

Her begynner den første boken med fru Birgitte av Sveriges himmelske åpenbaringer

Bok 1 - Kapittel 1.

Vår Herres Jesu Kristi ord til sin høyt elskede utvalgte brud om styrkingen av hans høyhellige menneskeformantakelse og om forkastelsen, helligbrødet og bruddet i vår tro og dåpen, og hvordan han oppfordrer denne sin elskede brud til å elske ham.

Jeg er himmelens og jordens skaper, en person i guddommen med Faderen og Den Hellige Ånd. Jeg er den som talte gjennom profetene og patriarkene, og som de ventet. For deres lengsels skyld, og for mitt løfte, antok jeg form i kjød uten synd og begjær, idet jeg gikk inn i jomfruens kjød, liksom solens stråler gjennom den klareste edelsten. For liksom solen ikke skader glasset når den bryter gjennom, så forfalt ikke jomfruens jomfruelighet, når jeg antok menneskeform. Jeg antok kjød på en slik måte, at jeg ikke forlot guddommeligheten. Og jeg var ikke desto mindre i guddommen med Faderen og Den Hellige Ånd, og styrte og oppfylte alt, endatil jeg var i jomfruens liv.

For liksom stråleglansen aldri kan skilles fra ilden, slik skilte ikke min guddom seg fra min menneskelighet, ikke engang i døden. Siden har jeg villet, at fra dette aldeles syndfrie legeme for alles synder skulle såres fra isse til fotblad, og korsfestes. Den ofres fortsatt daglig på alteret, for at menneskene skal elske meg enda mer, og stadig komme ihu mine velgjerninger for deres skyld. Nå er jeg derimot helt glemt, forsømt og foraktet. Jeg er lik en konge, som fordrives fra sitt eget rike, der en røver istedet har latt seg krone og hedre.

Jeg har villet at mitt herredømme skal være blant menneskene. Og over dem burde jeg med rette være konge og herre, ettersom jeg har skapt og frigjort dem. Nå har de imidlertid brutt og helligbrødet den tro, som de lovt meg i dåpen. De har krenket og foraktet mine lover som jeg har foreskrevet dem. De elsker sin egen vilje, og har stengt sine ører for mitt ord. Dessuten opphøyer de den elendige røver, Djevelen, over meg, og til ham har de gitt sin tro. Og han er virkelig en røver, for med falske løfter og gi dem onde ting, tilrøver han seg menneskenes sjel, som jeg har forløst med mitt blod.

Han røver ikke for å være mektigere enn meg - for så mektig er jeg, at jeg forsmår alt med mitt ord. Og så rettferdig, at jeg ikke ville gjøre det minste mot all rettferdighet, om så alle helgenene ba meg. Men ettersom menneskene, utrustet med fri vilje, frivillig forsmår mine bud og gir sitt samtykke til Djevelen, er det rettferdig at de får erfare hans tyranni. For denne djevelen, som skaptes som god av meg, men fulgte sin egen, onde vilje, er som min tjener avsett for de ondes straff. Men til tross for at jeg nå er så foraktet, er jeg likevel så barmhjertig, at de som ber om min barmhjertighet og ydmyker seg, de skal jeg forlate deres skyld og befri dem fra den onde røver. De som fortsetter å forakte meg vil jeg derimot besøke med min rettferdighet, så de som hører, må beve, og de som møter den, må si: "Ve oss, at vi noensinne har vekket majestetens Herres vrede".

Men du, min datter, som jeg har valgt meg ut og med hvem jeg taler i min Ånd, elsk meg av hele ditt hjerte. Ikke slik du elsker en sønn eller en datter, slektninger uten mer enn noe annet i verden. For jeg, som skapte deg, har ikke skånet noen av mine lemmer fra å lide for din skyld. Og fortsatt elsker jeg din sjel så høyt, at fremfor å savne henne, ville jeg ennå en gang, om det var mulig, la meg korsfeste for din skyld. Imiter min ydmykhet, for jeg, Ærens konge og englenes, kledtes i usle filler, stod naken ved pælen og hørte alt hån og skadefryd med mine egne ører. Sett likevel min vilje foran din vilje, for min mor, din herskerinne, har fra begynnelsen til enden hele tiden villet det jeg ville.

Om du så gjør dette, vil ditt hjerte alltid være i mitt hjerte og tennes av min kjærlighet, slik tørt gress opptennes av ild. Så skal din sjel fylles av meg, og jeg skal være i deg, så alt timelig skal bli deg bittert, og all kjødelig attrå til en gift. Du skal hvile i mine guddommelige armer, hvor ingen kjødelig attrå finnes uten Åndens glede og fornøyelse, hvor den glade sjel beruses til det indre og til det ytre, og fylles av fryd så den ikke tenker på og begjærer annet enn den glede den har. Elsk meg alene, så skal du få alt du vil og ha overflod. Mon det ikke står skrevet, at enkens olje aldri tørket ut, til Herren lot regn falle på jorden etter profetens ord? Jeg er den sanne profeten. Om du tror mine ord, og oppfyller dem, skulle olje, glede og jubel aldri i evighet mangle hos deg.

Kapittel 2.

Vår Herres Jesu Kristi ord til datteren, som han nå har tatt til brud, om den sanne troens artikler, og hva den pryder, de tegn og den vilje er, som bruden bør ha for å tekkes brudgommen.

Jeg er skaperen av himmelen, jorden, havet og alt som er i det. Jeg er ett med Faderen og Den Hellige Ånd, ikke som de guder av sten eller gull, hvor fordom tales. Og ikke flere guder, som man da regnet, uten en eneste Gud, Fader, Sønn og Hellig Ånd, tre til personene og en til vesenet, skapte alt og skapt av ingen, uforanderlig, allmektig,

bestående uten noen begynnelse og uten noen slutt. Jeg er den som ble født av jomfruen, men ikke mistet guddommen uten å forene den med menneskeligheten, slik at jeg i en eneste person kunne være Guds sanne sønn og jomfruens sønn. Jeg er den som hang på korset, døde og ble begravet, og likevel bevarte guddommen uskadd. For selv om jeg døde i menneske-skikkelsen og kjødet, som jeg, den enbårne Sønn antok, så levde jeg dog i guddommen, hvor jeg var en eneste Gud med Faderen og Den Hellige Ånd.

Jeg er den samme som oppstod fra de døde og steg til himmels, og som nå i min ånd, taler til deg. Jeg har utvalgt deg og tatt deg til brud, for å vise deg mine hemmeligheter, for det behager meg slik. Du er til og med med en viss rett min vordende, da du ved din manns død la din vilje i mine hender, og når du etter hans død likeså tenkte hvordan du skulle kunne bli fattig for min skyld, og ba deretter. Du har villet forlate alt for min skyld, og derfor er du med rette min vordende. Jeg skal sørge for deg, for din store kjærlighets skyld. Derfor tar jeg deg til min brud, og etter min vellyst, slik det hør seg med Gud å ha en kysk sjel.

Utvalg av Den Heliga Birgittas åpenbaringer

BOK 1

KAPITTEL 1.

JEG ER HIMMELENS OG JORDENS SKAPER, en person i guddommen med Faderen og den Hellige Ånd. jeg er den som talte gjennom profetene og patriarkene, - og den som de ventet. For deres lengsels skyld og ifølge mitt løfte ble jeg født i kjødet uten synd og begjær, idet jeg gikk inn i jomfruens skjød slik den strålende sol går gjennom den klareste edelsten. For likesom solen ikke skader glasset, når den trenger gjennom det, ble heller ikke jomfruens jomfruelighet skadet, da jeg tok menneskets skikkelse. Jeg tok kjødets form på slik måte at jeg ikke forlot guddommen.

Og jeg var ikke desto mindre i guddommen med Faderen og den Hellige Ånd og styrte og oppfylte alt, enda jeg var i jomfruens skjød med min menneskeskikkelse. For likesom stråleglansen aldri kan skilles fra ilden, har heller ikke min manndom vært skilt fra min guddom, ikke engang i døden. Senere var det min vilje at mitt legeme, som var fritt for

synd, for alles synders skyld skulle pines fra isse til fotsåle og korsfestes. Nu ofres det daglig på alteret, for at menneskene skal elske meg desto mer og desto oftere komme mine velgjerninger i hu. Nu er jeg derimot helt glemt, forlatt og foraktet. jeg er som en konge som er fordrevet fra sitt rike og i hvis sted den usleste røver blir utvalgt og hedret.

[...]

«MEN DU, MIN DATTER som jeg har utvalgt for meg selv og som jeg taler med i min ånd, elsk du meg av hele ditt hjerte, ikke slik som du elsker en sønn eller en datter eller slektninger, men mer enn noe annet i verden. For jeg som skapte deg har, for din skyld, ikke skånet en av mine lemmer fra å lide. Og jeg elsker ennå din sjel så inderlig at før jeg ville miste den, ville jeg ennå en gang, om det var mulig, la meg korsfeste for den. Efterlign min ydmykhet, for jeg, Ærens konge og englenes, ble kledd i usle filler, stod naken ved pælen og hørte all hån og spott med mine egne ører. Sett endog min vilje høyere enn din, for min moder, din herskerinne, har fra begynnelse til slutt villet bare det som jeg vil.

Om du gjør dette, skal ditt hjerte bestandig være i mitt hjerte og opptennes av min kjærlighet, slik noe tørt lett antennes av ild. Så skal din sjel fylles av meg, og jeg skal være i deg slik, at alt timelig skal bli bittert for deg og alt kjødelig begjær bli til gift. Du skal hvile i min guddoms arm, der hvor intet kjødelig begjær finnes, bare åndens glede og tilfredshet, hvorav den benåde de sjel henrykkes både i det indre og det ytre og fylles av fryd slik at den ikke kan tenke på eller begjære noe annet enn den glede den har. Elsk altså meg alene, så skal du få alt som du vil og ha overflod. Står det da ikke skrevet at det aldri tok slutt med enkens olje, før Herren, etter profetens ord, lot regn falle på jorden. Jeg er den sanne profet. Om du tror mine ord og oppfyller dem, skal oljen, gleden og jubelen aldri i evighet ta slutt for deg.»

KAPITTEL 2.

DET PÅLIGGER BRUDEN Å VÆRE BEREDT når brudgommen vil feire bryllup, og hun må være passende kledd og ren. Du holder deg ren på sømmelig sett om din tanke stadig kretser om dine synder: hvordan jeg i dåpen rensset deg for Adams synd, og hvor ofte jeg bar over med deg og viste deg tålmodighet når du falt i synd. Bruden skal også bære sin brudgoms tegn på brystet, d.v.s. at du bør gi akt på de verk og velgjerninger som jeg har gjort for deg: hvor edelt jeg skapte deg da jeg gav deg kropp og sjel, hvor edelt jeg gjorde

deg rik da jeg gav deg helse og timelige ting, hvor skjønt jeg gjenløste deg da jeg døde for deg og vant din arvedel tilbake til deg, om du vil ha den. Bruden bør også gjøre brudgommens vilje. Og hva annet er min vilje enn at du skal elske meg over alt annet og ikke lengre etter noe annet enn meg?»

KAPITTEL 3.

«JEG ER DEN GUD OG HERRE som du dyrker. jeg er den som holder himmel og jord oppe ved min makt, og de opprettholdes ikke av andre ting eller pæler. jeg er den som, i brødets skikkelse, daglig ofres på alteret som sann Gud og sant menneske. jeg er den som utvalgte deg. Ær min fader. Elsk meg. Lyd min ånd. Vis min moder heder som din herskerinne. Vis alle mine helgner ære. Lev etter den rette tro, som du skal lære av ham som har erfart begge ånders, d.v.s. løgnens og sannhetens ånders, tvekamp i sin sjel og seiret ved min hjelp. Bevar den sanne ydmykhet. Hva er sann ydmykhet annet enn å vise seg slik man er og lovprise Gud for de gode ting han gir?»

KAPITTEL 7.

«JEG ER MARIA, SOM FØDTE DEN SANNE GUD og det sanne menneske, Guds Sønn. Jeg er englenes dronning. Min Sønn elsker deg av hele sitt hjerte. Derfor skal du elske ham. Du bør være prydet med de mest høviske klær. For likesom du før har hatt serk, kjortel, sko, kappe og brystsmykke, skal du nu ha åndelige klær. Serken er sønderknuselsen, for likesom serken er nærmest kroppen, er sønderknuselsen og skriftet omvendelsens første vei til Gud.

Gjennom dem renses det sinn som gledet seg i synd, og det urene kjød tøyles. De to sko er to viljer, nemlig viljen til å forbedre de begåtte synder og viljen til å gjøre godt og avholde seg fra ondt. Din kjortel er håpet til Gud, for likesom kjortelen har to ermer, skal rettferdighet og barmhjertighet være i ditt håp, slik at du håper på Guds barmhjertighet og ikke glemmer hans rettferdighet. Og tenk således på hans rettferdighet og dom at du ikke glemmer barmhjertigheten. For han viser aldri rettferdighet uten barmhjertighet og aldri barmhjertighet uten rettferdighet.

Kappen er troen, for likesom kappen dekker alt og alt innesluttet i den, kan mennesket fatte og nå alt med troen. Denne kappe bør være merket med din brudgoms kjærlighetstegn, nemlig hvordan han skapte deg, hvordan han gjenløste deg, hvordan han fostret deg og innførte deg i sin ånd og åpnet dine åndelige øyne. Brystsmykket, som alltid skal være festet på ditt bryst, er betrakteisen av hans lidelse; hvordan han ble hånet og pisket, hvordan han hang levende på korset, blodig og såret i alle lemmer, hvordan, i døden, hele hans legeme skalv i den bitreste pine og smerte, samt hvordan han befalte sin ånd i Faderens hender. Dette brystsmykke må alltid være på ditt bryst. En krone skal være på ditt hode, d. v.s. at du må være kysk i din lengsel, slik at du heller lider slag enn beflekkes videre. Vær derfor ærbar og høvisk, tenk ikke på noen annen enn din Gud og Skaper, for når du har ham, har du alt. Og således prydet, skal du vente på din brudgom.»

KAPITTEL 11.

GUDS SØNN TALTE TIL BRUDEN OG SA: «Jeg er himmelens og jordens Skaper, og det er mitt sanne legeme som innvies på alteret. Elsk meg av hele ditt hjerte, for jeg elsket deg. Og jeg overgav meg frivillig til mine fiender, og mine venner og min mor stod tilbake i den bitreste smerte og gråt. Da jeg så lanser, naglene, pisker og de andre pinens redskaper ligge klare, gikk jeg ikke desto mindre glad frem for å lide. Og da mitt hode var blodig overalt etter torne kronen og blodet fløt til alle sider, hadde jeg til og med, om mine uvenner hadde berørt mitt hjerte, heller latt det såres og sønderlemmes enn jeg hadde villet miste deg.

Og derfor er du dypt utakknemlig om du ikke elsker meg for min store kjærlighets skyld. For om mitt hode var nedbøyet og gjennomstunget på Korset for din skyld, bør du bøye ditt hode i ydmykhet. Og da mine øyne var fylt av blod og tårer, skal du avholde dine øyne fra å dvele ved de fristende syn. Da mine ører ble fylt med blod og måtte høre de ord som ble talt til min forhånelse, bør dine ører vendes bort fra lettferdig og dåraktig tale. Da min munn måtte smake den beskeste drikk og ble nektet den gode, bør din munn stenges for det onde og åpnes for det gode. Og da mine hender ble spent ut med nagler, bør dine gjerninger, som symboliseres av hendene, strekkes ut til de fattige og til mine bud.

Dine føtter, med andre ord: den lengsel hvormed du skal komme til meg, skal korsfestes og avholde seg fra nydelser. Slik jeg har lidd i alle lemmer, skal også alle dine lemmer være rede til å tjene meg. Jeg krever nemlig en større tjeneste av deg enn av de andre, fordi jeg har vist deg en større nåde.»

KAPITTEL 18.

I MITT HUS SKAL ALL YDMYKHET FINNES, den som nu er dypt foraktet. Det skal være en sterk mur mellom mennene og kvinnene, for skjønt jeg kan forsvare alle og bevare alle uten mur, vil jeg likevel, som en sikkerhetsforanstaltning mot djevelens sluhet, at en mur skal skille de to beboelseshus ad. Den skal være sterk, ikke svært høy men middels høy. Vinduene skal være meget enkle og klare, taket passelig høyt, slik at intet synes her som ikke dufter av ydmykhet. For de, som nu bygger mitt hus, er likesom de byggemestere som, når byggherren kommer til dem, griper ham i håret og tramper ham under sine føtter; smusset hever de mot høyden, og gullet tramper de under føttene. Slik gjør mange med meg.

De bygger nemlig smusset opp, d.v.s. disse forgjengelige, verdslige ting hever de mot himmelen, men sjelene, som er mere dyrebare enn gull, bryr de seg lite om. Om jeg vil gå inn til dem gjennom mine predikanter eller gjennom gode tanker, griper de meg i håret og tramper meg under sine føtter, d.v.s. at de håner meg og holder mine gjerninger og ord for å være foraktelige som smuss. Seg selv anser de derimot for å være meget klokere. Men om de ville bygge for meg og til min heder, da ville de først oppbygge sjelene.

Den som nu vil bygge mitt hus, må passe på, med ytterste samvittighetsfullhet, at det til bygningen ikke anvendes en penning som ikke er vel og rettmessig erhvervet. Det finnes jo mange som vet at de eier urettmessig erhvervet gods, og likevel sørger de ikke over dette og har ikke vilje til å erstatte og gi tilbake til dem de har bedradd og plyndret, selv om de er istand til å gi tilbake og erstatte, om de bare vil. Men eftersom de tenker i sitt stille sinn at de ikke kan eie dette i all evighet, gir de kirkene en del av det gods de har erhvervet urettmessig, som om de vil formilde meg med en slik gave. Men annet gods, som er rettmessig erhvervet, bevarer de til sine etterkommere.

Dette tiltaler meg sannelig ikke. Den som vil behage meg med sine gaver, han må nemlig først nære et ønske om å forbedre seg og så gjøre alle de gode gjerninger han makter. Han må endog gråte og sørge over alt det onde han har gjort og så gi tilbake såsant han kan; og om han ikke kan, må han ha vilje til å gi tilbake det som er urettmessig erhvervet. Siden må han akte seg, så han ikke mer begår slikt. Men om det ikke finnes noen han kan gi det urettmessig erhvervede tilbake til, bør han gi det til meg, for jeg kan gi tilbake til alle, det som deres er. Og om han ikke kan gi tilbake, men med forsett om å forbedre seg om med

sønderknust hjerte beslutter å ydmyke seg for meg, er jeg rik nok til å kunne gi tilbake, og jeg kan tilbakelevere deres eiendeler til alle som er blitt bedratt, i denne verden eller den kommende. Jeg vil kunngjøre for deg hva det hus jeg vil bygge, betyr.

Dette hus er klosterlivet, dets grunnvoll er jeg, som har skapt alt og ved hvem alt er skapt og har eksistens. I dette hus er det fire vegger. Den første er min rettferdighet; med den skal jeg dømme alle dem som er fiender av dette hus. Den andre vegg er min visdom, hvormed jeg skal opplyse alle husets beboere med min innsikt og min forstand. Den tredje er min makt: Med den skal jeg styrke dem mot djevelens renker. Den fjerde vegg er min barmhjertighet, som tar imot alle dem som ber om den. I denne vegg er nådens dør: gjennom den tar jeg imot alle dem som ber om det. Husets tak er den kjærlighet hvormed jeg skjuler syndene til dem som elsker meg, slik at de ikke blir dømt for sine synder.

Takvinduet, som solen trenger inn gjennom, er betraktelsen av min nåde, gjennom hvilken min guddoms varme trenger inn til alle innbyggerne. At muren bør være sterk og stor betyr at ingen formår å svekke mine ord eller forkaste dem. At den bør være middels høy; betyr at min visdom kan fattes delvis, men aldri fullstendig. De enkle og klare vinduer betyr at, skjønt mine ord er enkle, trenger likevel den guddommelige kunnskaps lys inn i verden gjennom dem. Det middels høye tak betegner at mine ord skal åpenbares, ikke i ubegripelig mening, men i begripelig og forståelig mening.»

KAPITTEL 20.

DEREFTER TALTE JOMFRUENS SØNN til sin brud og sa: «Min brud, du bør ha fire egenskaper. For det første bør du være beredt til min Guddoms bryllup, hvor det ingen kjødelig attrå finnes, men bare den skjønneste åndelige lengsel, en slik som behager Gud i en kysk sjel. Kjærligheten til dine barn, ditt timelige gods eller dine frender må ikke dra deg bort fra kjærligheten til meg. Det må ikke gå med deg slik det gikk med de uforstandige jomfruer, som ikke var beredt da Herren ville kalle dem til bryllupet, og som derfor ble utestengt. For det andre bør du tro på mine ord, for jeg er sannheten, og fra min munn har aldri utgått annet enn sannhet, og ingen kan finne noe annet enn sannhet i mine ord. Iblant har jeg en åndelig mening med det jeg sier, og iblant mener jeg det som ordene uttrykkelig uttaler, og i slike tilfeller bør mine ord kunne forstås uten lignelse. Derfor kan ingen beskyldte meg for usannhet.

