

# CONTENTS

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## SPIRITUAL EXERCISES 1829

20 September

Preparatory Meditation 1 - *Necessity of salvation*. . . . . “ 65

Day 1 - 21 September

Meditation 1 - *On Death* . . . . . “ 66

“ 2 - *On the particular Judgement*. . . . . “ 67

“ 3 - *On the bodily pains of Hell*. . . . . “ 70

“ 4 - *On the bodily pains of Hell (continued)* . . . . . “ 71

Day 2

Meditation 1 - *On pains of the soul in Hell* . . . . . “ 73

“ 2 - *On pains of the soul in Hell*. . . . . “ 74

“ 3 - *On Eternity* . . . . . “ 77

“ 4 - *On the small number of the elect* . . . . . “ 78

Day 3. . . . . “ 80

Meditation 1 - *On the merciful love of God etc.* . . . . . “ 81

“ 2 - *On the two Standards* . . . . . “ 84

“ 3 - *On the three states of persons* . . . . . “ 86

Day 4

Meditation 1 - *On Jesus' Prayer and Agony in the Garden* . . . . . “ 88

“ 2 - *Jesus is brought before Herod and Pilate* . . . . . “ 90

“ 3 - *On the Scourging of Jesus Christ*. . . . . “ 93

“ 4 - *On the crowning with thorns:*  
*'Behold the Man'* . . . . . “ 95

Day 5

Meditation 1 - *Jesus is condemned to Death.*

<i>His Way to Calvary</i> . . . . .	page	97
“ 2 - <i>The Way of the Cross and the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ</i> . . . . .	“	98
“ 3 - <i>On the Words uttered by Jesus on the Cross.</i> . . . . .	“	101
“ 4 - <i>On Heaven</i> . . . . .	“	104

Day 6

Meditation 1 - <i>On Heaven (continued)</i> . . . . .	“	107
“ 2 - <i>How much Jesus and the Blessed Trinity have done to save me</i> . . . . .	“	109
“ 3 & 4 - <i>On the Love of God.</i> . . . . .	“	111

Last Day

Meditation of the Night - <i>On attending to little things thoroughly well</i> . . . . .	“	114
Morning Meditation - <i>On the Blessed Sacrament.</i> . . . . .	“	115
Resolutions. . . . .	“	119



## (SPIRITUAL EXERCISES 1829)

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HAIL JESUS, MARY AND ALOYSIUS

*20 September 1829*

FIRST MEDITATION & PREPARATION FOR THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

*Necessity of salvation*

In preparing for this H. Meditation abandoned myself totally in God's hands, begging him to help me throughout this sacred time. It seems to me that the merciful Heart of God reassured me of his readiness to receive me and pour his graces on me. This strengthened me and took away almost all my heaviness-of-heart.

In the Meditation itself I reflected on how necessary and important it is to save oneself. What struck me most is the thought that the grace of eternal salvation is many times attached to tiny graces: if you neglect them, you may easily be lost. And so I concluded how much I should value even the slightest of all graces because these too are gifts from the Lord and my salvation may be attached to some of them.

Getting lost would make of me another Judas since the Lord has showered countless graces on me...

I have had a great desire to profit from the grace of these Spiritual Exercises and through it to lead a better life. I was strengthened by the thought that God loves me still and is in fact just now favouring me with his graces.

**Resolutions:** To value all the graces the Lord will give me, no matter how tiny they may be, and day by day to make progress in serving the Lord.

I did this Meditation for half-an-hour on my knees, in church, and half-an-hour walking about in the house. I had few distractions and some fervent feelings.

## **Day 1.** 21 September

### FIRST MEDITATION - Night-time

#### *On Death*

I considered how: death is sure to come, at an uncertain time, and only once. What struck me most was the thought that since I do not know when I have to die, I could easily die when I am cold or lukewarm in God's service, when I am committing some fault. Should this happen, what would become of me? ... I was also impressed by the thought that I die only once; and so if I am not prepared, if my conscience is not right at that moment, that would be the end of me. I have therefore realized the necessity of being prepared all the time

and to keep death always in mind, because it may happen that at the very moment that I forget all about it, God calls me to himself.

**Resolutions:** Not to live even for a single instant in sin, not even venial sin, by making at least an act of contrition, and to remember very frequently that I have to die.

This Meditation took me little more than half-an-hour; I did it partly on my knees and partly sitting down. I had very few distractions but I found it rather arid.

## SECOND MEDITATION

### *On the particular Judgement*

In this Meditation I was scared to think of all the accusations that the devil could make to my soul before the judgement seat of God: I realized I would be at a loss what to say in answer. But even more confused I was when I began to think what my Guardian Angel would have to say against my soul, since he has witnessed so many inspirations, moments of light and particular graces the Lord has granted me, so many Sacraments badly received, so many gifts misused; I would not find anything to say for myself in answer to his accusations, either, these being all very true. But more than anything else I dread the scrutiny that Jesus Christ will carry out, no more as a Spouse but as a severe Judge, since he knows the secrets of my heart. How many sins he will bring

out, sins I don't even remember, what a bitter reproof for so many graces granted me but badly used by me! He will confront me with all my deeds, good in themselves but done out of human respect or pride, in order to shine and gain the esteem of others. If I were to hear the words '*I do not know you!*', and see for the first time the face of my God so indignant, how dreadful, how terrifying! ... but more than anything else, what a terrible thing it would be! I have therefore understood how important it is to act with the right intention, for God's sake alone and for His glory since sooner or later I will have to be examined by a just Judge, and unless I myself am honest, I will be reproved and condemned by him.

**Resolutions:** To act always with the right intention and never to do anything, however tiny, that I know will be displeasing to God.

I did this Meditation on my knees, in church, for about an hour. I had few distractions and some fervour; I did not lose my trust in God.

At my Holy Communion the Lord seemed to be telling me that he wants me to be a Saint, a great saint, and that I must not waste a single moment, even, because I don't have much time left to live. *I heard the voice of my Spouse putting new life in me, urging me to go on tirelessly, to go by the hard, narrow path, to subject myself to everyone, to work hard, very hard, and that in Heaven I will see how precious all this is. In this Communion I begged the Lord to let me know if I have to keep up my vows because at times I feel them as a heavy burden, fearing that if I neglect them they will serve to condemn me even more*

*severely. I felt that Jesus wants me to keep them: He demands that my life be strict and crucified, and points out that my vows are sweet chains that bind me to Him; these are not heavy but I must always keep in mind and do my very best to carry them out perfectly well. To have my mind fully at rest, I would ask my Director to note down here what he thinks of this.*

The *spiritual reading* was on the Life of St Teotista, Virgin. Three things in it were very striking. 1<sup>st</sup> The supreme power and wisdom of God who worked such extraordinary marvels in a person so delicate. 2<sup>nd</sup> How important withdrawal from the world is particularly for persons like me. 3<sup>rd</sup> How much good can be derived from even a single Holy Communion that is received well and how well we should prepare ourselves to receive it fruitfully.

*First General Examination of conscience.* I examined myself on pride, and I found that this vice has been in me from childhood. I realized that at times, either because I am contradicted, or forgotten, or wronged, my heart resents it. At times I feel rather pleased when I am praised, considered virtuous and held in esteem. I realized that I have done little or nothing to uproot this vice.

In my afternoon visit I heard the voice of my Spouse speaking to my heart, about the value and beauty of this virtue (humility). He made me understand that the more forgotten, humbled, ill-treated by men I am, the more will I become precious in the eyes of God. The meaner I am in my own eyes, the greater will I be in the eyes of my God.

### THIRD MEDITATION

#### *On the bodily pains of Hell*

I reflected on the torments of the bodily senses: eyes, ears and nose. However, what scared me most was the thought that if I ended up in hell, I too would have to hear my beloved Jesus, my sweet Mary and all the Saints hideously cursed. Having to stay all the time close to mean, sinful persons, never, never having anything that can be of the slightest relief. And all this maybe for a single mortal sin ... And for a moment's pleasure, maybe, to gain for myself such a hideous eternity! ...

