

PART I.
SPIRITUAL NOTES

I.

EXPERIENCES MADE DURING MY ANNUAL RETREAT 1826¹

TIMETABLE FOR THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

At 4.30 a.m. I shall get up from bed, say my prayers and recite Matins and Lauds before leaving the room.

5 a.m. I shall go to Church, meditate for an hour, recite early morning prayer, mid-morning prayer, midday prayer, mid-afternoon, and all my other vocal prayers.

¹ In Bartolomea's script, the year is not given, but it must have been 1826. This can be inferred from the following facts:

1. It cannot be 1828, '29, '30, '32, because a separate report is given on the Spiritual Exercises of those years.
2. It cannot be 1831, because in these Notes she mentions her father still living, whereas he died before that.
3. Nor could it be 1827 because from Ven. Bartolomea's letters we come to know that she did that year's annual retreat in September.
4. Nor the years before 1826 because in these Notes she refers to the Method of Life drawn up this same year.

After that, I shall pay a visit to the patients at the Hospital and then return home for breakfast and housework, after which, before I take up my needlework, I shall do some spiritual reading and pay a visit, in my room, to Jesus and Mary.

In the time usually devoted to work, that is, at 9 a.m., I shall do some more spiritual reading, and shortly before lunch I shall make an exam on my weaknesses and imperfections.

After lunch, before and after the Instruction, I shall pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, during which I shall listen to what the Lord graciously suggests to me and teaches me; I shall then pay another visit to the patients of the Hospital.

I shall do some sewing till 3.30 p.m. during which time I shall meditate for half-an-hour and then have 'merenda' (snack).

Then, if I am free, I shall go for a walk by myself. On the way I shall read this method of life, think about my resolutions

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5. Lastly, we conclude it must be 1826, because that year she had her Retreat in December, not as usual in September, because, as a matter of fact, she fell ill in September 1826. As a further indication of this, we can also note that we have no letters written by her those days up to 27 December, though she usually wrote several letters for Christmas, and this corresponds to her resolutions to avoid writing during retreat days. She probably chose these days because the people of Lovere had Missions preached to them then.

and reflect on what has struck me most in my meditations or in the sermons.

Then I shall go for Meditation and Visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

Before going to bed, I shall meditate for half-an-hour or longer, make my examination of conscience and read the meditation which I shall make towards midnight, and as soon as I wake up.

I shall keep silence throughout, with thought and mind continually absorbed in God, self-denial of senses, in particular, abstaining from food I like.

I shall note down what strikes me most in my meditations, good resolutions I take and weaknesses that the Lord will graciously make me see in myself.

(INTRODUCTION - 18 December)¹

On the eve of these Spiritual Exercises I was anxious, not quite sure that I would do them well; I felt as if I had undertaken a commitment that I was unable to fulfil. I started the first introductory Meditation without much enthusiasm, and I had various distractions in it. Towards the end of it, my eyes fell on a picture of a damned person, and the sight of it remained so imprinted in my mind that for a full half-hour my thoughts did not wander from it. I was deeply moved, especially in reflecting how God's merciful love has saved me from it etc. My eyes filled with tears and, turning to God I promised to do these Exercises well, above all to overcome my laziness.

¹ Day and month are not expressly noted in Bartolomea's script, but they are easily deduced from what appear as Days 6 and 7 of these Spiritual Exercises, said to be the eve and feast of Christmas respectively.

Day 1

First Meditation. Why man was created. I had no time to do it in my room, but only after Communion and the Mass. (In this I had to fight back my drowsiness). I thought especially of the many times and in so many circumstances I had made very poor use of God's grace by acting for human aims, and straying from God.

Second Meditation. Our ultimate aim. Ah! I must admit that, by no longer following on the footsteps of Jesus Christ, I strayed from the goal towards which I was moving. I realized I had neglected piety after I had opted for it, and had instead started to look fondly on vanities, and had even begun to have a desire to be pleasing to the world and, with that, to feel especially drawn to a certain fellow.¹

How I wronged you, my God, in thinking of abandoning you for a youthful emotion; to please a creature! What I am especially sorry about are the bad examples I gave during that unfortunate time; and how many there must be that I do not even know of. I felt as if you were chiding me and saying in my heart: You see, you have abandoned me after having so many times experienced my consolation in prayer and in the other practices, after you had received me so frequently in yourself

¹ From testimonies of her Confessors it is clear that these were simple temptations. Her profound humility made her accuse herself of things which were not sinful.

etc. ... And I said ... I myself, as though tired of devotion, I would have gone after a 'freer' life, and, had you not kept me back, where would I have ended up ? ... (thinking back of age 17 to 18).

Third Meditation. On the means and special graces used by God in order to save me. This was a vast subject; I do not know where it starts nor where it ends. I was deeply struck by it, as I had never responded at all to the loving care and attention that the Lord has had for me, etc. Today such a feeling of boredom came on me that I was almost on the point of giving up these spiritual exercises. This was when I was trying to reflect deeply. I felt it so strongly that I could not help wondering how I could keep it up all these days, and telling myself that it was useless for me to waste all this time because it would do me no good.

In my *visit* this afternoon my felt desire was mainly that of becoming a saint; in reaffirming this resolution I prayed for the necessary assistance.

On *examining* my conscience regarding pride, I became aware of the craving I have for appreciation from the world and how much trouble I take at times to meet its standards; the ease with which I take up commitments that often present themselves disguised as virtues or real needs: these I should avoid. Though at times I do humble chores, I have a few times put into them also the poison of a secret pride. This morning I had some distractions in Church; harmful thoughts were less than usual. I reviewed a bit my way of examining myself: I find

that when I examine myself in preparation for Confession, I always omit the first act, that is, of thanksgiving, and that I spend too much time on examining myself, leaving too little time for sorrow, and that the more I think the more confused I become; I am always at a loss how to distinguish a simple thought from consent to sin. Most of my sins are of omission.

Day 2

The first Meditation which I made when I got up during the night. I did not have any feeling of devotion except that I cheered myself up with the thought that I was at least enduring the cold for a while. I did not get up promptly and in Church I felt drowsy. I had a long distraction after Communion.

I had a great longing for religious life in my morning Meditation, but even more so after Holy Communion.

However, my present state of mind, I must admit, is that I don't mind which institute is meant for me; I would be ready to join this one or that one. I only wish that the Lord may make his will known to me as soon as possible. I am not expecting miracles, nor do I fix the time limit for granting me this grace.

I dare only show him my desire that he may as soon as possible make his holy will known, not to me, but to the person who is entrusted with the care of my soul, while I keep ready to do his will.

Third Meditation. As I reflected on the punishment meted out Adam and on the Angels, and on what Jesus has suffered because of the gravity of sin, I was especially struck by this

last thought: when the Son of God himself was not spared, how can I think of being spared myself? ... Hence the point of sorrow and rejection of sins, and gratitude to Jesus Christ.

The examination of conscience was on Sorrow and the 'Resolution' of amendment. I have the bad habit of spending more time on examining my conscience than on making acts of contrition; sometimes, even after the act of sorrow, I again start examining myself. I realized that what I am usually sorry for is that I have disappointed myself spiritually, not so much that I have offended God, etc. Sometimes I limit myself to the moment of Confession and Absolution to ensure the sorrow itself with a new act.

A fourth Meditation was on *one's own sins*. In this one I was wholly absorbed in prayer and more than in any of the other Meditations I was moved to detest the failures of my past life. Alas, my God! I began to offend you before I came to know you ... I had these and other similar thoughts: Though it is true that we could do penance anywhere, yet the fittest place is one of retirement from the world; otherwise there remains the danger of adding to our faults from having to relate to the world ... whose poison seems to creep into the hearts of those who just look at it. Though we can become saints in any state-of-life, the most saintly and the most perfect are found in religious institutes, and those who are bent on becoming great saints, join religious life (provided the Lord calls them to it); they part with the world and will have nothing to do with it because they know that it is filled with dangers, the mere inhaling of which is contaminating ...

I felt within my heart a call to Religious life and saying to myself: Magdalene¹, beware of lingering in enemy's land, because you will be deceived. You must leave it soon if you want to become a saint. If I resist and linger still, God may abandon me and leave me to my own devices: and so everything points to my decision: I am coming ... where you will. When will it be? As soon as you like: that would make me glad... Do of me as you will, and I will be happy, for I feel that you want some sacrifice from me. Such reflections made me feel rather distressed because they irritated the wounds that cause sorrow and shame at the slightest touch, though they have been healed, as I trust, through Jesus Christ. Today my thoughts were a bit scattered due to certain conversation I heard; I gave in to a needless satisfaction of my curiosity and an empty occupation, whereas I could have spent that time in prayer.

Day 3

The first Meditation on Death, did not scare me at all; I had some difficulty in overcoming drowsiness and many scattered thoughts. I could not receive Holy Communion. I don't know if it is an inspiration or a temptation that came to me these days to make a general Confession; in the situation I was unable to do it and so I made an ordinary Confession by just hinting in a general way at past years and nothing else, with the intention of doing it as soon as possible.

