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## **(SPIRITUAL EXERCISES 1832)**

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AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM. AMEN.

*22 September - Evening*

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE RETREAT**

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#### MEDITATION

#### *On the Necessity of striving for salvation*

This Meditation was meant to be on the above topic, but I had to let my God work. In such circumstances I received from my good Father the welcome and delicate warmth of the Father of the Prodigal Son. He inspired me with a boundless trust in his goodness and he showed me his Heart open-wide to receive me and help me become totally his. He also offered me a little Cross, inviting me to carry it gladly for Him. I have had sentiments of deep gratitude to God as I realized how many graces he grants me not only to save my soul but also to make me a saint. I strongly felt my Jesus urging me to strive after holiness by means of charity towards my neighbour. It seemed to me he was very pleased when I promised him I would spare no pains in that holy exercise. For that purpose, I

understood that Jesus will be pleased if I look after my health, something that I had never felt in other Meditations, nor ever before. I ended it with an act of total self-surrender in God's hands.

**Resolutions:** To do these Spiritual Exercises as well as I possibly can, and to overcome all temptations by turning for help to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

This meditation lasted a little more than half-an-hour. I had very few distractions: I had much peace of mind and deep spiritual joy. For a while Our Lord was at work, and I was moved to tears. I was seated almost the whole time.

### **Day 1 - 23 September**

At my Holy Communion this morning I felt inwardly urged to suffer patiently and to persevere to the end. Though it took me some trouble to prepare a few little girls in church I was very happy to do something useful for my neighbour, and Our Lord made up for it by giving me much peace and quiet.

#### FIRST MEDITATION

#### *On Man's Last End*

In this Meditation the Lord has graciously shown me by a particular light the Nothingness I am derived from; I have therefore understood how groundless my pride is, since what I have of my own is simply nothing, and sinfulness; it seems to

me that the Lord has really convinced me of this truth, in such a way that I have come to know how foolish I am to have conceived so many thoughts of pride.

In the second Point of my meditation, the Lord gave me a particular desire to attend as I should to the last end for which I was created, that is, to save my soul, and I have realized how important, sublime and necessary that end is.

In the third Point I felt confused when I realized how negligent I am in serving the Lord, how badly I neglect such a sublime end and the poor care I take of my soul.

**Resolutions:** When any thought of pride assails me, to remind myself of my origin, and let the truth about my nothingness, fight it and overcome it.

This Meditation lasted a little more than an hour; I was in peace; I attended to it with understanding and was also deeply moved. I was seated almost the whole time. During this Meditation I heard the Communion of the 'Oratorians' going on. It made me so happy that I could not hold back my tears, and Our Lord urged me to pray for all of them, that none of them be lost. The time of this encounter with my God slipped away almost without my noticing it. It made me very eager to suffer gladly for my God.

This morning's *spiritual reading* was on mental prayer. It made me realize how right our Lord is never to leave me 'quiet' in this regard. I understood the importance and need for it, the benefits and good derived from it, and with the Lord's help, I resolved to respond.

In the *General Examination of conscience* this morning I reflected on my pride, and I realized that I do very little to improve. In fact I do not avoid praise; at times I speak in my own favour; I like to be loved and thought highly of by others, and humiliations hurt a lot. That is what makes my self-love so touchy, what causes the reaction I feel within myself even when slightly wronged, and why I so easily take offence.

## SECOND MEDITATION

*On the means God has given me to be saved  
and to become a saint*

In the first point of this holy Meditation I understood how much Jesus loves me: with no merit of mine, unlike so many others, I was granted to be born in a Catholic town, and given the precious gift of faith. I was moved to tears of warm gratitude to my God, and it seemed to me I would have been only too glad to shed my blood for his sake.

In the second point I considered how much Jesus has done to save me, how much he has granted me that I may be worthy to enter Heaven. The suffering of my Jesus, his Blood, his grace, his merits, and everything so that I may gain Heaven.

In the third point I considered the outstanding graces the Lord has granted me all through my life, through which I

could have become a great saint, and instead I am still so bad. Among other graces: the good education, daily Communion, so many good inspirations, good spiritual direction from my Confessor, so many good examples from my companions, the loving-kindness of Mary, my Mummy, the assistance of my dear St Aloysius, opportunities to do good at home and in the town; my God, what a golden chain! ... And yet, I have made such a poor use of it!

**Resolutions:** To attend to my sanctification with eagerness and care, and in particular to do my best to receive the Sacraments fruitfully, and to approach them always with good dispositions.

This Meditation took me almost two hours; in the first two points I enjoyed tranquillity and recollection, I had particular insights and very few distractions; in the last point I was rather tired: I had distractions and it did not move me. For the best part of the Meditation I was on my knees, and sat down for the third part of it.

Today's *spiritual reading* was on Humility: What a plight I was in! I was scared when I read the sentence: No proud man will go to Heaven: For charity's sake, my God, rid me of this ugly vice!

### THIRD MEDITATION

As I was mentally quite tired, I could not force my mind any further, and so for this Meditation I took my place as a beggar at the door of the Heart of my Jesus, waiting for Him graciously to open it and let me in. I did my best to stay in His presence in holy quiet, and to listen to his voice. For some time I was quiet, and I enjoyed staying with my God, but then a certain restlessness harassed me now and then, preventing me from enjoying his presence perfectly well.

**Resolutions:** To abandon myself entirely in the hands of my God and to frequently study the virtues of his Divine Heart.

In this Meditation I had some distractions, but also considerable quiet. It must have lasted  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour. I did it partly seated and partly on my knees.