**Resolutions:** To watch over my senses, especially my eyes, lest I should deserve such a terrible punishment.

I did this Meditation partly walking about and partly sitting; it must have lasted a little more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour. At the start I had some distractions, much less as I went on; I did let it sink in to some extent.

The second *spiritual reading* was on the life of St Gertrude, a nun. I admired her exceptional purity, how much she cherished this virtue. I therefore concluded how much God delights in this virtue, and how carefully a person who possesses it should safeguard it as most valuable. In the life of this Saint I found joined together the two beautiful virtues of

prayer and charity, which Our Lord insistently makes me understand that he requires of me. In St Gertrude I found a model for myself, if the Lord grants me the grace to imitate her.

#### FOURTH MEDITATION

##### *On the bodily pains of Hell (continued)*

In this Meditation I understood how severely God punishes all the senses in hell. However, what frightened me most, and what wounded my heart most of all was the thought that if I ended up in hell I would be forced to curse, blaspheme and hate God. The beloved Jesus who, I know, is worthy of love, that Name that brings comfort to my heart, that Name that brings hope, that Name in whom lies all my exultant joy, I would have to curse it! ... That would be the saddest thing of all. In this Meditation I felt pity for those souls who never think of hell, and yet will end up in it because of their sins. I also understood my own stupidity that makes me do so little to avoid hell.

**Resolutions:** To let my pride be crushed underfoot by all, since it could lead to my damnation; I should also guard against any lack of fervour, because my damnation could start from there.

I did this Meditation in church, on my knees, for about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour. I had very few distractions; I was moved by a few points.

In my visit to the Blessed Sacrament I begged Jesus to let me know whether he wishes me to be actively involved in order to be of some benefit to my neighbour or rather that I should see to my own interior life, because meddling with other people's affairs makes me feel distracted and at other times it makes me feel proud and puffed up. I seem to have understood that Our Lord will be very pleased if I engage myself as much as I can for the good of others, especially for their spiritual good and above all to try to help girls who are not at all given to piety, but that I should do everything for God alone, to please Him, and charity will thus never be separated from humility nor from prayer.

*Second Examination on today's failings.* I did not take the Discipline, because I had put it off till it was too late and I was afraid to go out into the fields. I recited Vespers and Compline later than usual; I forgot to do the 'hour' of the vow of greater perfection, and had a few distractions during vocal prayer. With regard to the spirit of recollection, Our Lord helped me: as a matter of fact, there was nothing to distract me.

## Day 2

### FIRST MEDITATION - Night-time

#### *On pains of the soul in Hell*

For this meditation I just sat up in bed, and I was rather drowsy, and so it did not have a lasting impression on my mind. I think it took me a bit more than half-an-hour. I don't remember the resolutions either.

At my Holy Communion this morning I begged the Lord to teach me how to pray. I realized how much God expects from me, how necessary ceaseless prayer is, how perfect all my actions will be if while doing them I am deeply present to God, and what an anticipated heaven it is for a soul to live always united to her God! I have therefore resolved to devote myself wholly to this holy exercise. *I have also understood that to succeed in this I need to arm myself with much steadfastness, in order to overcome all the temptations and obstacles that the devil will put in my way to disturb me in this holy practice. I did this Holy Communion with longing and with fervour, and our Lord comforted me.*

## SECOND MEDITATION

### *On the pains of the soul in Hell*

I have considered how the pains of the soul in hell far exceed those of the body. My God, if I should end up in that horrible prison, what an inexpressible anguish it would be to remember and think of so many graces I have received, the extraordinary means given me, the times I was given the light to see, was called or inwardly stimulated so that I might not just be saved but also become a saint! What a torment it would be to know that so many men and women who were given far less graces than myself have been saved, but not!

How painful to think how with all my knowledge and fear of hell and counting on not ending up in it, I forgot all about it only to find myself in it! How sorry it would make me to think that for some time I was set on serving God and was very happy to do so, experiencing, in fact, how sweet his yoke is, but then I went away from Him! How distressing to think that I had urged others to do their utmost to avoid hell, and hearing in me the voice of God, availed themselves of the warning and were saved, and I, wretched that I am, was not able to put into practice what I taught others: they will be in Heaven and I in hell! What a torment to be unable any more to have a good thought, never again to say with acceptance: God's will be

done! But the most intolerable pain of all is that of knowing God perfectly well, knowing that your happiness lies in loving God and yet feeling forced to hate him, blaspheme and curse him, and feel for all eternity spurned by Him, without any hope of ever making peace with Him! Incapable of ever again to gaze on him with love, of making an act of love for God! And Jesus who is now my beloved Spouse, my loving Father, the delight of my heart, the One who the instant he makes his presence felt is sweeter than any delight or pleasure of this earth; to look on that same Jesus as a severe judge, an implacable foe, inexorably punishing for ever. That is truly the greatest torment of all. Now I understand how right my dear St Aloysius was in leading such an austere way-of-life though he himself was innocent, I understand why so many Saints inflicted pain on themselves in order to avoid that sort of hell, the greatest and the only irrevocable of all.

**Resolutions:** To live in constant fear of hell, and to keep in strict subjection all my senses and the whole of my body.

I did practically the whole of this Meditation on my knees, in church; it took me about an hour. I had very few distractions, and was deeply moved at some points. Tears came to my eyes and the memory of it is still with me. Oh my Jesus: “*from the pains of hell deliver me!*”<sup>1</sup>.

This morning’s *spiritual reading* was on the life of St Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary, a widow. I was impressed by all the details mentioned, but most of all by her generous

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<sup>1</sup> Original in Latin “*a poenis inferi libera me*”.

detachment from things of this world in the midst of life at the court. I admired her steadfastness in serving God, in spite of the gossip of the courtiers, but above all I was struck by her exceptional patience in bearing so many humiliations and so much suffering.

This made me understand that the souls most privileged by the Lord are, in fact, those who suffer the most for his sake; as a reward for their steadfastness they receive even in this world exceptional graces, especially in their prayer-life.

I need not mention her eminent charity, for this is the essential characteristic of saints. I felt myself reproved for doing so little for the good of my neighbour; I desire to do much more.

*First General Examination of conscience.* I examined my will, and I found out that I am very much attached to it: I rarely give in to the opinion of others; now I know that even in good things, denying our own will and doing that of others, is very pleasing to God.

I realize that many times I think I am right and so I find it hard to give in to the opinion of others, but it is just then that I should humble myself and do or accept what others want or say. I have therefore resolved never again to contradict others and admit that I may be wrong and the others right.

In my visit to the Blessed Sacrament, in the afternoon, I met with something that confirmed the truth of this, and I heard the most sweet voice of my Spouse calling me to a holy life, which is, of course, a crucified life, wholly set against my self-

love, and telling me that the way of the cross will be for a little while, and that bliss will be for all eternity.

### THIRD MEDITATION

#### *On Eternity*

I was deeply impressed by this important truth. If I had to be among the damned, for ever wretched, for ever tormented, for ever an enemy to God, I would never come out of that painful prison, never have the slightest relief, always tormented in the same way or rather ever worse and worse. And so many torments and so long, why? Maybe for one single mortal sin ... What a despair the thought of eternity is for a damned soul! Knowing itself to be miserably tormented, feeling inexpressible pain, a pain it feels unable to bear even for one minute and instead that it has to bear for ever and ever. Oh, what a despair! ... What a torment! This thought made a deep impression on me, and from what I have felt I realized how true is that saying of the Holy Spirit, that a person who reflects on death, judgment, heaven and hell will not perish, because anyone who even simply thinks of an eternity of pain and yet goes on sinning, must have either lost faith completely or gone mad. Or else it should make a person turn to God with a sincere heart.

**Resolutions:** When the yoke of the Lord weighs heavily on me, to cast a look on eternity and reflect that my suffering

will not last for ever, and that if I remain steadfastly faithful, I will receive a reward that will last for all eternity.