¹ Magdalene. She probably calls herself by that name, considering herself a repentant sinner.

The second Meditation. On the particular Judgement.

What left an impression on me was Jesus Christ's sentence: *I will search Jerusalem with lamps*¹. I carefully considered unfulfilled obligations of Baptism and of my profession, the offence given to the Judge in his presence, in the Sacred place. Under his very eyes ... I have committed so many sins that I cannot understand how he bore with me without punishing me ...

The third Meditation. On Hell considered in the senses. I did not have any special feeling in this Meditation except tediousness in doing it.

The exam was on my Confessions: certain failings came to mind at once. When I accuse myself of having paid no heed to God-given inspirations or desire for good, I hardly ever give the reason for it, nor do I mention the inspiration or desire itself, as I should do, perhaps: similarly with regard to downright self-indulgence, I seldom mention particular instances of immortification. As to downright sins, there is nothing I have failed to mention except that, in temptations against purity, I do not usually explain fully: I am always at a loss because I don't know if they are just thoughts, or if I committed some fault. When I go for Confession to another priest, I usually do not have so soon all the confidence needed even to tell him about the particular needs or defects of my soul. There is another thing which I don't know if it is right or wrong; it is this: I readily accept the opinion of my superiors even when in my mind

¹ Original in Latin "*Scrutabor Jerusalem in lucernis*" (Zephaniah 1:12).

there is something quite different. I used to think that this is docility, but it may also be pusillanimity or inconstancy, as for instance, when I ask permission to do something good and they don't grant it. I don't have the courage to insist but give up at once, but maybe such occasions put my constancy to the test and find me too weak to insist, however strong the inner urge to do so may be, and the wish I have to carry it out for my own spiritual benefit.

Day 4

First Meditation. How hell affects the powers of the soul.
As I am so material-minded, I cannot apply my mind to it as I should, and so I think I have not done it well.

The second Meditation. On Eternity. I did this hurriedly. My mind was taken up with something else; my thoughts were scattered, and so you can imagine what impression it left on me.

After Holy Communion my thoughts wandered for a good while, and then I had this thought: at all costs I must heed the voice that seems to be coming truly from God. Life at home with its continual temptations to indulge in comforts of life, giving in to what one feels like, however restricted opportunities for it may be, is a hindrance to perfect poverty. The opportunity to command rather than carry out orders is not easily handled by beginners. The care for the family and similar circumstances which will be my lot if I stay at home, would all

impede quiet reflection and the detachment that the Religious should have; in a word, the world is not the place for me to become a saint. Do I have to stay with such uncertainty in the midst of all this encumbrance? Heaven forbid! My God, take me away at once. I am determined ... Oh yes! And nobody can prevent me from carrying it out. And who could go against your holy Will, my God? You who are the Lord and owner of men's hearts, see to it that no one keeps me far from you.

Exam on internal acts, as in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. I have always been subject to passing feelings and imaginative thoughts etc. that may jeopardize chastity. In the past I was less wary than now, because I often aroused them by not keeping strict control over my senses; I did not give them much thought, nor so much scruple either. Now, instead, one thing like that is enough to keep me away from Holy Communion, fearing I might have given them cause maybe by a careless glance, though without any evil intention. However, such temptations are not always equally strong¹.

Pride, vain glory, self-love and so on, are my main defects and - what makes them worse - they are mainly about qualities of the spirit etc. I could mention many of them, but I don't have much time etc.

¹ She developed this extremely-delicate conscience and attained to this purity, as her Confessor attested, to the extent that "she never felt any stimulus against chastity", and that "she was favoured by those gifts that endowed St Aloysius Gonzaga, whom she had resolved to imitate".

The third Meditation was on the number of the elect.

Am I among the elect? ... I had this temptation: since I am so unsure of eternal goods, why don't I start enjoying goods I have at present, things that must have been given me for some reason, and make the most of the little that I do have now, before I run the risk of losing both what I have now and what I may have in future? By rejecting what I have here I may also lose what is beyond this life, etc. etc. But the temptation was soon recognized as such and driven away. This Meditation conveyed to me various salutary thoughts; in fact, unless I be made of stone, I should understand how important it is to ceaselessly act in a way that will ensure my admittance, as one of the 'elect', into Heaven.

A difficulty I met today almost made me wish I had not taken up these Spiritual Exercises. A sense of trepidation came over me as I thought of the new commitment I am about to assume by the vow, though my heart rejoices at the very thought of being able to do it (I hope this is not another vain thought of mine!) ... after having longed for it so much.

As to the *examination of conscience*, I should also mention, as a main defect, that I am attached to my own will, finding it hard to overcome myself in this respect and also disapproving, in my heart, what others do or want me to do.

Day 5

The first Meditation. On the return of the Prodigal Son.

As I myself have so many times strayed, and even run away from God, this Meditation encourages me, and I seem to hear the Heavenly Father calling me home, assuring me that I will

be welcome. He calls me to seek refuge in His Heart, where I will no longer need to seek pasture in the unclean things of this earth, for I will find, instead, all that is most delightful in his purest love, and every kind of nourishment in his Sacred Heart.

The second Meditation. On the Standard of Christ and the standard of Lucifer. Both of these meditations have stilled the fears I had yesterday, and rather than hesitate and fear about the future, I have felt reassured and trustful, opting (without fail) for the standard of my 'Captain', Jesus Christ. I was fairly intent on my prayer, not drowsy at all. After Communion my thoughts were a bit scattered.

The third Meditation was on the three Classes of Men. From the very start I put myself among the second class, that is, of those who want to follow Jesus Christ, but only where they want, when and how they want, not in all that they know the Lord expects from them. That is my miserable condition, and I don't know why I must be so stupid: why with all my desire, and some effort at times, I never make a step forward in self-abnegation. The main purpose of these meditations is to choose the state-in-life and to be firmly established in it. After a good hour in which I anxiously considered the various types of religious Institutes, I sincerely declare, before God, that the Lord is calling me to an Institute the purpose of which is the *Works of Mercy*, and that this is what at the point of death I would be happy to have embraced. I totally submit my view to that of my Director, whom I am well-disposed to obey

unreservedly; I limit myself to saying that it is to this that I feel inclined, feeling in the depths of my being that it is where God's designs over me are. But the task of choosing from among the many religious Institutes that are similar in that respect, I leave to my Director; and since he told me not to rush into a hasty decision but to leave it in God's hands, that is what I intend to do, and I pray that He may let my Director know His most Holy Will, rather than let me know, for I am unable to discern it.

However, I am disposed to embrace whichever God wants (which I hope my Spiritual Director will indicate to me). I who thought I had no greater desire than this, was actually told by my Spiritual Father that my desire is not great enough ... that I lack *all* the requisites to become a nun ... Alas!

I know he has good reason to doubt my constancy, but, good God, who inspire me with the desire for it, will you then deny me the help to fulfil it? Surely not! Ah! The Heart of Jesus, my Love, will not bear to see this soul moan, far from his house. Yes, my Child¹ Jesus, if you don't let this slip from your tiny tender hands, you will see me forcing it out of you. What I fear is this: that gradually I may become more and more insensible to God's call, and that He might little by little deprive me of this vocation and leave me ... that would be a just punishment of an unfaithful soul!

¹ It was the day before Christmas Eve.

Since the world is not the place for Saints, anyone who desires to be perfect abandons it. Anyone who seeks God shuns it ... Anyone who loves Jesus hates it, and anyone who wants to live in Jesus dies to the world And should I wish to stay in it? God forbid !

My *examination of conscience* was on what my spiritual director admonished me last time, that is: on attachment to material things, etc. I must admit that on all those points I find particular defects. First thing is, among my relatives I have a special liking for my Father, above that for my Mother, and it is a question of my own liking, not for God's sake ... I am attached to the world and its vanities, and I understand it, because at times when I am with others I feel ashamed if I lack certain adornments and things which, as it were, mark out persons deserving of respect and honour from other people, etc. And when people see that I lack certain things, I cheer myself with the vain thought that they will at least think highly of me as a pious person and that I do it out of a virtuous contempt for worldly vanities. I feel satisfaction at times when I make others think that I despise the world though in fact I want my views to be well-accepted by everyone as coming from someone important etc. etc. I am attached to material comforts, and to myself. How many times I am undecided whether to satisfy or deny a pleasure, and end up giving in to 'nature'¹

¹ On the contrary: it is difficult to come across saints who practised a greater and more constant self-denial than what Ven. Bartolomea Capitanio practised throughout her life.

How many times, just to gratify my own pleasure, I refuse to deny myself, disregarding the continuous inspirations from the Lord ... If it is a question of self-abnegation, Dear me! What an effort I have to make! And if it is a question of sacrificing esteem, alas! My heart feels faint at the very thought of it !

