the Church as "**love**", **redeems** the world in a super-eminent manner - wherever sin abounds, grace superabounds. The Passion and Death are the font of all our hopes. **The open and bloody wounds, for St. Alphonsus, are inexhaustible fonts of grace and pardon.** In this plan of spirituality, the center of emphasis is **not the resurrection but the Cross in itself**, as the Victory of Love which conquers the wavering love of believers. There is little mention of **the Glorious Wounds and the Apostolic Mission** [cf. Jn 20:19,ff.]

[d] It might be said that St. Alphonsus gradually cited more the Gospel of John, and speaks more of the "**Glorious Cross**". The **Victory of the Cross** is in the triumph over sin, it is the victory over the lack of love. The victory of the Cross had a universal effect, and can leave no doubt in the hearts of anyone who would believe in it regarding God's love. **The emphasis was more on Hope than on Love.**

[e] With the passing of his life, Alphonsus went from his frequent citations of Paul and John to the **Letter to the Hebrews**, with its insistence on the theology of sacrifice and the priesthood of Christ. The redemption of the human race happened in

³⁹ cf. Noel LONDONO, CSSR, *Se entrego' por nosotros. Teologia de la Pasion de Cristo en san Alfonso de Liguori*. Roma: Collegium S. Alfonsi de Urbe 1997, Presentacion, e pp. 113, ff.]

the death of Jesus on the Cross. The Resurrection was not presented as having a determining soteriological value. In his four catecheses, the saint does mention the resurrection, but **not as a central element of our faith.** His preaching makes it quite clear that the Resurrection does not pertain to the theological center of that era. **In his use of Scripture, there are very few texts that make reference to the Resurrection of Christ.** The Resurrection is a Miracle.

[f] In the last years of his life, St. Alphonsus paid some further heed to the Resurrection. For him, the Resurrection is a mystery similar to the death of Jesus Christ. As Christ has risen, so will those who confess Him. The Resurrection pertains more to the “plenitude of salvation” - with the resurrection, there was initiated a new era in the Church. **In redemption, the emphasis was on divine wrath.**

[g] Alphonsus’ insistence was on the Theory of Satisfaction as the interpretative model of the death of Jesus. The resurrection simply introduces the beginning of Jesus’ permanent intercession before the Father. Our Hope is confirmed by the Passion of Christ, which satisfies - and by the resurrection, which has opened heaven. Christ has “paid” with His Passion for our sins - and offers us a guarantee of actual intercession, through His Resurrection ⁴⁰. **The devil is defeated.**

[3] The fact that St. Gaspar Bertoni had wished but one image in his own room, and that of **the suffering Christ on the Cross**, would still not limit his openness toward the integral Paschal Mystery. The Crucifix is still the main symbol for our altars - and in the rooms of many religious houses and rectories, the Cross still remains on the walls as a constant reminder. However, what was somewhat “specific” to **Fr. Bertoni** may also be traced in his writings, from his childhood poems, until his final letters to his confidant, Fr. Louis Bragato: ***we may look for him in the openings of the Sacred Stigmata of our Lord, Jesus Christ.***

Fr. Bertoni did not follow St. Alphonsus’ interpretation of the Apostolic Mission, nor did he follow him primarily in his understanding of our Salvation.

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SECTION ONE: SACRED SCRIPTURE

1. **General Sources:** in all this, it must be remembered that for Fr. Bertoni that following **Sacred Scripture** and his perusal of the **Fathers**, [with special regard for **St.**

⁴⁰ cf. N. Londono, *Se entrego’ por nosotros. Teologia de la Pasion de Cristo en san Alfonso de Liguori*, , pp. 113-117, passim

Gregory the Great, and **St. John Chrysostom** - his main sources were the Angelic Doctor, **St. Thomas Aquinas** - and the model of the Stigmatine Founder's adult years, **St. Ignatius of Loyola**, and the great Jesuit theologian, **Francis Suarez, SJ [1548-1617]**. All of these authors, theologians and saints were much impressed by the integral Paschal Mystery, the Passion and Death, as well as the Resurrection and Ascension.

2. In his Introduction to the great classic by Fr. F.X. Durwell CSSR, *The Resurrection*⁴¹, Charles Davis offered these insights in his Introduction:

...Most students are disappointed with the [classical] treatise on the Redemption. They do not find the rich matter and profound thought they expected. Appended to the long developments on the Hypostatic Union, the pages on the redemptive work of Christ seem thin and shallow...The epic of victory is reduced to the payment of a debt... The plain truth is that the average theology of the Redemption [was] truncated and its intelligibility maimed..[The argument went]: ...If redemption equals satisfaction, the Resurrection which is not a work of satisfaction is **not redemptive**.

...St. Thomas, as so often, was an exception. He gave a masterly treatment of satisfaction and related ideas, but he went further. By attributing to the Passion, Resurrection and, indeed, the whole work of Christ an efficient causality in our salvation, he incorporated into his teaching, in Scholastic terms, themes associated more with the Greek than with the Latin tradition. However, this part of his teaching was not understood by his contemporaries or successors and only recently has it begun to exert its full influence. The concept of **satisfaction**, together with the closely related idea of merit [for which one must still be "way-farer"; the Resurrection occurred only after Christ's death], continued to dominate the doctrine of the West. Christ's death was understood as a sacrifice, but sacrifice was seen simply in these notions..."

...[This] is what St. Thomas meant when he said that **all the mysteries of Christ were efficient causes of our redemption**. A consideration of the various mysteries of Christ's life should be restored to the theology of Christ and not relegated to devotional literature...⁴²

3. Christ was 'delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification' [cf. **Rm 4:25**]. Paul states here clearly enough **the redemptive significance of the resurrection**

⁴¹F.X. Durwell, CSSR, *The Resurrection*. A Biblical Study. tr. by Rosemary Sheed. NY: Sheed & Ward 1960. 3rd Printing 1963

⁴²cf. Introduction to Durwell's work, *The Resurrection*. pp. xii-xx, passim.

and the indissoluble bond joining the death and resurrection in the one mystery of salvation. Jesus Christ is the visible, sacramental expression in this world of the saving act of divine love. Every action of Christ is an expression of the divine saving purpose - the divine saving act was not a single holy week in Christ's life, but His entirely earthly sojourn. The whole history of Christ from beginning to end forms a dramatic and effectual sign in which God's saving purpose is set forth.

4. This is what St. Thomas meant when he said that **all the mysteries of Christ were the efficient causes of our Redemption**. A consideration of the various mysteries of Christ's life should be restored to the theology of Christ and not relegated to devotional literature.

a. This is what St. Ignatius of Loyola did in his *Spiritual Exercises* - in Week Two he considers the Incarnation and the Nativity; Week Three is the Passion, and **Week Four is dedicated to the Resurrection**.

b. This also because St. Thomas treats of the various mysteries of the Life of Christ, all as "redemptive": after treating of the Incarnation of Christ, His "Person" [cf. III, qq. 1-25], then the Angelic Doctor considers Mary, her Espousals, the Conception of Jesus, His Nativity, His Baptism, Temptations, Miracles, Transfiguration [cf. III, qq. 26-45] - then His Passion and Death, Burial, Descent into Hell [III, qq. 46-52] - and then, His Resurrection [III, qq. 53-59].

c. Insertion into Christ and His mysteries, and thus contact with the saving act of God, is made possible by the Church and her Sacraments. We are saved by the transforming power in the free response of faith, hope and charity. There are two vital truths in all this:

- the death and resurrection of Jesus remain **forever actual** in Him in glory;
- and the **identification of the Church** with Christ in glory - not merely one body with Him, but actually in the act of His death and glorification.

d. Classical theology was very good in noting that Christ's work of redemption was seen as consisting in His Incarnation, His Life, Death on the Cross. The emphasis was on reparation, satisfaction and on what was thought to be meritorious. But, not much time was given to Christ's personal triumph. This impoverished the entire theology of Redemption. The following are key texts of Paul that need to be noted:

".. And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is in vain, for you are yet in your sins..." [cf. 1 Co 15:17]

"... Christ died for all... died for them, and rose again..." [cf. 2 Co 5:15].

“...Who was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification...”
[cf. Rm 4:25].

5. The Synoptics this tradition gives the resurrection something of a background role in the mission of the Son. The time is accomplished - the idea of the Kingdom predominated and Jesus states that the time is accomplished - this is the time to repent and believe the Gospel [cf. Mk 1:15].

a. The new element in Christ's preaching is the insistence that his death must be an essential part of the messianic scheme. He has come to give His life as Redemption for the many [cf. Mt 20:28]. This Blood of the New Covenant shall be shed for the many for the remission of sins [cf. Mt 16:28]. Believers have to be a part of this destiny - the kingdom is coming, but the heralding of His death is vital. The Resurrection is closely bound up with the Son of Man's twofold mission to announce the Kingdom and to die for many. The Resurrection comes as the crowning point [cf. Mt 16:21; 17:22; 20:17, ff.]. Jesus is tortured, killed, and He rises on the third day. For Jesus, His Resurrection is as much a part of His mission as His death.

b. The death and resurrection do not exist merely side by side - His resurrection is His glorification. Christ had to suffer in order to enter into His glory. [cf. Lk 24:26]. The Apostles are sent out to convert all the nations [cf. Mt 28:18, ff.; Mk 16:15, ff.]

c. The Christian life is bound up with the story of the Resurrection [cf. Lk 24:46, ff.; Ac 1:3-8]. The summary of the three Synoptics is there was a redemptive death; the remission of sins is promised to those who do penance - but, the Kingdom and the resurrection take first place. The resurrection thus unites the two streams of doctrine that flow from Christ's Mission:

- the theme of the Kingdom;
- the theme of His necessary death.

6. The Earliest Teaching: [cf. 1 Th 15:3-5; Ac 2:22-36; 3:12-26; 4:10-12; 10:34-43].

a. **1 Co 15:3-5: the first Creed in the NT** regarding the Resurrection. There is an expiatory value in Christ's death - the Resurrection is presented simply as a fact. Yet, the doctrinal understanding at this level of revelation might not have been complete.

b. **Ac 2:22-36; 3:12-26; 4:10-12; 10:34-43**: it is noted quickly that the Apostles are preaching a Paschal message. It is primarily the glorification of the crucified Jesus. The era starting with the resurrection is marked by a new relationship

between God and His people. Within the Apostles' teaching, the resurrection of Jesus appears as essential, as the key mystery which opens the messianic era.

7. The IVth Gospel: Jn's gospel seems to have been written in the light of his own personal contemplation of Christ's divinity, and a religious experience lived chiefly in the Liturgy of the sacraments. With all the comparisons that are made, it is clear that he did not teach the idea of a Redemption merely through the Incarnation and faith. He greatly emphasized the flesh of Christ [cf. 6:52] - the expectation of a pending Glorification [cf. 17:1]. There is a highly developed sacramentalism throughout the 4th Gospel. Great importance is attributed to the Holy Spirit [cf. 3:5, ff.] - and the fact that Jesus had to return to the Father before the Holy Spirit could be sent. [cf. 16:7].

a. Bodily Humanity: Christ is clearly presented as quite beyond our reach [cf. 8:58] - and yet, he is most palpably physical [cf. 4:6; 20:27]. It is significant that while Mk opens his account of our Lord's preaching with the announcing of the Kingdom [cf. 1:14, ff.] - and Lk, the Evangelist of the Holy Spirit, starts with Isaiah's promise of the Spirit that is to come and with Christ's declaration that this is now being fulfilled [cf. Lk 4:18, ff.]. In places at the very beginning of Christ's public life a statement about His body, the Temple of the new era [cf. 2:19, 21]. This "somatic theology" reaches its climax in Jn 6. The gospel theme of Redemption through the Body of Christ runs parallel with the theme of the life-giving light, and salvation through knowledge. The sacraments and the resurrection are all closely linked with Christ's Body: in the Eucharist it is Christ's body itself that we are given, and in Baptism we are acted upon by the Holy Spirit [cf. 3:5] Who flows out of that body [cf. 7:38-39].

b. The 'Passage' Theme: this Gospel unfolds against the backdrop of the Exodus, that exemplar of the Paschal Mystery. This is all being repeated and perfected in the Word made flesh. The mention of the first two Paschs is followed by a veiled announcement of the coming death and glorification of the Lord [cf. Jn 2:19; 6:51, 2]. The third Pasch is spoken of just before the account of the end of Christ's life [cf. Jn 12:1, 7; 13:1] In His death, He is the Immolated Lamb, in Him the Pasch is complete.

c. The Immolated Lamb, Spouse: Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church [Jn 3:29; Rv 19:7; 21:9; 22:17]. He makes His first appearance amid the festivities of a Saturday village wedding, Cana of Galilee - with His disciples, His Mother, the "beginning" of the signs of the Church.

d. Explicit Texts: He promises that at the Feast of Tabernacles the waters of salvation will flow from His Breast [cf. 7:37, ff.]. As Good Shepherd, He promises the sharing of life forever [cf. 10:14, ff.]. His Father loves Him for laying down His life [cf.

10:17-18]. His death and resurrection are the first duties of the Lord as Messiah. Thus, Jn presents a **soteriology based on the Incarnation**, but **interwoven with a very rich paschal theme**.

e. **Salvific Nature of the Resurrection**: [cf. Jn 17] eternal life is a “light” - it is the “knowledge” of the Father and of Christ, sent by Him. This Life and Light will be diffused over humanity, once Christ is “glorified”.

8. **The Theology of St. Paul**: more than anyone else, he is the great “**witness of the Resurrection**.”

a. **The Resurrection is the Fundamental Principle**: The coming of the Son of God into the world and the first moment of salvation coincide with the Resurrection. In Paul’s speech he states that the promises made to the fathers have been fulfilled in God resurrecting Jesus [cf. Ac 13:32, f.] . He was established the Son of God in power, according to the spirit of sanctification, by resurrection from the dead [cf. Rm 1:4]. The resurrection is a beginning both for Christ and for our salvation. It holds a position in his thought equivalent to the position held by the Incarnation in St. John’s Gospel.

b. **Rm 4:25**: We need to believe in Him Who raised Jesus Christ our Lord from the dead, Who was delivered up for our sins and rose again for our justification. There are two aspects here of the one salvation. There is attributed to the Resurrection a distinct role in our salvation - the object of our faith is the God Who has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. We need to believe in the heart that God has raised Him up from the dead and in this we are saved [cf. Rm 10:9]. In Rm 4:25, justification is the effect peculiar to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

1.] In Christ all are made alive [cf. 1 Co 15:22]. Anyone who is in Christ is a **new creature** [cf. 2 Co 5:17]. The law of **the spirit of life** in Jesus Christ has delivered me [cf. Rm 8:2]. He has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus [cf. Ep 2:6]. He rose for our justification: Christ in glory is the living principle through which redemptive action existing outside us is applied to us; we have no other form of access to the justice of God.

2.] Our Savior in glory forms the living sphere in which our justification is worked out. And the phrase “In Christ” defines the causality of the resurrection. The phrase “with Christ” specifies that this justification is effected by the same act of the Father by which the Son is glorified. Christ’s raising up by His Father gives life to Christ and to us in Christ at the same time.

9. The Theology of St. Peter: we have been regenerated into a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, up to an inheritance incorruptible [cf. 1 P 1:3-5]. This “living hope” is to be raised up by the Christ who regenerates us. St. Peter’s soteriology follows the familiar two-fold pattern of redemption: the death of Christ has expiated our sins [cf. 3:8] - the life-giving action of God upon Christ is the beginning of new life.

Reflections

[1] Any theory of the Redemption, or evaluation of Christ’s death which does not include a recognition of the essential part of the Resurrection can hardly claim to be true - let alone complete.

[2] Following Christ’s life on earth, His passage to Heaven is linked by His Resurrection. The Death and Resurrection of Jesus are presented in the framework of the Sacrifice. Through the Resurrection, the Church shares in the communion in the sacrifice.

[3] The Resurrection is what opens up the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Christ is raised by the Spirit, and transformed by the Holy Spirit of God.

[4] Among the effects of the Resurrection are seen the “Lordship” of Jesus Christ - He enjoys universal dominion, the Lord of the World to come, the Lord of the Angels. Born in the Spirit, as the perfect Image of the father, He has opened up a life forever new.

[5] The Risen Christ exercises a priesthood as our Mediator, Great High Priest of Mercy in heaven, in eternal prayer for His People.

[6] The Resurrection of Christ is also seen as the Birth of the Church. This reality is also presented in these ways:

- Mariological - in conceiving Christ, Mary also conceives also the Church;
- Kerygmatic: with Christ’s preaching, the seed of God’s Word planted in the womb of Israel;
- Eucharistic: Holy Thursday Night: with the Institution of the Eucharist and the Priesthood, the Church is born, the “Mystical” Body;
- Soteriological: with the soldier’s lance piercing the side of Christ, the New Eve is born;
- Pneumatological: on Pentecost, the Church comes into being.

[These are all aspects of the coming to life of the one Church].

[7] The Church lives her daily life in the Risen Christ. This life is Christ-like, Spiritual, a life in death, a New Creation, the ultimate victory of the Church, the Church is “Victim”, one, graced.

[8] Across the ages, the progress and the consummation of the Paschal Mystery in the Church goes on and on. The total possession of Jesus will occur only in the Parousia.

[9] This Church is “Apostolic” and “Missionary, ”called to intensify internally, and spread outwardly. This is done through ministry and the sacramental life. The Church is assimilated gradually to the Easter mystery. This will be perfected in Heaven!

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SECTION TWO: SAINTS

[A.] St. THOMAS AQUINAS

[I.] The Passion and Death of Jesus Christ [III, qq. 36-52]

Introduction:

[1] In his Preface to this Part, St. Thomas treats first of Jesus' Passion, then His Death, His Burial and finally, His Descent into Hell. Regarding the first point, the Passion, the Angelic Doctor treats of the Passion itself; the causes at work in this Passion, and the end-result of it.

[2] In this entire matter it is necessary to ponder deeply the Mystery of **Christ's Personality**, and the **various Redemptive Mysteries of His life on earth**. These matters need to be read also from the light of faith, and in what manner the three Persons of the Trinity cooperated in all this.

[3] "Satisfaction", the analogy most developed by Thomists, may be described in this way: He properly **atones** for an offense who offers something which the offended one **loves equally, or even more** than he detested the offense [III, q. 48, a. 2]. Christ offered His most precious blood, shed through His Sacred Stigmata, as a "**theandric act of love**", which God loves more than He hates all sins and crimes taken together. Essentially, Redemption is **a mystery of love**, both meritorious and satisfactory. **All other aspects of this mystery are subordinated to this supreme love and mercy** - we are indeed "bought" with a great price [cf. 1 Co 6:20].

[4] The **Church has never defined precisely any one theory** in the teaching on Redemption. However, it is necessary to note the following: the Nicene Creed presents us with the essentials: "... Who for us men, and **for our salvation**, came down from heaven ...became man ... He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate..." He was an **oblation** for us, the **sacrifice** for our sins. Jesus Christ, when we were enemies, for the exceeding charity by which He loved us, merited **satisfaction** for us by His most holy Passion on the wood of the Cross, and made Satisfaction for us unto God the Father [cf. DS 1528, Council of Trent].

[5] The following theories of Redemption were much discussed:

[a] The theory of **Expiation, Substitution**, which speaks especially of the guilt of undergoing punishment. In support for this, there are many OT texts noted - this led to the theory espoused by many Protestant theologians regarding "**Penal Compensation**."

[b] The theory of **Satisfaction** which is more sublime and richer, especially as explained by St. Thomas.

[c] The theory of **Reparation**, which seeks to perfect the preceding theory, insisting more on this, that it is not the death, but **the loving will of the person dying that placated the Father** [St. Bernard] ⁴³.

[d] Many others stress more **the Father's love for us**: God so loved the world that **He gave up** his only Son [cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16]. Christ loved us even unto death [cf. Ph 2:5, ff.]. St. Thomas subordinated the first three to this last one, in that **the Mystery of Redemption is especially a mystery of love**. St. Thomas of states that Christ suffered for us - that he offered satisfaction, reparation - but, he always affirms that **the foundation of their validity is Christ's theandric love, which is the source of all His merits**.

[6] All of this must be understood in the light of St. Thomas' treatment of the Attributes of God:

"Mercy and justice are necessarily found in all God's works... Now **the work of divine justice always presupposes the work of mercy, and is founded thereon** ... we must come to something that depends only on the goodness of the divine will... **So in every work of God, viewed at its primary source, there appears mercy. In all that follows, the power of mercy remains and works indeed with even greater force...**" {cf. I, q. 21, a. 4}.

Thus, God purely of His goodness created us, elevated us to the order of grace which is the seed of glory and gave us the Redeemer.

[7] It is from the **uncreated love of divine goodness that mercy proceeds inasmuch as good is self-diffusive, and then comes justice by reason of which the supreme Good has a right to be loved above all things**. But, first of all **the divine good is self-diffusive**

⁴³For a modern treatment of the "**Theories of Redemption**" from the biblical perspective, cf. F.W. DILLISTONE, *The Christian Understanding of Atonement*. Philadelphia: Westminster 1968

in creation, in raising us to the supernatural order, and finally in God's free decree to restore this order by means of the Word incarnate ⁴⁴

[8] Christ's **oblation** was an offering in which He gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offense of the whole human race"

- first of all, because of the **exceeding charity** from which He suffered;
- secondly, on account of the dignity of His life which He laid down in **atonement**, for it was the life of One who was both God and man;
- thirdly, on account of the extent of the Passion, and the greatness of the grief endured as already noted [cf. III, q. 46, a. 6].

1. God's Love for His Son and the Redemptive Love of the Divine Son

a. God's loving one thing more than another is nothing else than **His willing for that a greater good**: because God's will is the cause of goodness in things; and the reason why some things are better than others is that God wills for them a greater good. God loves Christ not only more than He loves the whole human race, but more than He loves the entire created universe: because He willed for Him the greater good in giving Him a Name that is above all names. Nothing of this love diminished when God did not spare Him, but handed over His most beloved and only Son for the salvation of humanity. In this Jesus became the Victor - universal government was placed on His shoulders [cf. Is 9:6, ff.] [cf. I, q. 20, a. 4 c and ad 1 um.]

b. Jesus was convinced in His divine mandate that when He would be "lifted up" [on the Cross and in the Resurrection] He would **draw all to Himself** [cf. Jn 12:32]. In the bitter conflict, God chooses the very best - the "Noble Guard" - to enter the most harsh area of the battle. After sending His prophets, in the final times, God willed to choose His Son - who came simply to do the Father's will [cf. Ps 40; Heb 10: 5-9].

c. The Father asked of the Son **the most heroic love** - love of the good demands the **reparation of evil**. The stronger the love, the more it demands. God's love demands the reparation of whatever ravages humanity, extends the kingdom of evil and darkness. The least of Jesus' acts would have super-sufficed for the redemption of the entire world, united as His human nature is to His divine Person. **By giving the last drop**

⁴⁴In this entire presentation, the works consulted are: R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *OP, Christ the Savior. A Commentary on the IIIrd Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa*. St. Louis: Herder 1950, pp. 531, ff.; and also, id., *Our Savior and His Love for us*. St. Louis : Herder 1958, pp. 183, ff.

of His most Precious Blood, we are enlightened somewhat to the abysmal darkness of sin. The hatred of evil is merely the reverse of love.

d. It is Jesus' infinite love for His Father that 'moved' Jesus to do His will so totally in the mystery of His redemptive life. It is only in this Mystery of Divine Suffering that we can have any understanding of human suffering ⁴⁵. Jesus Christ is the greatest proof of love that God can give the Church in making His only begotten, most beloved Divine Son **a Victim of love**.

e. What is most striking in Jesus' love, whether directed toward His Father, or toward humanity is that it intimately **unites the greatest tenderness and the most heroic strength in suffering and death: *fortiter et suaviter***. These two qualities are not even together in human love, but they are completely interdependent. Tenderness without strength becomes largely languor and affectation - and strength without mercy becomes severity and bitterness.

f. This tender and enlightened love of Jesus for His Father inspired Jesus, and continues to inspire Him in adoration and thanksgiving also through authentic worshipers. He Himself put it this way: God is a spirit; and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and in truth [cf. Jn 4:24].

1.] **Adoration** springs spontaneously from His heart. He is happy to acknowledge that God is infinitely good in Himself, that He is our Creator and our Father. He acknowledges this in practice by bowing with love before His infinite majesty. Jesus even rejoices in His own abasement, in His hidden life, ignored by men. He empties Himself, in terms of His human nature, so that He may better recognize God's infinite sanctity. We bow, genuflect as momentary acts of adoration - we have Holy Hours, and their beautiful services - all of this but a pale reflection of Jesus Who never ceased adoring His Father, from the first instant of His life until His death on the Cross. This adoration continues now and will forever, acknowledging the Heavenly Father's infinite goodness and a Song of Praise to Him.

2.] **His Thanksgiving** is ceaselessly inspired in Christ - for God is not merely God in Himself, He is our benefactor - no one will ever receive more from Him than has Christ. Jesus thanks God for Himself and for all of us, for the treasure of the supernatural life: Jesus offers His own Hymn of Thanksgiving: I thank You, Father, Lord

⁴⁵cf. "The Trinitarian Aspect of the Cross of Jesus Christ, or the 'Suffering of God'" in: *International Theological Commission. Texts and Documents. 1969-1985.* San Francisco: Ignatius 1989, pp. 219-223.

of heaven and earth, for having hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to the little ones.

g. The strength and generosity of Jesus' love are as great as its tenderness. From the first moment this love inspired in Him not only **adoration** and **thanksgiving**, but also **reparation**. In fact, while God is a benefactor, He is also a **Father** outraged, rejected by His children. Jesus from the first moment of His life offered Himself in the old Disciples' Prayer [cf. Ps 40] : 'Behold, I come!' [cf. He 10:9], the corner-stone of **His High Priestly Oblation of Himself**.

h. This same love, with which Jesus has loved His Father, and that love by which He was loved by the Father, is called **agape'**, that love infused into us as "Christian Charity." In Jesus' love for us we find the same two qualities: **deepest tenderness and heroic strength**. In humans, such love is rare, short-lived, addressed to a few intimates. So often superficiality takes over, and does not reach the depths of the well being of the other.

1.] The supernatural tenderness of Jesus Christ for us all is infinitely deep - it is universal, limitless. He knows us each by name [Jn 10:3] - He seeks out the lost, the strays, the wounded, the afflicted. Come to Me, He tells us, all who are burdened and we will be refreshed [cf. Mt 11:28]. He seeks out the prodigal, loves the adulteress woman of Samaria, raises up Mary Magdalen. The bruised reed will not be quenched, broken [cf. Is 42:3]. This infinite intensity never spreads itself too thin - infinitely it embraces all who strive to do the Father's Will. Such as these are members of His family.

2.] The supernatural strength is manifested increasingly from Bethlehem to Calvary, from the crib to the Cross. The son of God has loved us all, and delivered Himself up for us [cf. Ga 2:20] Jesus bore the punishment that each of us should have had. In His victory on the Cross, this became the source of life and holiness, the source of consolation. He has left us the Eucharist that He might remain with us. ⁴⁶

2. The Prayerful Priesthood of Jesus Christ

a. Christ Jesus is risen again, is at the right hand of God, also makes intercession for us. Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ [cf. Rm 8:34, f.]. Jesus continues forever, has an everlasting priesthood, whereby He is able to save

⁴⁶cf. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *Our Savior and His Love for Us*. o.c., 204-221, passim.

forever them that come to God by Him, always living to make intercession for us [cf. Heb 7:24, ff.]. Before leaving, Jesus promised: If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with You forever..." [cf. Jn 14: 15, f.] . Jesus always living makes intercession for us - His is 'prayer' in the true sense of the word.

b. When we pray the Litanies, we do not say: 'Christ, pray for us!' - but, **have mercy on us, hear us!** This is to remind us that Jesus is not only man, but that He is God also. When we address a divine Person, it is God Himself we are addressing, begging Him to grant our requests [IV Sent., d.15, q. 4, a. 6; q. 22, ad 1um]. In the heart of the glorious Christ, adoration and thanksgiving are ever alive. These are the prayers which are the "soul" of the Holy Mass. Let us ask Him to inspire us to pray as it is fitting, always in accord with God's desires.

c. The function of the priest is to be a **Mediator** between God and humanity, to offer up to God the prayers of the people, particularly **sacrifice**, which is the most perfect act of the virtue of religion, and to give people back the things of God - through preaching, through the sacraments, through spiritual leadership. The external **oblation** and **immolation** of the **Victim** must be a visible expression of **the interior oblation of the priest, of his adoration, his supplication**.

1.] The priesthood is all the more perfect in the measure that the priest, the Mediator between God and humanity, is **the more united through interior oblation and immolation to the Victim** that is offered up, and **the more united to humanity for whom the Victim is offered up**. The holier the priest is, the more perfect will be the sacrifice he offers up as the principal act of his priesthood. Christ is perfectly holy, being **one nature with God**.

2.] The more closely the priest and **Victim** are united, the more perfect will the sacrifice be. For the external **oblation** and **immolation** of the Victim are but a symbol of the inward oblation and immolation of the Priest. The more the Victim is pure, precious, and entirely consumed in God's honor, the more perfect will be the sacrifice. This is why Jesus' oblation is more perfect than all the holocausts of the OT - the entire Victim was consumed in God's honor, to signify that each of us needs to offer all that one is, has, or ever will be, to God.

3.] The more the **Priest** and the **People** are **united**, the more perfect is the Sacrifice. For the priest must bring together all the adoration, petitions, reparation and thanksgiving of the faithful in one elevation toward God, rising up as the soul of the whole People. The more the People are one with the priest, the greater will be the

homage, the worship of adoration given to God, and the more universal will be the effects of the sacrifice.

d. The purest of **Victims** is of infinite value, for it is the Body of the Word of God, torn and nailed to the Cross, Who sheds all His blood. The union of priest and victim cannot be any more perfect since Jesus is a **Victim** to the depths of His soul, plunged in sorrow also by universal abandonment.

e. What formally constitutes Jesus' Priesthood seems to **be the grace of substantial union to the Word which makes of Him the Lord's Anointed One** [cf. III, q. 17, a. 2] The Grace of Union, which is uncreated, for it is the Word Himself Who completes and possesses the humanity of our Savior, implies **a unique priestly vocation** and is the source of the habitual created grace by which Christ, the Head of the Church, has immediate influence upon its members or communicates supernatural life to them. [cf. III, q. 22, a. 2 ad 3 um]. Jesus is priest by reason of the Incarnation. His priesthood is substantial as is His sanctity, and it is from His priesthood that serves the priestly character of His ministers, impressed indelibly in their souls. And these priestly souls, He will give shepherds until the end of time. ⁴⁷

3. The Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, the Principal Celebrant at Every Mass: ⁴⁸

a. **The greatest proof of love is the perfect gift of self.** Generosity is essentially communicative, goodness is naturally self-diffusive. St. Thomas explains that it belongs to the essence of goodness to communicate itself to others. Hence, it belongs to the essence of the highest good to communicate itself in the highest manner to the creature [cf. III, q. 1, a. 1; CG IV, c. 11]

b. He who is Sovereign Good, the fullness of Being, communicates Himself as fully and intimately as possible by the eternal generation of the Word, and by the **spiration** of the Spirit of Love. The Father, in begetting the Son, not only communicates to Him a participation in His Nature, His intelligence, His love - but He communicates to the Son **the totality of His indivisible nature** without multiplying it in any respect.

c. Thus, it was fitting that God should not be content merely to create us, and to give us existence, life, intelligence, sanctifying grace and a participation in His

⁴⁷For these pages, cf. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *Christ the Savior*, o.c., c. 24, pp. 491, ff., id., *Our Savior and His Love for Us*, c. 19 & 20, pp. 230-247, passim].

⁴⁸cf. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *Our Savior and His Love for Us*. cc. 22 & 26, pp 260-268; 298-310, passim].

nature. Further, **God chose to give us Himself in Person**, through the Incarnation of the Word [cf. III, q. 1, a. 1].

d. Jesus, Priest forever, and the Universal Savior of Humanity, has also for His part willed to give Himself to us perfectly throughout His life on earth, particularly at the Last Supper and Calvary. He continues to give Himself to us each day through the Eucharist. There can be no greater gift of Self than these riches of **the Priestly and Eucharistic Heart of Jesus Christ**.

e. As God gives His entire nature in the eternal generation of the Word and the ***Spiration*** of the Holy Spirit, as God willed to give Himself in the Incarnation of the Word - **SO** Jesus willed **to give Himself totally in Person in the Eucharist**. For St. Thomas it is with a view to the Eucharistic consecration that Jesus instituted the priesthood simultaneously with the Eucharist [cf. III, q. 65, a. 3].

f. The **interior oblation**, ever alive in the eternal priestly Heart of Jesus, is the soul of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and gives it its infinite value. Jesus Christ also **continues to offer up** to His Father our supplications, our reparations, our thanksgivings. But, especially it is always the same infinitely pure Victim which is offered up, the Body of the Crucified Savior, and His Precious Blood sacramentally shed on the altar so that it may continue to wipe away the sins of the world. In eminent manner, we continually make up, apply, whatever is lacking of the merits of the Lord in this day and age [cf. Col 1:24].

g. Jesus gives us Himself to us in each Holy Communion as food and drink - not so that we will assimilate Him to ourselves, **but so that we may become more and more like Him, assimilated into Him**. The Eucharistic and Priestly Heart of Jesus offers the daily and ceaseless Gift of Himself. Christ loved the Church, gave Himself up for her, that she might be without blemish [cf. Ep 5:25,ff.].

h. Jesus is thus the supreme Model of **the perfect gift of self**, a gift which in our own lives is meant to be more generous with each passing day. Each new consecration of the Eucharist is meant to bring into the Church a certain progress in the theological life.

i. After His Resurrection and Ascension, our Savior a priest forever, did not cease in the offering of the principal act of His Priesthood. The Eucharistic Celebration is a sacramental sacrifice substantially perpetuating in an unbloody manner the Sacrifice of the Cross, of which it is a **“Memorial”**. The Mass in substance is the same as that of

the Cross, because it is the same Victim, really present on our altars, by the same principal Priest [Session 22, c. 2 of Tent].

j. The Mass is not merely a symbolic sacrifice, or the re-enactment of a past sacrifice, **for the Victim is really present. There is a real Oblation of the vVctim** - the Mass is a true, unbloody sacrifice which represents the bloody immolation of the sacrifice of the Cross. Jesus Christ is a Priest for all eternity - He continues to offer Himself up sacramentally in order to apply to us the satisfaction and the merits of His Passion. In His human capacity, He is the principal cause of this **continuing oblation**, which is **the chief act of His Priesthood**. This is the act to which His ministers ought to unite themselves as instruments, becoming in each Mass hopefully more conscious of this sacrifice.

k. **Jesus Christ is the principal Priest at each Eucharistic Celebration:**

- not only because He participates in it in a remote manner, in that He instituted the Eucharist as Sacrament and Sacrifice;

- not only because He once commanded that this Sacrifice be offered up in His Name until the end of the world.

Rather, He is the Principal Celebrant **because He actually participates in it at the present time in two ways:**

- **He continually wills to offer Himself up through the ministry of His priests** [Council of Trent];

- **in His human capacity, He is the conscious and intentional Instrument, always united to God, that truly produces the Transubstantiation and the graces that derive from the Eucharist.**

l. Jesus' **Interior Oblation** is always alive in His Heart: the sacred soul of the glorious Christ never ceases to see God immediately, or to love Him above all else, to love us, and to desire our eternal salvation. It is equally certain that Christ in heaven does not cease to adore God and to offer up to Him a thanksgiving that will never end. His worship of praise and adoration will **continue for all eternity**. It will always be offered up by Christ and by His Church.

m. Prayer offered for others proceeds from charity - the greater the charity the greater the prayer. The divine order is such that lower beings receive an overflow of the excellence of the higher, even as the air receives the brightness of the sun. Thus it is said of Christ: Going to God by His own power, to make intercession for us [cf. IV Sent., d. 15, q. 4, a. 6]. The interior oblation which is ever ablaze in the Heart of Christ, is one of **adoration, impetration and thanksgiving**. This is the soul of every celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice and communion.

n The Church of every age is invited to recollect herself under the wings of Christ's great prayer, so that he might present our prayers to His Father and thus increase the value of our acts adoration, supplication, reparation and thanksgiving - this is His **"re-capitulation"**. We are invited to unite our oblations to His one perfect self-giving [cf.1 P 2:2,ff.].

4. The Efficiency & Universality of Redemption ⁴⁹

a. For St. Thomas, Christ's Passion caused our salvation through **Efficient Causality**, by way of **merit, satisfaction, sacrifice, redemption, liberation**: and all of these are **subordinated to Christ's love for the Father and for us**. St. Thomas finds **all these different notions in Sacred Scripture and Tradition**. His task was to explain them as to their theological significance **in due order**.

b. These notions are of themselves subordinated as in the present enumeration beginning with the more universal and ascending to the less universal, and **they all presuppose Christ's charity, which holds the first place**. For Christ's act of charity is primarily meritorious, but it is strictly satisfactory only if it is laborious and difficult. A perfect sacrifice, such as a holocaust, is both meritorious and satisfactory.

c. For some Thomists, merit, satisfaction and sacrifice belong to redemption as **constitutive** elements - whereas, liberation and the efficiency of our salvation in the application of the merits and satisfaction of the Passion, belong to it as **consecutive** elements, or effects. The Merit, Satisfaction and Sacrifice for the human race is called **objective** redemption - whereas the **application** of this liberation and restoration to individuals is called **subjective** redemption. Thus, for some, the reading of Col 1:24: ["... It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can **to make up for all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his Body, the Church**..."] would refer to **subjective redemption, the application of Christ's super-abundant redemption in each age of the Church, with the passing of time**.

d. Jesus Christ practiced different subordinated virtues:
 - **first of all**, is **charity**, to which "merit" strictly belongs - for the other virtues can only be meritorious as they are commanded by charity;
 - secondly, He practiced **justice**, of which "satisfaction" is a part.
 - thirdly, He practiced **religion**, to which "sacrifice" belongs.

⁴⁹cf. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *Christ the Savior*. o.c., cc. 33 & 34, pp.562-607.

The higher and the more universal the cause, the more does it include several modes of causality - but, in this complexity shines forth **the splendor of its unity** inasmuch as **all these elements manifest Christ's love for the Father and for us**. This orderly arrangement is seen to be all the more profound when it is remembered that Christ, the Head of the human race, could have redeemed the entire universe by whatever meritorious act, without any painful satisfaction whatsoever and sacrifice in the strict sense.

e. Christ's voluntary death was truly a sacrifice and the most perfect of all sacrifices. He proves this by saying: a sacrifice properly so called is something done for that honor which is properly due to God, in order to appease Him. But, Christ offered Himself up for us in the Passion [cf. Ep 5:2]. This voluntary enduring of the Passion was most acceptable to God, as coming from charity. Therefore, it is manifest that Christ's passion was a true sacrifice [cf. III, q. 48, a. 3 c] **motivated by the infinite, intra-Trinitarian love for the Persons of God for humanity**.

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B. The Resurrection and Ascension

[III, qq. 53-59]⁵⁰

1. Christ's Threefold Victory: Over Sin, the Devil and Death

Presentation

[1] Christ stated that there would be distress for His disciples, but that He had **overcome the sinful world** [cf. Jn 16:33]. The Evangelist had told us: all that there is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life [cf. 1 Jn 2:16]. Christ overcame **the sinful world** by taking away its weapons of attack, the objects of concupiscence.

[a] Christ overcame **riches** by poverty, as He was indeed needy and poor [cf. Ps 85:1]

]b] He overcame **honor** by humility - and we are instructed to learn of Him, meek and humble of heart [cf. Mt 11:29]

[c] He overcame **pleasures** by suffering and hardship - being obedient unto death on the Cross [cf. Ph 2:5, ff.] - this is the "mind" of Christ Jesus.

⁵⁰For this whole section, cf. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *Christ the Savior*, o.c., cc.36-39, pp. 645-689, passim]

[2] Christ also overcame the world by excluding the **prince of this world** [cf. Jn 12:31]
- He despoiled the principalities and powers [cf. Col 2:15]

[3] Christ overcame the third great obstacle **Death** - in being lifted up, He will draw all things to Himself [cf. Jn 12:32].

a. Victory over Sin

1.] Christ's first victory is over Original Sin - one man's sin led to condemnation - so, by the justice of one, all are led to justification [cf. Rm 5:8,ff.] Through Baptism Christ's redemption is applied one by one to those who are coming to the faith

2.] Christ's victory over actual sin is many times affirmed in Scripture: **God is rich in mercy**, loving us even when we were in sin [cf. Ep 2:38].

b. Victory over the Devil

1.] The Prince of this world is cast out - as Christ is lifted up, drawing all to Himself [cf. Jn 12:31,ff.] The Son of Man appeared to destroy the works of the devil [cf. 1 Jn 3:8]. The appeal now is to put on the armor of God to withstand the deceits of the devil [cf. Ep 6:10]

2.] The Gates of Darkness will not prevail - Satan is conquered, and those whose robes are washed clean in the Blood of the Lamb will be welcomed home [cf. Rv 22:13]. By Christ's passion, humanity is freed from Satanic dominion [cf. III, q. 49, a. 1].

c. Christ's Victory over Death:

1.] In His glorious Resurrection, Christ gained victory for all over death. The Apostles appeal particularly to the Resurrection to confirm the truth of their preaching - without it, all would be in vain [cf. Mt 12:39; 16:21; 17:22; 20:19; etc.]

2.] There is an intimate connection between Christ's resurrection and the other mysteries of Christianity. As death is the effect of sin, by conquering death, we have a sign of His victory over sin. Through Christ we are freed of those things which we incurred through original sin [cf. CG IV, c. 79].

3.] This victory will be completed on Judgment Day when all will rise again. He has promised that if we eat His flesh and drink His blood, He will raise us up

on the last day [cf. Jn 6:40, ff.]. The gift, by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ has abounded unto many [cf. Rm 5:15].

2. Christ's Descent into the Underworld ⁵¹

a. St. Thomas lists a number of reasons why Christ should die:

- to satisfy for us sentenced to death because of sin;
- to show that He really was "man";
- that He might help us overcome the fear of death;
- that He might offer us the example of dying spiritually to sin;
- that by rising from death, He might show His power to overcome death, and instill in us all the hope of rising again.

b. In death, His divine nature remained united to His Body. What is bestowed by God's grace is destined to be permanent, and is not taken away without sin. With all the more reason, too, the divinity was not separated from His human soul either.

c. Christ's burial proved the reality of His death - by rising again from the grave, we are given **greater hope** of our own coming to life again **through the power of His resurrection**.

d. It is of faith that Christ descended among the dead - this was not the "hell of the lost" - ascending on high, Jesus led captivity captive - He that descended is the same that ascended above all the heavens. Three reasons are alleged:

- sin had brought death to the body - it was necessary then, for Christ to be among the dead;
- the devil was overthrown by Christ's victory - the souls in prison were thus released;
- He was able to enlighten those souls in darkness, already redeemed by the foreseen merits of Jesus Christ.

3. Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

a.. St. Thomas offers five reasons for the "necessity" of the Resurrection:

- for the commendation of divine justice, to which it belongs to exalt the humble; it was fitting that He be exalted by a glorious resurrection;
- for our instruction in the faith; by Christ's Resurrection our belief in His divinity is confirmed; [1 Co 15:12]

⁵¹For a recent Biblical study, cf. Willlliam J. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits. A Study of 1 P 3:18-4:6*. Analecta Biblica 23. Roma: PIB 1989.

- for the raising of our hope, because in seeing Christ Who is our Head rise again, we hope that we, too shall rise again ;
- to set in order the lives of the faithful so that we may also walk in newness of life [cf. Rm 6:4];
- **to complete the work of our salvation** - because Christ was thus glorified in rising again, so that He might advance us to good things [cf. Rm 4:25]. For it was so ordained by God that only after the resurrection would the Holy Spirit be given, or the Apostles sent to preach [cf. Lk 24:47; Jn 7:39].

4. Christ the King, Judge and Head of the Blessed

a. Christ the King:

1.] The universal power of Jesus is manifested in the Baptismal formula He revealed [cf. Mt 28:19] - teach all nations, make disciples of all. His universal power includes the elect and angels as well. On trial, Jesus admitted His royalty - you say that I am! [cf. Jn 18:33,ff.]. This title is present in the Apocalypse He is the King of kings [cf. Rv 1:5].

2.] There are reasons why He is the universal King:

- He is the natural Son of God and heir;
- He is the Redeemer of the universe - which He bought and paid for at a dear price. [cf. Heb 1:2]

3.] His claim for Kingship rests on various titles:

- the hypostatic union;
- plenitude of created grace; in this, He excels all other creatures. He has the highest degree of light in glory and charity.
- His Redemption is an acquired right, due to His Sacrifice on the Cross. In this, He transcends the angels - and thus, He now sits at the right hand of the Father.

b. **Christ as Judge**

1.] In His human nature He exerts judiciary power over all the angels, as regards the dispensation of graces granted through them and their accidental rewards. He gives essential rewards only in accord with His divine nature.

2.] Judiciary power befits Christ in all human affairs. The Father has given all judgment to His Son [cf. Jn 5:22] He is the Lord of the living and the dead - and we will all stand before His judgment [cf. Rm 14:9, ff.].

c. **The Head of the Blessed:** He preserves all the blessed in being - He preserves the light of glory. Glorious as man, He adore the Father, thanks and offers Him His whole mystical body. It is truly right and just for the Church always and everywhere to thank and praise the Lord in His majesty, adored by Angels and Dominations. The Glorious Christ is adored by the Blessed and He receives their thanksgiving.

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COROLLARY
TEXTS FROM St. THOMAS AQUINAS
on the
RESURRECTION

[cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. 35, The Resurrection of the Lord [III, qq. 53-59]. Latin Text, English Translation, Introduction, Notes & Glossary. C. Thomas Moore, OP. Aquinas Institute, Dubuque IA. Blackfriars. Great Britain. Eyre & Spottswode Ltd. 1976; cf. also: Rev. J. S.. Considine, OP, S.TLr.. STM, "The Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ", in: *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Benzinger 1920; 1948. Vol II, pp. 3426-3438, passim].

Introduction

[1] Christ died, and thus was conquered by death - however, He arose by His own power from the dead, and therefore He was the Victor over death. Death was indeed a manifestations of power, but Christ met it as its Conqueror. He died willingly and freely to accomplish all things ordained by His Father. His was a unique work: the atonement for sin and the opening of the Gates of Heaven to all human beings.

[a] St. Thomas treats of the sufferings and death of Christ right after His miracles and immediately after His most exceptional miracle, the miracle of the Transfiguration.

[b] These are all aspects of the “deep realities” of our faith which the Spirit reveals to us and which we must know and live by, if we would attain to the life of the Spirit. These revealed truths are the great mysteries of our faith, as the mystery of three divine Persons subsisting in one divine Nature - the mystery of the Second Person. the Person of the Son, subsisting in two natures - and the mystery of the God-Man satisfying, atoning, redeeming, **satisfying - redeeming - atoning - through divine Mercy**, for the sin committed by human beings.

[2] In the secret of Eternal Wisdom, and of the free eternal decree, hidden from the knowledge of the angels who dwelt the most intimately with God in heaven, and manifested to the world by the most striking and convincing theophanies, the Word of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity made flesh: For it pleased the Father that in Him all His fullness would dwell, and that through him He should reconcile to Himself all things, whether on the earth or in the heavens, making peace through the blood of his cross..” [cf. Col 1:20].

[a] In classical theology, the language adopted to present this mystery has been predominantly “**juridical**”: God could have adopted another plan to right the damage done by sin [cf. III Sent., d. 20, q. 1, a. .4] - that would have been a “deliverance” from sin, but not a “redemption” from the “debt”, because no “price” would have been paid.

[b] Eternal Wisdom itself determined the price of our redemption, that includes the idea of “ransom”: you have been bought at a great price [cf. 1 Co 6:20]. Because of this, we should not become slaves of sin [cf. 1 Co 7:23] It includes the idea of “satisfaction”, and includes the idea of **Liturgical Sacrifice**: it is an “expiation” and a “propitiation” moving God to regard humanity with favor.

[c] It eventually includes the idea of the **Priesthood of Jesus Christ** - His sacrifice includes the idea of deliverance and restoration, and the idea of “merit”.

[3] Therefore, the revealed data on “Redemption” includes many notions, all of which are subordinate to the loving Mercy of God:

- In relation to God it is a satisfaction and sacrifice;
- in relation to Jesus Christ it is a voluntary substitution or vicarious atonement, a free and yet obedient act of suffering and death on the Cross for humanity;
- in relation to man it is a deliverance from slavery and a restoration to grace and glory.

[4] All these ideas are developed by St. Thomas [cf. III, q. 48]: Christ procured our salvation:

- by way of merit, satisfaction, atonement;
- by way of sacrifice;
- by way of ransom, or redemption;
- by way of instrumental causality.

[5] For St. Thomas, as for Scripture and Tradition, the Redemption is an act which is absolutely free and gratuitous on the part of God - infinite love and unbounded mercy decreed it. Throughout tradition, this work of redemption has always supposed it to be the result of Divine Mercy. For St. Paul, reparation is always gratuitous [cf. Rm 3:24]. For St. Thomas, this work of reparation is always a work of mercy, since man of himself could never satisfy for the sin of all human nature - thus God sent His Son to satisfy for all [cf. III, q. 46, a. 1, ad 1^{um}]. God was not obliged to right the damage of sin. Christ has offered to the Father a superabundant satisfaction for the sins of the world. This conclusion is more than a theological theorem: it is a dogma of faith. There is no formal, explicit definition of this teaching, but it is equivalently defined in the Creeds and the teachings of the Councils: "... Jesus Christ suffered for us and for our salvation..." The divine Redeemer took upon Himself the penalty of our faults, without any culpability of sin and that He offered to God reparation equal to and even above the offense made to God by all the sins of the human race. This dogma is amply supported by the following:

[a] Sacred Scripture:

- in the OT, particularly Is 52-53 prepares us for the coming of Christ [cf. Mt 8:17; 1 P 2:22]. Jesus, the Suffering servant, has expiated for sin and saved the world: by His wounds, ours are healed.

- in the NT the ideas of substitution and satisfaction are sustained. Christ bore our sins and took them away [cf. Jn 1:29]. He took away our sins, being sinless [cf. 1 Jn 3:5]. He gave His life as a ransom for many [cf. Mt 20:28]. We have been redeemed by the innocent Lamb [cf. 1 P 1:18]. We are bought and paid for, we are not our own [cf. 1 Co 6:20]. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep [cf. Jn 10:11, ff.] His Blood has been shed for the forgiveness of sins [cf. Mt 26:28].

[b] The Apostolic Fathers: these were the men who could have known the Apostles personally - and, as would be expected, they give the same rich meaning to "redemption." They were convinced that Christ's sufferings were "**Vicarious Satisfaction**." By His Blood, Jesus brings about our redemption - His flesh for ours, His soul for ours.

[c] The Latin Fathers: present the same teaching. St. Ambrose noted that He took our sins that He might crucify our sin in His flesh. St. Augustine notes that He took on Himself the curse for our sins - by His death, He paid the debt of the entire human race. His oblation is of infinite value.

[d] The Greek Fathers were also consistent in noting that Jesus Christ paid our considerable debt in our place.

[6] St. Thomas Aquinas placed his entire theological development on the teachings of Scripture, Tradition and the Fathers who preceded him [cf. III, q. 48, a. 2, ad 1^{um}].

[a] The Head and members are as one mystic person and therefore, Christ's satisfaction beings to all the faithful as His members. Jesus is Head over the Church [cf. Ep 1:22]. By one man comes the resurrection of the dead [cf. 1 Co 15:21]

[b] The Redeemer enjoyed a two-fold grace: personal and capital grace. By this latter, He is consecrated King and Head of the faithful through which He obtained the right and per to merit and satisfy for them.

[c] It is one and the same grace that produces these two effects [cf. III, q. 8, a.5] just as it is the same sun that both heats and lights. He is our Head and all His gifts can bring profit to us, His members.

[d] All theologians agree that Jesus' satisfaction **super-abounds** more than all the sins of all human beings of all times - but, the theological opinions are in the reason, or the source of this superabundant value in the work of Christ:

- the abundance of offense existed, but there is a superabundance of grace through Jesus Christ - where sin has abounded, grace has super-abounded [cf. Rm 5:20] For St. John Chrysostom the work of Christ is a vast ocean which far surpasses a drop of water [cf. Hom. 10, ad Rom.] One drop of Christ's Blood, in union with the Divinity, would have sufficed for the salvation of all worlds.

- St. Thomas had noted that one loves equally or more than He has detested the offense - hence, in Jesus' love and obedience, Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offense of the whole human race, for various reasons:

- first, because of His exceeding charity;
 - second, on account of the dignity of His life. This fundamental argument is based on the union of the two natures, human and divine, in the one Divine Person.
 - it was because of His excessive love that God willed the death of His son [cf. Jn 15:13].

[7] Jesus Christ accomplished all this because He loved humanity unto death, even death on the Cross. By His death on the Cross,

- He satisfied the justice of God;
- freed us from sin;
- broke the power of Satan;
- restored us to grace.

[a] The Resurrection of Christ in Scripture is linked with his death: it is an integral part of the element of the redemption. His death opened the gates of heaven - His resurrection prefigured and restored to us a life which had been lost by Adam's sin [cf. Rm 4:25]: He was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification.

[b] It was only after the resurrection that the Apostles were to go forth and preach the faith, through which we are saved [cf. 1 Co 15:14].

[c] The resurrection is a cardinal dogma of our faith. The reality of the resurrection can be proven from Divine Revelation. Christ positively predicted that He would arise [cf. Mk 10:34; 12:40; Lk 18:33; Jn 2:18].

[8] It was necessary for Christ to rise from the dead - but, this is a necessity flowing from the divine plan. St. Thomas offers five reasons for this [cf. III, q. 53, a. 1]: thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and should arise again from the dead on the third day [cf. Lk 24:46]. St. Thomas offers five reasons:

- for the commendation of Divine Justice;
- to confirm our faith [cf. 1 Co 15:14]
- to strengthen our hope [cf. 1 Co 15:12];
- to encourage the faithful to live a Christian life;
- finally, to **complete the work of our salvation: He was delivered up for our sins, rose for our justification [cf. Rm 4:25].**

[a] The resurrection of Jesus is the prototype and the cause of the general resurrection of humanity [cf. 1 Co 15:20]. By virtue of this example of our Head, we profess that there will be a resurrection of the flesh for all the dead [cf. D-S # 286].

[b] By reason of His Divinity Jesus Himself was the principal efficient cause of His Resurrection. Christ arose by His own power. His Body was transfigured by certain qualities: agility, impassibility, subtility and agility.

§§§

q. 53: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Here St. Thomas offers his **five** reasons noted above, for the 'necessity' of Jesus' resurrection:

- to fulfill the requirements of **divine justice**: since Christ, through charity and obedience to God humbled Himself to the extent of death on the Cross, it was necessary that He be exalted by a glorious resurrection.

- to increase our knowledge in **faith**, confirmed by His resurrection: He lives now through the power of God [2 Co 13:4] - our preaching would be useless without the resurrection [cf. 1 Co 15:14]; by the resurrection, one is freed not only from death, but also from the necessity of dying again, an even greater event.

- to increase our **hope** - as our Head is risen, we hope that we will, too - no one can say now that there is no resurrection from the dead [1 Co 15:12] I know my Redeemer lives [cf. Jb 19:25, ff.] - the hope in our hearts is that we will raise on the last day.

- for the **instruction** of the faithful - that we might live a new life [cf. Rm 6:~4] We must be dead to sin, alive for God in Christ Jesus [cf. Rm 9:11]. Christ's resurrection was necessary to increase our knowledge in faith. Our faith, however, is in both the humanity and the divinity of Christ, and belief in one is not sufficient without belief in the other.

- as a **complement** to our salvation - by His resurrection He was glorified that He might move us towards what is good - He was raised to justify us [cf. Rm 6:4].

His is a "personal" union of the divinity and humanity - not a union of nature, such as body to soul By this union of soul to body a higher state was attained with respect to his nature, but not to his person. Strictly speaking the Passion of Christ achieved its effect with regard to the removal of evil - his resurrection was both the first instance and the model of the good effects produced.

The things that preceded His coming prepared for it, so also grace is a disposition for glory. For this reason, those qualities of the state of glory, for the soul perfect enjoyment of God - and for the body, a glorious resurrection - should first of all be present in Christ, the author of glory. On the other hand it is more fitting that grace be present first of all in those who are ordered to Christ.

q. 54: The Qualities of the Risen Christ

[a. 4: the Glorious Wounds which appeared in His Resurrected Body]

"Sed contra": when Christ appeared to His disciples, they were in a state of alarm and fright and they thought they were seeing a ghost [cf. Lk 24:37]. They thought that He did not have a true body but an imaginary one. to eliminate this misunderstanding Christ added: Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have [cf. v. 39]. Christ's body, therefore, was not imaginary, but real. [a.1].

That Christ's body was **glorious** in His resurrection is evident for three reasons:

- first of all, his resurrection was the model and cause of our own resurrection [cf. 1 Co 15:12, ff.];
- secondly, Christ merited the glory of the Resurrection by the humility of His passion. His troubled soul [cf. Jn 12:37] gave way to the glory of His Father's name [cf. v. 28];
- thirdly, at the first moment of conception, Christ's soul was glorious in the perfect enjoyment of divinity [cf. III, q. 14, aa. 1, 2; 45, a. 2]. It was by way of exception that the glory of his soul did not overflow into His body - but this was so that the Mystery of redemption might be accomplished through the Passion of Christ. As soon as the Mystery of the Passion and death were fulfilled, and Christ's body once more united to his soul, from His soul immediately overflowed into His body - thus, His was a glorious body. [a.2].

Whether Christ's body should have risen with its **wounds** [a. 4]: The Lord said to Thomas: put your finger here - give me your hand.. [cf. Jn 20:27]. It was fitting that in the Resurrection, Christ's soul should take up once more a body with wounds, for these reasons:

- firstly, for the sake of His own glory - He preserved His wounds not from any inability to cure them, but that there might be a perpetual sign of His glorious triumph [Ven. Bede]. In the bodies of martyrs, their wounds are not a deformity but in glory a sign of dignity. From these wounds will shine forth a beauty which is not from the body, but the result of virtue [cf. St. Augustine];
- secondly, these wounds are ordered to strengthen the hearts of the disciples in their belief in Christ's resurrection;
- thirdly, so that during Christ's prayer to His Father for us, He might manifest constantly the type of death He bore for the sake of humanity;
- fourthly, so that by placing before their eyes the very marks of His death, He might show those whom He redeemed by this death how mercifully He came to their aid;
- finally, to show on judgment day how just condemnation will be.

These wounds which remained in Christ's body are not wounds of corruption or of defect. Since they are signs of virtue, they are ordered to manifest **a greater degree of glory**. There even appeared in the places where the wounds were a special type of beauty.

Although the openings made by the wounds involved a certain rupturing, this was more than compensated for by the greater glory of their appearance. Thus, Christ's body was not less integral, but more perfect. Thomas not only saw the wounds, but touched them. Pope Leo's comments on this by stating that for Thomas' personal faith

sight alone was sufficient - but, he was working for us and so he touched what he had seen.

Christ wished the scars from his wounds to remain in his body for other reasons besides the strengthening of the disciples' faith. The scars, therefore, had to be permanent. In Augustine's words: I believe that Christ's body is in heaven in the same state in which it was when it ascended there. In Gregory's statement: If, contrary to the teaching of Paul, there would have been a change after the resurrection, this would mean a reversion to the state of death. Only a stupid man would affirm this for it would mean a denial of true resurrection of the flesh. Thus it is clear that the scars which Christ manifested after the resurrection never left His body afterwards.

q. 55: The Manifestation of the Resurrection

A public deed merits a public reward. In Augustine's own words, the clarity of the resurrection is a regard for the humility of the Passion. **Both the Passion of Christ AND His Resurrection are ordained for our salvation: He rose for our justification [cf. Rm 4:25].** There are certain things which are in the realm of our future glory - and these, in the words of the Prophet Isaiah, surpass our human knowledge.

There was a greater degree of love shown by these women towards the Lord, since they remained although the disciples fled. And so, they were the first to see the risen Christ in Glory.

The Apostles were also able to offer eye-witness testimony to Christ's resurrection: for they saw with their own eyes the One in Whom they believed, Christ alive Whom they knew to have died. But since the beatific vision is attained through that hearing which pertains to faith, so, too, they ultimately attained the vision of Christ risen from the dead only through the message they had first heard from angels.

The company of Christ with His disciples was a frequent occurrence before He ascended into heaven: this was for their consolation. Thus, Paul tells us that He appeared to more than 500 of the brothers at the same time and then He appeared to James [cf. 1 Co 15:6, f.], but there is no mention of these appearances in the Gospels.

By certain very evident signs He showed that He was truly risen from the dead. Christ gave His disciples these signs of the resurrection for two purposes:

- first of all, their hearts were not readily disposed to believe in the Resurrection. They were so slow to believe and He reproached them [cf. Mk 16:14; 24:25];

- secondly because of these signs the disciples' testimony was rendered more efficacious: what we have seen with our own eyes, and what we have heard and touched with our hands, this is our testimony [cf. 1 Jn 1:2]. Thomas believed - he saw the wounds of Christ, and believed [cf. Jn 20:29]. The fact is that He still bore His wounds. [cf. Lk 24:39-40; Jn 20:20, 27].

Christ manifested His Resurrection in two ways:

- first, by the evidence of **witnesses**; two types were used: the angels who announced the resurrection to the women; the second testimony, is Scriptural proofs used by Christ Himself.

- secondly, by proofs or **signs**. Three were offered:

- first of all, a body which was real and solid, not a phantom appearance, or ghostlike body. The sense of touch assured this [cf. Lk 24:39];

- secondly, Christ's body was presented as human, with physical traits which could be seen by human beings;

- thirdly, Christ's body was numerically identical with His body before the resurrection: the **wounds** demonstrated this: Look at My hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed! [cf. Lk 24:38, 39].

In another manner He showed His disciples the truth of His resurrection - from His soul being untied again to His body Operations attributed to the three types of human life show this:

- on the nutritive level, eating and drinking with His disciple [cf. Lk 24: 30, 43];

- on the sensitive level his replies to the disciples' questions [cf. Jn 21:21-211] and His greeting when He arrived in their presence showed that he has sight and hearing [cf. Lk 24:36; Jn 20:10, 26].

- on the intellectual level we find his conversations with the disciples and his use of Scriptural arguments with them [cf. Lk 24:25; Ac 1:3].

Especially important in this regard are the Scriptural proofs.

q. 56: Christ's Resurrection as 'Cause'

St. Thomas reasoned that Christ's resurrection can be attributed to the **Exemplar**, **Efficient** or **Meritorious** causality. Whatever is first in a given genus is the cause of all that come after it. Christ's resurrection is the first in the order of our resurrection. The Son gives life to anyone He chooses [cf. Jn 5:21] The natural order of things, which is of divine institution, works in this way: a first cause acts upon what is nearest to it and thus extends its effect to other things more remote. So, for example, fire first eats the surrounding air and through the warm air heats bodies farther away. Dionysius refers also to God as the One Who illuminates substances closest to him through whom others

more distant are given light. Therefore, to the Word is attributed the immortal life bestowed on the human body to his person, and so through him resurrection is worked in all others.

While it is true that the power of the principal agent is not restricted to act in a pre-determined way with respect to the instrument, once the course of action is chosen together with any taken instrument, that becomes a cause of the effect. The Resurrection of Christ is not, strictly speaking, the **meritorious** cause of our resurrection. It is the **efficient** and **exemplar** cause:

- The **efficient** causality is through the humanity of Christ in which the resurrection took place and which is like an instrument acting in the power of divinity; the effect is more specific in the case of **exemplar** causality because the death of Christ, by which he was deprived of mortal life, is the cause of the destruction of death in our behalf.

- And just as all the other things which Christ in His humanity accomplished or suffered for us are saving acts through the power of His divinity, so, too, is His Resurrection the **efficient** cause of ours through the same divine power whose proper effect is to raise the dead to life. By reason of **efficient** causality, which depends upon the power of God, it is fitting that Christ's death and resurrection effect the destruction of death, as well as the resurrection of life.

- Christ's passion is the **meritorious** cause as well [cf. q. 48, a. 1].

Christ's Resurrection operates **instrumentally** with a power effective not only for the resurrection of the body but also for the resurrection of the soul. Two things are implied in the soul's justification:

- the remission of sins;
- the newness of life, which is the result of grace.

In both cases the effect brought about by the power of God is said to be caused by Christ's death and resurrection. The resurrection properly causes the newness of life through grace, or justice: "... He was put to death for our sins, i.e., to take them away, and He was raised to life to justify us [cf. Rm 4:25].

q. 57: The Ascension of Christ

Christ's Ascension provided an additional element to divine glory, not as an essential requirement of this glory, but insofar as the fittingness of place was

concerned. Only in heaven could His heavenly body be at home and this in a way is part of His glory.

Christ's Ascension brought about our loss of His bodily presence, but gave us something more useful:

- first of all our faith, which is of things not seen, was increased The Spirit comes to convince the world of justice [cf. Jn 16:8]

- secondly, our hope is lifted - He has gone to prepare a place for us and He will return to take us with Him [cf. Jn 14:3]. With His human nature in heaven, He provides hope for our own.

- thirdly, to increase our charity towards heavenly things Let your thoughts be on heavenly things... [cf. Col 3:1, ff.] Where our treasure is, there is our heart Mt 6:21].

The descent can be applied to Christ in two ways:

- first of all when we say that He descended from heaven, and here the attribution refers to the God-Man in His divinity. There is no local motion implied in this descent from heaven, rather it should be called *kenosis* : He emptied Himself to assume the condition of a slave [cf. Ph 2:6, f.] We should not say, however, that by this condescension He lost anything of the plenitude of His divine power. Rather He assumed our nothingness, and in His descent from heaven He left nothing behind, but assumed our earthly nature in the unity of His Person.

- Another text which refers to Christ and says that He descended right to the lower regions of the earth [cf. Ep 4:9] [*ad inferos*], involves local motion. Consequently, this reference is to Christ's human nature.

Christ's Ascension is the **cause** of our salvation in these ways:

- first of all, His ascension prepared a way for us to heaven [cf. Jn 14:2] He walks at our head to lead the way in front [cf. Mi 2:13] Christ is our **Head**, and we are members of His body and follow Him to the place where He went before us: so that where I am, you may be, too [cf. Jn 14:3]

- secondly, just as the High **Priest** in the OT entered the sanctuary into God's presence to represent the people, Christ entered heaven to intercede for us [cf. Heb 7:25]. The presence of His human nature in heaven is itself an intercession for us, for God, Who exalted the human nature in Christ, will also show mercy towards these for whose sake this nature was assumed.

- thirdly enthroned in heaven as God and Lord, Christ from above showers upon men His divine gifts. He rose higher than all the heavens to fill all things [cf. Ep 4:10] with His gifts

Hence, Christ's Ascension is the cause of our salvation through **efficient** and not through **meritorious** causality. This was shown to be the case also in Christ's resurrection [cf. q. 56, a. 1 & 3, & 4]. Christ's Ascension is the cause properly speaking of our ascension because sin which prohibits our entry was removed and heaven was **merited** for us. Yet, more directly Christ's ascension is the cause for through it, He initiated as our **Head** what we as His members share in union with Him.

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[B.] St. IGNATIUS of LOYOLA

Presentation: The Risen Christ in the ***Spiritual Exercises*** of St. Ignatius, Preparation for the Life of an Apostolic Missionary in the ***Constitutions***.

[1] For an understanding of the ***Spiritual Exercises*** of St. Ignatius of Loyola it will help to have clearly in mind their general outline. They are divided into four 'weeks' of meditations, but the term '*week*' is flexible. They were intended as a preparation for living the ***Constitutions of the Society of Jesus***.

[a] The **First Week** corresponds roughly to what is called the "**Purgative Way**" in the spiritual life, i.e., it is devoted to purifying the soul and putting one's life in order. The aim of the Meditations of the First Week is to arouse **sorrow and contrition** in the one making the ***Exercises*** as he reflects on the disorder of his life: his sins, and how he has failed to move effectively toward his final end. This Week is designed to purify the soul, root out its inordinate attachments to creatures, and enable one to amend his life through grateful love and surrender to Christ the Redeemer. With these dispositions of soul, one is prepared too undertake the Second Week of the *Exercises*, or retreat.

[b] In the **Second Week** the Meditations are dawn from **the Public Life of Jesus Christ**. The aim of the Second Week is to persuade the exercitant to an interior knowledge and love of the Person of Jesus Christ, so that he may adapt his life to the model, identify himself with Christ as the concrete norm of Christian perfection. This assimilation to Christ is brought about by a series of Meditations on the Mysteries of His private and public life, and by the four key Meditations on the Kingdom, the Two Standards, and Three Classes of Men, and the Three Models of Humility. The '*Kingdom*' Meditation is designed to arouse the greatest enthusiasm for close following of Christ in poverty and humility, conquering the obstacles to His Kingdom in one's own soul and preparing for the apostolate.

[c] In the **Third Week**, the retreatant is invited to ponder the of **the Passion of Jesus Christ**. The Third Week of the *Exercises* is concerned with the Passion of our Lord and is intended to confirm the retreatant in the options he has taken to follow Christ more closely by increasing his grateful love for Christ and his sorrow for his sins through study of Christ's sufferings.

[d] The **Fourth Week's** Meditations are from **His Risen Life**. The Fourth Week of the *Exercises* develops meditations on the Risen Life of Christ and is intended to engender unselfish love, joy in Christ's glory and an unchanging trust in Christ the Consoler.

[2] Crowning the whole work of the *Exercises* is the **Contemplation of Obtain Love**, which synthesizes the movement of the Four Weeks so that one will **live life exclusively for God in joyous service, finding Him in all things and all things in Him**. The cycle of the *Exercises* is now completed; the assimilation of the soul to God, it is hoped, is final, and the soul is fixed in a permanent state of divine consolation, given wholly over to His love and service.

[3] It was at one time the fashion to study in detail the sources supposedly used by the Saint in the composition of his *Spiritual Exercises*, and some interpreters thought they could identify entire sections as taken from the spiritual writers. However, Ignatius himself tells us clearly where he found his inspiration. In addition to the interior illumination of grace, the sifted lived experiences [his own, and those of others cf. DV 8: contemplation, study, magisterium, and lived experience - to whom he had given the booklet to be read], Ignatius drew chiefly from three books:

[a] ***The Imitation of Christ*** : Ignatius tells us that he first made the acquaintance of this classic during his stay at Manresa. There is no doubt that its influence on his thinking was profound, for he referred to it as the devotional book he liked most and echoes of its doctrines appear throughout the *Exercises*, especially the tender love for Jesus Christ inculcated in the Second and Third Weeks.

[b] ***The Life of Christ, by Ludolph of Saxony, a German Carthusian*** [sometimes referred to as simply "the Carthusian."]: This was translated into Spanish by a Fray Ambrosia Montesino 1503, and it had deep influence on Ignatius. While convalescing from his deep leg wound received at Pamplona, the Saint read the book with avidity - copying in red ink the words of the NT which so movingly brought Jesus' deeds and words before him - the words spoken by our Lady, he copied in blue ink. He made lengthy excerpts from this source. Under the influence of Christ's drawing power,

this generosity, this aristocratic reverence for God's majesty, and this freedom of spirit were to be turned to divine pursuits.

[c] ***The Golden Legend***, in the Spanish translation of **Goberto Vagad**: Once he had learned of the great deeds that Augustine, Dominic and Francis had done for Christ, his natural magnanimity of soul was elevated and inflamed. A new kind of "competition" was opened up to him - far from the jousting contests and game that inspired his sense of "honor."

[4] The overall purpose of the ***Spiritual Exercises*** : commentators have widely differing opinions:

- one immediate end is to discover God's will for the disposition of one's life, vocation;

- however, the stress that Ignatius puts on "election" is not only one's state in life, but anything that pertains to progress, or sanctity;

- a more general end is service of the Church, learning in all things to love and serve Jesus Christ. By imitating Jesus Christ we will avoid undue attachments that could hinder spiritual progress.

- the ***Exercises*** were intended to be useful to many classes of people, but especially for the more generous souls from whom ***the greater service*** and love of God could be hoped.

[5] The ***Spiritual Exercises*** touch on so many important aspects of the spiritual life that they may justly be called a summary of the most profound principles of ascetical theology. Marked as they are with a deep concern for **the apostolic mission** in the Church through complete conformity to the will of God, they contain practical principles to arrive at it, some of which are positive and some are negative. The central positive principle is the imitation of Christ our Lord, the **exemplary cause** of all Christian perfection. to achieve such imitation requires the destruction of egotism, pride and worldly attachments. ⁵²

[6] St. Gaspar Bertoni preached a course of the ***Spiritual Exercises*** , which have come down to us from September 13th - 20th of 1810. These may be found in the ***Manoscritti Bertoni***, II, ## 2104-2682.

[a] In this same Volume II of the ***MssB*** [## 2683-3192] there is another set of "**Recollections for the *Exercises*** ", which evidently was another Retreat.

⁵² For these thoughts, cf. *St. Ignatius' Profound Precepts of Mystical Theology. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.* Translated by Anthony Mottola. With an Introduction by Robert W. Gleason, SJ.. NY: Doubleday Image Books 1963.

[b] Further in this same Volume II of the **MssB [## 3193-3811]** there are the papers for two courses of **Retreats** that the Stigmatine Founder preached to the **Clergy of Mantua, October 4-13; 17-26th of 1816.**

[c] In **Mss B III [## 3812-4597]** we find the Founder's papers for a series of Retreats and Missions - as for the **Vestition of John Mary Marani in December 1805** [the Founder's first successor as Superior General].

[d] There is a course of **Spiritual Exercises** for the year **1806**, in St. Paul's in the Campo Marzio section of Verona [cf. **III, ## 3887, ff.**].

[e] At Mardi Gras time in 1806, Fr. Bertoni preached **a retreat to brother Priests** and to the **Marian Congregation** of St. Paul's Parish in the chapel of the Nuns of St. Francis de Paola [cf. **III, ## 3965**].

[f] There follows in this same **Vol. III [## 4329]** his sermons for the **Penitential Triduum to St. Rocco, in the Cathedral**, for protection against the cholera epidemic, in **1831.**

[g] Then, finally his **Retreat to the "Acolytes"** [Seminarians] of November 22, 1810 [**Vol. III, ## 4440, ff.**].

[h] At this point in Vol. III begins the long series of the Founder's 13 Conferences to Seminarians on St. John **Chrysostom's Commentary on Genesis** - dated perhaps in December **1811 [Vol. III, ## 4615]**.

[i] Next would be Fr. **Bertoni's 73 Meditations from St. Gregory the Great's Commentary on First Kings [Samuel]** - which may have begun in **Nov. 1810** that overlaps then into Volume IV [cf. **Vol. III, ## 4853, ff.**].

[j] Finally, there are his 41 Conferences on St. John **Chrysostom's Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew [IV, ## 7341, ff.]**.

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[I.] A Look at the Text of the *Spiritual Exercises*

1. The Fourth Week [cf, *SE* ## 218-229]

218: The First Contemplation is on the appearance of the Lord Jesus to his Blessed Mother after His Resurrection from the dead.

299: The Resurrection of Christ our Lord - the First Apparition.

First Point. He appeared to the Virgin Mary. Though this is not mentioned explicitly in the Scriptures, it must be considered as stated when Scripture says that He appeared to many others. For Scripture supposes that we have understanding, as it is written: 'Are you also without understanding?'

Prayer. The usual Preparatory Prayer.

46. Prayer. In the preparatory prayer I will beg God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions actions and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of His Divine Majesty.

219. First Prelude. This is the history. Here it is how after Christ expired on the cross His body remained separated from the soul, but always united with the divinity. His soul, likewise united with the divinity, descended into hell. There he sets free the souls of the just, then comes to the sepulcher, and rising, appears in body and soul to His Blessed Mother.

220 Second Prelude. This is a mental representation of the place. Here it will be to see the arrangement of the holy sepulcher -

[**# 47:** First Prelude. This is a mental representation of the place.

Attention must be called to the following point. When the contemplation or meditation is on something visible, for example, when we contemplate Christ our Lord, the representation will consist in seeing in imagination the material place where the object is that we wish to contemplate. I said the material place, for example, the temple, or the mountain where Jesus or His Mother is, according to the subject matter of the contemplation.

In a case where the subject matter is not visible, as here in a meditation on sin, the representation will be to see in imagination my soul as a prisoner in the corruptible body, and to consider my whole composite being as an exile here on earth, cast out to live among brute bars. I said my whole composite being, body and soul.]

- and the place or house of our Lady. I will note its different parts, and also her room, her oratory, etc.

221: Third Prelude. This will be to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for the grace -

[# 48: The Second Prelude. I will ask God our Lord for what I want and desire.

The petition made in this prelude must be according to the subject matter. Thus in a contemplation on the Resurrection, I will ask for joy with Christ in joy. In one on the Passion, I will ask for sorrow, tears, and anguish with Christ in anguish.

Here it will be to ask for shame and confusion, because I see how many have been lost on account of a single mortal sin, and how many times I have deserved eternal damnation, because of the many grievous sins that I have committed.]

- to be glad and rejoice intensely because of the great joy and the glory of Christ our Lord.

222: The First, Second and Third Points. These will be the usual ones as presented -

[# 194: First Point. This is to see the persons at the Supper, and to reflect upon myself, and strive to draw some profit from them.

Second Point. This is to listen to their conversation, and likewise seek to draw fruit from it.

Third Point. This is to see what they are doing and to seek to draw some fruit from it.]

- in the contemplation of the Last Supper.

223: Fourth Point. This will be to consider the divinity, which seemed to hide itself during the Passion, now appearing and manifesting itself so miraculously in the most holy Resurrection in its true and most sacred effects.

224: Fifth Point. Consider the office of the Consoler that Christ our Lord exercises, and compare it with the way in which friends are wont to console each other.

225: Colloquy. Close with a colloquy, or colloquies, as the circumstances suggest, and at the end say, *Our Father*.

2. **NOTES**

226: Note 1. In the subsequent contemplations, all the mysteries from the Resurrection and the Ascension inclusive are to be gone through in the manner indicated below. As for the rest, throughout the whole Week of the Resurrection, let the same form be used and the same method observed as were followed during the entire Week devoted to the Passion.

The first contemplation on the Resurrection, given above, will serve as a guide [cf. ## 219-221]. The preludes will be the same, but adapted to the matter being considered. The five points [cf. ## 222-224] will be the same. -

73, ff. Additional Directions. The purpose of these directions is to help one to go through the exercises better and find more readily what he desires. [There follow here practical enjoinders] [cf. ## 73-81]

- In all the rest, for example, with regard to the repetitions, the Application of the Senses, the shortening or lengthening of the mysteries, etc., the Week devoted to the Passion may serve as a model -

[# 133: Note. Sometimes it will be profitable, even when the exercitant is strong and well disposed, to make some changes from the second day to the fourth inclusive in order to attain better what is desired. Thus, the first contemplation would be the one on rising. Then there would be a second about the time of Mass, a repetition about the time of Vespers, and the Application of the Senses before supper.

208 Second Day ... [practical suggestions]

209: Note for Seventh Day. ...[practical suggestions]

227 Note Two. Ordinarily, it is more in keeping with this week than with those that have passed to have four exercises a day, instead of five.

In that case, the first will be on rising in the morning, the second about the time of Mass, or before dinner, in place of the first repetition. The third, about the time of Vespers, will be in place of the second repetition. The fourth, before supper, will be the Application of the Senses -

121, ff. The Fifth Contemplation. This will consist in applying the five senses to the matter of the first and second contemplations [There follow here some practical points ... ## 121, etc.]

- to the matter of the three contemplations of the day.

In making the Application of the senses, attention and more time is to be given to the ore important parts and to points where the soul was more deeply moved and spiritual relish was greater.

228 Note 3. Though in all the contemplations a definite number of points, say three, or five, etc., the one who is contemplating may make use of more, or fewer as seems

better for him. For this reason it will be very useful before entering on the contemplation to foresee and determine a definite number of points that are used.

229: Note Four. In the Fourth Week, a change is to be made in the second [cf. # 74 of the *Exercise*] sixth [cf. # 78], seventh [cf. # 79] and tenth [cf. # 82] practical guidelines.

The second will be, as soon as I awake, to place before my mind the contemplation that I am to enter upon, and then to strive to feel joy and happiness at the great joy and happiness of Christ our Lord.

The sixth will be to call to mind and think on what causes pleasure, happiness, and spiritual joy, for instance, the glory of heaven.

The seventh will be, as far as there is reason to believe that it might help us to rejoice in our Creator and Redeemer, to make use of the light and the pleasures of the seasons, for example, in summer of the refreshing coolness, in the winter of the sun and fire.

The tenth will be, instead of penance, to attend to temperance and moderation in all, except on days of fast and abstinence ordained by the Church, which must always be observed if there is no legitimate excuse. ⁵³

†††

Here follows:

Contemplation to Attain Love of God

[*Contemplatio ad Amorem*]

†

†††

†

2. A Few General Reflections on This Text of the Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*

Presentation ⁵⁴

[1] First of all, the ***Constitutions for the Company of Jesus***, and the ***Spiritual Exercises*** of St. Ignatius, are not only two masterly works from the pen of the soldier Saint. Rather, these are two writings that complement each other. The *Spiritual Exercises* are the **internal** means, the substantial nucleus of the Saint's own life. In the *Constitutions* there lives the same spirit, but with a **concrete** body which gives to the

⁵³The Editions followed here are: *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph.* Louis J. Pohl, SJ. Chicago: Loyola University Press 1951, pp. 132, ff.; cf. also *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. An American Translation from the Final Version of the Exercises, the Latin Vulgate into Contemporary English.* Lewis Delmage, SJ, NY: Wagner 1968.

⁵⁴cf. "Introducción: Constituciones y Ejercicios, in: *Obras completas de San Ignacio de Loyola.* Madrid: BAC 1963, pp. 388, ff.

exercitants vigor and energy. The *Spiritual Exercises* really need the *Constitutions* as the soul to the body. The *Constitutions* provide the body, and **incorporation** of the ideals of the Retreat. And the *Constitutions* need the *Exercises* **as the fruit of the seed**. The *Constitutions* **translate** the **spirit** of the *Exercises* - the rule of life reflects what the Lord Himself wrote on the hearts of the first Jesuits in their retreat under St. Ignatius. This spirit was communicated to them in their making their *Spiritual Exercises*.

[2] There is a clear juxta-position of the generating principles of both books, if we do not want to speak of a substantial identity at base.

[a] The fundamental criteria of the *Exercises* form the back-bone of the *Constitutions*. The formulae which regulate the Jesuit life, even to the least prescriptions: it must always be that which "would be pleasing to the divine glory" - "to look always to the glory of God our Lord" - "the greater spiritual profit for souls and the glory of God our Lord" - we must "do all so that God Our Lord will be the more served and glorified in all things. These are not mere formulations that drop out of mid-air. They are, instead, the unchangeable criterion of the principle and foundations of the entire life.

[b] All the natural and supernatural means that can contribute to the fulfillment of this end - creatures of the *Exercises* - are taken under examination in conformity to this norm. All serves for the Glory of God, i.e., if they reach God, then they are acceptable to St. Ignatius. If some works do not do that, then Ignatius would leave them aside. All is admitted which would lead to the achievement of the end for which he established the Company of Jesus. In the last analysis, the Company of Jesus is that institution that seeks to lead human beings to live and move within the orbit of the ultimate principle and foundation. St. Ignatius himself expresses this in his Fourth Part: **to assist souls and one's neighbor to achieve the last end for which they were created** [# 307].

[3] The Ignatian ideal is simply to "serve and please the Divine Majesty - to seek in all things God our Lord, putting aside in so far as this will be possible, the love of all creatures, to place it in the Creator of them all". The ***Constitutions*** provide **concrete means** that ought to be realized in this detachment from creatures and this life-long quest for, and service of the Lord. The ideal is to set aside all that pertains to creatures, honors, riches. The greatest and most intense duty is always to seek in our Lord, one's own greater abnegation and continual mortification in all things.

[4] The reflections on the Reign of Christ and the Two Standards, according to Nadal, sprang the basic idea of the Company of Jesus. In the Two Standards there is

manifested how one is called to develop his own vocation. In the *Constitutions* there are specified those who were enemies, the field on which the battle needs to be waged, the objective of one's activities, and the concrete manner to follow the eternal King.

[5] The most powerful asceticism of abnegation is based on the third manner of humility and forms the strong framework for all of the *Constitutions*. The principle is:

- to surrender 'glory' even to the point of accepting injuries, false witnesses, insults,
- and to be thought of as being mentally imbalanced;
- striving for the ideal of giving up one's own will through the most exacting obedience, recognizing in the Superior, no matter who he is, one taking the place of Jesus Christ,
- and all this even when there are difficult matters and those repugnant to each one's sensual nature;
- conforming oneself totally to seek and to accept as one's own whatever the Superior seeks and maintains, in all matters.