I did this Meditation on my knees, for half-an-hour. I had very few distractions, and it left some impression on me.

Today's *spiritual reading* was on the life of St Catherine Virgin Martyr. I was impressed by her vast learning, and I realized how useful this is for knowing God more deeply and for helping our neighbour, provided it is used in the right way. I was struck by the supreme wisdom of God who many times makes use of very feeble instruments to confound the worldly-wise, and to turn men's hearts to Him, just as He made use of this Saint to enlighten and change the hearts of so many philosophers and so many unbelievers. It is a reproof for my habit of shrinking from what is hard, if I reflect on the steadfastness and patience of this martyr in the suffering she bore for her God.

#### FOURTH MEDITATION

##### *On the small number of the elect*

It had a terrifying effect on me to think that this tremendous truth is mentioned in various parts of the Gospel, and is confirmed by that very fact, because if it is certain that those who live badly will probably die in the same state, how few must be those who live as true Christians! ... And what

about me? Shall I be among the elect or among the damned? ... It is true that I do a good deed now and then, that I receive the Sacraments and profess a devout way-of-life. But am I doing what God expects from me? ... Am I quite honest in all my dealings? ... Do I carry out all my duties carefully, steadfastly, perfectly well? ... Ah! To think that a few sins, even just one, can make me end up among the damned, for ever lost! I then started wondering how it is that so many Christians who have the Faith, and believe in hell, are lost! I have understood, it seems to me, that this happens because they hardly think of death, judgment, hell and heaven, and because being so inclined to evil and unable to see things that are invisible, men easily forget what is eternal and so most of them are lost.

**Resolutions:** never to mind what worldly people say and do, but to be always mindful of the examples set by Saints and strive to imitate them.

I did this Meditation in church, partly seated and partly on my knees; it lasted about half-an-hour, not more than that, because I was not feeling well. I had a few distractions. Certain things fairly impressed me.

Due to the physical pain I had I could not stay for a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, but recited some vocal prayers in bed.

*Second Examination on today's defects.* I had a thought of pride; it was this: it occurred to me that on reading this script my Confessor might suppose that I had beautiful sentiments

which could in some way be useful to him as well. I did not take the discipline; I think I omitted it for fear it should do me harm. When I started the day I felt out of sorts, but I promptly abandoned myself in the Lord's hands and He in his merciful love accepted me and helped me in such a way that I almost felt more cheerful today than yesterday, and by His grace, I did not do badly with regard to inner tranquillity, either.

### Day 3

I did not get up during the night to do my Meditation, because I was not feeling quite well yet, and I feared that if I got up at that time I would be unable to get up in the morning. Maybe it was merely self-indulgence instead.

Today, during Holy Communion, Our Lord made me understand that he wanted me to be fully docile to his will, whatever might happen. *I have to take everything from his hands, have full trust in him and be restful in him. He assured me he will be ever mindful of me, disposing everything for his greater glory and my growth in holiness.*

I also asked the Lord how I have to behave with my Confessor, because my mind is not quite at ease with regard to openness with him. If I keep certain things from him I feel uneasy, knowing it may not do me good, and if I speak out, I

have the feeling that I am doing it out of pride, and I cannot help feeling pleased with myself when I know that he will be happy with me. My heart seemed to be telling me that for no reason whatsoever should I keep anything back from my spiritual director, because if I don't reveal to him my inner life, I will make it difficult for him to direct me properly, in particular to discern what is right or not. And to avoid all vanity and pride, I should always think of my Confessor and speak to him as I would speak out my thoughts with the Lord, whom I consider to be my divine Spouse.

#### FIRST MEDITATION

*On the merciful love of God  
as seen in the Parable of the Prodigal Son*

This meditation has brought me much comfort and gladness to my heart. ... Oh! How right is my Spouse, the loving Father of my soul, to warn me that it is only in his house, that is, only in his friendship and in his grace, that true happiness is to be found. How many times I myself have tried to stray from Him by growing less enthusiastic in his service; how at once I lost my peace of mind, my fervour, recollection, my sweet union with Him! How many times I felt deep in my heart that peace and comfort are to be found in Him alone! And this loving Father I easily forget and offend, is there ready

to receive me as soon as he sees signs of repentance in me; he embraces me, caresses me and grants me new graces, and goes on telling me to remain faithful to him, to love him always, because in doing so I would please him in the highest possible manner. And what he does with me he does equally with so many sinners. However great their sins are, however enormous or endless, if they repent and turn to him, he is the first to offer them his peace, to embrace them, kiss them and hold them close to his heart and make the whole heavenly court rejoice. He says that such a day is a great feast for him. Oh, my gentle Jesus! Oh, tenderly-loving Father, how truly divine this Goodness of yours is! If many, very many, knew your gentle heart, they would surely not remain in their sins nor deprive you of that sweet joy. Oh! Grant that all may know you, that I in particular may give myself to you and consecrate myself to you totally, for ever.

**Resolutions:** To have a boundless trust in God's merciful love and to do everything out of love; in my talk to assure others of God's merciful love, and encourage them to give themselves entirely to Him.

I did this Meditation in church, sitting all through, for about an hour. I had few distractions; I was moved to tears of tenderness; I ended it with a deep longing to consecrate myself wholly to such a loving Father, and never again to wrong Him in any way.

This morning's *spiritual reading* was on the life of St Cecilia

Virgin Martyr. In it I understood that every person has the bounden duty to draw souls to God. I realized how much good we can do if we act humbly and with a sincere desire to give glory to God. I was also struck by the supreme goodness of God who satisfies the desires of his servants even in extraordinary things provided these can be of spiritual benefit, like the grace he granted to St Cecilia by letting Valeriano, who had betrothed her, see her Guardian Angel.

*First Examination. On my general failings.* I examined myself on my duties at home, in class, on my method of life and on my vows. I find many defects in all these areas, often out of carelessness, at times I carry out my duties reluctantly, at times I feel weighed down by them and I almost feel sorry that I have to do them; at times I omit them with some lame excuse, and at times I wish I had some good pretext for omitting them, and a few times, when I had a good reason for omitting them, I seem to have been happy about it. I realize what a great wrong I do to God to serve him in that way; on the other hand, how greatly God is pleased with a faithful soul who is diligent in all her duties for his sake. I have therefore resolved that from now on I will have scrupulous care in all that I have promised to the Lord, and do everything gladly for his sake, however hard and tiresome it may be, etc.

In my visit, in spirit, to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I felt in my heart the voice of my Spouse, encouraging me and putting me on my guard against all these temptations, saying that I should consider gloomy thoughts as such and keep them

away from me with the greatest care, that I should not be cast down by feelings of tiredness, of being forgotten by others, or just dissatisfied with myself, because by remaining faithful to Him even at such times, I would become ever dearer and more pleasing to his Heart.

## SECOND MEDITATION

### *On the two Standards*

I have known the great difference there is between Jesus and Lucifer. The latter is proud, frightful, a most deceitful tyrant. To his followers he promises pleasure, glory and wealth; he promises to satisfy all their desires and to let them enjoy peace, but what do all these goods amount to? They consist in endless guilt-feeling, restlessness, disquiet, all leading to eternal damnation, the greatest, unending evil. With Jesus it is just the opposite. He is most meek and humble; he gently calls men to follow him, and tells them frankly that with Him they will have to endure suffering, go against their own passions, humble and deny themselves. However, he assures me that He will go ahead of me in all this: He will draw me into a grim struggle but he will fight by my side and for me; that he will expose me to danger but will give me the strength to overcome, and in addition he tells me and assures me that he has prepared for me an eternal reward, and that every little thing done for him will have an immense reward from him in Heaven. One particular thing deeply impressed me: though everybody knows the tyrannical ways of the devil and the

sweet yoke of Christ, there are so many who give themselves over to Lucifer and so few who follow Jesus Christ. As to me, you alone, Jesus my love, are my sole heritage, you alone, and your Cross, I want to follow, for ever.