Today I talked uselessly for a little while, disturbing my inner silence. I did not control my taste in eating; I committed an act of impatience, and I was curious in one thing.

Day 6 - Christmas Eve

To start with, I was lazy in getting up, and in *Meditation 1* of the day I had to repent of it. This was on *Jesus' Agony in the garden*. I had to admit that drowsiness is a marked weakness in me, and that when I am overcome by it my prayer is no good.

The second Meditation. On the Scourging at the Pillar and Crowning with Thorns. I did it badly, and also with my mind totally taken up with the housework. What strikes me most is Jesus' silence in the midst of such cruelty etc. But I, I myself was the dreadful cause, I was the one for whose salvation Jesus Christ suffered so much! I have committed so many sins¹, since my childhood.

¹ This and other expressions of this type must be considered exaggerated out of humility. The 'sins' she refers to must have been, at the worst, childish immodesty. Don Angelo Bosio, her Confessor, who was well-informed of her whole life, and who had also read these scripts, attested under oath during the Processes, that the Servant of God had kept her Baptismal innocence intact and that she had never committed any sin of impurity.

Alas! I remember the nasty things I dirtied myself with from such an early age! (how damaging it was for me to see indecency and lack of care on the part of certain persons ...)! I shudder at the very thought of it! A hundred times cursed is scandalous behaviour!

The third Meditation. On Jesus condemned to death. If human respect is so detestable in Pontius Pilate who, after all, depended on Caesar and could understandably enough dread disgrace in his eyes, what could be said to excuse all my regard for the world which is, after all, an enemy to me and an enemy to Jesus Christ!? If I displease the world, it has no owner's rights over me, and my eternal salvation does not depend on it. Ah! How foolish of me! And yet in certain situations, I cannot overcome myself.

When I omit virtuous acts before certain persons, or when I am afraid to appear special - it is often human respect and nothing else. So too my exaggerated shyness of dealing with persons in high positions etc. or my excessive anxiety about making mistakes before persons who thought highly of me or had seen me doing praiseworthy things etc. etc.: it is all human respect. How many times I start imagining people saying to me: "You want to play *pious*, to play the *saint*, while you are not even a good Christian!"

There is one resolution I must make: when I have to carry out a commitment, I will pay no heed to voices of false humility which, with the pretext of not craving for praise, will have me omit works of mercy or neglect my duty. I don't have to make

people hold their tongue; as much as I can, I will do everything with a right intention, and then let others talk if they will ... I am bound to overcome all human respect, not feel ashamed of staying at the foot of the ignominious Cross of Jesus Christ; I should rather cherish the bitter taste of humiliations in order to imitate Jesus Christ. What a lesson, what a rebuke to a tepid soul!.. Seeing him condemned! ... Crucified!.. Dead! ... What an impression it makes, and what tender calls Jesus makes from the Cross to a soul that longs to love him! I had various positive sentiments, among which was the desire to partake of the sufferings of Christ, and as a resolution I decided not to put it off any further out of human respect.

Examination on faults of omission. At the start there came to mind my poor response to divine inspirations, carelessness in my duties, etc. , a lot of it !... This exam covers scruples as well. These do not bother me at all, but I do have the defect of doubting if I have confessed my sins as I should, and I would repeat them if I were allowed to do so, in my fear of having explained myself inadequately. On the giving of scandal, I feel I am not giving any in the life I am leading at present, but in the past I am sure there were some.

Today I was slow in getting up, I gave in to curiosity twice, once I did not obey at once, not much abstinence at lunch, I had scattered thoughts and said useless words, especially in the morning; I was a bit careless in following my timetable. In the evening, as it was Christmas Eve, my happiness was beyond my own comprehension. I stayed more

than an hour before the Blessed Sacrament, with much delight, partly meditating on the mystery of Christmas, and partly desiring the spiritual coming of the Child Jesus in my soul, and I spent nearly the whole of the evening like that.

Day 7 - *Nativity of Jesus Christ*

With the intention of staying up for the night, I prepared myself for the Midnight prayer, but I was too sleepy and twice I dozed over it. This laziness and drowsiness had come over me that same morning, too, and this makes me think that it may have been an impediment to the gifts of Baby Jesus, preventing me, that is, from receiving the fervour I had so much longed for. I told Baby Jesus how sorry I was for this weakness of mine, but even more severely I had to accuse myself of neglect and lack of fervour.

The Meditations for this day served as a reviewing of the previous ones and on the Mystery of the Birth of Jesus. As I considered the obstacles I am all the time putting to God's love, there were aroused in me sentiments of sorrow and shame. At the moment of Holy Communion I felt so weighed down by my own misery and sinfulness that all I could do was ask God's forgiveness and mercy, renewing the act of Contrition all the while; I hesitated to approach Jesus Christ, lest he should reject me. I was not sure if I had to receive Communion that morning considering that I did not feel moved by love of God nor even able to have such sentiments; but then I threw myself with trust in God's mercy. 'I will go', I said

to myself; 'I am like rough straw, but the Child will enter into it like fire. Who knows what flames of fire he will perhaps kindle into it ... If my heart is confined in prison, He has the keys and will let it out. I hoped to feel a bit of fervour in that Communion, but in vain, and I have grounds to fear that it is because of a certain negligence and poor commitment on my part, that in these days of Spiritual Exercises I have not felt that warm devotion that Baby Jesus usually gives to souls enamoured of him, except for Christmas Eve when he graciously treated me sweetly. It is all charity shown to me by Jesus Christ.

That evening I felt a kind of trepidation thinking of the commitment that I was about to assume again, but it wore off without disturbing me. After Holy Communion I made the vow of Obedience with the conditions granted me, and renewed the vow of Chastity. Once again I renewed my resolutions, promises, etc. Regarding the Method of Life that I set myself, I did not feel there was anything else to add: it seems to me that what I already have will do, for perfection does not consist in doing many things but in doing them well; and so for the future I will insert in the list another act of penance for every failure to observe the Method itself: this will consist in making two crosses with my tongue on the floor for every ✠¹ sign, and one for every (I) sign, and to kiss the ground three times for every X sign.

¹ These signs are conventional symbols that stand for failure to observe the Method of Life in any of its points.

In the *Examination* made about conversation and leisure, I found no problem, because now, by God's grace, I don't think I am spending any time uselessly on it. As to the duties of my state-in-life, there are many things I repent of. I am easily inclined to laziness; in between things I have to do, instead of spending it well, I sometimes waste time doing useless things.

Today I spent more than a half of the time in church, but without having feelings of devotion, except sentiments of trust in the Blessed Virgin Mary. Throughout the day I kept imagining myself to be the hay on which Baby Jesus was laid, which kept pricking him: to this I compared the undue softness with which I treat my body and the rough way I treat others when I give in to anger.

Today I prayed harder than ever that the Lord be pleased to turn the preferential love my father has for me towards my sister instead. I don't know how it happens that, while I try to keep within the bounds of filial love, my father prefers me to her, though I don't have a bit of her good qualities, even¹.

Today's defect was some useless words.

¹ Her sister was rather short-tempered, while Ven. B. was very meek. But as saints do, she was so intent on finding out her own failings that she did not even see those of her sister, in themselves more noticeable.

Next day I received Holy Communion with the intention of having the blessing of Jesus Christ, and I spent the day in greater tranquillity than before. I feel happy about the vow that I have made lately (*of obedience, the day before*); I pray God to give me the grace to carry it out as perfectly as I possibly can.

(SPIRITUAL EXERCISES 1828)

MAY GOD BE EVER GLORIFIED AND MARY LOVED BY ALL

Saturday, 20 September 1828

FIRST MEDITATION. *On the importance of eternal salvation.*

I prepared this Meditation with some fervour and with great trust in Jesus Christ; I gave myself wholly to him and with trust I implored his assistance to do these Holy Exercises well.

In this Meditation I reflected deeply on the importance of saving my soul. Of what use would it be if I had all gifts: natural and supernatural, and then lose my soul? I admired the goodness of the Lord who, to make salvation more easily accessible to me, provides simple, easy means to put me on the path of holiness. I was alarmed at my failure to make good use of the graces the Lord has granted me for my salvation, but I was equally comforted by the thought that in his goodness God is helping me even now to save my soul by the most effective means of the Spiritual Exercises.

Resolutions: Not to neglect any means, however slight, to save my soul; especially to respond to divine inspirations

and have good will to do with great fervour, care and diligence these Spiritual Exercises.

I did this Meditation on my knees for an hour and, as it is the first one, with enthusiasm; the few distractions I had were passing ones. I ended the Meditation with a great eagerness to do everything well.

SECOND MEDITATION. *Man's last end.* In this Meditation I have come to know what I am, that is, nothing at all. This has made me realize how contrary to the truth my thoughts of pride are since what I have of my own is just nothingness; if I do have anything, that too is a pure gift of God and so all honour and glory is due to him alone. I realized that since I was created by God, he alone should be my Lord, him alone I should serve with fidelity and love because he is my first beginning and my last end. I was ashamed to see how poorly I have responded to this aim for which I was created, and that irrational beings serve God and glorify Him better than I do.

