

(SPIRITUAL EXERCISES 1830)

TIMETABLE FOR SPIRITUAL EXERCISES DONE PRIVATELY

I shall get up in time for Holy Mass. Before I leave the room I shall say the daily “Prayers of the Christian”, the *Veni Creator*, three *Hail Marys* and three *Glory Be* in honour of St Aloysius. On my way I shall pray the Rosary.

In church I shall do an hour of Meditation and receive Holy Communion, and before I leave I shall pray Matins and Lauds of the Office of Our Lady.

At mid-morning I shall do about half-an-hour spiritual reading, and end it with the *Miserere*.

Shortly before lunch I shall do my General Examination on my defects; in this, I shall delve deep down within me in order to know what is at their roots, what has become habitual, etc. After that, I pay a visit to the Crucifix and the picture of Mary.

After lunch I shall pay a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. If I cannot go personally I shall do it in spirit, imagining myself to be present to Him. I shall show him my inner wounds and beg him to heal me and teach me how to do his will. I shall recite the *Pange Lingua*¹.

¹ It is a liturgical latin himn.

An hour or two after lunch I shall devote $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour, or a whole hour, to Meditation and end it with a visit to St Aloysius Gonzaga: I shall beg him to intercede for me with God for the salvation of my soul.

Soon after that, that is, after a tea-break I shall do my spiritual reading for another half-an-hour, after which I pray Vespers and Compline of the Office of Our Lady.

Towards evening I shall go to the Church to pay a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. On my way to church I shall do the *Way of the Cross* and in church I shall meditate for another $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. After that, I shall say my usual vocal prayers. On my way back from church I shall recite the *Miserere* and a few *De Profundis*.

Before going to bed I shall do the exam on the defects committed during the day; I shall go through this method, and prepare the Meditation fixed for the night. I shall lie down to rest in the Wounds of Jesus, under the Mantle of Mary. As soon as I wake up during the night, I shall get up from bed and spend half-an-hour in Meditation, and then recite a *Hail Holy Queen* with my hands under my knees.

I shall note down all the inspirations and thoughts that have struck me most in my Meditations, as well as aspirations for good. I shall also write down all the defects and failings that the Lord will let me know of.

I shall keep silence throughout this period, saying only words that are strictly necessary; in this regard, for these few days, I will tread underfoot all human respect.

I will not admit into my mind the slightest thought that could distract my attention, even if there is nothing bad about it or even if it is good in itself. I will not read nor write any letter, nor do anything else that would take my mind elsewhere.

I will jealously guard all my faculties, doing my best to keep my mind engaged with God. I will value self-denial and every day I will take the Discipline for the duration of a *Miserere* and a *Hail Holy Queen*.

To do these Spiritual Exercises really well, I will imagine that I am about to die and that God is granting me this short period to put my soul in order, and so I will do everything as if I were on my deathbed, about to die, and that soon, on my death, about to give an account to God for everything.



I humbly ask you, who represent my Divine Spouse, the merit of obedience and your holy Blessing.

Hail Jesus and Mary

NOTES
ON MY SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1830

18 September

FIRST MEDITATION

in immediate preparation for the Retreat

*On the state of my soul
dividing it into 3 parts*

1st On the past, reflecting on so many graces that the Lord has granted me and on my poor response.

2nd On the present, reflecting on the infinite charity of my Jesus who, in spite of my ingratitude, is again calling me to himself through the grace of these Spiritual Exercises. At this point I considered for a while what is preventing me from making progress in the path of perfection, and I clearly understood that it is due to my pride and self-love.

3rd Regarding the future, I considered on the one hand the abyss of iniquity I would fall into if God looked at my demerits, and on the other hand the charity of my God. This cheered me, for I seemed to hear Him telling me that he has designs over me and that he wants me to be saintly.

I did this Meditation for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour, on my knees; I ended it with an act of trust in my God and with a holy joy in my heart.

I had very few distractions. I was moved to tears.

Resolutions: To avail myself of every means to do these Spiritual Exercises well, thinking that they may be the last.

SECOND MEDITATION - same day

On Man's last End, dividing it into three points

1st I have reflected on the end for which God brought me on earth: that in all things I may do his will and seek his glory. 2nd I have considered that to be perfect I must direct all my actions towards that end. 3rd I have realized that in this world I will never find peace, nor joy nor tranquillity unless I attend perfectly to that end.

I did this Meditation, for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour, sitting all through. I had few distractions. I found it arid, and my heart was labouring under a certain sadness; I don't know the reason for it, except that my stomach ache was worse than usual.

Resolutions: In every action, to have in mind the aim for which I should do it, that is: to honour and serve God.

Particular Examination of conscience. From the start of this Retreat, no defect comes clearly to mind, except that for a moment I was distracted by the thought of a new dress.

19 September

Day 2

FIRST MEDITATION - Night-time

*Reasons for my obligation to serve God
and do His holy Will*

I did the Meditation for a ¼ of an hour only, because I fell asleep. As I dozed, God made me continue my Meditation, but it left no impression on my mind because I was too drowsy. I made no resolutions either.

When I woke up I was tempted to go to sleep again without making my meditation, and twice or three times I felt like that again even as I tried to do it: for a while I resisted, but in the end I gave in¹.

SECOND MEDITATION

*On the excellence of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
in 3 points*

1st On the excellence of the richness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. 2nd On the excellence of its fruits. 3rd On the excellence of the traits of the Heart of Jesus. I did this

¹ In actual fact she went on struggling till the natural need to sleep took over.

Meditation on my knees, for an hour. I did it with much tranquillity and joy, so much so that the time passed almost without my noticing it, and I ended it with sentiments of tenderness and love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I really understood that the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the only One that can fully satisfy my heart.