[6] The challenge goes on: even more to try oneself in spirit and especially for the greater abnegation and humility, each one has to be content that all one's faults and mistakes become known to one's superiors by any person whatsoever outside of Confession [Const. # 63]. These and other fundamental means were the ones that St. Ignatius employed in his *Constitutions* to lead his followers to perfection. They are all little building-blocks drawn from the unfolding of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

[7] The Company of Jesus - just as the *Spiritual Exercises* themselves do - is meant to love. The love is presented as the intrinsic motive and the most suited and efficacious element to realize the purpose of the Society. If one sets aside love for creatures, this is so that love for God might have more sway - all things must be placed in reference to the Creator and all loved in Him. The interior law of charity and the love which the Holy Spirit writes and impresses in hearts has to be the underlying motive in all their actions. Only an intense love for God can provide the strength to realize that total and absolute self-renunciation which the *Constitutions* demand from the innermost depths of a believer. One is asked to hand over to God one's own freedom and inclinations, in the quest for the most sublime ideal.

[8] The force of these *Constitutions* consists in the living of the spiritual life, based on the life-long practice of the *Spiritual Exercises* which runs throughout the legislation. Their greatness and most efficacious guarantee is to provide the most adequate organism for the full and competent service of the Church.

[9] Therefore, between these two books there is a fundamental identity, a single spirit but a diversity in function and form:

- the ***Spiritual Exercises*** strive for the **spiritual renovation** of the individual; these have before them a determined amount of time in which to be accomplished - they go to the depths of the soul in striving to deepen one's personal relationship with God;

- the ***Constitutions*** have a clearly **social, ecclesial purpose** - these legislate for the remainder of one's life, regulate not only the internal actions, but also those relationships with one's superiors, equals and students. In a word, these establish a juridical bond and give practical norms of action.

[10] Therefore, a **profound experience of the *Spiritual Exercises* is meant to lead to a fuller living of the *Constitutions*.**

3. The 4th Week of the *Exercises* : The Resurrection of Christ our Lord ⁵⁵:

a. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a marvel and a manifestation of the Heavenly Father's Love. It is a creative act, enabling the Divine Son to sit at His right hand [cf. Ps 110:1]. The Risen One is thus glorified in a heavenly manner. The Father raised Jesus up from among the dead, and presents Him definitively and eschatologically to history as "the Lord of all creation." There is thus manifested in anticipation His glory in the Body of the Risen One to give Him back to humanity for ever, and with all His gifts. The Holy Spirit, Who was already present from the beginning in His human life, now brings into history with His own dimension, making of it a new era:

"... This news is about the Son of God who, according to the human nature he took, was a descendant of David. It is about Jesus Christ our Lord who, in the order of the spirit, the spirit of holiness that was in him, was proclaimed Son of **God in all his power through his resurrection from the dead...**" cf. Rm 1:3-4].

b. This event, which is for the Crucified Jesus His exaltation to the right hand of the Father, places in evidence His divinity and the fullness of His life as God. The death of the Crucified in the past could not live any other manner than with the very life of the Father. Jesus is the Lord, equal to the Father, and there is seen in Him the

⁵⁵For what follows, cf. Santiago Arzubialde, SJ, *Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio. Historia y Analisis*. Bilbao - Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae 1991, pp. 463,477, passim; 499-505 passim; 577-583, passim.

fullness of the glory of the divinity, which is Love. It is precisely this love which handed Him over to death, and it is that same love which raises Him up again. He could not die forever - He is the last and definitive word of God to the history of humanity. His love and fidelity could not expire. It is in this that the Father manifests for us His very being as God in this unique identity of crucified love, raised up now in the Holy Spirit, to His condition as Lord, equal to God. The Father constitutes His Son as that definitive center which brings to perfection His work of creation, that awaited from the beginning the glorious manifestation of the Savior.

c. Different from the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ, the Resurrection served as a marvelous confirmation of faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ and in the redeeming significance of the sacrifice of the Cross. Enthroned at the right hand of God, He received the Holy Spirit from the Father, He Who had been promised and has now been sent [cf. Ac 2:33]. The Risen Son is now the *Kyrios*, the Christ [cf. Ac 2:56]. However, He continues likewise to remain as Jesus of Nazareth. There is, then, in the Person of the Risen One, a profound identity with the realization of His earthly life. Yet, there is also a break, or overcoming all limit through the pneumatological dimension. The return of the Risen Jesus does not mean the continuation of the broken thread of His earthly existence. **What is true now is that the Crucified lives by God and in the Spirit, and there is placed in Him in evidence the plenitude of the divinity, His condition as Lord.**

d. For this reason, the Resurrection of Jesus is the most patent manifestation of God's love and fidelity in human history. The Resurrection represents not only God's decisive action, but also His eschatological self-revelation. In the resurrection, there is revealed in a definitive and insuperable manner just who God is: He is the One Whose power transcends both life and death, being and non-being, He is creative love and fidelity, the power of new life, the One in Whom all may confide in an unconditional manner, even when all their human possibilities have trickled away. The Resurrection of Jesus is the revelation and the realization of God's Reign announced by Jesus. In the Resurrection of Jesus from among the dead God has manifested His fidelity in love and identified definitively with Jesus and His cause. Jesus does not remain among the dead, but He lives. In this manner, there appears in him that definitive and ultimate significance of all things. With Him there have been inaugurated the eschatological happenings. He is the Lord of life and death, the first of all the risen.

e. On the part of the divine initiative, there exists the self-manifestation of His divine glory. However, in order for this to be an eschatological event in the Spirit, there is needed on the part of Paschal Faith that clear evidence of love, which makes possible that total abandonment into the hands of a God who disposes of possibilities

far beyond that evident in the present reality, even beyond life and death. In the biblical text, those that do not “understand” this reality there is the implication that there is likewise a total lack of preparation for this event. This would imply a radical ignorance, the absence of interior communion, which would be necessary in order to grasp the object.

f. The Resurrection of Jesus for Jn’s Gospel, is a mystery from ‘on high’ which humanity, the ‘flesh’, cannot know, nor grasp unless one is reborn of the Holy Spirit [cf. Jn 3:5]. The closeness of the Risen One, through which the Father’s fidelity and love are made quite evident, now illumine the eyes of the heart to “see” the Lord. This is a faith that is not possessive, but quite humble and regulated by love that opens up pleasantly into human history toward an eschatological future with God, in the mystery of the Risen One [cf. Jn 29:17, ff.].

1.] In the resurrection story, it has been noted that Mary Magdalene’s attempt to “cling” to the Risen One is still a terrestrial faith, and such faith never contented Jesus. It was necessary for Mary - as it always is for the Church - to **live a renewed paschal faith**, renewed **radically** from on high. Mary’s initial understanding was that Jesus’ resurrection was simply Christ returning to all that was before: she held him fast, and did not want to let Him go [cf. Sgs 3:4].

2.] However, Jesus had not risen from the tomb merely to pick up again all that had been terminated with His death. He is now in a totally new “condition” [cf. 8:23], from above, now with all His being Mary’s well-intentioned gesture does not correspond to this new reality of the Resurrection. She “allows” Jesus to escape from her hands at the precise moment that He calls her by name. Her profession of **paschal faith**: “Jesus has risen!” no longer pretends to hold that Jesus has simply returned to His previous earthly condition, that He gave up as a redemptive oblation to the Father as he **ex-spined** on the Cross.

3.] From all this, the fervent believer is being called **to base all of the rest of one’s life on the mystery of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus** - His life and death, His Resurrection and Ascension. This kind of decisive recognition can only be perceived departing from the activity of the Holy Spirit which is Love Itself which is communicated, and thus forces open the eyes of faith - as the travelers to Emmaus had their eyes “opened” in the breaking of the two-fold table of the Lord’s Word [cf. Lk 24:31, f.]. The believers come to see and believe through the understanding of God’s Word and **the perception of the Risen One in the Meal blessed by the Lord** - He, Who is here with us now, in the eternal presence of God.

g. What Ignatius learned from the Mystery of the Resurrection is that Jesus **LIVES**, and we are all being called to **a share in His “company”, to live in His “society.”** [cf. Lk 24:23; Ac 25:19]. At the very infusion of the Consolation of the Holy Spirit, at the showing of the Glory of the Lord’s divinity, human beings are “re-created from on high” in their Paschal Faith in the Risen Lord.

1.] The post-Resurrection encounters with Jesus are called **Christophanies** in the strongest sense of that term. In Jn’s language, this is an act of new revelation - new redemption. This is the decisive effect of the Lord “showing’ Himself, His Stigmata, and His purpose was to redeem the doubts, transforming them into **Paschal Faith - a resurrection in its own right**. This active ‘showing’ in Jn is both Wisdom [**Revelation**] and Power [**Redemption**].

2.] In Lk, the gesture of showing His Wounds, **Stigmata**, on His hands and His feet seems to have for its scope that of dissipating the doubts regarding the reality of the appearance and of the real Body of the Risen Jesus. For Jn, the identity is that this Jesus who had been Crucified, is now the Risen One - the wounds in the hands, feet and side are proof of this. This is the Jesus, One and the Same. This identity is essential in Jn’s theological perspective. The Savior, is the Lord, and it is He whom the disciples have seen on that Easter Night. This is Jesus, Whose hands, feet and side were pierced and the eye witness say the blood and water pour forth [Jn 19] - and these are the witnesses for those coming to the Church, t renewed paschal faith: the Spirit [the source of grace] - water [Baptism] and Blood [the Eucharist] [cf. I Jn 5:6]

3.] The experience of created grace [love and consolation] - opens up the eyes of faith so that disciples of all times might contemplate deeply the exaltation of the Risen One, and this is through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. It is precisely “the disciple whom Jesus had loved’ [cf. Jn 20:2; 21:7] - who had leaned on the side of Christ at the Last Supper, who brings this in-depth experience of the One Whom he had seen and touched [cf. I Jn 1:1]. Thus in Paschal Faith, the resurrection of the Crucified is also meant to be the resurrection of the believers of all time. This new creation is to a new life of faith, fidelity, justice and love for God and for one another.

4.] The Risen Lord comes back - **again and again** - to **be** with, to **remain** with, His followers in the Spirit. This is the whole learning of the apostolic way of life - intensifying in the Passion and Death, and culminating in the Resurrection and Ascension. For all believers now they are meant to **live this Paschal Faith**, from now on. They will **live** out the eschatological promises according to which God Himself will one day reach consummation - this is inaugurated on Easter Night by the Risen One: “**As the Father sent Me, I am now sending you!**” [cf. Jn 20:19, ff.]. Through Jn, we assist at the

resurrection of any believer who will accept Paschal Faith, to the glory of the Risen Lord. The resurrection redeems faith.

h. The Object of this Experience of the Encounter with the Risen Lord: the Apostles, Ignatius, believers, all **meet the Risen Lord**, now in the two-fold Table of His Word. In His humanity, word, Eucharist, there is manifested His divinity, and the triumph of His exaltation.

1.] St. Thomas Aquinas ⁵⁶ notes that the disciples were still held back by their merely human, 'carnal' love for the humanity of Christ, and had not yet been elevated by that spiritual love to His, and therefore, they were not yet ready for the Holy Spirit. Again, the Angelic Doctor ⁵⁷ notes that the disciples still needed to be elevated, raised up with and through Jesus to the sphere of the Holy Spirit, from their merely human, carnal love, totally and exclusively still bound to their previous experience of sharing life with the terrestrial Jesus. **They needed to be raised to a spiritual love to the adoration of the divinity of the Crucified, now raised in glory, manifested in His Resurrection.**

2.] **Paschal Faith consists in being raised up in conversion**, to see how the totality of His Divine Person is an encounter with God is with Him, His being God continuously, definitively and for ever, even though in a differing form and condition, the divine presence had set up His tent among human beings. This remains in His **Word**, in the **Eucharist**. The one who makes the *Exercises*, or strives to live the *Constitutions*, **begs often for the grace to perceive the Crucified as being present in human form, suffering and dying on the Cross, is still present here and now, "meta-historically", beyond and above history, in His new form of life**, quite distinct and superior.

3.] The description of this **new, risen condition of life** is beyond human capability, and all human expression is totally inadequate, insufficient for this. Jesus lives and is present here among His 'Company', His 'Society'. To the one **raised up** on the Cross, and handing His Spirit over to Him in His ultimate **ex-spiation** of His Spirit, the Son raised on the Cross has been given the power to "draw" all to Himself [cf. Jn 12:32]. In dying, He handed Himself over in loving obedience to the love of the Father in carrying out His will. The Father has accepted this eminently pleasing oblation of the divine Son. This Father has bestowed on Him His own eternal exaltation as "Lord", in the eschatological fulfillment of all Creation, lived now liturgically in the Church, especially in the Eucharist.

⁵⁶ cf. Super Ev. S. Io., 16, 7 [Marietti, Torino 1952, # 2088, p. 394].

⁵⁷cf. III Sent. d, 22, q. 3, a. 1, ad 5 um; cf. also Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale* 'The Way to the Father.'

4.] **The Father has manifested to us all, through the Risen Jesus, His definitive and eternal love.** He asks of the fervently believing Church to fall down in **adoration** [cf. Mk 28:17; Lk 24:52] of the divinity in complete triumph of Crucified Love. He is due **joy, veneration and apostolic service** - this is the purpose of this joyful and consoling Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, also for those who would live his *Constitutions*. **The apostolic mission is centered on the sharing of this Good News, through any form of the Word of God whatsoever.** [cf. *Formula S.J.* initium].

i. Thus in the mind of St. Ignatius, **the New Creation of the Holy Spirit** is reflected now in human beings through the powerful gift of consolation. Joy needs to be expressed in the triumph of the Risen Lord over sin and death, and in the total Self-giving of His life, His Self-lessness. In imitation of this, there is more joy in the triumph, well-being, success of another. The success of others can be the cause of real joy, and also bring about a more intense love for others. Not to us, O Lord, not to us - but to Your Name let there be glory! [cf. Ps 115:1]. This joy and happiness in the Lord's triumph has as its purpose to work in the conversion of the way-farer: out of this experience of the encounter with the Risen Lord there springs the firm desire of living the new life of Grace, in the Spirit. This rejoicing inspires one to be the more dedicated to the Apostolic Mission.

j. Therefore, the Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* is meant to assist in the ultimate purification which leads the believer to **a life of crucified joy**. This finds its foundation in the Glory of God. The Father, in His love, has pronounced the definitive Word of fidelity which consoles and fills the believer with Hope. All this returns to the Father in and through His Paternal Spirit, which Jesus has communicated through His presence, Resurrection and Ascension - this leads to Pentecost, the Descent of the Holy Spirit. In the glory of the manifestation of the Risen Lord, as Son of God, He sends another Paraclete, the Spirit - there dawns the era of the Church, the time of Joy and Hope. Each human being can become **a New Creation, being regenerated into new life in the Resurrection.**

k. The definitive vocation of the Christian **is not death, but the Joy of the Resurrection of the Lord**, the recognition of the divinity **through the glorious body of Jesus, in the manifestation of His Wounds** [cf. Jn 20]. Jesus, as God's only begotten, most beloved Son, establishes the New Creation. This is a new relationship of that same love that unites Jesus with His Father, through the Holy Spirit. This *agape'* is communicated, shared with the baptized, the consecrated into Christ Jesus - in the form of love and fidelity in the Risen Christ. All of the believers are being called to

become more and more children of the most High, sharing in Jesus' own Filiation, by participation in the glorious life of the Risen Lord. This is kept alive through the Contemplation toward Love.

4. The Structure of Ignatius' Text:

a. The very brief document of the Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, as these result from the pen of St. Ignatius, is composed of three basic elements, and their sub-divisions:

- the **appearance** of the Risen Lord to Our Lady [cf. SE, ## 218-220];
- three considerations that guide the contemplation:
 - the petition for **the grace of the Fourth Week** [cf. SE #221];
 - the divine **showing** of His Divinity [SE # 224];
 - the office of "**Consoler**" Who permeates the Risen One [SE # 224].
- the four "**Notes**" which really, of their nature, pertain to the interior and practical running of the *Spiritual Exercises* - but, these offer fruit from any careful reflecting upon them.

b. From this "structure" the student may note those basic points, that fundamental orbit, within which the contemplation of the retreatant should gravitate. This appearance to Our Lady fulfills a paradigmatic function. Then, the complementarity of the three considerations [cf. SE ## 221; 223; 224] guide and center the attention of the very ultimate meaning of the Resurrection in the life of the Church. These few elements are those which offer the key of Ignatius' own understanding of **this Encounter with the Crucified, Who is now Risen**. The Contemplation toward Love leads to a hope-filled APOSTOLIC MISSION.

1.] The Appearance of the Risen Lord to Our Lady [cf. SE ## 218-225; 299].

a.] For this non-biblical scene with all probability St. Ignatius had as his source *The Life of Christ*, by Ludolf of Saxony, '**the Carthusian**', who speaks of just such an apparition. For both writers, Jesus' appearance after His Resurrection to His Mother is the very first such encounter for Him, and both treat of it in the same way, in 'explaining away' the silence of the Scriptures in this regard.

[1] "The Carthusian" explains the appearance and the reason for Scripture's silence as follows: He appeared to her at the very outset of His glory. Jesus Christ came to her, her most beloved Son, dressed in the brilliant white of His glorious refulgence. This vesture represented the habit of the lasting glory and the dignity of His new Resurrection. And then that King of kings conducted the report on

how He had gone down to the nether-world and how He had emptied that infernal prison of those faithful ones who had awaited Him.

[2] With just such an admirable appearance, the Prince of Glory, it is piously believed, came to the glorious Virgin. Nothing about this is recorded in the holy Gospel, but it is believed that He conducted this as the first of His appearances. It is simply basic piety that it should have been thus. This seems implied in the readings of the subsequent appearances of the Risen One.

[3] It is simply a very noble reality that the Redeemer of the World should have visited His own Mother before coming to anyone else, and before anyone else would have been able to rejoice in His Resurrection. And even though this maternal appreciation was hidden from the Evangelists, with all firm piety it is believed and held for certain in the entire universal Church, according to Ludolf.

[4] There is nothing unusual about the fact that not one of the Evangelists has written anything about this appearance to Mary, because as St. John himself has stated, not everything about the life of the most holy Redeemer has been recorded. However, we can say that this most holy appearance would have taken place because his whole purpose in writing the 4th gospel was to note the witnesses of Jesus' Resurrection. It would simply not have been fitting to draw the Mother into this with other witnesses, simply to prove the glory of her Son. He left this appearance in the realm of the mystery in which it occurred. Nothing is present in the Scriptures that is without purpose. And there would be no need to mention this appearance which would have been evident in itself. He simply appeared to His Mother as her Risen Son, to bring joy to her heart through the vision of this Encounter.

b.] Because of his references to her, St. Ignatius places this first of all in his presentation of the Resurrected Christ. It stands to reason that for the Jesuit Founder this appearance would have been of primordial importance. He made use of none of the apocryphal sources, but simply placed this appearance to Mary as something self-evident, necessary and fundamental of all that will follow.

c.] Regarding the space accorded to this appearance of the Risen Son to His Blessed other, there are two observations to be made:

- in the first place, the appearance to Mary occupies and recurs in the Ignatian text as ending that 'Paschal Hiatus' [between the Burial and His Appearance], up until that moment in which the divinity of her Risen Son would appear to her as the principle of all life;

- secondly, this appearance is included in the Preamble of the Fourth Week and becomes its fundamental hinge. This logically is the point that will lead to the

structuring of the rest of the contemplations which will take place as the Fourth week progresses.

[1] It needs to be noted that the “Paschal Hiatus” evident in Ignatius’ works depends upon this. in the **SE # 208**, St. Ignatius describes the “Sixth Day” of the Passion: At midnight, from the taking down from the cross to the burial exclusive [SE # 298], and in the morning of the burial inclusive to the house to which our Lady retired after the burial of her Son.

[2] Throughout Holy Saturday, Our Lady spent this in solitude. The “Composition of Place” as part of the Ignatian spirit of prayer offers for the contemplation of the Resurrection an imagination of the disposition of the sepulcher, and the house of the Blessed Virgin. When the Blessed Mother returned to the sepulcher and there Christ appeared to her.

[3] In the presence of the Sorrowful Mother, the Sacred Body was taken down off the Cross and placed in the monument. Then, Mary went home. Mary’s suffering is also that of the disciples of all times.

d.] Throughout Tradition Mary is more than merely her physical person. She possesses a unique theological charge as Mother of Jesus. She fulfills a role in the History of Salvation which opened itself up more and more for St. Ignatius.

[1] In the *Spiritual Exercises*, as well as in his life, **Mary seems to appear in the crucial moments of his spiritual experiences:**

- she is present in the three-fold colloquy of the First Week [SE # 63];
- she is present for the Incarnation [SE ## 103, 107-108] and the Birth of Jesus ;
- she is mentioned in the colloquy of the Two Standards [SE # 147];
- in the farewell to His Mother at the beginning of His Mission [SE # 273, 1];
- in the moment of the resurrection, Jesus chooses to make His first appearance to His own Mother.

[2] In the unfolding of his *Life*, she is present at the moment of his conversion [Autob., c. 1,n.10]. He experiences her mediation at LaStorta when he goes there to be placed by the Father with His Son [c. 10, n. 96]. These are data that leave beyond any doubt her primordial function in his life. She plays a role in her mediating access to the Trinity as well as in the process of identification with Jesus with a view to sharing His Mission.

e.] She is present for the duration of Holy Saturday and in the passing over from death to life of the Risen Lord, as noted in the text of the *Exercises* - hence, she plays a role beyond compare. Her person is charged with a **symbolic value, in her intimate bond with the figure of the Church**. The Church is also chosen to be blessed by the appearances of the Risen Lord and Mary serves the Church with regard to all the appearances that He has made.

f.] Ignatius presents Jesus' descent into 'Sheol', where He sets free the souls of the just -then comes to the sepulcher, and rising, appears in body and soul to His Blessed Mother [cf. SE # 219].

[1] There is a note in **St. Gregory the Great's Commentary in Job [Bk 29, c. 12, n. 23]** to the effect that the Lord not only descended into this world, but He also descended into the nether world for us. Christ, in descending, spontaneously went to the depths of the sea when He placed himself into the abyss of the under-ground. He went there to empty the souls of the elect from their confinement. Prior to the arrival of the Redeemer, these depths under the sea were a prison, not a pathway. But, God **converted the abyss into a highway**, because He granted to His chosen the possibility to pass over to heaven from their imprisonment. This then, became the most new of the abysses, because in that our sight cannot plummet the depths of the sea, in the same way, there is no human intelligence which can penetrate the depths of the under-world.

[2] In much of the Eastern Church, the image of Redemption is that **Icon of the descent of Christ** into the under-world. He springs open those doors that had been perpetually closed. God died in the flesh, and was enveloped in the underworld. God had slept for a little while and had summoned forth from their sleep those who were living there. [Von Balthasar, "The Going to the Realm of the Dead", in *Mysterium Paschale*.]

[3] The fact that Christ descended into Sheol signifies for modern theology that he shared human death even to its ultimate consequences of dissolution, anguish, distance from God and total emptiness. In similar manner to Him being really alone among the living, He is now in solidarity in His tomb with the dead. The solidarity with the state of the dead will then be the presupposition for the work of Redemption, whose efficacy is prolonged even to the reign of the dead. Christ descended in to the land of forgetfulness to announce there in a kerygmatic manner His salvation, transforming the deepest part of the abyss into a purifying transition and pathway to salvation. In this manner God has illumined the death of those for whom

nothing had any more meaning - they were in the emptiness and the ignorance of 'Sheol.'

[4] It is from these 'depths' that Jesus passes over into the House of Mary, as the Risen One, in body and soul, to appear to His Blessed Mother. And this encounter is the beginning of the understanding of Sacred Scripture. This is the beginning of the Easter Consolation, in which there is most evident the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

g.] In handling his materials Ignatius has us look to see if in this description of this first apparition to His Blessed Mother, we find ourselves before the most profound reality of His Mystery. Christ thus comes to His Church, in the Spirit, and has chosen to remain there forever.

[1] The Symbol of Mary and the Understanding of the Faith.

[a] The encounter of the Risen Lord with Mary is the moment in which, according to St. Ignatius, the Holy Spirit makes known and interprets the entire reality in the light of Scripture and Revelation:

"... He appeared to the Virgin Mary. Though this is not mentioned explicitly in the Scripture, it must be considered as stated when Scripture says that He appeared to many others. For Scripture supposes that we have understanding, as it is written: 'Are you also without understanding?' [cf. Mk 7:18; 8:21 Mt 15:16; SE # 299].

[b] The Holy Spirit is the **Interior 'Agent'** Who gives origin to **the 'recognition' of the Risen One** and in His turn, He bestows the "Gift". This Gift of the Spirit is the **perfect Spiritual Understanding**. The Holy Spirit is the One Who reminds the Church, brings to the mind of believers, the disciples, all that Jesus has said to them and that He is now leading to the full Truth [cf. Jn 16:12-13].

{1} This "Truth" is variously interpreted:

- St. Irenaeus: this Truth is the **Doctrine** of Jesus Christ;
- DV 24: this is all Truth based on the **Mystery** which is Jesus;
- I. delaPotterie, S.J.: believes that Jn identifies 'Truth' principally with **Christ the Revealer**, with the **Light** of Jesus, with the **Revelation** of the mystery of His Filiation. The scholar insists, however, that each believer is called to live this truth in the depths of each one's being. The 'Truth' is the Word of God, Divine Revelation, which has been communicated to us in Jesus Christ and which has been communicated to us as **the norm of practical living**. Jesus is presented as the witness, *par excellence*, of the

messianic Revelation. This Truth is Jesus Himself - the witness that one must bring to Him is in making known to human beings the Mystery of His Person and Mission, by one's own conviction, and by one's dedication to the apostolic mission of the Church.

{2} For this reason, the one making the *Spiritual Exercises*, on arriving at the Fourth Week has to ask for this **new understanding** of the reality, in accord with the Scriptures, which can only be perceived, and all this in one place: in holy communion with the Church, **the True Spouse of Jesus Christ, ruled and governed by the Holy Spirit** [cf. SE ## 253;365]. The symbolic image of the Encounter of the Risen Lord with His Mother is the source, beginning with which there is shared this Gift. This is the underlying purpose of the Encounter of the Risen Lord with His Blessed Mother.

[c] In the Appearance of the Risen Lord to Mary, she is the **figure of the spiritual and prophetic tradition of the Church**, from the very beginning of the spiritual understanding of the glorious humanity of the Word of God - all the way through to the penetration into His mystery by work of the Holy Spirit. The Sacred Scripture, on its part, is the foundation and the guarantee that **this collective tradition and its spiritual understanding**, are bound indissolubly to the appearance of the Word of God to His Mother.

[d] **Mary teaches all how to accept the Risen Christ in and through faith**, without the multiplicity of proofs, nor of signs. She educates us, accustoms us, makes it habitual for us, through her faith, to grasp this presence of the Risen Lord in daily life. The one making the *Spiritual Exercises* as well as the one living perpetually the *Constitutions*, must place himself **alongside Mary - who is with her Risen Son**, in order to receive Him precisely as He appeared to her, **in His Risen Glory**. With our Lady one passes over from desolation, loneliness, to consolation. The person who unites with Mary experiences this presence of the Risen Lord in life. The saint has us enter into such experiential understanding in freedom and fidelity. Only an understanding of lived and hopeful faith can lead one to serve the Church for a lifetime.

[e] In the light of the resurrection of her Son, Mary inaugurates the new type of **understanding** the faith which will be the patrimony of the nascent Church. In the moment of the glory of the resurrection, Mary is one with the Church [cf. Ac 1:12-14] - which Jesus Christ has entrusted to His Apostles. In her one can become united in a unique manner to the Paschal Mystery, and in this way the faith in the Church is generated and communicated.

[f] The understanding of the Scriptures, the Gift of the Spirit, and Mary: these are three realities that are intimately interwoven throughout the unfolding of that Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Ignatius begins to contemplate from this very composition of the initial place which consists in the

passing over from the disposition of the sepulcher to the House of Our Lady [cf. SE # 220]. Concerning this coming to the “House of Mary”, a figure of the Church, the spiritual understanding of the Scripture is the Gift of the Spirit which the Church receives in the moment in which the Risen One, her Son, meets with Mary.

[2] Ignatius’ Conversion through the Risen Lord to Total Commitment to the Apostolic Mission of the Church:

[a] For this reason, there can be little surprise in accepting the person of Mary as symbolically the culmination of the entire spiritual process. In similar manner, as for the Grand Journey of Jesus, ever towards Jerusalem, St. Ignatius follows this step by step, noting the historical Jesus all the way up to the moment of His death on the Cross. Jesus is followed right through to Jerusalem.

[b] However, at a given moment of Ignatius’ life, Rome comes to occupy for him the end of his own pilgrimage. Rome for him is definitively the New Jerusalem, whence he looks upon the faith of Mary received in the Spirit in her Risen Son, and she then becomes the exemplary Model of the Faith of the Church obedient to God.

[c] From the reception of the Word and by the fulfillment of the salvific will of God, the Church is born, **the Spouse of Christ**, constituted in conformity with the Gift of the Holy Spirit, by the ecclesial communion, **for the apostolic mission**. With the appearance of the Risen Lord to Mary we find ourselves consequently before the theological foundation of the specific discernment of the Fourth Week: **to consider the Church as the Spouse of Christ, led by the Spirit of God beginning with the moment of the Ascension.** [cf. Ac 1:4].

[3] The Ascension and Ignatius’ Conversion to the Apostolic Mission:

[a] For Ignatius, the Lord’s Ascension was connected closely to his own desire for the Holy Places. His idea was to imitate even materially Jesus Christ even in the minimal details, and to consider these simply as elements on his way of his following of Christ - the horizon of which was still in the Plan of God. He was making the leap from the ‘particular’ place, the Holy City of Jerusalem - to the Spiritual Jerusalem, the Universal Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

[b] The Ascension meant for him that final point of the Fourth Week. This opened up, through the Contemplation toward Love, to the daily monotony and routine of the living of the *Constitutions*, using as his horizon his life in

and for the Church. This meant the disappearance of the visible Jesus of Nazareth Who gave the beginnings of the **Apostolic Mission**, beginning with the humble, but vital apostolate of teaching catechism to the *rudes*, in an around the *Gesu'* in Rome. This all began and was inspired by the experience of the Risen Lord present to all, in the Gift of the holy Spirit - in every single historical moment of life in the ecclesial service.

[c] In this perspective, St. Ignatius made use of the text of St. Luke's Ascension [cf. Ac 1:3-4; Lk 24:50; Ac 1:9-11]. Ignatius personally would have to leave the *Exercises*, and get back to the daily living of the *Constitutions*. Jesus goes up in a cloud - the Apostolic Missionaries cannot stand there all the day idle. Jesus' divinity is proclaimed - He leaves the Church His Spirit, and daily life must get on. Much like earlier, Ignatius had been obliged by God's will to give up the Holy Places of Palestine and Jerusalem.

[d] The Ascension broadened the concept of the Appearance in order to make it coincide with the redeeming act the efficacy of which is no universal. The retreatant is inspired by the Call from his Creator and Redeemer [cf. SE # 229, 4]. He is now to be committed to the **apostolic mission** for the good of souls. This is the culmination of this new manner of living the new dimension of the life of Jesus in the Spirit, and Ignatius undertakes the Roman stage in his journey - as happens in the Acts of the Apostles. The conducting motif in this entire process is the Gift of Pentecost, described in the Contemplation meant to increase Love for God and love for the Apostolic Mission.

[e] The mysteries have to be chosen to be contemplated, in service of the spiritual situation of anyone making the *Exercises*. each part needs to be considered in itself as a unity, though, in the backdrop of each one's personal experience Underneath it all is the Christological perspective and the intention to serve the father as He did - and to serve Him as the Apostles did.

[3] The Gift of the Spirit - and the Spirit's Gift of Joy

[a] In this connection, the Saint often speaks of the Gift of the Spirit, as "Joy":

- "Here it will be to ask for the grace to be glad and rejoice intensely for the great joy and the glory of Christ our Lord" [cf. SE # 221].
- "...then to strive to feel joy and happiness at the great joy and happiness of Christ our Lord." [cf. SE # 229].
- [Under his Rules for Discernment of Spirits, the Saint writes]: It is characteristic of God and His Angels when they act upon the soul, to give genuine true

happiness and spiritual joy, and to banish all sadness and disturbances which are caused by the enemy” [cf. SE # 329].

[b] His use of the word, and a variety of synonyms, refers to that phenomenon that results from **consolation**, or **the spiritual experience of the Resurrection**. Such joy is lacking in self-interest, because it is based on that “experience” resulting from contemplation, study, and heeding the Magisterium [cf. DV 8] in the praying of God’s Word. This is the same as the pure joy of love that is happy in good that comes to someone else, or has a special access to the goods of salvation. Only God and His life can satisfy the deepest yearnings of the human heart. From this springs the “**obedience of faith**” [cf. DV 5: including hope and charity] - this is the open faith that is enabled to recognize the Risen Lord present in all the events of life. [cf. St. Thomas Aquinas: **III, q. 55, a. 2, ad 1 um**]: **they saw with their own eyes the One Whom they knew to have been dead, is living after the resurrection ...**’]

[c] To consider the Divinity with the gesture of **adoration**, to ponder the unfolding of His activity as the Risen One, in His **relationships** with the constellation of persons He encounters, this recalls to mind also the remaining human dimension of His Divinity. The response of one who has made the *Spiritual Exercises*, and then has chosen to live the *Constitutions*, is meant to be one of **the obedience of faith in joy**. There is here **the triumph of the Resurrection which clings to God as the foundation of all Hope**. Faith from now on, is considered an encounter, and it is one that opens up in the life of grace to the eschatological future of God.

[d] St. Ignatius uses the word “**joy**” in two senses:

- objectively, as the equivalent of the glory or the triumph of Jesus Christ - this is the origin of the second, which is:
- and as the subjective experience which inspires into a believer the activity of the Spirit of God. This is the of the lack of self-interest in one’s corresponding love to God. This is a human sharing in the triumph and in the life of the Risen Lord - and this **joy always culminates in sharing in the same apostolic mission Jesus received from His Father**.

[e] For St. Ignatius, the consolation which in this last stage of Week Four ought to be prayed for by the one making the *Spiritual Exercises*, and then perpetuated by the one living the *Constitutions*. It is meant to be the real, ‘objective experience’, both profound and intense, of the religious and priest. The source of this experience is the real presence of the Risen Lord through the theological life. **The presence of the Crucified who has risen becomes the source of the Apostolic Mission** - He lives and manifests Himself as the fullness of God. It is His Mercy which

reconciles human beings among themselves and with God. The fervent believer thus is open to the reception of the Spirit of the Risen Lord.

[f] And this is why St. Ignatius retains the two most genuine aspects of this experience:

- the miraculous manifestation of the fullness of the Divinity: “Fourth Point: This will be to consider the divinity, which seemed to hide itself during the Passion, now appearing and manifesting itself so miraculously in the most holy resurrection in its true and most sacred effects.” [cf. SE # 223].

- the friendly challenge to console the people of God: “Fifth Point. Consider the office of Consoler that Christ our Lord exercises, and compare it with the way in which friends are wont to console each other [cf. SE # 224].

[1] Immediate Experience of the Divinity:

[a] That joy proper to the Resurrection is a Gift of the Holy Spirit. And to remain consoled, as an intense experience, is analogous in its kind, but is qualitatively different from **the Paschal Experiences of those first witnesses in the Gospels and Acts**. The source of their joy was nothing other than the objective fact of the Resurrection of the Lord, and the repercussion of this divine event for the history of humanity.

[b] In this ambiance of mystery St. Ignatius recommends that the one making the *Spiritual Exercises* - and in some cases then making a life of this by following the *Constitutions* - needs, **first of all, to go through the Theology of the Cross**. The intensity of pondering this aspect of the Paschal Mystery needs that depth of faith-perception of the miraculous manifestation of the divinity in itself. This perception needs to be continued in the theological life through its genuine and most holy effects.

[c] These effects redound directly from the origin of the motion. They are derived from the manifestation of the triumph and from the glory of the Risen Lord Himself - they derive from the experience of His glory and identity, through faith, hope and love. It is from this experience that joy is born, rejoicing and peace - that stability in the fidelity of God the Father and His love. In this manner, the fervent apostolic missionary places himself in the footsteps of Jesus, along the way of the Cross. The Father has glorified His Crucified Son, confirming in this manner His historical process of the Incarnation. By this, all the way through His death and Resurrection, more and more He makes Himself ‘experienced’, each time more openly, and all this in the fullness of the mystery of the Trinity.

[2] The Office of Consoler

[a] For Ignatius, the Apostolic Mission is also **the duty “of consoling” the Lord’s people**, speaking to their hearts! [cf. Is 40:1, ff.]. “To be consoled” for the Jesuit Founder meant **to meet personally with the Risen Lord**. Each Apostolic Missionary is sent **so that others may likewise personally and intensely experience the Risen Lord’s triumph and identity**, which was the whole purpose of His coming and His Mission. This open confirmation, on the part of the Father, of this Risen Son and now Lord, in the Holy Spirit, happened through His arduous life-long journey of abasement and final exaltation. This life-long Way of the Cross gave access to the fullness of the divinity. All who would follow Him are challenged to take up the Cross - and they are guaranteed by that same fidelity of God the Father and His love, which inspired His most beloved Son. This means that all are invited to participate in His Resurrection and to find their highest hopes confirmed, and all this unfolds within the sphere of the Paternal Spirit of God.

[b] His office of Consoler consists precisely in conceding that Spirit which proceeds in a more principal manner from the Father. In the place of naming the Spirit specifically, he alludes indirectly to Him by referring to His effects, His personal gifts, which are both authentic and most holy, that flow from the Resurrection of the Divine Son, after **ex-spiring** His Spirit. These gifts are admiration, joy, happiness, which those first witnesses experienced when they saw the Risen Lord [cf. Lk 24:32, 41, 52]. These gifts are the new space of freedom created by the Spirit of God [cf. 2 Co 3:17]. “To console”, then for St. Ignatius, means to work that the Spirit come to the hearts and minds of God’s people. The abundant out-pouring of the Holy Spirit diffuses everywhere in the fullness of these final times.

[c] The Risen Christ of the Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* expressly introduces to the exercitant the contemplation of these other special dimensions of the divine activity. These are all presented under the category of the form and global experience of the Holy Spirit of God. His proposal is:

“...as soon as I awake, to place before my mind the contemplation I am to enter upon, and then to strive to feel joy and happiness at the great joy and happiness of Christ Our Lord.” [cf. SE # 229].

Trough the experience of these special gifts of the Holy Spirit, we enter into contact, in the natural form with the living reality of the Holy Spirit which is found present in an active manner from the first undertaking of the spiritual process, bringing together the life of Jesus Christ, and that of the one making the *Spiritual Exercises*, who then is called to live that life through the *Constitutions* **in serving in the Apostolic Mission**. However, in this Fourth Week, this special presence becomes more and more evident, because the believer and apostolic missionary enters more and more into contact with

that very “font”. It is from Him that flows the manifestation of the Divinity in the glorious body of the Risen Lord.

[d] The Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* supposes in this sense a real advance in the Trinitarian and Pneumatological development, precisely around the concept of the authentic joy of Paschal Consolation [the Holy Spirit in Person], which is immediately derived from the Risen Lord. The reason is that the effects of this, which are authentic motions of salvation, are found immediately related to the Person of the paternal Holy Spirit Whom Christ gives us. It is through him which enables the believer to pass from the “spiritual” to the very life of the Spirit. And since this Holy Spirit communicates to His very own Spirit, and in part this consists in authentic joy, proper to the Resurrection - and then, on the other hand, a share in the filial communion of Jesus with the Father through love.

[3] The Response: Life in the Spirit:

[a] Ignatius’ *Suscipe* -A Trinitarian

Prayer:

“Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To You, O Lord, I return it. All is Yours, dispose of it wholly according to Your will. Give me Your love and Your grace, for this is sufficient for me.” [cf. SE # 234d].

[1] There is some surprise for commentators when they note Ignatius’ pre-ordination of his freedom, with respect to the three potencies of the soul: memory, understanding, will. This oblation is the reflection of the double reciprocal movement which defines love. The Lord, Who has made of me the object of His election, now seeks to receive me in the intimacy of His life.

[2] This is a matter of handing over that objective dominion upon which my freedom holds sway and the union of this with God - And when everything is subjected to him, then the Son Himself will be the subject in His turn to the One who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all [cf. 1 Co 15:28]. St. Ignatius does this not so much out of any duty, but simply out of love. The Lord has given him all, and thus he returns it with a reciprocity which includes all, that God is all in all.

[3] This prayer of the ***Suscipe*** is that expression of St. Ignatius' life: this is his "existential theology", the root, the synthesis of all the rest that he tried to do. He hands over his memory, his understanding, and his entire will. This image of the Trinity is to respond to the very life of God Father, son and Holy Spirit: intellect, will, memory. On the soul is taken over with such love of self-giving it is raised up by the spirit of God and by His grace and placed into contact, according to the three potencies of the soul with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

[4] **St. Gaspar Bertoni, on May 24, 1810** ⁵⁸ presents in his Spiritual Diary, a prayer of the deMontfort spirit, in honor of Mary, but close, as well, to this spirit of St. Ignatius:

"I greet you, o my Mother, give me your blessing, bless me and all who are dear to me. Please offer to God all have to do and suffer today, in union with your merits, as well as those of your Blessed son. I offer you and consecrate to your service, all my being, and whatever belongs to me placing everything under your protection. Obtain for me, my dear Lady, purity of soul and body and grant that I may not do anything today displeasing to God. I entreat you through your Immaculate Conception and your perfect Virginity."

[b] Love consists in communication on various levels; a likeness in nature, and a wishing the other well. Reciprocity is the indication of the quality of the human sentiments and the measure of love. If appreciation is the bond that brings together those of unequal status, the Love, in exchange, that proceeding from God, brings the parties to some level of equality in order to reach out to one another in giving and receiving, in all its plenitude. In this we know that we remain in Him and that He remains in us, because He has given us His Spirit [cf. 1 Jn 4:13]. The love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us [cf. Rm 5:5]. In this way, all graces return with interest to the source of their Origin, from whence they flowed out in the mutual exchange of love. The Spirit impresses within the believer, by means of the Indwelling of the Most Blessed Trinity, that divine likeness in Whose image we have been formed.

[c] However, the formal motive in this case, is based always in the divine initiative which previously communicates a share in God's own nature, coupled with the receptivity in the human heart, experiencing this enormous love for itself. In this sense, the Divine Indwelling is a "**real**" presence, to which the fervent believer responds "**psychologically**", in prayer, in the keeping of the

⁵⁸cf. CS, IV, pp. 170-172

commandments, in **commitment to the Apostolic Mission**. The human response, then, is translated in the generous handing over of oneself which incorporates all one's freedom in the service of the One Who loves us. The 'core' of love is to respond in a 'disinterested' manner, that is, unselfishly, in this plan of equality, being raised up from the Image and Likeness of God at creation, to the communication of the New Creation, in receiving the from of Christ. And thus, to hold oneself back, even just a little from this divine Totality, would be equivalent to evaluating that human attachment to other than God even more than the love of mutual communion, or would alienate us somewhat from God. On the contrary, anyone who would commit himself without reserve to this grace, and would commit himself to the Apostolic Mission, one who would consume himself in the service of God and neighbor - this is the concrete pathway of an endless process that leads to the return of all gifts, without any reservation, and with interest to God. Everything is in common for those who love one another:

"... Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To You, O Lord, I return it..." [cf. SE # 234].