Resolutions: In all my actions to seek nothing except God, and never to complain of anything.

I did this Meditation walking about for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour, with little emotion but also, I trust, with few distractions. I had two temptations in it: one was that I felt bored; this exercise seemed too burdensome; the other because it crossed my mind that I had better not write anything about this Meditation lest I should not be sincere.

However, I ended it with the firm determination to do these Spiritual Exercises as well as I can, and to write everything with utter sincerity, even if I didn't feel like it.

THIRD MEDITATION during the night. *On the means and graces God has given me to be saved.* Oh! How great and lavish in graces and favours the Lord has been with me! He has not deprived me of the least little thing that I needed to be saved. For no merits of my own, or rather, in spite of my unworthiness, God has given me the Christian Faith, he has placed me in a very Christian country-town, he has provided me with parents who are so concerned with my salvation. He granted me the exceptional gift of a good education, and then, how many Sacraments, sermons, instructions, warnings; how many inspirations, stirrings of the heart, good examples and countless other kindnesses my divine Spouse has showered on me!

If God had given to another person a half or a third of the graces he has granted me, she would have already been a saint by this time, a great saint. As for me, I have misused it all, and perhaps I have not even started to love God from my heart! ... How ungrateful I am!

Resolutions: To be firmly determined to be a saint, cost what it may, and no longer let the means God gives me to become a saint come to nothing.

I did this Meditation partly on my knees and partly sitting, for a little more than half-an-hour. I had very few distractions in

it, and I ended it with gratitude to my God, who has loved me so much and done great things in me, and with a firm will to become a saint.

Sunday, 21 September 1828

At Holy Communion this morning I prayed my Lord present in the Sacrament to let me know if he wishes me to have Absolution every week. I felt a great desire to partake frequently of this Holy Sacrament. I was touched by the loving kindness of the Lord who, even without my asking for graces, He himself offers this grace, which is so great. I have therefore resolved to do my very best to prepare myself well for this Holy Sacrament, and to try to receive it at least once a week. In this Holy Communion I have also realized the great courage I will need to follow the path of perfection. I understood that I am just at the start of it and I foresaw the long way I still have to go: a path that is so narrow, filled with obstacles, temptations, boredom, snares, crosses, contradictions, etc., all of which made me conclude that I will find it extremely difficult to reach the goal; but God comforted me by reminding me that He would always be there with me and help me, and that he himself would bring about my salvation.

FIRST MEDITATION. *On the gravity of sin.* The severe punishment with which the Lord struck down those who had committed sin made me realize what a serious evil sin is. The Angels sinned, and for a single grievous thought of pride, he

struck them all down into hell, without giving them time for repenting, with no consideration for their great dignity or the great number of them. They sinned and that was enough to bring on them irreparable punishment. However, the gravity of sin is even more visibly seen in the punishment of Adam! Such a perfect creation of God's hands, endowed with so many natural and supernatural gifts, sinned and as a consequence of it he was instantly deformed; he lost everything all at once, and what was left in him was sheer misery; so many years of penance and sin is not yet wiped out. God himself had to come down from Heaven to redeem man, and the pain of sin is something we still bear. Countless other temporal punishments and all due to sin! ... Oh, God. And I commit sin so easily, and never think it is so serious: what shall become of me? ...

Resolutions: To avail myself of every means not to commit even the tiniest sin, and to do my best that others may avoid it.

I did this Meditation on my knees, because I was in church: It took me altogether an hour-and-a-half, in two separate moments, not at a stretch. I think I had few distractions; I was truly horrified by sin.

Regarding the two *Spiritual Lessons*: as the passages I read were on prayer, I understood that I don't do it well mostly due to a lack of preparation for it, inattentiveness and because I am not keen enough on acquiring a genuine spirit of prayer. I have therefore resolved to improve on these points and never get tired of the practice of prayer.

Today I had the inspiration to note down with care all the defects that I find in myself, during these days of Spiritual Exercises; then to take one for every week and do my utmost to uproot it from my heart. If I am allowed, I will do so ...

As I listened to the sermon in honour of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, I realized why Our Lord disposed that I should emit my vow of perpetual Chastity on that feast-day: it was because in consecrating myself for ever to God, I had to learn from Mary the way of giving delight to Him, by imitating all Her virtues and so become a true Bride of His.

SECOND MEDITATION. *On my own sins.* I was really scared when I discovered so many sins in myself. I had not even a notion that I had learnt to offend God. I saw every single day marred by my sins, especially in my early youth. And now how lukewarm I am! ... In return for so many graces, mercies, calls, I offended you, I have greatly offended you. Indeed, I have used your gifts themselves to offend you with. But how greatly I admire your patience, my God! What held you back from flinging me into the depths of hell the very moment I wronged you? ... All those times I deserved it! ... And I could now be burning for all eternity in hell, with no hope of ever coming out of it, had not your merciful love hovered over me. - My God, how greatly I am indebted to you; a thousand hearts to love you with are not sufficient. No more sins, my God, no more!

Resolutions: To revive my fervour and to love God all the

more to make up for the past, and never to think I have served God enough.

I did this Meditation in Church, on my knees, for about an hour. I think I had few distractions. My pride had the worse of it when I realized there were so many sins in myself. However, I ended the Meditation with an act of trust in Jesus Christ, who bears my sins on his own shoulders, and with his Blood adorns my soul.

THIRD MEDITATION. *On Death.* And so, I have to die, that is sure. As to when, God alone knows. I have therefore to be always well-prepared for it. Sin is what makes death so bitter; for a just man death is not a death but the beginning of real eternal life. And so, if I could die a saintly death, how happy would my death be! ...

I then considered that death is the only thing that matters more than anything else, because on it depends either my eternal happiness or my eternal damnation, which means that it is very important that I spend well the moment of death. I reflected on the total stripping of everything that death does; at that moment fame and glory, high positions, wealth and pastimes, etc. are of no use; what I will value are my good deeds, which will accompany me even in eternal life.

As I asked myself what would cause me the greatest anguish if I had to die just now, I understood that my pride, self-love and lack of right intention in my actions would be for me the most serious cause of distress.

Resolutions: To make up my mind to make amends in these three defective areas, and to think often of death, especially in my actions, that is: by doing everything in a way that would make me face death quite happily.

I did this Meditation walking about, for a little more than half-an-hour. I had a few distractions, but the time passed almost without my noticing it.

I heartily thank God who has assisted me throughout this day. I have committed a few defects, but I hope they were not deliberate. God has granted me fervour in all my actions, with inner tranquillity as well. Everything comes from Him as a gift. I pray He may do the same with me tomorrow, though I do not deserve it.

FOURTH MEDITATION Night-time. *On the particular Judgement.* My God, how many accusations will be made in that terrible Judgement! Countless accusations from the devil: he will bring out so many sins I had not even thought of nor worried about, things I had considered harmless. And my poor Guardian Angel will be so displeased! He will present the tiny book with my good deeds and with it so many accusations he too will have to make! He will let me know of inspirations prompted by him but ignored by me, of remorse he had put in my heart but which I paid no heed to. He will let me know how many times he had to take his eyes off me so as not to see so many sins: what shall I have to say then? I will be so ashamed, so confused! But my greatest fear will be that of

facing Christ as my Judge. What will become of me if for the first time I see him indignant! My God, how severe will that scrutiny be! ... After uncovering so many sins I had not even kept in mind, God will examine the good I have done and will find so many failings even in that! Vain, proud, unruly thoughts; little or no fervour, negligence, self-love, etc. etc. What shall I say then? Of what use will it be, what good will it do me then, if people now think I am virtuous? If God who sees through my actions into the depths of my heart, disapproves of them? ...

Resolutions: To be more diligent in examining my conscience, in order to come to know my faults and make amends for them; to do solely for God's sake all the little good that I will do, lest it should be rejected on that day.

I sat down for this Meditation, which took me about half-an-hour. I had very few distractions and experienced great dread of God's judgement. I ended it with a desire and a will to make sure I have a right intention in all my actions by doing everything for God's sake alone.

In my Holy Communion this morning I asked the Lord to let me know if he wishes me to reveal everything, be it good or bad, to my Spiritual Director. Regarding my inner wounds I had the inspiration to tell him of all of them. I realized that in the past my self-love deceived me at times, keeping my own wounds out of sight.

With regard to the good actions I could not make out if I had simply to answer any questions he puts to me or if I had to tell

him everything of my own accord. However, I decided I would do better not to keep anything from him. As my pride may penetrate even here, I resolved to tell him whatever there is to say, and tell him also whether I felt like mentioning it or not. I will do the same in asking permission for acts of penance. And so I pray my Director to put a Yes or No mark according to what God will inspire him...