*Particular Examination of conscience.* Today I was unable to follow the method fixed for Spiritual Exercises, and carried out my normal practices when I could. By chance I saw in a little boy something 'against modesty', and some time later I was a bit disturbed by the thought of it, but I just paid no heed to it and remained perfectly quiet. A thought of self-complacency crossed my mind; this is truly my predominant passion.

I spent the day very peacefully and with gladness of heart, with my whole being absorbed in God.



Though I said something about our Institute, it did not disturb me. Certain other cares and thoughts came to my mind but then easily left me. I went to bed happily though I had felt my usual aches and pains more than ever during the day; it seemed to me that if death came to me in the night, the Lord would have been merciful to me.

### **Day 2 - 24 September**

I got up from bed with a cheerful heart though I had slept very little over the night. By God's grace I gladly resumed my Spiritual Exercises. I was very happy to receive Holy Communion but my heart was strangely cold. However, Our Lord is always so kind to me: he made me remain calm and quiet, and I felt the Lord urging me to abandon myself totally in his arms and let him do everything even for the Institute itself because the humblest instruments are the very ones he uses to carry out His designs with. I felt he was encouraging me to proceed with this undertaking and take heart; to let him do everything himself: all I had to do was to remove all obstacles and follow him blindly.

## FIRST MEDITATION

*Gravity of mortal sin  
as can be deduced from the enormous punishments  
meted out to it.*

In the first point I reflected on the rebellious angels' sin and punishment. How greatly indebted I am to God: though I have sinned so many times, he has not punished me!

In the second point I understood, or rather reflected on Adam's sin and punishment. In this point I had some idea of the gravity of sin: God, who is so merciful, punishes it severely in the very act of showing extraordinary mercy by not hurling into Hell our forefather Adam and all of us with him. I was struck by the thought that all evils spring from sin, and that sin is the only real evil because by it we offend God. And yet I commit it so easily and then I don't care about it and forget all about it! ...

In the third point I deduced the gravity of sin from the pain of hell it deserves and from the terrible suffering Jesus Christ had to endure to wipe it out. I understood the ugliness of sin and how seriously I should keep away from even the smallest sin, lest I should incur the wrath of God.

**Resolutions:** To have a horror for small defects and never to commit even a single one deliberately, lest I should fall into grave ones.

This Meditation took me a little more than an hour; I had few distractions. I was fairly impressed as I realized how horrible sin is. I did the Meditation partly seated and partly on my knees.

The *spiritual reading* was on meekness. I learnt how pleasing this virtue is to God and how important it is. I also realized how foolish are certain excuses that my self-love brings to make me correct others harshly.

*General Examination. On vigilance over my senses.* I realized that I have not been keeping good watch over my eyes; especially in church I used to keep a better watch on them before<sup>1</sup>. As to my tongue, I find that I easily put in some words in idle talk and these return as distractions during prayer; some days I often talk uselessly. I realize also that at times I gladly listen to certain things which are not harmful in themselves but cause distraction all the same, and at times I listen to them out of curiosity.

In my visit, in spirit, to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus appeared to my mind as the Good Shepherd tenderly receiving the sheep that run into his arms. I enjoyed this goodness-of-heart and I availed myself of it by begging him to grant me holy humility ...

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<sup>1</sup> Most probably she could not keep such a strict control over her eyes as before because she had to keep an eye on her pupils even in church. However, true to her usual way, she here blames herself where she was not in fault at all.

## SECOND MEDITATION

### *On my sins*

In the first point I reflected on my youth. How many sins, even before I came to know God! Sins of disobedience, obstinacy, vanity, but more especially against holy purity. My God, how gladly I would wash away such ugly stains<sup>1</sup> with my blood! ...

As I recalled these sins I was moved to tears, and God made me feel it very keenly, though not so much as I deserve. My youth could have been so pleasing to God and instead I placed it in the devil's hands! ... At this point I realized what a good thing it is to protect the innocence of little girls and keep them away from those dangers they know nothing of but which are fatal, and over which they will shed tears of sorrow for the rest of their life. In doing that, I can in some measure render to God what I have deprived myself of.

In the second point I have considered the circumstances in which I have sinned, because I sinned knowingly, in spite of

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to observation made on similar expressions in a note on Meditation 2 of Day 6 of Spiritual Exercises 1826. Note also what Bartolomea herself asserts here: that she had committed these 'sins' - *even before I came to know God*.

feeling that it was bad; I was repeatedly heedless of the inspirations that you kept giving to my heart. I must confess that when I was only seven years old, a sermon I heard made me tremble; the thought of death drove me to make good resolutions, a warning made me stop to reflect; but then everything came to nothing and I continued to commit sin.

In the third point I meditated on the great mercies the Lord has always shown me in spite of my ingratitude. I thought of my good upbringing, so many inspirations and the wise advice of my Confessors, Teachers and companions, the Sacraments so frequently received, so many practices of piety, and in return for it all, such a poor response! ... Alas, my God, I am monstrously ungrateful!"

**Resolutions:** Three times a day to make an act of contrition, to remain mindful of my enormous sins.

This Meditation took me about an hour; I did it partly walking, partly seated; I attended to it fairly well, with very few distractions. It moved me somewhat, giving me light to know my sins.