[d] **This is the heart of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius - what he codifies in his *Constitutions*.** This is the very center of "Ignatian Spirituality." St. Ignatius himself offers us the best explanation of this marvelous "**system**", "**school**", in the *Constitutions*. It might be summarized in this Constitution: "...All should make diligent efforts to keep their intention right, not only in regard to their state of life, but also in all particular details. In these they should always aim at serving and pleasing the Divine Goodness for its own sake and because of the incomparable love and benefits with which God has anticipated us, rather than for fear of punishments or hope of rewards, although they ought to draw help also from them. Further, they should often be exhorted to seek God our Lord in all things, stripping off from themselves the love of creatures to the extent that this is possible, in order to turn their love upon the Creator of them, by loving Him in all creatures and all of them in him, in conformity with His holy and divine will..."

[e] The right intention is a freedom ordained in its total selflessness evident in authentic love. Of this, freedom has to be the root and the synthesis of all the rest that is offered and handed over. In this **total unconditional giving of self** one notes the central source in freedom, a synthesis of **the three potencies within the soul, the created image of the most Blessed Trinity**, so that His divine Majesty might make disposition completely in full harmony with each one's free availability. **This total handing of oneself over**, in Ignatius' mind, is the equivalent of the founding response of one giving himself over totally to God. These needs to continue, intensify regarding one's detachment from this world and all its goods, while

precisely one is committed to the Apostolic Mission in the heart of the history and the world.

[f] Only love is capable of **finding God in all matters**, because He alone knows full well the delicacy and the immediacy that the Spirit works in this descent, even to the depths of **self-giving** in the history of creation. To descend with Him in this manner, to submit oneself even to the extreme of purification through the process of selflessness, to leave aside anything that would interfere in this path, and to latch on to anything and everything to **make an oblation of self**. This is done purely and simply to serve and to please His divine Goodness, to leave aside all else - even many blessings found in the redeemed world, one becomes 'transparent' for God, and returns His love with that of the fervent believer. In this cooperation with the workings of grace, one is raised up, in some way 'equaled' through love, to the very being of God.

[g] This Ignatian Formula: **to love and to serve God in all things**, is the goal toward which the entire course of the *Spiritual Exercises* tends - and which the *Constitutions* then codify for one's entire life of **service**. This is the authentic orientation which springs from the Holy Spirit of God as a Gift. The experience of **unconditional adherence to God** culminates in **service toward God**, and **the apostolic mission** in behalf of the Church. This is assumed by cooperation with the work of God in the world. Cooperation in the redemption of humanity asks of each one to become transparent in this service of God - and when one is, this enables the apostolic missionary more and more to make God transparent in the world. Love has that unique capacity of transforming all into something splendid, wonderful for God, even though some of these realities, in human eyes, might appear desperately irrecoverable, useless, harmful - such as would be suffering and death itself. For the persevering apostolic missionary in the service of God and the Church all needs to become transparent - this is what communicates the very visage of God.

[h] That contemplation for the increase of love is, in the end, that exercise directly orientated toward the profound, total and definitive ordination of our love for God in the same relationship that a human being establishes necessarily in response to the Spirit. For one to come to the conviction that only His love and His grace suffice, he must be orientated with all his affection to creatures in order to place them in the sphere of the Creator of all.

[4] The Holy Spirit: The Gift from the Risen Lord:

[a] The expressions that St. Ignatius uses to refer to God in this contemplation are clear and unmistakable: 'God our Lord' - "His

Divine Majesty” are expressions that are clearly Trinitarian, and they refer to God precisely as God, One and Three. Hence, any reductionist interpretation would be a narrowing of this Pneumatological experience with which the Saint was blessed, and in it there is contemplated the fullness of the activity of the Spirit within us.

|b| In this experience the **Father** is present. He comes out from Himself in the Creation and also in the Incarnation, **in handing over His Son**. He manifests in this way **His unconditional love** for humanity. However, there is likewise especially present **the Holy Spirit** Whom St. Ignatius mentions more than once at the end of his Book: [cf. **sentire cum Ecclesia**] “... For I must be convinced that in Christ our Lord, **the bridegroom, and in His Spouse, the Church**, only one Spirit holds sway, which governs and rules for the salvation of souls. For it is by the same Spirit and Lord who gave the Ten Commandments that our Holy Mother Church is ruled and governed...” [cf. SE # 365, 13]. The Saint silences the expressed presence of the Holy Spirit, omitting the contemplation of Pentecost. There appears, instead, precisely described through the use of the formula “**in**”, to present **the bond of communion of God with the believer, and for the Epiphany of Love**. St. Ignatius spoke of the Holy Spirit, without naming Him, above all in the Rules of Discernment [cf. SE ## 316, 330 - where he speaks of “Uncreated Grace”] - and now again in this Contemplation for Love, again as “Uncreated Grace”. The Holy Spirit dwells within the Apostolic Missionary as a **presence**, as a **power**, in anyone who works to carry on the same mission of Jesus Christ received from the Father.

|c| Poured out into the heart of the believer [cf. Rm 5:5], He brings it about that creation itself is a manifestation and experience of love, so that **in Him** everything goes back once more to God through freedom. And finally, this is the **Pneumatological Presence of the Risen One** to Whom all of creation is ordered as toward its purpose, goal. All has to be one day **re-capitulated** in Jesus Christ, as a universal passing over, for the glory of God the Father. **The God-Love has manifested Himself in the definitive form as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

|d| God the **Father** **hands over** to us His **Risen Son**, and with Him gives to us the **Holy Spirit of Love**, through whom we receive all the gifts. All this happens in this microcosm which is that act of freedom affected by a Love that is received in a most gratuitous form. **Only He is capable of bringing about the New Creation, to the Image and Likeness of His Son, through the availability of His Love.**

|e| This Contemplation toward Love is an exercise that needs to go on and on, without any limited horarium, nor set for some determined day. This must be proposed for the consideration of the one who has made

the *Spiritual Exercises* and who now lives the *Constitutions* permanently as an Apostolic Missionary. This is proposed in the Fourth Week, after one has gone through the entire program of the *Spiritual Exercises*. This Trinitarian love is lived as **Friendship, Companionship**. When one has been led through the Scriptures, the Eucharist, to taste the ineffable experience of the Resurrection of the Lord and to God, His Father, as the indefectible fidelity, which His Love is This Love and Fidelity provoke a **Life of Holy Abandonment** of trust in God, and one of **total confidence in His hands**. One this is **abandoned to God, and totally available to the Church**.

|f| The **New Creation** is life in Jesus Christ - this is not the fruit of a conquest, but is a Gift which the Father bestows on the Apostolic Missionary with the purpose of bringing about in the recipient a **similarity, likeness to the Holy Spirit**. One is born from on high [cf. Jn 3:3, 7] Jesus Christ was 'anointed' in His humanity by God the Father and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus received this 'consecration' so that He might pour it out through His sacred stigmata on His Church, so that all would live as sons and daughters of the Most High, and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, in the one Spirit.

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[II.] The Theological Objective of Contemplating the Risen Lord:

1. **A Personal Relationship** is made clear to the retreatants by St. Ignatius. It is a matter of some urgency to be involved in a **personal relationship with the Risen Lord**, Who is alive and present today in the life of the believer. This leads to a certain **experience of the Divinity**. The Crucified Jesus of Good Friday now manifests Himself as the Risen Lord on Easter. The disciple thus passes over **from the following of Jesus of Nazareth** to that **spiritual love of the glory of His divinity**. In this manner, does there spring forth the life of God.

a. The 'Climate', 'Sphere', 'Orbit' proper to the Risen Lord:

1.] In his *Spiritual Exercises* [## 222 & 226], the Fourth Week opens with the Apparition of Christ our Lord to Our Lady. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd points will be the usual ones as presented in the contemplation of the Last Supper. Then, the "Notes"⁵⁹ point out the manner of proceeding, in accord with the direction the Saint offers for the Third Week, in the contemplation of the Passion of the Lord. That kind of reflection suggested for the Passion is then presented as the norm and paradigm to be followed in so far as the distribution of the contemplations are concerned. The various points are

⁵⁹cf. above in this study, p. 24.

discussed for the various days and their adaptation. In accord with this format all the rest of the mysteries of Christ's life must be seen, all the way up through the Ascension, inclusively. Since this is the Apparition of the Risen Lord to Our Lady the point according to which the rest of the previous contemplations must be considered more or less as the "preambles" - what is being raised to utmost importance are the contemplations of the Fourth Week, on the Appearance to Our Lady of the Risen Lord and His Ascension.

2.] The rest of the Notes then allude principally to those means which ought to favor the climate of joy proper to the Resurrection: four 'exercises' are suggested, rather than five - by noting and pausing over those points that are the more important and from which one receives the greater spiritual motions and taste ⁶⁰. There is suggested a certain adaptation of a number of the points to the spiritual situation - and then four ⁶¹ of the 10 Additions are changed. These refer to the creation of the proper psychological and spiritual environment, the imagination and thoughts, and deeper motives - the light within the room, and the bodily posture. Even to the moment of getting up there is the suggestion to lead rejoicing in the thought of the Risen Lord. All of this "composition" of the inner mind and heart of the one praying, as well as to the physical ambiance, are all geared to a greater concentration on the exaltation of the Risen Lord.

b. Two Practical Suggestions of Approach

1.] The first is the pondering of the unfolding of the revealed history concerning the Risen Lord - especially with His dispersed Apostles, who were able to experience this New Creative Power of God and its transforming dynamism.

2.] The other is complementary: the "immediate access" to the Holy Spirit, that is proper to this Contemplation of the Fourth Week in order to arouse love. In this second suggestion the fervent believer basks in the presence of the Risen Lord in that period of expectancy of the Day of the Pentecost of Divine Love. In this view, through the obedience of faith in the presence of revealed mystery, **God "works" within, "descends and dwells" within the Apostolic Missionary.**

a.] God lives and works and exists within all of creation. All that "is", is a pledge of that which the Lord wishes to bestow further. The transcendent Divinity of the Risen Lord is He who maintains in being and in life all of creation. Ignatius seeks for this realization for us in the presence of the Risen Lord, in His Spirit, which is Love.

⁶⁰cf. SE # 227,3.

⁶¹cf. SE: 2nd [# 74]; 6 [# 78]; 7 [# 79]; 10 [# 82].

b.] In this way, the habitual response of the believer from now on in his spiritual and apostolic life will be that of living fully his own call to the Resurrection as an Apostolic Missionary. He will be further motivated to seek and to find the divine will, both for the experience of consolation, as well as for the discovery of God in all of creation. The reflection, in this case, that occurs within the fervent believer is intended to be a deeper experience of the Risen Lord. This becomes the proper activity of the Apostolic Missionary who wants to give back to God all that he has received - and with interest, serving him as would St. Paul in his Apostolic Mission.

2. The Meaning behind St. Ignatius' Choices of the Mysteries of the Risen Lord

a. As is noted in the Third Week of the Exercises, there are detailed instructions for all seven days. There are clear indications also on how to dedicate oneself to the prayer of the week, in distributing the matter that would correspond to each one of these seven days [cf. SE # 208]. When it comes to the Fourth Week, however, this detail is missing, and there is only a general allusion to the detailed method of the previous week [cf. SE # 226]. As a result, to guide the Fourth week, St. Ignatius - with clear dependence, and some creativity - has suggested 14 separate mysteries of the Risen Lord [cf. ## 299-312] - most of which are contained in Sacred Scripture and a few of which are not. These contemplations have as their goal that of an intensifying of love - for the Lord and commitment to His service.

b. The **14 Mysteries of the Risen Lord** are the following:

- 1- Appearance to Mary [non-biblical - [cf. the "Carthusian" source];
- 2- To Mary Magdalen [Mk 16:1-6, 9];
- 3- To the three Mary's [cf. Mt 28:8-10];
- 4- To Peter at the Monument [Lk 24:12, 34];
- 5- To the Disciples going to Emmaus [Lk 24:13-35];
- 6- To the 11, Thomas being absent [Jn 20:19-23];
- 7- The 11, Thomas being present [Jn 20:14-29];
- 8- To the seven Disciples, fishing [Jn 21:1-17];
- 9- To the Disciples on Tabor [Mt 28:16-19];
- 10- To the 500 [1 Co 15:6];
- 11- To St. James [1 Co 15:7];
- 12- To Joseph of Arimathea [non-biblical -cf. "the Carthusian" source];
- 13- To Paul and the Patriarchs in the Descent [1 Co 15:8, 7];
- 14- The Ascension [Ac 1:3-4, 9-11].

c. St. Ignatius then presents these 14 'mysteries' of the apparitions of the Risen Lord for the contemplation of the retreatant. His method of procedure is quite orderly:

- the story of the apparition - he offers the existential situation of the persons in the plan of salvation;
- the appearance itself, as a happening for which the Risen Lord Himself takes the initiative;
- finally, the unfolding of the Christophany: a Gift of the Spirit, then each of them is "sent", bringing about the transformation of the personages, or by offering some explanatory remarks.

d. The Saint gives greater importance to the apparition to the Blessed Mother. In general, he spells out in a very concise manner these various apparitions, following a schema created by himself, in coherence with the summary declaration. He imposes a very correct order to the traditional outline. He does not present the contemplation of Pentecost. He adds the appearance to Paul, and concludes his account with the description of the final activity of the Church, in awaiting for the Holy Spirit, presenting the Lukan scene of the Ascension. This presents in a very special manner the mystery of the resurrection to the Community. The emphasis in this on three elements: the *kerygma* and the faith - the sacraments, especially the Eucharist - and Peter at the Head of the hierarchy.

3. The Appearance to Paul in the Lukan Account [cf. Lk 24:49, f.; Ac 1:3-11] of the Ascension: there are three elements here:

a. **The personal conversion of Ignatius was a faithful reflection of the apparition of the Lord to Paul along the road to Damascus** [cf. Ga 1:15, f.; Ph 3:12; 1 Co 9:1; 15:8; Ac 9:3-6]. The presence of this episode in the *Spiritual Exercises* possesses beyond any doubt for St. Ignatius a very special significance. Ignatius calls it an "apparition." It takes place after the Ascension. It is oriented **toward the future of the Apostolic Mission**, which is our own present situation. However, the author brings out the creative and foundational character of the Faith of the Church, similar to that of the "apparitions" of the 12, prior to the Ascension. For St. Ignatius, this includes all the officials which precede.

b. The apparition to the holy Patriarchs in limbo ⁶². Chronologically, this should have been the first that he was presenting. This took place at the moment of His

⁶²For a recent treatment of this, cf. William J. Dalton, SJ, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits. A Study of 1 P 3:18-4:6*. Rome: PIB 1989; Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Going to the Dead", in: *Mysterium Paschale*. Edinburgh: Clark 1990. For St. Ignatius, cf. SE # 311, 2: "... He appeared also in soul to the Fathers in limbo..."

descent into *Sheol* as Savior: "... His soul, likewise united with the divinity, descended into hell..." ⁶³. However, without entering into more refined doctrinal considerations, St. Ignatius placed it for reflection in the Fourth Week as the equivalent of a recapitulation for the Risen One regarding the entire past History of Salvation. The Risen Lord's redemptive influence includes all space and time, for all of humanity. In this manner, **the Risen One re-capitulates** in this manner, in a **redemptive act** in the plenitude of time [40 days], humanity and all of history in its integrity. The presence of the Risen Christ in His Church goes far beyond "before and after" - with the ascent the Contemplation toward Love is also a **Contemplation of Hope**.

c. It is in this context that St. Ignatius' own conversion fits in - as was treated above. this involves a life-long quest of seeking to find God in all things - and a total self-giving to the Apostolic Mission in the Church.

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⁶³cf. SE # 219, 2.

PART III
SOME WRITINGS OF St. GASPAR BERTONI:
SORROWFUL GLORIOUS DIMENSIONS OF OUR REDEMPTION

Presentation:

As has been noted above, the Stigmatine Founder spoke throughout his long life - almost from his early poems as a high school student - to among his last letters to his dear friend, Fr. Louis Bragato, about the various dimensions of what is called today the "Paschal Mystery." A few incidences of his remarks will be noted in what follows. The following are taken from:

- A. Early Parish Sermons
- B. Franciscan "Panegyrics"
- C. Miscellaneae

ΩΩΩ

- A. His Early Parish Sermons⁶⁴

425:

SERMON 4

The Passion

Preached in the Church of St. Paul's, in the Camp Marzio section of Verona, on Good Friday, April 3, 1801. - It lasted for about one hour and a quarter.

This Sermon was repeated, with the "Addition" found below, in St. Paul's, Campo Marzio, on Good Friday, April 4, 1806, in the evening. This lasted about one hour and three quarters.

426: The Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. - *The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart...* [Ps 57:1].

[Introduction: *Is there no one who lays this to heart?*]

Therefore, Jesus has died, and is there no one who is moved? So, the Just Man perishes in a sea, drowning in sufferings, and is there no one to weep? I have to say it again, *and no one lays it to heart.* And so, what is being said here: there is no one who is moved? It would be necessary to be on that mountain a few minutes earlier, when in

⁶⁴ Cf. MssB ## 425-498

all His anguish of dying, as He was just about to give up His last breath. One could note however, nature itself responded out of pity for Him: the sun hid its face, the rocks were rent, the earth trembled on its axis. Would I, therefore, see before me only these, my listeners, with tranquil faces, serenely looking on? Why is it these faces are not reddened with weeping? How is it that these hearts are not broken? Why is it that the by-standers are not profoundly moved? And these women, who weep so bitterly over the deaths of their own children, their husbands, their lovers - and these men who are so deeply upset by their own reverses, as well as of those of their fellow-citizens - they do not shed a single tear, nor do they have a simple sigh left for Jesus? Is it that only Jesus is not mourned, He is not wept over? Just listen to His own complaint regarding you: *...Ad I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none...* [Is 68:21].

427: Why is it, my brothers and sisters, that there are such coldness, such ingratitude, and even injustice, and that those tears of compassion that you shed so prodigiously at the sufferings of just any poor soul, you so cruelly deny Jesus? Have you perhaps had a change of heart on this very point that the underlying motives - that are even stronger - that Jesus offers you for having compassion in His regard, to not move you? Or, is it that you just do not know these motives? Do you not realize that He has suffered? But, you do know through faith that He had to languish on a cross. Do you understand that He suffered all of this for you? Faith, though, teaches you that "... for us men and for our salvation..." ⁶⁵ He did this for us. How can it be, therefore, that you are not deeply moved, believing all this? Should we conclude, then, that there is either lacking faith, and that your faith has grown so languid? It cannot be this, my listeners. May heaven keep me from drawing any such conclusion so insulting to your piety.

[1. Bringing Christ's Passion close]:

428: What, then, is the origin of such insensibility of heart? The Holy Spirit responds for us: *... The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart...* [Is 57:1]. He is simply not considered, and this is why no compassion is given. This is the real reason, while the Philosopher also teaches on the other hand that to bring something within the sphere of compassion so that this will excite compassion in others, it is necessary that it be brought close ⁶⁶. Thus, we observe that the miseries of others far from us, either distant in space, or in the passing of time, either do not touch our hearts, or do so only in a very slight manner. For this reason, all I have to do is expose these facts, with all simplicity, as they unfolded. My task, then, is to render Jesus' Passion close, not only to your thought, but to your very eyes. In this way, the reality of it which is of all events.

⁶⁵Nicene-Constantinople Creed

⁶⁶St. Thomas Aquinas, 4 Sent., d. 17. q. 2. a. 1, sol. 1 ad 1 um.

the most able to draw a compassionate response, will indeed become the object of your most actual and most tender compassion.

[a. A Prayer]:

429: However, before going on in drawing out for you this sorrowful narrative, there is suddenly before me that warm Cross, that is still marked with the blood of this Just Man. I now place this before your eyes, prior to any other reality. to test the impression that such a sight is able to make on your hearts.

Holy Cross, that I should now adore as that which alone was worthy to bear that August Victim sacrificed on you for our sins - I know only too well the many and varied affections that you can arouse in the hearts of these listeners. You have now become the standard of their faith, the sure guide of their lives, the foundation of their hope, comfort in their wretchedness, the desire of the just, the terror of hell. But, I ask you that the sight of you arouse today only a sadness and a dolor that will be most vibrant for those terrible sufferings that you brought to our Jesus, when He united Himself to you out of love for us.

430: Show, therefore, to these souls who devoutly gaze upon you those **cruel clefts of those nails** made in you, first lacerating His hands, and then His feet. Show the very place where His head reclined upon you, expiring, as their loving Father, indeed their faithful Friend, their most tender Brother, their most lovable and most kind **Spouse**. Lastly, show that blood shed out of love for them, with which you still trickle and redden in long streams. In addition to the impression that you can bring about in them, let there be joined also the eloquence of this blood, as the Apostle describes [[Heb 12:24](#)]. Let there be attained, therefore, through you such a great commotion in the hearts of these listeners that I believe I will see this very day, even though I cannot achieve this with my words.

[b. Ponder the Various Aspects of this Mystery];

431: I do fear, my listeners, that the sheer multiplicity of facts, even exposed in their natural simplicity, might impede your otherwise gifted intelligences, keeping them all straight in your minds at the end of my sermon. But, since you can all the more easily gather all this in by a single glance, I ask you that while I speak, you will keep in mind the various aspects of this mystery: first, the most perfidious betrayal; then, the most unjust sentence; and finally, the most torturous torment.

[2. Judas among the Most Cruel]:

432: I am not unaware that you might be able to recall to memory other examples. It is not totally new in this world to see an innocent, virtuous, beneficent person thus betrayed by a friend, and very often one who has benefited the most from the friendship. Nevertheless, there could not be found any other person more innocent, and better than Jesus. Furthermore, there was no one more trusted and no greater beneficiary in this band than His traitor. For these reasons, there could never be heard, and never will be, a betrayal more perfidious than this one. Just who is Jesus? Is He not that God to Whom by title of creation, conservation and final blessed end, all human beings are indebted for what they have, for what they are, and for all that they hope? Who would ever thought that among all human beings there could ever be found one who would prove to be more disloyal, more cruel, more ungrateful, that he would then decide to betray Him? And yet, such a person was found. He was Judas. He did not only think about this, or just plan it. But, he brought this evil scheme to term, that of betraying this most beneficent God. This God proved Himself to be so beneficent that out of greater love for humanity, He gave up His blessed trappings, and put on our flesh. He became like a king in disguise, and enjoyed treating with human beings on friendly terms. He did this with all His servants, and in particular, with Judas.

[a. Was Jesus' Disguise so complete?]:

433: Maybe Judas did not recognize Him for what He was, in that His disguise was so complete? But how could he not have recognized Him after all those truly divine charms that He manifested? Further, did not Jesus many times, in the presence of Judas make known the nobility of His figure? Was not Judas an eye-witness of many of the miracles that He worked? Even further, did not Judas Himself work some of those prodigies with that totally divine authority that Jesus had communicated to Him?

Just think of all the honor that Jesus inspired for him, from the crowd, even the most uncouth. Even if this were not enough honor, Jesus had prepared a most honorable throne among the 12 places that He had promised that the other Apostles would receive, when He would have returned with them to judge the whole world. Judas, among all these, was the most "domestic" minister, His very own brother and friend, with whom Jesus often dealt, with whom He often ate, and with whom He lived, without ever sending him away from His side.

[b. They broke Bread together]:

434: That very same night in which Judas had determined to betray Him, Judas was sitting at the same table with Jesus. Jesus could see that his heart was evil, but even so,

He did not send him away, He did not reprove him. Rather Jesus reached out to him, showing every manifestation of love. It was that very night when Jesus chose to wash the feet of his disciples, even those of Judas. And when He did mention His approaching death, and even gave indications of his own betrayal, He did this to shake up the hardened heart of Judas, who simply did not grasp these favors. He did all this with such a calm soul that at the same time, He communicated every reason for confidence in His pardon. It happens quite often that such ingrates, harboring evil thoughts of betrayal, are moved to make some response when they are treated well by their friend. It is hard to know whether such as these are moved more by confusion, or by stupor, but often they do make a switch, and transform their earlier hatred, that was so powerfully nourished in them, into like affections of love. But, it did not turn out this way for Judas, and this points out the fact that among betrayers, he proved to be the most perfidious.

[c. Judas received Holy Communion]:

435: As the Supper was drawing to a close, Jesus blessed the bread and wine: ...*Take this,* He said to His Apostles [Mk 14:22, ff.]...This is my Blood... which shall be shed for you.... This is the Pledge that I leave you of My love: ... *Do this, as often as you shall drink, for the remembrance of me...* [1 Co 11:25]. And you, too, Judas, you take this Brad in your own hands. It is no longer bread, but it is My own Body, take it and be nourished. Bring your lips to this chalice - first drink My Blood and then go, and betray Me.

436: I tremble, quiver and shake. He, too, approaches, to receive His Master in this new and unheard of manner, which His charity imposed upon Him. He receives Him into that heart ... But, I can hardly go on. I can see clearly, my listeners, that you hardly have room in your hearts for the indignation that springs up in you at this malice. You are overwhelmed with stupor at such perfidy, and seek some explanation for what could ever move this wretch to such excess. And contrasting such virtue, such amiability in Jesus, you will encounter ever greater difficulty in trying to find it.

[d. Judas had only known Kindness]:

437: It seems to me that you may be making this conjecture: perhaps Judas had been wronged somewhat by his Master. He may have been placed below the other Apostles in some post of honor, and so his ambition was further strengthened by his envy. But these conjectures hardly stand up. Only Judas was given the honor bestowed on no one else, in that he was placed over the meager resources of the little group. Do not try any harder to find out the reason for his perfidy, that I have already pointed out to you.

[e. Bent on Betrayal]:

438: Let us, then, follow Judas, who has already set out to betray his Master into the hand of His enemies who seek to put Him to death: ...*And He said to them, what will you give to me and I will deliver Him unto you...?* [Mt 26:15]. Here it is, this is the reason: sordid gain. What a criminal! But you might have thought that some large sum

would have been thrust into Judas' hands, that would have befuddled the heart of this ingrate. But what did Jesus' enemies offer him? Just thirty pieces of silver! Just thirty pieces? When such a stingy hand is able to buy off a disciple, and a disciple who had benefited the most, to perpetrate such an enormous betrayal, they must have been sure of the refusal. But, what did Judas respond? What was his answer? He accepts without even bartering over the miserable amount and reached agreement on just how he would do it. Now I am sure that your hearts will burn with indignation against a betrayer that the world has never seen anyone worse. But, are you not likewise moved with compassion towards Jesus, Who is so good, so beneficent, so lovable and so ungratefully betrayed? What a blow this must have been to His heart. Through grace, let us return to Him, to see how He got through such sorrow.

[3. Jesus in the Garden]:

439: We no longer find Him in the Cenacle room, as He has already left with His disciples. But, we will find Him a short distance away, in Gethsemane.

And here He is, and separates Himself a bit more in order to enter all alone that garden in which He was accustomed to praying the nights through. Judas had already set his plan in motion. Jesus was no longer able to hold back the anguish of His spirit: ... *Then he said to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death...* [Mt 26: 38]. ... *For if my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it...* [Ps 54:13].

But he is a person who is so dear to Me, and one for whom I have done so much good - this really pierces My heart.

[a. David and Absalom - betrayal]:

440: And do you think that this betrayal was not sufficient to fill His heart with sadness? Just say, any of you who have experienced it, or who may have known this in the bosom of your own families - or, those who have loved with excessive affection and extended special kindnesses toward some disguised enemy who then about your present calamity. Just think of David when he had to flee by this same path from the rebellious Absalom [2 K 1:1, ff.]. David experienced the greatest pain in abandoning all at once his palace, his people and even his wives. There was great suffering in seeing all of this brought about by his most loved son. It was he who betrayed the King, the one who incited the most faithful subjects in the plot against his own father. He even dishonored his own father's bridal chamber.

441: But, there is hardly any comparison in this! Just think of Jesus, and what a bitter sight that is! All the horrible apparatus of his sorrowful Passion is arrayed against Him. He could see that His most favored disciple was the very one who had handed Him over to the unjust judges, to those very cruel butchers, to those horrible sufferings. It is true, of course, that the horrible sight of the sins of the whole world that He was destined by

the Father to carry was overwhelming. However, among all these, the most horrible aspect before His face was Judas' enormous crime: .. *Therefore, He confessed, he who has delivered Me to you, has the greater sin...* [Jn 19:11].

It is true that He felt the heavy weight of so many people for whom He died who would separate themselves from Him: and what a cruel separation He saw this to be! He could see in this how many would share in Judas' betrayal.

[b. Total Betrayal by Apostles: He Must have been an Impostor!]:

442: This is the very kind of argument that His envious enemies would raise against Him to withdraw the simple of hear from following Him! Just look, they would say, what a great success His disciples have had, those first disciples, and most steady students in His school. Did we not say that He is an impostor? If anyone would give credence to Him, then it should b His most intimate friends. But, you can see that these are the very ones who have raised up their hands in opposition to Him.

What do you think of all this, my listeners? Could Judas have wounded Him any more in life? Could we not say that this betrayal alone would be enough to overwhelm Him with sadness? Or, at least, would this not add one more very strong reason among so many others that had already invaded Jesus' heart? This injury by one so close, would this not have been a kind of *coup de grace* to his spirit?

[c. Amazing Sweat of Blood]:

443: And now just look at Him: even though Jesus is the stronger [Mk 3:27] and indeed is invincible, nonetheless, of His own free choice, to satisfy for our sins, He subjected Himself as man to those afflictions that we still experience. Even more, because of the superior knowledge of His mind and the greater sensibility of His heart, He was even further disposed to suffer all this. He is already being constrained to hand over His heartfelt freedom to that sadness that scourges Him, and He falls face first on the ground. Not even the very powerful resistance that He brought to opposing the dolor which oppressed Him was beaten back. this brought about His sweating right through His clothing in abundance, and dampened it, leaving many drops on the grass, and the stones on the ground under Him. This is a very strange sign of a totally new type of pain, supreme suffering.

[d. Judas leads the Assassins to Him]:

444: Hurry, Judas, hurry! Hasten forward that band of assassins that you are leading with you. Even should you be unable to witness your Jesus killed by the weapons of His enemies to whom you chose to betray Him, you will take delight in knowing that you alone have killed Him, killed Him first with immense suffering that you brought about.

Alas! what will happen to Jesus? Have no doubt about it: there remains still so much for Him to suffer. However, an Angel comes down to comfort Him, and then we see that He even takes the first step to go to meet the betrayer who seeks Him.

[e. The Actual Betrayal]

445: *Friend, why have you come?* [Mt 26:50].

What is Jesus' response to all this? Judas approaches with peaceful air and reached for Jesus' neck, to embrace Him. It seems, therefore, at long last Judas is beginning to be moved. What would Jesus' heart do if this were the case? How He would have willingly received him, how He would have comforted him, by giving him pardon for all! Yes, my listeners. He does not reject him, but receives him, allows Himself to be kissed, and then says:...*And Jesus said to him: Judas do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss...?* [Lk 22:48]. How can he betray You, Jesus, if he is coming to see your peace?

But no, my hearers. You can finally see the supreme perfidy of this betrayal Judas had already made some agreement with those soldiers who had to arrest Him. You can see that at the agreed upon signal, they charge Jesus, they bind Him, they drag Him away, they rain blows down upon Him, with sticks and they kick Him. And where do they drag Him? And here is still one more motive for your deeply felt compassion: an innocent man is being arraigned before the Tribunal, to receive from it the most unjust of sentences.

446: It would be, it is true, a major injustice to condemn to death even one who is truly guilty, without first having heard the case. But, Jesus is not the only one among the innocent upon whom a similar destiny has fallen, being dragged to the place of execution by an angry mob. He is, though, brought before a tribunal to experience deeply the pain that is all the more unjust in that His enemies wanted to go through the motions of making use of the organs of justice to condemn Him.

[e. Overwhelming Commotion]:

447: But how can you gaze on this scene, without an almost overwhelming commotion deep within your hearts? As you look at Jesus, innocent, alone and abandoned, even by his own, standing before those judges who are already His enemies - do you not see how they almost tremble in their haste to carry out their duty which they see as putting Him to death? They look for the witnesses, and even pay them so that they will bear false witness. They interrogate Jesus, and then do not let Him respond - and if He remains silent, they take this for the admission of guilt. And yet, when He does open His mouth to speak, they punch Him in the face. I just do not want to lead your thought, and with that, your hearts that are already very sensitive, before

tribunals such as these. But, this is where Jesus has been led, where everything has served to pervert justice, and where only anger, fury and tumult dominate.

[4. Before Pilate]:

448: Suffice it for me to lead you to Pilate's tribunal. He is a more reasonable and impartial judge for Jesus, as well as for the Hebrews, His accusers, since He is the Roman Governor. And so it was that Pilate, having examined Jesus in accord with the accusations leveled against Him, had clarified His innocence. He had been able to see that it was only out of envy that they wanted Him dead. He goes out from the Pretorium, where all His enemies were gathered awaiting His condemnation, and Pilate declares Him innocent. Praise the heavens, then. Jesus has received a just sentence. He had been betrayed by His own disciple, He had been judged unjustly by the priests who ought to have been favorably disposed toward Him, but finds justice before a foreign judge. I can see that you are consoled, seeing Jesus absolved by that tribunal, which alone had jurisdiction in such cases.

449: But, just a minute! Do you not hear that those who earlier were judges, have now become the accusers, and that they are insisting on His death, and they even bring forward new charges? ... *We have found this man perverting the nation... saying He is king... [Lk 23:2]*. Jesus is brought back to be examined under this point. He confesses that He is indeed a King, but that His Kingdom is not of this world [*Jn 18:36*]. ... *If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered...*

So much evidence is lacking for Him to be convicted of sedition, because it would be necessary to show the arms that He would have cached away, to uncover His secret plots. However, all His actions, His public statements testify to the contrary. so, the Judge goes back out and proclaims once more that he can find no cause in him. This is all the more significant in that even Herod himself, to whom Jesus had been sent, even though he was more versed in the Hebrew law, let Him go. Then Pilate makes the declaration that he would punish Him with blows and then he, too, would set Him free.

450: How is this explained? If Christ had been declared innocent, how can it be that He is first to be scourged, and then allowed to go free? What injustice is this? - you ask in complete wonder. But, hold back your indignation a little while against the injustice of a sentence such as this. In the interim, listen as Pilate continued the custom that at Passover there would be freed, at the request of the people, a person already condemned to death. Pilate leaves this up to the crowd to decide which of the two they would want to set free. They could choose either Barabbas, who was a real criminal, caught in sedition, and homicide - or, Jesus. I can see, my listeners, that now you tremble all the more, seeing Jesus first declared innocent, and now placed side by side

with one condemned. I know that He should not have to wait to be pardoned, as justice would demand that He be allowed to go free. But, what happens? In order to calm down the furor of His accusers, Pilate has decided to make the choice, and he turns toward the people.

451: Entertain no doubts about it. The people seemed well disposed toward Jesus. This multitude is made up of those blind men whose sight He had restored; of those lame whose limbs He had restored; of those mute to whom He had given the ability to speak; of those hungry people, who - after He had abundantly satisfied them - they sought to make Him their king; of those countless infirm, whom He had cured. What is there to be afraid of, then? And with all the less reason, because He is being put up along side of a criminal who was the most hated of all, an enemy of both the public as well as the private good.

452: *..Whom do you wish that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus...?* [Mt 27:17]. The people will certainly choose Jesus.

But, alas! everyone at this gathering of the people presented with the same question, replied to it at the top of their voices: *Barabbas, Barabbas!* [v. 21]. How perfidious they were! What, then, should I do with this innocent man, toward whom you are all indebted? *Let Him be crucified, let Him be crucified!* [v. 23].

What wickedness, ingratitude! What insult, what fury! Here will an innocent Man have to pay as one guilty? Is Jesus to be compared to a revolutionary? Pilate, though, who is convinced of the innocence of this Man, should not give in to such injustice. And yet, Pilate sends Him to be scourged.

453: Shortly he would deny Jesus the justice due Him as an innocent Man under judgment. What is worse, he still denies that He is guilty as He is being condemned. In such sentences imposed on all guilty persons, the judge first specifies how many blows to be imposed, what kind of instruments are to be used in tormenting Him, and the number of those involved in meting out the punishment. These would rarely inflict more blows than had been prescribed. But, Jesus hands Himself over to the discretion of the most irresolute ruffians. They were not content with the simple scourgings, but take up into their hands knotted clubs, heavy chains, iron switches. One is missing the point should he think that the number of the blows was counted, even though these were already prescribed according to their laws. They were not supposed to go over forty lashes, but in this case, they were multiplied without number. No effort was made to stop even when the blood flowed down His body in little streams. Up and down went the blows until the flesh was literally torn. No effort was made to stop until the arms of

the executioners had become tired, even though they worked in relay teams. Each new scourger attended to the task with new strength and renewed vigor, laving Him alive only to entertain their cruelty.

[5. The Soldiers]:

454: My soul rebels in mentioning here that harsh joke played on that innocent Man, so badly wounded, and hardly breathing. There was placed on His head a crown of very sharp thorns, beaten down with plaited maces. There was placed in his hand a kind of reed for a make-believe scepter, and a red mantle was draped over Him. In this way, they made fun of Him, making believe that He was a king and bowing down before Him in fake acts of homage. You could hardly tell whether His physical pain, or His shame were the greater. While He was gasping for breath in real pain, they laughed, they struck Him in the face, pouring out over Him their inner bile in mockery.

455: And what court sentence ever allowed the executioners to mock Him as a false king? And all of this took place in the very hall of the Pretorium, under the eyes of the judge, and the judge made no effort to impede them. What a barbaric and unjust judge! Is this how, therefore, that justice, innocence are betrayed? What can you say in your own behalf? Is it that you wanted to allow the people this satisfaction, and then you wanted to let Him go? No, just no. Kill Him as well, kill Him! The people are not content with His death. All right, let Him die, then, but with a single blow. It makes no sense for you to cry out from your balcony: *...Behold the Man...!* [Jn 19:5]. And then show Him so disfigured, so lacerated,. The crowd once more took up the cry, even stronger, that He be condemned. Get on with it, then, condemn Him, and at least draw to a close by an unjust sentence the dolor of this innocent man.

456: And thus, my listeners, Pilate conducts his tribunal in public. He sits down in order to pronounce his sentence before the crowd. Just wait - you would imagine an unjust sentence: but, none will be worse than this one. I do realize that many others have been condemned, innocent though they may have been. But, if there have been unjust judges, where has there ever been one like this one? Was there ever one who first declared that he found no cause for the capital punishment, and yet condemned Christ to death? This, the height of injustice, was perpetrated on Jesus.

457: Just listen: *... I find no cause in this Man...* [Lk 23:4], then, such a person should be let go. No: for the judgment is that He should die, therefore, that He should be crucified. Therefore, let Him be condemned as you have asked.

Poor Jesus! He is yours, handed over to you, raging Hebrews. What else is left? You have already heard the sentence: He is in your hands. Even hungry lions and wolves do not leap on their prey as all do now: the executioners, the soldiers, the crowd. The

entire city is set in motion, and thus there is prepared the most terrible execution for Jesus.

At this point, however, kind listeners, I cannot go any further to present you an even more dreary scene, if first you do not grant me a brief rest, in order to give some comfort to my own heart.

[Translators' Note: here could be substituted here the addition that opens with the words: "...Listen to the uproar..." - cf. ahead, # 467].

[6. More in Particular - Barbaric Punishment]:

458: The facts that remain now. beloved listeners, to be placed before your consideration are so cruel - that if I was not afraid of lacking excessively in my duties, I would omit them. But, if I do I would conclude my sermon very shortly, not mentioning a point I had proposed to myself to offer these very facts for your reflection. I do believe that you are already sufficiently moved by what you have heard up until now. Take some comfort at least that I will spare in part my own and your spirits, from an additional and even stronger pain. I will prescind now from the most bitter circumstances that you might experience, in theory, that the torment that Jesus underwent were the most terrible.

459: We are still talking about generalities. There is no doubt that among all the ways of dying, that on the Cross is the most bitter. We have this on the testimony of those gentile writers who lived in such barbaric times. In this kind of death there is no kind of torment that is unknown and not employed on these poor condemned wretches. In fact, in this form of execution of the Cross, the greatest torment that the poor guilty person suffers, reach precisely those parts of the body that are the most sensitive because of the presence of delicate nerves in them. These are the hands and the feet; the weight of the whole body itself hanging on the cross continuously increases the pain. The fact that the pain lasts for such a long time renders the death all the more bitter, as it is protracted over a longer period of time.

[7. His Wounds]:

460: Even within this same general heading, just notice how the execution of Jesus surpasses and thus transcends other deaths on the Cross in its torments. He not only had **His hands and feet torn open by the nails which brought their own pain**, but also all the other parts of His body. Covered with wounds, as He was, He experienced most penetrating pain. These openings must have been all the more agonizing in that they were all reopened as His garments were stripped from Him in a very rough manner. These garments had been put upon Him after the scourging had become attached to

the open skin. The cruelty increased as His arms were stretched beyond limit so that His hands could be nailed. This stretching of His limbs was so fierce that it disjoined all the bones from their natural place. This suffering was augmented further when the Cross was allowed to slip into the hole on the ground prepared for it. The shock of the Cross falling into place produced a horrible effect on the body hanging from it.

461: Job [7:5] complained that the Devil, allowed to be his tormentor, had left only the lips around his teeth healthy. However, Jesus' executioners were even more cruel than the demons. They did not leave all over His entire body even a single member in which He was not wounded. They saw to it that not a single sense was without its own torment. With gall, they soured His taste; His sense of smell was tormented because they crucified Him in a place where dead bodies had been thrown, making a fetid odor. His sense of hearing was violated with the most horrible cries, with the insults and most biting slogans they hurled His way, along with the most gross curses.

462: For His sight, they prepared a particular torment, by crucifying Him between two thieves. Hence, anywhere He could turn His head, He would meet that shameful scene they placed before Him. And what I think was the torment to end all torments, before His eyes they hurled countless insults against those languishing in such agony. They ridiculed His moans, and laughed at His suffering.