**Resolutions:** To bear suffering gladly and never to complain of any obstacle in my way, because since I opted to have Jesus as my Commander-in-Chief, I have to follow his Standard, which is the Holy Cross, in everything.

I sat down for this Meditation, which took me about an hour. I had few distractions, but not much inner stimulation. In fact, I was a bit drowsy. However, I did reflect deeply on the last point.

Today's *spiritual reading* was on the life of St Diego. In this Saint I have found a blending of all the virtues at a high level of perfection, but what struck me most of all was his blind obedience, which made him unable to contradict anybody and his only will was to obey. I also considered how pleasing to God are souls that are humble and single-minded, and how easily they can serve God and become saints.

### THIRD MEDITATION

#### *On the three states of persons*

In this Meditation I know how harmful it is for a person to remain irresolute in the service of God and how such a person can never advance a step ahead. I have also understood that God is greatly displeased when a person is willing to serve him only in certain things but will never make up her mind to undertake other things that would honour him more. I applied this to myself, because I gladly do certain things which I like best while other things which would be pleasing to God and of real benefit to me are put off and neglected because they are humiliating to my self-love. I realized that this is very displeasing to God because in that manner I am not serving Him, but myself.

I learnt about the three levels of humility. With regard to the first level which consists in being willing to die rather than commit a single mortal sin, it seems to me that I am determined to die rather than incur such a terrible thing. With regard to the second level, that of avoiding a deliberate venial sin, I think I am determined to avoid it at any cost. Regarding the third level, which is that of choosing to be like Christ by embracing pain, humiliation, the cross, suffering, I heard the

most sweet voice of my Spouse calling me to a life that He holds dear, and telling me of its worth and value and of the satisfying sense of peace and joy that is experienced in leading a crucified life in self-denial for the sake of Jesus Christ. I came to know of the great fortune that will be mine if I respond to this call from my Divine Spouse.

**Resolutions:** To consecrate myself to a life of strict self-denial for the sake of Jesus Christ, and to prefer suffering, self-abnegation and humiliation to the empty pleasures of this world.

I did this Meditation in church, on my knees throughout, for about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour. At the start I had a few distractions, but practically none after that. Certain points moved me deeply.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament *I begged him to let me know how I should manage when I have many things to do that all need to be done but of which something must be dropped. I felt this reply in my heart. In that case place all your things at the feet of the Crucified Lord, and then select the ones that please Him most, with His glory always in mind, and recommend the others you cannot carry out to Him, offering him your good will to do them if at all possible.* He also told me that I should never complain neither within myself nor externally, if at times I feel overwhelmed by too many things, but take everything calmly and always thank the Lord every time that I have the opportunity to work hard for Him and for my neighbour.

*Second Examination on today's defects.* I had some distractions during vocal prayer. Once a thought against charity in a matter of purity almost crossed my mind but I think that by God's grace I drove it away at once before it could take shape. During the day I had some useless thoughts, one among which, I remember, was this: a few times the fearful thought came to my mind that I might fall ill and die here, and I thought I would be sorry to die here. For the rest, I feel I have spent the day fairly well: I started the day by serving God and I end it in his name. Amen.

## **Day 4**

### FIRST MEDITATION - Night-time

#### *On Jesus' Prayer and Agony in the Garden*

I reflected with sorrow in my heart on the pain my poor Jesus endured in the Garden as there came to his mind the suffering he was about to go through: Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial, his arrest, slaps, blows and kicks, pushing about and spitting in the face, insulting words, shameful treatment and contempt; the terrible scourging, the cruel crowning with thorns, the painful journey to Mt Calvary and finally the nailing to the cross. I heard Jesus piteously crying out to his Father to take away the bitter chalice if he willed it so. But that was not

the hardest part of what the poor Jesus had to bear because he had willingly taken on himself the burden of our sins and the obligation to make penance for it. What caused the greatest torment and sorrow for our Lord was that on casting a look on the whole world he saw that so much suffering bore so little fruit. It was this that brought an agony on him. At that moment Jesus saw all my sins that I was to commit, he saw how ungrateful I would be for his graces, how cold I would be to his love, and that sight put my poor Jesus in greater affliction than ever. At that moment he saw so many sinners for whom the Blood betrayed by them was to add to their damnation, and so great was the pain of my Jesus that he nearly died of it. In the midst of so much suffering endured by Jesus I seemed to see him comforted a little as he recognized so many souls that would be faithful to him, so many saints who would love him passionately: benefiting from so much that Jesus had done for them, they would be saved. I admired the supreme charity of my Jesus in allowing himself to be surprised by boredom, sorrow and heaviness-of-heart etc. in order to make me understand that my feeble nature cannot help feeling so weighed down by helplessness and that I should not be frightened when such reactions are felt right within me, provided I, like him, do not let myself be overcome by them.

**Resolutions:** No feeling of boredom or tiredness is to let me slacken my tenor of life, much less make me neglect prayer.

I did this Meditation for half-an-hour, on my knees. I had very few distractions and some deep insights, but my

heart was unmoved and so hard that I was not capable of shedding a single tear for my Jesus, who for my sake shed so much blood.

At my Holy Communion this morning I begged the Lord to let me know his will regarding the choice of my state-in-life. I seemed to have clearly felt in my heart that I would not make a mistake if I obeyed my Superior and that His will was just that. It seemed to me that he is more inclined to let me live in the world. May His Holy Will be done!

In preparing for this Holy Communion I was not so fervent, and I felt rather drowsy. But Our Lord was very good to me all the same. Thanks to His goodness, my heart warmed to him and my thoughts were taken up by him.

## SECOND MEDITATION

### *Jesus is brought before Herod and Pilate*

First of all I meditated on the sufferings endured by my beloved Jesus in these various 'stations' from one tribunal to the other: blows, pushing about, spitting at him, etc. Oh! The goodness and patience of my God in suffering so much for me! But in this Meditation I dwelt more on the dishonour that was heaped upon him. I saw him brought before Herod, and before Pilate, and I heard so many false charges brought against him, so many blasphemous words uttered, but he stood erect, endured it and was silent. I heard the Jews questioning him, provokingly demanding an answer to justify their own attitude, but he endured it and was silent.

I saw him taken to Herod, before whom he would have surely been set free if only he had worked a miracle or given one reply, but he endured it and was silent. I saw him treated as a madman and as such led through the roads of Jerusalem, scorned and laughed at by everyone, but he endured it and was silent. I saw a mean servant striking him with his hand, I saw them spitting at his face as if he were a scoundrel, but he endured it and was silent. A God! ... Wisdom incarnate! ...The Lord of heaven and earth! ... He whose honour mattered so much since he was the Messiah and as such he had to reveal himself to the world! But he endured and was silent. ... What a lesson for me! I am so particular about my honour, I feel so bad when I cut a poor figure; I resent even a slight wrong done to me. Oh! Jesus my love, how different is your way of thinking from mine! I have understood that if I want to be saved, if I want to become a saint, I must follow in your footsteps, and so walk by the path of humiliations and disgrace, that I should not mind at all what others think of me, but should only seek to please you.

**Resolutions:** To shun all worldly honour and cherish humiliation, as it is only in this manner that I can please the Lord.

I did this Meditation, in church, for an hour; I sat down for nearly the whole of it. I had very few distractions but not much fervour either.

This morning's *spiritual reading* on the Life of Saints Agricola and Vitale Martyrs. I learnt from it that before God all

persons are equally important: he accepts rich and poor alike, provided their merits are the same. I was struck by their great steadfastness and patience in suffering so much for Jesus Christ.

*First General Examination: on obedience, patience and gentleness.* I have found that sometimes I obey because I like it, not as a virtue. Other times, when what I am told to do hurts my self-love, I carry it out reluctantly, other times, carelessly. I find that when something that I do not like happens to me, I get anxious; other times, when I am a bit cast down, I treat others harshly, particularly the girls in class. I have therefore resolved, by the grace of God, to obey everyone gladly and blindly and never to be short-tempered, whatever may happen to me.