### THIRD MEDITATION

#### *On the Rectitude of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

For the greater part of this Meditation I allowed my heart to work freely. I implored Jesus to let me enter into the furnace of love of his Heart. In there, I meditated on how steadfastly he

sought in all that he did only the glory of His divine Father. I have understood how greatly Jesus will be pleased with me if in all that I do I have no other aim except his glory, and that I myself, my own concern even in spiritual matters, and whatever I may desire, should have no other aim than that of pleasing and honouring Jesus. After that, I let my spirit rest in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and I enjoyed for a while his divine presence. Oh! How good my Jesus is!... Even after I have committed countless sins, he receives me so kindly, and he loves me.

**Resolutions:** Before I do anything I shall remind myself: I am doing it for God.

For this Meditation I remained seated throughout, that is, little more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour. I had very few distractions. I was absorbed in God and enjoyed peace and joy.

Today's *Lesson* was on the meekness we should cultivate when we are wronged. This is just the right thing for me, with the touchy self-love that I have. God grant that I pay heed to Blessed Liguori on this point.

*Particular Examination of conscience.* I am extremely obliged to my God. He has helped me in every situation, accompanying me at every step; he has put in me a sweet sense of gladness that comforts me; everything spoke to me of Him, and every moment I felt my heart uttering those words: "*I will take her into the desert and speak to her heart*"<sup>1</sup>. He kept me in tranquil repose and though two or three times thoughts of housework etc. crossed my mind, they fled at once.

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<sup>1</sup> Original in Latin "*Ducam in solitudinem, et loquar ad cor*".

I expect some cross because what I have been enjoying is too simple and sweet. I may have committed many defects all the same, I fear: of pride, in imagining something great in myself. Lord, give me your light and forgiveness.

### **Day 3 - 25 September**

By God's grace, I got up well and cheerful this morning too, and I resumed my Spiritual Exercises with delight. In the Mass of preparation for Holy Communion, many things about home came to mind, but they did not make me anxious, and they easily went away. I was happy to receive Holy Communion, though my heart was cold. In it I felt strongly urged to wage a holy war on myself, that is, on my passions, desires and whatever cannot please God; to crush self-love, pride, craving for esteem, good name, reputation, etc.; that I should tread the path that few go by: sorrowful, rough and thorny, but which will lead me to the happy ending.

#### FIRST MEDITATION

##### *On Death*

I reflected that it will certainly come, at an unknown time, once for all. And so I understood how important it is to prepare for it well, prepare for it without delay and remain

always prepared, if I want to spend that important moment safely. I reflected on the nothingness, emptiness and madness of worldly possessions, vanity and honour, knowing that at the point of death everything vanishes and such things can only make it more bitter. How truly wise are those who habitually think of death and regulate all their actions accordingly.

My God, I do think of death very often and yet it does not bring me out of the lukewarm life that I lead! ... How important it is to die well! ... Everything is passing away, but death will open for me an eternity that will never come to an end ... Lord, in your wounds, in your blood, is all my hope. I want to live well so that my death may be precious in your sight.

**Resolutions:** To think very often of death; particularly when I am about to do some important thing, to ask myself how, on the point of death, I shall wish to have done it.

I did this Meditation in church, seated nearly the whole hour. I had very few distractions, but I felt a bit drowsy. It did leave an impression on me. I ended it with the determination to do my utmost to ensure the death of the righteous.

This morning's *Lesson* was on inner self-denial. I understood how necessary it is and how assiduously I should practise it in order to rid myself of pride, self-love and so many other passions that have a hold on my heart. Lord, help me; I do want to pay heed to your voice, and if I cannot practise bodily austerities because I am so anxious about my health, I



will be all the more eager to do inner mortification of my passions.

*General Examination on my vows and Method of life.* I found out defects everywhere, but especially in the Vow of Charity, now and then on the vow of Obedience to my sister, and much more in the Vow of Greater Perfection. In my method of life I found failings due to negligence; there are so many things that I do out of habit, not for genuine love of God. The bonds the Lord keeps me united to Himself with are so many, and yet I am so careless to keep them tight! ... I should belong totally to Him and instead I belong just to myself. Dear Jesus, help me in your charity, wash away all my stains in your blood, and make me beautiful in your sight.

In my visit, in spirit, to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as I thought of our dear Institute, I felt my heart urging me to resolve to be the least of all, to do gladly what others dislike, never to say 'No' to anything but show myself happy with everything, not to express my own opinion in anything unless compelled by obedience, and if anything is not to my liking, if my companions are not as I should like them to be, I will not speak of them with anyone else. Instead, I will take everything to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and place it at his feet begging Him to turn everything to his glory.

Lord, I implore from you the grace to carry out all this: all that I can do is to throw away and spoil your works.

## SECOND MEDITATION

### *On the Particular Judgement*

In this Meditation I first reviewed the accusations that the devil will bring up against me, those presented by my Guardian Angel and lastly those of Jesus Christ who will both accuse and judge. I pictured the big book of my sins which the devil will open before me. I was scared when I began to imagine what his accusations might be.

I was even more moved by the accusations brought up by my Guardian Angel, because he will accuse me justly, in all truth, on sound reasons. He will have good reason to claim that in justice I should be brought to account, because I treated him so badly, committed so many sins in his presence, and responded in such an unworthy way to his plans and inspirations, so many times forgetting all about him and so often refusing to listen to him ... Forgive me, my Good Angel, forgive me; in future I will acknowledge your service, I will pay heed to your wishes and will do my best to please you.