PRAISED BE THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY
AND MARY MOST HOLY

Monday, 22 September

FIRST MEDITATION. *On Hell.* How terribly scared I have been to dwell in spirit just for an hour in Hell! How would it be then if I had to stay in it for all eternity!... There, in the midst of so many torments of every sort, never-ending, without the slightest relief. How horrible it must be to hear all the time so much blasphemous swearing against God, Mary, Angels and Saints, and I myself to be forced to swear and curse Jesus my Beloved whom I now acknowledge worthy of infinite love, of infinite praise! How dreadful to find myself close to frightful souls with their loads of sins and floating in filth! And the greatest pain of all, the thought of being unable any more to love God and instead of having to hate him for ever and ever!

What a remorse for my conscience to think that I could have so easily saved my soul, to consider how many means the Lord had provided not only to save myself but also to strive towards holiness, and that I had used it all so badly! What an extra hell that would be for me, Jesus my love, if I had to end up in there! It would certainly be a thousand times greater than that of all the damned, considering that I have received so many graces.

My God, how many times I have been deserving of hell, and I should be there to burn for ever with the damned had not your infinite merciful love, in its excess of goodness, waited for me to repent. For charity's sake, Jesus my love, do not permit that I should offend you any more and so deserve Hell.

Resolutions: To be determined to avoid hell whatever it may cost me, and so do all that I can to shun even the smallest sin, today, in particular, so that I may not put myself in danger of going to hell.

I sat down for this Meditation and so I spent on it a little more than an hour as I had all the time I wanted. I had few distractions, and experienced fear of hell. In spite of this, after my prayer, or rather before I ended it, I had a thought of pride. This vice is truly the worst torment of my soul, and if I do end up in hell, it will be due to my tremendous pride.

SECOND MEDITATION. *On the small number of the elect.* I have experienced much fear at the thought of how few the saved will be, and that this truth is confirmed both by words

uttered by Jesus Christ and by the opinion of the Fathers of the Church, and by the fact that most Christians lead an easy, idle life which can easily lead to eternal perdition. I have realized how easy it is to be damned, because evil passions, and tendencies, the devil, evil company, are all means that lead us astray. On the contrary, how hard it is to save oneself. We must wage ceaseless war against our passions, go against our own inclinations, love suffering, humiliations, etc. As a result, how few save themselves! ... And yet, my Jesus, what about your Blood, what about your sufferings, what about your merits? ... These will help us save our soul, but they are not enough by themselves. God has decreed that he does not want to save man without man, and so to be among the number of the elect, we must do our very best to co-operate. My God, as I reflect on my life, though I profess devotion to you, yet I admit that it is only on the surface, because I do not have the solid foundation of humility. And so, unless you help me by a special dose of mercy, I will most surely find myself in the number of the eternally-lost.

Resolutions: To be set on saving my soul in the company of the few, by doing what they do, especially by seeking humility and self-abnegation in everything, for these are the surest roads to salvation.

For this Meditation I partly walked about and sat down for the rest of the time, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour in all. I had few distractions. I experienced a great desire to live among the few, though this may cost me a great deal. I thanked my God

because I do hope that he has destined me to be among the elect, though I do not deserve it, though I have misused his loving kindness.

In the two *spiritual readings* I did today I learnt how easy and how important it is to cultivate spiritual recollection and ejaculations; I have also understood how important it is to give heed to inspirations, for many times it is on them that the beginning of holiness-of-life depends; I have greatly neglected them.

In my visit to the Blessed Sacrament there was confirmed in me a desire I had in this morning's Communion, that is, to be very open with my Confessor, knowing how necessary this is for advancing in virtue, and how easily I could be deceived if I am not open with him. Jesus in the Sacrament also made me understand how important the virtues of humility, lowliness and self-abnegation, etc. are and that I should value them above any joy or spiritual enjoyment.

Today I had this thought: that since I cannot possibly carry out all the resolutions I take during these days, nor keep all the meditations in mind, I could more profitably take one at a time each week and let it sink deep into my heart.

THIRD MEDITATION. *On the Prodigal Son.* In this wayward young man who abandons his father, I saw myself, for I too wronged my God, especially in my youth. I realized how greatly I displeased my God by going away from him, who loved me so much, had done so many good things to me and

had used all the means to make me totally his from early childhood. But, ungrateful of me, I preferred to forsake him! ... What good did it do me? ... I lost his grace, his friendship, peace, the most splendid stage in life for dedicating myself to God, Heaven, and all spiritual treasures, with nothing left except sin and hell. Yet how great is the mercy of my good God! ... Just like the father of this boy: as soon as he saw him from afar he ran to meet him, threw his arms around him and kissed him; he received him anew, and prepared a sumptuous banquet to which he invited all his neighbours to celebrate with a feast the return of his lost son.

So too with my poor soul, after I had wronged him, dishonoured and offended him so much, all the same as soon as he saw in me a desire to return to Him, or rather, because He himself sought every means by which I could make peace with him, He welcomed me, caressed me tenderly... Exultantly, as if he had won a great victory, he invited the Angels to rejoice with him. What can I say in return for such mercy? ... I am at a loss ... I humble myself and express that I am extremely sorry because I have so many times displeased God who is infinitely good to me.

Resolutions: To have absolute trust in this tenderly-loving Father, to go to Him in every need, and to see to it that I never again displease him.

I did this Meditation walking about, for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. I had few distractions. I was deeply impressed by God's infinite love and mercy towards my poor soul; for a good while I shed

tears. I ended it with a great desire to love this gentle Father, and displease Him no more.

Today, too, I have good reason to thank the Lord, because He has helped me in a special way. However, I have said a few words more than yesterday, and I resolve to improve on this point.

Today, practically throughout the day, I have experienced an inner joy without knowing the cause of it. Heaven grant it does not come from the devil, to lead me astray. I heartily implore God to grant me his grace again tomorrow, and to intensify it ever more, and to grant me the grace to profit from it.

FOURTH MEDITATION night-time. *On the two Standards.* In this Meditation I realized how badly deceived are those who follow the Standard of Lucifer, and how fortunate are those who follow Jesus Christ. Satan's promises are all lies, because he promises pleasure, honour, amusement, wealth, fortune-making, etc. and in actual fact those who follow the devil are ordinarily the unhappiest of all, for what pleasure and joy can anyone have from following a tyrant who treats his subjects like slaves?

But suppose he does give these goods to his followers, how long can they last? One moment, one instant, leading to eternal damnation. On the other hand, Jesus Christ bids us control our passions, fight them down; he bids us be humble, patient, and kind, be glad to bear it and to forgive, etc.; but at

the same time he says to us: "I myself will be the example you have to follow; I will help you by my grace. I will do the hardest part myself and your own efforts will win for you an eternal happiness: in return for a little suffering you will be happy for ever. How fortunate I am to be received by Jesus among the number of his followers, to fight under his Standard, in view of an everlasting happiness! My God, I absolutely declare myself to be a disciple of yours, and I will do my best to follow in your footsteps.

Resolutions: Never to get tired of fighting against my enemies, especially against pride, in order to be on the side of Jesus Christ.

I did this Meditation partly sitting down and partly on my knees: It took me about half-an-hour. I had few distractions in it, but also very little fervour. I ended it with the desire to fight bravely under the Standard of Jesus Christ.

Tuesday, 23 September

Shortly after getting up I almost wished the Spiritual Exercises could quickly come to an end. I suppose this is because I feel in need of a rest. Whatever it be, I prayed God to give me the grace to get on with them and finish them well. At Holy Mass I had several distractions. During Holy Communion this morning I begged the Lord to let me know if he wishes me to write out the Novena practices for our Pious Union: several times I was almost on the point of letting it be,

and do nothing else as far as I am concerned, because what I put into it is just pride. However, I felt that the Lord is pleased if I keep it up because if I don't, it would be my fault if other girls lose their fervour and interrupt the good they are doing. However, I am still anxious that I may be deceiving myself, and so I request my Director to note down his opinion.

I have also begged the Lord to let me know if he is pleased that I devote myself to service of my neighbour in any opportunity that will present itself, or if I should rather attend more to myself and to a retired prayer life. I understood that Our Lord is pleased if, without neglecting myself, I do all I can for the benefit of others. I admit that I have neglected my duties towards all the Associations, Sodalties, girls and sick people entrusted to my care; in future I will consider myself as a Mother to them, and what I desire for myself I will seek to do towards them, sparing myself no pains, no acts of self-denial, etc.

FIRST MEDITATION. *On the three Classes of Men who serve God.* I have learnt how large is the number of those who will not go beyond knowing about virtue and praising it in others; they have no real desire to practise it themselves. I realized that there are similarly many people who have esteem for virtue and practise what they feel like, but not all the virtues, nor even the most essential ones. Among these I find myself too: I strive to practise certain superficial virtues, perhaps just to show off and be held as virtuous, and meanwhile I neglect the most essential ones, those which lead to genuine perfection, without which everything else is no

good. On the other hand, how few are those who are truly virtuous, who hold on to solid virtue and love God with all their heart.