463: I am just skimming over these facts: but, what do you think of Jesus' torment? What do you think brought the greatest agony? I have already pointed out that this punishment, to which He was condemned with the most unjust sentence, by the most perfidious betrayal. This morning I have placed before you Jesus' Passion, then, as a reality drawing the most sublime compassion. I have just noticed, however, that I have given every effort to prescind from the most bitter circumstances, in order to diminish that dolor that I see is gradually increasing in you. By so doing, perhaps I have only poorly corresponded to the affections of your hearts. I note that once you have come to consider more fully the situation of this Just Man, that there was the desire to remain with Jesus overwhelmed in His sufferings. It seems that there is the yearning not to deny Him the most just response of compassion. What is there to fear Should I not also carry out this pious desire of yours, of extending your tenderness Jesus' way?

[8. Behold the Man!]:

464: And now, therefore, no longer just with your thoughts, but also with your eyes you can see His pain. *Behold, behold the Man!* [Jn 19:5]. Just look at this body, how lacerated it is with so many wounds. Not only have they taken from Him every beauty, all graciousness, but even the very figure of a man [Is 53:2]. Just look at His head, pierced by so many thorns. **Look at His hands, His feet that are so wounded; this side that is gaping open.** Look on in sadness, and this will help you grasp this scene and also

will satiate the desires of your hearts. You could never weep over Him as He merits to be mourned.

465: And You, o Jesus, take note of the compassion that these pious souls offer you: for such is what I proposed for myself with Your grace obtained this morning. My purpose is to move them and soften their hearts with an affectionate compassion. This was all to dispose them to bring You some comfort in Your pain. It is now up to You to speak, to show and to make known to them what they ought to do and how they can bring consolation to Your most afflicted heart. Even before You open Your mouth, see that they are disposed to anticipate Your requests. Since they know that nothing can bring You more comfort than to see in them that fruit come to them for which You have suffered so much. All You want is for them to love You and to destroy all sin in them

466: They are already disposed to offer You their hearts, freed from every wrong affection. They are planning now the way, the means to be taken, and the time to give up entirely the sin in their lives. They are disposed to despoil themselves of that affection that is displeasing to you, so that they can begin a new conduct of a virtuous life, in accord with Your wishes.

But, no - they do not intend that all their compassion should be consumed in tears. They want the compassion that they feel for You should move them to console You with their deeds. Come now, give them Your blessing as a kind of pledge that their tears are pleasing to You, that their tenderness for You is beloved to You. Pour out on them the abundance of Your most efficacious graces, whence they will be moved when they proceed now to kiss Your wounds, and to mingle their tears with Your blood. They will be able to grasp and to carry out for Your comfort whatever You request of their hearts on this point.

[Here begins the third part, following a brief rest. This could substitute the paragraph above, that begins with the words: *The facts that remain now...* -cf. # 458].

[9. Dragged to execution]:

467: Listen to the uproar! More than the sound of trumpets and drums, it is the unsettling roar of anger, fury, tumult, hoots and insulting whistling. It is like a sea of people in agitation. Christ is being dragged along the street, outside of Jerusalem, to the place of His execution. Why is there such a crowd? *Why have the Gentiles raged...?* [Ps 2:1]. To execute a malefactor, one executioner alone would suffice, and sometimes

it is even hard to find one. Is it that against this one innocent man, maliciously condemned, that all have conspired to torment Him? Yes, all play their part, since His personal torment is to be the most painful. All are there, of every order, class and condition.

468: There have been times that an innocent person was persecuted by many, but was always able to find some defense, refuge in others, or at least compassion. It is only Jesus, in being hated, all play their role to bring about His death. There are princes and ministers, Jews and soldiers, lay people and priests, nobles and the masses, learned and ignorant, citizens and foreigners, Jews and Gentiles, Romans and barbarians: all concur in this execution, of the most painful kind. All are able to have a share in it, to incite further the executioners. Some shout their insults from afar. Some seem to enjoy the sight of His spasms of pain in His death: ... *they stood up... met together...* [Ps 2:2].

469: How is it that there is such a furor in everyone, and how is it that in such furor there is also such harmony in such a disharmonious mob? This is what brings the greatest pain to the heart of that innocent Victim: ... *They are multiplied above the hairs of my head, who hate me without cause...* [Ps 68:5]. They give Me evil for good, hatred for love. What is the source, then for such wrath, for such fury? And just notice, my listeners, what wrath, and what fury! Just look: with a slow pace Jesus moves ahead, *led like a sheep to the slaughter* [Is 53:7], *for many dogs have encompassed me* [Ps 21:17], *wild bulls have besieged Me...* [v. 13].

[10. The Crucifixion]:

470: Drained as He was from the excessive flagellation, they placed on His sagging shoulders the cross-bars of His gibbet. How barbaric, and cruel they are! Every step He takes, He grows more weary. He wavers, and falls. Just look at Him, o heavens! Look at Him, stretched out on the ground under this weight. Alas! Just look at Jesus, *the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people...* [v. 7], no longer a man, but He is a worm, crushed under those villainous feet. On the strength of the kicks and blows they rain upon Him, they vainly strove to have Him climb Calvary.

471: Still, what is the source of such fury in the human breast? But, it is not just human beings who are tormenting Him: the Devil himself is among His tormentors. For it is the Devil who, on entering into human hearts, changes them into such fury. Human beings assume his ancient livery against this man-God. Rather, it is not just a single demon, but all hell has broken loose: ...*this is the Power of Darkness...* [Lk 22:53]. Do not even begin to think, however, that it is from any sense of compassion in those inhuman executioners for the remainder of the climb. They only did this to keep Him alive for even more cruel, and more protracted torments.

472: And yet they had to harass one another to see who would carry the Cross in His place. And where are His friends who do not step forward, freely offering to carry it for Him? They have abandoned Him.

Hence, the distress of Christ had to be all the more painful as His torment was universal. His suffering was universal not only because it was brought on Him by all, but He hurt in every way possible for a human being to do so. He experienced anguish not only from His friends, but also in the loss of reputation. They dragged two thieves long with Him, and so, *He was reputed with the wicked...* [Is 53:12], being placed among the condemned and the evil. Thus, losing His reputation, He experienced a loss in the honor and glory due Him.

473: The Cross was the torment bringing with it the greatest shame. Such a death was the most shameful [Ws 2:20], *for he is accursed of God that hangs on a tree...* [Dt 21:23].

There remained His robe. Despoiled of all else, even now His clothes were stripped off Him. He was stripped nude! and this in the sight of such a huge crowd! and it all took place at high noon! and on a high hill! *..He shall indeed be filled with reproaches...* [Lm 3:30], *shame has covered his face...* [Ps 68:8]. And that whole day long, the shame He bore wounded Him more, pierced Him more painfully than all His wounds, than all those openings brought to His body.

And now, where are the beauty, the decor, the most pure candor of those members? There is no beauty in Him, no comeliness [Is 53:2]. He is all one large bruise, one terrible wound.

474: Look over all the members of that body just to see if there is a single part that is healthy and without torment. There is no crown of gold, but one of thorns. The black tresses of His hair are all streaked with blood. His eyes are no longer those of a dove [Ct 1:14], but are daubed with mud, covered with dust and spittle. His cheeks are no longer rosy red, but are bruised, swollen by the slaps, the punches, His tresses totally bereft of comeliness. His neck, once a tower of ivory [Ct 7:4], is livid and bruised from the ropes they used to drag Him along like an animal. His shoulders, His back, His sides and legs, all are lacerated by the whips. And, o my God, on what a bed of pain they place Him now, and stretch Him out!

[11. The Nails]:

475: O God, how those arms and wrists are stretched and cut and by such crude knots. Now He is fully flattened out on the Cross. **And His hands and His feet are contorted... those very hands and feet that offer themselves now to the nails. The measure is taken for the blows, and how heavy are the hammers raised above. Dear God! It seems that even before they fall, the blows strike my very heart...** I cannot

stand, beloved hearers, I cannot stand these particulars that are so atrocious, so sensitive. Let us proceed rather to consider the kind of pain being administered.

476: There is no doubt that among all the deaths that of the Cross is the most bitter. We have this on the testimony even of those gentile authors, who, even though they were living in the most barbarous times in which there was no form of torment that was unknown, or unused to carry out execution on condemned unfortunates. These writers, therefore, can offer a sure witness. In fact, on the Cross the greatest torment that the wretched guilty one endured was suffered precisely in those parts of the body where the nerves are the most active. Hence, the most sensitive areas of all seem to be the **hands and feet**. The weight of the body itself as it hangs, increases continuously the agony. And the slowness of the distress renders the death all the more bitter, as it is all the more slow.

477: Not only are all the other forms of execution surpassed by that of the Cross, but all other kinds seem to be compressed and included in this one alone. Therefore, the gashes brought by the swords, the pulling and drawing of other instruments of torture, the tearing of the limbs, being crushed by wild beasts, all this followed by convulsions, the spasms of the most acute suffering - it was like a fire that burned deep within, literally broiling His members and slowly consuming Him.

478: Furthermore, along these same lines, just see how this awful pain inflicted upon Jesus almost exceeds, and it might even be said, transcends Him. The reason is that He was afflicted not only in His hands and feet, but in all the parts of His body. He was wounded in every way, and in an instant was the recipient of most acute distress. And these terrible wounds became all the more sorrowful as they were reopened as He as furiously stripped of His garments. These had been draped over Him after the flagellation, and had become attached to the forming scabs. This was all very crudely intensified when He was most roughly stretched out on the Cross to bring the arms to the holes already made to nail Him to them. This stretching was so excessive that His bones were dislocated from their proper place. His suffering was augmented even further when the Cross with Him affixed to it was raised up, and then dropped into the deep slit in the ground prepared for it. With this, His distended body was horribly shaken.

479: Job complained bitterly that the demon, who had become his tormentor, had left nothing well, other than the lips about his teeth [Jb 19:20]. Jesus' executioners, however, did not even leave a single member of His entire body unwounded. They even willed that not even any one of His senses should remain without its own particular torment. With gall, they embittered His taste: to torment His sense of smell, they

crucified Him in that place which because of the number of bodies buried there, was most fetid; they continuously wounded His hearing with the most horrible shouts, with insults and the most biting sayings, and the most enormous curses. For His sense of sight, they had prepared its own particular torment: right before His eyes they hurled scorn at Him as He languished, they made fun of His groans and laughed at His pain.

[12. Insulting Mob]:

480: And so, after having tormented His body in every way, they insidiously took steps to wound even more profoundly His spirit. What more bitter wound could there be for a loving heart than to see one's death being obtained, but being subjected to insults unto death, precisely by those for whose salvation He has chosen to die? And what deeper laceration could there be for that heart that is already wounded and full of compunction for the sins of all, of all human beings who ever were, or ever will be until the end of time for whom He underwent all this, and for each one is particular? Did He not suffer all this especially for those committing the horrendous crime of Deicide? Was it not He personally who experienced most bitter contrition as if all these were His own sins, in that He had applied to Himself these words: ... *these are the words of my sins..* [Ps 21:2].

481: Nonetheless, Jesus prays even for them, and also excuses them: ... *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do...* [Lk 23:34]. Yet they do know how cleverly to curse Him: '*...He saved others..*', they derided Him, saying: '*Let Him save Himself...*' [v. 35]. And these are the leaders of the people, and there are Levites among them, and they are the well-educated among them who talk this way. As for the vile members among the crowd, and even the thieves crucified with Him, all join in insulting Him: ... *If You be the Christ, save Yourself...* [v. 39]. At these wicked voices, the sun left this world, ... *and there was darkness over all the earth...* [v. 44]. And what about Jesus through all this? If even one of them would withdraw into himself and recognize his sin, Jesus is ready to say to him: ... *this day you shall be with Me in paradise...* [v. 43].

482: But, even this actually aggravated His pain. Thieves are saved: "but, My People, My Chosen Nation; My dear Disciple, and Judas are damned." Only one repents and he will be followed by so few. The greater part of those for whom I suffer so much will profit nothing by My distress. What good will there be from so much blood being poured out? [Ps 29:10]. For many, all this blood will serve only for judgment [1 Co 111:29], and this Cross will prove only to be a scandal [1 Co 1:23]. He sighs heavenward, and then looks in great affliction toward the ground, and there He sees Mary.

[14. Mary]:

483: At this sight, the bitter floods of compassionate suffering that had inundated the Mother's heart, turn in all their might with an impetus, to the most bitter sea of pain [Lm

2:13]. They rush into the Son's heart, and He is overwhelmed by them, as this time the tide sweeps all in its wake.

Sharing thus in His pains, only increases them in the Son. The barbarians do not block her in this, but only deny her the possibility of extending comfort to Him. There is no veil allowed to cover the confusion of His nudity, nor is there permitted a drop of relief to His dying lips burning with fever.

Mary weeps, and with her, John does too: "... Ah, woman [Jesus no longer says, 'Mother'] ... I now leave you. Behold the one who from now on will be your son in My place [cf. Jn 19:26]. ...And then He turned to the disciple... [v. 27]. And she, He said, now that I have to leave, will be your Mother".

484: Now from that heaving chest, His panting breath blocks His throat. At the violent shaking of His body, all His members shake in convulsion, and the whites of His eyes appear. O God! Jesus is dying! But, no, my listeners: the end of His sufferings has not yet come. This is but the natural horror of death, it is the love for her life, and one that is so precious, and a life that is so dear. This combat between love and life together seem to exhaust His nature. It is a veritable flood of pains arising from every part of His body, and rushing up out of His spirit, that they seem almost to bring shipwreck to His heart. This distress transcends all human judgment, or experience, in that Jesus' senses are the more perfect and thus more capable of suffering.

485: His Body is that formed of the most pure blood of the Virgin and through a miracle formed immediately by the Holy Spirit. So, in the words of St. Bonaventure⁶⁷, His body was all the more delicate, and therefore, the more sensitive. The sole of His feet was more capable of pain than would be the pupil of our eyes.

Christ's soul, both because of the sublime excellence of His mind, and the immense depths of His Heart, was, as St. Thomas teaches ⁶⁸, the most disposed to be saddened to a supreme degree for all the motives for sadness that came to Him in abundance.

[13. Total Desolation]:

486: Would that at least this humanity that was agonizing in the dolors and the sadness of the most tormenting punishment, have had at least some comfort from the Divinity, conjoined and inseparable to it! But, what do these words entail: ...*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me...*? [Ps 21:2; Mt 27:46] - if not to mean: is it not so that the Divinity, as far as easing My human nature from its distress, conducts itself with this humanity as though it were not conjoined to it by any union? And not only by a prodigious barrier there is kept in full His glory in the superior part of My soul - but, this

⁶⁷St. Bonaventure [precise citation not given].

⁶⁸St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 46, a. 6.

very glory, immovable in Me, of a blessed fruition, also militates in Me to even greater discomfort.

487: Even if in others who suffer there is often mitigated either the sadness of the spirit, or the dolor of the body, by reflections that appeal to reason - in this case, by a certain redundancy of the superior forces over those that are inferior, there was closed to Me this path of consolation. And so, since the way to every torment is open in My Body and in My Spirit, with all natural efficacy, thus - every sense, or strength, or potency, is allowed to suffer. this holds true in all intensity and purity for that sadness and that dolor proper to them.

O, all of you, therefore, who pass by today in compassionate meditation along the path signed by My pain, fix upon Me the look of your contemplation, ... *and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow...* [Lm 1:12]. O, my Jesus!

488: But, does not the sheer power of Your love not diminish Your pains, or at least, Your interior sadness? Is it not this powerful love that forces You to say: ...*I thirst...*! [Jn 19:28]. Is not this the thirst for the salvation of souls, a thirst of suffering even more for their salvation?

So, my listeners, thus His sufferings increase beyond measure. Therefore, if He willingly assumed these in order to liberate us from sin, then He had to take them on in such quantity that they would be in proportion to the greatness of the fruit that He desired. This quantity and proportion He achieved not only by the strength and by the worth that His Divinity always united to His pain and dolor. Hence, even a single drop of His blood was superabundant in removing all the sins of the whole world. Even further, even according to His human nature alone, His distress would have had a certain sufficiency, and His pain would have achieved a notable satisfaction. The reason is that He emptied all of His blood from His veins under the crushing press of the most tormenting execution.

[14. Another Prayer]:

489: O Eternal Father! Your will, Your Decree is now accomplished by me. Now the human race is liberated from sin, not by power alone, indeed possible for Your omnipotence. But, all is accomplished with justice and with full rigor of justice, as Your violated honor required of Me: ... *it is consummated..!* [Jn 19:30].

Your justice is satisfied. Enormous was the debt of human sin - and enormous were the pains that My will, in harmony with Yours, assumed in this torture. In this distress, My very life is now lost, and is rather consumed. ... *It is consummated... Into Your hands I commend My Spirit...*! [LK 23:46]. And here, Jesus bows His head and dies.

[15. Wound in the Side]:

490: So dies the Just Man. In a most tormenting torture, condemned by a most unjust sentence, by the most perfidious betrayal. Thus, Jesus' suffering ends. Here His enemies have ceased tormenting Him, but their cruelties have not yet terminated. **They insult Him even in death, they lash out against His dead body. With a lance, they open in His dead body a large wound on His right side. The cruel iron penetrates right through to His heart, and the point comes out the other side. What cruelty! what barbarity! O supreme injury! even worse than the torture itself! O, our love, Jesus! O, who would give to us that dead and bloody body, that we might make reparation with the just obsequies of our tears for the most atrocious injuries of those cruel men!**

491: O my God! Look at Him, my hearers. Unleash your hearts, loosen the bonds of your tears, satisfy the warm affections of your compassion. The motive is all too just, honest - this alone is reason enough to cry, to weep. You are alone on this day to offer your compassion for this innocent, betrayed Man, this Just Man Who has been condemned, this Crucified Love. Weep for Him. He is Your Father, Your Redeemer. It was for you, for you, that He chose to die. This tribute of your tears is all that the One Who gave all His blood for you is asking.

492: O God! Stop ... What do I hear?... Alas, do you also hear the eloquence of this blood? I am shaking... and I tremble. And what about you? Is your heart still deaf? Well, must I tell you what I feel, that these **wounds** correspond to our tears? But, even better, pay close attention yourselves. Listen: ... *weep not over Me...!* [Lk 23:28]. Does this mean, then, that Jesus refuses the tribute of our tears? But, how can this be? Listen as He goes on: ... *but, weep for yourselves and your children...!* [ib]. O God! I understand You, I get it. Our sins are the sole reason for Your suffering.

[16. Let us weep!]:

493: Let us weep, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us weep, all of us. Mourn for Jesus, but let our hearts feel compunction. We are the cause of the death of this Just Man. We have betrayed Him, and how many times, and at what price! Just for some sordid gain, for some unclean pleasure. We have been unfaithful to promises made, ungrateful for gifts received, with no understanding of His love. we have been more perfidious than Judas, the traitor. What betrayal, what perfidy, what sin! Pardon, my Jesus, give me pardon: give vent to your tears always. Let us commit no more sins, no more sins.

494: O God, just what have we ever accomplished by sinning! What injury have we heaped on Jesus! We have placed the King of Heaven below the mud of our own bodies. What should have died in us was that degrading passion, and yet our evil will cried instead: Let Jesus die, let Him be crucified, but long life to that passion in us. What perversity of judgment, what injustice of choice, what disorder of sin! Give me pardon, O Jesus, pardon! Let us sin no more, no more sins! Death to sin, let sin be put to death!

Our evil will is condemned to perpetual contrition. As long as life lasts, these eyes of ours will find good reason to weep - this heart of ours should feel sorrow - these members, suffer.

495: Give to us, O Lord, give to us these thorns that pierce the temples, the horrible fruit of our bad thoughts. **Give us those nails, tragic result of our bold and lascivious hands and feet.** Give to us this cross, shameful accounting for our sin. Our pride, our anger, our gluttony, our lasciviousness, all are Your Cross. We have put You to death, we have crucified You. What cruelty, what barbarity!

[17. We continuously wound Him!]:

496: And even dead, our scandals continue to lacerate this Body, to wound this side, to open Your Heart, to wrench from You the souls that are so dear to You, and to snatch them from Your paternal bosom. And your veins are emptied still, this blood is bludgeoned out by us. He is trampled under foot on every corner, in every street, and in every square by so many blasphemies. He is trampled under foot in these temples, at the very feet of these altars, with so many sacrilegious profanations. He is still being trampled under foot in every place, at all hours, by all of us, washed clean from sin so many times by this blood - yet, we sin, and we go on sinning.

497: What supreme fury! What heights of cruelty! How excessive the sin! And should anyone not know what sin is, come to the Cross and learn. Right now, I myself will place it before your eyes, I will stretch it out at your feet. And whoever has not sinned, I am content that such a one would not have to weep this evening. But, we sinners, we who have re-crucified this Son of God so many times in ourselves - we who have trampled under foot the Blood of the Covenant: we should weep, we should all weep, and weep even more.

498: This is most suitable for us, all of us who would merit to weep eternally, buried in hell, even below the perfidious Judas; worse than the evil Hebrews, even the very demons themselves. We have beat all these in perfidy, in insult, in cruelty. It could very well be that the last blow awaits us in the next few minutes. Let us all weep, Ladies and Gentlemen, before this day of copious Redemption and Salvation draws to a close, and gives way to the day of wrath and vengeance. Let us cry at the feet of the deceased Christ, Who reaches out to us - before He turns in His Majesty and in His anger to pass judgment on our fault. Let us weep, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us weep even more. It is more than helpful for us to weep this day. For this is the day in which pardon is extended even to the crucifiers. This is the day in which Jesus manifests to us His Mercy and gives us His blessing as pledge.

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SourcesOT

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Jb 7:5, ff.	# 461	21	# 427
19:20	# 479	Ct 1:14	# 474
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2	# 468	Ws 2:20	# 473
21:2	## 480;486	Is 53:2	## 464;473
7	# 470	7	# 469
13	# 469	12	## 426; 428
17	# 469	57:1	#487
29:10	# 482	Lm 1:12	#487
54:13	# 439	2:13	#483
68:5	# 469	3:30	#473

NT

Mt 26:15	# 438	Lk 23:35	#481
38	# 439	39	#481
50	# 445	44	#481
27:17	# 452	46	#489
21	# 452	Jn 18:36	#449
23	# 452	19:5	## 455;464
46	# 486	11	#441
Mk 3:27	# 443	26	#483
14: 22, f.	# 435	27	#483
Lk 22:48	# 445	28	#488
53	# 471	30	#489
23:2	# 449	1 Co 1:23	#482
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Magisterium

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1807**1297:****SERMON 38****The Spiritual Life****The Resurrection**

For 'Low' Sunday, April 5th [98], of the year 1807, Verona, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio.

[Introduction]:

With what desire, most illustrious listeners, and my most gentle brothers and sisters, with what desire always comes over me when I ascend here in this place to speak .. And with what pleasure there is for me to speak to you, God knows. Moreover, today I cannot hide my joy, I do not know how to contain my rejoicing.

Having just completed in these past days, the laments of penance, and your justification being completed, celebrated in these days, as I believe, today, for all of you, is Easter. I see you, then, risen in Christ, walking joyfully in newness of life, solicitous to hurry on with the disciples to see Christ in Galilee.

1298: I am speaking, then, with men and women who from fear and contrition, ascend with sureness to the confidence of divine mercy. You have ascended from the joys of this world and from its consolations, through compunction and sadness that is from God. You have now passed over into a holy devout exaltation, into a vibrant spiritual joy in the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is not so much that past sins remembered give pain, as the memory delights and influences the desire for eternal rewards. You are indeed happy, and I call myself blessed today in that I share in your joy.

1299: However, my tongue is not free except to serve the most bold dispositions of your and my heart. You are running along quite well: I have to feel joy, and I must congratulate you. I cannot hold back from exhorting you to move your bodies along toward heaven, even to touch the blessed goal toward which you tend, without ever going back to retrace one's steps. I exhort you not even to give a glance at this unhappy earth, from which, as a sorrowful bitter place, you have by now much distanced yourselves.

[1. *Seek what is above!*]:

1300: If you have risen with Christ, I have to take on the sonorous expressions of St. Paul and put them on my own lips:*Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God... [Col 3:1] -mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth... [v. 2]. - ...for you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God... [v. 3].*

Here are two very strong reasons for this: I will only try to explain them to you. I promise you on such a day of much joy that my sermon will have much consolation, and as is my custom, it will be brief.

[a. Be dead to sin!]:

1301: First of all, *you are dead*. There are various kinds of death. Bodily death: according to this, Abraham, being dead, yet was not dead, since God [the Gospel speaks, Mt 22:32] is not a God of the dead, but of the living. Then, there is the death of the soul. Christ alluded to this in His saying: *...let the dead bury their dead...* [Mt 8:22]. Another, very praise-worthy death is that which comes from virtue, of which the Doctor of the Gentiles writes in this same place: *...Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth...* [Col. 3:5]. There is still another death, the cause of the antecedent one. This is achieved in Baptism, or in Penance, which is a laborious Baptism. It is of this that St. Paul wishes to have you understand how it is that you are *dead*.

1302: He explains this quite well himself in the Letter to the Romans: *...For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?* [Rm 6:2]. This is about the subject of this death. And what does it mean to be *dead to sin*? It means not to make any more use of sin. Baptism has accomplished this once, and Penance has renewed it: it has put us to death to sin. It is necessary now to carry this death out with our solicitude, that whatever sin should command us, or evil passion, perverse affection, we are not to be obedient, but to be totally deaf to it all. We will thus be as dead, and let us persevere immobile.

[b. No wrong to others]:

1303: A person who is deceased, is said to be a Saint ⁶⁹, never speaks badly of another. The dead do no injury, violence, offer no calumny, oppress no one. They show no envy toward the good, and do not insult the evil. Luxury does not pamper their flesh, nor do they burn with hatred. They do not adulate the powerful and the rich of this world, nor are they attracted by a restless curiosity. They do not seek the applause of the crowds that surround them. They do not chase after gold or silver, or rich, and pompous trappings. They do not cultivate honors, and do not respond to injuries. Pride does not swell them up, ambition does not vex them, and vain glory does not agitate them. The false wealth of this life does not elevate them, the insane fury of wrath does not perturb them. The frail beauty of a face does not fascinate them. This is what it means to be dead, dead to sin: not to be spent on earthy attractions, animal-like affections, the desires of this world and of the flesh.

[c. Dead through Baptism, Penance]:

1304: The Apostle continues: *...Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death...?* [cf. Rm 6:3]. [You add to this: or washed in the blood

⁶⁹ cf. Cornelius a Lapide, in Col 3:3; Rodriguez [t. 3, tr. 1, 23, 2 (99)].

of Christ, or Penance]. This is the manner of such a death: Baptism and Penance are our Cross. This is also our sepulcher. We are, in fact, the Apostle continues: *...for we are buried together with Him by Baptism unto death...* [v. 4]. This is so that each one of us would die as he has died, although not in the same way, he has died in the flesh and was buried; we are meant to be both of these in regard to sin. Both of these are 'death', but not of the same subject. The death of the flesh, that is Christ's death to sin, is ours: and both the former, as well as the latter, are true *death*. However, even though this is true, it is fitting that we should still contribute all that activity that is expected on our part. Thus, the Apostle adds: *... that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life...* [v. 4].

[d. Resurrection through Conversion]:

1305: Having thus proposed the future resurrection, St. Paul requires another resurrection of us, a new institution in the present life, for the changing of our ways. When, in fact, a fornicator becomes chaste, or an avaricious person becomes merciful, or a wrathful individual becomes meek, there takes place in these instances a *resurrection* which is the principle of the future. And how is this a resurrection? Because one dies to sin, and resurrects to justice. The former way of life is cancelled, and the new and angelic way almost flourishes anew. Thus, we can say with St. ANSELM ⁷⁰: intemperance has died in such a person, and sobriety has risen up; in that young man impurity has died, and purity has risen. In that woman, uncleanness has died, and modesty has arisen. On hearing *new life*, let each one seek out in himself much diversity, and great changes.

[e. Going back to flesh-pots of Egypt]:

1306: However, the thought of how much virtue the Apostle might ask of us makes one weep, especially in seeing how much weakness there is in us. After Baptism, we have gone back and aged in the old vices, and after the Manna from heaven, we have again sought out the vile food of Egypt. Even, we have been rejuvenated so many times and liberated from slavery, and we have fallen right back into that sad old age of sin, and once more put our hands freely within chains. Now, however, in this Easter we have once more risen to grace and died to sin. Do we not now wish no longer to abuse such mercy, and to persevere with every effort?

1307: Would that past sins, I repeat this, and never could sufficiently: would that all past sins were buried, as this is the gift of grace. Would that after penance, we would keep ourselves as dead. This is the challenge for our commitment, although we see that even in this, grace must help us very much. Penance does not only cancel previous sins, but also confirms one against future lapses. As we have employed in the sacrament what is our part, namely contrition, the accusation and the will to make satisfaction - so,

⁷⁰ Cited by Cornelius a Lapide, Col 3:3.

we also for the future, commit the care of our dedication not to become contaminated anew.

[f. Through Burial of our Sins, we rise with Him]:

1308: This is the counsel of our apostle, and he proceeds: ... *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection...* [Rm 6:5]. With this word *planting*, there is implied also the eventual fruit that is expected in us and from us. Just as the Body of Christ buried in the ground, had for its fruit the salvation of the world - so we, too, planted anew in Penance, we have borne the fruit of justice, of adoption, of sanctification, and of numberless gifts. We will bear also later on the gift of the resurrection.

1309: All this while our lives are hidden with Christ in God [Col 3:3]. As this fruit of blessedness is to be produced, it is necessary to let it come to maturity. We could still say much about this plant of death, but already without even being aware of it, we have touched upon the more joyful motive of the fruit of life. This, too, contains some difficulties at first sight to understand it, so cutting this out of love for brevity, with just the idea dropped, let us move on in haste to the **second thought**.

[2. New Life: Life of Grace

1310: And let us see right away how there might be explained this hidden aspect of our life with Christ in God. Our brand new life is the life of grace that we possess. It is the life of glory that we await. Both of these are hidden from the eyes of the world. The world has no knowledge of this new kind of life, that is interior, spiritual and holy. In fact, the world thinks of it with abhorrence, and esteems it as melancholic and death. Furthermore, such a life proceeds covered under the humble veil of mortification, of apparent sadness and of corporal tribulations. And grace, the virtues, and the gifts, that are like the soul of this life, remain intimate in the spirit, and enclosed in the mind.

1311: And the good, points out the Holy Father, AUGUSTINE ⁷¹, the good remain hidden because their good is concealed. What they love is neither visible, nor corporal. And thus, their merits are held back in secret, as are their rewards.

St. GREGORY THE GREAT also explains to you how these virtuous individuals are hidden in God. Thus, he writes in the Gift Book of his *Moralia* ⁷²: Anyone who loves to mortify himself, rejoices much in the repose afforded in contemplation. Such a person is dead to this world, and is shielded from all the perturbations of human realities in the bosom of the interior life where he remains in obscurity.

⁷¹ *Enarr. In Ps 53:3* [t. 4, p. 493 g].

⁷² 5. 5 [t. 1, p. 91, 1 B].

1312: To cite still another example, CORNELIUS a LAPIDE ⁷³ relates the story of the Holy Count, Eleazar, immobile in his mountainous solitude, lived there a celibate life with his virgin wife, Delphina. She sent him letters to find out how he was getting along. He responded: I am healthy of body and safe. **If you wish to see me, look for me in the wound of the side of Christ. For it is there that I dwell; and here it will be easy to find me. You will search in vain in any other place.**

Do you see, my hearers, **the just idea of a person risen with Christ?** Could such a person even yearn for the lowly realities of this life? Could such a one seek for anything else in this life, other than the supernatural and heavenly goods, among which he will live eternally?

[3. Life of Glory is unseen]:

1313: But, precisely this life of glory, in the hope of which we now glory, is much less known and seen by the world. Similarly, there is not seen the glorious life to which Christ has risen, and of which He lives in God, that is, near His Father. This is why St. Paul states [Col 3:3, ff.] that our life is hidden with Christ in God: *...When Christ shall appear, who is your life [i.e., the cause of your life], then you shall also appear with Him in glory... [v. 4].* This is just like the pearl, says St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ⁷⁴, whose end is hidden as it is in its shell.

[a. Spiritual Winter gives way to a New Spring-time]:

1314: Even more fitting is the example that St. AUGUSTINE ⁷⁵ uses to dilucidate this passage, that later St. ANSELM [100] would copy. In the bitter **winter** even the green tree seems dry to the sight. As the summer approaches, the living root once again is vested with fruit. This is our life, that is much like that **winter**, when the sun is further away from us and concealed behind the clouds. This sun for us is Christ.

[b. New Life in Christ]:

1315: We are much like the plants, dry on the outside, and without foliage, without honor, and without the appearance, or the luster of beauty. However, within we have living roots: charity, planted in God, as in a vital, stable, and living earth. The summer will appear, as the glory of Christ comes. And the plants will be seen to come to life again, rising up, and once more give their fruits and vital foliage. There will be the glorious traits of beatitude, both in the spirit as well as in the flesh. Come on now,

⁷³ Col 3:3.

⁷⁴ *In Epist. Ad Col.* Hom 7, 2 [t. 11, p. 227/2 D].

⁷⁵ cf. *De Script. Vet. et Nov., Test.*, Serm. 36, 4. [t. 5/1, pp. 176 G, ff.].

exclaims St. AUGUSTINE [104], come now, most sweet Jesus, that this pact with You be a firm one for me: that I might die totally to myself so that You alone might dwell within me. Within, totally in recollection, I will keep silence, so that You alone might speak in me. I will be totally at repose, so that You alone might work in me. The Apostle cries out: *... And I live now, not I; but Christ lives in me...* [Ga 2:20].

1316: And in another place: *...But our conversation is in heaven...* [Ph 3:20]. And: *...But you are not in the flesh..* [Rm 8:9]. And again: *... having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ ...* [Ph 1:23]. These are some of the sublime affections of a person dead to sin, one who no longer has a taste for the things of this earth. These **are the sublime feelings of a spirit living hidden together with Christ in God**. Such a person seeks only the **superior realities, those that are of heaven, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God** [Col 3:1]. These are the sweet transports of a heart ravished by the sweet joy of these holy thoughts.

[4. Reasons for Joy: Risen with Christ]:

1317: You, though, my hearers, you also prove how true is that which I promised you at the beginning: that my sermon should have been a reason for much joy among you. And so, to keep my word perfectly of abbreviating it as much as possible, I will soon conclude [and I can do this handily, and you are absolutely right, wise that you are!]. At any rate, it is totally fitting for you and with all diligence to persevere in your holy proposal to tend in a lively way, toward heaven, without even turning an eye to this earth. If you have indeed **risen with Christ**, seek those realities that are above you, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God: taste those heavenly goods and not the earthly ones [Col 3:1, ff.].

1318: Heavenward, then, my beloved brothers and sisters, to heaven your thoughts, to heaven direct your affections. Elevate your hearts to heaven, where your treasure is, where your glory is, where your life is. The riches of this earth will flatter you, its honors will enchant you, all of which this earth offers you. But, this is not your life. When our life will indeed appear, we will then seek the delights, the leisure, the repose. And then we will find the riches, but without thorns; the pleasures, but without sadness; the honors, but without jealousies. We will be inebriated by the divine delights [Ps 35:9]. And we will be seated in the beauty, in the tranquil order of peace [Is 32:18]. And in the very bosom of God we will have rest from our fatigue, without any necessity to disturb us, without adversities that wear us down, without upsetment that would disturb us.

1319: In the meanwhile, as long as our life remains hidden, let us be content with keeping ourselves, and even being considered to be dead: *...we have been crucified to the world, and the world is a crucifix for us...* [Ga 6:14]... thus, we will mortify ourselves

as the apostle goes on to say: *...mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth...* [Col 3:5]. He means: you are already dead; persevere in this death by mortification.

1320: Mortify in you the members of the old man, the sinner in Adam [Col 3:5, ff.]- these members are the passions, that even after Penance, they come to life again with their acts which are, as he explains immediately, fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols [v. 6]. For all these, there comes, or has come, the wrath of God upon the children of incredulity, reveals to the sight of God and to the Gospel: *...in which you also walked some time, when you lived in them...* [v. 7].

1321: *...What fruit, therefore, had you,. Then, in those things of which you are now ashamed...* [Rm 6:21]. Would you like, then, to return to your vomit? Exhume your sin, put yourself back into slavery, throw away the most copious redemption of Jesus Christ? Would you annul the price of so much Blood, call down this Blood upon yourselves, with all the intolerable weight of His wrath? Would you exchange the supreme future goods that have been promised to you, for the abysmal evils from which God has dug you out? Would you choose rather the glory of your state, an eternal shame; the rights for an inheritance, for a sentence of condemnation? Would you swap divine filiation and its honor for infamy, for a brute-like life? Would you prefer the flesh to the spirit, the earth to heaven, paradise for hell?

[Conclusion: Onward to heaven!]:

1322: No, of course not! To heaven, to eternal life, to heaven, you have been called. You are already well along your way, and moving along with giant steps. Follow through to the goal, to your heavenly home. You have been enrolled by God for an eternity to be the citizens of heaven, domestics, heirs of God. Upward, then, with all vigor, with all your strength, hurry onward, hasten your steps. The saints await you, already sure as they are of their happiness and solicitous also for yours. Christ awaits you, and has already prepared a place for you - rather, a throne. Why do you hesitate, why look anymore to earth, to heaven, to heaven! **If you have risen with Christ...**

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SOURCES

OT

Ps 35:9	# 1318	Is 32:18	# 1318
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NT

Mt 8:32	# 1301	Ph 1:23	# 1316
22:32	# 1301	3:20	# 1316
Rm 6:2	# 1302	Col 3:1, ff.	# 1317
3	# 1304	1	## 1300;1316
4	# 1304	2	# 1300
5	# 1308	3	## 1300; 1309; 1313
21	# 1321	4	# 1313
8:9	# 1316	5	## 1301; 1319; 1320
Ga 2:20	# 1315	6	# 1320
6:14	# 1319	7	# 1320

FATHERS

St. AUGUSTINE, *Ennarr. In Ps 53:3*. [t.4, p. 493 G] # 1311

De Script. Vet. et Nov. Test. Sermon 36, 4 [t.5/1, pp. 176/G ff.] ## 1314;1315

St. GREGORY the GREAT, *Moralia*, Bk 5, 5 [t. 1, p. 97/ 1 B] # 1311

DOCTORS

St. ANSELM [Col 3:3 - cited by Cornelius a Lapide] # 1305

[Uses Augustine's idea of the cold winter in the spiritual life] # 1314

OTHER AUTHORS

CORNELIUS a LAPIDE, *In Col 3:3*. ## 1303; 1305; 1312

RODRIGUEZ, *Christian Perfection*. [t. 2, tr. 1, 23, 2] # 1303

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SERMON 5

The Ascension

Preached in the Parish Church of St. Paul's in the Campo Marzio section of Verona, on the 14th day of May in the year 1801.

[Introduction: Preparing a Place for us!]

At the harmonious sound of the angelic trumpets [Ps 46:6], at the joyful jubilation, Jesus in triumph ascends toward His Kingdom. I am quire sure, devout

listeners, that you, too, direct your yearning on this day toward heaven. There you have affixed your hearts where indeed is guaranteed happiness ⁷⁶, where there is perfect beatitude and where peace is eternal. You are indeed exultant, animated by these noble promises with which Jesus consoled you before His departure, when He said: *.../ go to prepare a place for you...* [*Jn 14:2*]. Indeed, your affections have been inspired and placed on such a sublime level.

500: But look, it would not be terribly offensive to your inspired charity to direct a compassionate regard toward so many of your brothers and sisters. They, too, are participants with you in the same promises, and yet, they are discouraged with their eyes lowered. The reason is that they are afraid of being forced to give up those wretched delights that they still badly enjoy. They make no effort, therefore, or they lack the confidence to lift up their eyes boldly toward heaven to where they have also been called.

501: PROPOSITION

As for me, I have to confess, the pain that I feel at their loss does not allow me to do anything other than to direct my words up this day for their salvation. In order to shake them up, I will make clear to them just how stupid it is for anyone to deliberately enjoy the present goods at the cost of an irreparable future good. You should not refuse to extend your helping hands in the form of your most fervent prayers. If you do, then I have absolutely no doubt that we will succeed in lifting them up out of their most sorry abjection.

[1. The Choice: Time - or, Eternity?]:

502: 1. The first point is that one should come to elect quality goods in contrast with those that are excessively inferior; in other words, the choice is between short-lived goods as against those that are eternal.

Let us imagine, then, my brother or sister in sin, that you could accept as directed to you all my words this day. Let us just imagine for a little while that it were possible for us to choose one of these two realities: either to enjoy for a single night a pleasant dream, and then on awaking the next day, to be confronted with a series of misfortunes that should have to last the rest of your life; or, to go without that very brief and only apparent sweetness, and even be willing to suffer a somewhat sad dream, but with the assurance, however, that there would be placed in our hands until death all the goods that this earth could offer ⁷⁷.

⁷⁶cf. Liturgy for the 4th Sunday after Easter.

⁷⁷St/ John Chrysostom *Ad Theod. lapsus*, bk 9, t. 1, 8/1 A.

503: Should there be anyone, desirous of that vain happiness of a short dream, who would be content to lose an entire life-time of joy, then I do not know what judgment to make. It would be hard to say whether such a one making such an extravagant choice would merit the more to be pitied as imprudent - or rather derided as ridiculous. What else is this present life than a fleeting dream, a waft of smoke, a shadow, a vapor, that dissipates when confronted with eternity? The choice now is up to you: either to enjoy in this short dream some delight forced out of creatures, as it were - or, to enjoy a blessed life that would know no end.

504: That such a choice is given to you, you have from the very words of Christ: *...the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy...* [Jn 16:20]. And do you resolve to rejoice now with the world and thus lose eternal joy? And are you not ashamed of yourself to entertain such a sorry deliberation? What opinion can the truly wise form regarding your judgment? Is not this already some indication of that rectitude of understanding with which each and every one of you, to your great honor have been endowed by God?

505: But, I do not want to find any further fault with you in this since I notice that you already are beginning to be a little shamed of yourself; I can see that such an unfortunate deliberation has proceeded in you rather from not fully understanding the reality as it is in itself, rather than from any malice in your mind. This is also confirmed because I notice in other matters regarding which you surely have full knowledge, as regarding affairs that have to do with the necessities of this temporal life, you make use of prudent and praiseworthy counsel. Hence, let us understand well the quality of temporal goods and heavenly goods, and then all the more clearly will you perceive the ill-judged choice of such a determination. It is not just that you elect a delight that is at best fleeting, but even more you opt for a good that is only apparent over one that is authentic.

[a. Authenticity over Arrogance?]:

506: Apparent goods, over those that are authentic: Indeed, what are these benefits that are enjoyed in the brief dream that this life is, if not just that, goods that are merely dreamed? The avaricious person dreams of having his hands full of gold and silver - but, then with the new day, he gets up thinking that he is still clutching that wealth in his hands, but rather finds his hands empty. Thus is the way it is with the goods of this world, says the Holy Spirit - Who, however, speaking of those persons who abound in this, thus expresses Himself?