I cannot help shedding tears when I think of Jesus' accusations: What will my Jesus say to me? ... What an account will he make me give for so many graces he granted me, so many mercies he showed me, so much love he bore me, so much patience he had with me? ... What excuse shall I bring for my ingratitude? ... Alas, my God! If of the graces

granted to me you had given just a portion to someone else, she would have by this time become a great saint, and I am instead a monster of ingratitude ... For charity's sake, don't look on me with wrath, forgive me now, for you are my Father, so that I may sing your mercies.

**Resolutions:** In order to obtain mercy from Jesus, I will practise charity towards my neighbour, and never spare myself any trouble.

I did this Meditation for an hour, seated all through. I had few distractions. I attended to it carefully and with understanding. I ended it with sentiments of gratitude towards the beloved Jesus who bears with me so tenderly.

### THIRD MEDITATION

#### *On the Loveable S. Heart of Jesus*

With rapturous sweetness I went to the one who this very day was my severe Judge, for I can still call on him as my most loving Father. I begged him to let me know the treasures of his Heart and make me experience how loveable he is. I had a glimpse of his loving Heart when I considered that he is absolute Goodness in himself, how greatly he loves all his creatures, how much he did for our sake and how gently he receives every person who turns to him. Oh! What a treasure of charity is the Sacred Heart of Jesus! ... Is it possible that my heart should be so hard towards Him?

In this Meditation the charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus has made me understand that my charity towards my neighbour should be very great indeed: I should put the interests of others before my own. Today, to enjoy my quiet, I made someone who wanted to see me call me several times: this made me feel remorse. I learnt from it that even during these days, charity must come first, and if anyone wants to speak to me or come to see me, I should receive them and treat them kindly and then place everything in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and try to put the thought of it aside in order to attend to what I am here for.

**Resolutions:** To bear pain gladly and endure it without letting others know of that little suffering that God sends me, and so give him a proof of my love.

I did this Meditation in church, seated the whole time it took me - an hour or so. I had few distractions; I was recollected on the whole, but I was a bit restless because my imagination was very active, except for the last bit.

The *spiritual reading* was about the detachment I should have from things and from my relatives, from appreciation and from my own will. It was quite alarming because it made it so clear that with all the things I am attached to, I cannot acquire any virtue. I felt convinced of the truth that the Saint teaches here, and I do wish to do as he suggests.

*Particular Examination.* I said something that was prompted by self-love; I let persons call me several times before answering them, partly because I didn't feel like it and partly because I did not like to be disturbed. Today, too, Our

Lord kept in me recollection, union with Him, a sweet sense of gladness and a great desire to do my utmost to become a saint in the manner that is pleasing to Him.

#### **Day 4 - 26 September**

By God's grace, this morning, too, I got up in a cheerful frame of mind; I resumed my spiritual Exercises with a will, relying fully on the loving kindness of my God.

I was very happy to receive Holy Communion, and my eagerness for it was a little greater than is usual with me. In it the Lord graciously disposed me to suffer, for this was what I felt he was saying to me: If you really want to be wholly mine, you must learn to cherish suffering, that you consider yourself fortunate when you have something to endure, especially when you find yourself humbled, ignored, harassed or forgotten etc. It is then that you have to show that you truly love me, by bearing everything gladly.

#### FIRST MEDITATION

##### *On Hell*

I set myself to do this Meditation with a sense of dread bordering on fear. I imagined the horror of a stinking prison with no light, packed with devils and the damned.

I imagined the disgust of hearing endless yelling and blaspheming, hurling curses at God, the Saints and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

I imagined the torment of terrible hunger and thirst, and having to swallow down, instead, sulphur, pitch, rot and filth.

And that devouring fire, endlessly burning, tormenting pitilessly.

And that continual coming to the mind of the damned the thought that they could have easily avoided these pains of hell but had failed to do so for a mean pleasure or a passing satisfaction ...

And through the divine light the glimpse that the damned will get of the glory that is enjoyed in Heaven by so many of their friends, relatives and acquaintances they had lived with, but who attended to the salvation of their soul and are now blessed for all eternity.

But then most painful of all, knowing that God is the sole Good, feeling a violent pull to him, unable to be His and ever rejected by him and condemned by him to that prison, with no hope of ever seeing him, of ever enjoying him, and, instead, feeling like hating him, blaspheming and cursing him ... Oh! No pain could be anything like that! ... My God, if I ended up in hell, what hell would it be for me! .. I who received so many graces .. so many favours ... so many lights ... so many means to avoid it ... For pity's sake: *From the pains of hell deliver me, O Lord!*

**Resolutions:** To fight against my pride and not to give in to it even once, for it is what could be my eternal perdition.

I did this Meditation in church, mostly seated, for an hour. I had very few distractions: something did sink in and

impressed me: I ended it with the determination to do my utmost to avoid hell.

This morning's *spiritual reading* was on external penance; I learnt from it so many ways I could practise self-denial, without harm to my health. I understood how important it is to have complete control over my senses. And so, with God's help I want to avail myself of the gain I could acquire from such acts.

*General Examination on gentleness and on distractions.*

I have found myself at fault in my way of correcting and warning: many times I do it roughly, not very gently, and sometimes even unkindly. I know that my distractions are mostly due to poor preparation for prayer: I keep in my heart so many things I am concerned about, which then trouble me in my prayer time. Besides this, very often I give cause to distractions by looking up unnecessarily, at times even out of curiosity.

In my visit, in spirit, to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I felt that my Jesus was recommending me patience and steadfastness in view of my forthcoming separation from my family. To bear the separation gladly, not to mind the unpleasant things inflicted on me, to take them from his hands, keeping always in mind that everything is disposed by God for the best, and when, quite naturally, it hurts, to remember that this is the sacrifice God wants from me and that the harder it is, the dearer it is to Him and more beneficial to me.