In my visit, in spirit, to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I prayed for the grace of having a sincere love for the Cross, suffering and humiliations; I felt in my heart that this is the path I should go by, and none other, to please Him; that the more I shall be scorned and forsaken by men, the more pleasing will I be to Him; that the souls that are dearest to him, the greatest Saints, are just those who are most harassed and humbled.

### THIRD MEDITATION

#### *On the Scourging of Jesus Christ*

I was moved with compassion when I meditated on the terrible pain inflicted on my dear Jesus by this torture. I understood that my gentle Jesus bore this torment to make up for sins of impurity, and to my great shame I realized that my own lack of transparency added to the blows he received. I admired the patience and long-suffering of Jesus in enduring so much, and his love in bearing everything so willingly for the salvation of His dear creatures. I then understood that our sins hurt the Heart of Jesus more cruelly than the whip, because had the whipping been sufficient to wipe all our sins away, Jesus would have been very glad and the blows would have been like roses to his gentle Heart.

I asked the suffering Jesus what I could do to comfort him; in my heart I heard him answer that I had to win souls to his love and do my best in finding ways and means to be of comfort to him; with many other persons to stay around his sacred body and keep him pleasant company, and by the odour of holy virtues drive away the stench of countless sins which are like poison to his open wounds; in fact, the tears and good deeds of souls he loves were like a soothing ointment to his wounds,

and all the relief he had in that bitter torment came from thinking of so many hearts ardent with love for him and generously dedicated to him, tenderly compassionate about his holy Passion.

**Resolutions:** To do my very best in finding ways and means to be of some benefit to someone and to join many others in good deeds so as to be of some comfort to Jesus in his suffering.

I sat down for this Meditation, which took me little less than an hour. I had few distractions; certain thoughts moved me and convinced me.

Today's *spiritual reading* was on the Life of St Uomobono. From it I learnt that we can become saints in any state-in-life. That is what this saint did in the midst of his occupations as a layperson, at the shop and housekeeping. Among all his virtues what struck me most was his generous charity towards his neighbour and how he was always absorbed in God even throughout days of distracting happenings. This is reproof for me with all my scattered thoughts.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament I asked him to let me know how to practise self-abnegation. His answer, it seemed to me, was that with regard to inner passions, bodily feelings and my will, I should really chastise them and wage war against them and never, never indulge in them. As to care of my health, He said that I should take from his hands what my Superiors command, be satisfied with the food that they give me, and accept everything as charity and

gifts from his hands, in order to keep the life that I want to spend totally for his glory and to be of benefit to my neighbour.

#### FOURTH MEDITATION

##### *On the crowning with thorns: 'Behold the Man'*

I was painfully moved to compassion as I beheld my poor Jesus suffer so much and so cruelly. I realized, to my grief, that I too, with my thoughts of pride and lack of transparency, have fixed very sharp thorns into the sacred head of Jesus. I was amazed and bewildered at the piteous state to which Jesus was reduced by those cruel Jews, or rather, by my sins, treating him as a mock king, making of him a laughing stock and poking fun at him in their talk.

It's incredible: a God bending down so low!

He who is all-powerful not to defend himself against such insults and, instead, suffer everything out of love for those very creatures who ill-treated him so!

Nothing short of the love of a God can go to that extent!

And I cannot bear it, even for his sake, if they make fun of me; just a little joke makes me blush and I resent it.

I was moved to pity as I contemplated Jesus shown to the people, and how these rejected him and not a single person acknowledged him as his God. And yet all those wretched people had received from Jesus extraordinary graces and

marked favours. I beheld Jesus piteously disgraced through this rejection by all his people; it seems to me that even if a single person had stood by Jesus' side and spoken out in his defence, he would have been of great comfort to my Jesus. I wondered what I would have done if I had been there at that moment and it seemed that I would have surely stood by Jesus and spoken out for him before everyone, but God alone knows what I would have done if I had been put to that test. My heart seemed to tell me that to console Jesus crowned with thorns there is no other way than humility and humiliations.

**Resolutions:** To shun all thoughts of vanity, always to see myself as I truly am: poor and unable to do anything except sin.

I did this Meditation in church for about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour, the whole while on my knees. I had few distractions, some fervour; I was attentive and was for a moment moved to tears.

*Second Examination on today's failings.* During Mass I felt drowsy; during the recitation of *Stabat Mater* I laughed, and for a moment I could not help thinking that a cross awaited me at home. I got rid of this when, after Mass, I offered myself wholly to the Lord, ready to bear whatever He wanted. I think I remained prayerful, and today I have been especially happy and at peace with myself. God grant that I use it all for his glory and for the good of my neighbour. Amen.

## Day 5

### FIRST MEDITATION - Night-time

#### *Jesus condemned to Death. His Way to Calvary*

In this Meditation I considered how harmful human respect is and how much good it impedes. I realized that if Pilate had not been so dominated by it, he would never have condemned Jesus to death: he knew that Jesus was innocent and, unlike the Jews, he did not hate Jesus nor was he jealous of him, and yet out of mean human respect and the fear of incurring the displeasure of Caesar and of the people, he was induced to commit such a serious blunder.

**Resolutions:** To shun all human respect; in particular, never to omit a good deed out of fear of people or of what they might say.

I sat down on the bed for this Meditation, because I felt too lazy to get up; as a result I was drowsy and my reflections did not go deep enough.

At my Holy Communion this morning I asked the Lord to advise me with regard to the way I should dress. I seem to have understood that I should have no will of my own in this but simply accept as charity what is given me by my Superiors,

without ever seeking anything, not even what I need, nor to express any desire for anything whatsoever. I also asked him the proper demeanour in dealing with others, and his answer in my heart, it seems to me, was that I should be loving, cheerful, unassuming and pleasant because in that way i will more easily draw them to what is good.

## SECOND MEDITATION

### *The Way of the Cross and the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ*

In this Meditation I have come to know of the exceedingly great love of my Jesus. I saw how gladly he embraced the cross on which he had to lay down his life for my salvation. I accompanied my poor Jesus along the streets of Jerusalem. I have seen how shamefully Jesus was treated the whole way, led like a criminal, between two thieves, with his scaffold on his own shoulders. I seemed to hear the wretched people of that city adding to Jesus' pain and suffering insulting words and abuses, while others scoffed and mocked him, calling him a false prophet and possessed by devils; others were glad to see him go to his death.

And all this ill-treatment weighed heavily on the Heart of Jesus, it seemed to me, because it came from people who knew him, people who had been favoured in exceptional ways, people who a little before had acclaimed him Messiah and King.

Thus the small defects of persons consecrated to Him and highly favoured by him hurt the Heart of Jesus more than grave sins committed by persons who hardly know him. I followed him on the road to Calvary; I saw it all bathed in the Blood of my beloved Jesus, that precious Blood one drop of which is sufficient to save a thousand worlds.

I saw Jesus fall down again and again so painfully, and there was none who had compassion on him.

I reflected how on this journey Jesus had no relief because the very sight of his Mother's sorrow must have added to his grief; the sight of the women who wept over him did not cheer him because it made him think of their sins and of the sins of their children.

However, what especially grieved the Heart of Jesus was, I think, the Cyrenian's unwillingness to help him carry his Cross because in that refusal Jesus thought of so many souls he was to favour with exceptional graces and treat as dear daughters and brides: they would follow him only as long as they received consolation from him but when he presented the cross they would complain, carry it reluctantly or almost by force. This causes deep sorrow to the Heart of Jesus, and among the number of those souls I unfortunately find myself too.

I then looked on as Jesus, the moment he had reached the top, was cruelly stripped and ruthlessly crucified in the most savage manner. I was struck with wonder at the love of my dear Jesus. When I asked Him what he did in the midst of so

much suffering, I heard him answer me, “I am praying to my Eternal Father for those who ill-treat me in this way; I am praying for all my dear creatures because I want to see them all saved”. Oh truly divine Love! Oh Charity exceedingly great! I now understand why so many saints called Mt Calvary the Place of Love. Now I understand why so many men and women saints did not want to live of anything save the cross and suffering. O my Jesus, crucify me with you and grant that I may suffer much for love of you.