They have slept their sleep; and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands... [Ps 75:6]. And just as the illusion of a dream that does not render the state of anyone more comfortable than that of the poor person. He has dreamt that he had become rich, but this only increased his wretchedness realizing to his greater inner

sorrow that he was indeed bereft of the wealth that with such pleasure he imagined that he possessed. Much like this, the goods of this present time will never satisfy our hearts. This is an evident sign that such appurtenances are not all that they seem to be.

507: Just listen for a minute: what else does that emptiness mean that you experience after having satisfied your passions; after you have not denied your senses some pleasure that is really forbidden to you? What is that inner yearning, always desirous of other trappings, of ever new delights, over and above those that you achieve only after much effort? What is that regret that still weighs on your heart, and what is this restlessness that only increases, as your desires intensify even the more? Is it not that you are something like a feverish person who wrongly thinks that with just a little water he might be able to extinguish the burning fever, and yet seems to increase it even further?

[b. Inadequacy, or Perfction?]:

508: These are inadequate benefits, in comparison to the last end, which is perfect beatitude: But, I would like to point out that these goods seem to be genuine. However, they are not adequate for the deepest yearnings of our hearts: and this is why they can never be fully satisfying. Whatever delight and joy that might quiet our spirit put in motion by desires spring from the application of the faculties to objects pleasing to them. However, the object of any being, practically infinite in its desires, can only be an infinite good. How, then, can we want such insignificant rewards, that are so limited, for our satisfaction? If indeed our heart is as vast as another ocean, how could these little streamlets of water ever fill the immensity of its capacity?

509: O, but in heaven, only in heaven will we ever find an object suitable to our heart: a God, an infinite good. O, my God, only then, then only will I be satiated, when Your glory will appear [s 16:15]. Only You can slake my deepest yearnings with the torrent of Your delights [Ps 35:9]. This is why You have created me with an insatiable heart, that it might come to understand that it has been made for You, and that it will always be restless until it rests in You ⁷⁸. Human heart, understand your folly! Just to enjoy a passing dream, you would lose eternal beatitude. You chase after the shadows, vanity, and you leave the genuine good, Uncreated Beauty, you lose that God Who is everything.

⁷⁸St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk 1, t. 1, 69 B.

[2. Counterfeit Gain - or, Real Loss?]:

510: 2. In the last analysis, it is only a matter of depriving yourself of just a few counterfeit goods, and delights that are really base.

These arguments that I have advanced up to now prove of themselves that whenever it is a question of renouncing each and every one of the goods and the pleasures of this life in order to be assured of eternal blessings, it would be supreme folly to prefer the present over the future. However, it is not necessary to go this far. God did not forbid Adam from enjoying all the fruits of the earthly paradise: He forbade only one tree. And the condition with which Adam could have assured for himself and for all his descendants his felicity was so easy to comply with, that his bad judgment is all the more deplorable when he lost so much for such a small gain.

511: This is our own situation now. Are those delights truly honest ones, and are those pleasures truly innocent that you enjoy so much? If so, then continue to enjoy them. However if due to bad intentions of your mind, or if there is an unregulated manner in which you make use of them, or if you love them - you yourself make illicit what, in other circumstances, could become licit. Nothing other is being asked of you than that you reform your heart and that you regulate the use of these realities. Hence, it is apparent that you can indeed enjoy these benefits or delights in this life provided they are correct in themselves, or that they can be rendered good by your manner of making use of them. In this way, you can pass on to eternal joy of heaven, as passing over from what is imperfect to what is more perfect. What it really all comes down to is the necessity of depriving yourself from those false goods and pleasures which are already unworthy in themselves. The reason here is that there is nothing that can change the nature of evil that is intrinsic to these.

512: And will not your poor judgment be all the worse when it is simply a matter of giving up some very insignificant delight that would dishonor your right reason with its malice? Is it not true that you can enjoy abundantly other benefits promised to you? Why would you be willing to lose eternal delights which are promised to you and which, by contrast, and so incomparably advantageous to you? Even further, you really do not have to wait all that long, as in this life as well, you will be compensated with a superabundance of joy.

[3. Present Denial, and Eternal gain]:

513: 3. Because such deprivation will be compensated with an even greater delight:

In fact, even before condemnation to hell, a life of vice forms also in this life in its unfortunate followers, a very grave torment of bitterness and bother. By contrast, virtue is not slow in rewarding its noble lovers, nor does it wait long to crown them with immortal glory in heaven. But, it showers in the meantime with anticipated delights their entire life with sweet hopes nourished with pure pleasure ⁷⁹.

514: But, pay no heed to my words, any of you who perhaps is used to looking at a mortified and virtuous life as one of melancholy and sadness: I would not be surprised. The sick person believes that wine is bitter and that music is bothersome, while the healthy individual enjoys its taste and takes pleasure in its sweetness. As long as Augustine lay in the filth of his own pleasures, he himself confesses that it seemed impossible for him to live, in that he could find no comfort outside of them. But, when he made the generous resolution to hold back his passion from those unclean pleasures, he himself tells us ⁸⁰: O, how very quickly, how very soon was I able to experience the sweetness of being deprived from that vain sweetness! And those pleasures that just a short while before I had dreaded losing, were now a delight to leave behind - since You, o my God, You expelled them from me. You Who are true and supreme Sweetness, You ejected them, and You entered Yourself in their place, much more sweet than every supreme delight.

515: For this, you could very well believe a person who, after having experienced the bother of illness, the sweetness of restored health is made all the more evident. Let us conclude, then. If the deprivation of some benefit and of a very vile pleasure is compensated not only with an immense excess of beatitude in heaven, but also with the superabundance of joy even on this earth, then what is the extent of poor judgment of anyone who would decide not to give them up - even at the cost of having to lose forever one's future perfect and ultimate happiness? I leave this for you to judge and do reflect upon for a while, until I catch my breath, and then will draw this to a conclusion.

516: PERORATION: And now, sinner, here you are, and all are waiting for your resolution. Yes, all await it. We wait for it impatiently as the desire of all of us, for whom the salvation of your soul is as much in our hearts as our own is. God knows with how much affection, we have begged today for your conversion, and we have not even yet given up the most fervent appeals to obtain it.

517: Heaven awaits it, that I see opened up, above your head. Jesus is sitting there at the right hand of God [Ac 7:55]. He is holding between His hands a crown, and He is

⁷⁹St. John Chrysostom, *In Ps 124.*, 2 t. 5, 216/ B, C.

⁸⁰St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 9, 1. t. 1, 157/B.

inviting you to win it with the victory over that passion of yours. I can see all the saints, who are encouraging you onward to come to where they are now. Do not be afraid, they are saying, do not put it off. Even to us, this ascent seemed too difficult, but the grace in which we placed our confidence, has made it very easy for us, all sweetness, by extending its living arms out toward our weakness. Many of us living in this land have sinned just like you have and perhaps even more than you have. However, since fortunately in good time we have renounced the vain pleasures of this world, confiding in the mercies of God. And this is why we are now here to give praise to those mercies forever.

518: I can see that the Angels are preparing already to place everything in Paradise in motion for a new, most joyful festival, for the conversion of your heart which they feel is by now proximate. What more? Hell, too, is waiting, with indignant agitation and with fear of your resolutions. And I can almost see it yawning wide at your feet. This is the moment that decides - perhaps it will snatch you to have you lost forever. They are very much afraid, these enemies of yours, offering temptation that the vision of heaven and of so many eternal and incomparable blessings that are being promised to you, might in the long run move you to resolve to cast aside these very empty earthly delights, with which they have for so long filled your hearts' desire.

519: What do you think, then, what are you going to do? What do you decide? What are your resolutions? Are you still uncertain? Are you still doubtful? But, if you want to go on living as you now do, there is no need to make any resolution. Hell is for you. And I can already see that the demons are making even greater efforts to tighten your chains, while you delay making the resolution of escaping from their hands. Come on, now. If you do resolve, resolve in this very instant. The grace of God does not know of slow preparations ⁸¹. Have you, therefore, resolved to kick aside your unregulated passions? Yes, you have, I no longer have any doubts. It would be already an indication of poor judgment that you have not done this before; but, it would seem absolutely impossible that you do not do it at this moment.

520: Lift up your eyes boldly to heaven. Yes, heaven is yours. Already at this hour the Saints of heaven recognize you as their fellow-citizen. Jesus has already prepared the place that you are to occupy, the glory with which He wants to reward you. He already disposes the graces to assist you even unto the final realization. All the high-ways and by-ways of the heavenly city resound with most joy-filled chants and with most sweet music, with which they celebrate as a festival this most blessed moment of your conversion.

⁸¹St. Ambrose, *In Luc.* 2, 19. t. 1, 1288/ E.

[Concluding Prayer]:**521:**

O, my God, my Jesus! If this is the way it is, if this is the state of the matter, I cannot longer put it off. The proposal of this soul who hands himself over to you - by the words of a poor sinner such as I am, assisted by your grace - and by the intercession of so many prayers of such a pious and devout audience - have gained on this day even a single happy soul to be added to the squads of those blessed souls, like happy prisoners, conquered by Your grace - they now form the most solemn pomp of Your triumph, following Your glorious Ascension into heaven. If this is the way it is, then, I do not request of You any other consolations for myself, no other comforts in the hardships of my life and my spirit. This is enough for me, joined to the hope with which I trust that my innumerable sins are benignly condoned, I will be together with all of these, my devout brothers and sisters, after these few days, to enjoy your glory forever.

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Sources**OT**

Ps 16:15	# 509	Ps 46:6	# 499
35:9	# 509		

NT

Jn 14:2	# 499	Ac 7:55	# 517
16:20	# 504		

Liturgy

4th Sunday after Easter	# 499
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Fathers and Doctors

St. Ambrose, <i>In Luc</i> , 2, 19. t. 1, 1288 E	# 519
St. Augustine, <i>Confressins</i> , Bk 1. t. 1, 69, B	# 509
<i>Confessions</i> , Bk 9, 1. 1, 157/B	# 514
St. John Chrysostom, <i>Ad Theod. lapsum</i> . 1,9. t. 1. 8/1 A	# 502
<i>In Psalm 124</i> , 2 t. 5, 216, 2/B	# 513

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B. Three “Franciscan” Panegyrics by St. Gaspar Bertoni ⁸²

{I} Panegyric in Honor of St. Francis of Assisi, preached in St. Firmus’ Major Church,
Verona, Italy - October 4, 1808 [evening before?]

[Three Ages of the Interior Life]

[Introduction: Definitions and Texts]

1795:⁸³ Perfection consists in conformity with Christ: ... *everyone shall be perfect, if he be as his master.* [cf. Lk 6:40] ⁸⁴.

Since it is our intention now to expose with simple words, which are the only ones at our disposal, the sublime life of the humble St. Francis, to his great praise and honor and for our instruction, we need to fix our attention on the character of his perfection, and to distinguish its grades.

The perfection of every Servant of God consists in imitating the Divine Master. It was a singular imitation of Christ that forms the character of St. Francis.

1796: Wishing, then, to expose with simple words, which are all that we can muster, the sublime life of the humble St. Francis, for his just praise, and no less for our own useful instruction, it is not difficult to fix our attention on the character of his perfection and to be able to distinguish its levels.

The perfection of every great Saint consists in **conformity with Jesus Christ:** the perfect conformity with Jesus Christ is the character of the sublime holiness of Francis.

Perfection, which springs forth from charity and which finds its perfection in charity, consists in the imitation of Christ: the life of Christ is expressed His teachings.

⁸² St. Gaspar Bertoni: born, October 8, 1777 in Verona, Italy; founded Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus on Nov. 4, 1816; died, June 12th, 1853; Beatified on Nov. 1, 1975; canonized on Nov. 1, 1989. [NB: In the Franciscan tradition, there are two special homilies - morning and evening - attributed to St. Bonaventure [cf. *Francis of Assisi. The.. Early Documents.* A Three Volume Series. New York City Press 2000, pp. 508-524; Vol. II, *Saint Francis of Assisi. The Founder*]. Here are two panegyrics in honor of St. Francis, preached by the Stigmatine Founder on October 4th, 1808, perhaps following the same custom of a morning and evening intervention. Much of the text is in Latin, perhaps copied. [The texts abound in “pious exaggerations”, more in accord with the spirituality of earlier times].

⁸³ These marginal numbers were affixed to the copies made of the Stigmatine Founder’s original documents by the Stigmatine scholar of these writings, Fr. Louis Benaglia, CSS [+ Dec. 3, 1988]. These are collected in a typewritten five volume set, ***Monoscritti di Don Gaspar Bertoni***. Series III. Fonti Bertoniane. Archivio Storico Bertonianiano. Roma 1999.

⁸⁴ Since Fr. Bertoni’s text was the Latin Vulgate, the English translation used in these sermons will be: *The Holy Bible translated from the Latin Vulgate.* Douay Version.

1797: *Be followers of me as I also am of Christ* [cf. 1 Co 4:16].

Charity is the bond of perfection. [Col 3:14].

Everyone shall be perfect, if he be as his master [Lk 6:40]

Charity is the bond of perfection [Col 3:14].

Everyone shall be perfect if he be as his master [Lk 6:40].

Perfection, which from charity has its root as well as its accomplishment, consists in the conformity of our life with that of Jesus, our Lord. And since this divine Master *began to do and to teach* [Ac 1:1], His actions are individual to Him and of incomparable excellence, but they are expressed under the heading of His teachings for imitation.

[1. Variations on the Three Ages of the Interior Life]

1798: *The charity...is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us* [Rm 5:5]. When this charity is newly born, and still a baby, it still is similar to Christ according to all His precepts through the work of every virtue. This is the common evangelical perfection, necessary for all the sons and daughters of His Church, regenerated in the light of His Gospel. This charity, when it is nourished, and has grown and become adult, conforms one to Christ according to His counsels, through the work of supererogation, and of every heroic virtue. This is the perfection proper to the Saints, the heroes, of apostolic men and women. A seraphic charity in a wayfarer, which transforms one into Christ through the most strict and literal fulfillment of His every word, and by the most vivid copy of his every individual action, this is the perfection that is characteristic of the humble Patriarch of the poor Franciscans, the most perfect lover and imitator of Christ, who cries out to us: *be followers of me as I am of Christ*. [1 Co 4:16].

1799: For this purpose, as St. Bernardine observes, God places him to shine out in His Church in the dangerous darkness of the final times, so that he might point out in the way of perfection the manifest sign of every virtue, example, and scope, by which we are led back to Christ. St. Bernardine writes: 'so that against the dangerous darkness, he might show to us a manifest sign in the way of perfection, by which we would be led back to Christ, the exemplar and end of perfect virtue.'

1800: So, as I am proposing this evening his transforming charity, not only as to admire this most perfect life in the fitting tribute, but further that we might be led to imitate even more for the usefulness of your souls, it is fitting for me to do so.

Since we are in agreement that we are not only to admire him, but also to imitate him, it is fitting that we become instructed in his perfection and in his charity ... it is fitting that we go from the most common levels, to the more special parts of his life. So, I am proposing Francis to you, not only for your admiration. We are not only to admire him, but also to imitate him. Thus, it is fitting that in a way that is proper for our

smallness, then passing over from the better known realities to those more concealed, and finally to those that are the most mysterious - from the lowest to the very heights, even to the most sublime levels. We need to ascend by steps to the knowledge of his charity, to distinguish by parts the most sublime path of his perfection.

1801: These levels of perfection are explained by Christ in His eight Beatitudes, where the first three are meant for the believer to decline from evil; and the four following are geared toward exercising good; and the final one, is aimed at helping each to sustain adversities. The levels of charity responding to these are explained by St Paul:

- charity from a pure heart [in so far as it declines from evil];
- and a good conscience [in so far as it follows after good];
- and an unfeigned faith [in so far as it holds strong against adversities] [1 Tm

1:5].

Everyone shall be perfect if he be as his master [Lk 6:40].

Evangelical perfection which the Blessed Francis observed, and in the witness of which **Jesus Christ Himself sealed him with His Stigmata**.

1802: The state of charity is three-fold:

- the Lowest: which consists in the observation of the legal mandates;
- the Median: which consists in the carrying out of the spiritual counsels;
- Supreme: which is in the realization of the eternal joys and consolations.

Thus, **a three-fold perfection** is had; which distinction is found in the Scriptures: that of Necessity, that of Supererogation; and that of Ultimate Fullness.

1803: The Perfection of Necessity: ***You shall be perfect, and without spot before the Lord your God*** [Dt 18:13] [cf. St. Thomas for whom perfection is that from which nothing is lacking].

The Gloss adds here: 'without criminal stain'. - Prosper writes in his "Concerning the Contemplative Life": the perfect are those who, willing what God wills, do not acquiesce in any sins by which He is offended.

The Perfection of Supererogation: Mt 19:21: ***If you will be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor...*** Jerome wrote to Heliodorus: The perfect servant of Christ has nothing other than Christ: and if he/she have something other than Christ, such a person is not perfect.

The Perfection of Ultimate Fullness: Pr 4:18: ***But the path of the just, as a shining light, goes forward and increases even to perfect day.*** [this means: the resplendent clarity of the divine vision]. St. Augustine in his Soliloquy, 1: The truly perfect virtue is that reason which comes all the way to the end, where the blessed life is achieved.

1804: The first and the second perfection differ from the third much like merit differs from reward. The Median perfection differs from the Lowest level much like a consul is distinguished from a precept. All of these were in Blessed Francis, as appears from the reading of his *Legend*; all precepts as well as counsels refer to the fulfillment and the observance of that charity.

1 Tm 1:5: *Now the end of the commandment is charity, from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith.*

Decline from evil - accomplish good - and patiently endure adversities.

In these words the three-fold act of charity is insinuated: on account of the declining from evil, there is the 'pure heart'; on account of the following of good, there is the 'good conscience'; on account of the tolerance of adversities, there is the 'unfeigned faith'. I.e., a faith that is not fragile and weak, but one that is strong against adversities.

1805: This three-fold act of charity proceeds in two ways from the habit of the virtue: either according to the law of precept and of necessary, or universal obligation; or, according to the law of counsel and that of spontaneous and spiritual obligation: the second includes the first, and adds to it in so far as the possibility of the wayfarer would admit. So it is that the second level is said to be 'perfect' with regard to the first: however, with respect to the second, more advanced level, the first is said to be imperfect.

1806: Ambrose writes in his *Concerning the Offices*: every office is either median or perfect; which can be proven from the authority of the Scriptures. Mt 19:7: *If you will enter life, keep the commandments.* V. 18: *You shall do no murder, you shall not commit adultery.* These are the duties of the Median level, to which something is still lacking. V. 21: *If you will to be perfect, go sell what you have, and give to the poor, ...and come, follow me.* This is the Perfect duty, which the Greeks call *catorthoma*, by which all are corrected which might leave some still lapsed. [The saint treats these in *De Off. 1, 35, f. - t. 2. 11 B*].

1807: Therefore, we are treating of evangelical perfection according to the common acceptance, and we intend to speak of this Median Perfection.

From what has been said it might be gathered that evangelical perfection is the conformity of the way-farer to Christ, through that habit of virtue by which evils are declined from in a supererogatory manner, goods are accomplished, and adversities are suffered. In these three, three levels of evangelical consist, which the Blessed Francis perfectly achieved. In the mystery of this Christ consigned him with His own Sacred Stigmata as a testimony of his consummate imitation and evangelical perfection.

And patience has a perfect work [Jas 1:4], in fortitude and perseverance unto the very end of the cross and of life: *And you are they who have continued with me*, Lk 22:28: to the very end: for the faith, justice and virtue of Christ; in the assembly of innocence and of the rest of the virtues.

Bede commented: The one whose patience cannot be conquered, such a one is proven to be perfect.

St. Cyprian stated: Take away patience from charity, and one does not endure times of desolation [cf. *Regarding the Good of Patience*, 497 A].

Tertullian so depicts the portrait of patience: The countenance of the patient person is tranquil and placid, pure brow, not drawn in the wrinkles of wrath, or the furrows of anger; the untoward events this person sees as insignificant, expressing humility in one's eyes, not unhappiness, and this individual's mouth is sealed with the honor of taciturnity. His color remains the same before what is secure as well as what is harmful; he disdains the advances of the devil, and threatening laughter. His clothing lies in cleanliness next to his breast, and suited to his body, as one who is neither angered or inflated. Such a one sits on the throne of his most meek Spirit and most gentle, Who is not disturbed by upsetment, nor by the overshadowed moon. But is always open and simple in tender simplicity. Elias is thus described in the third level [1 K 19:12]. For wherever God is, there is also His student in patience. When, therefore, the Spirit of God has descended, He is accompanied by individual patience. [cf. *Concerning Patience*, c. 15, p. 70].

1809: There are three levels of patience: to endure patiently - freely - joyfully. [These are described by three military ranks:]

The One standing before the Standard [Antesignanus]: this is Christ: Lk 12:50: ***And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how I am straitened until it be accomplished?***

The Captain of the Centurion [Primipilus]: this is Peter: 1 P 4:13: ***But if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when His glory is revealed...*** etc.

The Standard Bearer, [the Ensign] [Signifer]: this is Paul: Rm 5:3: ***but we glory also in tribulations.*** - 2 Co 12:10: ***For which cause I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ.*** - Ga 6:14: ***But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...*** By this love and joy in the Cross, Paul was seen to be transformed into the crucified Christ.

1810: This is the way that it was with St. Francis, and thus he was impressed with the Stigmata by Him. St. John Chrysostom [in his *Hom. 1, 4., in 2 Co*] wrote that when temptations that besiege one daily are comparable to a cumulus cloud, the Apostle to the Gentiles did not act in any other manner than as though he were already living in the midst of paradise, this is how he rejoiced and conducted himself [cf. *t. 10, 253/2 A*].

The Centurion here is St. James: ***Count it all joy...*** etc. Jas 1:2 as applied to supreme good. Love, desire, joy refer to the good; hatred, fear, sadness refer to the evil. The remaining Apostles, Ac 5:41: ***And indeed they went rejoicing...*** - St. Bernard comments: Concerning the three-fold kind of goods: No only patiently, but also willingly, and indeed even ardently, as torments are comparable to ornaments, sufferings to delights, as the Blessed Andrew made clear.

[2. An Application of the Three Ages]

1811: The first level of perfection is: to decline from evils.

The scope of the precept is charity from a pure heart. Rather, since from disordered conversion to a three-fold commutable good, one might note that all sin draws its origin either exteriorly, inferiorly or interiorly. This order is in accord with the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life. These three are to be avoided not only regarding consent to their acts, as this is done by the exercise of their opposite virtues. But further, these must be avoided even as far as the occasion is concerned. And this promotes merit, as something expedient for salvation.

1812: Jesus is the Master of Perfection, and so to perfectly decline from the concupiscence of the eyes, He counsels that all these temporal goods be left behind: ***If you wish to be perfect.*** Mt 19:21: to perfectly decline from the concupiscence of the flesh, He teaches that every experience, or concupiscence of the generative faculty, be totally avoided, Mt 19:12: ***...For there are eunuchs,, who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. He that can take, let him take it...*** To perfectly decline from the pride of life, He suggests that the will be denied, Mtr 16:24: ***If any man will come after me, let him deny himself...***

In this three-fold supererogatory declination of the three-fold origin of all evil, consists the first part of evangelical perfection. This is what Sacred Scripture insinuates, and the authentic Doctors teach, and the Holy Fathers, the instructors of religion affirm.

[a. The First Part of Perfection] ⁸⁵

1813: The first part of perfection, then, is to decline from evil: charity is to be of a pure heart.

Every sin draws its origin from the disordered conversion to a three-fold commutable good, i.e., external, inferior and interior, according to the concupiscence of the eyes, of the flesh, and the pride of life. And these three realities must be rejected totally, and not only as regards their act or consent to them, as this can be done by the exercise of the opposite virtues. Further, these must all be avoided even as far as their

⁸⁵ NB: with this paragraph, Fr. Bertonini's basic text shifts from Latin to what seems to be antiquated Italian.

occasion is concerned, and this further promotes the merit and becomes an expedient to salvation.

Dt 18:13: ***You shall be perfect, and without spot before the Lord your God...*** Prosper, in his *Concerning the Contemplative Life*, noted: that the perfect are those who will what God wills, and they acquiesce in no sins by which He is offended.

1814: St. Francis was perfect in this manner, also while still living in this world, even before he knew of his own vocation. It happened that while he was wasting time with vane friends, immersed in vanities, and in his youth, he would never take hold of these vices, and he would not even desire those delights that were any less than innocent. He fled the companionship of the lascivious, those wanton sinners, and the vain. He was born rich, and situated by his father in the business world, he began to appreciate wealth. However, he did not place his hope in money, nor in the treasure of this world. Humility and meekness were the adornment of his beautiful customs. This is perfection, but only according to the precepts. ***You will be perfect...***, etc. Dt 18:13.

1815: But Jesus is the Master of Perfection, and in order to decline perfectly from the concupiscence of the eyes, which is avarice, He counsels that all these temporal goods be left behind. Mt 19:21: ***If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have...***

And of that other young man he never paid much attention to the fact that he had been born rich, as he was, and he was committed by his father into buying and selling, and understood what was needed to make a profit. Did he ever, though, place any hope ever in gold, which is so highly thought of on the part of other men?

1816: Rather, Francis was also quite liberal in his use of it, and very generous toward all. He also became a very merciful benefactor with the poor, even to the point of thinking that he had done very little penance at the request of one, and came to tears over having given but little, once being distracted as he was by so many business matters. Then, he actually ran after that beggar, and fell at his feet, and warmly asked him to kindly pardon him. Then, beyond what the poor man had hoped, and beyond what was his need, the saint made very liberal provision for him. And he was not even content with all this and so, from that time on, he obliged himself perpetually by vow that he did not wish ever again to deny anything that was asked of him for God.

1817: And it became his custom that when he would even hear mentioned the love of God, or heard about the deeds and sufferings of Jesus Christ, he would first feel himself shaken to the core, and this would move him to wish for the most ardent imitation of Him.

And how great was his temperance, his modesty, his innocence, that he sought no pleasures, or comforts, in conversations, and took part in no abuses? Even his

innermost desires, were they ever anything but the most innocent? As a young man, did he not remain gentle, loving, and even among his rather vain companions, and those immersed in vanities, in such a licentious age? Did he not consider every type of vice to be the most despicable and abominable?

And was not his humility great, his meekness, and were these not the adornment of his most beautiful conduct? And was not his detachment most generous in the face of riches?

1818: He managed all this while he was still being occupied in worldly affairs, and had not yet understood well the secret of his vocation. What would he do then, once he would come to understand it? What did he do? Hardly had he heard the voice of the Master of Perfection, Jesus, Who led him to know that to perfectly decline from the concupiscence of the eyes, or avarice, He counsels all to the renunciation of temporal goods [*If you wish to be perfect, go, sell,...* and so on - Mt 19:21 - *Blessed are the poor in spirit* Mt 5:3]. This moved the saint to sell what was his, since he was quite wealthy, and to cast it all away from himself, if not always through generosity, but with disdain, with a feeling of its abomination, to seek Christ alone. *I count all these things to be but loss...that I may gain Christ* [Ph3:8].

1819: What would he do? He would despoil himself even of his clothing, as well as the right of being the heir to his own father. He even took off the clothing that covered him in the presence of the Bishop in order to follow the nude Christ, stripped on His Cross. Then there was seen the very harsh hair-shirt on the flesh of Francis.

What would he do once he would hear Christ Who taught that in order to decline perfectly from the concupiscence of the flesh, not only to remove every such experience, but even to extinguish any desire of pleasure, even those licit ones, with a voluntary grief and mortification? It was enough for him to hear the message of Christ: *He that can take, let him take it* Mt 19:12. *Blessed are they who mourn* Mt 5:5. Thus one would see Francis with such scarce meals, so much so that it seemed impossible that he could hold his life together with so little. This was furthermore sprinkled with ashes to remove taste from it, and he would pour icy water over the heated vegetables. During his illness, however, he would consume the cooked food, but only in the more acute phases of his sickness.. Yet, his fasts were perpetual, that were even more intense in the six Lents, but were never interrupted.

1820: He traveled and did not bring food for the journey; when he would lodge somewhere, he did not accept any human care whatsoever. He slept very little: his bed was the naked earth, his pillow a stone, or a piece of wood: and this was his situation after having worked hard in preaching. Otherwise, he took his rest almost in haste,

either standing up or while seated. His dwelling places were either the horrible caves, or poor stables.

He wore rough clothing, even intentionally made more uncomfortable. These allowed his flesh to experience everything from the heat, as well as from the cold, and the greater discomforts of the seasons. His flesh was tormented by coarse hair-shirts, by harsh flagellation, that much blood flowed out from his veins. Under this punishment a number of times, he fell to the ground, conquered as it were by the excessive suffering of his body. And not content with the arms used to combat this, nor even being satisfied with some victories, he continued to have thorns, ice, flames, fire, to serve as his instruments for his final victory. Not even after his victories would he let up from crucifying in every manner his flesh with its desires, so that he would be all the more similar to his Crucified Lord out of love for Him.

1821: What would he do? After listening to Christ Who would offer the persuasion that to decline from the pride of life, he would need the abnegation of his own will, by submitting it docilely to others, in order to humiliate himself: ***Whoever would come after me, let him deny himself. Mt 16:24. Blessed are the meek. Mt 5:4.*** And immediately, Francis would be subservient to all, would serve all others, subject himself to many. He placed himself among the leprous as his duty in order to medicate them, to kiss them, and to suck their wounds. He would refer to himself as the General Minister of his Religious Community, even though he was its illustrious Founder. He renounced the Generalate, in order to depend in all things on a Guardian who was assigned to him at his own request. He promised obedience to his companion on the journey, considering it to be the greatest grace among all those he received from God, if he could obey a novice, even for a single hour.

1822: And so, to confess his wretchedness, his defects in the presence of his own subjects; and he would command them under obedience to repeat the words of supreme humiliation for him and embarrassment, which he would bring up about himself.

Therefore, the making known his own defects, his imperfections, he would note these also in public, along the streets, in the squares, gathering the people round to listen to him.

In a few words, there was nothing which could contribute to his greater humiliation and most profound confusion, that he would not immediately embrace. He was disposed in everything to contradict, to bring displeasure to himself. He was so capable in drawing upon himself in the most vivid manner, the obedience of Jesus Christ, and the love for His ignominies. ***He was made obedient ... Ph 2:8. He shall be filled with reproaches... Lm 3:30.***

[b. The Second Part of Perfection:] ⁸⁶

1823: The second part of evangelical perfection consists in two aspects:

The second part of perfection consists in the supererogatory pursuit of goods, which, according to a two-fold manner of live, namely, active and contemplative, consists in two possibilities: the first in a condescendence toward one's neighbor, and the other in raising up toward God by the activity of the mind.

The first: in a condescendence toward one's neighbor. This supererogatory condescendence of charity toward one's neighbor consists in this, that according to the laws of justice and mercy, signs of love and benefits are extended, not only toward one's friends, but even toward one's enemies, by means of a very broad benignity. Mt 5:44, ff.: *Love your enemies: do good to them that hurt you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you. ...be you, therefore, perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect...* [v. 48].

1824: Secondly, through this manner of directing the supererogatory action of the mind upward toward God, there is awaited in this, that according to the law of mental cleanliness and peace, through ecstatic love for the divine splendor and ardor, the devout mind experiences the sacred and suffers the excess. 2 Co 5:13, f.: *For whether we be transported in mind, it is God; or whether we be sober, it is for you.* - Heb 5:14: *But strong meat is for the perfect; for them who by custom have their senses exercised to the discerning of good and evil.*

1825: In witness to this matter, the Blessed Patriarch of the Poor, Francis, in the beginning of his Rule, proposes three values to be vowed as fundamental: the Rule and the Life of the Minor Friars is this, i.e., to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without having anything of their own, and in chastity.

He then commends another three values as to be desired, as complementary to the above three: Let the Friars that above all, that they ought to desire to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy activity; that they pray always to God out of a pure heart; and to have humility, and patience under persecution and in sickness, and to love those who persecute, reprehend or argue with you.

1826: And surely, wherever these three are lived, there is first of all the direction of one's activity in God - there is added to this then the condescension toward one's neighbor, and there is placed in the center, the tolerance for adversaries. Therefore, in the first three the perfect man is crucified to the world: in the following three, one is rendered conform to God, and as though on the six seraphic wings one is elevated from worldly concerns and borne toward the heavenly rewards.

⁸⁶ NB: Here Fr. Bertoni's text returns to Latin.

As a result, on this poor man, St. Francis, who perfectly observed and taught the perfection of the Gospel, in a seraphic apparition, Jesus impressed His own Stigmata as a sign of His greatest approval. He did this that He might show to us that on this way of perfection by which we would be led back to Christ, the exemplar and end of perfect virtue, against the very dangerous darkness of the final times.

[c. **The Third Gospel Perfection:**]

1827: The third evangelical perfection consists in the supererogatory acceptance of all that is adverse. This is attended not only in this sense, that one might patiently endure adversities that might come upon one, which according to the Law of God cannot be declined, since each is held to this. But, further, that each one should out of the fervor of the divine love yearn for adversities with a great desire, and with a great desire sustain these. Jas 1:2, ff.: **Count it all joy, my brethren, when you shall fall into divers temptations...And patience has a perfect work that you may be perfect and entire, falling in nothing ... [v.4].**

For this is indeed the consummation of perfection and charity Jn 1 [1 Jn 4:18]: **Fear is not in charity - but perfect charity casts out fear** from the ark of spiritual perfection.

According to this, therefore, the ark of spiritual perfection since it is within triple arched and double vaulted, is consumed on two elbows

1828: To sustain patiently - freely - joyfully.

All joy: i.e., all good.

- The honest, because the adversities make us to become conform to the image of Jesus Christ, Rm 8:29. They raise us up from the 'common': ***for I bear the stigmata of the Lord Jesus in my body ... Ga 6:17;*** we are raised up over the Angels, who cannot suffer for God. ***Strength and beauty are her clothing... Pr 31:25.***

1829: From adversities there comes to us a real good, utility, because they take evil away, that is, they remove imperfections: ***I will purge away your dross...*** [Is 1:25]; they do these because they eradicate their very roots, which is self-love. Stupidity assembles in the heart of youth, and the rod of discipline will put it to flight.

Adversities bring good to us: they expel us from this world and urge us onward toward God. ***And the Egyptians pressed the people to go forth out of the land speedily. Ex 12:33.*** - Adversities perfect the spirit in us: the intellect. ***So it was always: by day, the cloud covered it, and by night as it were, the appearance of fire. Nb 9:16.*** Adversities also perfect the will.

There is brought to us a delightful good, because adversities are the sign of predestination of the love of God and of love for God; the reason is that God sweetens these.

[d. **The Progressive Beatitudes: Mt 5:1, ff.**]

1830: As on a sublime mountain, the Savior and our Master has shown by the example in His own life, this mystery of perfection, He Who is the total splendor of perfection, the mirror and exemplar. Lk 6:40: *But everyone shall be perfect, if he be as his master.* Since He would teach His Apostles this perfection in accord with this significance, as in Mt 5:1, ff., He went up into the mountain, not addressing the imperfect crowds, but His own disciples, whom He had decreed to raise up to the height of perfection. And therefore, in a most ordered manner, He teaches them the eight Beatitudes:

1831: 1. ***Blessed are the poor in spirit:*** He invites them to the perfect abdication of temporal possessions.

2. ***Blessed are the meek:*** He induces them to the denial of their own wills and senses, by which one becomes rude and impudent.

3. ***Blessed are they that mourn:*** He encourages them to the perfect detestation of the carnal desires.

4.& 5. ***Blessed are they that hunger and thirst...the merciful:*** He attracts them toward the just and pious condescension and support toward one's neighbors.

6 & 7: ***Blessed are the clean of heart...the peace-makers:*** He draws them to action that tends on high, to be limpid in intellect, tranquil and peaceful in affection, by which the soul of the perfect man, is rendered in accord with Jerusalem, which is interpreted as the vision of peace.

8. Concluding with: ***Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*** By so doing, He has made a complete circle, and returns to the first beatitude, for in this one last one, the summary of all of them is completed.

1832: And through this, His seminal perfection of this small, representative world in the way of reparation and grace, directly corresponds to the healthy production of the world machine in the way of nature. Hence, since those first three Beatitudes pertain to distinction, the following three are embellishment. And so in this, as by almost distinguishing the first three, the powers of the soul are separated from the totality of evils, that there might be a pure and distinct being; the three following are presented almost as ornamentation, and they lead souls toward God, that there might be had a decorous and embellished being. However, should one descend to each one of these Beatitudes, in which there is clearly manifested such marvelous correspondence, and the symbol of such similitude, that there could be said the same as is noted after the works of the six days of creation: Gn 2:1: in the soul of the perfect man it would seem that all is completed.

On account of this, as in the place of the first three works, which are the foundations of the universe, and then their completion in the three following days, the first three Beatitudes fall under vow: and the three following, pertain to desire.

[4. **The Example of Francis and His First Companions:**]

1833: The second part of perfection, therefore, consists in following by the way of supererogatory works that good which, as far as the two-fold life, the active and contemplative, are concerned, and so is distinguished in two: The first in condescending toward one's neighbor; and the second in elevating the mind toward God. ***Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice.*** Mt 5:6

He preached with great fervor, and drew souls with the most gentle of manners. He began to conform himself to the apostolic life, rather to the life of our Lord, calling all to penance.

1834: With his first companion, he opened the Gospel three times. The first time they read: ***If you wish to be perfect*** [Mt 19:21]. The second time: you will bring nothing with you, only one tunic. Mt 10:9, ff. The third time: ***Whoever wishes to come after me*** Mt 16:24. Francis then comments: 'This is our rule. The Rule and Life of the Friars Minor is to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in obedience, without having anything of our own, and with chastity.

1835: *Blessed are the merciful.* Mt 5:7. He saw the world of his time so declined from rectitude, through the heresy of the Albigensians and the Waldesians; also because of the interior wars, bad customs of life, exchanging gentleness with licentiousness, values for vengeance, the abundance of fraud, a real industry of deception, and presumption over magnanimity. The Saint proposed the remedy with prayer, good example, and preaching.

1836: The difficulties of travelling did not hold him back, nor the contrarieties of the seasons, or his diminishing strength. Very few were the cities that did not hear him; and extremely few were those who did not find profit in him and wanting to follow him. At more than 30 candidates at a time were those that followed him. In but a few years he had more than 5,000 sons. The villages and entire cities would see him and follow after him, resolved to live obedient to his laws, and in his cloisters: thus, he instituted his Third Order. Simply at the sight of him, some heretics converted, as did convicts and thieves. ***He was directed by God unto the repentance of a nation, and he took away the abominations of wickedness.*** Si 49:3.

Italy discovered that she had been changed. She came to disdain vice, and sought virtue as its reward. Once more worship was rendered on the altars, respect for priests, and honor to God.

1837: However, Italy did not suffice for him: he wanted **the whole world**. As soon as he had seven sons, that he sat down with them one day to divide up the world. Let's go, he said to them, wherever God and the need of souls cry aloud for us. And while at that time all this was merely the beseeching of the heavens, a little later their number had increased, and he sent them throughout the world. He did not close his eyes before he had abundantly provided for the four parts of the world with such valid workers.

1838: He manifested love and rejoicing in suffering. There is no need for me to tell you again what his meals were like, or his sleep: and indeed, I feel no need to repeat the story of his perpetual fasts, distinguished in six very long Lents, but never interrupted. He would submit to the whip for any infraction: just listen to an eye-witness, Brother Giles.

If only he had had a healthy body... But, he, too, had to suffer physically: in foods, sleep, his flesh, with perseverance and voluntarily. Three times he went looking for martyrdom.

He suffered spiritually through compassion; **through his Sacred Stigmata, he found his every joy.**

1839: At the point of his death, he lay despoiled, naked: this was his living of Poverty: **Blessed are the poor...** Mt 5:3. He had himself stretched out on the ground: mortification: **Blessed are they who mourn** Mt 5:5. - covering with his left hand the wound in his side: he lived humility, and soon received a cloth for this as a loan, and lived his obedience: **Blessed are the meek.** Mt 5:4.

He admonished all to live patience and poverty, and the faith of the Holy Roman Church. Beginning to pray Ps 141:2: ***I cried to the Lord with my voice*** [and he expired at these words: ***the just wait for me, until You reward me!*** V. 8.

§§§

[Summary]

1840: This, then, is the path along which Francis walked and reached heaven: let us follow him, then, courageously, living in evangelical perfection according to the precepts - or, if God should call us to them, according to the counsels, and we, too, will arrive at the same end of imitating Christ on earth, and of possessing Him for all eternity. And let us set underway immediately, as the journey is long, and maybe the time allotted for us is rather short: eternity awaits us, without end.

1841: The second element of the second part of perfection ⁸⁷.

There is need to move upward in limpid union in the intellect: having become as a mirror of the Divinity, a most lucid temple, with an understanding of the sacred Scriptures.

Prayer - prophecies - ecstasies.

Memory: from the thought of creatures, he passed over to the continuous recollection of Christ.

1842: The will freed from any affection whatsoever, he cultivated only love for Christ the Lord.

Since they shall see God. Mt 5:8.

He realized a tranquil and peaceful union in his affections.

Order: ***He set in order charity in me.*** Ct 2:4. His mind was subjected to God, his passions subjected to reason. He hardly experienced them any more, after having overcome them. His body was subject to his soul, as ill as it was, it was most disposed toward the soul. For him creatures were subjected to humanity, almost as though in the state of original justice.

Will sit: ***And my people shall sit in the beauty of peace.*** Is 32:18. Tribulations were not able to separate him, and were not even to upset him. These actually formed the complement of his blessed state.

Since they will be called the children of God. Mt 5:9, because they submitted all to God with loving reverence. - Those who act in the Spirit of God, they are called the children of God, because they deal confidently with God. ***And His turning is toward me.*** Ct 7:10.

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⁸⁷ Cf. # 9953 of MssB

{II} **Second Panegyric in Honor of St. Francis of Assisi -
preached in St. Firmus' Major - Verona, Italy
October 4, 1808 [morning of the Feast?] ⁸⁸**

§§§

**[The Sorrowful Stigmata:
The Joy of the Con-Crucified Spouse of Christ]**

[Introduction: The Saint's Life]

1844: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.* Mt 16:24.

Since it my task on this day, sacred to the every glorious memory of the Seraphic Patriarch, provide some spiritual nourishment for your devotion, most beloved, I would not know how I could better satisfy this duty other than by guiding your pious and very docile attention along the most illustrious foot-prints of his life.

To speak of the heroic actions of Francis of Assisi means to speak about every virtue, of every manner of perfection, of every level, even the most elevated, of holiness.