In this Meditation I came to know that there are three kinds of humility: in the first kind we subject ourselves to God and shun mortal sin; in the second kind we shun also venial sin; in the third kind, the most perfect one, we love humility, poverty, contempt and self-abnegation for the sake of Jesus Christ. I have seen how gracious the Lord is with me in calling me to a life of perfection, and at the same time I realize how poorly I have responded, for I have not even begun to love Him with all my heart.

Resolutions: To be determined in seeking the way of perfection, especially by means of humility and self-abnegation.

I sat down for this Meditation, which took me a little more than an hour. I had various distractions and for a while I was drowsy. However, I ended it with fervour and a great desire to practise self-abnegation in real earnest and to acquire holy humility. As a punishment for my drowsiness and the distractions I had in this Meditation, was a thought of pride I had at the very start of the day.

SECOND MEDITATION. *On Jesus' Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.* First of all, I admired the charity of Jesus who in order to heal my spiritual infirmities took them upon himself and did severe penance for them. I understood the gravity of sin as I reflected how, after taking it upon himself, Jesus dared

not lift his face from the ground, but trembled in distress and in agonizing pain. If sins which are not his own had this tremendous effect on Jesus, what should I be doing with all the sins I have committed?

And yet, strange as it may seem, I don't feel anything. I have no sorrow, no repentant feelings! What an anguish it must have caused Jesus to think of all that was in store for him: thorns, beating, slapping and spitting on the face, and kicking about, insulting, mocking, scourging, the painful crowning and the cruel crucifixion: what an anguish it must have been to the Heart of Jesus; all the more so when he thought, as He cast a look on the whole of mankind, that for thousands and thousands of men all that pain and suffering would be of no use, or worse still, of greater damnation! His anguish was so great that great drops of blood ran down his body, and he began to grow faint.

My Jesus, in all this suffering I wish my own behaviour could be of some comfort to you, but I am well aware that I myself, with my sins, was the main cause of all those torments. Though weighed down by all the pain and sorrow that Jesus experienced during his prayer, he did not run away, when his enemies drew near. Instead, he hastened forward to meet them. He willingly undertook to suffer. What a severe lesson this is for me: when I find no pleasure in what I am doing, I either leave it half done or go on with it reluctantly.

Resolutions: Never to omit any duty out of boredom or lack of readiness for it; instead, just then to redouble my fervour

and act with greater care and fidelity.

I sat down for this Meditation, for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. I had few distractions, but my heart is so hard that I shed no tears that could have mixed with Jesus' Blood. I have tried to put my sorrow into it, at least, with the desire to bear something for Jesus' sake.

In my visit to the Blessed Sacrament I have learnt from Jesus-in-the-Sacrament not to give importance to praise from others, because deeds praised by men are often less pleasing to Jesus. I should rather have a love for humility and self-abnegation, which are the virtues most pleasing to Jesus Christ. I have ended the visit with an earnest desire to serve and love God with my whole being.

In the two *spiritual readings* of today I learnt how important virtues are; at the same time I realize that I have not valued virtues sufficiently because I did not distinguish well between them: I hankered after virtues that are externally impressive but which are of little use unless they are built on virtues that form their solid ground, virtues that I valued little and practised even less. My God, grant that I may profit from these Lessons.

Tuesday, 23 September

THIRD MEDITATION. *Jesus before the Judges.* I was struck with admiration at the meek demeanour of Jesus in bearing the insults of mean, wretched people, and at the same time I realized how painful to the Heart of Jesus this outrage must have been, because it was done by people all of whom had received from him exceptional graces. My God, how humiliating and insulting it must have been for you to be taken from court to court, bound, led by hired ruffians just like a criminal, and where you received nothing but ill-treatment and abuse! Herod treats you as a madman, because you do not answer his questions, and you keep silent in face of his contempt, nor are you anxious to let him know who you are. So little you mind the way men judge ... In this you reproach me and at the same time teach me, who am so anxious to be held in honour and esteem by others. You are struck on the cheek by a mean servant and you as a revenge speak to him gently and let him know his mistake.

Another fellow spits at you and you don't even show it on your face, nor utter a word at such an outrage. How ashamed I should be, I who resent every tiny wrong or word and cannot bear anything peacefully ! ...

Resolutions: To pay no heed to what the world may say, but to serve the Lord with freedom of heart, and to bear everything with patience.

I did this Meditation walking about, for about three quarters of an hour. I had a few distractions. I did it with some anxiety, fearing that my mother might be displeased.

Today, too, I have much to thank the Lord for. He has helped me in a very special way, giving me exceptional helps. May he be praised most fervently; I beg him to continue to assist me.

FOURTH MEDITATION at night. *On the Scourging and crowning with thorns of my beloved Jesus.* At the start I wondered at what Jesus must have felt at seeing himself stripped naked in the midst of so many people, making amends, unfortunately, for my lack of modesty. My God, what a savage torture that scourging was! ... You, King of heaven, bound to a pillar and flogged pitilessly by the savage Jews, till your flesh went livid all over, with blood spurting out of your veins and forming in your Sacred Heart wounds upon wounds!... And yet you don't complain, but offer it all to the Eternal Father for my sins! That is the lovely fruit of my sins! ... That is the most bitter pain that they caused to Jesus my love!... But not yet satisfied with this, the furious Jews invent new ways of tormenting the poor Jesus. They taunt him and pretend to adore him as a king, and so instead of a crown they put on his head a bundle of very sharp thorns and fix it into his head, in such a way that blood spurts out from all sides. How terribly painful it must have been, poor Jesus! ... But cause for all this are my thoughts of pride, of vanity, and with these I keep piercing the head of my good Jesus. How ungrateful of me!

Resolutions: To have done, once for all, with sinning, for it is on account of it that Jesus suffers so much; in particular, today, to be on my guard against thoughts of pride.

Wednesday, 24 September 1828

In my Holy Communion this morning, I asked Jesus if he minds that in order to do deeds of charity towards my neighbour more freely and draw some girls to the right path, I offer some little thing without depending on my Elders, out of fear that they will say No. It seems to me that he does not mind, and I resolved, for things that concern me alone, to be very dependent in everything, and for what concerns others, to do as much as I can. However, I here request my Superior to tell me what he thinks of it.

I have also asked Our Lord if he minds that I never follow Holy Mass but either go on with my meditation or do the thanksgiving after Holy Communion, etc. It seems to me that he would be pleased if I accompany Holy Mass, but I should then shorten my meditation, and therefore I think I had better do like this: on all Sundays and feast-days to follow the Mass, and on weekdays to fix the intention at the start and let the meditation serve the purpose of the acts that are normally done at Holy Mass. I request my Confessor to tell me what he thinks best.

FIRST MEDITATION. *On Jesus condemned to death.* I have realized how harmful and misleading human respect is. Pilate

declares that Jesus is innocent and yet out of fear of Caesar, condemns him to death. How many times I myself offend God and forget all about virtue out of some mean fear! ... What must Jesus have felt to walk through Jerusalem bound, in the midst of hired ruffians, with the cross on his shoulder like any evil-doer! People all around mock him, jeer at him, scorn him and among so many bystanders there is no-one who has compassion on him! Oh! How dear to Jesus must have been those who now strive to suffer gladly for his sake! A glance at such souls is all the comfort Jesus has in the midst of all his pain. Meantime, however, Jesus draws nearer and nearer to Mt. Calvary. The road is marked all over by the Blood of Jesus, he falls again and again, without anyone near to help him up and comfort him. How I wish my soul, at least, were pure enough to comfort Jesus. Instead, alas! This is unfortunately what makes Jesus suffer so much. Jesus is let down by just this. And I? What do I suffer for Jesus?... Nothing ... Nothing ... Nothing ...

Resolutions. Today I shall keep company to Jesus in his sorrow, and if he sends me any suffering as a gift, I will bear it most gladly, with the intention of comforting him in some way ...

I sat down for the greater part of this meditation and a little also on my knees for about an hour; I have had few distractions and ended it with the desire to suffer for Jesus' sake.

SECOND MEDITATION. *Jesus Crucified.* In this Meditation I tried to place heart and spirit at the foot of the Cross of Jesus

and in silence I listened to what my Crucified Love was saying to me. I realized how great Jesus' love for me was while, in order to save me, he bore so many torments and died on a cross. I had a great desire to do something in return for a God who died for me, and the most pleasing thing that came to mind was to die to myself and to my will for his sake. Therefore from now on, the will of my God will be my food, my comfort, and whatever you permit me, I will accept most gladly.

Resolutions: Once for all to resolve no more to stray from the will of God, but to discern God's will in everything that happens to me.