## SECOND MEDITATION

### *On Eternity*

I have reflected on the endlessness and unfathomable reality of eternity: that it can neither be measured nor comprehended. I dwelt on the thought that there is no end to eternity, nor can anything be compared to it. And so, I would be really mad if for a passing pleasure, for a fleeting satisfaction or a momentary outburst, I should bring on myself an eternal torment. The thought of that: for ever ... never ... for all eternity! ... How could I remain so lukewarm, with an eternity in store for me, awaiting me? ...

In the end I turned my thoughts to the eternal bliss in Heaven. Oh! What an immense happiness it is to be sure of loving, enjoying and being with God for ever, of being happy for all eternity!

**Resolutions:** To tread my self-love underfoot, and overcome my reluctance in all the things I don't like, in view of an eternal happiness.

I did this Meditation partly seated and partly walking: it took me about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour. I had few distractions. I did it attentively, and it did have some impression on me.



### THIRD MEDITATION

#### *On the Humility of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

I have knocked at the door of the Heart of Jesus, and in his infinite mercy he graciously opened it to me. Oh, what ineffable riches are enclosed in the Sacred Heart of Jesus! ...

To teach me his humility he kept me a good while in his stable, and made me realize in a vivid manner how different his thoughts are from men's thoughts: God as he is, he humbled himself to the point of becoming man; he was born a child: helpless, unable to move, even. As parents, he chose very poor people and as a house, a very mean stable. The first people he invited to know him were poor shepherds ... That is the humility that Jesus teaches me ...

He came down to earth from Heaven to reveal himself as the true God who was to save humankind and yet for thirty whole years he lived in obscurity in a poor dwelling-place, plying a most humble trade and always obedient to his parents. He who is Holiness itself, who holds Heaven in awe and wonder, lived so hidden that we can hardly come to know that he lived on earth. Oh! How precious a hidden life is; how safe it is, how dear to Jesus!

Jesus' wondrous humility was most visible on the Cross. There he urged me to gaze on him and see him mocked, jeered at and hated, held by a whole population as a criminal

... What an example for me who am so particular about my dignity and honour!

Lastly, Jesus made me reflect for a while on his hidden life he leads in the Blessed Sacrament. He made me understand how many graces he has in store for those who opt for the same kind of life as His.

**Resolutions:** To shun honours and as much as possible avoid giving the impression that I am a very spiritual person, particularly by not making a show of the graces that the Lord grants to me.

I did this Meditation with inner feeling and keen interest. I had very few distractions; I was fairly calm and quiet: I ended it with a sincere commitment to the hidden life and to the contemplation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It took me a little more than an hour; I was seated for the greater part of it and knelt for the rest of the time, in church.

The *spiritual reading* was on external penance of the taste and other senses. I understood that the extremely delicate care I take makes me shirk so many ways of practising bodily penance that I should practise. I resolved never to let a day go by without doing something, always with the permission of my Superior (Confessor). When I omit even a simple *Hail Mary* of what I usually do, I will at least confess it to my Director, even if it happens because of some necessity or sickness.

*Particular Examination.* Today I had to fight against my self-love twice; it hurt a lot, but I hope that by God's grace I overcame it. Today I omitted the Discipline and some vocal prayers.

Today, too, Our Lord has kept me recollected, united to Him and in spiritual gladness, even though my stomach was upset and as it ached more than usual, I was almost afraid of something serious.

### **Day 5 - 27 September**

By God's special grace I am up and doing this morning too, and Our Lord is keeping up my spirits though I slept very little. In his Sacred Heart I resumed my Spiritual Exercises, and I am counting on his help.

While preparing for Holy Communion, I felt rather weary and tired to the extent of almost wishing I could finish the Retreat soon. But the Lord helped me by making this thought come to my mind: "What is the use of starting well if you do not keep it up to the end? ... You must stay till the end, come what may. This thought cheered me so much that I thought no more about myself, and so I resumed the Exercises.

I went to receive Holy Communion like the Prodigal Son who went back to his Father. My beloved Jesus loves me with an exceedingly great love and he always receives me with a charity that is worthy of his compassionate Heart. He revived in me the readiness to suffer, by reminding me that my glory should be that of being like Him who remains hanging on the Cross. Moreover, he made me understand that I should be enamoured of the Blessed Sacrament, and that my whole delight should be sought at his feet.

## FIRST MEDITATION

### *On the Merciful Love of God*

I reflected on my ingratitude when, in order to sin and do as I felt like, I was cowardly and took no further notice of my gentle Jesus. And what came out of my disloyalty? ... I lost the great treasure of innocence, I stained the inestimable lily of purity, I spoiled my good habits, I strayed from my good Father Jesus Christ. But He, how many times he grieved over me when I stayed away from him! ... How many times he called me by making me feel remorse, by inspirations, or by severe warnings that made me tremble! ... How many times he called me through others, either through my Confessor or through that sermon, or that Teacher, or that good friend! ... And yet how long I kept resisting the loving voice of this good Father! ... The best years of my youth, where did I let them go? ... Ah! Forgive me, my dear Jesus, now I have come to you, here I am, totally yours.

Oh God, how merciful you have been in accepting me, favouring me with so many graces, granting me so much spiritual joy, assisting me with exquisite charity, bearing with me so patiently, treating me in such a kind and gentle manner, making yourself totally mine, giving yourself to me day by day, and keeping me bound to you all the time. Good Father, most loving Father, how largely I am indebted to you! Help me to love you.