1845: To speak of this most holy hero means to speak of the most perfect spirit of penance, of the most sublime spirit of the Cross, of the most enflamed spirit of love towards the Crucified Christ. Hence, how well to him might those words of Christ in the Gospel be applied: Mt 16:24: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself:* this is the spirit of penance. ***Take up his Cross:*** this is the spirit of the Cross; ***And follow Me :*** this is the spirit of love. These are the principles, the progress, the consummation of holiness The way is clearly marked for anyone who would want to follow it: ***If any man will...*** This is for anyone who would choose to follow this way, not trusting in his own strength, but in the divine mercies: ***to come after Me.*** All of this is to speak of Francis. To attend to this message, as I am not sure on your part whether there is fear of my insufficiency, but this is an enkindling to the imitation of one who indeed imitated Christ so well.

[1. If any man will come after me,let him deny himself...]

1846: *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself.* Let him deny himself: this is the spirit of penance. The effect of this spirit is to put to death all of man that is exterior, by denying himself what is his: denying those things that pertain to us. In the

⁸⁸ NB: in the MssB ## 1783-1794, there are some notes that seem to have been the rough draft of this fuller discourse - which runs here from # 1844 - # 1874.

interior it means, denying oneself: denying ourselves. One denies those things that belong to him by renouncing them. It is relatively easy to deny one's things. However, to deny oneself, means to leave self behind. It is quite laborious to give up oneself. That person leaves behind himself who sets aside that living the old life of Adam according to the flesh, in order to live according to the spiritual new life of grace. This is how St. Gregory explained it [Hom 32 in Ev. T. 2, 325/2 A]. This occurs because the man who lives of this spirit of penance is led to abhor that which he previously loved, and to love that which... and so on. This is the thought of St. Ambrose [Serm 26, 6. App. t. 2, 427 C spurious]. Hence, in practice that person is a good penitent and a perfect denier of himself who previously was intemperate and has become very abstinent: previously he was impure, and then totally chaste: once he had been avaricious, and now he is supremely generous. This is St. Jerome's description.

1847: Observe then the change: here is a man who was but a little while earlier rather wealthy, and was much respected in the public squares because of his fine business sense. He was all eyes, and all hands in order to accumulate riches that were not sinful, but they were indeed earthly. This same man comes rather suddenly to the door of a church among the crowd of poor people, dressed as a poor person just like they, in exchange for his new and lordly garments. Now he is seen to be all committed, totally fervent, and full zealous in quest for poverty. And who is this man? It is Francis. But, how can such an unusual change of his actions be explained? And there was an even more stupendous change of affections. Let us ask him himself: ***But the things that were gain for me, the same I have counted for loss for Christ.*** Ph 3:7.

1848: What merchant [Fr. Segneri so nobly and on his own comments this passage of St. Paul] - what merchant who buys pearls in the dark, replaces with them all his other gains, i.e., meaning his delights, his wealth, his reputation: then in the light of day it is seen that rather than pearls, he has bought mere glass. Such a man would not think of these quite valueless merchandise as a profit, but rather as a real loss - this was Francis. In the very profitable speculations of his merchant's profession he once contemplated his pleasures, he tasted the fruits of a smiling good fortune, he took his ease in the shade and in the breeze, happy in the vast credit and enjoying a good name, that the more this all spread, it produced for him many friends, and matured for him abundant means of every greater usefulness.

1849: All this took place while he was still in the darkness, as unfortunately so many of us are right now, who might nonetheless speak to their own confusion of their laziness and sleepiness: ***The light of justice has not shined unto us...*** Ws 5:6: We do not know virtue under its genuine light. However, since God would draw the light from that same darkness in which His servant was. This servant, then, cooperated in a powerful manner

in the spirit of penance and when he had removed from himself those impediments, he was brought to a more vivid light by means of the gospel teaching that soon was suggested to him. He then clearly discovered that his apparent gains were in truth, losses, i.e., they were clearly misunderstood: **on account of Christ**. His wealth was misunderstood, first because of the lessening profit, because they can promise to no one that they will acquire Christ's love; and then secondly, because of the emerging harm that accrued, taking from him the love for Christ to anyone who might have acquired it. And this is why it is said: **But the things that were gain for me...** Ph 3:7.

1850: Nor is this all: having been assisted by this light, the Saint moved on to consider as loss not only the things that previously he had that of as gain: his delights, his wealth, his reputation. But, he also came to see all else under this light, that was not Christ: the convenience of his high birth, his quickness of mind, his abundance of talents, and other such gifts and all for the same reason: **on account of Christ**. That is, it is because anyone who wishes these things, it would only follow, either that he would not aspire to follow Christ, or that he would abandon Him. **Furthermore, I count all these things to be but loss.** Ph 3:8.

1851: But, how did Francis pass over to form so resolute a judgment, which went against the torrent, so to speak, of the entire human race, which held all the more earthly goods in such high esteem? **He was one against the many**, something like a second Noah in his times, as St. John Chrysostom would say. How did he do it, and what path did he follow? **All was for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ:** Ph 3:8: he achieved it not through any knowledge acquired in the school of philosophers, but in that of Christ, and through an eminent knowledge of Christ, and this is one that surpasses by far all the other knowledge that is not of Him. And also, as part of His knowledge there is that lesson of renouncing everything [**So likewise every one of you who does not renounce all that he possesses, cannot be my disciple.** Lk 14:33]. This is not ordinary knowledge, but eminent, precisely because no knowledge is less practiced. To render oneself 'nude', so that one would wish nothing other on this earth than the nude Christ: ...for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ. Ph 3:8.

1852: So, this excellent knowledge led Francis to give up everything. To each his own, he set about selling all that he had, even from the clothing he wore, to the horse that he rode, and placed it all among the workers at San Damiano. To all persons should be given that which is theirs: to fellow-citizens, correspondents, and friends, and his relatives, from all, he departed without so much as a farewell. He renounced everything within himself, even to the approaching of a leper, in order to overcome the strongest repulsion with him, he even kissed that leper on the mouth. He did this so that he might the better put away the horrible attachments in his own life, so that he received as a

reward that ability of recognizing his most beloved Savior. To give up not only what he had, and all that he was, but he also handed over whatever he could have hoped to achieve, or to be one day. From the prosperous course of his profession, and from the most abundant means of his own talents that he had at his disposal: *he surrendered all*. He persuaded himself not only speculatively, but on the very practical level, that Christ alone could supply for all these realities. Even more, he was convinced that Christ could satisfy the more for all the goods that he was leaving behind, in order to have only the naked Christ on a Cross: ***all things are loss for Christ***.

1853: His was a most universal refusal. This was because it even included other goods which he did not actually have to give up, only because he did not possess them at the time, nor had any reasonable hope of ever acquiring them [such as these would be positions of authority, tributes, thrones, courtesans]. However, even at the hint of ever coming into the possession of such earthly goods, realities only as a mere possibility, all were in like manner rejected: he counted ***all things, all things to be loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ***.

His was a most generous refusal: this is because he not only renounced them, but he rejected them outright: *I count all things to be loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ*. Ph 3:8. Furthermore, it was because he rejected them all with disdain, much as would be done with things that are truly harmful to one, he would castaway: *I count all things to be loss*. And this is what he did with a brief-case that contained the price of all the goods that he had sold, and he offered it all to the priest at San Damiano for its restoration. And since this gesture was not accepted by the priest out of fear of Francis' father, these were all thrown out of a window by Francis, with such a noble and generous gesture of disdain.

1854: And it was not only done out of disdain either, but even with a sense of abomination, and one of the most high level: ***I count all things to be but loss***: Ph 3:8. He considered all earthly goods as 'loss': ***I count all things to be loss***. 'Loss' would now be all lascivious conduct, also because of the ill repute that these would render even among those far away, with such damage to one's reputation - and to those close at hand, who would note such bad example: ***The beasts have rotted in their waste***. Jl 1:17. 'Loss' would be all the profits from avarice, because of the filth that is so difficult to avoid for all those who would strive to manage these: ***The sluggard is pelted with the waste of oxen: and every one that touches him will shake his hands***. Si 22:2.

1855: He would consider as 'loss' the glory of ambition, which so soon and suddenly goes bad, becomes worm infested, putrefied: ***Fear not the words of a sinful man,. For his glory is waste and worms. Today he is lifted up, and tomorrow he shall not be found***. 1 M 2:62, f. ***The name of the wicked shall rot***. Pr 3:7. In this way, Francis gave

up everything and with generosity and with disdain. He presented himself naked before the Bishop, in order to more expeditiously hasten along and even fly to embrace no longer the consolations and the delights, but the Cross, and the Cross of Jesus Christ.

[2. **Let him take up his Cross...**]

1856: *Let him take up his Cross: Mt 16:24.* This is the spirit of the Cross. Not that he took it of necessity on his own shoulders, as was forced on the Cyrenean, but by his own choice, totally free, fully spontaneous. He did not pick up the lightest one: he elected the heaviest. Nor did he drag it behind himself out of duty, with protestations, or with a sense of imposition. Nor did he bear under it only with peace and resignation, or out of a sense of commitment: he carried the heaviest Cross with thanksgiving, with supreme, heart-felt joy, with indescribable rejoicing and happiness and exultation of spirit, and solely out of his grand love for suffering. This, then, describes his tender devotion even at the exterior sign and figure of the Cross of his Savior. He never bent over under its weight, nor for the long period of time that he bore it, or because of its overwhelming burden: he was always looking ahead toward his goals, always constant in his yearnings, he carried it, rather he raised it up like the glorious flag of his triumph. This is the way Assisi saw him entering as in triumph in the midst of his detractors.

1857: His own fellow citizens thought he was crazy, and so they not only shouted out against him and derided him, but they even threw mud and stones at his head and person. In fact, the **persecution** of enemies, St. Jerome notes [*cf. Letter to Heliodorus, 14, 4, f. t. 5, 30 C*], is the first type of the Cross, and he endured this to supreme degree from his fellow citizens and friends, even from his own father - and what was most painful, from his own Friars, as indeed from some of his first companions, he endured bitter persecution beyond all belief.

This tribulation permitted by God, allowed that His own Vicar [of Christ] at first would not recognize him and rejected him. Later, however, having been better informed in a vision, had him called into his presence, and pleased the saint in everything by granting the requested approval of his Order. A greater tribulation, however, was in God's permitting his own Friars to rebel against his spirit. This was for him the greatest tribulation, especially when God expressly imposed on the Saint that of authorizing as head of his new Community, one of the most seditious and turbulent rebels against him. These are indications of the secret, adorable dispositions of God, employed to try His servants.

1858: The **temptation** of the devil is the second type of Cross, and this was quite fierce and long-lasting. This came to him under every guise, both from within, and from the outside.

The Cross in third place, and the heaviest of Crosses, was the most severe **mortification** that he personally imposed on himself: very meager meals, from which he was scarcely able to conduct his life, and these were rendered tasteless by the sprinkling of ashes, or cold water on the cooked vegetables. He only made use of these cooked vegetables in times of illness, and solely in its most acute phases. His sleep was very short, and always on the floor, with a stone, or block of wood under his cheek, even after having been worn out in preaching. Otherwise, he would take his rest as though in passing, even standing up, or seated. His flesh was afflicted with rough clothing, that was purposefully rendered so. Such clothing allowed him to suffer from the heat, and also the cold, undergoing the greatest discomfort from the seasons as they passed. He tormented his own flesh with hair-shirts, caused it great discomfort by prolonged fasts, lacerated it with assiduous flagellation, even though he was almost habitually infirm, and languishing in his illness

1859: Still not satisfied in carrying such a cross, and one that was so heavy, he took it along with him to live among barbarians, in order to seek there something even more harsh and contrary to his nature, if something could be found to assist him to rise up. However, not finding even this, he did find another commitment to raise up there on his own, in his very love towards Christ. Since his love gave him great desires to be with Christ [*Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ*, Ph1:23], he **discovered a great cross in the sheer living in the world** and that life itself was a very harsh martyrdom. *The world is crucified to me, and I to the world* Ga 6:14. Here he is on his Cross: but love knows no limits.

1860: It was not enough for Francis to be patient on his Cross, while he was still alive: he indeed wished to be crucified, and even further, to be dead. *For I ...am dead* Ga 2:19. Love assisted him even in this: *For love is strong as death* Ct 8:6. In the end, he was indeed totally dead: dead to the life of sensation, dead to the world. A dead person does not see, not hear, nor taste, nor does he have feeling, or movement, he does not speak: he does not change, nor experience resentment, nor is such a one moved. This describes Francis with regard to this world from which he was totally outside it. His world was entirely interior to himself: the three-fold concupiscence, explained by St. John, 1 Jn 2:16, and to all else, he wished to be dead.

1861: Regarding the concupiscence of the flesh: so that it would die, he would role about in the ice and the snowy bushes. For the concupiscence of the eyes, which is avarice: never dwelling in the ins, and not the proper clothing to remove the cold, or his nudity, hardly a piece of bread to satiate his hunger: in summary, he had nothing of his own, but the yearning for death. For the pride of life: whether he joined the people gathered in the square of Assisi, or entered into the major church of the town, he would

be almost nude, other than his leggings, and a cord around his neck, he would let himself be drawn before the people in the public square as in accord with the customs of the time, malefactors would be conducted. Standing up on a stone, even when suffering fever and the very great cold, and seemingly close to death, he would nonetheless, preach to that people with great fervor and vigor of soul and would say to be heard by all: 'I am not worthy to be honored as a spiritual man; rather I should be considered as one who is carnal and gluttonous and should be rejected by all the people, in that in the most acute phases of my struggles, I did make use of some meat. In his preaching, he would shout so that he would be heard by all: may it die, may all my pride be put to death: ***For I ... am dead*** Ga 2:19.

1862: I am crucified, I am dead: but not even with all this has my life known sufficiency, if I am not fixed together with Christ on His Cross, and on the very Cross of Christ Himself: ***With Christ I am nailed to the Cross*** Ga 2:19. And how much clearer the Greek is here: ***Christo synestauromai***. With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. This means that his desire was to be **crucified together with Christ** - as though **in-grafted**, and **co-planted** into the tree of the Cross of Christ, as though to have in common with Him on the tree the sap and the life, i.e., the grace and the charity.

1863: Of this **co-suffering** and transforming love, the first effect is **union**, a cording to the Author of the Book, *Concerning the Divine Names*. And this is what St. Francis did, that he be united, and became as though one with Christ Crucified: ***That they may all be as one...with Me***. Jn 17:21. The second effect is **mutual inherence**. And this is what St. Francis achieved, so that he was able to say: ***A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me ... and I to him***. Ct 1:12; 2:16. The third effect is an **assiduous thought**. And this is what St. Francis realized toward his beloved Jesus, almost being ***as a bundle of myrrh...he shall abide between my breasts***. Cf. Ct 1:12, of the intellect and will, through a loving contemplation, Thus he languished and his love liquefied in the simple memory of his Crucified Lord.

1864: The forth effect is **ecstasy**: and Francis truly experienced this in that night in which from that Seraphin which appeared to him, as St. Bonaventure narrates, he would receive in his spirit an admirable ardor, and in his flesh the no less marvelous image, from which he seemed to be no longer just an earthly man, but a Seraphim of heaven. He became a living image of the Crucified Lord, with the **five wounds of the Savior**, as though **totally transformed into Christ**. And just notice that already, without almost even realizing it, I have introduced, as I now can see, what is far beyond, and almost as though led to the heights, of that perfection which totally consists in following behind after Christ, and which I have reserved for the third point.

[3. **And follow Me... - “the Espousals Principle”**]

1865: ***And follow Me*** Mt 16:24].

This is the spirit of love in following Christ: ***And follow Me***. Also because this which we have described here is rather a flight than a following, if it pleases you, we might continue now step by step, retracing the way, adapting our expression to all, so that they, too, might arrive according to their capacity to this height, or at least to measure it with their eye, in order to reach it in their own time.

There are very many who follow Christ as **slaves**, out of fear: these do follow, but from afar, and since they are indeed at a distance, they have no share in the secrets of their master. ***The servant does not know what his lord does.*** Jn 15:15.

Some follow Christ as **children**, out of a love that is somewhat self-centered in the inheritance. However, children are often more loved than loving: hence, they may even come to the point of disdaining their father, if he commands them to do some things contrary to their taste, even though these may be reasonable and for their own good, but they are difficult and arduous. ***I have brought up children and exalted them: but they have despised me.*** Is 1:2.

1867: A few follow Christ as **friends**, who base their love in the mutual communication of goods; but should there cease the sweet flow of these goods, due to a disposition at present still hidden, but which would always be in accord with a just Providence, and should there be substituted for these the bitter participation of evils endured by the friend: ***The disciples all leaving him, fled.*** Mt 26:56: these were the very ones who once declared themselves to be the friends of Christ: ***For all seek the things that are there own; few, the things that are Jesus Christ’s*** Ph 2:21.

1868: Very few are those who follow Christ as **lovers**, who in the early flame of their youthful tender love, they follow Christ everywhere He goes, whether to Tabor, or even to Calvary, and in the odor of His perfumes, of the internal consolations and inspirations, they even run behind Him; however, they are not able to keep up with Him, nor can they come even with His speed which presents itself as giant steps forward, in running along in His way. ***He has rejoiced as a giant to run the way*** Ps 18:6.

But the **spouse**, and **adult in the school of love**, is not attracted by the odor, but finds support on the right hand of her Husband: ***Draw me.*** Ct 1:3: on him, she clings, finding support in His strength, and keeps up with His pace, and with Him she not only runs, but flies. ***Leaning on her beloved*** Ct 8:5.

1869: And this is how Francis followed Christ: ***And let him follow Me.*** Mt 16:24. This does not mean just near by, but side by side; this does not mean just closely, but in united manner, but transformed. Francis did not search for consolations, delights, the gifts of Christ: rather he sought **Christ Himself: *that I may gain Christ*** Ph 3:8. The

'nude' Christ on the Cross, in His shame, poverty: and this was the ideal from the first motions of grace, he began thus where others hardly even manage to arrive. ***But the things that were gain to me, that same I have counted as loss for Christ. Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as dung, that I may gain Christ*** Ph 3:7, f. For Him Francis left behind, refused, rejected everything: not merely to gain love, service, the following of Christ, but **Christ Himself: *that I may gain Christ*** *ib.*. The reason is that from the outset he did not want anything less than the whole Christ.

1870: And oh! How he achieved Him, while he succeeded **in becoming with Christ as though one and the same spirit**, in such a manner that he could finally exclaim: ***And I live, now not I; but Christ lives in me***, Ga 2:20, and this by an entire and perfect transformation of love: *that I may gain Christ, and that I might know Him*, Ph 3:8, ff.: he achieved this by losing all of himself, in order to find his all in Christ. So it was that one could no longer find Francis unless with Christ, rather in Christ. Nor could one discern, I would almost say, even Francis as comparable with Christ: **disdained as Christ, poor as Christ, wounded as Christ.**

[Summary]

1871 A Saint so sublimely transformed by love - a Saint who suffered such great and frequent languor, ecstasies, refinements of love - a Saint, I would say with that expression of St. Francis de Sales, whom God exposed to the world through a miracle of love, could only avoid death by strength of love, it was love that kept him from dying. Just observe him at the point of his death: he had himself placed nude on the earth, and received a habit as an alms, and spoke to his Friars gathered around him, and he spoke to them of love. He urged them to love and fear **God**, that they love and fear also His **Church**. Then, he had the Passion read, and finally he began with supreme ardor, Psalm 141: ***I cried to the Lord with my voice: with my voice I made supplication to the Lord.*** And then he pronounced those words, v. 8: ***Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name: the just wait for me, until You reward me.*** Then, he breathed forth his soul in the flower of his virile age, the 45th year of his life.

1872: Much like a little bird, I would say, that had been enclosed in a prison by his master so that he might love it. This creature comes to be exposed one day to the flowering spring-time and in the orchard that will bear fruit in the autumn. The bird feels the open air of the country-side, and looks toward the green branches of the near-by trees, in the shade and in the gentle breeze, leaping happily as on a feast, and sees its winged companions, and hears their harmonious singing with which they invite it to compete with them. At a certain point, moved by a stronger love of freedom, the small

bird strikes against his gates with his head, and with his breast, in order to break out of his prison. Such is the spirit of this **Seraphim of Love**, hearing, I believe, the canticles of love which in heaven the Angels and the Blessed offer their tribute to God. The Saint was moved by a very strong desire to be with them, rather with God Himself, and so he struck, shook, flew up against his confinement with such vehemence, and with such impetus against his bars and the confining chains of his prison, that his beloved and loving Master was deeply moved, and finally made the move to release him and set him free from his prison.

Say with Francis: **Draw me. Ct 1:3.** He did this in singular fashion, because the level of his love with which he followed Christ is indeed quite singular...

1873: Therefore, he could indeed say with the Spouse in singular manner: **Draw me**, and could say with her in common: **Draw me: we will run after you to the odor of your ointments. Ct 1:3.** He could say, as I pointed out, in common with so many of his sons, who in number and in splendor equal the stars. They shine out gloriously in perpetual eternity. **Dn 12:3.** They have made for him a triumphal crown up there in heaven, or enlighten the living with the most pure light of virtue, the dense darkness of this world in which we are: he could say this to the many of his devout admirers, faithful followers, powerful imitators of his spirit in every state, In every condition, in every place, in all ages, in all centuries, in all times, and in the past, in the present and in the future, and thus, everywhere and always where this Gospel of Christ will be preached [and this will go on until the end of the world, in accord with the ineffable promise of Christ]: *If any man will come after me...* **Mt 16:24.**

1874: Yes indeed, Francis could say, and could say, in common with the Spouse: **We will run after You Ct 1:3:** It is as though he were saying: I will run in the odor of Christ's examples by which I am drawn. And they will run in the odor of my examples, which are not mine, but are those of Christ. **To the odor of Your ointments. Ct 1:3..** I could also add these words of the Apostle: **Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ 1 Co 4:16**, in the spirit of penance, in the spirit of the Cross, in the spirit of love. **If any man will come after me, let him deny himself**, etc. **Mt 16:24.**

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2126: [III] Panegyric in Honor of St. Veronica Giuliani
on the Occasion of her Solemn Canonization, delivered in the Church of the
Reverend Capuchin Fathers,
in Verona, on December 29, 1839 ⁸⁹.

§§§

[The Stigmata of Easter and the Eucharistic Espousals]

[Introduction]

2127: Much less does the Apostle forbid glorying in supernatural goods, provided that they give glory to God. 2 Co 10:17. Veronica had all these supernatural gifts, common to the saints and spread among them: *...but everyone has his proper gift from God. 1 Co 7:7 ; ...dividing to everyone according as he will. 1 Co 12:11*. And in addition to all this, she was endowed with her own most singular gifts, unique and prestigious. And yet, she never gloried in any of it.

She did not boast of her prestigious blessings of holiness and gifts:

Those of her infancy: she was a blessed pregnancy on the part of her mother, after experiencing many previous difficulties; she was born on the feast of St. John the Evangelist, the beloved disciple of Christ; she was baptized on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, as she was to be innocent in her own life: she received the name of Ursula, the virgin and guide of virgins; she never whimpered or even cried; three days a week she would consume a few drops of just milk, in the morning and then in the evening; at just five months she was able to walk unaided and was able to offer reverence to the image of the Most Holy Trinity; on the day of the Liturgical Feast: 'Hail Temple of the whole Trinity' at the age of a year and a half, she spoke to cry out against a fraud that was meant to be a go-between God and sinners.

2128: In her childhood: at the age of three, she already enjoyed familiarity with Jesus and Mary; her sense of enjoyment was totally immersed in her decorating a statue of Mary with the Child. That this was done out of instinct, not so much of nature, but of grace This came to be understood because all the delicacies bestowed on her she would

⁸⁹ This would have been St. Gaspar Bertoni's final public address - he took ill at this time and remained so until his death - June 12, 1853 - an invalid and for the most part confined to his room. [NB: cf. recent studies on this Capuchin Mystic: Aa. Vv. *Testimonianza e messaggio di Santa Veronica Giuliani. Atti del Congresso Internazionale di studi su santa Veronica Giuliani*. Roma, Pontificio Ateneo Antonianum, 27-31 ottobre, 1982. Roma: Ed. Laurentianum - G.R.A. Km 68.800. 1983. 2 Volumes]. [The level of self-inflicted mortification as described would be considered excessive, in the minds of many, perhaps due to the significant advances made in the Church in the modern theology of saints and the body].

use to decorate that image. She would engage in colloquies and simple conversations with the images, as her models. She would easily make believe these images were truly the persons represented: ***[Wisdom] was playing in the world, her delights with the children of men*** [Pr 8:31]. She was like Job in the time of childhood innocence. Mary began to speak from her image, instructing her in salutary manner. And the Baby, in like manner, and she handed herself over to the Mother to be guided. She appeared to her in the garden and she embraced her through her image. This information was had on the testimony of her sisters, of her Confessor, and from herself in her adult years. From an odor that she would sense, she would know when her mother and aunt, on returning from Church, had been to Holy Communion. In Church, she saw on a number of occasions the Sacred Host illuminated with the Infant Jesus. At four years of age, when Viaticum was being brought to her Mother, she expressed the desire to receive Holy Communion. [p. 10] ⁹⁰.

2129: The dying Mother recommended her five surviving daughters to **the Five Wounds of the Crucified: to Veronica, she assigned the Wound of the Sacred Side**. She was motivated by charity toward the poor, and miraculous gifts: she yearned to suffer, after hearing these prodigious words from the Infant Christ [p. 16], when she herself was just three years old: 'My Spouse, the Cross awaits you!' She came to understand these much better in hearing her Mother read the lives of the Martyrs. Her charity toward the poor was rewarded with a prodigy. She would place her hands in the fire as a discipline. Her hand was severely injured - and she experienced a wound in her feet. These defects of her youth, received by mistake, or through ignorance, do indicate her serious commitment to virtue.

She never gloried in the marvelous experiences she knew, but rather would always speak of her wrongful state for her age. ***What a one do you think this child will be? For the hand of God was with him.*** Lk 1:66. If you would ask the whole world, they might respond that she would be a great saint. But if you ask Veronica, she would say that she was not good, that she was an ingrate. But what can be said when to these special graces there would then follow unique gifts, and one would notice signs accomplished in her as indications of divine predilection in her regard?

2130: These signs are the supernatural gifts, gratuitously bestowed, which however often accompany the most outstanding holiness. Whenever a country bumpkin, or a poor shepherd girl would see themselves suddenly so loved and caressed by a great monarch: to the former such a personage would make the promise to make him important in his royal court, and to the latter was **given the pledge of future nuptials**.

⁹⁰ These page numbers are found in the original manuscript - referring to the Franciscan/Capuchin source from which Saint Gaspar Bertoni apparently derived much of his material.

However, since both of them are still in their lowly work and garments, how could this be done if they were not first glorified? Would they still not be considered as nothings by their peers, simple and poor brothers and sisters and neighbors? How would they consider them suddenly raised up, and exalted even beyond the more noble and the well of in the realm? However, even being raised up to such greatness the miracle would be their own not taking advantage of their sudden promotion, but rather never to forget their lowly origins. This is precisely a good comparison of the prodigy of Veronica's humility.

2131: She never gloried in the wonderful supernatural gifts bestowed on her totally gratuitously, as well as her common endowments, the customary testimonies regarding her holiness: prophecies, miracles, healing from illness. All these were ordained to her holiness, as were her visions, revelations, ecstasies, raptures, throughout her entire life. Hers were such singular gifts: such as the impression of the Cross on her heart, the Chalice of Jesus Christ, the crown of thorns, the **wound in her heart** with flowing blood, the **stigmata, formal espousals with Jesus Christ**, communion from the hand of Angels, of Mary the Virgin, of Jesus Christ [192], visible sufferings of the entire passion, an experience of Purgatory [203], a vision of the judgment [69], a vision of Hell [195]. She hid all these things to the best of her ability, in order to flee from the danger of being admired by her peers. And she was also very much afraid of deceptions, even to the very end. ***But be zealous for the better gifts: And I show unto you yet a more excellent way. 1 Co 12:31.***

[1. Her Special Graces]

2132: Common Gifts:

- Prophecies: there were often testimonies regarding her holiness. This gift was so frequent in her that it was said commonly in her Monastery that her words were almost all directly prophecies; in that they always seemed to correspond to the effects. She predicted her death in various ways. She once advised two postulants, with so much opposition, and facing near impossibilities, that they should enter the Convent. For two others, her advice was the opposite, even though they had already been assured of acceptance, and one was also already vested. She predicted the names of three Bishops, one of whom became a Bishop six years after her death. This prophecy concerned the young Fr. Guelfi, who was an Oratorian of St. Philip. She also advised him that he should go to his father far away, because she could see that he was already close to his death, and that the old man would be assisted by his priest son as he approached death.

2133: She predicted the health would be restored to others among the Fathers of St. Philip whose health was in a desperate condition. She predicted the birth of a son to Charles VI, although he would then die. She stated that the plague that had brought

near extermination to Marseilles, had ended. She predicted the healing of the priest, Fr. Lomellini, and then also his death.

- Her reading of hearts: [cf. c. 10 of Bk 1]: She did this for Bishop Codebo', who had consulted with Fr. Guelfi what should be done regarding the body of the Saint after her death. In seeing him, as though she had heard everything, the Saint said to him: Your Excellency, regarding my body after my death, do whatever you wish, and do not be so worried. She could recognize many times certain mental reservations, and secrets kept in people's hearts. She treated Fr. Crivelli, her Confessor, with reverential fear and great subjection, persuaded that he knew all that passed in her heart.

2134: - Infused Knowledge:

- Discretion of spirits:

- Miracles:

- Cures: she was once instrumental in the cure of cancer in the leg suffered by a religious Sister, who was enduring spasms of pain. She healed her with the simple washing of the ailing member one time. She also healed migraine headaches and other such evils simply by touching the afflicted person's head, and it would disappear. Another time, she encountered a person who felt that he was going out of his mind with pain, and she healed him with a blessing. A religious once suffered a sliver in her eye, which soon inflamed and created much discomfort. It was decided that she would have to undergo a very dangerous operation, but with a simple embrace the saint cured her. Another time a religious sister had received multiple and serious wounds in both hands: by simply reaching out to the scapular of the Saint, her difficulties were healed. And still another time, a young boy suffered a cataract in one eye, and he was healed simply by bathing it in water that the saint had used to wash her own hands.

- All such gifts ordered to her holiness:

- Visions, revelations, ecstasies, raptures that she experienced all her life.

2135: - Better gifts:

- The impression of the Cross in her heart.

- The Chalice of Jesus Christ. When Veronica was 33 years old, the same age as the Divine Redeemer. Before He began His passion, He was comforted by the Angel, so Veronica was by Christ Himself.

- A Crown of Thorns: Christ Himself placed this on her head. This Crown served as a clear sign that she was **to be espoused with the Lord**. The thorns made it clear that she was being called to be the **Spouse of The Crucified God**⁹¹.

⁹¹ This is the title of a very insightful modern theologian's book - cf. Jurgen Moltmann, ***The Crucified God***. NY; Harper & Row 1973

[2. The Divine Espousals of the Eucharist and the Stigmata of Easter]

2136: - The Divine Espousals: which is a certain, most intimate union between the soul and God, by the most perfect charity. It has been pleasing to the Lord to initiate this with certain great souls and to manifest it with sensible signs, and with certain formalities which are customary in human marriages, as with St. Catherine of Siena and with some other Saints of the highest level. To dispose her the better for such an honor, God generously bestowed on her many graces and visions: those of Jesus Christ Who comforted her and stipulated the **Marriage Pact**: visions of the Virgin Mary. Who appeared to her on a magnificent throne, with St. Catherine and St. Rose, assuring her of her approaching **nuptials**, and showing her the **wedding ring**, and teaching her about the most sublime virtues. On Holy Saturday Jesus Christ also appeared to her, telling her of her **Nuptials on the following day [Easter]**, and showing her also the precious **ring**. He gave her a new rule of life, worthy of **His Spouse**. She spent the intervening night in prayer, and Jesus Christ appeared to her many times, in order to purify her spirit, and to endow her with rich endowments of His merits, given to her as a kind of **dowry**.

2137: When the moment came for **Holy Communion**, in which **the Espousals** were to be celebrated, she was given the grace of hearing the Angels singing a very sweet melody: '**Come, o Spouse of Christ!** In her rapture, she saw two magnificent thrones, one for Jesus, and one for Mary. She saw the immense Heavenly Court: the two Saints were standing at the fore, as maids of honor. St. Catherine and taught her the ritual of that august function. These two saints led her to the throne and vested her in precious garments over her religious habit: the final outer garment was a white dress richly embroidered. Jesus Christ then began: **Come, o Spouse of Christ!** The Blessed Virgin then picked up with the following: 'Accept the crown...', etc. and with these words, St. Catherine began to remove the other garments, and left her in her religious habit. And there was shown to her the excellence of the regular life.

[3. The Wedding Ring from the Glorious Sacred Side]

2138: Then He indicated to His Mother that she should be vested in the wedding garment: and this was a most rich mantle covered with gems. Mary handed this to St. Catherine, and she vested Veronica in it. Jesus Christ then **drew the Wedding Ring from His Side**: the ring, with a gem on which was the Name of Jesus: Jesus Christ with His Mother then slipped it on her finger: then He blessed it. There ensued the celestial harmony. There was imposed the new rules of a more perfect life. Among its stipulations was that from now on her life would be totally crucified. He made her the mistress of all His treasures, the merits of His actions and sufferings.

2139: - Wounded in her heart, on Christmas, by the Baby Jesus, with a kind of arrow, the blood issued forth, and this was noted various times by the other nuns.

- **The Stigmata**, and the renovation of these at different times, and a prodigious odor which permeated throughout the entire monastery. The Sisters would know from this when the **Stigmata** were being renewed, and the bandages which covered these, gave this sweet odor to the garments in the laundry.

- A Participation in the other sufferings of the Passion.

- The multiplicity of the signs impressed on her heart: in all, there were 24.

[a. **Sublime Gifts lived in Charity**]

2140: *But be zealous for the better gifts. And I will show you yet a more excellent way. 1 Co 12:31.*

Veronica came to know well that one way can be excellent, because it exceeds others [and thus one arrives in the heights], because of its sublimity, rarity, singularity. This, however, is admired the more, but in it there is also the greater danger for the person who traverses it, either of taking vain glory in the praise that accrues from it, or of falling down because of its height. And greater, too, is the envy of one's enemies, as they strive either to incite one to slip, or by trying to deceive the individual by suggesting other false ways in preference to the true path. Therefore, all the less is the number of those who can be helped, or directed along such a journey, since there are so few who walk along such a way and come to know these extraordinary ways.

2141: Now, the most excellent path is that which is the most direct, smooth, secure, and masterful, along which all follow, and in which, in the final analysis, every path must be inserted, even that which is the most singular, if it is authentic. This is the way of **charity**, to which are subordinated all the visions, the ecstasies, and the like, almost like the sacraments in the Church, which signify and produce and increase, charity. Therefore, the Holy Church, in order to prove the authenticity of singular spirits, tries each one and observes with various trials, in order to ascertain their charity. Charity consists more in what is done than in the affections: ***If anyone will love me, he will keep My word... Jn 14:23.*** This is the path that Veronica trod. This is the pathway of charity, ***which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given to us... Rm 5:5.*** And this is why He is most excellently called ***the Gift of God. - Being justified freely by his grace, etc., let us glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God Rm 3:24; 5:2.***

2142: And Veronica certainly had every human reason to glory for these reasons. She was endowed with such grace.

And she did not glory in those gifts that render one graces: sanctifying grace, holiness: she was endowed with grace from the time of her swaddling clothes. She maintained innocence of life until her death. She was educated by the Virgin Mary and by Jesus Christ, and she was always instructed and moved by them right up until her very last day.

Her infused, theological virtues: in her faith, she yearned for Martyrdom; hope in which she desired death for the assurance of being united with Christ: ***I am having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ*** Ph 1:23. This was so needed in order to overcome the most horrible temptations. She would intercede with God in order to provide miraculously for the monastery. Her charity was so ardent that it extended even to the conversion of her enemies, sinners and the common folk.

[b. Her Moral Virtues]

2143: Her moral virtues [chap. 10], justice, and cf. there, also for her fortitude, temperance.

Her counsels of religious perfection: poverty, chastity [Book 3, Chapter 4], obedience [chapter 7].

Prudence: this is for guiding not only one's own reason, but also that of others. Thus, she was mistress of Novices all her life, and Abbess for the last eleven years, and with apostolic confirmation, while still serving in the office as Mistress. She maintained a gentle but strong government, in such a way that those who were her enemies became her friends. She was one who would have been capable of governing the world! This was the testimony of Bishop Eustachius. She exercised great providence in temporal matters, and great discretion in the spiritual.

2144: She was endowed with exceeding justice toward God, as in religion, promoting His glory, not only by making of herself a holocaust in religious observance, but even by converting sinners to God by the force of her tears and the blood that spurted from her flagellation. She exercised toward her family that piety, by carrying out that last wish of her pious mother, who consigned her **to the side of Christ**, even to the forming of her own heart with that of Christ, one heart alone. She was a source of comfort to her grieving father after the death of his beloved partner. She freed her from the horrible pains of Purgatory with the fervor of her acts of penance. She maintained justice toward her superiors, by her observance, obedience, placing herself always submissive to their orders and indications.

Hers was a rigorous justice: toward both equals and inferiors. She fulfilled all the offices of religion, from the least to the most sublime with singular exactitude, fidelity and diligence.

2145: Fortitude: Her heart remained always strong and constant even in the most bitter agonies, or in her battling with both visible and invisible enemies, or in the most harsh trials that came to her from human beings or which were permitted by God. By means of these, she used them as cement for her virtue and constancy. She used to say: my suffering is not suffering to me: my suffering is always compassion [218]. Temperance: She not only restrained her passions and appetites, but she had them so under control, and her spirit was so free, ordered and peaceful, that of her it could rightly be said: *...but the lust of sin shall be under you, and you shall have dominion over it.* Gn 4:7.

[c. **Evangelical Counsels and her Espousals**].

2146: The Counsels of Evangelical and Religious Perfection:

Poverty: From her childhood and as a young girl living in the world, she rejected all the pomp and fine clothing, of which so many of that sex and of that age are much carried away [206]. Out of love for the most rigid poverty, she chose the Capuchin Nuns: her tunic abounded in 96 patches, even when she was Abbess. She introduced the most demanding poverty into the Convent, and the perfect common life.

Chastity: she flourished in that hedge of penance: this was cultivated in her by heaven from her earliest years. With her **espousals**, there was the pleasing odor of paradise that came from her body, filled her cell, and everywhere she went. In her battles and beatings on the part of devils, and in her participation in the flagellation of the Cross, she was never seen with any part of her body uncovered. She possessed chastity in such an eminent level that she seemed to be the portrait of this great virtue. It seemed that she was a pure spirit, without the weight of humanity. And with her example, she manifested the will to have and to maintain this virtue.

2147: Obedience: and not only of execution and of deed, but also that of will and judgment. If it had been possible for her, she would not have wanted to take a step, nor draw a breath, without the merit of obedience. Invited by the Most Holy Virgin to the eternal banquet, she excused herself in that she did not feel she had this under obedience. And when commanded by Christ, and reproved because of her fasting, she never wanted to do any of this unless under obedience. Even in the harshest of her trials that came to her from other human beings and from the devil, she begged her Superiors never to use terms of what would be better, but only those of commanding and ordering.

[d. **In Fear and Hope in the Cross**]

2148: In such sublime virtue, she never fell prey to pride: rather, she always considered herself to be the greatest sinner, and not only in her opinions and words, but in deed.

I know that ***the fear of the Lord is the beginning of, and is wisdom itself*** Si 1:16. This must be maintained in charity which is perfect, which is also the sign of its authenticity: ***Fear the Lord, all you his saints.*** Ps 33:10.

However, since charity is known by deeds: ***If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him. And we will come to him, and will make our abode with him,*** etc. Jn 14:23 - then all the more is it manifested in suffering. The reason is that the *proof of love is the manifestation of the work*, and sufferings show charity radicated and solid in the heart: ***But that on the good ground are they who are in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word of God they keep it and bring forth fruit in patience.*** [Lk 8:15].

2149: However, the Apostle Paul does not simply concede, but praises taking glory in ***the hope of glory for the sons of God: Being justified therefore by faith, let us have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we also have access through faith into this grace wherein we stand, and glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God.*** Rm 5:1, ff. He then adds, almost this new grade of perfection to this good glory: ***And not only so: but we glory also in tribulations.*** Rm 5:3.

Now Veronica did not end by glorying in ***the hope of the glory of the children of God***, with the ordinary level of being just: justified, yes, but with the grade of the more perfect just and with the greatest saints she came to glory in suffering: ***but I will glory in tribulations,*** Rm 5:1, ff. She indeed glory in suffering: in the Cross, as can be gleaned from her love of penance, mortification, fasting, all of which were her Cross [cf. Book 3, chapters 4 & 5].

[e. Penance Lived]

2150: Mortification: she practiced heroic acts to overcome her repugnance of her very delicate nature: she had putrid fish brought into her room, [etc. 60]; she kept a cotton pad used to bandage an external ulcer from the infirmity mistress, which she chewed over in her room. As these acts displeased the devil, she noted that the kitchen utensils she was using were all mysteriously over-turned. Yet, her efforts were pleasing to God, and that it was seen that the food she was preparing was more mysteriously multiplied. The challenges in the novices' training she took on herself [62, etc.], even taking care of their corporal needs in sickness [63]. Her room seemed to harbor all the insects of the entire monastery, [ibi]. She would eat for herself even the longest kept left-overs. [212].

Fasting: the life of the Capuchin Nuns in that Convent was a perpetual abstinence from meat, and the fast was maintained every day, except for Sundays. With what she ordinarily ate she could not naturally keep alive, in the judgment of her doctor. The devil rendered this all the more bothersome with all kinds of creatures, such

as insects, mice, bed-bugs, blood-suckers; the Lord provided her with a liquid of an unsupportable taste. [cf. *Resitretto*, Book 2, chapter 5; and her *Life* 104 & 212].

2151: Penance regarding her sleep: her rest lasted usually about an hour, often interrupted by affections and disturbed by battles with the devil. Who tempted her especially in the night. She slept on the bare ground, or on a very low bed. On her bed, she often put thorns, or hard objects. She would sleep on a kind of container holding stones, and this for the whole night, and often on the hard bin containing the fire wood.

Regarding the flesh: in addition to her sharing in the torments of the Passion, on her own she added so many other practices that for her to survive it all was something of a miracle: she underwent terrible disciplines, for even as long as two and one half hours. She would mark her body with little wounds. She placed a kind of garment of thorns inside her habit, that she would wear also at night, and she would call this her embroidered gown. She would scratch herself with pieces of iron, she would puncture herself with sharp pins. She would hold to her body very hot plates inscribed with the name of 'Jesus' In the garden she would carry a heavy kneeler along pathways covered with ice.