For det tredje bør du være lydige, slik at du krever rettferdig bot og bedring av alle de lemmer du har syndet med. For, skjønt jeg er barmhjertig, forlater jeg aldri rettferdigheten. Derfor må du ydmyke deg og glad og lydige lystre dem du skylder lydighet, slik at du ikke engang gjør det som du synes er nyttig og fornuftig, om det strider mot lydigheten. Det er nemlig bedre, for lydighetens skyld, å avstå fra egen vilje, selv om den er god, og istedet følge den overordnedes vilje, såfremt denne ikke er mot frelse eller uforstandig på annet sett. For det fjerde må du være ydmyk når din brudgom kommer, og blyg. Din tjenerinne, d.v.s. din kropp, må være måteholden og behersket, tilbakeholdende og høvisk. Du skal jo være fruktbar av åndelig sæd, til gagn for mange. For likesom en liten kvist, om den podes inn på en tørr stamme, får stammen til å grønnes, slik bør du, ved min nåde, grønnes og bære frukt. Min nåde skal beruse deg, og av den søte vin som jeg skal gi deg, skal hele himmelens hærskere gledes. Du må ikke tvile på min godhet.»

KAPITTEL 41.

NU ANKLAGER JEG ALTSÅ DEG, du Kirkens hode, du som sitter på min stol, den som jeg overlot til Petrus og hans etterfølgere å sitte på med trefold verdighet og myndighet. For det første skulle de ha makt til å binde sjelene og løse dem fra synden, for det andre skulle de åpne himmelen for de botferdige, og for det tredje skulle de stenge himmelen for de forbannede og dem som forakter meg. Men du som burde frigjøre sjelene og føre dem til meg, du er i sannhet en sjelens villeder. Jeg satte jo Petrus til å være hyrde for og vokter av mine får. Du derimot, splitter og sårer dem. Du er verre enn Lucifer. Han følte nemlig misunnelse mot meg og ønsket ikke å drepe noen annen enn meg, forat han skulle få herske i mitt sted. Du er meget verre. Du ikke bare dreper meg, men med dine onde gjerninger driver du meg bort fra deg, og du dreper også sjelene ved ditt dårlige eksempel.

Jeg gjenløste sjelene med mitt blod og overlot dem til deg som en trofast venn, men du overgir dem igjen til den fiende jeg gjenløste dem fra. Du er mer urettferdig enn Pilatus: Han dømte bare meg til døden, men du dømmer ikke bare meg, som den som ikke har noen makt og ikke er verd noe godt, nei, du dømmer også de uskyldige sjeler, og dem som volder skade, lar du gå fri. Du er hårdere enn Judas. Han solgte bare meg; men du selger ikke bare meg, men også mine utvalgte sjeler for din skammelige vinnings og for ditt forgjengelige navns skyld. Du er mer nedrig enn jødene. De korsfestet bare min kropp, men du plager og korsfester mine utvalgte sjeler, og for dem er din ondskap og dine overtredelser bitrere enn ethvert sverd. Og derfor er du lik Lucifer, mer urettferdig enn Pilatus, hårdere enn Judas, mere nedrig enn jødene. Derfor klager jeg med rette over deg.

BOK 2

FORORD

DET FINNES INTET STRENGERE LIV enn ridderens, om det leves efter sin bestemmelse. For det kristne ridderskap ble ikke innstiftet for verdslig eiendoms eller vinningsbegjærs skyld, men for å styrke sannheten og utbre troen. De riddere som bar våpen, var rede til å gi sitt liv for rettferdigheten og til å utgyde sitt blod for den hellige tro, til å hjelpe de trengende til rettferdighet og kue og ydmyke de onde. Men nu er de som omskapt. De hovmodes nemlig over sine velskapte kropper, de trakter efter rikdom, de er fulle av lyst, og derfor skal de kropper de hovmodes over, drepes av sverd, spyd og øks. Og av denne grunn formaner jeg dem til å søke min barmhjertighet, slik at de ikke blir rammet av min rettferdighet, som er fast som fjell, brennende som ild, forferdelig som torden og rask som buen til å skyte ut en pil.»

KAPITTEL 8.

EN SOM VILLE BLI RIDDER kom til mitt tempel, og da han gikk inn, hørte han denne røst: «Om du vil bli ridder, må du ha disse tre ting: For det første må du tro at det brød du ser på alteret er sann Gud og sant menneske, himmelens og jordens Skaper. For det annet må du, efter å ha mottatt ridderslaget, legge mindre vekt på din egen vilje enn du før var vant til. For det tredje må du ikke bekymre deg om verdens heder. Jeg skal gi deg guddommelig glede og evig ære.» Da han hørte dette og sto og tenkte over disse tre ting, hørte han, i sitt sinn, en annen, meget ussel røst, som sa tre ting som var det motsatte av de tre første. «Hvis du tjener meg», sa den, «skal jeg gi deg tre andre ting. Jeg skalla deg eie det du ser, høre det som gleder deg og få det du attrår.»

Da han hørte dette, tenkte han: «Den første herren befaler meg å tro det jeg ikke ser og lover meg det jeg ikke vet. Han befaler meg å avholde fra de fornøyer som jeg lengter efter og ser. Han befaler meg å håpe på det usikre. Den andre, derimot, lover meg verdens heder, som jeg ser, og den fornøyer jeg attrår; han forbyr meg ikke å høre og se det som behager meg. Visselig er det bedre for meg å følge ham, ha det jeg ser og utnytte det jeg er

sikker på enn å håpe på det usikre.» Den mann som tenkte slik, begynte først å vike bort fra det sanne ridderskap. Han fornektet den sanne riddered og brøt sitt løfte. Han kastet tålmodighetens skjold for mine føtter, og sverdet til troens forsvar kastet han fra seg og gikk så ut av mitt tempel.

Den usle røst sa til ham: «Om du, slik jeg sa, vil være min, må du gå frem med alt hovmod i gater og på streder, og likesom Herren bød å vise ydmykhet i alle ting, må intet skryt eller noe hovmod utgå fra deg. Og likesom hin trådde lydig inn og underkastet seg all lydighet, må du ikke tåle at noen står høyere enn deg og ikke bøye ditt hode i ydmykhet. Ta sverd i hånd i den hensikt at du skal utgyde din nestes og din brors blod for å vinne hans eiendom. Ta skjold på arm i den hensikt at du skal gi ditt eget liv for å vinne ære. I stedet for den tro som hin har, må du elske ditt legemes tempel, slik at du ikke avholder deg fra noen vellyst som du finner behag i.» Til slike ting styrket nu denne mann sin vilje og hensikt, og hans fyrste la sin hånd på hans nakke i det rum, som var bestemt til slikt. For intet rum overhodet skader noen, om viljen er god og gavnlig, om hensikten enn har vært ond. Efter at de ord som bekreftet hans ridderskap, var uttalt, gikk han bort og utøvet sitt ridderskap, i alt verdslig hovmod, idet han, den elendige, aktet lite på at han nu var forpliktet til mere enn før og til et strengere liv. Utallige ridderskarer fulgte og følger denne ridder i overmøt, og, da de har svoret riddereden, synker de dypere ned i avgrunnen enn andre.

Men nu kan du spørre: «Mange vil opphøyes i verden og kalles store, men har dog ingen makt. Mon disse, for sin onde viljes skyld, skal straffes som de som har hatt all den fremgang de ønsker.» Til dette svarer jeg deg: «Den som har fullkommen vilje og gjør det som står i hans makt for å bli opphøyet i denne verden for å vinne verdslig heder og nevnes med et forfengelig ord, men som på grunn av min hemmelige dom dog ikke tillates å nå sin viljes mål, han skal (det forsikrer jeg deg) for sin onde viljes skyld straffes like hårdt som den som har fullbyrdet sin vilje i gjerning, såfremt da ikke viljen forbedres ved botgjørelse.

Se, nu forteller jeg denne lignelse om to som er vel kjent av mange. En av dem hadde fått all den fremgang han ønsket og vant nesten alt han begjærte. Den andre hadde samme vilje, men vant ingen fremgang. Den første vant verdens heder, elsket sitt legemes tempel og hersket som han ville; alt han forsøkte lykkedes han i. Den andre var ham lik i vilje, men fikk mindre ære. Han hadde gjerne utgydt sin nestes blod hundrede ganger, om han med det hadde kunnet tilfredsstille sitt begjær. Han gjorde hva han kunne og oppnådde sin vilje ifølge sitt begjær. De lider begge den samme forferdelige straff.

Selv om de ikke døde på samme tid og i samme stund, taler jeg om de to som en eneste sjel, for begges fordømmelse er en og den samme, og begges røst, da kropp og sjel ble skilt fra hverandre og sjelen ble frigjort, var en og den samme. Da sjelen forlot kroppen, talte den slik til den: «Si meg, hvor er nu det behagelige syn for øynene, som du lovet meg, hvor er den vellyst du viste meg, hvor er de lokkende ord som du befalte meg å bruket» Djevelen kom straks til ham og sa: «Det lovede syn er bare støv, ordene er intet annet enn luft, og vellysten er bare urenhet og råttenskap; alt dette gavner deg intet.» Da ropte sjelen: «Ve meg som er blitt så usselt bedradd. Jeg ser tre ting. Jeg ser nemlig at han, som ble lovet meg i brødets form, er kongenes konge og herrenes herre. Jeg ser hva han lovet, og det er uutsigelig og uutgrunnelig. Nu hører jeg at den tilbakeholdenhet som han har tilrådet, ville ha vært meget nyttig.» Og han ropte enda høyere med trefoldig Ve: «Ve», sa han, «at jeg er født. Ve at mitt liv ble så langt på jord. Ve meg som må leve i den evige død, som aldri tar slutt.»

Se, hvilken elendighet den elendige skal få for sin gudsforakt og for den forgjengelige lykke. Takk meg derfor, min brud, forat jeg har kalt deg bort fra slik elendighet. Lyd min ånd og de utvalgte.»

KAPITTEL 9.

HVER TID I DETTE LIV er som bare en time for meg. Derfor har det, som jeg nu sier til deg, alltid vært i min forutviten. Jeg sa før at det var en, som begynte med et sant ridderskap, og en annen som skammelig forlot det. Den som vek bort fra det sanne ridderskap, kastet sitt skjold for mine føtter og sverdet for min side, da han brøt sitt løfte og sin hellige tjeneste. Hva betyr det skjold han kastet, om ikke den rette tro, hvormed han skulle forsvare seg mot troens og sin sjels fiender. Og hva er mine føtter, som jeg går til mennesket med, annet enn den guddommelige glede, hvormed jeg trekker menneskene til meg, og den tålmodighet som gjør at jeg så tålmodig holder ut med dem?

Dette skjold kastet han, idet han tenkte ved seg selv da han gikk inn i mitt tempel: «Jeg vil følge den herre som ikke rådet meg til avholdenhet, som gir meg hva jeg attrår, som lar meg høre alt det som behager ørene.» Slik kastet han altså min tros skjold, da han heller ville følge sin egen vilje enn min, da han elsket det skapte mer enn Skaperen. Om han hadde hatt en rett tro, om han hadde trodd at jeg er allmektig og rettferdig dommer og giver av evig ære, da hadde han ikke attrådd noe annet enn meg, ikke fryktet noe annet enn meg. Men han kastet sin tro, og det foran mine føtter da han, efter å ha foraktet min tro og

regnet den for intet, hverken spurte etter min glede eller gav akt på min tålmodighet. Videre kastet han sverdet ned ved min side. Hva betyr sverdet, om ikke den gudsfrykt, som en sann ridder bestandig bør ha i sine hender, d.v.s. i sine gjerninger? Og hva betegner min side, om ikke min beskyttelse, den jeg omhyller og forsvarer mine barn med likesom hønen sine kyllinger, slik at djevelen ikke får skade dem eller ulidelige farer får ramme dem? Men denne mann kastet bort fryktens sverd, da han ikke brød seg om å tenke på min makt og ikke gav akt på min kjærlighet og mitt tålmod. Han kastet det ned ved min side, som om han ville si: «Jeg frykter ikke og bryr meg ikke om ditt forsvar, for det jeg har, stammer fra min flid og min fornemme byrd.»

Han brøt endog det løfte han hadde gitt meg. Hvilket er det sanne løfte som menneskene bør gi Gud? Visselig kjærlighetens verk: Alt det mennesket gjør må det gjøre av kjærlighet til Gud. Men mennesket brøt løftet da det vred gudskjærlighet om til egenkjærlighet og satte sin egen lyst høyere enn den kommende og evige glede. Se, da ble mennesket skilt fra meg og gikk ut av min ydmykhets tempel. Alle kristnes kropper, hvor ydmykhet hersker, er nemlig mitt tempel. Men de, hos hvem hovmodet råder, er ikke mitt, men djevelens tempel, han som etter sin vilje hisser menneskene til begjær etter det verdslige. Etter han gikk ut av min ydmykhets tempel og kastet troens skjold og min frykts sverd, gikk han ut med alt overmøt, øvet seg i vellyst og egenviljens begjær, og etter å ha forsmådd min frykt, vokste han i synd og i onde lyster.

Men da han kom til livets siste slutt og sjelen skulle forlate kroppen, stormet djevlene frem mot den. Den første sa: «Mon ikke det er han som vek bort fra ydmykheten og fulgte oss i alt hovmod? Om han hadde kunnet stige to fot høyere enn vi i hovmod, for til og med å overgå oss og være fremst i hovmod, så hadde han gjort det.» Sjelen svarte til dette: «Jo, det er meg.» Da svarte rettferdigheten ham: «Dette er gjengjeldelsen for ditt hovmod at du skal falle fra den ene djevel til den andre, helt til du kommer nederst i helvete. Og likesom det ikke finnes noen djevel som ikke vet om den sikre straff som vil ramme ham for alle hans unyttige tanker og gjerninger, så skal heller ikke du unngå noen av dine plageånders straff, men erfare alles ondskap og ondskapsfullhet.»

Da ropte den andre røst: «Mon dette ikke er han, som brøt det ridderskap han lovet Gud og sluttet seg til vårt ridderskap?» Sjelen svarte: «Jo, det er jeg.» Og rettferdigheten sa: «Det er din belønnings lodd at hver den som følger din ondskap, han skal med sin ondskap og pine øke din pine og plage og ved sin ankomst hos deg likesom såre deg med et dødelig sår. For likesom den som allerede hadde et stygt sår, nok vil plages ulidelig og rope ve etter ve om sår etter sår ble ham gitt, helt til hans kropp var full av sår, så skal og elendigheters

elendighet komme over deg. Din smerte skal stadig fornyes, din plage skal aldri opphøre og ditt verop skal aldri lindres.»

Den tredje røst ropte: «Mon dette ikke er han som solgte Skaperen for det skapte, kjærligheten til Skaperen for kjærligheten til seg selv? Rettferdigheten svarte: «Jo, det er han. Derfor skal likesom to svelg åpne seg for ham. Gjennom det ene skal hver pine, som er bestemt for alle hans synder, komme til ham, helt fra den minste synd og like til den største, eftersom han har solgt sin Skaper for sin vellysts skyld. Gjennom det andre skal all hans skam og møye komme til ham, og aldri skal guddommelig trøst eller kjærlighet nå ham, for han elsket seg selv i stedet for sin Skaper. Derfor skal hans liv være uten ende, hans straff være uten ende, og alle helgener skal vende sitt ansikt bort fra ham.

Se, min brud, hvor ulykkelige de blir, de som forsmår meg, hvor stor smerte de kjøper seg for liten vellyst.

KAPITTEL 11.

JEG HAR TIDLIGERE TALT MED DEG om den ridders ende og pine, som først vek fra det ridderskap han hadde lovet meg. Nu forteller jeg deg i lignelse (for på annen måte kan du ikke forstå det åndelige) om hans ære og heder som først, mandig, begynte det gode ridderskap og fullførte det enda mandigere. Da denne min venn nærmet seg livets fullbyrdelse og sjelen skulle forlate kroppen, ble det sendt fem legioner engler for å møte ham. Blant disse kom også utallige djevler for å finne ut om de hadde noen rett til ham; for de er fulle av ondskap og forlater aldri sjelen. Da lød imidlertid, klart og lyst, en røst fra himmelen, og den sa: «Mon ikke han, o Herre Fader, er den som forpliktet seg til din vilje og virkeliggjorde den fullkomment?» Og han svarte da selv i sitt indre: «Jo, jeg er i sannhet det.»

Siden hørtes tre røster. Den første talte på Guddommens vegne, og den sa: «Har jeg ikke skapt deg og gitt deg kropp og sjel? Du er min sønn, og din Faders vilje har du gjort, kom derfor nu til din allmektige Skaper og din allkjærlige Fader, for den evige arvelodd skal gis deg, eftersom du er sønn. Til deg skal Faderens arvelodd gis, fordi du adlød ham. Ja kom, du kjære til meg, og jeg skal motta deg med glede og heder,» Den andre røst talte på Manddommens vegne, og den sa: «Min broder, kom til din broder, for jeg ofret meg for deg i striden, jeg utgjøt mitt blod for deg; kom til meg, for du fulgte min vilje; kom til meg, for du gjengjeldte blod med blod. Du var rede til å gi død for død og liv for liv; kom nu til mitt liv og til min glede, som ikke skal ta slutt. For jeg anerkjenner deg i sannhet som min

broder». Da talte den tredje stemme på Åndens vegne (det er dog ikke tre guder, men en). «Kom min ridder», sa den, «Du var så attråverdig i det indre at jeg attrådde å bo hos deg. Gå derfor, for din kropps uros skyld inn i roen. Gå for ditt sinns sorgs skyld inn i den usigelige trøst. Gå for din kjærlighets og din mandige kamps skyld inn i meg selv, og jeg skal bo hos deg og du hos meg. Kom altså du gode ridder, til meg, for du har ikke lengtet etter noen annen enn meg, kom, og jeg skal fylle deg med guddommelig glede.»

Derefter lød det fem røster fra de fem legioner engler. Den første sa: «Kan vi få gå foran denne gode ridder og bære hans våpen foran ham; d.v.s. kan vi, for hans Gud vise hans tro, som han bevarte urokket og forsvarte oss med mot rettfærds fiender?» Den andre røst sa: «Kan vi få bære hans skjold foran ham; d.v.s. kan vi, for vår Gud, få vise hans tålmodighet som visselig er kjent for vår Gud, men dog blir enda mer ærerik ved vårt vitnesbyrd. For med sin tålmodighet utholdt han ikke bare motganger med tålmodighet, men takket til og med Gud for dem. Den tredje røst sa: Kan vi få gå foran ham og i vår Guds påsyn få vise frem hans sverd, d.v.s. kan vi få vise hans lydighet, hvormed han adlød, glad og lett, slik han hadde avlagt løfte om.» Den fjerde røst sa: «Kom! Vi må vise Gud hans hest, d.v.s. avlegge vitnesbyrd om hans ydmykhet. For likesom hesten bærer menneskets kropp, gikk hans ydmykhet foran ham og etter ham og ledet ham til enhver god gjerning. Hovmodet fant, hos ham, intet av seg selv, og derfor red han trygt.» Den femte røst sa: «Kom, vi må vise Gud hans hjelm, d.v.s. avlegge vitnesbyrd om hans gudrettede lengsel, den lengsel han alltid hadde efter Gud. Han tenkte visselig i sitt hjerte hver eneste stund på Gud, han hadde han i munnen, ham i sine gjerninger, ham lengtet han til over alle ting. For Guds kjærlighets og heders skyld var han som død for verden. La oss få vise vår Gud dette, for denne mann er verdig til - for liten møye - å få evig hvile og glede hos sin herre, som han så ofte og så inderlig lengtet til.»

Med slike røster og med vidunderlige englekor førtes min venn til den evige hvile. Da sjelen så dette, jublet den inderlig og sa: «Salig er jeg, at jeg engang ble skapt. Salig er jeg, som tjente min Gud, som jeg nu får se. Salig er jeg, for jeg har en glede og ære uten slutt.» Se, slik kom min venn til meg, og med sådan lønn ble han belønnet. Og skjønt ikke alle har utgydt sitt blod for min skyld, skal de og få samme lønn om de er villige til å gi sitt liv for meg, om anledning gis, og troens behov krever dette. Se, hvor meget den gode vilje utretter.»

ALTSÅ, DERE RIDDERE, VEND TILBAKE TIL MEG med oppriktig ydmykhet, dere som i overmøt forlot meg. Om dere synes det er hårdt å lide litt for meg, så betrakt hva jeg har gjort for dere. For deres skyld gikk jeg på blødende føtter til korset, for deres skyld lot jeg mine hender og føtter gjennombore; for deres skyld skånte jeg ingen av mine lemmer, og dere glemmer alt dette og går bort fra meg. Vend da tilbake, så skal jeg gi dere tre ting til hjelp. For det første: Styrke mot legemlige og åndelige fiender. For det andre mannsnot, slik at dere ikke frykter noe annet enn meg og synes at det ville være herlig å arbeide for meg. For det tredje skal jeg gi dere visdom, hvorved dere skal forstå den sanne tro og Guds vilje. Kom altså tilbake og stå mandig fast. Jeg som formaner dere er jo den som englene tjener, som befridde deres lydige fedre, dømte de ulydige og ydmyket de hovmodige. Jeg var den fremste i krig, den fremste i lidelse. Følg derfor meg, så dere ikke blir oppløst, som voks av ild.»

KAPITTEL 13.