**Resolutions:** To be faithful to my God in little things, never again to part from his loving embrace.

I did this Meditation in church, mostly on my knees, and for a short while seated. At the start I was a bit drowsy but after that, I was quite awake. I had few distractions, but I also enjoyed a sense of tenderness and tranquillity, as I attended to it with some depth.

The *spiritual reading* was on the Love of God. I understood from this reading what means I should use in order to acquire genuine love of God, that is: frequent meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ, and an ardent desire to be a saint and to love Him intensely. With His help, I want to acquire such a valuable treasure.

*General Examination on charity and on obedience.* I admit that in charity, besides failing in several spiritual things that I could do but omit out of laziness, I am also negligent in lending a hand wherever I can; in fact, I am not even doing as much as I used to do before. At home I sometimes do not carry out the wishes of my mother or of my sister; at times I do things only by halves.

In my visit, in spirit, to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I felt that he was recommending the practice of little virtues, those virtues that grow at the foot of the Cross, quite hidden from men's eyes but so precious to the Heart of Jesus. It seemed to me that Jesus will be very pleased if I comply with the wishes of others, though this may involve some changes in

my method of life and in my usual devotions, provided I do it out of charity with the aim of pleasing Jesus.

## SECOND MEDITATION

### *On Jesus' Prayer in the Garden and his Arrest*

First of all I reflected on the charity of my Jesus, who took on himself all my sins in order to make me fit for Heaven. With my mind's eye I contemplated the Heart of Jesus as in his divine wisdom he saw at a glance all the sins of the world and what an impression it must have made on that Sacred Heart! ... To see them so countless, so malicious, of so many sorts, and having to say to the Eternal Father: punish them all in my person, for I accept them all as my own and do penance for them. And my own sins: how they must have weighed on Jesus' back! ...

I reflected on the anguish that Jesus must have felt as he brought to mind the pangs of pain of his Passion: a disciple who betrays him, another who denies him, others who flee from him; scorn, arrest, insults, slaps on the face, kicking and spitting at him, scourging, pricking with thorns, nailing to a cross. It was all this that makes the sorrowing Jesus say to the Father: Father, remove this cup from me. It was all this that made him sweat Blood. Innocent souls must have comforted Jesus at that moment as he thought of them and of the conversion of sinful souls and made him say: "Your will, not mine, be done.

This puts me to shame, unable as I am to make the least sacrifice for my Jesus! ...

**Resolutions:** To overcome myself in something that I feel no liking for, never to speak of it out of self-love, and to be as gracious as I can in what I do.

I remained seated for this Meditation, which took me little less than an hour. I had few distractions. I had a few insights and was moved by it.

### THIRD MEDITATION

I started this Meditation with reflection on the Scourging of Jesus. I thought of what Jesus must have felt at being stripped naked before all the people, and endured it as a punishment for my own lack of modesty. I reflected on the atrocious pain of the scourging itself. My heart could not find what it sought, and so I followed it by entering into the Sacred Heart of Jesus and there I contemplated his infinite patience. His patience in waiting so long for me, patience in bearing with me, sinful as I am, patience in accepting me with all my defects, patience in being infinitely kind to me though I do not deserve it. I thought also of Jesus' patience in bearing so much irreverence, derision and neglect in the Blessed Sacrament from myself and so many others. I felt impelled to learn at the 'school' of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

**Resolutions:** Like Jesus, to bear everything patiently, especially pain and suffering, for His sake.

I did this Meditation in church, partly seated and partly on my knees.

I had some distractions: my imagination was restless. However, I did understand a few things from this Meditation.

The *spiritual reading* was a continuation on the love of God. I learnt from it that the characteristic features of love for God are: doing everything with the sole aim of pleasing God, bearing patiently all the adversity, trouble, sickness and any kind of cross sent by God, accepting it all for His sake.

*Particular Examination.* In writing some of these things a thought crossed my mind that my Confessor would observe my ability to note them down, and would be favourably impressed by them. Today, too, I had to suppress my self-love in a certain thing, and it was very painful. Today I spoke of two things which after a while troubled me a little; I hope God was not offended by it, but one of them was a rather hot retort.

Today, too, I have much to thank Jesus for: he has helped me; he has kept me in deep recollection and union with him and in gladness, although I had almost wished the Spiritual Exercises to be over soon. Maybe that was also because I was afraid of falling ill, as I was not keeping well today, either. However, this evening I feel much better, and I am also cheerful and calm.

### **Day 6 - 28 September**

I must thank the Lord, who is giving me a good will and peace of heart to start a new day and go on cheerfully with the Spiritual Exercises, which I commended to the Sacred Heart of Jesus that He may help me finish them well. Last night I slept



a bit more than the other night, and physically I feel much better. I thank God for his loving kindness.

When I went to receive Communion I approached Jesus with the same feelings of Peter when he returned to his God after denying Him so meanly. My good Father received me with his usual kindness and made me understand that if I want to please Him, I should with a right intention procure what is of benefit to my neighbour, that I should find ingenious ways of helping others promptly, giving priority to acts of charity over any particular practice of piety; that I should not give in to my usual laziness, nor act out of human respect or with any other aim that is merely human; that when it is a question of doing good to anyone, I should let nothing stand in my way but do everything calmly, with the sole aim of honouring God.