**Resolution:** To cherish the cross, and to call to mind very frequently that Jesus hangs on the cross for my sake, and that I must suffer for his sake.

I did this Meditation in church, for an hour, partly kneeling and partly sitting down. At the start I had a few distractions, but after that, none; I did it with attention and understanding, but my heart was hard, and so I was not capable of shedding a tear for Jesus who suffered so much for me.

This morning’s *spiritual reading* was on the Life of St Peter, Patriarch of Alexandria and Martyr. What struck me most was this Saint’s heroic charity towards the beloved ‘sheep’ entrusted to his care; for their sake he day after day risked his own life, in his desire to be of some help to them. I also admired his sincere willingness to suffer martyrdom for his God, in suggesting to his executioner the quickest way to put him to death.

*First General Examination of conscience. I examined myself on my distractions, on my demeanour in church and on useless thoughts.* I found out that in my prayer I easily neglect

the preparation for it, and I am often slow in ridding myself of distractions. In church I often say useless words and I am at times lacking in respect towards the Blessed Sacrament. I found quite a lot of useless thoughts partly deriving from pride and partly from too little love for God, and so I waste so much time instead of using it for his glory.

In my visit, in spirit, to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I begged him to let me know if he is pleased with my eagerness not to miss even a single holy Communion. I understood, I think, that I should first of all try to receive each Communion well and with renewed fervour, as one Communion could suffice to make me a saint, and that he is pleased with my eagerness to receive it as long as it depends on myself and I alone have to take the trouble, but when I had to cause much trouble or annoyance to my dear ones at home, I should be satisfied with a deep desire for it. *In this regard, however, I request my Superior to note what he thinks.*

In this visit I also felt encouraged to do good, because I have to die soon, and at that point I will be glad to have done so.

### THIRD MEDITATION

#### *On the Words uttered by Jesus on the Cross*

I have understood the exceedingly great love of my God who, at the most painful moment, his lips uttered a request of forgiveness for those who were crucifying him, excusing them saying that they did not know what they were doing. This

made me feel ashamed of my poor level of charity when, instead of thinking well of others, I often interpret their actions unfavourably. I was even more moved by his charity when I heard him readily assuring the good thief, who commended himself to him, that there was a place for him in Heaven. What I found most touching, however, was the gift that he made to the whole of mankind in leaving Mary as our Mother. As he was about to leave us and go to Heaven, he left to us, as a heritage, what was dearest and nearest to him, and to Mary herself he gave the power to assist, help and strengthen all those who have recourse to her. This is all the vengeance that Jesus takes of his enemies: he presents them with what is most precious to him, and imparts to them his choicest graces. I was moved to compassion when I heard Jesus crying out that he was abandoned by the Father. That was suffering at its highest. Immensely tormented in body, wronged in his honour, afflicted and desolate even in spirit, how could the gentle Jesus bear it all? But he endured everything not only for love of me but also to teach me. He chose to feel abandoned by his Father to teach me that I should not be attached to feelings of joy. If he deprives me of it, I should accept his will and remain steadfastly loyal to him. I heard him cry out, "*I thirst*<sup>1</sup>". But his thirst was a mysterious one, a thirst to suffer more for my sake, a thirst to fulfil the divine will in all its fullness. Lastly, I contemplated him as he commended his Spirit to the Father and then breathing his last. I gazed at him lying still in Mary's arms. Oh! How deeply moved I was to behold those most holy

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<sup>1</sup> Original in Latin "*Sitio*".

wounds, his crowned head, his badly-lacerated body. Oh, my Jesus! I should rather die than fail to love you in return.

**Resolutions:** To be very kind to everyone, and to bear up with them with human understanding. To have great trust and devotion towards the Blessed Virgin Mary.

I sat the whole time of this Meditation, which took me about an hour. At the start I was a bit drowsy, but not so after that. I had few distractions but not many warm feelings, either.

Today's *spiritual reading* was on the life of St Edmund Archbishop. I was glad to think of the holy, excellent upbringing afforded by his devout mother; this made me realize the spiritual benefits the youth derive from a good upbringing. I admired his devotion to Mary and the patience with which he put up with his adversaries. These are all very important lessons for me.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, this afternoon, I asked the Lord to let me know if He was displeased with what I had said. That was because I felt a bit of remorse for not doing it for charity's sake but with a bit of subtle pride. However, I felt reassured in my heart: If I have permitted this, it is a sign that I have certain designs over him, and you just pray earnestly for a good outcome.

## FOURTH MEDITATION

### *On Heaven*

Ah! How refreshing this Holy Meditation has been! My heart was filled with gladness, and I wept for joy. At the start I imagined myself on the threshold of that holy city and with the eyes of faith I saw a countless host of Angels and Saints hastening to welcome me and take me in, and rejoicing with me. Among them I made out my beloved Luigino<sup>1</sup>: as I looked, he ran up to me with festive joy and embraced me. What a delightful sight it was! I gazed at the vast number of Saints, looking different, yes, but all happy in that glory. I thought how happy I will be to meet relatives, persons I have known, friends and especially my spiritual sisters. And if by my good example or advice, or warning, I could procure Heaven's bliss for someone, how they would run up to meet me to thank me and tell me that they have always prayed for me. I then imagined myself being taken by my good Aloysius and my Guardian Angel right up to the throne of Mary. Oh, the delightful sight that once again met my eyes! To see her beauty, her greatness, her loveableness, and to kiss her with devotion, acknowledge the graces she has given me, the love she has had for me, and to see myself received with such love. Oh!

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<sup>1</sup> Bartolomea calls St Aloysius "*Luigino*" in an affectionate and familiar way.

What a bliss! And if I have happily done something for Her, if I have loved and served Her, and encouraged others to honour her, how glad I will be to know that she has been pleased by it.

What a new and brighter Paradise will it be to see the Holy Humanity of Jesus Christ, beloved Spouse of my soul. To gaze at his divine face, his eyes, his wounds, and acknowledge in Him the whole merit of my salvation! To see myself crowned by Him and received as his faithful Bride. And to hear so many angelic melodies, and all the time surrounded by Angels and Saints and hear the never-ending songs of praise, and myself praising him for all eternity! What a supreme happiness!

But the Paradise of the soul will be even greater. The remembrance of things of the past, the pain endured, dangers overcome, so many timely graces put to profit, serving to win for me such bliss. How happy I will be to know the secrets of nature, the order of grace, the wise and just ways of my God! But above all, what about the happiness of knowing, seeing and loving God? To know about all his attributes, the Mysteries that surround him, to see his justice, omnipotence, wisdom and providence, but more especially his goodness and merciful love, to see that immense beauty and share in his blessedness, to gaze to my heart's content on his divine face, love him perfectly, see him loved by an infinite number of creatures, sure that I will never, never lose him again! What a bliss! What a happiness! What a blessedness!

A thousand years of penance would be worthwhile to gain by them a single day of Heaven's bliss.

**Resolutions:** To fight against my pride lest it should rob me of Heaven's beauty.

I did this Meditation partly in Church and partly in my room, on my knees all through, for a bit more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour. I had very few distractions, though not much fervour; I was slightly moved to tears, and with some insight, too.

*Second Examination on today's defects.* Last night I was lazy in getting up for the Meditation; I had a thought of pride: I was told that when I was a little child, there was a good priest who was very fond of me. A thought crossed my mind that this Priest may have foreseen what I would be when I grew up. Today I did not take the discipline because it was raining and I did not know where to hide myself for it. Now and then, today, I felt a bit like wanting to get back home<sup>1</sup>, but I don't think I have spent the day badly, thank God, nor did I lose my inner recollection, it seems to me. May God help me with his grace, so that I may serve him as I should. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> To enjoy the tranquility of quiet surroundings, the venerable Bartolomea usually went to have her Spiritual Exercises in a farmhouse she possessed at Sellere, a village in Val Cavallina.