Resolutions: In all my actions to be at one with what the Sacred Heart of Jesus used to do, and to have deep trust in Him.

During my Holy Communion I was also quiet and recollected. In it the Lord made me feel that He is pleased with my vows, that I should keep them with greater care, that they are chains that unite me to Him, but that I should observe them perfectly well.

The *spiritual reading* was on the necessity of loving God and neighbour, and that in this holy love lies all that pertains to holiness and perfection. I realized that I am very far from that goal.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament I had a great desire to give myself wholly to Him unreservedly.

THIRD MEDITATION

On the esteem I should have for creatures in 3 points

1st I have been thinking how wisely God created all things that I may use them as steps of a ladder to climb up to Him, but instead, I have used them to offend Him. 2nd I

therefore reminded myself of my obligation to keep my heart detached from all created things, and that I should be happy with all that God allows for my greater good. 3rd I have examined myself on what causes me to be low-spirited, anxious, restless etc., and I have realized it is because my heart is attached to myself, to what I am interested in, or to persons, and that though I say over and over again that I am totally God's own possession, yet I am keeping the best portion for myself, since I cling to love of self.

I did this Meditation on my knees, for an hour. I had various distractions; I ended it with the desire to give myself wholly, unreservedly to God.

Resolutions: In my actions not to seek my own satisfaction or the appreciation of persons, but only God's will and pleasure.

The *spiritual reading* was done on the cardinal and moral virtues: that these are simply means for the attainment of genuine perfection, which consists in love of God and neighbour.

General Examination of conscience. I examined myself on self-love and pride. I have found out that in practically all I do, self-love creeps in. Many times I am unaware of it, other times I try to cover it up. Pride has always been my predominating passion; I am pleased when I am praised, sorry when others are more highly regarded than myself; I rate myself very highly, thinking I am exceptionally good and kind, and feel jealous of those I consider better or more dearly loved than myself, etc.

FOURTH MEDITATION

*On the harm done by creatures
who lead us away from God's will*

1st What an insult it is to reject God for the sake of a creature. 2nd I have reflected on the vanity of worldly pleasures. 3rd I have seen how my heart is made for God alone and so only He can satisfy it. In this Meditation I have clearly realized why my heart is many times restless, troubled, disturbed because it does not belong entirely to God, because many times I do things for creatures, seeking to please them rather than God.

I sat down for a part of this Meditation, and knelt down for the rest of the hour I devoted to it. I had some distractions in it.

Resolutions: Never to do anything for my own sake nor merely to please others, but simply to please God; once for all to rid my actions of any craving for appreciation from others or for my own satisfaction.

Particular Examination of conscience. I made some variations in the order of these Exercises, for a real need, it seems to me. The Lord has granted me recollection and a sense of trust in Him. For a part of the day I felt a bit downcast, maybe due to the usual stomach trouble: I really cannot think of any other reason. I did not avail myself of a good opportunity to mortify my pride.

Day 3

FIRST MEDITATION - Night-time

On the malice of mortal sin

In this Meditation I did not concern myself with distinct points. I simply made an effort to know the enormous ugliness of it and the offence done to God by it. It must have taken me half-an-hour or so, maybe even more. I had few distractions, but it did not leave much impression on me. I just tried to keep my mind on the subject, to keep awake.

Resolutions: To have horror for sin more than anything else, and to watch out for smaller faults lest I should fall into grave ones.

SECOND MEDITATION

On conforming our heart to that of Jesus Christ

1st How every Christian should resemble Jesus Christ.
2nd How this resemblance consists in the traits of his Heart, that is: in what the heart thinks, does and loves, striving to be in all things like Jesus Christ. 3rd On the genuine devotion to the Sacred Heart as an efficacious means to acquire that resemblance to the virtues of Jesus Christ.

I sat down for this Meditation; I had few distractions, but I was not particularly moved by it. For a part of it, I felt drowsy. It took me about an hour.

Resolutions: To have a great devotion towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to make it consist in the imitation of his virtues, especially of humility, charity and gentleness.

Holy Communion time was spent in the same way as in the Meditation: with few distractions but not deeply moved, and I still felt drowsy.

However, Jesus seemed to be prompting the thought that with regard to my vocation I should never set my mind at rest but have the holy concern that the planned Institute be realized by others, but that I should do everything with much tranquillity of heart, with acceptance of God's will and readiness to wait even a hundred years if that is God's pleasure, and be equally happy if God did not will it to succeed or else that I should take no part in it.

The *spiritual reading* was on the different states of those who want to attain perfection. I am only among beginners though at times my pride made me place myself among the perfect ones.

General Examination of conscience. I examined myself on my distractions and on how lacking in fervour my prayer is, many times. I realized that the main causes of such defects are truly self-love, pride, useless thoughts I often indulge in, curiosity and lack of vigilance on myself. My Jesus, have mercy on me.

In my visit, in spirit, to the Blessed Sacrament, I felt a great desire to advance in perfection and to please God alone.

THIRD MEDITATION

On venial sin

1st I considered the great evil that venial sin is, and yet I commit it so frequently. 2nd How displeasing to God sin is, and how severely he punishes it, both in this world and in the next. 3rd I reflected on the harm caused by venial sin, and yet so frequently I do not think of that and so commit it so frequently.

I sat down throughout this Meditation, which lasted little less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. I had few distractions. It left a deep impression on me and so I ended the Meditation with a horror for sin and determination not to commit it any more.

Resolutions: To shun even the smallest sins and imperfections as well, though these are not sins in the strict sense, in order to avoid such a great evil.

FOURTH MEDITATION

On Death

I meditated on: 1st Its certainty. 2nd It comes only once. 3rd The unforeseen nature of death. 4th that we should be always prepared. 5th As we live, so we die.