Jeg har tidligere talt med deg om ridderskapet, som før var meg meget kjær. Det var meg så kjær at det var bundet til meg ved kjærlighetens bånd, for ridderne forpliktet seg med sitt løfte til å gi sitt kjød for mitt kjød og sitt blod for mitt blod, og derfor var jeg ett med dem og bandt dem til meg ved ett bånd og til ett samfund. Men nu klager jeg over disse ridderne som burde være mine: De har vendt seg bort fra meg. Jeg er visselig deres Skaper og Gjænløser; jeg er også deres hjelper, jeg har skapt kroppen og lemmene for dem, og alt som finnes i verden har jeg skapt til nytte for dem. Jeg har gjænløst dem med mitt blod, jeg har kjøpt den evige arvedel til dem med min lidelse. Jeg forsvarer dem i alle farer og jeg gir dem styrke til å handle og arbeide. Men nu har de vendt seg bort fra meg.

De holder min lidelse for intet, de glemmer mine ord, av hvilke deres sjeler skulle gledes og næres. De forakter meg, og med sin sjel og hele sitt begjær velger de å gi sitt kjød og la seg såre for å bli lovprist av mennesker, å utgyde sitt blod for å tilfredsstille vinningslyst og gjerne få dø for det verdslige og for djevleske og forfengelige ord. Ennu er dog min barmhjertighet og min rettferdighet med dem, skjønt de har vendt seg bort fra meg. For ved min barmhjertighet beskytter jeg dem, så de ikke blir overlatt til djevelen og ved min rettferd bærer jeg tålmodig over med dem. Og om de ennu vil omvende seg til meg, skal jeg ta imot dem med glede og komme dem i møte med fryd.

Si altså til den som vil vende sitt ridderskap til meg, at han igjen kan takkes meg slik: Den som vil bli ridder, bør med hest og rustning skride frem til kirkegården og la hesten bli igjen der, for den er ikke skapt for menneskelig hovmodskyld, men til nytte i livet og til forsvar og til bruk når Guds fiender skal bekjempes. Så skal ridderen ta på seg sin kappe,

hvis bånd skal legges over hans panne slik at - likesom når diakonen tar på seg sin stola til tegn på lydighet og tålmodighet i Gud, slik skal også ridderen ta på sin kappe og legge båndet over pannen, til tegn på lovet ridderskap og den lydighet han må ta på seg for å forsvare mitt kors. Den verdslige makts banner skal bæres foran ham, slik at han skal vite at han skal lyde den verdslige makt i alt som ikke er Gud imot.

Når han er kommet inn på kirkegården, skal prestene komme mot ham med kirkens banner, og på den skal min lidelse og mine sår være malt, til tegn på at ridderen skal forsvare Guds kirke og troen og også kirkens prelater. Men når han går inn i kirken, skal den timelige makts banner bli igjen utenfor, og mitt banner skal føres foran ham inn i kirken, til tegn på at den guddommelige makt har forrang fremfor den verdslige og at man bør legge mer vekt på det åndelige enn det timelige. Når messen blir lest, frem til Agnus Dei, må den åndelige leder, kongen eller en annen, gå frem til ridderen ved alteret og si «Vil du bli ridder?» Når denne svarer «Ja», skal kongen legge et sverd i ridderens hånd, og si: «Se, jeg overgir sverdet i dine hender forat du ikke skal spare ditt liv for troen og Guds Kirke og at du skal kue Guds fiender og forsvare Guds venner.»

Så skal han gi ham et skjold, og si: «Se, jeg gir deg et skjold, forat du skal forsvare deg mot Guds fiender, gi enker og faderløse hjelp og i alt øke Guds ære.» Derefter skal han legge sin hånd på ridderens hals og si: «Se, nu er du underkastet lydighet mot Kirken og dens velde. Se til at du, likesom du har bundet deg ved et løfte også må oppfylle løftet i gjerning.» Etter dette skal han legge kappen og dens bånd over ridderen, slik at han daglig skal bære i minnet hva han har lovet Gud, og at han ved sitt løfte i Kirken selv mer enn andre er forpliktet til å forsvare Guds Kirke. Når dette er fullbyrdet og Agnus Dei er lest, skal den prest, som feirer messen, rekke ham mitt legeme, forat han skal forsvare den hellige Kirkes tro.

Jeg skal være i ham og han i meg. Jeg skal gi ham hjelp så han blir sterk, og jeg skal opptenne ham ved min kjærlighets flamme, slik at han ikke ønsker noe annet enn meg og ikke frykter noe annet enn meg, sin Gud. Om han tilfeldig er ute i felt og der tar på seg ridderskapet til min ære og for å forsvare troen på meg, skal dette dog gavne ham, om bare hensikten har vært god. Jeg er jo overalt med min makt, og alle kan tekkes meg ved god hensikt og god vilje. Men jeg er kjærligheten, og ingen kan komme til meg uten den som har kjærlighet, og derfor befaler jeg ingen å gjøre alt dette, for da ville han tjene meg av frykt. Men de som har vilje til å ta på seg ridderskapet slik, de behager meg. Det ville være tilbørlig at de, likesom de ved hovmot har veket bort fra den sanne utøvelse av ridderskapet, også viser seg villige til, gjennom lydighet, å vende tilbake til utøvelsen av det sanne ridderskap.»

Man tror at denne ridder skal ha vært herr Karl, den hellige Birgittas sønn.

KAPITTEL 16.

KRISTUS TALER: «Mange gad gjerne vite hvorfor jeg taler med deg og ikke med andre som fører et bedre liv og som har tjent meg i lengre tid. Jeg vil svare på dette med et eksempel, som forteller om en herre som hadde flere vingårder i flere ulike egner, og hver vingårds vin hadde smak fra den egn den stammet fra. Når vinen så er modnet, drikker vingårdens herre stundom av den middelmådige og lette vinen, ikke alltid av den sterke. Om nu noen av dem som er tilstede og ser dette, skulle spørre: «Herre, hvorfor gjør du så?», da ville vel Herren svare at nettopp denne vin var ham behagelig og smakte ham ved denne anledning; men av den grunn avslår han ikke eller forsmår ikke de bedre vinene, men gjemmer dem til sin egen heder og nytte, for å bruke dem ved en anledning som passer bedre for dem. Slik gjør jeg med deg. Jeg har mange venner hvis liv er meg søtere enn honning, behageligere enn enhver vin, og mer strålende enn solen selv for mitt åsyn.

Likevel er det til deg jeg sender min ånd, fordi dette behager meg så, ikke fordi du er bedre enn de er, eller kan sammenlignes med dem fordi dine fortjenester er mer verdige enn deres, men fordi jeg vil det slik. Jeg gjør vise mennesker av dårer og rettferdige av syndere, og ikke forakter jeg de andre om jeg viser deg denne nåde, men jeg gjemmer dem heller til en annen heder eller nytte for meg selv, slik rettferdigheten krever det. Ydmyk deg derfor i alle ting, og ikke vær urolig over annet enn dine egne synder. Elsk alle dem som synes å hate og baktale deg, for de gir deg en mulighet til å vinne en større krone.»

KAPITTEL 21.

MARIA TALTE: «Fem ting skal du tenke på, min datter. For det første at alle min Sønnens lemmer ble kalde og stivnet i døden, og at blodet under pinslene fløt fra hans sår og hang levret på alle lemmer. For det andre, at han ble så bittert og ubarmhjertig stukket i hjertet, at den som stakk, ikke sluttet før spydet berørte hans ribben og begge delene av hjertet hang fast på lanssen. Tenk for det tredje på hvordan han ble tatt ned fra korset.

De to som tok ham ned, brukte tre stiger. En rakk opp til føttene, en annen ble stillet opp under skuldrene og armene, og en tredje rakk ham opp til livet. Den første av dem steg opp og holdt ham rundt livet. Den andre steg opp på den andre stigen og drog først naglen ut av den ene hånden; siden vred han stigen til den andre siden og drog ut naglen fra hans andre hånd. Disse naglene stod langt ut fra korsets stamme. Så steg han som holdt vekten av kroppen, sakte og forsiktig ned, og den andre steg opp på den stige som rakk opp til føttene og drog naglene ut av føttene.

Og da kroppen nærmet seg marken, tok en av dem fatt i den ved hodet, den andre ved benene, og jeg, som var hans moder, holdt ham om livet, og så bar vi ham til en heile som jeg, hans moder, hadde bredd et linklede over. I det svøpte vi kroppen, men jeg sydde ikke linkledet sammen, da jeg sikkert visste at han ikke skulle smuldre i graven. Siden kom Maria Magdalena og andre hellige kvinner og hellige engler så tallrike som sandkorn ved havets bredd og tilbød sin Skaper sine tjenester. Den bedrøvelse jeg følte kan jeg ikke beskrive.

Jeg var som en barselskvinne, hvis alle lemmer skjelver etter forløsningen og som, skjønt hun knapt kan puste av smerte, dog gledes i sitt hjerte alt hun kan, fordi hun vet at det barn hun har født, aldri mer skal vende tilbake til den elendighet som det er utgått fra. Slik var det med meg. Skjønt jeg var inderlig bedrøvet over min Sønnns død, gledet jeg meg dog i min sjel, fordi jeg visste at han aldri mer skulle dø, men leve i evighet; og slik ble det blandet litt glede i min sorg. Jeg kan i sannhet si at da min Sønn var begravet, var det som om det var to hjerter i graven. Er det ikke sagt at der din skatt er, der vil også ditt hjerte værere? Min tanke og mitt hjerte var alltid i min Sønnns grav».

BOK 3

KAPITTEL I.

JESUS KRISTUS, GUD OG MENNESKE, som kom til jord for å ta menneskeskikkelse og frelse sjelene med sitt blod, han som med sitt lys viste hvordan et sant liv er og som åpnet himmelens port, han sendte meg til dere: «Lytt», sa han, «for deg er det forunt å høre åndelige ting. Om nu en biskop bestemmer seg for å gå den smale vei, den som få vandrer på, og for å være en av disse få, må han først legge av seg den byrde som hviler på ham og tynger ham, nemlig lysten til de verdslige ting. Disse må han bare bruke til sin nødtørft,

nemlig det som trenges til en biskops beskjedne livsopphold. Det gjorde den gode Matteus, som ble kallet av Gud; han la fra seg verdens tunge byrde og fant i stedet en lett byrde.

For det andre må han være omgjordet som en veifarende, som Skriften sier. Da Tobias stod beredt til sin ferd, fikk han se en omgjordet engel som stod klar. Hva annet betyr det at engelen var omgjordet, enn at hver biskop skal være omgjordet med rettferdighetens og den guddommelige kjærlighets belte, samt være beredt til å ferdes på den vei som han gikk som sa: «Jeg er den gode hyrde, som gir mitt liv for mine får.» Måtte biskopen også, med sine ord, være beredt til å tale sannhet og med sine gjerninger til å øve rettferdighet, såvel mot seg selv som mot andre, og måtte han ikke vike bort fra rettferdigheten for truslers eller forhånelsers skyld, for falsk vennskap eller for forfeilet frykts skyld.

Til hver biskop som viser seg omgjordet slik, skal Tobias komme, d.v.s. rettferdige mennesker, som skal følge hans levevis. For det tredje må han fortære brød og vann før han drar ut på sin ferd, slik vi kan lese det om Elia, som fant brød og vann ved hodegjerdet, da han ble vekket av søvnen. Hva betyr dette brød som er gitt profeten, annet enn det legemlige og åndelige gode som er ham tildelt? For i ørkenen ble det gitt ham legemlig brød for eksemplets skyld. Gud hadde visselig kunnet livnære og opprettholde profeten uten legemlig føde, men han ville likevel gi ham legemlig brød, forat menneskene skulle forstå at det er Gud velbehagelig om mennesket gjør behersket bruk av Guds gaver til kjødets glede.

Profeten ble dessuten oppmuntret av Åndens inngydelse, da han gikk i førti dager på styrken som denne føde gav. Og såfremt ikke nådens indre salve var blitt inngydt i hans sinn, hadde han visselig gått til grunne under de førti dagers møye, for han var i seg selv en svak mann, men av Gud fikk han styrke til å gå så lang vei. Enda mennesket lever av Guds ord, oppfordrer vi altså biskopen til å fortære brødstykket, d.v.s. til å elske Gud over alle ting, mer enn alt annet, både fordi Gud har skapt og gjenløst ham og på grunn av Guds lange og gode tålmodighet med ham. Vi ber ham også om å drikke litt vann, d.v.s. i sitt indre å tenke over Kristi bitre pine. For hvem formår på verdig vis å tenke over Kristi død som menneskene, den han led da han bad om at lidelsens kalk måtte gå ham forbi, og da hans svede falte som blodstråper til jorden? Måtte biskopen alltid drikke dette vann til kjærlighetens brød. Da skal han styrkes til å vandre på Jesu Kristi vei!

Om nu biskopen, efter at han har slått inn på frelsens vei, vil vandre videre, er det nyttig for ham, helt fra dagens første time, å takke Gud av hele sitt hjerte, å tenke samvittighetsfullt på sine gjerninger og å begjære Guds hjelp til å gjøre hans vilje. Når han

senere tar på seg sine klær, må han be slik: «Aske være hos aske, støv hos støv! Men eftersom jeg ved Guds forsyn er biskop, kler jeg deg, min kropp, med klær som er av jorden, ikke av hovmod eller for å gjøre meg fager, men for å skjule kroppen, slik at min nakenhet ikke må synes. Jeg legger ingen vekt på om din drakt er god eller tarvelig, bare den er slik at biskopsskrudet blir gjenkjent til Guds ære og den biskopelige myndighet fremgår av drakten, til andre menneskers tukt og opplysning. Derfor ber jeg deg, milde Gud, at du gir meg et standhaftig sinn, slik at jeg ikke hovmodes over askens og støvets verdi eller i dumhet pranger med støvets farver. Men unn meg styrke, slik at - likesom biskopsdrakten er forskjellig fra andre og mer hederverdig enn alle andre på grunn av den guddommelige bemyndigelse - min sjels drakt må synes like verdig for Gud og jeg ikke må synke desto dypere som straff for uklok og uverdigg bruk av min myndighet eller desto mer skal bli avkledd til min egen fordømmelse, fordi jeg på forfengelig måte har båret et ærverdigg skrud.»

Siden må biskopen lese eller synge tidebønnen, for jo høyere verdighet et menneske har fått, desto større ære bør det vise Gud. Dog behager et rent hjerte Gud i taushet som i sang om mennesket er beskjefteget med andre rettferdigg og nyttigg arbeider. Efter at han har lest messe, skal biskopen styre sitt ernbede, og han må gi nøye akt på at han ikke retter sin oppmerksomhet mer mot det timeligg enn det åndeligg. Når han går til bords, skal han tenke slik: «O Herre Jesus Kristus, du som byr meg å opprettholde denne skrøpeliggg kropp med kroppsligg føde, gi meg hjelp til å tilføre kroppen det som er nødvendig, så kroppen ikke går mot sjelen i formasteligg på grunn av overflod av mat og heller ikke blir trett i din tjeneste på grunn av uforstandigg nøysomhet, men gi meg det passende måtehold, slik at når det som er av jord opprettholdes av det jordiske, jordens herre ikke tირres til vrede av sin jordiske skapning.

Når han sitter til bords, må en tilmålt vederkvegelse være ham tillatt, og en samtale, hvor lettferdigg og forfengeligg unngås. Og ikke må ett ord høres, som tilhørerne kan lokkes til synd av, men alt må være ærbart og til nytte for sjelen. For likesom alt er uten smak ved et verdsligg bord der brød og vin savnes, så er ved et biskopelig og åndelig bord, der god lærdom og formanigg savnes, alle de retter som er satt frem uten smak for sjelen. Og derfor må, forat man ikke skal få noen tilskyndelse til forfengeligg, noe av slik art bli lest opp ved bordet, som bordfellene kan oppbygges av. Når måltidet er slutt og man har takket Gud for maten, må biskopen begynne på sitt arbeide eller lese i bøker, hvorved han kan vinne fremgang for sin sjel.

Efter kveldsmåltidet må han kunne underholde seg med sine omgangsvenner. Men likesom en mor, når hun skal avvende barnet, stryker aske eller noe annet beskt over

brystet til barnet er avvendt fra morsmelken og har venner seg til fast føde, så må biskopen lede sine venner og tjenere til Gud med ord, av hvilke de kan lære seg å frykte og elske Gud slik at han, biskopen, kan være deres fader ved den myndighet Gud har gitt ham og deres moder gjennom åndelig oppdragelse. Og om han vet at noen av hans husfolk synder til sjelens død, og denne ikke forbedrer seg etter at han har fått høre biskopens formaning, må han gi ham avskjed. For han kan ikke forbli ubesmittet av denne synd, om han beholder ham for timelig nyttes eller hygges skyld.

Når han går til sengs, må han samvittighetsfullt granske den forgagne dags hendelser og sinns stemninger og tenke slik: «o Gud, du som har skapt min kropp og min sjel, se til meg i barmhjertighet og gi meg din nåde, slik at jeg ikke av overdreven søvn blir forsømmelig i din tjeneste og heller ikke ved kort og urolig søvn, blir trett i din tjeneste. Og gi meg, til din heder, den måteholdne søvn som du har befalt oss å ha til kroppens vederkvegelse, og gi meg din styrke, slik at min fiende og djevelen ikke makter å forstyrre meg eller skiller meg fra din mildhet.» Når han står opp fra sengen, må han renvaskes ved skrifte, om kjødet har gjort seg skyldig i noen forsømmelse, slik at ikke neste natts søvn begynner med foregående natts synder.»

KAPITTEL 2.

VIDERE TALER GUDS MODER: «Si til biskopen at om han slår inn på den omtalte vei, vil tre vanskeligheter møte ham: For det første at veien er smal, for det andre at det finnes stikkende torner langs den, for det tredje at veien er stenet og ujevn. Mot disse tre ting skal jeg gi deg tre råd. Det første er at biskopen bør iføre seg sterkere og kyndig sydde klær for den trange veien. Det andre er at han foran sine øyne må ha ti fingre som han kan se gjennom som et gitter, slik at han ikke stikkes av tornene. Det tredje er at han må sette sine føtter forsiktig ned og for hvert eneste skritt kjenne etter om den nedsatte fot har feste, om han da ikke på forhånd er blitt overbevist om veiens beskaffenhet.

Hva betegner denne trange vei annet enn vrang menneskers ondskap mot rettferdige, slike mennesker som håner rettferdige gjerninger, forvrenger de rettferdiges veier og ringeakter alt som heter ydmykhet og mildhet? Mot slike mennesker må biskopen iklæ seg tålmodighets og standhaftighets klær. For tålmodigheten gjør det vanskelige lett og bevirker at man i glede tåler den forhånelse man tilføyes. Og hva betyr tornene, om ikke verdens motgang? Mot disse skal biskopen bruke Guds ti bud og Guds råds fingre, slik at han, når motgangens og fattigdommens torner stikker, må betenke Kristi lidelse og

fattigdom. Men når vredens og misunnelsens torner stikker, da skal han betrakte Guds kjærlighet, som Han bød oss å bevare.

Den sanne kjærlighet søker nemlig ikke sitt eget, men stiller seg helt til tjeneste for Guds ære og nestens nytte. Og at han bør være forsiktig når han setter føttene ned, det betyr at han bestandig må nære forstandig frykt. For et godt menneske bør ha likesom to føtter; den første er lengselen etter det evige og den andre er motvilje mot verden. Men lengsel etter det evige må være forenet med klokskap, slik at biskopen ikke lengter etter det evige bare for seg selv, som en som er dette verdig, men legger all sin lengsel, sin vilje og sitt håp om belønning i Guds hender. Motviljen mot verden må være forenet med forsiktighet og frykt, slik at motviljen ikke beror på verdens motgang og lede ved livet og heller ikke på at han vil ha mer hvile i dette timelige liv og bli befridd for det arbeide som er så nyttig for andre, men bare på avsky for synden og lengsel etter det evige liv.

Når så biskopen har overvunnet disse vanskeligheter på veien, vil jeg ytterligere advare ham mot tre fiender, som finnes på hans vei. Den første fiende forsøker å hvese i biskopens ører for å stenge for hørselen. Den andre står foran ham for å stikke ham i øynene. Den tredje ligger for hans føtter, roper høyt og har en snare i hånden, for å binde hans føtter, når han løfter dem fra marken. Den første fiende er de mennesker eller de innskydelser som forsøker å trekke biskopen bort fra den rette vei, idet de sier: «Hvorfor påtar du deg så meget arbeide, hvorfor ferdes du på en så smal vei? Vik heller bort fra den og slå inn på den blomsterkantede vei, hvor så mange vandrer. Hva angår det deg hvordan verden og menneskene lever? Hvorfor skal du refse og forarge dem, som du burde kunne hedres og elskes av? Om de ikke gjør deg og dine imot, hva behøver du da bry deg om at de fortørner Gud, eller hvordan de lever? Om du selv er god, får det være nok; hva tilkommer det deg å dømme andre? Gi heller gaver og ta imot gaver og gjør deg nytte av menneskers vennskap, slik at du kan prises og kalles god mens du lever!»

Den andre fiende vil blinde deg, slik filistrene gjorde med Samson. Denne fiende er verdens skjønnhet, og eiendom og overdådighet i klær og andre praktfulle ting, gunst og heder blant mennesker. For når slike ting tilbys og henrykker øynene, forblindes forstanden, da kjølner kjærligheten til Guds bud, da begås synd lett og egenmektig og glemmes lett, når den engang er begått. Av denne grunn må biskopen kjenne seg tilfreds, når han har det nødvendige, med måtehold. Nu finner mange, mange det mere trivelig å stå med Samson ved begjærets kvern enn å elske Kirken ifølge hyrde-embedets prisverdige forordning.

