

(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.