6th The state I wish to be in at the hour of death.

For the first half of this Meditation, which took me $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour, I sat down, and then knelt for the other half. I had very few distractions, and the Lord seems to have made me go deep into it. At a certain point I felt a little drowsy, but the Lord freed me from it. As I thought over death it seemed to me that if death really came this evening it would not find me happy nor prepared. However, the Sacred Heart of Jesus comforted me: he opened the door of his heart to me and made me feel that if I died within it I would be blessed and happy; and so I sought refuge in it.

Resolutions: To have death very much in mind, and to act in such a way that at the point of death my actions would be a cause for joy to me.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I had this thought: what good will it do me if other people consider me a saint, speak well of me and think highly of me, if in the end I lose my soul? And so what I should be concerned about is what is pleasing to God, not to people; that I should seek to please God, not creatures.

The *spiritual reading* was that a great, constant desire for perfection is necessary for attaining it. I also read four thoughts on perfection which I found very interesting and enlightening.

Particular Examination of conscience. Thanks to God, I feel I have spent the day well. It has given me inner tranquillity

and peace of mind. For a fleeting moment I had this thought: What are you busying yourself with in this way now when it would be better for your health if you took rest; at that moment I almost wished the Spiritual Exercises could come to an end soon. But the Lord promptly drove away the fear of serious danger during these Spiritual Exercises which, instead, will be very useful to me.

Another time, on my way to church, I met people I did not know, and I could not help wishing they might consider me as a girl from a respectable family, not take me for a poor girl, and my thoughts wandered about my dress, wondering if that could give them a favourable impression.

Day 4

Last night I did not get up to do my usual Meditation, though I woke up several times.

It seems to me that I did so because the previous night I had slept very little, but I fear that my laziness is mostly to blame.

FIRST MEDITATION

On the sorrows of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

1st Jesus chose to suffer so much in order to teach me that the path to Heaven is sown with crosses, and that I cannot walk along it if I want to shirk suffering.

2nd Jesus chose to suffer so much to wipe away all my sins and gain Heaven for me.

3rd Jesus has suffered much more because I am ungrateful to him, and so my ingratitude to the Heart of Jesus is much more painful than all the suffering he endured.

I remained seated for this Meditation, which took me an hour. I had very few distractions; I had a few insights and feelings of tenderness, which were however disturbed by drowsiness. I ended it with thanks and love for the Heart of Jesus.

Resolutions: To take effective means not to displease the gracious Heart of my Jesus any more by my misdeeds: even if I have to sweat blood, I will never again do things which I know are displeasing to Him.

Today I received Holy Communion with greater fervour, devotion and tranquillity than yesterday. I again felt I should do whatever I can, and not set my mind at rest till the longed-for Institute is started. As a matter of fact, I felt sure and confident that it will soon be put underway. My beloved Jesus recommended, almost in a tangible way, that I should have at heart charity towards my neighbour, in their bodily and spiritual necessities, particularly those girls who are in great need: I often feel strongly impelled to do what I can to help them, and yet I have all the time been so negligent.

It also occurred to me that in matters pertaining to Sodalties, Unions, Companies, etc. I should step aside and let others be active; but when for some reason or other they fail to do what is right, especially what would give glory to God or honour to

Mary, or some benefit to my neighbour, then, without human respect, I must do what others shirk, but humbly, that is, with the sole aim of pleasing God, and willing to withdraw if the others do not like it to be done by me.

The *spiritual reading* was on the importance of having a great desire for perfection. This reading was stimulating and in some points it also made certain things more clear.

SECOND MEDITATION

On the Judgement

1st The 'qualities' of the Judge who will judge me. 2nd What he will judge me upon, that is, my sins, and how many sins I am now unaware of, will come to light. 3rd The sentence that will be delivered once the Judgement is done.

I remained seated throughout this Meditation, which took me an hour. At the start I had many distractions, but then I went on with it quietly and at some depth. I was somewhat moved by it. I ended it with an ardent desire to do what is right and ensure for myself a favourable Judgment.

Resolutions: To be very frank and open with my Confessor; not to let myself be misled by my own self-love, to tell him whatever I feel ashamed to confess.

General Examination of conscience. I have tried to find out why it is that for some time now, I have had, from time to time, thoughts that are somewhat opposed to my vow of

Chastity, and am rather sensitive to various things, which I wasn't before. The causes seem to me these: 1. Because I give greater freedom to my senses, especially my eyes. 2. Perhaps because the Lord wants to show me the extent of my helplessness, to let me know my pride; if he does not sustain me by a continuous miracle of his mercy, I would fall away at once. 3. Perhaps the Lord allows this to let me know that the cloister is the place he has planned for me. 4. It might also come from excessive cautiousness, for in reality I have always cherished my Vow etc. with all my heart and will, and have always been happy to have made the Vow, and most willing to do it at once had I not made it yet.

In my visit, in spirit, to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I felt in my heart that I should always keep it afire with his holy love; that when I feel it getting cold I should make every effort and by means of prayer, Holy Communion and some other means rekindle it, keeping ever in mind that a single moment would be enough to make me lose what I had gained with difficulty over many years.

THIRD MEDITATION

On Hell

1st I reflected on the sort of place Hell is. 2nd I meditated on the torments of soul and body. 3rd I reflected on eternity. Oh! What a madness if I should lose my soul and end up in hell!

The Lord has given me time to do an extra Meditation, to make up for the one I dropped last night. I sat throughout this Meditation, for half an hour; I had very few distractions; I went fairly deep into it and was also moved by it. I ended it with an ardent desire to do my utmost to be saved.