## Day 6

### FIRST MEDITATION - Night-time

#### *On Heaven (continued)*

I have been thinking what supreme happiness it will be for our human will to find itself in the happy need to love God, to see all its desires fulfilled in God, to be fully aware that all its yearnings are fulfilled, all its longings met in a sacred manner, with no desire outside God's will. What a supreme joy it is to think that all these good things will never be mixed with the least sort of evil; there will be no fear of being deprived of God nor of his grace; there will be no more pain, sickness, infirmity, no afflictions of heart or spirit, no evil at all.

What a bliss it is to think that all these good things will fully satisfy the human heart, that they will be ever new and ever more beatifying but above all, what supreme happiness it is to be certain that such happiness will last for ever, with no fear that it might diminish or come to an end. Jesus my love! In return for a little trouble, a reward so great! Oh Heaven, Heaven! How lovely you are! ...

And you, earth, how worthless, World, how unworthy you are of my love! Riches, pastimes, how deceptive! ... Heaven, Heaven is real happiness, the only real blessedness and to it alone I want to direct all my commitments in order to reach it soon.

**Resolutions:** Not to waste a single moment, but to spend all my time usefully, in order to win vast treasures in Heaven.

This Meditation, lasting half-an-hour, was done on my knees. I had very few distractions; my heart was filled with the desire to attain Heaven.

At my Holy Communion this morning I prayed the Lord to let me know if he minds it that I write to so many friends and that in my letters I treat only of spiritual things, fearing this may be vanity and pride. It seems to me that he did not mind my corresponding with friends by letter, but that I should prefer those friends to whom I can in some way do good, and those who have less means for their sanctification. *With regard to what I write, I feel that Jesus is pleased that I speak only of edifying things and that, in fact, I should never merely pay compliments, stand on ceremonies or write on useless things, but to write on things that can do good to the soul, I also begged him to let me know if he approves of it when in order to give alms I take away<sup>1</sup> things from the house, and it seems to me he is pleased with this too, and that he encouraged me to be generous in charity.*

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<sup>1</sup> It was not a question of ‘robbing’, as she calls it, but of giving some alms to the poor, without letting her father know, because of his difficult character. Besides, even these small alms she never did without her mother’s permission.

## SECOND MEDITATION

*How much Jesus and the Blessed Trinity have done  
to save me*

In this Meditation, I have come to know of my immense obligation to my God who has done so much that I may be saved. I 'saw' the whole Blessed Trinity actively concerned for my eternal salvation. God the Father makes use of his omnipotence to provide me with the easiest and most suitable means for it. He creates an immense number of creatures so that in different ways they may be of help in attaining my salvation. He gives charge to a large part of his angelic court to keep guard on me and on everyone, that they may support me, defend me and lead me to salvation. The Eternal Son uses his wisdom to teach me the way to salvation.

The Holy Spirit uses his loving kindness, his love, to save me, and so, how many inspirations he prompts deep in my heart, so much inner urging and light; how many times he calls me and helps me. But more especially, what has my Jesus left undone, what pain has he spared himself so that I may be saved? He is God, immensely blessed in Himself independently of all else; and yet in order to save me, he humbles himself, he lowers himself and almost brings himself to nothing in taking a human form, in order to save me. And still that does not satisfy his love. How many hardships, how much suffering he undergoes to free me from sin, in order to save me.

The Blessed Trinity and Jesus care so much for my eternal salvation, and shall I be so little interested in procuring it? ... They have given me all the means, they have opened the way and showed me where to direct my steps; Jesus has made himself my Head, my guide, and shall I just abandon him and go astray? To my utter dismay, I realized how negligent I have been in my commitment not only to save my soul but also to become a saint, for that is what the Lord expects from me. I realize that I should like to be a saint, but without taking too much trouble; I want to save my soul, but without hardship. I now know that what God wants from me is humility, he wants self-denial and prayer; I know that he wants me to be dead to the world and to myself, that he wants me to engage myself in activity with my neighbour. Yet with all this, I do nothing. Oh my God! Move my will into action yourself, my God! Grant that once for all I may set myself resolutely to love you and serve you.

**Resolutions:** To do everything with much fervour, keeping in mind that if I want to save myself, I must work hard for it.

I did this Meditation in Church, on my knees for a part of it and sitting for the rest of the time, about an hour. At the start I had some distractions; as I went on, practically none. I had a little fervour, and understood a few things. I ended it with a live desire to do all I can to become a saint.

Today's *spiritual reading* was on the Feast of the Presentation of Mary at the Temple of Jerusalem. This *spiritual reading* really strengthened me. I have understood how

delighted God is with chastity and how highly Mary valued it and cherished it. I have also understood how much it would displease God if it remained sterile and cut off from other virtues. I had an ardent desire to give my whole self to God, at once, in the company of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

*General Examination of conscience.* I have found out that I am sometimes curious, both by looking on and by wanting to know things without a real need. I have therefore resolved never to look nor seek to know things unless it be for the glory of God or for the benefit of my neighbour, or necessary in some way. I have also found that out of pride I easily meddle in the affairs of others. In this regard I have resolved to intervene whenever it may be of some use to my neighbour, even if they will call me '*learned person*', and to keep quiet when there is no real need to speak.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he seemed to be speaking to my heart, telling me to do even the little things thoroughly well, because the fruit of these Spiritual Exercises may depend on it.

### THIRD AND FOURTH MEDITATIONS

#### *On the love of God*

In these two meditations I reflected on the love that my dear God professes to me. How boundless I have found it to be! I have considered how from all eternity Almighty God has had for me an immense love. From all eternity, he had planned to create me out of nothing, to mould me into such an

excellent body, with such a noble soul, made in his own image. As a dwelling-place for me, God created the world, so beautiful, so varied and so delightful. He could have made me an animal, or a stone, or a non-rational creature. No, he made these lower creatures to be of use to me. But, my God, how did I merit to be born in a Christian country, of good parents who are so concerned for my salvation? ... How did I merit to be endowed with memory, intellect and will, with considerable talent? How did I deserve to be given Faith in you, Baptism, so many Sacraments, especially the Eucharist?

And such a good education in which I have come to know so clearly how sweet it is to serve you, in which I have learnt to love you, and through which you have drawn me to yourself. What merit had I to receive it? And what about these sacred espousals in which you, my gentle Spouse, chose me to be your bride and through which you admitted me into your intimacy: you have granted me the best of all gifts, holy Purity. How could I ever have deserved it? And the continual graces you are granting me, Lord! Light, Holy Communions and good examples, a spiritual director. What are all these if not most clear signs of the love you have for me? ...

Oh Lord! When I offend you, you seem to close your eyes and turn a deaf ear so that you may not stop loving me and favouring me. Oh infinite goodness and love ... And still shall I not love you? Or love you coldly? ... Oh, don't let it ever happen. But the exquisite tokens of your love are not over. What about that beautiful Heaven you have prepared for me,

that immense happiness, the same bliss you enjoy, is it not all a clear sign of the love you have for me? But above all, what you, dear Jesus, have done for my sake: those hardships, that sweating and caring for my salvation and in the end that painful death you bore for love of me: what tokens are these of? ... Oh Lord, you have loved me too much, and I, unworthy that I am, feel ashamed that I have had an icy-cold heart for you.

**Resolutions:** For the sake of my God, to overcome my pride and so prepare a lovely heart fit to love him.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament I begged him to let me know how I should behave when I am sick. I seem to have understood that I would then need to redouble my patience, offer to the Lord my desire where I cannot manage to do things, be more intensely aware of the presence of God and be more prayerful.

Second *Examination on today's defects*. I did not take the discipline; my thoughts were a bit scattered, and I have had a thought of pride, that is, I thought that a certain person must have said that though I no longer hold any key role in the Sodality, yet I will have for it the same sense of commitment. With regard to the last two Meditations: one of them I did in Church, on my knees, for half-an-hour, with devotion and under standing; the other, also for half-an-hour, I did in my room, not very attentively, but a few things did move me.