Den tredje fiende roper høyt, har en snare i hånden og sier: «Hvorfor går du så forsiktig og med senket hode? Hvorfor ydmyker du deg selv så dypt, når du kunne og burde hedres av så mange? Vær heller prest av den årsak at du kan få sitte blant de fremste; vær biskop av den grunn at du kan bli hedret av så mange som mulig. Skrid frem til større verdighet, slik at du kan bli oppvartet mer og kan nyde mer hvile. Samle rikdommer som du kan hjelpe andre med, slik at din rikdom bringer trøst og du kan gledes overalt.»

Når nu sjelen angripes av slikt begjær og slike innskydelser, løftes sinnet straks, likesom ved et ondt begjærs fot, til jordisk lyst. Da snøres sinnet til den grad inn i den jordiske omsorgs snare, at det knapt kan reise seg og betrakte sin elendighet - og den evige belønning eller straff. Og dette er ikke underlig, for Skriften sier at den som trakter efter biskops embede, trakter efter en god gjerning til Guds ære. Nu derimot trakter de fleste efter ære og skyr arbeidet, der sjelens evige helse er. Av denne grunn må denne biskop forbli i det embede han har og ikke strebe mot et høyere, før det behager Gud å gi ham et slikt.»

KAPITTEL 3.

GUDS MODER TALTE: «Jeg vil forklare for biskopen hva han bør gjøre for sin Gud og hva Guds heder er. Hver biskop bør ha biskopsmitraen vel forvart i sine armer, ikke selge den for penger, ikke overlate den til andre for verdslig vennskaps skyld og ikke miste den av forsømmelighet eller likegladhet. Hva annet betegner biskopsmitraen enn den biskopelige verdighet og makt, nemlig til å vie prester og gi salvelse, kalle de villfarne tilbake til den rette vei og med sitt eksempel oppmuntre de forsømmelige? Og at han bør ha mitraen vel forvart i sine armer, betyr at han flittig må tenke over på hvilken måte han har mottatt sin biskopsmakt, hvordan han har forvaltet den, hvilken frukt den mon vil bære og hva mon dens ende vil bli?

Om biskopen nu vil tenke over på hvilken måte han har mottatt makten, må han først tenke over om han stundet efter biskopsverdigheten for sin egen skyld eller for Guds skyld. Om det var for sin egen skyld, da var hans lengsel uten tvil av verdslig art. Men om det var for Guds skyld, d.v.s. for å gjøre Gud heder, da var hans lengsel fortjenestefull og åndelig. Om biskopen senere tenker over hvorfor han har fått biskopsverdigheten, må han huske at det visselig var for at han skulle være de fattiges far og sjelenes trøster og meglingsmann. For biskopens eiendom er sjelenes, og om denne fortæres til ingen nytte og sløses bort i dårskap, skal disse sjeler rope på hevn over den urettferdige forvalter.

Hva biskopsverdighetens frukt skal være, vil jeg fortelle deg: den er, slik Paulus sier det, dobbel, nemlig legemlig og åndelig. Den er legemlig, fordi biskopen er Guds stedfortreder på jord og derfor, for Guds æres skyld, skal han hedres som Gud av menneskene. I himmelen skal den bli legemlig og åndelig på grunn av legemets og sjelens forherligelse, for der skal tjeneren være med herren, såvel for den biskopelige vandels skyld som for det ydmykhetens eksempels skyld, hvormed han kalte andre til æren, sammen med seg selv. Men hver og en som har biskopelig drakt og verdighet, men avskyr den rette biskopelige vandel, han skal møte en dobbelt skam. At biskopsverdigheten ikke skal selges, det betyr at biskopen ikke må være bevisst simonistisk, ikke utøve sitt embede for pengers skyld eller for menneskers yndest og ikke etter menneskers bønner utnevne slike menn til embedet, som han vet fører et slett liv.

At mitraen ikke bør overlates til andre for menneskelig vennskaps skyld, det betyr at biskopen ikke må overse de forsømmeliges synder, og ikke la dem få være ustraffet som han bør refse og ikke fortie sine venners synder for verdslig vennskaps skyld og heller ikke legge sine underordnedes synder på sin egen rygg, for biskopen er Guds vekter. At biskopen ikke må miste sin mitra av forsømmelighet, betyr at biskopen ikke skal overlate til andre å gjøre det han selv er forpliktet til å gjøre og som han selv kan gjøre på mer fruktbærende vis, og at han ikke for kroppens hviles skyld må overlate det til andre, som han selv kan utføre på bedre vis. For til biskopens embede hører ikke hvile, men arbeide. Biskopen bør heller ikke være uten kunnskap om deres liv og seder, som han betror de embeder det tilkommer ham å ansette i. Han må vite og kjenne til hvordan de iakttar rettferdigheten og om de forvalter sine embeder med klokskap og ikke med vinningslyst.

Videre vil jeg at du skal vite at biskopen, mens han har fårehyrdens embede, skal ha en blomsterkvast under armene, en kvast hvis vellukt lokker fårene til, glade, å komme springende fra fjernt og nær. Disse blomsterkvaster betegner forkynnelsen av Guds ord, som det er biskopens plikt å utøve. De to armer som han holder den guddommelige forkynnelsens blomsterkranser under, er de to for biskopen nødvendige typer av gjerninger: de gode gjerninger i det åpenbare og de gode gjerninger i det dultede. Disse skal utvirke at de får som står ham nær i hans bispedømme, skal forherlige Gud i biskopen, når de ser biskopens kjærlighet i hans gjerninger og hører den i hans ord. Og de får, som er langt borte, skal føle en lengsel etter å følge biskopen når de hører om hans berømmelse. For dette er den skjønneste blomsterkvast: Ikke å blyges for sannheten og ydmykelsen overfor Gud, å lære det gode og selv gjøre det gode man har lært, å være ydmyk i ærens tid og from i forhånelsens. Når biskopen har vandret denne vei til ende og er kommet frem til porten, da må han ha noe i hendene, som han kan rekke frem til den høyeste konge. Derfor

skal han i hendene ha et for ham dyrebart kar, og dette bør han gi, tomt, til den høyeste konge.

Dette tomme kar som skal rekkes frem, er hans hjerte, og biskopen må arbeide på, natt og dag, at det skal være tomt for all vellyst og alt begjær etter forfengelig ære. Når en slik biskop skal føres inn i herlighetens rike, skal Jesus Kristus, sann Gud og sant menneske, skynde seg mot ham med hele sin hærs-kare av helgener, og da skal han høre englene si: «O vår Gud, vår fryd og alt vårt gode. Denne biskop var ren i kjødet og tapper i sin gjerning; derfor er det sømmelig at vi fører ham frem for deg, for han lengtet hver dag etter vårt selskap. Oppfyll derfor hans ønske og øk vår glede ved hans komme. Da skal også de øvrige helgener si: «O Gud, vår glede er i deg og av deg, og vi behøver intet annet. Dog vekkes vår glede av at denne biskops sjel får oppleve glede, han som stundet etter deg da han levete. Han bar jo de skjønneste blomster i sin munn, og med dem øket han vårt antall. Med sin gjerning trøstet han dem som bodde både fjernt og nær. Unn ham derfor å få glede sammen med oss, og gled deg også du over ham, for du elsket ham j o så høyt at du ville dø for hans skyld! Til sist skal Ærens konge si til ham: «O min venn, du er kommet for å gi meg ditt hjertes kar, tomt for deg selv og for din egen vilje. Jeg skal derfor fylle det med min glede og min ære. Min glede skal være din, og din ære skal jeg aldri la opphøre.»

KAPITTEL 27.

[...] DET FINNES INTET STRENGERE LIV enn ridderens, om det leves etter sin bestemmelse. Om det er foreskrevet munken at han skal ha kappe på, er det foreskrevet ridderen å bære det som er tyngre, nemlig brynje. Om det er tungt for munken å kjempe mot kjødets vellyst, er det tyngre for ridderen å rykke frem mellom bevæpnede fiender. Om en hård seng er foreskrevet munken, er det hårdere for ridderen å hvile i full rustning. Og om munken engstes og plages i sin avholdenhet, er det hårdere for ridderen stadig å plages av frykt for sitt liv. For det kristne ridderskap ble ikke innstiftet for verdslige besiddeisers eller vinnings skyld, men for å forsvare sannheten og utbre den sanne tro.

KAPITTEL 32.

MODEREN TALER TIL BRUDEN OG SIER: «En mann, som lette efter edelstener, fant en magnet, som han løftet opp med egen hånd, og gjemte den blant sine klenodier. Med dens

hjelp førte han skipet til trygg havn. Slik min Sønn lette efter edelstener, lette han også efter helgener, men bare meg utvalgte han til sin moder, forat menneskene, ved meg, skulle føres til himmelens havn. Derfor skal du ikke føle uro, om ditt hjerte stundom kjennes hårdt, for det skjer forat din belønnings krone skal bli større.»

BOK 4

KAPITTEL 4.

KRISTUS TALER TIL BRUDEN: «Av to ånder inngis og inngydes tanker og inspirasjoner i menneskenes hjerte, nemlig aven god og aven ond ånd. Den gode ånd råder menneskene til å tenke på det himmelske, som skal komme, og til ikke å elske det timelige. Den onde ånd råder menneskene til å elske det synlige, den gjør at synden virker tiltrekkende, den sender oss svakhet og setter svake menneskers eksempel opp som forbillede. Se, jeg vil billedlig beskrive for deg hvordan begge ånder har opptent den dronnings hjerte som du kjenner og som jeg før har talt med deg om. Den gode ånd inngir henne disse tanker: Rikdommer er besværlige, verdslig ære er som vind, kjødets nydelse er som en drøm, gleden er forgjengelig og alt verdslig er forfengelig; derimot er dommen uungåelig og fristeren er meget nærgående. Dette synes meg da urimelig: Å avlegge strengt regnskap for forgjengelige rikdommer, å høste åndelig vanære for forfengelig vind, å utholde lang bedrøvelse for en kortvarig fornøyelse og å avlegge regnskap for ham, som kjenner alt, endog før det blir til. Av den grunn er det tryggere å gi fra deg meget og således ha mindre å avlegge regnskap for enn å snøres inn i mangeslags gods og måtte avlegge et omfattende og besværlig regnskap.

Den onde ånd, derimot, inngir henne slike tanker: La denslags ideer fare, for Gud er mild og lett å formilde. Ei frimodig det gode du har og gi gavmildt ut av det du eier. Du er jo født til å ha rikdommer, og rikdommer har du fått forat at du skal bli rost og gi til den som begjærer noe av deg. Men om du skiller deg fra dine rikdommer, må du tjene dem som nu tjener deg, din ære blir mindre og din forsmedelse større. Det fattige menneske vandrer nemlig uten glede. Det er vanskelig for deg å vende deg til nye skikker og å tukte ditt kjød med nye vaner og å leve uten oppvartning. Hold derfor fast på den ære du har mottatt, lev kongelig efter din stand og ta deg av ditt hus på hederlig vis. Om du forandrer ditt levesett, vil du bli klandret for ustadighet. Fortsett å leve som du har begynt, så blir du rik på ære for Gud og mennesker.

Atter inngir den gode ånd sine råd i denne dronnings sjel, idet den sier: «Jeg vet at to ting er evige, nemlig himmelen og helvede. De som elsker Gud over alle ting, skal ikke komme til helvede, men de som ikke elsker Gud, skal ikke komme til himmelen. På veien til himmelen gikk den menneskevordne Gud selv frem og bekreftet den med tegn og med sin død. Å, hvor rikt på ære er ikke det himmelske, hvor bitter er ikke djevelens ondskap, og hvor forfengelig er ikke det jordiske! Denne Gud ble fulgt av sin moder og alle helgener, som heller ville utstå all kval og miste alt, ja, som til og med foraktet seg selv, for ikke å miste det himmelske og det evige. Derfor er det tryggere å gi avkall på ære og rikdommer i rette tid enn å holde fast på dem like til slutten, for det kan hende at minnet om syndene svinner bort når smerten tiltar på det siste. Og da vil de som ikke bryr seg om min frelse, stjele til seg av det jeg har sarnlet.»

Djevelens inngivelse tok til motmæle slik: «Ikke tenk slik. Vi er svake mennesker; Kristus derimot er Gud og menneske. Vi må ikke sammenligne våre gjerninger med helgenes, som jo hadde større nåde og vennskap med Gud. Det er tilstrekkelig for oss å håpe på himmelen, leve på vårt svake vis og øve bot for våre synder med almisser og bønner. Barnslig og dåraktig er det å begynne på noe og så ikke kunne fullføre det.»

Påny svarer den gode inngivelse: jeg er uverdigg til å sammenlignes med helgnene. Dog er det meget trygt å arbeide seg frem til fullkommenheten litt efter litt. Hva skulle hindre meg fra å gi meg i kast med det uvanlige? Gud er jo istand til å gi hjelp. Ofte hender det at en fattig mann følger en mektig og rik mann på veien. Og skjønt den fornemme kommer fortere frem til herberget, og får nyde en utsøkt mat og hvile i en myk seng, så kommer dog den fattige frem til det samme herberge, om enn senere, og får smake levningene av den fornemme herres måltid, og dette hadde han ikke fått om han ikke hadde fulgt den andres vei og oppsøkt hans herberge. Derfor sier jeg nu at skjønt jeg er uverdigg til å sammenlignes med en helgen, vil jeg dog slå inn på den vei de har valgt for i det minste å få en del av deres fortjenester. Det er nemlig to ting som engster mitt sinn: For det første at hovmodet får makt over meg, om jeg forblir i mitt fedreland. Kjærligheten til mine frender som ber om hjelp, gjør meg nedtrykt til sinns. Overfloden på tjenestefolk og klær volder meg besvær. Derfor er det behageligere og mer tilrådeligg for meg å stige ned fra hovmods sete og tukte min kropp på pilegrimsferd, enn å forbli i min ærefulle stand og hope synd på synd. For det andre plages jeg av folkets fattigdom og rop om hjelp; jeg burde bistå det, men er istedet en byrde for det med mitt nærvær. Derfor har jeg behov for et godt råd.

Den onde inngydelse og djevlske inngivelse svarer: Å begi seg på pilegrimsferd tilkommer bare den ustadigg. Barmhjertigg er dog mere behagelig for Gud enn offer. Om du reiser bort fra ditt federland, kommer vinningslystne mennesker, som har hørt tale om deg, til å

plyndre deg og ta deg til fange. Slik vil du i stedet for frihet få fangenskap, i stedet for rikdom, fattigdom, i stedet for heder, vanheder, i stedet for makelig hvile, uro og bedrøvelse.

Den gode ånd kommer nu med denne inngivelse: Jeg har hørt om en som ble tatt til fange og satt i tårnet og som kjente større trøst i fangenskapet og mørket enn han noensinne hadde opplevet i sin overflod og timelige velstand. Om det av denne grunn vil behage Gud å sende meg en bedrøvelse, så vil dette bli meg til desto større fortjeneste. Gud er jo mild og trøster meg og er rede til å bistå, fremfor alt om jeg forlater mitt land for mine synders skyld og for å vinne Guds kjærlighet.

Den onde inngydelse og djevleske inngivelse svarer påny: «Om du er uverdigg til å få trøst av Gud, og om du har vært utålmodigg når det har vært spørsmål om fattigdom og lydighet, da kommer du til å angre den strengheet du har pålagt deg selv, for du kommer til å ha en stav i hånden i stedet for en ring, et simpelt klede over hodet i stedet for en krone og en tarveligg sekk istedet for et purpurskrud.

Den gode ånd svarer: Jeg har hørt at den Helligge Elisabet, prinsesse av Ungarn, som ble oppfostret i svakelighet og ble fornemt gift, hun tålte stor fattigdom og forsmedelse, men fikk større trøst av Gud i fattigdommen og en herligere krone enn om hun hadde forblitt i all verdsligg ære og fryd.

Atter hvisker den onde inngivelse: «Hva vil du gjøre om Gud overgir deg til en mann, som voldtar din kropp? Kan din blygsel tåle slik? Må du ikke da sørge over din stahet, og må ikke hele din slekt skjemmes og sørge? Og da kommer du visselig til å kjenne utålmodighet i hjertet og bli utakknemlig mot Gud. Du kommer rett og slett til å ønske du var død. Kan du mon våge å vise deg, når du er blitt utskjemt i alles munn?»

Den gode tanke svarer igjen: «Jeg har hørt av skriftene at den hellige jomfru Lucia ble bortført til et bordell, men hun var standhaftigg i troen, stolte på Guds godhet og sa: «Hvor meget det enn blir øvet vold mot min kropp, er jeg dogjomfru, og min krone skal fordobles.» Og Gud så hennes tro og bevarte henne uskadd. Således sier jeg at Gud, som ikke lar noen fristes over evne, vil bevare min sjel, min tro og min vilje. Jeg befaler meg altså helt i hans varetekt. Må hans vilje med meg skje!»

Da nu denne frue ble beleiret av slike tanker, vil jeg formane henne til tre ting. For det første at hun husker på hvilken ære hun er utvalgt til. For det andre hvilken kjærlighet Gud har vist henne ved hennes ekteskap. For det tredje, hvor nådig hun er blitt bevart i dette dødelige liv. Videre vil jeg, advarende, minne henne om tre ting. For det første at hun skal avlegge regnskap for Gud for alt sitt timelige gods, ja, til og med for den minste skjerv hun tok frem og gav ut. For det andre, at hennes tid er meget kort, og at hun ikke vet ordet av det, før hun skal dø. Derfor råder jeg henne til tre ting: For det første: å angre det hun har syndet og vise fruktbar forbedring etter at syndene ble skriftet, samt elske Gud av hele sitt hjerte. For det andre råder jeg henne til, med forstand, å flykte fra skjærsildens pine. For på samme måte som den som ikke elsker Gud av hele sitt hjerte, fortjener streng straff, er den, som ikke bedrer sitt syndige liv, skjønt han kan det, hjemfallen til skjærsilden. For det tredje råder jeg henne til, for noen tid, å forlate sine venner i kjødet for Guds skyld og for å unngå skjærsildens pine, og begi seg til det sted hvor det finnes en snarvei mellom himmel og død, ettersom det finnes avlat (d.v.s. frelse for sjelene) som hellige paver har gitt og som Guds helgener har utvirket ved sitt blod».

KAPITTEL 38.

Sønnen taler: «Hvorfor blir du så glad til sinns av glade drømmer og så bedrøvet over triste drømmer? Har jeg ikke sagt deg at djevelen er misunnelig og at han, uten Guds tillatelse, ikke kan legge et strå i veien for dine føtter? Jeg har også sagt at han er løgnens far og opphavsmann, og at han blander litt sannhet i alle sine usannheter. Det er derfor jeg sier at djevelen ikke sover, men går omkring for å finne en anledning til å få deg til å falle. Derfor må du ta deg i akt, slik at djevelen, som med sin fine innsikt utforsker ditt indre utfra din adferd i det ytre, ikke skal føre deg til fall.

For iblant sender han ditt hjerte glade drømmer, slik at du skal kjenne uforstandig glede; iblant triste drømmer, for at du i mismot skal unnlate å gjøre noe godt, som du ellers kunne gjøre, og for at du skal bli ulykkelig og sorgfull, alt før bedrøvelsen kommer. Iblant inngir også djevelen det hjerte, som er bedradd og som vil behage verden, mange falske ting slik at de farer vill, som det også gikk med de falske profeter. Slikt hender det menneske som elsker noe annet høyere enn Gud. Således går det til at meget sant kan finnes blant mange falske ord, for djevelen ville aldri kunne bedra om han ikke blandet litt sannhet inn i løggen.

At så er tilfellet fikk vi et vitnesbyrd om gjennom den djevelbesatte som du så. Skjønt han bekjente at bare en er Gud, viste dog hans ukyske geberder og hans øvrige uttalelser, at djevelen bodde i ham. Men nu kan du spørre hvorfor jeg tillater djevelen å lyve. Jeg svarer: Det har jeg tillatt og tillater på grunn av folkets og prestenes synder; de ville nemlig vite det som Gud ikke ville at de skulle vite, og de ønsket å finne fremgang, da Gud sa at dette ikke ledet dem til frelse. Av den grunn tillater Gud for syndernes skyld meget, som ikke ville inntreffe, om mennesket ikke misbrukte nåden og sin fornuft. Men de profeter som ikke stundet etter noe annet enn Gud, og ikke ville tale Guds ord annet enn for Guds skyld, de ble ikke bedradd og talte sannhetens ord og elsket dem.

Men skjønt ikke alle drømmer bør legges vekt på, bør heller ikke alle avvises. For iblant inngir Gud også onde mennesker gode tanker og åpenbarer deres dødstime, for at de skal slutte med sine synder. Iblant inngir han også de gode tanker i drømmen, slik at de kan gå frem i kjærlighet til Gud. Derfor må du, så ofte noe slikt hender deg, ikke la ditt hjerte legge vekt på dette, men du må overveie og vurdere det med hjelp av kloke, åndelige venner, eller lukke det ut av ditt hjerte, som om du ikke hadde sett det, for den som finner glede i slikt vil ustanselig bli bedradd og bedrøvet. Stå altså fast i din tro på den Hellige Treenighet, elsk Gud av hele ditt hjerte, vær lydig i motgang såvel som i medgang, sett ikke deg selv høyere enn noen annen i dine tanker, føl frykt også når du handler vel, tro ikke at du er klokere enn andre og vær rede til alt Gud vil. Da behøver du ikke frykte drømmer, for om de er gode, må du ikke tro på dem eller lengte etter dem, om de er triste, må du ikke bli bedrøvet, men overgi deg til Gud.»

KAPITTEL 59.