Resolutions: To crush my pride with all my might because that is what will surely land me in hell if I do not correct it.

FOURTH MEDITATION

On lack of Fervour

1st I reflected on the sorry state of being lukewarm. 2nd In particular, how displeased God is with this state and the dishonour I do him in serving him without fervour. 3rd I thought about the harm caused by it; I realized that it was truly the actual state of my soul.

I did this Meditation partly on my knees and partly seated, for a little more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. I had very few distractions, and I was alarmed at my own miserable state. However, I ended the Meditation with deep trust in God's gracious and merciful love, knowing for sure that he still wants me to be his, since he is calling me to himself.

Resolutions: Not to do anything at random, but to direct everything to God, never neglecting ordinary little things.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I asked the Lord to let me know how he wishes me to dress. I seem to have understood that there should not be about it anything that is worldly: in a gentle but firm way to show my dear ones at home that I want to have it that way. At times they think I am not presentable enough and they expect me to put on some little thing that is more to their liking. That is right, but as I myself like to dress well, that is, I prefer to wear a dress that looks well on me rather than a shabby, worn-out one, I think Our Lord expects me to take a firm stand and avoid just putting on what I like. However, I would ask my Superior to advise me on this matter, because many times I find myself in such situations that I am at a loss to know what is best.

Particular Examination of conscience. I had a few distractions in reciting some vocal prayers; during the day I felt like getting bored with these Spiritual Exercises; but the Lord gave me the grace to overcome this temptation, by disposing my will to go on with them an extra week, even, if my Superiors expect me to. He gave me tranquillity of mind, an easy trust in Him and a calm, cheerful heart. His merciful love overcomes my own unfaithfulness.

In yesterday's examination I forgot to write that a thought had crossed my mind which was in some way against my beautiful *vow of Chastity*.

Day 5

FIRST MEDITATION - Night-time

On the Prodigal Son

This Meditation must have taken me less than half an hour, after which I fell asleep; meanwhile I have been thinking on my own ingratitude, like that of the Prodigal Son, because in return for so many graces the Lord has granted me I have been so ungrateful. On waking up other times I reflected on the goodness of the Lord who, in spite of my unfaithfulness, chases me with his countless graces. However, I cannot say that I have done a Meditation in the formal way, because I was too drowsy to attend to it. I didn't make any resolutions either.

SECOND MEDITATION

On the tenderness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

1st Tender love and mercy with which Jesus receives every sinful soul that goes to Him. 2nd Trust that he imparts to former sinners who have turned to Him and are constant in serving Him. 3rd Tenderness and love with which he treats souls that have always been innocent.

I sat down throughout this Meditation, which took me $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. It went straight to my heart, wounding it by the very tenderness and goodness of the Divine Heart.

I can say that in these Meditations my soul finds rich pasture, more than anywhere else. They draw me sweetly, irresistibly, to the love of my Lord Jesus Christ, and stimulate me more than any other thing to mend my ways out of love of the beloved Jesus who, I know, loves me so much. I had very few distractions.

Resolutions: To have a boundless trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and when I feel anxious or afraid, restless or depressed, to run at once and trustingly seek refuge in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I received Holy Communion with fervour, calm and quiet. I asked Jesus Christ to teach me how to benefit from my daily Communion and how to forget myself.

In my heart He seemed to be telling me that I should always receive Holy Communion with much eagerness, with a new hunger, aware of what I am about to do and with the aim of advancing in his holy love. I must be careful never to do it coldly, as a habit, with no desire, no preparation, as I unfortunately have done in the past.

To acquire self-forgetfulness, I should be intensely aware of the presence of God, to do everything with the sole aim of giving glory to God and meeting with his pleasure, and to do things I shrink from;

I must be careful, especially when I do things I like, not to try to impress people, but frequently to pray that Jesus Christ may, in the loving kindness of his Sacred Heart, grant me the grace of perfect self-forgetfulness, and to ask for this grace with great confidence of obtaining it.

Last night's *spiritual reading*, which I forgot to write about, was on the importance of choosing a good guide to lead me on to perfection, and today's reading was on the reasons for the need of such a guide. This confirmed me in my readiness to say everything to my Confessor, so that he may lead me safely along the way of perfection. On the other hand I realize that self-love and pride often make me conceal from him what is rotten in my heart, which if I did tell him about, I would at once be healed of. However, I cannot see clearly where I could have been lacking in sincerity; I will pray God to let me know it clearly and at the same time the grace to reveal it honestly, because I myself desire it with all my heart.

THIRD MEDITATION

On the Prodigal Son (continued)

1st The crosses in our life are often an incentive to lift our hearts to God. 2nd It made the Prodigal Son reflect and decide to return to his Father: that is what I too have to do.

3rd The warm welcome given by this Divine Father towards his disloyal, wayward Son.

I did this Meditation walking about; it took me a bit more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. I had few distractions, a few insights; I was moved. The goodness and merciful love of my God is exceedingly great; I realize that there is no greater sin than that of being disloyal to him.

Resolutions: To decide once for all to give myself wholly to God by tending towards perfect love through continuous self-abnegation.

General Examination of conscience. I examined myself to see if I have a right intention in what I do, or not. I found out that I often do things to please myself, often to cut a good figure, often just to please someone, and only a few times to please God alone. I understand that God will not give me any reward for what I do because I seek it in this world. At times I do things because I like to, especially when my Confessor tells me to do something, and sometimes I don't feel quite happy if I don't tell him about it, not out of submission but out of pride.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I felt it was my duty to look after my health especially because my Superiors recommended it to me, but that after taking due care, I should in every situation abandon myself to divine Providence, refusing to worry about my pains and aches or to mention them needlessly, unless I am asked to tell. I also felt I should keep myself prepared and ready to die, soon or not so soon, as it be pleasing to God.