#### FIRST MEDITATION

*On Jesus Crowned with Thorns  
and condemned to death. His way to Calvary*

I reflected how painful it must have been to Jesus when his head was pierced with so many sharp thorns; this made me understand the enormity of my evil thoughts, especially of pride, which God wanted to be so severely punished in his own Person. Oh! How ungrateful of me to inflict so much pain on the loveable Jesus! ...

I contemplated Jesus subjected to torment: clothed in a purple cloak, crowned with thorns, reed in hand, scorned, ill-

treated and saluted in mockery as the king of the Jews. In that pitiable state he made me understand my own cowardice, my inability to put up with a little fun poked at me, how keenly I feel it every time I check my self-love. To teach me, Jesus is meekly silent in the midst of that pack of scoundrels who deride him most shamefully.

I accompanied Jesus to Pilate's judgment seat: I was struck by his patience when he heard the people demanding his crucifixion, his humility in bearing to have Barabbas preferred to him, as if he were worse than Barabbas himself; his charity in accepting the death sentence and in gladly embracing the cross, for my sake; his humility in having to pass through the streets of Jerusalem with the cross on his back, between two thieves, with a crowd jeering at him and shouting insults at him ...Oh! What examples from a God who offers himself in sacrifice for my sake! ...

**Resolutions:** Not to feel ashamed any more for having to go through the streets in humble dress, and when my self-love resents it, to think of Jesus' way to Calvary, and so overcome my own feelings.

I did this Meditation in Church, partly seated and partly on my knees. It took me about an hour. I had few distractions. I concentrated on it fairly well, and parts of it struck me and moved me.

The *spiritual reading* was also on the Love of God. I learnt from it that a sign of genuine love of God is perfect conformity of our will to God's will, in all that happens and wherever we are, but especially in adversity, and to obtain this

precious gift we must never get tired of begging the Lord for it in all our prayers. May the Lord be pleased that I too be endowed with a treasure of such inestimable value.

*General Examination of conscience.* I examined myself on my weaknesses in general. I see that I am very much attached to my own opinion, and find it very difficult to accept wholeheartedly the opinions of others; sometimes I act according to my bent and liking, not out of a sincere desire to please God, and that in my talk I easily say things that go against charity towards my neighbour.

In my visit, in spirit, to the Blessed Sacrament, I felt urged to aspire to perfection and earnestly desire it, that I must be determined to become a great saint, and that though I should not rely on myself but admit that I am not able to do anything except offend God, I should all the same trust fully in Him, abandon myself in his arms and hope for everything from Him. Even in matters concerning our Institute, to have great trust in God, not to get anxious in any way but take everything from His hands, even the hardest and most difficult things.

## SECOND MEDITATION

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

*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.* Jesus' first word, and first rose of charity springing from his Heart. Immense charity of God! In the very act of being crucified, he prays for his enemies. What a gentle reproof for me, who am not able to bear the slightest offence!

*Today you will be with me in Paradise.* Second word uttered by the Blessed Jesus on the Cross. As soon as the request is made to him, he grants it; he seems to have been only waiting for the supplication to be made in order to bestow the grace. Oh! If only I knew how to pray, how many graces I would obtain! ...

*John, this is your Mother. Woman, this is your Son.* Jesus' third word. Oh, infinite charity of God; he cannot bear to leave us orphans; as he dies, he leaves us Mary Most Holy as our Mother, and from his own lips there comes out his recommendation to her, that she treat us with mercy.

*My God, My God, why did you abandon me?* Jesus' fourth word uttered on the Cross. My poor Jesus! To be abandoned by the Father must have made of Him the perfect Man of Sorrows. All around, you find only cause for suffering and the Eternal Father himself, seeing on you the burden of my sins, abandons you and leaves you comfortless. What a sorrow must have pierced the Heart of Mary to hear this lamenting word from her divine Son! ... How I wish I at least could comfort you both with humble acceptance in time of adversity!

*I thirst.* Jesus' fifth word. But this was a mysterious thirst, a thirst to fulfil perfectly the Will of his Divine Father, thirst to suffer even more, thirst for my eternal salvation. And I am so negligent in seeking such an immense good! ...

*It is finished!* Jesus' sixth word. The great work of Redemption is now completed. You have done and suffered everything, giving the world this great proof of your love for men ... What about me? What shall I do for you, my most loveable Jesus? ...

*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.* Jesus' last word, and then, he bowed his head and died for my sake. Dear Jesus, I too wish to commit into your hands what little fervour I can gather from what you have given me these days. Keep it in your Heart, and grant me the grace to benefit from it.

**Resolutions:** Once a week, at least, to bring to mind these Spiritual Exercises, with the resolutions I have made.

I did this Meditation sitting the whole hour through. I had some distractions, but I also learnt from it and was moved by it.

### THIRD MEDITATION

#### *On the Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

In this Meditation I entered into the contemplation of the steadfast charity that the Heart of Jesus has shown me throughout my life, and I know that his charity truly befits him. I have sought sweet repose in that Heart that is wholly aflame with love for his creatures. He made me understand that the best proof of my love that I can give him is to cast myself entirely in his arms, live in tranquil security in His hands, never anxious about anything, for he will help me all the time, and with the desire of being totally His, I ended this holy Meditation.

**Resolutions:** In all that I do to live solely with Jesus and for Jesus, abandoning myself in his arms.

I did this Meditation in Church, partly sitting down, partly on my knees; I had some distractions, but also moments of deep recollection and tranquillity, and sentiments of love for Jesus.

The *spiritual reading* was on devotion towards Mary. It is a topic I am very fond of; the Saint is quite right in recommending this devotion, because it is truly the gate to heaven.