SØNNEN TALER: «Tre ting tilkommer en prest, for det første å innvie Guds legeme, for det andre å ha kjødets og åndens renhet, for det tredje å sørge for sin menighet. Men nu kan du spørre om hva det tjener til å ha en kirke om man ikke har en menighet? Jeg svarer deg at den prest som har vilje til å gavne alle og til å preke for Guds kjærlighets skyld, han har en så stor menighet som om han eiet hele verden, for om han fikk anledning til å tale for hele verden, ville han ikke sky noen møye. Derfor skal hans gode vilje tilregnes ham som gjerning. For tilhørernes utakknemlighets skyld skåner Gud ofte sine utvalgte for strevet med prekenen, og dog taper de ikke sin lønn, for deres vilje har vært god.

Det tilkommer også presten å ha bok og olje, bok for å undervise de ukyndige og hellig olje for å smøre de syke. For likesom legemlig og åndelig visdom inneholdes i boken, må

presten ha visdom til å beherske seg selv, slik at kjødet ikke blir tøylesløst av begjær og hans menighetsmedlemmer tar anstøt av dette, og han må sky denne verdens gjerrighet, for hvis skyld Kirkens heder forsømmes, samt flykte bort fra verdslige menneskers adferd, gjennom hvilken presteskapets verdighet vanhelliges. Åndelig visdom er det å undervise dem som kan lite, refse de selvhevdende og oppmuntre dem som gjør fremskritt i det gode. Med oljen betegnes imidlertid bønnens sødme og de gode forbilleder. For likesom oljen er fetere enn brødet, er kjærlighetens bønn og den gode livsførsels eksempel mere fremgangsrike når det gjelder å lede menneskene til det gode, og deres fedme er kraftigere til å formilde Gud. Jeg sier deg sannelig, min datter, at prestens navn er stort, for han er Herrens sendebud og formidler, men hans embede er enda større, for han berører med sine hender den ufattelige Gud, og de lavere ting forenes med de himmelske i hans hånd.

KAPITTEL 69.

SØNNEN TALER: «Av tre ting kan du fastslå at en kildes vann ikke er godt. For det første om det ikke har rett farve. For det andre om det er grumset. For det tredje om det er stillestående og ikke i bevegelse, slik at det mottar all urenhet, men ikke fører den bort fra seg. Med dette vann forstår jeg prestenes seder og hjerter. De skulle likesom kilden være herlige å drikke av; på grunn av sedenes renhet, samt være stengt for syndens smuss. Prestens rette farve er ydmykhet: Han burde ydmyke seg mer i tanke og gjerning, jo større forpliktelse han innser han har til å arbeide for Gud. For der hovmod finnes, der er djevelens farve, som gjør vannet like avskyelig å se på som om en spedalsk holdt på å øse vann av kilden. Slik forårsaker hovmodet at prestens gjerninger fremstår som skitne. Vannet er grumset om presten er vinningslysten og ikke nøyer seg med det nødvendige.

Likesom han er unyttig for seg selv og bare volder seg selv engstelse, slik er han skadelig for andre ved sin griskhets eksempel. For det tredje er vannet urent om det mottar smuss, men ikke fører det bort, hvilket kommer av at avløpet er stengt, slik at vannet blir stillestående. Slik er den prest uren, som i sitt kjød og i sin kropp elsker kjødets vellyst og ikke gjennom en sann anger kaster fra seg det urene han er smittet av. For likesom en flekk på kroppen er stygg og frastøtende overalt, men aller mest i ansiktet, bør urenheten være forhatt av alle, men aller mest av dem som er blitt kallet til en høyere verdighet. Derfor skal de prester velges til å arbeide for meg, som ikke utmerker seg ved ordrik visdom, men ved ydmykhet og renhet, og som både lever dydig selv og underviser andre med ord og eksempel, for selv en spedalsk hånd kan være nyttig til min gjerning, om bare sinnet er godt og den åndelige hånd ikke mangler.»

KAPITTEL 80.

FOR DET FØRSTE RÅDER JEG DEG til å forbli på ditt bosted, nær den kirke som er viet til den hellige jomfru Maria, og at du kun har en eneste tjener hos deg, slik at du straks kan gi tilbake alt det som blir til overs av dine inntekter, når de nødvendige utgifter til dine fordringshavere er trukket fra og du helt og holdent har betalt dem hva du skyldte dem. Det er nemlig hverken tillatt eller klokt å gi mange penger til de fattige eller til formuende venner eller frender, før all gjeld er helt og fullt betalt. Når all din gjeld er helt innfridd og de for deg og din tjener nødvendige utgifter er trukket fra, må du, til Guds ære, gi det som er igjen, til de fattige og trengende. Du må gi nøye akt på at du har en ærbar og hensiktsmessig prestedrakt, slik at man ikke merker noe prangende eller forfengelig i din måte å kle deg på, men bare ærbar nødtørft og kroppslig nytte. Du må innskrenke ditt klesbruk til to sett klær, ett for høytidsdager og ett for hverdager. Du må heller ikke ha mer enn to par sko og strømper; om du har noe mer i klesveien, må du skifte det ut med noe annet du kan ha nytte av eller også betale gjeld med det. I inneværende år må du helt avstå fra bruk av linklær, såvel om natten som om dagen.

Din Mariakirke skal du i dette år holde som klosterkirke, og det av tre grunner. For det første av den grunn, kanskje, at om du tidligere har residert i hovmod, må du herefter, i lydighet mot Gud, tjenestegjøre der til den dypt ydmyke jomfru Marias ære. Og om denne kirkes kanniker eller prebendeprester ved et tilfelle, med lettferdige ord, har dradd deg bort fra tjenesten til Gud og til ondt begjær, så må du nu, med Guds hjelp, ved fromme og åndelige ord, lede andre bort fra det onde begjær og til gleden ved å elske Gud. Og om du kanskje, gjennom tidligere utillatt adferd, har gitt noen, som har sett deg, et slett eksempel, må du nu, i stedet sørge for, ved dine gode gjerninger og ærbare seder, å gi deres sjeler et nyttig og godt eksempel.

Videre bør du, kjære venn, på klokt og forstandig vis, innrette nattens og dagens timer til å prise Gud. Jeg har lagt merke til at klokkene i din kirke ringer kraftig til fastsatt tid. Derfor råder jeg deg til at du, så snart du hører dem ringe om natten, står opp av sengen, kneler fem ganger og leser fem Fader vår og Hill deg, Maria samt tenker på Jesu Kristi fem sår og hans høyverdige moders smerte. Siden må du begynne matutin til den hellige jomfrus ære og lese andre bønner som du er glad i, til kannikene samles i koret for å synge. Og det er bedre at du kommer til kirken blant de første enn blant de siste.

Du skal, andektig og verdig, synge dagens matutin, stå helt til slutt og sitte ned av og til, når dette passer. Men du må ingenlunde tale om du ikke blir spurt om noe; isåfall må du svare med så få ord som mulig, og ikke med høylydte ord og uten vrede eller utålmodige fakter, om dette kan unngås. Du ville jo ha oppført der meget høvisk om du hadde vært i en verdslig eller jordisk herres nærvær; hvor meget mer bør du da ikke med all verdighet, høviskhets og ydmyk respekt, både i det indre og det ytre, oppføre deg i den evige himmelkonges nærvær og tjeneste, han som alltid og overalt er nærværende og ser alt! Om du kanskje, i viktige anliggender som angår deg selv eller noen andre, blir nødt til å tale midt under de pågående tidebønner, så må du forlate koret og utenfor, med få og lavmælte ord, svare det som du mener er nødvendig, og derefter, uten å drøye videre, gå tilbake til din korstol. Og om du kan det, så sørg for at utførelsen av dette ærend utsettes til annen tid og annet sted, slik at gudstjenesten og tilbedelsen av Gud ikke avbrytes eller hindres.

La også være å vandre omkring i kirken mens tidebønnene synges, for slikt vidner om et ustadig og flyktig sinn, ja, om et lunkent sinn, og vitner om liten kjærlighet og andakt. Mellom tidebønnene skal du be eller lese noe som er nyttig for sjelen, noe som er fromt eller gavnlig på annet vis, og du må alltid være oppmerksom på at fra den stund du forlater sengen for å synge matutin og til høymessen er avsluttet, ikke gjerne skalla andre gjøremål oppta deg enn sang, bønn eller studium, såfremt dere ikke i samlet kapitel, må drøfte kirkens saker og de forbedringer, som må innføres i kirkestyret. Når høymessen er holdt, passer det utmerket å samtale om legemlige behov og anliggender og unne seg en ærbar og gudfryktig avspenning.

Når du går til bords, skal det leses bordbønn. Og enten du er gjest hos andre eller selv har gjester, må du under måltidet først tale om Gud eller om hans høyverdige moder eller en helgen, til bordfellenes, og også til de oppvartendes oppbyggelse og nytte, ja, i det minste ett eller to ord, eller du må også stille de andre et spørsmål om Gud, hans moder eller hans helgener. Selv om du sitter alene ved bordet og din tjener står ved din side, må du gjøre dette, og til opplesning ved bordet bør du ha slike tekster som dem man pleier å lese i klostrene når brødrene spiser.

Når måltidet er slutt og du har takket Gud og dine velgjørere, kan du tale en kort stund med aktverdige personer du liker godt, om saker og gjøremål som angår deg selv. Siden må du gå inn i ditt lønnkammer, knele fem ganger og lese Fader vår og Hill deg, Maria, for vår Herres jesu Kristi sårs skyld og for hans moders smerte. Halvparten av den tid som er igjen til vesper, skal du bruke til lesning, studium og litt hvile, såsant du ikke blir opptatt med dine venner i spørsmål som angår dem. Den andre halvpart skal du bruke til en spasertur til kroppens vederkvegelse, slik at du får desto større kraft til å prise Gud. Når det så ringer

til vesper, må du straks begi deg til kirkens kor for å synge officiet, og i koret må du forholde deg slik det er skrevet i det foregående. Hver dag må du, når kompletoret er lest og før du inntar kveldsmaten, forrette matutin med tre lesestykker for de døde. Tiden etter kveldsmat kan du bruke på samme måte som tiden etter middagsmåltidet. Etter takksigelsen kan du gå og spasere og tale nyttige og oppmuntrende ord, til du vil gå og legge deg. Før du går til sengs, må du knele ved sengen og fromt lese fem Fader vår og fem Hill deg, Maria til minne om jesu Kristi lidelse. Siden du må gå til sengs og unne din kropp så megen søvn og hvile at du ikke faller i søvn når du skal våke, på grunn av altfor kort hvile og søvn.

Hver fredag må du fromt lese de syv botssalmene og litaniet. Denne dag må du også, av respekt for jesu Kristi fem sår, gi fem sølvmynter til fem fattige. Videre råder jeg deg til, kjæreste bror og venn, at du i inneværende år må leve i abstinens for dine egne synders skyld. Hver dag under hele førtidagersfasten og advent må du nøye deg med ett eneste fiskemåltid. Alle vigilier før Vårfruedagen må du faste på brød og vann og alle apostelfredager får du bare nyde brød og vin, men om du skulle foretrekke vann fremfor vin, så fraråder jeg ikke dette. På lørdager kan du ha fisk og olje til middagsmat. Søndag, mandag, tirsdag og torsdag kan du spise kjøtt to ganger om dagen, såfremt Kirken ikke akkurat da foreskriver faste.

Merk deg, kjære broder, at jeg har besluttet å skrive til deg og gi deg disse råd av tre grunner. For det første at ikke djevelens misunnelse og list skal forårsake at du fort sliter deg ut og at din kraft og dine åndsevner ikke utmattes slik at du, under den gjenstående del av ditt liv, tjener Gud mindre enn du burde. For det andre av den grunn at verdens barn, om de merker noen brist i din kraft og dine sjelsevner, forårsaket av for meget arbeide, eller ser deg gå trett i et arbeide du har påbegynt, blir redde for å påta seg et arbeide for Herren. For det tredje av den grunn at jeg håper at dine gjerninger finner velbehag hos Gud langt mer om du ydmykt vil rette deg etter en annens råd enn om du styrer deg selv etter eget godtykke.

KAPITTEL 106.

SØNNEN TALER: «Hvorfor frykter du? Selv om du spiste fire ganger hver dag, skulle det ikke tilregnes deg som synd, bare du gjør det med tillatelse fra den som du skal lyde. Vær derfor sterk og standhaftig. Du bør være som en ridder som har ratt flere sår i striden, men til gjengjeld gir sine fiender enda flere sår og blir ivrigere til å kjempe, jo heftige re han

angripes av fienden. Slik bør også du slå din uvenn tilbake, og du bør ha en forstandig vilje til å være utholdende i det gode. Men du overvinner djevelen når du ikke samtykker i fristelsen, men står mandig imot den, idet du setter ydmykhet mot hovmod og måtehold mot fråtseri. Du er standhaftig når du i prøvelsen ikke knurrer mot Gud, men tåler alt med glede, oppfatter hjemsøkelsen som en følge av dine synder og takker Gud.

Din vilje er fornuftig når du ikke trakter etter annen belønning enn den som gis deg av min vilje- og helt overgir deg i mine hender. Det første gode, nemlig å slå fienden tilbake, hadde ikke Lucifer, for han lyttet kun til egne innfall, og det gjorde han i et tilfelle han ikke kan oppreises fra; likesom han ikke hadde noen som egget ham til ondskap, skal han heller ikke få noen som kan reise ham opp. Det andre gode, nemlig standhaftighetens, hadde ikke Judas, for han fortvilte og gikk og hengte seg.

Det tredje gode, nemlig den gode vilje, hadde Pilatus ikke, for han hadde en mer ivrig vilje til å behage jødene og bevare sin egen heder enn til å befri meg. Men det første gode, nemlig å slå fienden tilbake, det hadde min moder, som slo tilbake alle fristelser som djevelen hjemsøkte henne med, og slo ham igjen. Det andre gode hadde David, som var tålmodig i motgang og ikke falt i fortvilelse da han falt. Det tredje gode, nemlig den fullkomne vilje, hadde Abraham, som forlot sitt fedreland og til og med ofret sin eneste sønn. Disse må du altså efterligne så langt dine krefter rekker.»

KAPITTEL 112.

SØNNEN TALER TIL BRUDEN: «Vær ikke opprørt over menneskenes hovmod; det skal snart forsvinne. Det finnes nemlig et insekt, som kalles sommerfugl. Det har brede vinger og liten kropp. For det andre har det et mangfold av farver. For det tredje flyr det høyt fordi det er så lett og spinkelt. Men da det har liten styrke i kroppen, faller det fort ned på det som ligger nærmest, på stener eller stokker. Dette insekt betegner hovmodet. Det har brede vinger og liten kropp, for dets sinn svulmer av hovmod som en blåsebelg fylt av luft.

De tror nemlig at de har alt for egne fortjenesters skyld, de oppfatter seg selv som bedre og mer verdige enn andre og ville gjerne gjøre sitt navn kjent i hele verden, såsant de kunne, men da deres liv er kort som øyeblikket, faller de ned før de hadde tenkt. For det andre har de hovmodige mange farver, som sommerfuglen, for de hovmodes over sine lemmers skjønnhet, over sine rikdommer og byrd, og de forandrer sin skikk alt efter sitt hovmods

innfall, men når de dør, er de intet annet enn støv. For det tredje hender det de hovmodige at de, idet de går opp på hovmodets høyeste tinde, faller ned og dør, plutselig og med øyeblikkelig virkning. Vokt deg for hovmodet, for det skjuler Guds åsyn for menneskene, og min nåde kan ikke komme til dem som er i hovmodets makt.»

KAPITTEL 123.

SØNNEN TALER TIL BRUDEN: «Jeg er lik den brudgom som har festet en brud som ønskes tilbake av sin far, mor søster og bror. Faren sier nemlig: «Gi meg min datter tilbake, for hun er av mitt blod.» Moren sier: «Gi meg min datter tilbake, for hun er næret av min melk.» Søsteren sier: «Gi meg min søster tilbake, for hun er oppfostret sammen med meg.» Broren sier: «Gi meg min søster tilbake, for det tilkommer meg å befale over henne.»

Brudgommen svarer dem: «O, fader, om hun er født av ditt blod, skal hun nå fylles med mitt blod. O, moder, om du har næret henne med din melk, skal jeg nu nære henne med min glede. O, søster, om hun er oppfostret etter din skikk, er det nu min skikk hun skal følge. O, bror, om du hittil har befalt over henne, så tilkommer det nu meg å befale over henne.» Slik har det skjedd med deg. For om din far, d.v.s. kjødets lyst, begjærer å få deg tilbake, så tilkommer det nu meg å fylle deg med min kjærlighet. Om din mor, d. v.s. den verdslige omsorg, vil ha deg tilbake, så tilkommer det meg å nære deg med min kjærlighets melk. Om din søster, d.v.s. det verdslige samværs vane, vil ha deg tilbake, bør du heller holde min sedvane. Om din bror, d.v.s. din egen vilje, vil ha deg tilbake, er du forpliktet til å gjøre min vilje.»

Bok 5 «FRÅGORNAS BOK»

Tyve spørsmål og svar fra FRÅGORNAS BOK

Inledning på Svenska:

[...] «Det hände sig nämligen en gång, när hon [fru Birgitta] red till sitt slott i Vadstena, åtföljd av flera ridande tjänare, att hon, där hon red på vägen, upplyfte sitt sinne till Gud i

bön, varvid hon plötsligt blev hänryckt i anden, så att hon färdades liksom berövad sin kropps sinnen och upplyft i den inre betraktelsens extas. Hon såg då i anden en stege, som var fastsatt i marken och räckte upp till skyn.

Ovanför stegen, i himmelen, såg hon Herren Jesus Kristus sitta på en underbart skön tron, liksom en dömande domare. Vid hans fötter stod Jungfru Maria, och runt omkring tronen befann sig en oändlig härskara av änglar och en ofantlig mängd helgon. Mitt på stegen såg fru Birgitta en för henne bekant munk, som då ännu levde och som besatt stort teologiskt vetande men samtidigt var full av svek och djävulsk elakhet. Med sina oroliga, otåliga åtbörder påminde han snarare om en djävul än om en from ordensman.

Fru Birgitta förnam nu denne munks tankar och alla inre begär i hans hjärta och hur han med obehärskade, högst otåliga åtbörder yppade dem för Kristus, den på tronen sittande domaren, i form av nedanstående frågor.» [...]

1. Hvorfor har du gitt oss fri vilje, hvis vi ikke skal følge vår vilje? Jeg gav menneskene fri vilje for at de skulle glemme sin vilje for meg, deres Gud, og derved vinne større fortjeneste. [3, 3]

2. Hvorfor har du gitt menn og kvinner sæd og lyst til samkvem med hverandre, når denne lyst ikke skal tilfredsstilles når legemet begjærer det? Jeg gav sæd som skulle blandes, for at menneskene skulle avle avkom på rette sted og på sømmelig vis og bli tallrike av en rettfærdig og fornuftig årsak. [3, 4]

3. Hvorfor skal jeg lyde andre, når min vilje er i min makt? Hver og en som har sin frie vilje bør frykte og i sannhet betenke at ingenting så lett leder til den evige pine som ens egen vilje uten leder. Derfor skal enhver som overgir sin egen vilje til meg og lyder meg, vinne himmelriket uten noen plage. [4, 5]

4. Hvorfor har du skapt ville rovdyr, som skader menneskene? Hvorfor jeg skapte de ville rovdyr? Jeg svarer: Alt det jeg skapte var ikke bare godt, men til og med meget godt, og det ble skapt enten til menneskets gavn og behov eller for de øvrige skapningens vesener, og for at menneskene desto mer ydmykt skal tjene meg, sin Gud, som de er lykkeligere enn alle andre. Dog skader de ville dyr ofte i de timelige ting, og det av tofold årsak. For det første til tukt og tilrettevisning for onde mennesker, for at de gjennom sine hjemsøkelsers skal innse at de er mennesker, og at de bør lyde meg, sin Herre. For det annet skader de også

gode mennesker forat deres dyder skal styrkes og forbedres. Og fordi mennesket syndet og reiste seg mot meg, sin Gud, har også alle de vesener som skulle være mennesket underdanige, reist seg mot det.» [5, 2]

5. Hvorfor sender du sykdommer og plager til kroppen? Hvorfor rammes kroppen av sykdom? Jeg svarer at dette skjer forat mennesket skal ta seg bedre i akt og også på grunn av umettelighetens og overflodens synd, forat mennesket skal lære måtehold og tålmodighet i sin ånd, samt å tøyse sitt kjød. [5, 3]

6. «O dommer, jeg spør deg hvorfor ett barn kommer levende fra sin mors liv, og blir døpt, mens det andre, som dog har fått liv i morens skjød, må dør?» «Min venn, ditt spørsmål springer ikke ut av kjærlighet, men bare fordi jeg tillater at det blir stilt. Derfor vil jeg svare deg med ords lignelser. Du spør om hvorfor det ene barn dør i sin moders liv, mens det andre kommer frem levende. Grunnen er denne: All styrke i en barnekropp stammer fra fars og mors sæd, men om det som unnfanges, på grunn av svakheter hos faren eller moren, frykter og i sannhet ikke har tilstrekkelig styrke, dør det snart. Meget beror på foreldrenes forsømmelighet og ubetenksomhet, og meget skjer gjennom min guddommelige rettferdighet, forat det som var forenet desto fortere skulle adskilles. Ikke får sjelen av den grunn (skjønt det ikke i lengre tid har vært den forunt å gi kroppen liv), møte en særlig hård pine, nei, snarere den nåde som er kjent av meg. Likesom solen når den skinner inn i et hus, ikke kan sees slik den er i sin fulle stråleglans på himmelhvelvingen - det er bare dens stråler man ser - således møter slike barns sjeler, skjønt de på grunn av dåpens savn ikke får se mitt åsyn, snarere miskunn enn straff, selv om de ikke får lodd og del med mine utvalgte.» [6, 1]

7. Hvorfor rammes de rettferdige av så megen motgang, mens de urettferdige får alle sine ønsker oppfylt? «På spørsmålet om hvorfor de rettferdige rammes av motganger, svarer jeg ennvidere: Min rettferdighet er den at ethvert rettferdig menneske skal få hva det ønsker seg. Men den er ikke rettferdig som ikke lenges etter å rammes av motgang for lydighets og rettferdighets skyld, og som ikke av kjærlighet til Gud gjør godt mot sin neste. Mine venner må tenke på hva jeg, deres Gud og Gjenløser, har gjort, og hva jeg har lovet dem, samtidig som de skal gi akt på den ondskap som råder i verden; derfor skal de også til min ære, ønske sin egen frelse og syndfrihet, og snarere ønske seg motgang enn medgang her i verden. Slik vil de kunne spares for fristelse. Og derfor tillater jeg også at mine hemsøkes av prøvelser, og selv om noen av dem bærer sine gjenvordigheter med ringe tålmod, tillater jeg ikke dette uten grunn og står dem bi i prøvelsens stund.