I also asked God in prayer if I should wear the Crucifix all the time as I do, round my neck: some reasons persuade me to do this, others dissuade me from it. I have therefore decided to consult my Confessor and do as he tells me; I therefore request him to tell me what he thinks about it.

ANOTHER MEDITATION

to take the place of the night one

On the importance of imitating Jesus Christ

1st I have reflected on how necessary it is for me to follow the examples set by Jesus Christ in order to save my soul, otherwise I would be a heretic¹. 2nd I have reflected on how perfect holiness consists in imitating J. Christ; 3rd I can do no greater honour to Jesus than that of imitating Him. And yet I am so very far from imitating him truly. I only seem to do so.

For this Meditation I sat down for half-an-hour or so. I had some distractions, and little assimilation.

Resolutions: to have an earnest will to imitate *Jesus Christ*, especially in self-abnegation.

¹ In practice, because heretics, relying exclusively on the merits of the Redeemer, think it is unnecessary for their eternal salvation to follow His example by doing good deeds.

SECOND MEDITATION

On the need to imitate Jesus Christ in humility

1st I have seen what true humility is. 2nd I have thought about the lessons and examples given me by *Jesus Christ*. on this important virtue. 3rd I have reflected and realized how far behind I am in this virtue, and as a consequence, how I am lagging behind in perfection.

For this Meditation, of about an hour, I partly sat down and partly knelt. I had few distractions, it seems to me. It has made me see my miserable state, so full of pride. I concluded it with the desire to seek actual opportunities for humbling myself and putting myself aside, and yet, shortly afterwards, when I did have a small opportunity, my self-esteem seemed most eager to assert itself again.

Resolutions: When I am tempted to give in to pride, to remind myself of these words: I am a mere nothing, a malicious nothing.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament it seemed to me that he was offering me the cross, and that he was urging me to bear it gladly because he wants me to be crucified in everything; he seemed to be persuading me that I should now crucify myself and my passions by means of self-abnegation, and He himself would then crucify me in another manner. But I dread the cross and run away from it ! ...

The *spiritual reading*: I did it on the qualities I should look for in my Confessor, so that he may safely guide me on the path of perfection.

Particular Examination of conscience. I have had two thoughts which I fear may be in some way against charity. I found it hard to use good manners with two persons I find disagreeable, and my strong feeling about them came back even during prayer, disturbing me somewhat.

I have been anxious about material things; I have omitted the 'discipline' - on a reasonable ground, it seems to me. For the rest, today too our Lord has come to my help; he has granted me recollection, quiet and cheerfulness, and all this without any difficulty on my part, purely out of merciful love.

Day 6

I have dropped the night Meditation; unless I am deceived by self-love, I honestly think it was because I was not feeling well.

MEDITATION 1

On the Love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

1st Disinterested love. 2nd Sincere love. 3rd Steadfast love.

I sat down for almost the whole of this Meditation, for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. I have had very few distractions. I was

moved, at certain moments, even to tears. I ended it with a great desire to love Jesus with a truly-sincere heart.

Resolutions. For the sake of Jesus to accept gladly any suffering he is pleased to send me.

The Holy Communion which in his charity the Lord has granted me to receive, was done with a recollected and quiet mind: just before it, I was a bit drowsy. In this Communion the Lord made himself felt in the depths of my being; he urged me to go on struggling and watching, keeping my passions in check, because they are still very active, and if I slacken the reins a little bit, they would at once make me fall headlong into deep iniquity. I also felt him telling me in my heart that He wishes my Confessor to look after his health, not to wear himself out, for a good while to give up preaching, and that in his activity to avoid what is detrimental to his health, because at the moment he has to look after it and have it perfectly restored so as to use it later on to the greater glory of God and the good of his neighbour without sparing himself, without undue fear. He should take all these precautions with the sole aim of doing God's will and of pleasing Him, knowing that he will not have to give an account for what is done to recover his health, because this does not belong to him, but to Jesus Christ.

The *spiritual reading* was on the importance of letting my Confessor know about my inner life, if I want to advance with assurance on the path of perfection.

This made me feel remorse for having failed to mention to him a temptation to envy, which I also have at times. With the Lord's help I resolved to do so at the first chance I have.

SECOND MEDITATION

On the Passion of Jesus Christ

1st Jesus sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane.
2nd Jesus scorned and jeered at, in the house of Annas and Caiaphas. 3rd Jesus in Herod's palace treated as a madman.
4th Jesus sentenced to be scourged; Barnabas preferred to him.

I did this Meditation walking about, for a little more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. I had few distractions; I let it sink in and move me. I ended it with the desire to humble myself in order to imitate Jesus Christ.

Resolutions: Never to let slip any opportunity that presents itself to humble my pride and check it with all my might.

General Examination of conscience. I examined myself on negligence in my duties, in my method of life and in my various practices: I find that I easily omit them, at times for no good reason, often for reasons that are not so serious; other times I am happy to have some pretext to exempt me from certain duties. I also find that I am lacking in self-denial, especially in controlling my senses and all my passions.

I know I don't like penance very much, for I exempt myself from it if I am slightly indisposed.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament I felt inwardly urged to be constant, persevering and firm in carrying out my resolutions, and that I should often remind myself that this is not my homeland. And so, I should not bind my heart to it at all, nor even meddle with its affairs. With eyes fixed on Heaven, I should remember that, that is my dear homeland, if I remain faithful to God.

THIRD MEDITATION

to make up for the one omitted last night

On the Passion of Jesus Christ (continued)

1st Jesus crowned with thorns to expiate my sinful thoughts.
2nd Jesus carries his Cross to Calvary, falls down and is helped, because he desires that by suffering gladly for his sake I may help him carry it. 3rd Jesus dies on the Cross to give me life.