In today's *spiritual readings* I realized how I am lagging behind in the practice of genuine humility, especially internally; in particular, I am not at all convinced of my lowliness. I have had a great desire to make up for it, and I pray that God may grant me the grace to do so.

In my visit to the Blessed Sacrament, this evening, I have discovered how displeased he is with what I do because I do not do it well. I have realized that Jesus is more pleased with one thing done well than with many things done in an imperfect way; I have therefore thought I had better not burden myself too much with all sorts of things, but rather do perfectly well the few things that I am duty bound to do, to take time to do them calmly as if I had nothing else to do at that moment.

THIRD MEDITATION. *On the last words that Jesus uttered on the Cross.* I have been deeply impressed by the supreme

charity of my God. There he is, on the Cross, about to die out of the pangs of pain, and when he does open his mouth, the first words he utters are a prayer to the Eternal Father to forgive those who crucified him, telling Him, by way of excusing them, that they do not know what they are doing. Only the Heart of a God can hold in itself such charity. Now I understand how the world can remain in existence though in danger at any moment to collapse due to the grievous sins committed in it: the Blood of Jesus, his Wounds cry out for mercy. Jesus my love inspires me with an immense confidence that through his merits my sins will be forgiven! What should I do for you, my God? ... Even if I were to die a martyr and suffer any amount of pain, I would still be doing nothing; but at least the little I can do, I want to do it at all costs. Jesus once more opens his mouth and what does he say? ... He presents me with the most precious gift, he gives me what is dearest to him, he presents me to Mary as her daughter, and he gives me Mary as a Mother. He commends me to Mary's love and care just as if I were himself, and he tells me to honour, serve and love his Mother, my Mother, just as he had done. Oh, what a gift it was! What a charity! ... What a huge debt I owe you who from your bed-of-death, totally unmindful of your own pain, care so much for my greater good.

Resolutions: To have great confidence in the Wounds of Jesus, and deep devotion and trust towards Mary.

I did this Meditation walking about for about three-quarters of an hour. I have had few distractions and was deeply moved; I have ended it with the desire to do something Jesus will be pleased with.

I heartily thank Jesus that today, too, he has not deprived me of his grace; I honestly think I have spent the day well. But I am a bit uneasy, because I have received much praise, and I fear I may have given rise to it with my hypocrisy. God forbid it should be so!

FOURTH MEDITATION at night. *On the last words uttered by Jesus on the Cross.* I was filled with awe and bewilderment as I listened to the dying Jesus crying out from the Cross: I thirst. After such terrible pangs of pain, out of which he is evidently about to die, he still cries out again: *I thirst*¹. He thirsts for new suffering to offer for my salvation, for new pain and for new desires to carry out the will of God. In his excessive love the pain he suffered seemed too little, and he would have gladly suffered more. Oh! Such love of God none else but you yourself know how great, how ardent it is! You say *I thirst* for me, and I, at the slightest pain I have to bear cry out, Enough! Enough! How cold I am, how poor in holy love of you! ... However, I too now cry out and say that I thirst for suffering for your sake and I will always do so from now on. I hear Jesus uttering another word: *It is finished*². Jesus is comforted at the thought that his great work of redemption is now accomplished, that humankind is saved, that the gates of Heaven are now open. My God, how I wish that I too at the point of death may be able to say: *It is finished*: that is, I have done all I could to love my God, to save my soul but God alone knows how it will be ... Lastly, in the act of recommending his spirit to the Father, he expires. The whole of nature is moved

¹ Original in Latin “*Sitio*”.

² Original in Latin “*Consummatum est*”.

at the death of its Creator: only I am unable to shed a tear. Mary receives him in her arms: her eyes wander all over the dead members of Jesus' body and finds no single part unharmed. What a sorrow for Mary! ... Finally she accompanies him to the Tomb, with the thought that she will have her dear Jesus no more with her on earth.

Resolutions: To bury myself with Jesus Christ by caring no more for this world, but for Him alone, and today by keeping company to the Mother of Sorrows who grieves over the loss of her dear Jesus.

This meditation was done on my knees, for about half-an-hour. This time I did not feel like getting up from bed and I was a bit lazy in doing so. However, I did not do the Meditation badly, nor did I have many distractions either.

Thursday, 25 September

At Holy Communion this morning, the Lord made me understand that the more I consider myself 'mean', the more will He be pleased with me, and on the contrary, the more complacent I am about myself the more displeased he will be. I also realized that God delights more in a single soul that does its best to acquire true perfection than many souls that are imperfect. I begged him to let me know if he wished me to keep up my vows: I had the feeling that he chided me for failing to observe them very well, and at the same time the desire to keep them up more perfectly, because I am sure that if I were to exempt myself from them, I am sure I would be

doing very little for the Lord's sake. And so I ardently beg him to grant me the grace to carry them out to perfection, so that they may not add to my shame instead of rendering me more pleasing to the Lord, as I fondly think I'm doing through these.

FIRST AND SECOND MEDITATIONS. *On Heaven.* Ah! How great is the reward that God is preparing for those who serve him faithfully! I reflected on the bliss all my faculties will enjoy in that blessed homeland. My eyes in gazing at such a splendid light and the holy city so beautifully adorned, in recognizing so many Angels and so many Saints, among whom my patron saints, particularly St Aloysius, in admiring the surpassing beauty of my Mamma Mary, and above all, in seeing face to face my beloved Jesus. My ears will be delighted with the music and sweet melody of the Angels, in hearing, not swearing, but praise to my good God, and so on for the other senses. In that holy city, what a happiness it will be to remember the graces that the Lord has bestowed on me to save me, occasions in which I had done something for the Lord, in view of Heaven.

How delightful it will be to come to know all the mysteries, to contemplate all the attributes of God, especially his loving kindness, and to see him loved by an infinite number of his creatures. What ineffable joy to be so sweetly assured that I can no longer offend him but only love him and be with him for all eternity. To be, I myself, transformed in God, happy of his happiness, almost divinized. Oh! How glorious! Oh, what endless rejoicing!

In return for such small things the Lord gives me a reward so great, how good he is! Now I see the things of this world in a truer light, and I realize how little I have done for Heaven, and I understand how much I should do to gain it.

Resolutions: Not to let slip even a single moment of time because a single instant can enable me to get to Heaven; every day to do something for it.

I sat down for both of these Meditations, the first one for about an hour. I think I had few distractions, on the other hand I did not have many sensible feelings either. The second one took me about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour; I have had a few distractions but there was warmer fervour in it, and I ended it with a desire to strive hard to gain Heaven.

In today's *spiritual readings* I learnt how necessary and pleasing to Jesus gentleness is, and at the same time how far I am from having it; I find that at times I say gentle words but out of pride, not out of genuine humility.

This evening I could not stay long in Church, and so I experienced nothing in particular.

Thursday, 25 September

THIRD MEDITATION. *On how much God has done to save me.* I have realized how much God watches over me that I may attain to salvation. He created all things, rational and non-rational, that they may serve that purpose.

The Eternal Father uses all his omnipotence to save me; the Divine Son employs all his wisdom, the Holy Spirit all his goodness and love. What has Jesus Christ not done for me?... Thirty-three years of sweating, suffering, pain: he uses it all to save my soul, and in so doing he shows me that he cares more for my salvation than for his own life. By his example he makes the path of virtue easier for me; with his Blood he washes my soul of my sins, and through his suffering he opens for me the gates of Heaven. Jesus does so much for me, and what am I doing? What have I done to save my soul? Hardly anything. Yet I pray God to give me the grace to do much more in future.

Resolutions: To be more seriously committed for my eternal salvation; in particular, to practise virtue in little, ordinary things.

This meditation took me a bit less than an hour. I sat down for it. I have had various distractions and was not very sensibly moved. I have ended it with a desire to work out my eternal salvation, and a feeling of confusion for having done so little towards that end. Today too the Lord has not deprived me of his graces, and for them I thank him with all my heart.

However, I have talked much more than usual, but partly, it seems to me, because there was need for it, and instead I have had to go against my will in some things.

FOURTH MEDITATION at night. *On God's love.* I have learnt how great is my God's love towards me, his poor handmaid.

From all eternity he has loved me, before the world came to be, even before I was born, He thought of me, he loved me, and prepared wonderful graces for me. And now he loves me with an infinite love, he watches over me and defends me all the time, availing himself of every opportunity to give me proof of his love; He is always by my side. He has forgiven me so many sins and invites me to accept his holy love. He does not seem to be satisfied until he sees that I love him. Out of love he has prepared for me eternal happiness in Heaven, and he seeks all ways and means to make me gain it because he is not happy if I do not share in his happiness. He sees that I do not respond to him and even turn away from him and leave him, even offend him, and yet He is never tired of loving me. Oh unfathomable love! ... Infinite love! ... And still I do not love You? ... and I offend You? ... Oh! How ungrateful of me!

Resolutions: To drive away from my heart all love for earthly things, and with it self-love, too, in order to love Jesus alone, with all my strength.