Når en sønn i barndommens år tuktes av sin elskede mor, har han ikke forstand nok til å takke henne, da han ikke kan bedømme av hvilken grunn han ble straffet, men når han derimot har nådd frem til moden alder, takker han henne fordi han gjennom hennes moderlige tukt er blitt ledet bort fra de onde seder og har vennet seg til gode. Slik gjør jeg med mine utvalgte, for de overgir sin vilje til meg og elsker meg over alle ting. Derfor hjemses de av gjenvordigheter i noen tid, og skjønt de i dette liv ikke fullt ut forstår mine velgjerninger, gjør jeg dog det som vil være dem til gagn i fremtiden. Men de ugudelige bryr seg ikke om rettferdighet, frykter heller ikke å tilføye andre urett, de begjærer det forgjengelige og elsker alle jordiske nydelser, derfor lar min rettferdighet dem nyde fremgang en tid, og de skånes for plager, forat de ikke skal synde enda mer, om de rammes av motgang. Dog får ikke alle de onde det de begjærer, for de skal lære at det står i min makt å gi til hvem jeg vil. Selv de utakknemlige gir jeg hva godt er, selv om de ikke fortjener det.» [6, 2]

8. Hvorfor kommer døden så plutselig at den bare ytterst sjelden kan forutsees? «På spørsmålet om hvorfor døden kommer så plutselig, svarer jeg envidere: Om mennesket kjente sin dødsstund, ville det tjene meg av frykt, og slite i sorg. Forat menneskene skal tjene meg i kjærlighet, og stadig nære bekymring for seg selv; men være trygge på meg, er timen for alles bortgang usikker. Og slik er det med rette, for da mennesket forkastet det som er sant og sikkert, var det nødvendig og rettferdig at det skulle plages av det som er usikkert.» [6, 4]

9. Og da nu helvedes plager er forferdelige over enhver beskrivelse, hvorfor lar du da ikke menneskene få se dem i dette liv; slik at de kan unngå dem? «På spørsmålet hvorfor helvedes plager ikke er synlige, svarer jeg envidere: Om helvedes plager ble synlige slik de er, da ville menneskene bli stive av forskrekkelse, og de ville strebe etter det himmelske av redsel og ikke av kjærlighet. Men da ingen bør etterstrebe himmelens gleder av frykt for straff, men alene av kjærlighet til Gud, holdes helvedes plager skjult. Og likesom de gode og hellige ikke vil få smake den uutsigelige fryd, slik den er, før kropp og sjel er skilt fra hverandre, skal heller ikke de onde møte helvedes kvaler før sjelen er skilt fra kroppen; men da skal de erfare dem, som de ikke ville feste tiltro til mens de kunne det.» [8, 4]

10. Hvorfor er det ikke like lyst om natten som om dagen? «På spørsmålet om hvorfor det ikke er dag til enhver tid, vil jeg svare med en lignelse. Under hver eneste vogn er det hjul, forat lasset skal kunne trille desto lettere. Bakhjulene kommer etter forhjulene. På lignende måte forholder det seg i det åndelige liv. Verden er nemlig et stort lass, som tynger menneskene med bekymring og gjenvordigheter. Det er ikke noe merkverdig i dette, for da mennesket forsmådde hvilens gave, var det bare rettferdig at det fikk stifte bekjentskap

med arbeidets sted. Forat nu denne verdens byrder lettere skal tåles av mennesket, er det i barmhjertighet ordnet slik at tider veksler og at dag følger etter natt, varme på kulde, for menneskets virksomhets og hviles skyld. Det er jo fornuftig at der motsetninger møtes, nemlig det sterke og det svake, der må man gjøre innrømmelser overfor det svake, forat det skal kunne bestå ved siden av det sterke, ellers ville jo det svake tilintetgjøres. Slik forholder det seg også med menneskene. Skjønt de gjennom sin udødelige sjels kraft skulle kunne leve standhaftig i betraktning og arbeide, ville det på grunn av kroppens svakhet, bli svekket, og derfor ble både lyset og natten skapt: lyset forat mennesket skulle dele lodd med både de høye og lave ting, arbeide om dagen og erindre skjønnheten i det evige lys det har mistet, natten forat det skulle få hvile sin kropp og være villig til å komme til det sted hvor det hverken finnes natt eller arbeide, men evig dag og evig ære.» [9, 5]

11. Hvorfor ville du hvile så lenge i jomfruens skjød, og hvorfor kom du ikke straks frem, da du var avlet? «På spørsmålet hvorfor jeg hvilte så lenge i jomfruens skjød, svarer jeg ennvidere: Jeg er all naturs skaper, og for hver natur har jeg bestemt på tilbørlig måte, tid og ordning til å fødes. Om nu jeg, Skaperen, fremgikk av moderkjødet straks jeg var unnfanget, hadde jeg handlet i strid med den naturlige ordning, og min menneskevorden ville ha blitt mystisk og ikke ekte. Jeg ville altså være i moderlivet like lenge som andre barn, for også med meg selv å oppfylle den naturens orden som jeg så viselig hadde innrettet.» [10, 3]

12. Hvorfor ville du, som er unnfanget og født uten synd, la deg døpe? «På spørsmålet hvorfor jeg ville døpes svarer jeg ennvidere: Hver og en som vil anlegge eller opparbeide en ny vei, bør selv gå foran på denne vei. Nu hadde jødefolket ratt en kjødelig vei, nemlig omskjærelsen, til tegn på lydighet og fremtidig renhet; hos de troende og lovlydige utvirke t den, før den lovede sannhet (d.vs. jeg, Guds Sønn) kom, noe av den kommende nåde og løftets oppfyllelse. Men det var bestemt fra evighet av at eftersom loven ikke var noe annet enn en skygge, skulle den gamle vei forsvinne og miste sin virkning når sannheten kom.

Forat sannheten skulle tre frem, skyggen vike og en lettere vei til himmelen åpenbares, ville jeg, Gud og menneske, som er født uten synd, la meg døpe av ydmykhet og som et eksempel for andre for å åpne himmelen for de dømte troende. Til tegn på dette åpnet himmelen seg da jeg ble døpt, Faderens røst hørtes, og den Hellige Ånd åpenbaret seg i en dues skikkelse, og jeg, Guds Sønn, viste meg i menneskeskikkelse, for at de Kristustroende skulle både vite og tro at Faderen åpner himmelen for de dømte troende. Den Hellige Ånd er med den døpende og med min manndoms kraft i vannets element, for min Faders, min egen og den Hellige Ånds virksomhet og vilje er en og den samme. Da sannheten kom, d.v.s. da jeg, som er sannheten kom til verden, da forsvant skyggen straks, lovens skall ble

brutt og kjernen kom til syne; omskjærelsen opphørte, og i meg ble dåpen stadfestet, hvorigjennom himmelriket åpnes for gamle og unge, og vredens barn blir nådens og det evige livs barn.» [10, 6]

13. Hvorfor lot du ikke alle dine ord bli hørt i ett og samme øyeblikk, da hadde det ikke vært nødvendig å forkynne dem over så lang tid? «På spørsmål om hvorfor jeg ikke talte alle mine ord i en og samme stund, svarer jeg videre: Likesom det på det materielle område strider mot kroppens natur at den på en gang inntar så meget føde at den kunne få næring nok for mange år fremover, så er det også mot den guddommelige plan at mine ord, som er sjelens føde, alle skulle uttales samtidig; nei, på samme måte som den legemlige føde inntas litt etter litt for å tygges og derefter føres videre til innvollene, så skal ikke alle mine ord utsies i en og samme stund, men med mellomrum, avpasset etter deres forstand, som skal vinne lærdom, slik at den sultne skulle få noe å bli mett av og den mette skulle vekkes til høyere ting.» [11, 2]

14. «O dommer, jeg spør deg: Hvorfor ville du heller fødes av en jomfru enn av noen annen kvinne som ikke var jomfru?» «Min venn jeg ville heller fødes av en jomfru enn av en kvinne som ikke var jomfruelig, for, for meg, den reneste Gud, var det bare den reneste som sømmet seg. Sålenge menneskets natur befant seg i den tilstand den var skapt i, var det intet vanskapt ved den, men da Herrens bud ble overtrådd, oppstod det straks noe man måtte skamme seg over, slik som det hender for mennesker, som synder mot sin jordiske herre og som må skamme seg til og med over de legemsdeler de har syndet med.

Med skammen over lovbruddet kom også en uregjerlig drift og mest i det lem som ble skapt for fruktbarhets skyld. Men forat denne drift ikke skulle være uten nytte og fruktbarheten ikke skulle bli tilintetgjort, ble denne gjennom Guds godhet vendt til det gode, og gjennom Guds bud og forordning ble det kjødlige samkverns handling tillatt, slik at naturen kunne forøkes. Imidlertid er det mer ærefullt å strekke seg høyere enn budet krever og i kjærlighet legge til hva godt man kan. Derfor behaget det Gud å velge ut til sitt verk det, som strebet mot en større renhet og kjærlighet, for det er mer kraftfullt og fornemt å være i hjemsøkelsens ild og dog ikke brenne enn å være uten ild og likevel ville kronen. Da nu jomfrueligheten er en snarvei til himmelen, men ekteskapet likesom bare en vei, behaget det meg, den aller reneste Gud, å hvile i den reneste jomfru. Det første menneske ble skapt på jord, og jorden var så å si jomfruelig, eftersom den ikke var flekket av blod; og Adam og Eva syndet i fråtseri, da de spiste av den forbudne frukt, hvorved deres natur, d.v.s. fruktbarhetens natur, forble ufordervet og uskadet. På sådan måte ville jeg, Gud, tas imot i det aller reneste oppbevaringsrum, slik at alt skulle fornyes og gjenskapes ved min godhet.» [12, 1]

15. Hvorfor flyktet du til Egypten for Herodes skyld og lot de uskyldige barn bli drept? «På spørsmålet hvorfor jeg flyktet til Egypten, svarer jeg ennvidere: «Før Guds bud ble brutt, fantes det en eneste vei til himmelen, bred og lys var den; bred i dyders overflod og skinnende klar i den guddommelige visdoms og den gode viljes lydighet. Siden viljen ble forandret, oppstod det imidlertid to veier, av hvilke den ene førte til himmelen, og den andre bort fra den. Det var lydigheten som førte til himmelen, og ulydigheten som førte bort fra den. Da det nu berodde på menneskets frie valg å velge det gode eller det onde, å lystre eller ikke lystre, så syndet den som ville noe annet enn det jeg, Gud, ville at han skulle velge.

Forat mennesket skulle bli frelst, var det altså rett og rimelig at det kom en som gjenløste det og som selv hadde den fullkomne lydighet og uskyldighet, en, hos hvem de som ville det kunne se kjærlighet, og de som ville det, kunne se ondskap. Men for å gjenløse mennesket skulle ingen engel bli sendt, for jeg, Gud, tildeler ingen annen den ære som tilkommer meg. Det finnes ikke det menneske som makter å forsonliggjøre meg ved egen kraft; hvor meget mindre da for en annens? Derfor kom jeg, Gud, den ene rettferdige, for å rettferdiggjøre alle. Den omstendighet at jeg flyktet til Egypten viste min menneskenatures svakhet og bragte profetiene til fullbyrdelse, og derved gav jeg det eksempel til de kommende slekter at man stundom må gi etter for forfølgelsen, forat Gud i fremtiden skal vinne desto større ære.

Og at jeg ikke ble funnet av forfølgerne, det viser at min guddoms råd seiret over menneskenes - det er jo ikke lett å stride mot Gud. At barna ble drept, det var et tegn på min kommende lidelse og mitt hemmelige samfunn med dem, som skulle bli kalt og med den guddommelige kjærlighet. Skjønt disse barn ikke bar vidnesbyrd om meg med røst og munn, gjorde de det dog ved sin død, og hedret min barndom, for det var forutbestemt at Guds lov skulle fullkommes ved de små barns blod. For skjønt de urettferdiges ondskap med urette plaget dem, så skjedde det dog med min guddommelige tillatelse, som alltid er mild og rettferdig, og det for å vise menneskenes ondskap og min guddoms ubegripelige nåde og godhet. Der den urettferdige ondskap raste mot guttebarna, der fløt også fortjenesten og nåden i overmål over, og der tungens bekjennelse og alderen manglet, der samlet blodsutgydelsene det mest fullkomne gode.» [12, 4]

16. O dommer, jeg spør deg: Hvorfor tas din nåde så fort bort fra noen, og hvorfor bærer du så lenge over med andre i deres ondskap? «Min venn, alle mine gjerninger ligger fra begynnelsen av i min forutviten, og alt som er skapt, er skapt til glede for mennesket. Men

da mennesket setter sin egen vilje fremfor min, blir det med rette fratatt de gode ting som fritt er gitt mennesket, slik at det skal vite at alt er forstandig og rettferdig i Guds rike. Og da mange er utakknemlige overfor min nåde, ja, blir desto mer ugudelige jo mer de får av gavene, berøves de de samme gaver tidlig, slik at min guddoms beslutning desto snarere skal bli åpenbart, slik at mennesket ikke misbruker min nåde, til større straffedom for det selv. Og grunnen til at manges ondskap blir tålt så lenge, er den at mange - midt i sin ondskap - har den doble egenskap at de enten kan være mennesker til gagn eller også tjene dem til advarsel.

Da Saul ble klandret av Samuel, syntes det som han hadde syndet lite i menneskers øyne, David derimot mer. Men da prøvelsens time kom, falt Saul, ulydig som han var, bort fra meg, sin Gud, og spurte en trollkvinne til råds, mens David, da hjem søkelsen rammet ham, ble mere trofast og bar med tålmodighet det som ble lagt på ham, og mente at dette tilsvarte hva hans synder fortjente. At jeg tålmodig foretrakk Saul, det åpenbarer Sauls utakknemlighet og min guddommelige tålmodighet, men at David ble utvalgt, viser min forutvitenhet samt Davids fremtidige ydmykhet og anger.» [13, 1]

17. Og hvorfor må noen lide over all måte, mens andre går nesten fri for lidelse? «På spørsmålet om hvorfor noen må lide mere enn andre, svarer jeg ennvidere: Jeg er alles Skaper. Derfor kommer ingen lidelse uten min tillatelse som skrevet står. Jeg er med andre ord en Gud som skaper det onde, jeg tillater bedrøvelse, og slik rammes ikke hedningen av lidelse uten meg eller uten en fornuftig grunn. Mine profeter forutsa jo meget om hedningenes hjem søkeiser, forat de som var glemske og misbrukte sin forstand, skulle oppdras av sine prøvelser, og jeg, Gud, som tillater alt, skulle bli kjent og opphøyet av alle folk.

Om nu jeg, Gud, ikke skåner hedningene for tukdens ris, så skal jeg enda mindre skåne dem som så rikelig har fått smake min guddom~elige nådes sødme. At noen lider mindre, andre mer, det skjer forat menneskene skal vende seg bort fra synden og efter plagene i dette liv, få trøst i det kommende. Alle som dømmes og som dømmer seg selv i denne verden, skal slippe den kommende dom. De skal, som skrevet står, gå fra døden til livet. Og at noen skånes for plager, det skjer forat de ikke skal forledes av plagene til å murre og knurre, og således pådra seg en strengere dom, for det finnes mange som ikke har fortjent å bli tuktet i dette liv. Det finnes til og med de som hverken har vært hjem søkt av kroppslig eller åndelig lidelse i dette liv og som lever så trygge som om Gud ikke var til eller som om han ville skåne dem for deres rettferds gjerningers skyld. Men de burde i særlig grad frykte og sørge slik at ikke jeg, Gud, som skåner dem i det nuværende liv, skal dømme dem desto hårdere i det neste (hva de ikke har forutsett) fordi de ikke angrer. Det finnes også de som

har kroppens helse, men hvis sjel lider under at de spotter Gud. Andre nyder hverken kroppens eller sjelens indre trøst, men tjener og hedrer meg dog etter evne. Noen hjemsøkes like fra moders liv og til slutten av sykdommer, men jeg, deres Gud, tilrnåler deres lidelser slik, at intet skjer uten årsak og uten belønning, for mange som sov før hjemsøkelsene, får sine øyne åpnet gjennom ulykkene.» [13, 3]

18, O dommer, jeg spør deg: Hvorfor lider dyrene slike hjemsøkelser, de som ikke skal få det evige liv og ikke har noen forstand å bruke? «Min venn, visstnok er dette spørsmål ikke inspirert av kjærlighet, men jeg vil likevel svare deg av hensyn til den kjærlighet andre kan ha. Du spør hvorfor dyrene lider av sykdommer. Det beror på at alt er underordnet hos dem, likesom hos andre vesener. Jeg er jo den som har skapt alle naturer, og hver eneste natur gav jeg dens lynne og særpreg, som den skulle bevege seg i og leve i. Men siden mennesket, for hvis skyld alt ble skapt, gjorde opprør mot meg, dets Gud som elsket det, kom også alt annet ut av lage, og alt det som ellers burde hatt ærefrykt for mennesket, begynte å reise seg mot det, og denne manglende orden er skyldig i at allehånde hjemsøkelser og prøvelser rammer dyr likevel som mennesker.

Forøvrig lider dyrene iblant for sin naturlige umettelighets skyld, iblant forat deres natur skal temmes og lutres, og iblant på grunn av menneskenes synder, slik at mennesket, når det som det elsker plages og bukker under, skal tenke over, hvor tung straff det er verdig, det som har fått en høyere forstand. Om ikke menneskenes synder krever det, skulle ikke dyrene, som jo er i menneskenes hender, plages så meget. Dog lider de ikke urettferdig, for enten rammes de forat livet hastigere skal ta slutt eller forat lidelsen og smerten skal minskes og den sterke natur tæres hen eller på grunn av tidenes omskiftelighet eller menneskenes skjødesløshet, når de bruker dyrene til å arbeide. Menneskene må altså mer enn alle andre frykte meg, sin Gud, og være desto mildere mot de vesener jeg har skapt og mot dyrene, som de må forbarme seg over for min, Skaperens, skyld. Jeg, Gud, befalte jo mennesket å overholde sabbaten, for jeg verner hele mitt skaperverk.» [14, 1]

19. Hvorfor blir dine venner ikke alltid belønnet når de ber? «På spørsmålet hvorfor mine venner ikke alltid blir bønnhørt av meg når de anroper meg sine bønner, svarer jeg ennvidere: Jeg er likesom en mor som ser at hennes sønn ber om noe som er skadelig for ham og derfor unnlater å oppfylle hans ønske, idet hun demper hans gråt med sine advarsler. En slik advarsel innebærer ikke vrede, men stor, varm kjærlighet. Slik bønnhører jeg, Gud, ikke alltid mine venner, for jeg ser bedre enn de hva som er nyttig for deres velferd. Mon ikke Paul us og andre bad fromt uten å bli bønnhørt?

Blant alle sine mange dyder, har mine venner noen svakheter, noe de skal renses for, og derfor bønnhøres de ikke. Det er jo meningen at de skal bli så meget ydmykere og mere brennende i sin kjærlighet til meg, jo større de har sett at din kjærlighet er, ved hvilken jeg bevarer dem uskadde fra fristelsen til synd. Det er således et bevis på stor kjærlighet at mine venner ikke alltid bønnhøres, og det innbringer dem større fortjeneste og tjener til å prøve deres standhaftighet. For likesom djevelen forsøker å besudle de rettferdiges liv og levned gjennom en foraktelig død, for på den måte å få de Kristustroendes standhaftighet til å vakle, slik lar jeg - ikke uten årsak - den rettferdige prøves, forat hans fasthet skal fremtre for andre og han selv bli kronet desto mere ærefullt. Og likesom djevelen ikke undser seg for å friste sine (han ser jo at de er rede til synd), så lar jeg for noen tid være å skåne mine utvalgte, eftersom jeg ser at de er rede til alt godt.» [15, 3]

20. Om ennvidere din Hellige Ånd talte i evangelistene, hvorfor avviker da evangeliene så meget fra hverandre? «Du spør ennvidere om hvorfor det ikke er bedre samsvar mellom evangelistene, siden det var den Hellige Ånd som talte til dem. Jeg gir følgende svar: Det står skrevet at den Hellige Ånd er mangfoldig i sine gjerninger, for den fordeler på mange måter sine gaver blant sine utvalgte. Den Hellige Ånd er som en mann, som har en vekt i hånden og på mange vis balanserer vektskålene og tilpasser dem efter hverandre, til vekten hviler i likevekt. En slik vektskål behandles forskjellig aven som er vant til dette og en som er uvant, forskjellig av den sterke og den svake.