I sat the whole half-hour, or so, of this Meditation. I had few distractions; I let it sink in and move me. I ended it with sentiments of gratitude to God, who shows me boundless love and charity.

Resolutions: To pray every day for the grace of helping him carry his cross, by having some share in his suffering for his sake, and, in opportunities that arise, of bearing everything gladly, without complaining.

FOURTH MEDITATION

On the immensity of God.

1st God is before me, with me and in me. 2nd God is in me in his very essence. He dwells in me through his grace, he rules me with his Spirit. He finds delightful repose in me with his peace and tranquillity. 3rd Just as God is always before me, so I too should be always before him. As God is always with me, so I too should be always with him. As God is always in me, so I too should be always in him.

I did this Meditation for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour, partly sitting and partly on my knees. I had very few distractions. My whole being was calm and quiet. I felt my soul had found good pasture. I have brought it to a close in a state of rapture, and I resolved never to lose sight of my Lord, since he is so immense that I can find him everywhere.

Resolutions: To remain truly in the presence of God throughout the day, and to make use of visible things to lift up my heart to God.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I asked the Lord to let me know if he approves or not of my receiving little gifts that several pupils of mine offer me sometimes. Certain times I fear I may hurt them if I don't accept their little gifts, but I am never quite at ease about it; I suppose Our Lord

himself will be pleased if I myself accept nothing except if the gift is offered to my people at home and accepted by them. To be quite sure of this, I here ask my Confessor what he thinks. During this visit I also felt impelled to be aware of God's real presence within myself and to cultivate it continually, never to be unmindful of it.

The *spiritual reading* was on how kind Confessors should be in directing souls.

Particular Examination of conscience. I had some thoughts against holy purity, but the Lord in his mercy freed me of them at once. I had distractions in certain vocal prayers, and felt a bit anxious to get back home: I think this was because my stomach ache got worse.

In spite of my ingratitude, today, too, the Lord has been merciful to me in an extraordinary way: he kept me recollected, calm and quiet, with much inner peace, tranquillity and gladness. May he be pleased that I may make good use of all of this, solely for his glory.

Day 7

I have omitted the Night-time Meditation for the same reason of yesterday, that is, because I was not keeping well.

FIRST MEDITATION

On the Humility of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

1st Excellence and nature of holy humility. 2nd Genuine humility cannot be separated from perfect obedience. 3rd The utterly sincere obedience of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is what I must have in everything that I do and in all circumstances.

I remained seated the whole time of this meditation, that is, for an hour. I had practically no distractions, but I was a bit drowsy. In this Meditation I understood how pleasing to God and how necessary is a genuine, prompt, blind and obedience to everyone, and so I brought it to a close with an ardent desire to practise it as well as I can.

Resolutions: To obey everyone, even those 'inferior' to me, in everything, even in the smallest and most ordinary things, and never to demand that I should know why the command is given me.

In receiving Holy Communion I was more deeply quiet and recollected than usual. The real presence of Our Lord in the Sacrament filled my heart with joy and a certain quiet that I

cannot describe. In that peace I felt an inner impulse to make known to my Confessor a desire I have with regard to my vocation; I reveal it to him as a temptation because I feel it may be prompted by presumption since I know very well that I am unable to carry out what I feel. And so ... Quite often, especially when I receive some praise that makes my pride come to the fore, I feel the desire to retire in some Convent far away, where no-one knows me, where after asking that I be admitted for charity's sake, I would live unknown and as an ordinary religious, in the role of a servant. It seems to me that would be the only means to subdue my pride; on the other hand, since I know that self-love, however far I go, will not leave me, I can imagine that that way-of-life may be in itself an occasion for endless temptation to pride, perhaps even harder to overcome than the ones I have at present. However, enough of this: I have opened my heart to you frankly, it seems to me. I will do what I am told to.

The spiritual text I read was on the necessity of spiritual reading as a means for attaining perfection.

SECOND MEDITATION

On the Unfathomable mystery of God

1st God is beyond human understanding always, everywhere, to every mind and heart. 2nd God is especially beyond the grasp of human intellect, because being infinite, He cannot

be known nor understood. 3rd In order that our heart and mind be filled with God, we must empty our heart of all earthy attachment and rid our mind of all thoughts, ideas, images and notions because God is none of these things, and is above them all.

I did this Meditation walking about, for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. I had few distractions; I remained awe-struck by the greatness of God, though this is veiled in mystery. I ended it with sentiments of gratitude towards this God who is so immense, beyond our understanding and yet not reluctant to become like his creatures and remain with them, to the extent of becoming their Spouse, Father, Friend and their all, and of affirming that his delight is to converse with the 'sons of men'.

Resolutions: To devote myself with all sincerity to the practice of prayer and to detach my heart from whatever hinders me from attaining union with God.

General Examination of conscience. I realize that I fall easily subject to useless thoughts and to curiosity about little things but which come and distract my attention during prayer. I find that I am very much attached to my own will and to my opinion and so I find it very hard to adapt myself to others especially in things I do not like. I also understand that the passion of vanity is still in me and I still feel attracted by new clothes.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament I seem to understand that the Lord is eager to grant me a genuine spirit

of prayer, but that to earn it I must deny myself and detach myself from everything, live for God alone and for his glory.

The *spiritual reading* was on the good derived from the reading of spiritual books, in order to attain perfection.

THIRD MEDITATION

On Solitude

1st I considered the three types of solitude: Solitude of body, of mind and of heart. 2nd that we need to deprive ourselves of all company in order to attain perfection, and that the mind must empty itself of all ideas and images for the same purpose. 3rd that we should free our heart from all attachment to creatures, to ourselves or to anything else so that it may be fully occupied by Jesus Christ and his holy love.