For this meditation I walked about for three quarters of an hour. I did not feel very much like getting up, but it seems to me that I did it with fervour, with only a few distractions, I think.

Friday, 26 September 1828

At my Communion this morning the Lord made me understand that I need much courage to go along the path of perfection. I seem to have understood that the Lord has prepared crosses for me, or in any case that he made me feel the need to be prepared for anything that may happen, because He wants to do what is most pleasing to Him. Then I implored him to let me at least die in some religious institute, and I do hope he will grant me that grace. However, it seems to me, I felt that he wishes me to do as my Confessor will say about this.

LAST MEDITATION. *On the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.* I have realized to what excesses God loves my poor soul. After doing so much for my sake, it still seems to him too little, and he is not satisfied until he reaches the point of giving his whole self to me in the Holy Eucharist. He stays here as a passionate lover, always thinking of me, ever ready to receive me at his banquet and into his confidence. He knew how much this love would cost him: abuse, insults, lack of respect, neglect, offences; and yet, not to leave me alone, he bears all things, endures all things, and for my sake he remains in the Blessed Sacrament. And what a grace it is for me - that every morning he admits me to his banquet, he deigns to come into my heart and grant me all the graces that I ask of him.

In this regard I have realized how ungrateful it is of me to

receive Holy Communion with such little fervour, to do it almost as a matter of routine instead of preparing new sacrifices each time to please his heart. I am sorry for this and I pray God to give me the grace not to do like this any more.

Resolutions: To receive Holy Communion with greater devotion than in the past, in particular to have always a deep craving for it.

In the last *spiritual readings* of today I have understood how important it is to attend to ordinary little things because the profit from these Spiritual Exercises depends on it.

Praise be to the Most Blessed Trinity.
Amen.

TO THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD. AMEN

Saturday, 20 September 1828

1st *General Examination of conscience.* When I started thinking about the faults committed in my life I got frightened, as I became aware of so many. There are two in particular that I am more sorry for: coldness and lack of fervour in the service of God, and pride, knowing that all, or almost all my actions are spoiled by this vice.

2nd *Examination on today's defects.* My prayer was not very fervent this morning. I had a thought of pride.

Sunday, 21 September

1st *General Examination of conscience.* I detected many defects due to self-love, at times inner resentment at being corrected, sadness about being ill-treated, forgotten, wronged, etc. I detected defects in prayer, because I do it with little fervour, little concentration, not enough preparation, and during the day I am easily distracted by chatting, curiosity, etc.

2nd *Examination on today's weaknesses.* I got up a little late, but I trust I have done so because my stomach was a bit upset; I had two thoughts of pride, and I also felt a bit sorry to think that another person was to be preferred to me; however, when it did happen, I did not mind it at all. I did not obey blindly in a small thing.

Monday, 22 September

1st *General Examination of conscience.*
I detected defects mainly against charity, that is: I easily think unfavourably of others, sometimes I let slip words against love of neighbour, and several times, instead of feeling sorry to hear negative things about others, I almost feel glad, and I do not do all that I can to stop such talk. I have also found myself careless in obedience: at times I try to find excuses to shirk it, or I complain within myself.

2nd *Examination on today's defects.* I have had a thought of pride. I did not feel sorry when I heard others speak somewhat unfavourably about a certain person. In fact, I almost wished they would go on talking of it. I have said more words than yesterday. Today I could not abstain from eating fruit.

Tuesday, 23 September

1st *General Examination of conscience.* I detected failings relating to my vows. Regarding poverty I do hope I am not attached to earthly things, but I don't have a true spirit of poverty, and I also detected signs of vanity, in the fact that I am glad to wear new clothes. I realize that I have neglected the vow of not committing deliberate venial sins: I easily forget about it. The vow of chastity is very dear to me, but I have not been very watchful over my feelings; I am distressed to have certain dreams against holy purity; however, I hope it is not through any fault of mine, and even in the dream itself I know I am opposed to it. I realize that I do practically nothing to make sure I observe the vow of greater perfection: I just forget about it: I would be a saint if I observed it; instead, I have not even started to be so. I detect some imperfection in almost everything that I do, because of which I think I had better not increase the number of practices, but carry out well what I have. Similarly, I have found myself negligent about my household duties, because of which I have a few times displeased my Parents.

2nd *Examination on today's failings.* I have had a thought of pride. Today, too, I have eaten fruit; I have said some words more than I usually do. I trust there was need for it; I think I have been in prayerful recollection reasonably well. Today, I found it tiresome to write all these things.

Wednesday, 24 September

1st *General Examination of conscience.* I realize I am too much attached to my own opinion, and so many times I obstinately hold on to it. I also know that I don't easily comply with my sister's wishes, and so many times I don't do very gladly what she tells me or wishes me to do, etc. I also understand that thinking so little of the Passion of Jesus Christ has a harmful effect on myself.

2nd *Examination on today's failings.* I detect only a 'half-thought' of pride. I have also had a few thoughts against charity in matters of purity, but I think I drove them away as soon as they arose. Today I have spoken rather freely, but it seems to me that I have kept inner recollection.

Thursday, 25 September

1st *General Examination of conscience.* I have again detected traces of envy, caused by pride, which makes me almost sorry to see others doing good and so fearing that I be considered inferior to them, and also I may be a little bit sorry

deep within me when I hear others praised. I admit I am too 'delicate' paying too much heed to little troubles that Our Lord at times graciously sends me; several times I wish others may know about my slight ills and feel pity for me. I have not said all my vocal prayers very well: at times I pray without thinking about what I'm saying.

2nd *Examination on today's defects.* I have had a thought of pride, but I hope I have driven it away as soon as it was conceived. Today I spoke more than usual, and I have interrupted a little bit my prayerful recollection, but I hope I did it for a real need.

HAIL JESUS, MARY & ST ALOYSIUS

26 September 1828

RESOLUTIONS I MAKE ON THIS OCCASION

With heartfelt gratitude and a resolute will to do what you want, O my good God, I prostrate myself before you and thank you with all my heart for the most special grace of these Spiritual Exercises. I thank you for all the inspirations, appeals, admonishments and for the light you have shed on me throughout this holy time. Grant me the grace to put what you have taught me to good use. I sincerely wish to please you and to be truly yours. I beg you for charity's sake to help me because in the measure that I do not rely on myself, I put my trust in you and hope to obtain everything from your goodness

alone. Accept the resolutions I am about to make, and give me special help so that I may carry them out.

1. I resolve to be a Saint, a great Saint, a Saint soon. This is what you are calling me to. This is a 'big word', which could come from pride had I not all my confidence in you, my God, had I not known that all those who became Saints kept that goal always in mind. And I resolve to become a Saint by cultivating three virtues, that is, humility, self-abnegation and prayer.

2. Humility. I will seek first of all to acquire a genuine, inner spirit of humility, a lowly regard for myself, awareness of my nothingness. I will carefully guard against saying words in praise of myself, and I will shun and avoid praise as much as I can. At home I will be the servant of all and in the Associations I will do all that the other members do not like to do; and when it is my turn to lead in some meeting, I will do it for obedience' sake, not to outshine the others. In short, I will often remind myself that I will never please Jesus as long as I am not truly humble. From Jesus Crucified I will seek to acquire true humility.

3. Self-abnegation. I will practise this virtue by perfectly obeying everyone, in everything, especially my Superiors. Where there are several options I am free to choose from, I will try to do always what goes against my will. I will no longer express my opinion except when I think it is necessary, or if I

am asked to do so; but even then I will express it in an objective sort of way, without making others think that it matters much to me that my view is seconded or not. I will then consider it my duty not to hold on obstinately to my own view.

4. Holy prayer. I will unfailingly attend to all my usual prayer and to what a duty of charity or serious illness will dispense me from it. I will do my best to improve in this holy practice. I will avoid whatever may hinder holy prayer: curiosity and useless talk, distracting company; I will check my self-love and keep control over my body and my feelings. I will keep inner recollection and remain in the presence of God; in short, I will do whatever I am taught in order to acquire a genuine spirit of prayer. With regard to this virtue I will be very open and sincere with my Confessor; to him I will say everything, even without his asking.

Lord, my promises are 'big' if I think of my own weakness, but if I think of what you deserve, they are nothing. However, I beg you to help me do what you expect from me. Grant that, in return for so many graces you have given me, I may not be as monstrously ungrateful as I have always been. Of this poor handmaid you love so dearly, do what is most pleasing to you. I have no other desire than your will; I love none else but you; I do not want to seek anything except what gives you delight.

Most Holy Mary, I thank you with all my heart for the loving kindness you have shown me these days; continue to

be with me, for charity's sake, because a greater undertaking is now ahead of me. St Aloysius, my Guardian Angel and all you Saints who act as my Advocates and Protectors, I thank you for what you have done for me and at the same time I beg you to commend me earnestly to the Lord, that he may graciously grant me the grace never to stray from Him.

Amen.