Slik stiger den Hellige Ånd, som en vekt, stundom opp i menneskenes hjerter og stundom ned igjen. Han stiger opp, når han løfter sinnet igjennom forstandens fine skarpsindighet, gjennom sjelens andakt og derved at den tenner begjæret efter ånd. Han stiger ned, når han lar sinnet innvikles i vanskeligheter, unødige angst og lar det hjemsøkes av bedrøvelser. Og likesom en vekt ikke har noen fast likevekt, om ikke det som legges på skålene er avveiet av den hånd som styrer den, så er det også i den Hellige ånds gjerning nødvendig med en fint beregnet avveining, et godt liv, enkel og redelig hensikt samt klok dømmekraft i gjerninger og dyder.

Da jeg, Guds Sønn, åpenbart i kjød, talte om forskjellige ting på forskjellige steder, fikk jeg også forskjellige følgesvenner og tilhørere, for noen fulgte meg av kjærlighet, noen for å oppnå gevinst eller av nysgjerrighet, og noen av dem som fulgte meg var skarpsindige, andre mindre begavet. Derfor talte jeg enkle ting som enkle mennesker kunne vokse på, og jeg talte også om høyere ting, som fylte de vise med forundring. Stundom talte jeg i lignelser og dunkelt, (og dette gav enkelte anledning til å kritisere meg), stundom gjentok jeg det jeg før hadde sagt, stundom øket jeg det eller forminsket det. Det er således ikke underlig om de som har nedtegnet evangelienes fortellinger, har tatt med ulike, men dog

sanne ting. Noen av dem har føyet ord til ord, noen av dem har gjengitt ordenes betydning men ikke ordene selv, noen har beskrevet det som de har hørt men ikke sett, noen har fortalt om det tidligste mot slutten, andre har fortalt mere om min guddom, ja, hver og en har talt slik den Hellige Ånd har unnet ham å tale. Imidlertid vil jeg du skal vite at bare de evangelister som min Kirke anerkjenner, skal godtas. Mange som har hatt flid og glød, har nemlig forsøkt å skrive, dog ikke i overensstemmelse med den kunnskap jeg bragte.

Se, jeg har sagt, slik det ble lest i tekstenes ord idag: Bryt templet ned, så skal jeg bygge det opp igjen. De som har vidnet om at de hørte dette, var sannferdige i forhold til det ord de hadde hørt. Men dog var de falske vidner eftersom de ikke gav akt på mine ords innhold - disse skulle jo oppfattes som talt om min egen kropp. Likeså gikk mange bort og sa: «Om I ikke eter mitt kjød, skal I ikke leve» fordi de ikke festet seg ved det tillegg jeg talte: «Mine ord er liv og ånd», d.v.s. de har åndelig innhold og kraft. Det er ikke underlig at disse for vill, for de fulgte meg ikke av kjærlighet. Den Hellige Ånd hever seg som en bølge i menneskenes hjerter, snart ved å tale legemlig, snart ved å tale åndelig. Den synker ned igjen, når menneskets hjerte forherder seg mot Gud, innvikles i vranglære eller verdslig forfengelighet - og formørkes.» [16, 3]

Bok 6

KAPITTEL 6.

«JEG ER DIN SKAPER OG BRUDGOM. Du, min nye brud, har syndet firedobbelt i vrede. For det første fordi du var hissig i ditt hjerte på grunn av de ord som hadde falt. Jeg utstod pisking for din skyld, og da jeg stod for dommen, svarte jeg ikke med et eneste ord. For det andre syndet du da du svarte så hårdt og hevet stemmen da du ble bebreidet. Da jeg hang fastnaglet på korset, så jeg opp mot himmelen og åpnet ikke min munn. For det tredje syndet du da du foraktet meg, for hvis skyld du tålmodig burde tåle alt. For det fjerde syndet du da du ikke gavet godt eksempel til din neste, som for vill, og som ved din tålmodighet burde ha vært oppfordret til det som bedre er. Derfor vil jeg at du ikke mer skal vredes. Om du av noen blir forledet til vrede, så tal ikke før vreden har forlatt din sjel. Og når sjelens opprørthet har lagt seg og årsaken til din opprørthet er nøye gjennomtenkt, må du tale med saktmodighet. Men om du ser at du ikke gjør noe nyttig ved å tale og at du ikke synder ved å tie, er det bedre å tie, for da får du en. større belønning.»

KAPITTEL 13.

SØNNEN TALER TIL BRUDEN: «Du bør ha tre ting. For det første bør du gå bare etter min vilje. For det andre bør du ikke sitte annet enn til min heder. For det tredje bør du ikke stå annet enn til din brudgoms nytte. Du går etter min vilje når du innretter all din tid etter meg, når du hverken spiser eller sover eller gjør annet uten på den måte som du forstår er til Guds behag. Du står støtt når du har vilje til å stå i min tjeneste. Du sitter når du bestandig oppløfter ditt sinn til det himmelske og tenker over hvor herlig helgenenes ære og hvor herlig det evige liv er.

Til disse tre ting bør du legge tre andre: For det første bør du være beskaffet som en jomfru, som skal troloves og tenker ved seg selv: «Alt jeg kan få av fars gods, som er forgjengelig, skal jeg samle til min brudgom, som jeg skal leve med i nød og motgang.» Slik bør også du gjøre, for din kropp er likesom din far, og av den bør du alltid kreve alt det arbeide som du makter å gjøre til nytte for de fattige, og andre gode gjerninger, for at du slik må kunne glede deg med meg som brudgom. Da din kropp er forgjengelig, bør du ikke skåne den i denne verden, men behandle den slik at den kan oppstå til et bedre liv i den kommende verden.

For det andre bør du tenke ved deg selv det som en god hustru tenker ved seg selv: «Om min mann elsker meg, har jeg da noen grunn til bekymring? Om han lever i fred med meg, hvem behøver jeg da å frykte? Derfor skal jeg, forat han ikke må vredes mot meg, vise ham heder og alltid være rede til å følge hans vilje.» For det tredje må du tenke i ditt stille sinn at din brudgom er evig og den rikeste av alle og at du med ham skal få evig heder og evige rikdommer. La derfor være å elske det forgjengelige, slik at du skal vinne frem til det som skal evig vare.»

KAPITTEL 39.

EN DJEVEL VISTE SEG VED GUDS DOMSTOL med sjelen til en avdød; den skalv som et skjelvende hjerte. Djevelen sa til dommeren: «Se, for et bytte. Din engel og jeg fulgte denne sjel fra begynnelse til slutt, han for å beskytte den og jeg for å skade den. Vijaget den begge slikjegere gjør, men til sist falt den i mine hender. Jeg var så ivrig og heftig etter å vinne den som en fallende foss, som ikke kan stanses om den ikke møter en hindring.

Hindringen er din rettferdighet, men den har ennå ikke vist seg for denne sjels skyld. Derfor eier jeg den ennå ikke sikkert. Jeg attrår den så brennende som et dyr som er fortært av sult, og som av sult kan ete endog sine egne lemmer. Da du er den rettferdige dommer, er det altså du som må felle en rettferdig dom over denne sjel.»

Dommeren svarte: «Hvorfor falt sjelen akkurat i dine hender, og hvorfor var du den nærmere enn min engel?» Djevelen svarte: «Fordi dens synder var flere enn dens gode gjerninger.» Dommeren sa: «Vis meg hva slags gjerninger det var,» Djevelen svarte: «Jeg har en bok som er full skrevet av dens synder.» Dommeren spurte: «Hva heter boken?» Djevelen svarte: «Dens navn er Ulydighet. I den boken er det syv bøker, og hver bok har tre spalter. Hver spalte har mer enn tusen ord. Ingen bok har mindre enn tusen, men noen har mange fler.» Dommeren sa: «Si hva disse bøkene heter, for skjønt jeg vet alt, vil jeg dog at du skal tale, forat din vilje og min godhet skal bli åpenbare for andre.»

Djevelen svarte: «Den første boken heter Hovmod, og i den finnes det tre spalter. Den første handler om åndelig hovmod i tankene, for han hovmodet seg over sitt gode liv; som han trodde var bedre enn andres. Han hovmodet seg også over sin forstand og sine tanker, som etter hans mening var bedre enn andres. Den andre spalten viser at han hovmodet seg over de rikdommer som var blitt ham forunt. Av den tredje fremgår det at han hovmodet seg over sine lemmers velskapthet og over sin fornemme slekt og sine gjerninger. Og i disse tre spalter er utallige ord, slik du selv vet det best. Den andre boken handler om hans begjær. Den hadde tre spalter. Den første var viet hans åndelige begjær, for han trodde ikke at hans synder var så tunge som det ble sagt, og på uverdige vis attrådte han Himmels rike, det som bare tilkommer den fullkomment rene. Den andre spalte forteller at han begjærte mer i verden enn hva nødvendig var, og at hans vilje bare gikk ut på å opphøye eget navn og egen slekt, slik at han kunne oppfostre sine arvinger og gjøre dem mektige, men ikke til din heder, bare til verdens. Den tredje spalte vidner om at han begjærte verdslig heder og det å stå høyere enn andre. Og i disse spalter er, slik du selv vet det best, utallige ord, de ord hvormed han efterstreber yndest og vennskap og erhvervet seg timelige goder.

Den tredje bok handler om hans misunnelse. Den har tre spalter. Den første handler om misunnelsen i hans sinn, for han mislikte i sitt stille sinn alle dem som hadde mer eller gjorde større lykke enn han selv. Den andre var at han tok av deres eiendeler av ren misunnelse, tok fra dem som hadde mindre enn han og hadde større behov enn han. Den tredje viste at han av misunnelse i det skjulte skadet sin neste ved sine råd og åpenbart, i såvel råd som i gjerning, såvel ved egen kratt som ved sine medhjelperes samt at han egget andre til å gjøre det samme. Den fjerde bok heter Gjerrighet. I den var det tre spalter. Den

første handlet om gjerrighet i sinnet, for han ville ikke røpe for andre ting han visste og som andre kunne få trøst eller nytte av, idet han tenkte for seg selv: «Hva nytte får jeg av at jeg gir den eller den dette råd? Hva godt får jeg av at jeg bistår den eller den med råd eller ord? Og så gikk den nødstedte bort fra ham, ikke belært og opplyst, hvilket han meget vel kunne ha blitt, om bare mannen hadde hatt god vilje til å opplyse ham. Den andre spalten viste at når han var istand til å forlike folk som lå i tvist, ville han ikke gjøre det. Og når han kunne trøste bedrøvede, brød han seg ikke om å gjøre det. Den tredje spalten fortalte om hans gjerrighet med egen eiendom, for om han måtte ut med en eneste penning i ditt navn, ble han engstelig og bekymret, men gav gjerne ut hundre for verdens heder.

I disse spalter er utallige ord, som du best vet selv, for du vet alt, og ingenting kan skjules for deg; men ved din makt tvinger du meg til å tale, fordi du vil at andre skal ha gavn av det. Den femte bok heter Dovenskap, og den har tre spalter. For det første var han doven i gjerning, når det gjaldt å gjøre gode gjerninger til din ære og å oppfylle dine bud. Han spilte tid med å hvile sin kropp; kroppens hvile og vellyst var ham nemlig kjærest av alt. For det andre var han doven i tankene, for da din gode ånd inn gav ham anger eller åndelig innsikt, syntes han dette var drepende kjedelig, og han ledet sine tanker bort fra de åndelige tanker, men hver verdslig glede syntes ham behagelig og kjær. For det tredje var han doven i munnen, d.v.s. til å be og til å tale om det, som kunne ha vært til nytte for andre og til din ære, men han var meget ivrig når det gjaldt lettferdig tale. Hvor uendelig mange ord som finnes i disse spalter, det er det bare du som vet.

Den sjette bok heter Vrede. Den har tre spalter. Den første viste at han var vred på sin neste for ting som ikke var til gavn for ham selv: Den andre spalten vidnet om at han i vrede skadet sin neste i gjerning, og endog i vrede berøvet ham hva hans var. Det tredje var at han foruroliget sin neste med vrede. Den syvende bok viste hans usedelighet. Også den har tre spalter. Den første viste at han utgjød sin sæd på vill og utilbørlig måte. For skjønt han var gift og ikke forsyndet seg mot andre kvinner, utgjød han dog sin sæd ved dvelende omfavnelser og andre uanstendige geberder. Han forledet nemlig ikke bare sin hustru til hetere lyst, men lokket ofte ved sine ord også andre til å lytte til og tenke på lettferdige ting. Den tredje spalte viste at han næret sin kropp på lekrierer, idet han lot mange fine retter tilberede for seg til større stimulans for kroppen, for å prises og kalles stor av mennesker. Det finnes mer enn tusen ord i disse spalter. Han satt ved bordet lengre tid enn hva han burde, gav ikke akt på den tid som ble ham forunt, talte på upassende vis og spiste mer enn hva naturen ville. Se, o dommer, nu er min bok slutt. La denne sjel tilfalle meg ved din dorn.»

Dommeren tiet, men barmhjertighetens moder, som før hadde stått lenger borte, nærmet seg og sa: «Min sønn, jeg vil disputere med denne djevel om rettferdighet.» Sønnen svarte henne: «Kjæreste moder, når rettferdigheten ikke nektes djevelen, hvordan skulle den da nektes deg, som er min moder og englenes herskerinne? Du kan alt og vet alt i meg, men du taler for at min kjærlighet skal bli kjent for andre.» Moderen sa nu til djevelen: «Jeg befaler deg, djevel, at du svarer meg på de tre ting jeg nu spør deg om. Skjønt du gjør dette ugjerne, må du dog gjøre det i rettferdighetens navn, for jeg er din herskerinne. Si meg: Kjenner du, mon, alle menneskers tanker?» Djevelen svarte: «Jeg kjenner bare dem som jeg kan bedømme ut fra deres ytre fremtreden og indre disposisjon, samt dem som jeg selv har inngitt dem i hjertet, for skjønt jeg har mistet min verdighet, ble det dog så meget igjen av min fine natur og min visdom at jeg fra et menneskes adferd vil kunne slutte meg til dets sjelstilstand, men menneskenes gode tanker kan jeg ikke lære å kjenne.»

Da sa den milde jomfru atter til djevelen: «Si meg, du djevel, skjønt du ugjerne gjør det, hva er det som kan utviske skriften i din bok?» Djevelen svarte: «Intet annet enn en ting kan utviske den, og det er kjærlighet til Gud. For den som får denne kjærlighet i sitt hjerte, utviskes straks det som står skrevet om ham i min bok, hvor stor synder han enn måtte være.» Jomfruen sa for tredje gang: «Si meg, djevel, om det finnes noen, som er så uren synder og står så fjernt fra min Sønn at han ikke kan vinne nåden igjen, så lenge han lever i verden?»

Djevelen svarte: «Nei, ingen er så syndig at han ikke kan forbedre seg mens han lever, om han bare vil, for om noen, hvor stor synder han enn er, forvandler sin onde vilje til god, gripes av kjærlighet til Gud og vil holde fast ved den, da kan ingen djevler beholde ham.» Da sa barmhjertighetens moder til dem som stod omkring: «Mot slutten av sitt liv henvendte denne sjel seg til meg og sa: «Du er barmhjertighetens moder og den som forbarmer deg over de elendige. Jeg er uverdigg til å be til din Sønn, for mine synder er så tunge og mangfoldige, og ofte har jeg utfordret ham til vrede, idet jeg mer elsket min lyst og verden enn Gud, min Skaper. Derfor ber jeg at du må forbarme deg over meg, for du nekter ikke din barmhjertighet til noen som ber deg om den. Av denne grunn vender jeg meg til deg og lover deg at om jeg får leve, vil jeg forbedre meg og vende min vilje til din Sønn og ikke elske noen annen enn ham. Men fremfor alt sørger og gråter jeg nu over at jeg intet godt har gjort til din Sønns, min Skapers ære. Derfor ber jeg deg, milde frue, forbarme deg over meg, for jeg har ingen annen å ta tilflukt til.»

Med slike ord og med slike tanker kom denne sjel til meg da det led mot slutten. Burde jeg ikke lytte til den? Hvem fortjener ikke å bønnhøres, når han anroper en annen av hele sitt hjerte og med fast vilje til å forbedre seg? Hvor meget mer må da ikke jeg,

barmhjertighetens moder, høre dem som roper til meg?» Djvelen svarte: «Om en slik vilje visste jeg intet. Men om det er slik du sier, må du fremlegge det med klare bevis.» Moderen svarte: «Du er ikke verdig at jeg svarer deg, men for at det som her vises skal bli andre til gavn, svarer jeg deg. Elendige, du sa nyss at intet annet enn kjærlighet til Gud formår å viske ut skriften i din bok.»

Og nu vendte jomfruen seg til dommeren og sa: «Min Sønn, la djvelen få åpne sin bok, lese og se om alt står der skrevet fullt ut, eller om kanskje noe er utvisket.» Da sa dommeren til djvelen: «Hvor er din bok?». Djvelen svarte: «I min buk.» Dommeren spurte ham: «Hvor er din buk?» Djvelen svarte: «I hukommelsen, for likesom all urenhet og stank er i buken, så er all ondskap og all urettferdighet i min hukommelse, og det stinker som den usleste stank for deg. For da jeg i mitt overmøt falt fra deg og ditt lys, da falt all ondskap på min del, og min hukommelse ble formørket for Guds gode skaperverk, men i denne min hukommelse er alle synderes ondskap skrevet ned.» Da sa dommeren til djvelen: «Jeg befaler deg, djvel, at du ser nøyaktig efter og undersøker i din bok hva som der står skrevet og hva som er utvisket av denne sjels synder, og at du sier det offentlig.»

Og djvelen svarte: «Jeg ser i min bok, men jeg ser at det er skrevet andre ting der enn hva jeg hadde tenkt. Jeg ser nemlig at de syv bøker er visket ut, og intet står igjen av hva som stod der i min bok; det eneste som synes er at det en gang har stått noe skrevet der.» Nu sa dommeren til den gode engel, som stod hos ham: «Hvor er denne sjels gode gjerninger?» Engelen svarte: «Herre, alt er i din forutviden og din kunnskap: det nærværende, det forgangne og det kommende. Vi vet og ser alt i deg - og du i oss. Men da du vil vise din kjærlighet, tilkjennegir du din vilje for dem det behager deg å tilkjennegi den for. Fra første stund, da denne sjel var forenet med kroppen, var jeg bestandig med sjelen. Jeg skrev endog en bok om sjelens gode gjerninger. Det står i din makt om du vil høre denne bok.»

Dommeren svarte: «Jeg kan ikke dømme før jeg har lest og kjenner både hans gode og hans onde gjerninger. Først når disse, på rettferdig vis, er veiet mot hverandre, skal han, slik rettferdigheten krever, dømmes enten til døden eller til livet.» Engelen svarte: Min bok er hans lydighet, den hvormed han adlød deg. Og i den er det syv spalter. Den første er hans dåp, den andre er hans avholdenhet under fasten og fra ulovlige gjerninger og synder, endog fra kjødets lyst og fristelser. Den tredje spalte er hans bønn og hans gode forsetter til din ære. Den fjerde spalte var hans gode gjerninger i almisser og andre barmhjertighetsgjerninger. Den femte spalte var hans håp til deg. Den sjette var hans tro, hans tro som kristen. Den syvende var hans kjærlighet til Gud.»

Da sa dommeren til den gode engel: «Hvor er din bok?» Engelen svarte: «I beskuelsen av deg og i kjærlighet til deg, herre.» Da sa Maria hånende til djevelen: «Hvordan har du tatt vare på din bok, og hvordan har det seg at det som var skrevet i den, er blitt utvisket?» Djevelen ropte: «Ve! Ve! Du har bedratt meg!» Dommeren sa til sin nåderike moder: «Du har på forstandig vis fått en domsavgjørelse i denne sak, og du har rettmessig vunnet denne sjel.» Djevelen skrek: «Jeg har tapt! Jeg er overvunnet! Men si meg, o dommer, hvor lenge får jeg beholde denne sjel, for de utviskede synders skyld.»

Dommeren svarte: «Jeg skal kunngjøre det for deg, for bøkene ligger oppslått og er lest. Men si meg nu, djevel, enskjønt jeg vet alt, om denne sjel rettelig bør tre inn i himmelen eller ikke. Nu lar jeg deg få innsikt i den sanne rettferdighet.» Djevelen svarte: «Hos deg finnes den rettferdighet at om noen går bort fra denne verden uten dødssynd, skal han ikke hjemfalle til helvedes plager, og at hver og en som har kjærlighet til Gud, med rette skal komme til himmelen. Da nu denne sjel ikke forlot verden i en tilstand av dødssynd, men hadde kjærlighet til Gud, er den verdig til å tre inn i himmelens rike, når den er blitt rensset i skjærsilden.»