I sat for this Meditation, which took me a little more than half-an-hour. I had few distractions, and it seemed to me that our Lord was calling me to this holy solitude. Though I had only a vague idea about it, yet I have understood that in it alone will peace and tranquillity be restored to the human heart, and I felt an inner urge to cultivate it within myself. In this Meditation I understood that the desire I had felt to return home was a temptation from the devil, because I can truly say that here I enjoy solitude; however, even now I can't help feeling a certain eagerness to be back home.

Resolutions: To make every effort to free my heart from all earthly affection and shun useless company, so that the Lord may make me worthy of entering into solitude in his company.

FOURTH MEDITATION

On the steps leading to perfection

Step 1st: Detachment from all things and pressing on eagerly towards perfection as a traveller does on his way home.

Step 2nd: Perfect crucifixion of all my passions, of myself.

Step 3rd: Dealing death to myself, to the world, and everything else.

Step 4th: Burying whatever pleases the world and myself, that is: living 'buried', unknown, forsaken, rejected, known to God alone.

Step 5th: Descending with Jesus Christ into 'hell', that is, living deprived of consolations, spiritual light and delight, desiring nothing else except Jesus Christ and his Holy Will in everything.

I did this Meditation partly seated and partly on my knees; it took me $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. I had few distractions. It made some impression on me: I clearly understood that I haven't a single one of these steps, and that I have to struggle very hard to attain perfection. I ended it with a great desire for it.

Resolutions: As much as possible to be hidden to the world, to others, to myself, and live only for Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.

In my visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament I felt he urged me to be generously detached from everything, even from spiritual things. Even concerning my Confessor: I should look on him as I would Jesus Christ and as such listen to him, obey him and have deep respect and veneration towards his person; for the rest: not to talk about him, not let my thoughts dwell on him, not to do things with the desire that they be appreciated or praised by him, but for the sake of Jesus Christ. In a word, to be unmindful of other things and dwell with my thought in God.

During this visit I also felt an inner urge to obey my Parents really well even in school affairs, and when in this regard there is something I feel I should do but they don't think so, not to rely on myself and do it, but first explain both my reasons and theirs to my Confessor and then abide by his advice.

The *spiritual reading* was on the proper way of doing spiritual reading, and on the necessity of holy Meditation.

Particular Examination of conscience. I had a thought of pride: that my Grandmother would say that I spend my time well and never waste a minute. I had other temptations to pride but the Lord drove them away at once as soon as they sprang up. Another time I had some useless thoughts, regarding my health, and I did not drive them away at once.

Today, too, the Lord has been infinitely gracious and

merciful to me: he assisted me with his grace, he kept me quietly taken up with him and in perfect peace of heart; he gave me aspirations and an ardent desire to become a saint; it is up to me to respond.

Day 8 - Last Day

I omitted the Night-time Meditation for the same reason as yesterday.

FIRST MEDITATION

On the Generosity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

1st Jesus' generous love shown throughout his life on earth, endured for love of us. 2nd Jesus' generous love in his risen life, in giving himself in the Blessed Sacrament, with all his most holy gifts. 3rd How I should imitate Jesus by making generous sacrifices for his sake.

I sat for the whole hour of this Meditation. At the start I had some distractions and I could not concentrate, after that, I settled down and I let the generosity of Jesus touch my heart. I ended the Meditation with an ardent desire to be generous like Jesus, at least as much as I can, since my misery makes me feel helpless, and to consecrate myself to Jesus totally, unreservedly.

Resolutions: To keep ever in mind that I must become a saint, that for Jesus' sake I must make any sacrifice, cost what it may, that I must forget myself utterly and think of Jesus alone.

In my Holy Communion I felt earnestly urged to be constant, persevering, watchful over myself, waging war against all my passions, responding to the grace of these Spiritual Exercises and the Lord's call, in short: to become a saint, a great saint, a saint soon. In this Communion I was fairly recollected and calm, but not so much as yesterday.

The *spiritual reading* was on the way of preparing for Holy Meditation, and how I should go about it. I understand that I need to improve much in all respects.

SECOND AND LAST ONE MEDITATION

On Heaven

1st I considered the beauty of Heaven in itself. 2nd I contemplated the immense bliss, beyond anyone's imagination that the soul will enjoy on seeing, loving, knowing and being with God for ever and ever. 3rd I contemplated the marvellous way in which God will make me enjoy his life, transforming me into himself, enriching me with his wisdom, power and goodness to enable me to partake of his own bliss. 4th I contemplated the blessedness that the body will enjoy when it

finds itself in the house of the Lord in the company of the Saints; it will then be clothed in beauty and in light and all its senses will be satisfied in a marvellous manner, and this for all eternity.

I did this Meditation walking about, for little less than an hour. I had very few distractions. I was cheered by the thought of what is prepared for me in Heaven; above all I was absorbed in contemplation of the blessedness that the soul will experience in enjoying, seeing, loving and knowing God. I clearly understood that all the beauty of Heaven is nothing when compared to God himself. I ended it with an ardent desire to do my utmost to attain Heaven.

Resolutions: When I come across any suffering or find the practice of some virtue rather hard, or when I find it painful to overcome my pride and lead a hidden life, to look up to Heaven and do all that is needed to win it.

Last Examination of conscience. I have found that I easily suspect others, interpreting their actions in a dark light and occasionally even going against charity by talking about my neighbour. I also realize that I easily promise God great things, but then fail to keep them; I find also some negligence in living up to my vows.

Honour and glory be to the Blessed Trinity
Homage and Love to Jesus Christ,
affection and Devotion to Mary most Holy.