2152: She would allow the hot wax from candles to drop on her flesh; she would sometimes pinch it with hot pliers. Her sandals were often without soles, or she would put small stones and thistles in them. At night, she would ascend a long stair-way on her knees, marking each step with the sign of the Cross made by her tongue. At times, she would place her tongue on the window sill and place on it a heavy stone. She would often extend herself, hanging with two ropes tied at her wrists. She suffered in so many ways that her flesh could not stand it any longer, and demanded some respite. Very often her rest was spent with bad tooth aches, and real sufferings in her members. In the middle of December she went barefooted through the garden, walking across the ice, saying: This is my rest. She prepared herself with great penance in the Christmas Novena. [125].

2153: However, at the slightest hint of obedience, she would set aside all her penance, which still did not suffice for her ardent yearnings.

She would offer prayer for sheer suffering. - There are two expressions attributed to her indicating her insatiable desire for suffering [216].

Could anything greater than all this be read in the biographies of the greatest penitents? What was lacking in her that she could merit the title 'a martyr of penance'? She had gifts beyond all others, and yet held herself to be less than all others, this is the summary of her humility. She merited supreme honors, and always loved the lowest place, and even to be disregarded. This is the most perfect level of humility. She would glory only in the cross Ga 6:14. However, this is already something common to the most

illustrious saints. For this most singular Saint, like Francis himself, it did not suffice to glory only in her own cross, but she wished to glory also in the very Cross of Jesus Himself: ***But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;*** because while it is said of all the just and the saints who will ever follow Christ: ***Take up his Cross,*** Mt 16:24, and to each one his or her own. To singular saints there is granted this addition: ***save in the Cross of our Lord.*** Veronica loved sheer suffering, and not the glory that might accrue from that. However, she likewise loved the disdain of sharing in suffering for Christ. She loved all this through the inclination of her own will, disdaining her own humanity, but always in obedience to God and to her superiors, and for her love for her neighbor, the Church and sinners. [Book 3, chapter 3].

2154: Her suffering [Book 2]. God began this, when Veronica reached the age of thirty-three, being an express image of His Son [76]. Jesus Christ predicted the chalice for her and its torments: The Virgin Mary to animate her, appeared to her in the night of the Feast of the Assumption and the Feast of St. Augustine. She had a natural repugnance for the chalice, which was overcome by the strength of her penance. Her thirst was not so much for consolations, but rather of bitterness and sufferings. The vision of Jesus being scourged, and He showed her the chalice while comforting her.

The effects of the chalice [79], these were increased by her doctors and also by the devil [80], as well as by God Himself [87]. Her goal was to have Him always before her mind, restraining her own humanity. Each day she was afflicted by a powerful fever, that kept her for eight days without eating or drinking [79]. Seeing the chalice poured out over her she experienced the excessive heat of the fire, and the more that she drank, the more would she suffer from a terrible thirst. Seeing it poured out over her meals, she would experience such bitterness, that her palate seemed unable to taste for a long time. She would see her eating utensils transformed into swords, lances, arrows, and would feel her flesh being pierced, passing through her heart.

The remedies offered by medicine increased her torments [79, 80]. The demons then added their part, and she challenged this. God Himself tried her with dereliction, and she cried out: 'May this suffering go on!'

[4. The Experience of the Stigmata and the Divine Espousals]

2155: The crown of thorns: [chapter 2, 82]. The vision of Christ crowned with thorns, and the affections of the Saint herself: overwhelmed by suffering, she fell to the ground [84]. In order to bring her contentment, the Lord Himself often drew her close to Himself. Whenever she returned to herself following these supernatural sufferings, she went back to her practice of self-inflicted flagellation and other kinds of penance. One form of suffering would invite still others, and all seemed little to her. She spent entire Lents in continuous suffering. These afflictions were suffered by her for 34 or 35 years

[85]. The exterior signs were evident in her body [86], The remedies brought by doctors and surgeons increased her torments and heroic acts.

2156: The question almost naturally arises: but did she not also some experience heavenly consolations to comfort her? Yes, and these were extraordinary: one of these was the **Divine Espousals**, which, however, was the result of her pure suffering.][90] The preparation for this grace were visions and greater sufferings, and the supreme pain in this line, were the aridity and most refined sense of being abandoned. Her proofs of fidelity cost her agony. She gave no indication of paying much heed to anything else, she did not desire anything different, than pure sufferings, without any mixture of sweetness and all was accepted out of love for her Beloved.

2157: The Wound which the Infant Jesus had inflicted on her heart on the Feast of Holy Christmas led to the profusion of flowing blood. [125] This **wound in her heart** was renewed by a flame, leaping forth from the feet of Jesus Christ, on the middle of which was a large nail, which went to her heart through and through, with indescribable suffering. [129]. She experienced great suffering in her reception of the **Sacred Stigmata** [136 and 229]. She experienced most difficult trials by order of the Bishop aimed at the humility of the Saint, due to the presence of signs [139]. On July 12th, there were revealed to her the trials coming from the Holy Office, and she was enjoined to remove as far as would be possible all visible signs. She responded that she would do this once her gifts had been authenticated. However, she was prepared with further greater sufferings. [140]. On July 20, 1699, the suffering of her **Five Wounds** was renewed. This indicated to her that the signs would not be taken away until three years had passed from their first impression. These were renewed many times with great suffering. [ibi]. The night before the signs would be taken away, she experienced great pain.

2158: It seemed to her that her flesh had become detached from her bones [142]. There remained after the impression of the **Stigmata** that her hands and her feet remained so numb, that she could hardly move them, not even to perform any act. [143]. The nerves in her hands had so withdrawn that this produced in her such pain that she thought she would die. [ibi]. **The wound in her heart** gave her such suffering that she thought she would expire at any moment [ibi]. And not because the signs were taken away did her suffering from the **stigmata and their renewal** cease, for they were renewed until her death, with great pain, many times, and every Friday at 9:00 p.m. , in the greater solemnities, as on September 17th and October 4th, and always in that obedience had commanded this [144].

2159: Her participation in the other pains of the passion [148]: One sign of this was the enormous curvature of her spine and her bones from the right shoulder under the weight of the Cross: she experienced shocks, contortions , a pulling, and frequent agony from her endurance of all the Passion of Jesus Christ, which would sometimes last 24 hours: agony, being captured, bound, fatigue - the experience of being led to the tribunals of Herod and Pilate with the slaps and blows [153]. In all this, she was reduced to such an authentic agony that her confessor was called a number of times. This was all witnessed by him and his companion, as well as by the nuns. They noted the most profound piercing of the ropes on both of her wrists, with the experience of both terror and compassion. [153]. She endured then the flagellation; and felt its torment [154]. Her being crowned with thorns, the carrying of the Cross, the ascent to Calvary. She endured the sensation of being crucified with a fierce agony and cold sweat [155, ff.]. She suffered then the pains of the Virgin Mary [156]. She experienced the crucifixion in her feet and in being raised up, before the Bishop and her confessor [157-8].

2160: Disdain: She offered prayers so that the thorns would not impede her labors in the Monastery, and that they be hidden [83]. She begged the Lord many times that all the sensible signs be taken away. [cf. the heading "Suffering"]. The scars of the signs once the **wounds** were closed, she hid with a bandage. [144]. Many times she asked the Lord to take these signs away also. He said to her however, that He would only do this when she would be closer to her death [144]. She experienced the vision in which Jesus Christ revealed to her the false accusations leveled against Him, the criticisms, the rejection, that He had to suffer from human beings.

Once her **Stigmata** had been manifested in the Convent, some of the nuns began to contradict her and speak against her, saying that this was all for show and that she had clearly arranged for all this to happen. They made it known that in their opinion that if she made a show of such appearances, and did not cease and desist from her hypocrisy, she would be damned. The Bishop was informed, and he manifested a sublime disdain [224].

2161: Once the Holy Office in Rome was advised, and the order was received to make the required proofs in order to discover whether this was indeed a case of hypocrisy and delusion, he began by removing her from her task of Novice Mistress. She lost both active and passive voice in community Chapters. This seemed to be in accord with the wishes of the stronger members in the community, and their whisperings could be heard along the corridors of the nuns, who called her a witch, and excommunicated. They threatened to burn her alive in the middle of the cloister. They confined her to a room in the infirmary, as in a prison. They prohibited her from writing to anyone, other than to her fellow nuns in Mercatello, and once her letters were first reviewed by her Abbess. She was never allowed to go down into the 'speak room'. Then, she was

forbidden even to come into the choir for the Divine Office and the Mass, other than on feast days, and even then, she could only come to the threshold, as though she were indeed excommunicated. She always had to be accompanied with a Lay Sister who was charged with leading her down and then back to her prison, with the prohibition of speaking to the other nuns. This Sister was commanded to treat Veronica with such rigor, as if she were indeed a hypocrite and a deceiver.

2162: She was even deprived for some time from Holy Communion, and she was only allowed to go to the confessional for a time prescribed by the Abbess. She did all she could to have these **wounds** healed, and almost feared for herself that all of this was a posture. She had her gloves sealed with the episcopal seal. However, her wounds then began to fester within, and so it became necessary to go to bathe them with rose water, as the Bishop reported to the Holy Office. While she was in this state of total abandonment by everyone in the monastery and outside, and even being totally rejected, she remained in complete humility, resignation, quiet, tranquility, fully at peace in the arms of Christ, for Whom alone she wished glory. In all of this, she thought nothing of herself, nor did she take any steps that the disdain in which she was held by others would be lessened. Rather, she rejoiced in all this, and eventually came to be much admired by the Bishop, and the monastery. The Holy Office was indeed satisfied that all doubt had been set aside regarding Veronica's virtues, but many cautions were imposed in order to impede the curiosity and frivolous conversations in the city.

2163: She endured very harsh trials in the person of the Abbess, by order of the Bishop and from Father Crivelli, whom God had made known to her was a man of great merit [228]. She was also tried by words: when he first saw her, he called her a witch and a hypocrite, and more than once. Once preaching to the community, he singled her out in the choir, and called her out of her stall, saying: Where are you? Come here and sit on the ground. Veronica did this without showing the least sign of disturbance, and then she thanked him profusely. He told her that he had lost all confidence in her and that she should be burned alive as a witch and a hypocrite. And yet she was found by him even in this so resigned and humble in these ordeals, that he came to admire her the more. And the more he tried to humiliate her by speaking brusquely to her, the more she humbled herself, saying: 'I really do not want to be a witch, and if your reverence should know that I am under the sway of the devil, please free me from him for the love of Jesus Christ' [229].

2164: Trials by deeds: she was prohibited to speak or to write to those outside. A Lay Sister was assigned to her as her superior. This Sister was always accustomed due to her nature and by a precise order she had received, always to speak down to her in a rude manner. The Sister commanded her first to do one thing and then another. She made

her change her cell into a very poor room, that was quite dark and unused, and full of spiders and insects. She was ordered first to clean the floor with her tongue and then the walls. She did all this without indicating any sign of the slightest disturbance, and even did more. She cleaned her stall and even swallowed spiders and ticks as though these were something precious. [230]. The priest, simulating his admiration, bawled her out as acting stupidly, that she had really not understood her orders. This went on for about two months, and this so displeased the devil that each night he appeared to her under horrible forms, hoping that she would run away out of fright. And often with a group of monsters, his companions, he beat her, striking her viciously. She remained through all this always at peace, and even showed great unhappiness when these ordeals ceased.

2165: Obedience: By nature, the drinking of the chalice was repugnant to her, and yet her spirit was always anxious with the great desire to taste it, to carry out the will of God [77]. 82]. In the midst of these sufferings from the Crown, she exclaimed: 'Long live the Cross, may my suffering go on! I want nothing other than the will of God; I am happy in what pleases Him: here I am, ready for all.' [85]. In her sufferings in preparation for her **Espousals**, she protested that she did not want anything other than his will and good pleasure, [90] and the Lord showed His pleasure in her through a vision. She wanted to be a **Victim** to be sacrificed on the altar of Christ's Cross, and to suffer all His pains, but all submitted to His will [91]. Jesus Christ showed Himself content with these acts.

[a. **The Wound in her Side**]

2166: Having been asked by Jesus Christ whether she wanted that the **wound in her heart** be renewed, she responded: Lord, 'You know that I do not want anything other than Your Will' [129]. Before receiving **the Stigmata** promised her by Christ, she was interrogated by Him to see if she yearned for these, she responded: 'Just the fulfillment of Your will' [135]. At the hint of obedience the **Stigmata** were renewed. [144]. She accepted Fr. Crivelli's mental precept, directed to her by God to suffer the torments of the Passion in His presence and of the One Who willed this. And it was carried out in the presence of Fr. Crivelli and of the Bishop [15 c and 151]. During her suffering of the flagellation, while she was destitute of all her strength, and the confessor said: That is enough! And immediately it stopped and quiet returned. And receiving the order to get up, she came alone into choir to hear his Mass kneeling. She simply obeyed [154, 155]. Being totally out of breath and under the fierce agony of the Cross, with cold sweat and tears, at the command of obedience, she ceased everything [156].

2167: Charity toward her neighbor: In the midst of the sufferings of the crown she also experienced a profound compassion for sinners. She asked to be the mediatrix between God and sinners, and that He would send her more sufferings [85]. In this circumstance the sufferings of the crown were renewed, also throughout her entire head, and for many hours she enjoyed similar suffering [85]. She protested her principles and asked through the **wound** that was given to her heart by the Infant Jesus on behalf of sinners [123]. She offered **the wound** in her heart, saying: 'For this **wound** I ask of you for the conversion of sinners [133]. Jesus Christ, in conferring on her the most sensible signs of the **Stigmata**, confirmed her as the mediatrix between sinners and Himself, and willed that quite often she would ask Him to suffer for the salvation of many souls [143].

2168: And really, she did not glory in this cross, shared and copied over in herself, but rather in the Cross of her lord Jesus Christ: ***But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.*** Ga 6:14: She always feared and trembled even to her death that she was indeed a great sinner.

Humility of concept: this was notably in the consideration of her own nothingness. She considered this in a unique manner, as appears from her writings [234]. For nothing other did she pray so frequently to God, than for her to understand this from him. She feared that she was indeed the greatest of sinners.

§§§

**[Conclusion:
Humility in Word and Deed]**

2169: Humility in speech: Whoever did not know her, or did not understand who she was, if this person had only come to understand her words and expressions, such an individual would have taken her as the greatest of sinners. She was most desirous of confessing to the whole world, and would have tried to have herself considered to be the most ungrateful woman before God, and the greatest sinner of the world. And she did whatever she could in this regard. She referred to herself in such tones before her companion nuns and with her novices. She often made before the novices a kind of general confession, narrating the little defects of her childhood as enormous sins, with such contrition that her listeners often broke into tears for her, repeating many times: 'In hell, there is place for all; there it will be for me, if I do not change my life!' [235]. She continually recommended herself to all to pray for her conversion, with such efficacy and fervor that it seemed that her heart would break.

2170: Humility of Deeds: She did not risk that others would accompany her, for the fear of infecting them and yet she remained so abject and mortified with the nuns, as though

she was not of the stature to appear among them. If she could have been hidden in the deepest center of the earth, so that she would not have to see any more by creatures, and that these creatures would not be able to see her any more, this was so that she would not infect and poison them with her exchanges with them. She deeply wished that all would cast her away from them, and disdain her, as she so well merited. She never resented the disdain that more than one person directed in her regard, for different reasons [236]. [cf. also Book 3, chapter 5]. Whoever might disdain her, would please her very much, and she repeatedly obliged her novices to give her means of mortification and humility. [236. And Book 1, chapter 10].

2171: As Abbess, she practiced some very lowly duties. She served all, even the external Sisters. She did all she could to resign from her position as Abbess. Fr. Crivelli, her confessor, implored her to ponder the thought that had not been communicated to her, that of making her Abbess, from not giving her the Cross about which she was thinking. And in wishing to convince her of this, she was surprised by such a terror that she fell to her knees, to beg of the Bishop and the Chapter not to let her be the cause of the final ruin of the Monastery, with giving it a superior who was so evil and useless for anything worthwhile, both in the spiritual as well as in the temporal realms [238]. Meanwhile, according to Bishop Eustachi, she was capable of governing an entire world: and all had recourse to her for counsel in the most complicated matters. And yet out of humility, she never undertook anything herself without taking counsel from others. As Superior she never used terms of command, but rather of prayer, with artists and workers, hiding everything that might cause them to honor her, concealing the extraordinary penance she performed and the gifts and supernatural graces she received. Only obedience could induce her to manifest these to confessors.

2172: She was afraid even of her own visions as though they were her own imaginings, and she said she did this in fact, in fear and trembling. She would willingly relate those visions where she would be corrected by God for some of her defects or imperfections. Since she could not hide the **Stigmata**, she would simply state that certain benefits were bestowed by God even to sinners in order to convert them. She would quickly point out, however, that these benefits in her had not yet been followed by any good fruit of her conversion. When the Bishop came to visit her on the day she fell ill she began with the most humble acts to protest to him that she was the most unworthy in the Monastery, while in 50 years of religious life she had so poorly corresponded to God that so far she had not yet acquired even a single virtue. She asked for his pardon and also of the listening nuns for all the scandals she had committed, begging them to not imitate her, as she was a great sinner. In a letter to the Bishop of 1625, she once wrote: May the

most Holy Virgin obtain for me the salvation of my soul: I always fear and tremble. [187. Cf. observations, here] ⁹².

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C. Miscellaneous Writings

THE SACRED HEART ⁹³

1755: Introduction:

The faithful direct their worship of adoration to the humanity of Christ. This adoration, by which the humanity and vivified flesh of Christ is adored,, is not adored on account of itself, as a mere flesh, but insofar as it is united to the Divinity, this is one and the same adoration by which the Incarnate word is adored together with His own flesh.

So, a pious and due worship has been offered by the faithful to the humanity of Christ.

Therefore.

1756: 1. Doctrine: Devotion toward the most Sacred Heart of Jesus is not new, nor erroneous, nor dangerous, as this has been approved by the Apostolic See.

The Faithful do not adore the Heart of Jesus separate from, or distinguished from His divinity, but they adore it in so far as it is the Heart of Jesus, this word which is inseparably united to the Person of the Word, in that manner in which that emptied

⁹² NB: It goes without saying, some of these accounts of frequent diabolical interventions in the saint's life, and the extraordinary suffering inflicted on her own body, may be more in accord with the 'hagiography' of former times. For the frequent mention of the Devil, and for the descriptions of the saint's horrific self-imposed mortification, as well as the imposed monastic disciplines, the student would do well to ponder the following recent bibliographical reflections: The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, **Christian Faith and Demonology [Les formes multiplies de la superstition]**. June 26, 1975, in: *Vatican Council II. Vatican Collection*, Vol. 2 *More Post Conciliar Documents*. Gen. Ed., Austin Flannery, OP. Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press 1982, Doc. # 108, pp. 456- 485.

John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body. Human Love in the Divine Plan*. Boston: Pauline Media 1997.

Benedict Ashley, OP, *Theologies of the Body. Humanist and Christian*. Pope John Center 1985.

⁹³ NB: The Latin sections of this sermon seem to have been copied, and will be translated in **bold** print - these may have been copied from a work in Latin on the Sacred Heart, which Fr. Bertoni cites in **1765; 1774**.

Body of Christ in the triduum of His death, without any separation, or distinction from His Divinity, was adorable in the grave.

1757: The Holy See ⁹⁴, the Mistress of Truth [***The Roman Church is the Mother and the Mistress of all Churches - Council of Trent, Denz. 946***] has pursued this with thousands of Briefs with indulgences in order to favor this devotion and to spread it throughout Christianity.

a.. The Apostles: of this Devotion were:
- Father Colombiere, a religious of heroic holiness: **Claude de le Colombiere, was a most celebrated preacher, so fervent in the divine spirit, that it appeared from his sermons and the most sublime devotion which he nurtured, that** he was seeking in all the greater perfection. [This is from Concina, the tract of Penance, in Disc. 3, c. 6].

1758: - Margaret Mary Alacoque: was always honored by Benedict XIV with the title of Venerable [t. 4, De Beat., Book 4, part 2, c. 31, n. 20] - whom all of France followed to venerate her tomb. Her life was written by Msgr. Languet, one of the most learned and zealous Prelates that France ever had [cf. Ben. XIV, De Fest. D.N.J.C., Book I, c. 15, n. 5].

b. The Sacred Congregation of Rites asserts: **The worship of the Heart of Jesus is propagated in almost all parts of the world, with the blessing of their Bishops.**

The Roman Church granted to the Feast of the Sacred Heart its own Mass and Office.

1759: 2. History: This Devotion to the Sacred Heart is not new.

It did not have its origin with Thomas Goodwin, a Socinian, or Calvinist heretic.

It is necessary to distinguish in this devotion its private cult, and that which is public. It is certain that this private cult was introduced much before the great saints.

a. The Saints:

- In the Life of St Gertrude, printed in Venice in 1510, among the many devout exercises offered to the Sacred Heart, similar to those more familiar and public forms of ours, in chapter 5, 120, of the 4th Book, *The Herald of the Divine Love*, p. 252, there can be read that on the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, this Saint appeared to her, not that he had not spoken to her in his Gospel, and responded that for now she should first teach in order to come to know the Divine Word and that the sweetness and gentleness of His Heart is reserved to be discovered in the last times - so that from hearing these things

⁹⁴ NB: this segment, translated in simple print, is in Italian.

there might be re-kindled the world that had already become tepid and was languishing. **The purpose was that from hearing such things, this world, which had become old and weighed down with torpor, might be warmed anew and by the love of God.**

1760: - St. Mechtilde attests that the Son of God appeared to her and ordered her to venerate with every manner of **oblation** [**ossequio**] His Most Sacred Heart in the Divine Sacrament, and that there was no more complete book that contained the favors for this devotion obtained.

These two saints died two centuries before Goodwin.

- St. Clare each day greeted and venerated the Heart of Jesus, and called this exercise her dellight.

- Similar **oblations** [**ossequi**] we read practiced by St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure , St. Brigid, St. Frances of Rome, St. Francis de Sales and by many other souls favored by God.

1761: b. Witnesses:

Blosius, the light of the Benedictine Order, spoke of this more than a century prior to Goodwin, as those devoted of the Sacred heart speak of it today.

Lanspergius, a Carthusian Monk who died in 1539, spoke more than 100 years prior to Goodwin. In Letter 26 [Book 10 of Lanspergius; Works, called the 'Minor'] counsels all to keep the image of the Sacred Heart in a fitting place, in order to revere it often, and to kiss it, with the desire it **kissing the very wood of Jesus' side and His wounded Heart.**

1762: The Venerable Father Ignatius of Nantes, a Dominican, who died in 1648, 30 years before making public the devotion of the Sacred Heart - and who was acclaimed a Saint by the people, and in 1650, in the Acts of the General Chapter, was listed among their religious outstanding in holiness - in his Meditations on the Most Divine Heart, printed in Florence by order of the Father General in 1643, writes:

Jesus Christ, from the very first instant of his conception, as He was in the spiritual heart the first lover of heaven and heart, so through the inflamed transfusions of the supreme part in the heart of flesh burned and died of love.

1763: *Christ understood perfectly the infinite malice of sin, contrary to the supreme good, and He detested and abhorred it infinitely, and transfused into the heart of flesh a continuous pain, one that was ineffable of immense dolor, whence the life of the Heart of Jesus was totally suffused with love and all with suffering. And because the Heart of Jesus of the mind and of the flesh is the most beautiful, the most candid, the lost lucid*

and the most lovable - and all the eternal hearts, the most dear and the most loved by God, there is no one among the Saints who did not admire It, and who did not adore it, and out of thanksgiving who would not offer it always to the Eternal Father.

1764: After the mid-way point of 1600, it became a public festival, nor did the English heretic have any part in it, in the occasion for which it was instituted. A great part the Venerable La Colombiere gave us with his printed retreat.

Also before him, Fr. Eudes, one of the most zealous Missionaries in France, had obtained from the Holy See a Papal Brief very generous in its indulgences for the Feast of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

3. Solemn Origin

1765: The solemn institution had its origin solely from the Prelates and Shepherds of the Church and from the Holy See. All this is proven with some evidence by Gallifet, in chapter 2 of his work in Latin, approved by Benedict XIV before he became Pope, in the year 1726 - and even more in the same work translated into French and dedicated to the some Pontiff in the year 1743 [Benedict Tetamo: **Concerning the true worship and Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**].

The first images were exposed in France with the authentic approval of the Bishops, and thus were the Feasts as well: as well as the New Offices and Masses. From the Holy See, there were added also the indulgences.

a. Spread

1766: The Confraternities, through the testimony of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, were erected canonically and favored with indulgences. These were erected in the churches of almost all the different religious Orders: the Benedictines, the Hermits and the Canons of St. Augustine, the Fathers of the Order of Preaches, and in all of the four classes of Franciscans and the two Orders of the Carmelites, the Trinitarians, the Celestines, the Servites, the Theatines, the Barnabites, the Camillians, the Somaschi Fathers and the Scolopi Fathers: and above all, in the most noble parish Churches, the collegial and metropolitan churches. There should also be remembered especially the Roman Arch-confraternity, to which Benedict XIV in 1751 privileged its altar.

The members of this are counted in the thousands. Among them, are the illustrious, the most learned priests, Bishops, Cardinals, and every condition of persons, from every walk of life, nation, order, secular and regular.

The number of these Confraternities with authentic registers of Rome up to 1765, were more 1,080.

1767: The Clergy of France in 1763 established this Feast in all the Dioceses of the Realm.

b. Object

The object of the Feast of the Sacred Heart: it consists in that marvelous and practically divine complexity of aspects, formed both of the bodily and wounded heart of Jesus, as well as by that most holy soul by which that Heart finds life - as well as from the Person of the Divine Word, hypostatically united to that heart, and from which it is divine - as well as from that immense love with which that heart burns - and from the many virtues of which the sacred Heart is the Symbol and the Seat - and also from the sufferings and the anxieties endured by this Heart. For indeed this complexity of aspects that are so sublime, so admirable, so divine, so lovable, that this is the authentic, proper and adequate object of the Feast of the Heart of Jesus.

The Advocate who implored and obtained in 1765 the Decree for the New Mass....

4. Theology

1768: It manifests a carnal wound, a spiritual wound.

a.. The prudent and most wise Bride of Christ, the Church, made ingenious because of her love, desired most ardently to see her Spouse, Jesus adored and beloved - and she studies further the more sweet and universal means and the more easy and efficacious incentives. And since human beings, made up of reason and the senses, are not moved very much by matters that are purely spiritual in order to have them flail in love with these sublime and invisible realities, she makes use of visible realities: such would be the Infant in the Crib, Christ moribund on the Cross; but also His Blood alone, His Name, His Wounds, the Christmas crib, the thorns, the lance, the Cross.

b.

1769: Thus, Benedict XIV notes that the Church never had the custom to solemnize with its own Mass and Office any of the divine attributes, or the internal virtues and abstract perfections of Christ, unless under some sensible object that would clearly represent them, or under some sensible fact, or mystery, which renders them more vividly evident. The example of this would be that the Church does not venerate the 'patience' of Jesus Christ without any symbol, or mystery: but rather worships His Wounds, His Passion, His Cross. Not only should one never exclude from the Feast of the Sacred Heart every sensible object, but this simply cannot be done.

1770: Could there be found a more felicitous symbol of God's love? The innumerable relationships that the heart has with love in all human beings have already produced a universal sense, through which all the nations, both the most worldly uncouth as well as the doctors, the poets, the painters, the sacred and profane writers, all recognize in the heart and almost attribute to it love, and very often they confuse one for the other.

c.

1771: The love of Jesus is much better symbolized by His divine heart. This is the source of that blood shed out of love for us, given life by a most holy soul, deified by the hypostatic union of the Word. That which is to Him totally proper is His being which has always been the most perfect instrument in which there are rendered, and have been rendered, sensible the invisible and ineffable effects of His charity.

His side, opened after His death, is used to show us that Heart, that same Heart wounded by the lance, that WOUND RETAINED IN HIS GLORIOUS BODY, render the Heart so sweet, evident, divine, so much so that it is impossible to venerate **the Wounded Heart without remembering and venerating His immense love** ⁹⁵.

5.

1772: The Church has happily seen its plan carried out. With this sensible help: the Feast, Confraternities, indulgences, images, and in promoting for herself a devotion of this kind, she has seen Holy Communion frequented every First Friday of the month, and the renewal of the devotion for the Most Holy Sacrament, and to see on the most licentious of days, such as *Carnevale*, the Churches and oratories filled with people. And this is done in order to make reparation for the offenses committed against the love of Jesus, and seeing this all celebrated in a solemn and happy feast, not so much for its pomp, or the noise of the multitudes, but much more for the piety, the tenderness, the love of those devoted to the Heart. And generally the devout are reminded most often of the charity of Jesus and this love is returned with more fervor.

1773: The most beautiful praise of this Devotion is the solid and entire piety of one who professes it; and perhaps the greatest obstacle to professing it is the need to ask for it not only with external acts or vocal prayers, but also at least with a little loving gratitude and fervor.

⁹⁵ NB: this passage is very helpful for the Stigmatines in understanding the devotion of their Founder for the **integral Stigmata**, both **sorrowful** dimension as well as the **glorious** aspect. It is interesting to note the fact that his Spiritual Diary, the ***Memoriale Privato***, seems to begin and end with a few of his thoughts on the Sacred Heart.

1774: The authority of the Church is its greatest praise.

The opinion of the Reverend Father M. Bernardino Membrive, a Dominican, Preacher of the Catholic King, Provincial of Scotia, Consultor of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, notes:

Reading the book by Gallifet, there was presented to my soul the prophecy of Simeon: 'He will be a sign that will be contradicted' [cf. Lk 2:34]. And I understood that that which happened then to the Person of Jesus Christ, happens in our time to His heart as well. I am persuaded that to combat the proposed devotion, and to impede that it be received, would be the same as depriving the Church of those fruits of piety which from her are usually produced.

Rome, from the Convent at the Minerva, February 26, 1726....

[The beginning of the Definitive writing]

1775: *What is man that you should make so much of him? Subjecting him to your authority?* [cf. Jn 7:17].

What is man? Create, o Lord, the heavens, the earth, decorate these with stars and plants, supply the earth with animals, fish and birds with a simple *fiat*. And then finally: *Let us make man to our own image and likeness* [cf. Gn 1:26]. *What is man that You would direct your heart toward him?* [cf. Jb 7:17] - making him the end of other creatures and in Your own image, capable of knowing You and loving You?

1776: Man became ungrateful after a few days and lost himself and his descendants: You promised us from his very seed a Liberator, who is your own Son. You gave Him up to death for us: *See what charity!* [cf. 1 Jn 3:1]. *What is man that You should place Your heart upon him?* [cf. Jb 7:17]

this Man put to death his own Redeemer, and in that same night that he betrayed Him, You instituted a sacrament of Love, in order to communicate Yourself to him, and to be with Him even to the consummation of the world. *What is man that You would set Your heart upon Him?* [ib].

1777: But, this man became cold toward Him, and further rejected this benefit, ground it under foot, and You place before his eyes in these last times **Your Heart, visibly wounded for him.** *What is man that You would set Your heart before Him?* [ib]

To provoke him to love you, You employ such industry of love. I understand, o Lord. You are an Abyss of goodness, of charity; and man is an abyss of ingratitude, of malice. The one abyss of misery calls out for the Abyss of Mercy.

1778: But, what if there were one who was so wretched that he would not only call out, but who would disdain, who would deride, who would insult this Mercy, calling this devotion - and I do not know if this is more through stupidity or wickedness - a new devotion, an erroneous devotion, dangerous - and very soon, as he is even more wretched, thus he needs even more the Mercy: let us prove to him that this devotion is ancient, it is solid, it is salutary, and descending with our charity even to the depths of his misery, in order to bring him help that he might, too, share in such mercy - or, let us lead him to esteem, admire, and to know this....

[INCOMPLETE]

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JESUS, THE TEACHER ⁹⁶

1779: *For the Grace of God our Savior has appeared ...* [Tt 2:11].

Grace: a gratuitous gift of Christ.

Has been revealed: because previously the Son of God lay hidden.

Grace: mercy, the remission of sins. Before justice appeared [in the flood; Sodom]. Previously there was nothing but sin.

And it made salvation possible for the whole human race. *There are no more distinctions between male and female: slave and free* [Ga 3:28].

Preparation for this school: God is the Teacher, Who therefore appears - by remitting sins and by infusing grace.

Grace has taught us that we must be self-restrained and give up ...all our worldly ambitions... [Tt 2:12].

1780: It is grace that instructs us. The execution of this is easy: it teaches and works with us.

We must be self-restrained and give up: not only flight: but also hatred and detestation.

Impiety: depraved dogmas, as far as the mind is concerned.

Worldly ambitions: voluptuousness, avarice, honors, as to what pertains to the heart.

Soberly and justly and we are to live religious lives in this world: as for what pertains to exteriors.

While we are waiting in Hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing [Advent] of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ [Tt 2:13].

A blessed hope: *If our hope in Christ is for this life only...* etc. [cf. 1 Co 15:19].

Blessed: because truly the supreme Beatitude is hoped.

It is Blessed: because it brings about the beginnings of beatitude.

The Advent of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ : there are two Advents: one of grace, and the other is of retribution.

[THE BEGINNING OF THE COMPLETE DRAFT] ⁹⁷

⁹⁶ **NB:** [Latin phrases will be translated in **bold print**.] Teaching school was always considered as one of the prime purposes of the Stigmatine Community as is evident from a Proposal submitted to an early General Chapter. It is reflected in the Stigmatine motto: **Euntes Docete!** The Christian formation and teaching of youth is a prime apostolate - as is teaching and forming Seminarians is listed among the principal duties of the **Professed**, the **Apostolic Missionaries** - cf. Part IX, CF ## 158-186: *concionando, instruendo, ad perfectionem instruendo, clericorum institutionem, institutio christiana puerorum, correctio educare, Professorum munus est docere non solum in concionibus, exercitiis, lectionibus...et etiam rudimenta fidei...* [cf. especially CF 182]

⁹⁷ **NB:** the 'Complete Draft' apparently this has been lost.

1771: Has appeared: two words, ladies and gentlemen, on this apostolic text that we have read this evening at Mass: since today, unexpectedly all instruction had to be lacking.

Today, too, ladies and gentlemen, due to an un-thought of accident, there had to be lacking to your piety that solid pasturage of the Word of God. So, I offered myself so suddenly and simply, in that it seemed to me that I should trust that the Lord would not all us to miss instruction altogether, on the day in which He was born, which He did precisely in order to instruct us. ***For the grace of God has appeared...*** [Tt 2:11]. Two words, therefore, out of love on this sentence of the Apostle.

1782: Let us see just who this Teacher is Who comes to teach - what His doctrine is = what are the rewards proposed to anyone who would profit by this School.

Who is the master: ***The grace of our Savior...instructing us*** [ib., vv. 11,12].

The Savior, who is Grace: the Grace of the Savior, for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. [Jn 1:17]

For all men: grat excitement in learning:

1. The God Man: the Nobility of the Teacher. ***Blessed is the man whom You shall instruct, O Lord: and You shall teach him out of Your Law...*** [Ps 93(94): 12]. He is a Teacher Who teaches with deeds: ***Jesus began to do and to teach*** [Ac 1:1]
2. Grace: The Teacher at home - He is a Teacher who not only teaches but Who leads others to perform. - He moves us b gratitude, seeing us delivered from our sins...⁹⁸

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⁹⁸ **NB:** Translators' Note - the Discourse on Jesus the Teacher - ends abruptly right here.

A FEW LETTERS TO MOTHER LEOPOLDINA NAUDET

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Letter 45: 'School of God'

[June 1, 1814]

9280 Very much Esteemed, Reverend Mother,

Since the Lord stands above all our internal contrasts, it only follows that we ought to keep the eyes of our confidence riveted upon Him, without ever being disheartened in any case. Since we are most sure that ***He has strengthened His mercy towards them that fear Him...*** [Ps 102:11]. What shall we do in recognition for so many mercies? We will do more than we thought, or could think, if now we just do what we should do. And what should we do right now? We should do that which a baby does with regard to his mother who holds him in her arms, and not wish ever again to be put down on the ground ...

9293: I am getting better little by little. In your charity, reverend Mother, please pray that I draw fruit from this school which the Lord has deigned to ask me attend, so that I might dispose myself to serve Him. Tomorrow I will begin to get up for meals, as up until now I have only got up in the afternoon...

...

Letter 92; His 'Wounds'

[July-August 1825]

9415 Reverend Mother,

The news from Milan brought me great pleasure. May the Lord be praised.. The Emperor seems well disposed toward your Work. The Governor, assisted by Count Joseph Cipolla, and the Delegate, Baron Paul di Lederer, have indicated that they are in favor that which pleases their patrons, and these seem to be most favorable circumstances...

9418: Furthermore, we are living in times, that whether little is going on, or nothing at all, there is needed the greatest caution. It is necessary to go behind, following after the traces pointed out to us by Divine Providence, which goes on ahead of us....

I thank you for the little book of the life of Fr. Bianchi. I have read it with great joy; Would that I would know how to profit from it!. It seems that my wound is not going so well, if we can give credence to appearances, which so many times before, have deceived us. If it indeed it does heal nicely, then I will believe that it would have been due principally to the prayers of the holy Prince, and your own charitable concerns which would have obtained such a grace for me...

...

Letter 104: Wounded, but not dead!**[May 15, 1826]****9447:** Dear Reverend Mother,

I render supreme thanks to the charity of Your most illustrious Reverence, for the Novena and for the fascicle that you have lent me. The Lord has been helping me for a time much against my merits, with the prayers of His faithful servants, My health has begun to go downhill, but He wills me wounded, and not dead. In this way I will be able to serve Him, and not to abuse His graces, and to do that penance which is necessary for me to do. The work increases for the conversion of every manner of person, whose heart God has touched in this Jubilee. We need the assistance of many prayers in order to complete worthily our office of cooperators in the salvation of those souls that the Lord sends into our hands, in order that the knots and the bonds of their sins might be loosened...

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Letter 130: His Wounds**[March 9, 1828]****9509:** Dear Reverend Mother,...

9510:...I do offer the Holy Mass, but I do not think that I can say that I am getting much better, My legs are not well, as the wound on the right swells a bit, with a kind of vague pain, which I really do not want to heed. I have been going patiently along up to this point, but now I see that nature is not helping me very much, so I take the liberty of asking you to pray a Novena once more with the holly Prince, because it does seem that the Lord allows me to keep going on the strength of these extraordinary helps...

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Letter 131**[March 18, 1828]****9511:** Dear Reverend Mother ...

9512:The Lord once more took from me the Mass and Divine Office this morning, because there has begun to break open again that little tumor on the knee. We will see what this will take. In the meantime, I cannot move around. I will make the remembrance as best I can, but not at the altar, as I did yesterday. May Your reverence also pray for me, and do all you can to finish your work as soon as is possible. I am afraid of a storm breaking out, and therefore, it would be necessary then to have completed all this...

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Letter 132**[March 19, 1828]****9513:** Dear Reverend Mother,

I ought to thank God profusely for the charity of Your most illustrious Reverence for the prayers that you have offered, and asked for others, for my health. And even

though the Lord did not hear these entirely due to other purposes of His, and for this I have to say: ***Thy Will be done***. Nonetheless, I am sure, for the great confidence that I feel in the power of prayer, and for the divine goodness, that there would have been protection from some even greater danger.

Also last year on the Feast of St. Joseph, this illness began. This year, on the Vigil I had to go to bed because of a swelling that developed on the sole, and then up to the knee, it seems that it has infected some glands, and not without real suffering to touch. Thanks be to God, it has not spread as it seemed to threaten, but Dr. Gregory prudently condemns me severely to bed, and to certain interventions...

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A FEW LETTERS TO FR. LOUIS BRAGATO

Letter 2: "Left in the Stigmata!"

[November 18, 1835 ⁹⁹]

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9688: All of this was simply our duty. And since we have given willingly to our most beloved Sovereign your very person, which to us was the most dear and useful that we had, what price can we put on our poor holdings here? Now your debt is to God alone, Who, with his gifts, for which I thank Him, has made you grow ***in wisdom and virtue, and holiness and justice before Him*** [Lk 1:75], and with these signs of exterior honor wishes to exalt you before me.

9689: Only keep in mind continuously, that bearing some distinct mark of honor which God imposes upon you, as does our Sovereign, that ***the greater you are, so much the more humble yourself in all things*** [Si 3:20]; and if you cannot be in our small house bodily, be there spiritually as in the ***clefts in the rock*** [cf. Ct 2:14], in **the Wounds of our most lovable and humble Savior, where I leave you, embracing you with all my heart.**

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Letter 4

[December 1, 1837]

[A Description of an Apostolic Missionary]

: To the Most Reverend, most Honorable, and most Observant
Fr. Louis Bragato
Imperial Court,
VIENNA
Most Reverend, most dear and most honorable Fr. Louis,

⁹⁹ [Translator's Note: Fr. Bragato had left for the Royal Court just a few months earlier, July 1835].

9799: ...I come now to satisfy your charitable and fraternal curiosity, and to provide you with a bit of matter for your usual recreation after supper, as in the times of the famous Chilo! Fr. Marani on school days, is at the Stimmate; evenings and on free days he is at the Dereletti. At the Stimmate, he teaches his classes and studies a bit in the library for his preaching. At the Dereletti, on Saturday evenings and Sundays, he hears confessions and with great fruit for the people of that neighborhood. The other evenings, he offers a Conference in Moral Theology for about 10 or 12 priests, as we used to do in days gone by at St. Firmus'. After his methodical presentation, he acts like Fr. Guerreri; he outlines and defines as the circumstances demand, and this is every day, the most intricate cases; and the Lord gives him the light and the prudence that is far from ordinary.

9700: On Thursdays' he examines as usual the clerics at the Seminary, and after that, receives his penitents in any manner and at any hour, interrupting his dinner, supper, and putting off his own rest. Similarly, on feast days, while he hears confessions in the Choir of St. Stephen's which will continue even to the time to be able to come then for the instructions at St. Sebastian's. which he will then continue until the Lord is pleased. The people listen to him very willingly, and it seems that the Word of God is not just thrown about, but is received in good ground. Before taking up the course of his instructions, I sent him to St. Zeno's, to preach the Octave for the Deceased...

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Letter 5: "Find Refuge in the Glorious Wounds"

[January 29, 1840]

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9707: As for the rest, keep your chin up! And when you need a little joy, fly in thought to Fr. Michael's little room. And if you do not always have the wings ready to support yourself over the clouds, in the bosom of you God, **find your support in the glorious wounds of your Savior.** *Seek those things which are above, where Christ is* [Col. 3:1]. Sit there, as one of His people, in the beauty of that peace [Is 32:18]. All finishes and finishes soon, but that eternal peace never ends. And pray for us, and you will be remembered in our prayers....

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The End.