*Particular Examination.* I had again to struggle against self-love which suggested so many reasons for holding myself excused. I paid heed to it for a little while, and then I think the Lord gave me the grace to check it. Unintentionally I saw

something not quite modest in a person, but it did not affect me. A thought crossed my mind that a person who saw me doing a devout practice would consider me a spiritual person.

Today, too, I am very much obliged to my Jesus. He kept my mind recollected, in union with Him, desiring to be wholly his and to draw profit from these Spiritual Exercises; he also kept me cheerful. I am glad that I am nearing the end of this commitment; but should I be told to start it again from the beginning I would do it willingly. However, to prolong it of my own accord is not something I feel like.

### **Seventh and last Day - 29 September**

Though I was a bit in pain last night, I got up with a will this morning, eager to bring these Spiritual Exercises to a good end; I have recommended these to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to the charity of Mary and to the protection of my dear St Aloysius.

I went up to receive Holy Communion with the sentiments and attitude of St Aloysius Gonzaga; I prayed the Blessed Virgin Mary to let me receive her Jesus from Her own hands, so that I may be more acceptable to him. Jesus is always meek and gentle of heart and he never fails to strengthen those who place their trust in Him. In this Communion I felt that he was again encouraging me to suffer gladly, steadfastly, patiently because my beloved Jesus seemed to say to me: a cross is in store for you. I felt that he recommended our Pious Union, and that he would be pleased with any work I can do for it. It seemed to me that he wanted

me to have the Hospital and the poor very much at heart; he assured me that he is very pleased every time I do anything to meet the needs of these dear members of His.

## FIRST MEDITATION

### *On the Blessed Sacrament*

This meditation always stirs my heart more than any other. Jesus in the Sacrament has truly 'ravished' my heart. How I wish I could return him love for love! I have been thinking about the institution of this most divine Sacrament: I seemed to see the radiant face of Jesus, my love, rejoicing, like a loving father, sitting at table with his children, and saying to them, "I have ardently longed for this happy moment, I have always looked forward to this instant; I want to give you proof of my love; no, I will not forsake you, I want to remain with you in the Blessed Sacrament ..." How great is his charity! ... How great is his love! ... How tenderly he has loved us ! ... You can't help loving him! ... I have been thinking of the endless patience he has with me in the Blessed Sacrament, bearing up with my unfaithfulness and lack of reverence, hearing my supplications, admitting me always into His presence, never getting tired of my company; instead, he offers me his comfort and his help, becoming for me: father, spouse, friend and brother.



The Holy Eucharist is truly Heaven-on-earth. It is the highest manifestation of the Heart of Jesus! ... Lord, having you in the Sacrament I have everything, and should even the powers of earth and hell break in upon me, if I can just place my troubles before your holy Altar, I need not fear, for you are my sure refuge.

**Resolutions:** I will at any cost be the beloved one of Jesus in the Sacrament, and stay as long as I can before his altar.

I did this Meditation in Church, partly sitting down, partly on my knees. I had few distractions; I reflected deeply, and with love; in this Meditation my soul has found its food and pasture.

The *spiritual reading* was a continuation of yesterday's, on devotion to Mary. Oh! How fortunate are those who are truly devoted to Mary; I too wish to acquire the highest level of devotion possible.

*General examination of conscience.* I realize that due to my pride I am often liable to envy, and sometimes, again out of pride, I have a lofty idea of myself and at times I consider myself superior to someone else. I also understand that out of laziness I neglect certain duties at home, and am careless in some particular duties.

## SECOND MEDITATION - last one

### *On Heaven*

Heaven at last: the thought of it makes me glad! God created me for Heaven. There he has prepared for me an eternal Kingdom. All the misfortunes of this earthly life will then be over, and with Heaven there will start a happiness that will never have an end. And so, if I remain faithful to my God, on my death my Guardian Angel and my dear St Aloysius will hold me between them, lift me high above the earth, above the moon, the stars and the sun. And as I look down from there upon the earth, how empty will its glory, riches, vanities and pleasures appear to me, and how glad I will be for having cast them aside! ... What will I say to those dear Guides who did so much for me? ... I think that my eyes filled with gratitude will express to them my sincere thanks, and trusting in their goodness, I hope they will lead me to the gates of the heavenly Kingdom. How beautiful it will be to see first of all the Angels and Children happy to see me and warmly welcoming me! To see so many choirs of Angels and of Saints, to gaze at such beauty, grandeur, majesty, to see them all glad and happy, for ever blessed! What a joy to recognize at first sight my dear Mummy Mary, to gaze on her so beautiful, so loveable, so great, so close to God, to come to know the love she had always had for me, the graces she had granted me, how much she had prayed for my salvation. What a happiness

to be able to thank her, love her and kiss her feet! What a delight to come to know so many things clothed in mystery, things that give delight and comfort. But all this alone would not be Heaven. Seeing God, knowing him, being happy with him, loving him, being one with him, sharing in his divine nature, and all this for all eternity, with no fear of ever losing Him ... Oh, the treasures of God! How blessed are those who strive to win them!

**Resolutions:** To be faithful to God in little things; when I find it hard to do anything, to lift up my eyes to Heaven.

I did this Meditation walking about, and partly sitting. It kept me happy and glad: I had very few distractions. I had some special light, and I ended it with a determination to do my utmost to win Heaven.

In my spiritual visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament I felt that he recommended perseverance, loving acceptance of suffering, trust in Him and a sincere disregard for the things of this world in order to be wholly His.