25 September 1830

RESOLUTIONS I MAKE AT THE END OF THIS RETREAT

Most loveable Jesus, my heart is filled with gratitude; I am at a loss, as I kneel in your presence, how to thank you for the wonderful grace you have granted me in calling me to this sweet retreat to do my Spiritual Exercises. I thank you for the assistance you gave me, the gifts you showered on me, the graces you granted me, the light you shed on me, the countless appeals you made to my heart, the feelings of remorse you put in me, the inspirations you sent me, and all the good resolutions you urged me to make.

I thank you for making me realize how lukewarm I had become, and for showing me the vanity of the world and of all created things, the beauty of virtue and the happiness of a soul that serves you with sincerity and without reserve.

I thank you for letting me know of my sins, my defects, my ingratitude. I beg you to forgive me, beloved Jesus, for all my unfaithfulness, ingratitude and poor response to your graces. I do admit that if you had to look at my demerits you would have to leave me alone with my sins and let me fall headlong in an abyss of iniquity. But your infinite mercy did not permit it, nor will it ever do so, I trust. Gentle Jesus, help me to benefit at

least from this exceptional grace that you have now granted me, and give me the strength and grace always to keep the resolutions that I am about to make, for I dare not promise to keep them unless you come to my aid with your all-powerful grace. I promise and then as usual I break my word. I beg you, dear Jesus, let not this happen, give me a deep repentance and then let me die before committing such enormous ingratitude. Help me, beloved Spouse, in what I promise you ...

1. I will strive to go against myself in all things and deny myself, my passions and above all my self-love. I am determined to become the humblest of all, not somehow but by seeking humiliations. Rather than merely acknowledge what the Lord in his merciful love has worked in me, I will be constantly mindful of my countless sins and my continual ingratitude, and of the miracle that the Lord is working in me by not letting me fall down the precipice of my misery.

And when others praise me, appreciate me and applaud me, I will say these words to myself: I am just nothing, or rather a mean nothing; all that is good derives from God.

I will carefully avoid doing anything impressive with the aim of being praised and appreciated. I will do everything with the sole aim of pleasing God, of giving him glory, of helping my neighbour.

I will seek to become the lowest of all, obeying everyone, even those inferior to me, gladly and sincerely with no affectation or subtle reasoning. Above all, I will seek to be aware and

convinced of my unworthiness, weakness and extreme frailty. I will strive to convince myself of the truth that I am utter misery, that I am unable to do anything that is not evil, that in fact I do only what is evil and that if God grants me graces, it is out of a pure gift on His part, without any merit of my own. I will seek to learn perfect forgetfulness of myself, total disregard of what can puff up my pride, and since I am absolutely incapable, I will never cease to beg it from the Lord, to acquire it at the feet of the Crucified Lord, to pray for it through the merits of the Divine Heart. I will never be happy till I have learnt to love only Jesus, to seek only Jesus, to work only for Jesus, to think and speak only about Jesus.

2. Furthermore, I will treat my neighbour with genuine charity, purely for the sake of Jesus Christ. I will ceaselessly pray for sinners, using a holy skill to obtain for them genuine sorrow; I will strive to rob the devil of some of them, at least, and restore them to my beloved Jesus. I will help the poor as much as I can, depriving myself even of what is necessary, when a real need demands it, in order to help them. I will be concerned for the souls in purgatory, daily offering suffrages for them and doing my best to afford them some relief. But above all I will use every skill to be of spiritual benefit to young girls, keeping constantly in mind those who are in the greatest need, either because of the extreme poverty they live in, or because they have no-one to keep an eye on them, or because of the moral danger they are in, because of the evil inclinations they are overruled by, or because of their lively

character. To these, in a special way, I will consider myself a Mother. I will first do my best to win their confidence and affection and then try to instil in them a horror for sin and a love for the practice of virtue, with frequent recourse to the Sacraments. I will cultivate their friendship. I will try to meet them often and stay with them, and to satisfy their wishes as far as I can. I will not be 'in peace' till I see them all devoted to the service of God.

3. Above all, I will apply myself most earnestly to the practice of prayer. First of all I will seek to remove all the obstacles that hinder me in this holy exercise. I will cultivate: detachment from all the things of this world, from everybody, from myself; strict vigilance over all my senses, especially my eyes and my tongue; control over all my passions, particularly of taste, vanity and curiosity; shunning of vain company and empty talk; the habit of living in the presence of God, of recognizing him in everyone and of doing everything for Him alone.

I will be faithful in the practice of holy Meditation: never to omit it unless in obedience, preparing well for it, giving every week to my Confessor, without waiting for him to ask for it, a minute report on how I have spent it, frankly admitting that I am extremely poor in this holy exercise with nothing of my own in it except distractions; being very open with him, telling him of all the inclinations of my heart, letting him know its bents, and doing nothing without consulting him.

Lastly, I will constantly beg from God the grace of praying well, trusting to obtain it from his 'charity' and learning it at the feet of the Crucified Lord. I will abandon myself entirely to him, ready to do whatever is pleasing to him, forming the habit of seeing in all circumstances the will of God and so accepting everything gladly, never complaining but always thanking, in short: living in complete self-surrender in the Lord's embrace, safe in His keeping.

This is what I promise you, dear Jesus, or rather, what I pray that you give me the grace to do. I cannot do anything, but you can do everything. Help me, and I can be sure that I will carry it out.

Mary, my dear Mamma, I commend myself to you, that I may be truly faithful to your Jesus, to my Jesus. St Aloysius, my Guardian Angel, St Ignatius, St Philip, keep praying to Jesus for me. Amen. So be it.

Hail Jesus and Mary