This evening's *spiritual reading* was an extract from the life of Blessed Alphonse de Liguori. I learnt from it how thoroughly I should carry out my duties, and how I should be conformed to God's will. I conclude this day, too, in the name of the Lord, and I really wish to profit from these Spiritual Exercises.

## **Last Day**

MEDITATION - Night-time

*On attending to little things thoroughly well*

First of all I reflected on how much God is pleased when we value good little things and carry out our little duties with the utmost care not just in carrying them out but also in the time, way and place fixed for them. I have realized that when we go about our duties in that manner, we truly act for God's sake alone and also avoid many defects of pride, of self-complacency, of empty praise, etc, and that acting with such care we also meet with God's delight.

Then I reflected on how careful I should be to shun and avoid even the tiniest defects. I realized that the devil is very adept at making us commit small defects in order to draw us into his snare. I have also understood how risky it is to keep committing small defects and almost without thinking<sup>1</sup>, because it leads souls into the danger of committing grave

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<sup>1</sup> Not being FULLY aware of them, that is, with some negligence on our part.

sins, because their fervour grows weak, God's grace is not allowed to work and they get used to sinfulness. I realized that this is the greatest wrong a soul can do God, because God who is so good and worthy of infinite love, is served with such negligence. That is my own state after so many graces that I have received. My God, for love's sake help me to come out of this situation.

**Resolutions:** To set a high value on little things, and to carry them out thoroughly well.

I did this Meditation on my knees, for half-an-hour. I had few distractions, and some insight.

#### MEDITATION - Morning

##### *On the Blessed Sacrament*

Oh Lord! What can I write about this Meditation? Your exceedingly great love can never be described. In this Sacrament you have manifested it fully. I have reflected on it as long as I could, and I have seen in my dear Jesus in the Sacrament a passionate lover of my poor soul; in seeking some further proof of his love, he goes to the extent of giving me his whole self as nourishment, along with all his treasures; he goes to the extent of telling me that he finds his delight among us. But, my Jesus, how can you find delight in us when we are utter misery and iniquity? ...

How can you say that you find your delight in us? ... Oh, my Jesus, I do understand: your heart is nothing but charity: in loving, you let your greatest attribute shine out in all its splendour and you let us recognize you as the one true God. And so by staying with us you have continual opportunities to express your charity, and these you consider to be your most cherished delights. In this mystery I see only love, I know nothing except love, and as I meditate on it, I experience nothing except love. I am unable to say anything else; I know that this is an effect of divine charity; I know that you love my soul beyond any limit, I know that anyone who does not love you does not deserve to live. And I who day by day come to you to receive you, day by day unite myself to you, day by day I partake of your banquet, feed on your flesh and am transformed in you! My heart should be all aglow with charity! ... I feel ashamed that in spite of all this I am still cold and slow to love my God.

**Resolutions:** If God asks anything from me, whatever it may cost me, I will give it to him gladly, since He too has given himself totally to me so many times. I shall receive Holy Communion with great devotion.

I did this Meditation in Church, for an hour, on my knees throughout. I had few distractions, much fervour and, if I am not mistaken, I also shed tears of tenderness.

At my Holy Communion I made some resolutions on the completion of these Spiritual Exercises; I shall write them out

later on. I have had a desire to profit from all the graces given by the Lord during this holy time.

For my own peace of mind, I am adding a few things: the main inspirations that I kept having most frequently during this time are these three ...

1<sup>st</sup> A most ardent desire to dedicate myself as much as I can, and even more, for the good of my neighbour. I really seemed to hear my dear Spouse recommend to me one by one all those persons I could be of some help to, by His grace. My heart was filled with a most tender compassion for sinners, and I felt I would have done all in my power to take them away from sin. Several times I envied persons whose ministry is that of tirelessly striving for the conversion of sinners.

2<sup>nd</sup> I understood the great need of living a life that is crucified, in self-abnegation and humility, forgotten and abandoned by all. I had a great desire to cling solely to the cross and be crucified with Jesus Christ, I experienced how sweet and comforting this is to souls that have fallen in love with Jesus, and I felt very keenly in my heart that God wants that kind of life from me.

3<sup>rd</sup> I have had a great desire to consecrate myself wholly to holy prayer. I realized how necessary, useful and advantageous this is; how I would go from bad to worse without it and how I should be united to my Jesus by means of this holy exercise.

*Throughout these days I have done gladly whatever I had set myself, except that I found it a bit burdensome to do the*

*Meditation of the night and that of having to write so much. At times this gave rise to pride, because I thought my Confessor would be pleased and would praise what I wrote, maybe showing it to others, too. However, I have decided to go on writing all the same, because I hope it may be useful to myself later on, and so I tried to drive away the temptation. With regard to the time set for the Meditations, I could never fix them exactly because I never heard the clock strike the hour. I may have said too much or too little; I have said what I sincerely felt, more or less.*

I have good reason to thank the Lord, because he has assisted me in a marvellous manner. I trust I have never lost inner recollection, and at the same time I have always been very cheerful and happy. My slight ailments did not disturb me unduly except once for a day. Now the Exercises are starting in the sense that I have to derive fruit from them, otherwise I shall have to give a strict account for them to my God. May He grant that everything be done for his greater glory, for the good of my neighbour and for the benefit of my own soul. Amen.

Hail Jesus and Mary.

## RESOLUTIONS I MAKE IN THESE RETREAT DAYS

### PRAISED BE JESUS CHRIST

Most loveable Jesus, I come to you to express my heartfelt thanks for what you have done to my soul during these days. Your goodness is truly overwhelming; I did not deserve even the tiniest part of so many graces you have granted me; I feel enveloped by your loving kindness, with which you have favoured my soul so abundantly. I thank you a thousand times and pray you to give me the grace to put your graces to good use. I beg you to forgive me my poor response and cold manner in which I have received your gifts. However, I trust that the same infinite goodness that has done so much for me will also help me to respond to it well. Be pleased with my resolutions and bless them; grant that they may be imprinted indelibly in my heart, and that I may carry them out in every detail.

1<sup>st</sup> Dear Jesus, I place myself entirely in your holy hands. See to all that concerns me as it pleases you most. I offer you my will, my life-situation, my possessions: use them all according to your Holy Will. From now on I will no more be concerned about myself but leave all the care of myself entirely to you. Everything, down to the tiniest things, I will accept from your holy hands. Life or death, health or infirmity,

poverty or riches, good or bad reputation, afflictions or spiritual refreshment, provided they come to me from your hands, I will accept them equally well. Do just as you like best, for I abandon myself totally to your care.

2<sup>nd</sup> Dear Jesus, by your help I resolve to devote myself as much as I can to the holy exercise of prayer. To attain to union with my God, I will go against my will, I will let my self-love be trampled upon by all, I will seek humiliations, I will cherish the cross, and will live bound fast to it. I will do as much meditation as my life-situation allows, I will prepare for it with care, and I will go about in this world as if I were alone with God, and everything else will be done for Him without any other concern. I will try to learn the best way of doing this holy exercise so that I may know how to remain in ceaseless conversation with my gentle Spouse.

3<sup>rd</sup> Lord, give me a deep passion for charity, because to charity I consecrate my whole self. Once more I pledge myself to do what I promised you by my vow of charity. Indeed, I wish to do even more with your assistance. I feel and hope that what pleases you above all is my self-dedication to the poor, to the sick; for their sake I promise I will spare myself no pains, time or trouble. I will do my best to learn at your feet the proper way of being useful to them. I beg you to help your poor handmaid.

4<sup>th</sup> Every Sunday I will read again one of these Meditations, and the resolutions made in it will serve to put them into practise all through the week, and as for any defects found out

on that day, I will 'scourge' them throughout the week; in that way I will keep my Spiritual Exercises in mind and benefit from them.

My Jesus, I place myself entirely in your hands. Help me yourself so that I may love you as much as I am capable of. Most Holy Mary, I commend myself to you. Dear St Aloysius, all you Saints of Heaven, pray much for me. Amen.