Dommeren svarte: «Da jeg åpnet din forstand og lot deg se sannhetens og rettferdighetens lys, må du nu i nærvær av dem som det behager meg å gjøre dette kjent for, si hvilken rettferdighet som bør vederfares denne sjel.» Djevelen svarte: «Den må renses slik at det ikke er igjen en eneste flekk på den, for skjønt den vitterlig er dømt til deg, er den dog ennu uren og kan ikke komme til deg før den er lutret. Og da du, dommer, spør meg, spør jeg nu deg på hvilken måte den skal renses, og hvor lenge den skal være i mine hender?» Dommeren svarte: «Det er deg forbudt, Djevel, å gå inn i denne sjel eller sluke den i deg, men du skal rense den til den er blitt helt ren og uten en flekk, for den straff den lider er avpasset etter dens synd. Den syndet trefoldig med syn, trefoldig med hørsel og trefoldig med følelsen. Derfor skal den straffes trefoldig i synet. For det første skal den se sine avskyelige synder. For det andre skal den se deg i din ondskap og i din forferdelige vanskaphet. For det tredje skal den se alle andre sjelers usalighet og forferdelige straff.

Likeså skal den straffes trefold i hørselen. For det første skal den høre forferdelige verop, fordi den ville høre sin egen pris og verdens lyst. For det andre skal den høre djevelens stygge rop og trusler. For det tredje skal den høre forhånelser og uutholdelig elendighet, for den hørte heller og med større glede verdens kjærlighet og yndest enn Guds, og den tjente verden mer nidkjært enn sin Gud. Også i følesansen skal den plages trefold. For det første skal den både innvendig og utvendig brenne i den mest fortærende ild, slik at det ikke finnes den minste flekk på den som ikke er rensset i ild. For det andre skal den utholde den strengeste kulde, for den brant i egen lyst men var kald i sin kjærlighet til meg. For det

tredje skal den være i djevelens hender, slik at det ikke finnes den aller minste tanke eller det minste ord som ikke skal renses, til den blir som gull, som etter eierens vilje blir smeltet i smeltedigelen.

Da sa djevelen igjen: «Hvor lenge skal denne sjel måtte utholde disse straffer?» Dommeren svarte: «Så lenge som det var dens vilje å leve i verden. Og da den var slik at den gjerne ville leve i sin kropp til verdens ende, skal denne straff være like til verdens ende. For slik er min rettferdighet at hver og en som har sin kjærlighet til meg, Gud, og av hele sitt hjerte stunder etter å være hos meg og skilles fra verden, han skal få himmelens rike uten straff, for hans nuværende liv er hans prøvelse og renselse. Den som frykter døden for den bitre dødssmertes skyld og for den kommende straff og som gjerne vil leve lenger for å få anledning til å forbedre seg, han skal få en lett straff i skjærsilden. Men den som vil leve helt til dommedag, han skal, selv om han ikke har begått noen synd, likevel, for denne sin vilje til å leve evig, straffes like til dommedag.»

Da svarte den nåderike moder og sa: «Velsignet være du, min Sønn, for din rettferdighet, som rummer all barmhjertighet i seg. Skjønt vi ser og vet alt i deg, må du likevel, til andres lærdom, si hvilket lægemiddel som må anvendes for at en så lang plagenes tid skal bli forkortet og en så grusom ild bli slukket og hvordan denne sjel skal bli frelst ut av djevelens hender.» Sønnen svarte: «Deg kan jeg intet nekte, for du er min barmhjertighets moder, og du fordeler barmhjertighet og trøst til alle. Det finnes tre ting som kan forkorte en så lang pinselens tid, slukke ilden og befri sjelen fra djevelens hender. Det første er at noen tilbakebetaler for den det han urettmessig tok fra andre eller som han rettmessig selv burde ha gitt tilbake til andre, for det er rettferdig at sjelen renses inntil det den har tatt fra andre er tilbakebetalt til siste skjerv, om nu dette skjer ved helgnesens bønner og gode gjerninger, gjennom venners almisser og gode gjerninger eller ved tilbørlig renselse. Det andre er rikelige almisser. Derved slukkes ilden. Det tredje er at mitt legeme ofres på alteret for sjelen, og at mine venner ber for den. Disse tre ting kan frelse sjelen fra de tre straffer.

Barmhjertighetens moder spurte på nytt: «Hva gagn har han nu av de gode gjerninger han gjorde for deg?» Sønnen svarte: «Du spør ikke fordi du ikke vet (for du vet og ser alt i meg), men fordi du vil åpenbare min kjærlighet for andre. Visselig skal ikke det minste ord eller den minste tanke han tenkte til min heder, forbli uten belønning. Alt det han gjorde for min skyld er nu inne i ham, og i hans pine blir dette ham til svalende trøst, og det gjør at han kjenner mindre hete enn han ellers ville ha gjort.»

Derefter talte Moderen til sin Sønn og sa: «Hvordan går det til at denne sjel står her så urørlig, som en som beveger hverken hender eller føtter mot sine uvenner, og endog er levendes» Dommeren svarte: «Profeten skrev om meg at jeg var som et lam, som er stille overfor dem som klipper det. I sannhet, jeg tiet overfor mine uvenner, og derfor er det rettferdig at denne sjel, fordi den ikke aktet på min død, men anså den for noe ringe, nu er i drapsmenns hender, likesom et barn som ikke formår å rope eller verge seg.»

Moderen svarte: «Velsignet være du, min kjæreste Sønn. Du gjør intet uten rettferdighet. Du har sagt tidligere, min Sønn, at dine venner kan hjelpe denne sjel, og du vet meget godt at denne sjel tjente meg på trefold vis. For det første ved avholdenhet, idet den fastet på vigiliene til mine høytidsdager og da utviste avholdenhet i mitt navn. For det andre ved at den leste mine tidebønner. For det tredje fordi den med egen munn sang til min heder. Eftersom altså du, min Sønn, hører dine venner som roper på jord, så ber jeg deg om at du også må høre meg.»

Sønnen svarte: «Den som er mest elsket av sin herre, er den som fortest blir bønnhørt. Og fordi du er meg kjærere enn alt annet, så ønsk hva du vil, og det skal gis deg.» Moderen svarte: «Denne sjel lider tre straffer i syn, hørsel og ytterligere i følelsessansen. Derfor ber jeg deg, kjæreste Sønn, at du må eftergi ham en av straffene i synet, slik at han ikke ser de forferdelige djevlene, men må utholde de to andre straffene, for det krever din rettferdighet, som jeg ikke makter å sette meg imot, ja, det krever din barmhjertighets rettferdighet. For det andre ber jeg at du må eftergi ham en straff i hørselen, slik at han ikke må høre sin skam og vanheder. For det tredje ber jeg deg at du også må eftergi ham en straff i følelsen, slik at han ikke kjenner den verste kulde, en straff som var ham idømt med rette, for han var kold i sin kjærlyghet til deg.»

Sønnen svarte: «Velsignet være du, kjære moder. Deg kan intet nektes. La det skje, det som du har ønsket.» Moderen svarte: «Velsignet være du, min kjæreste Sønn, for all din kjærlyghet og barmhjertighet.» I det samme øyeblikk viste seg en helgen med en stor hærs-kare og sa: «Lovet være du, Herre Gud, alles Skaper og dommer. Denne sjel tjente meg fromt i sitt liv på jord, for den fastet til min heder og priste både meg og dine venner som her står, med respekt. Derfor ber jeg deg på deres og mine vegne: Forbarm du deg over denne sjel og gi den for våre bønners skyld hvile og lettelse i dens straff, slik at djevlene ikke får makt til å formørke dens bevissthet.

For i sin ondskap kan de fordunkle dens bevissthet slik at sjelen aldri vil makte å håpe på å få oppleve slutten på sin elendighet eller å oppnå herligheten, (hvis det da ikke behager deg

å se til henne i din nåde), og dette er en verre straff for den enn alt annet. Unn den derfor, milde Herre, for våre bønners skyld, i hvilken pine den enn måtte komme, at den må være forvisset om at dens straff skal ta slutt og at den skal oppnå din evige herlighet.»

Dommeren svarte: «Dette er sann rettferdighet, for denne sjel vendte seg ofte bort fra åndelige tanker og betraktninger og til det kroppslige, idet den ville formørke sin samvittighet og ikke fryktet å gjøre meg imot. Derfor er det rettferdig at djevlene nu fordunkler dens bevissthet. Men da dere, mine kjæreste venner, hørte mine ord og fullkommet dem i gjerning, er det ikke riktig å nekte dere noe. Derfor skal jeg gjøre som dere vil.» Da svarte alle helgnene: «Velsignet være du, Gud, i all din rettvisthet, for du dømmer rettferdig og lar intet forbli ustraffet.»

Siden sa den gode engel, som var gitt sjelen som beskytter, til dommeren: «Jeg var med denne sjel helt fra den første stund den var forenet med kroppen, og jeg ledsaget den, ifølge din kjærlighets bud. Den gjorde, iblant, min vilje. Derfor ber jeg deg, Herre: «Forbarm deg over den.» Herren svarte: «Vi skal tenke over dette.» Og så var synet slutt.

FORKLARING

Denne ridder hadde et mildt sinn og var god mot fattige mennesker. Hans hustru gav de rikeligste almisser for hans sjel. Han døde i Rom, slik det i Guds ånd var blitt forutsagt for henne. Sammenlign bok 3, kapittel 12.

KAPITTEL 41.

SØNNEN TALER TIL BRUDEN om en konge i Sverige og sier: «Jeg sa deg at denne konge er et barn, Det kan du forstå av to ting: For det første av hans styremåte, for det andre av hans tallrike hærstyrker. Vant ikke hyrden David over kjempen? Men hvordan? Kanskje ved makt og visdom? Visselig ikke, men med Guds kraft, for om ikke Gud hadde tilintetgjort kjempens djervhet og inngydt mot i guttens sinn, hvordan skulle da gutten ha kunnet gå mot den veldige kjempen?

Og hvordan skulle stenen ha kunnet slå ned en så sterk mann og ha kunnet treffe en så erfaren mann, om ikke Guds kraft hadde vært i stenen? Altså seirer den lett som har Gud

til hjelper. Den som har fullkommen tillit til Gud, trenger ikke megen kroppslig styrke, bare tro og kjærlighet. Men verdslige mennesker mener at de seirer ved kroppslig styrke, og at stridens utfall beror på menneskers innsats. Og når de står som seierherrer, tilskriver de dette snarere den menneskelige dyktighet enn Guds kraft, skjønt hverken gode eller onde seirer uten Guds tillatelse og rettferdighet.

For stundom vinner de gode over de onde, og stundom får, tvert imot, de onde seier over de gode, ved Guds hemmelige tillatelse. Og fordi få mennesker vil betrakte Guds tålmodighet og rettferdighet, på grunn av den almindelige glemsel og forsømmelighet, vanhedres Guds kraft, og mennesker prises og opphøyes, som om de var mektige og vant seire ved egen kraft. Jeg sa, ikke uten årsak, at denne konge er et barn. For om et barn ser to epler, av hvilke det ene er helt forgylt utenpå, men helt tomt eller bedrevet inni, mens det andre er mindre vakkert i det ytre og helt og friskt inni, da foretrekker barnet det eple som ser vakkert ut, men er råttent inni, for det kan bare bedømme det, hvis ytre det kan se.

Slik gjør denne konge. Det synes ham prektig å kunne dra ut med en hærs-kare, men han visste ikke og overveiet ikke den elendighet som skjules i hærens indre. Han la ingen vekt på den hungersnød og sorg som måtte følge, og at de ville dra ut, elendige av sult, og komme enda mer elendige tilbake. Tarvelig og dåraktig forekommer det kongen å dra ut med en liten hær, men stor nytte kan ligge skjult i det. Om han drar ut slik, nemlig med ydmykhet og en liten hær, så skal jeg fylle hans tanker med guddommelig innsikt og gi hans kropp guddommelig styrke.

Jeg formår nemlig å gjøre en sterk av den svake, en høy av den ydmyke, en hedret av den foraktede. Si derfor til ham at han ikke skal være redd, men sette sitt håp til meg og gjøre hva han formår med gudelig innsikt og menneskelig fremsynthet. Da vil kjærligheten og den gode vilje rettferdiggjøre ham, om enn den menneskelige klokskap tar slutt.

TILLEGG

GUDS SØNN TALER: «Hver og en som ønsker å besøke de vantros land, bør gjøre fem ting. For det første: lette sin samvittighet ved anger og oppriktig skrifte, aldeles som om han lå for døden. For det andre: legge bort all slapphet i seder og påkledning, og ikke gi akt på nymodens sedvaner, men på de gamle, prisverdige, som ble skapt av hans forfedre. For det tredje må han være villig til å ikke ha noe timelig utover det som er til egen nødtørft og til Guds heder, og om han vet at han selv eller hans foreldre har erhvervet noe med urette, må han være villig til å levere det tilbake, om det er lite eller stort. For det fjerde må han arbeide på at de vantro skal komme til den sanne tro, og han må ikke attrå deres

rikdommer, gods eller noe annet, bare det som er til legemets nødtørft. For det femte må han være villig til å dø til Guds ære, men før det må han vise en så prisverdig vandel at han fortjener å nå frem til en dyrekjøpt død.»

KAPITTEL 55.

GUDS MODER TALER: «Da min far og min mor kom sammen etter ekteskapets skikk, gjorde de dette mer av lydighet enn av lyst. Hos dem var kjærligheten til Gud sterkere enn kjødets lyst. Den stund da jeg ble avlet, kan med rette kalles en gylden og dyrebar stund, for alle andre ektefeller kommer sammen av kjødlig vellyst, men mine foreldre kom sammen i lydighet til Guds bud. Ja, i en gylden stund fant min tilblivelse sted, for da begynte alles frelse, og mørket ble byttet bort med lys.

Gud ville nemlig gjøre noe helt uten sidestykke som var skjult for verden, slik som han gjorde med den tørre stav som skjød skudd. Man vet at min tilblivelse ikke var kjent for alle, for Gud ville at likesom naturlovene og det frivillige valg mellom godt og ondt kom før den skrevne lov som skulle forby alle vildtvoksende drifter, slik behaget det også Gud at hans venner fromt skulle tvile på min tilblivelse og at hver og en skulle vise sin fromhets glød, inntil sannheten skulle stråle frem på den tid som forut var bestemt.

KAPITTEL 58.

MARIA TALER TIL BRUDEN OG SIER: «Jeg talte med deg om mine sorger. Men ikke var den sorg minst, som jeg hadde da jeg flyktet med min Sønn og førte ham til Egypten, da jeg hadde hørt at uskyldige barn ble drept og at Herodes forfulgte min Sønn. Og skjønt jeg visste hva som var skrevet om min Sønn, fyltes dog mitt hjerte av sorg og smerte på grunn av den store kjærlighet, som jeg hadde til min Sønn. Men nu kan du vel spørre om hva min Sønn gjorde hele den tid som gikk forut for hans lidelse. Jeg svarer at han, slik Evangeliet sier, var sine foreldre underdanig og oppførte seg som andre barn, til han ble eldre.

Dog manglet det ikke underverk i hans barndom: Hvordan de skapte ting tjente sin Skaper, hvordan avgudene ble stumme og flere av dem falt om i Egypten da han kom dif, hvordan de vise menn spådde at min Sønn var et tegn på store ting som skulle skje i fremtiden,

hvordan englene synlig tjente ham, hvordan det aldri klebet noen urenheter ved ham og man aldri så hans hår ustelt, - alt dette er det ikke nødvendig for deg å vite, da tegnene på hans guddom og manndom er lagt frem i Evangeliene, hvor du og andre oppbygges av dem.

Men da han ble eldre, var han utrettelig i bønn, og lydig gikk han med oss til de foreskrevne fester i Jerusalem og andre steder. Hans utseende og tale var så vindunderlig vakre, at mange som var bedrøvet, sa: «La oss gå til Marias Sønn; hos ham kan vi finne trøst.» Da han vokste i alder og i den visdom han var fylt av fra begynnelsen, arbeidet han dyktig med sine hender og talte i fortrolighet trøstende ord om guddommen med oss, slik at vi stadig var fylt av usynlig glede. Og når vi var i angst, fattigdom og vanskeligheter, skapte han hverken gull eller sølv til oss, men oppfordret oss til tålmodighet.

Vi ble på vidunderlig vis bevart mot misunnere. Det nødvendige tilfløt oss undertiden fra gode menneskers medlidenhet, undertiden fra vårt eget arbeide, slik at vi hadde det nødvendige til vårt livsopphold, men ikke til overflod, for vi ønsket intet annet enn å tjene Gud alene. Videre talte han fortrolig i sitt hjem med de venner som kom dit, om loven, dens innhold og tegn, eller han disputerte offentlig med de vise, så de ble forundret og sa: «Se, josefs Sønn belærer lærerne; så stor er den ånd som taler i ham.»

Da jeg en gang tenkte på hans lidelse og han så at jeg var bedrøvet, sa han til meg: «Tror du ikke, moder, at jeg er i Faderen og at Faderen er i meg? Ble du beflekket ved min inngang eller led du smerte med min utgang. Hvorfor engstes du da og sørger? Det er min Faders vilje at jeg skal lide døden, og min vilje faller sammen med Faderens. Det som jeg har av Faderen kan ikke lide, men det kjød jeg mottok fra deg skal lide, slik at andres kjød kan bli gjenløst og at andres sjeler kan bli frelst.» Han var også så lydig at når josef iblant sa til ham: «Gjør det eller det», så gjorde han det straks. Slik holdt han sin guddomsmakt skjult, så bare josef og jeg visste om den. Vi så ofte hvordan et underbart lys strålte om ham, og vi hørte englens røster synge over hans hode. Vi så også hvordan de urene ånder, som ikke kunne fordrives av de vanlige åndemanere i vår lov, forlot de besatte, når de fikk se at min Sønn var hos dem. Dette, o datter, må du alltid bevare i ditt minne, og du bør oppriktig takke Gud, som gjennom meg har villet gjøre hans barndom kjent for andre.»

GUDS MODER TALER: «Såsnart engelen hadde bebudet meg at Guds Sønn skulle fødes av meg og jeg hadde gitt mitt samtykke, kjente jeg noe uvanlig og vidunderlig i meg. Derfor begav jeg meg straks, i dyp undring, på vei til min frenke Elisabeth for å trøste henne, som var med barn og for å tale med henne om det som engelen hadde bebudet meg. Og da hun kom meg imøte ved kilden og vi hadde hilst hverandre med omfavnelser og kyss, gledet barnet seg i hennes liv med selsom og synlig sparking.

Da ble også jeg grepet i mitt hjerte av en uanet jubelfryd, slik at min tunge talte utenkte ord om Gud, og min sjel knapt fattet seg selv av glede. Elisabeth undret seg over den åndens glød som talte i meg, og jeg forundret meg på samme sett over Guds nåde i henne; vi priste begge Gud og var sammen noen dager. Siden begynte den tanke å fylle min sjel at jeg burde oppføre meg fromt, etter at en slik nåde var vederfaret meg, og jeg grunde t over hva jeg skulle svare når jeg ble spurt om hvordan jeg hadde unnfanget og hvem som var far til det barn som skulle fødes, og jeg fryktet også at josef, etter påtrykk fra uvennligsinnede, skulle mistenke meg for å ha begått en urett. Og se, mens jeg tenkte på dette, viste en engel seg for meg, ikke ulik den jeg hadde sett første gang, og han sa: «Vår Gud, som er evig, er med deg og i deg. Frykt derfor ikke, for han skal inngi deg hva du skal tale og lede dine skritt og bestemme hvor du skal være. Han skal på mektig og klokt sett fullbyrde sitt verk med deg.»

Da så josef, som jeg var trolovet meg, forstod at jeg var med barn, ble han forferdet og anså seg selv som uverdigg til å bo sammen med meg. Han fryktet og visste ikke hva han skulle gjøre. Men en engel sa til ham i en drøm: «Du skal ikke skille deg fra den jomfru som er deg betrodd, for det du har hørt av henne, er sant. Hun har nemlig unnfanget ved Guds ånd, og skal føde en Sønn, verdens Frelser. Tjen henne derfor trofast, og vær hennes kyskhets vokter og vidne.» Fra den dag av tjente josef meg som sin herskerinne, og jeg ydmyket meg også og tjente ham. Siden var jeg utrettelig i bønn, lot meg sjelden se og gikk meget sjelden ut, annet enn ved spesielt store høytider, men aktet nøye på de bønner og skriftlesninger våre prester fremførte. jeg brukte noen tid til å arbeide med mine hender, og jeg fastet klokt, alt etter det min natur kunne bære i Guds tjeneste.

Det som ble til overs av vår mat, gav vi til de fattige og var tilfredse med det vi hadde. josef tjente meg så ømt, at aldri noe lettfærdig ord eller et ord i vrede kom over hans munn, for han selv var ytterst tålmodig i fattigdommen, flittig i arbeidet når det var nødvendig, mild og saktmodig mot dem som spottet, ytterst lydigg i min tjeneste, den mest redbone forsvarer av min jomfruelighet mot dem som fornektet den og det mest trofaste vidne om Guds undergjæringer. Ja, han var så død for verden og kjødet, at han ikke lenger lengtet etter noe annet enn det himmelske. Han trodde så fast på Guds løfter at han bestanding sa: «Å, om jeg fikk leve og se Guds vilje fullbyrdet». Han gikk ytterst sjelden til menns

sammenkomster og rådslagninger, for hele hans higen var å lyde Guds vilje. Derfor er nu hans ære stor.»

KAPITTEL 62.

MODEREN TALER: «Da jeg en dag, noen år etter min Sønnns himmelfart, ble grepet av heftig lengsel etter å komme hjem til min Sønn, så jeg en strålende engel, slik jeg hadde sett det en gang før, og han sa til meg: «Din Sønn, som er vår Gud og Herre, har sendt meg for å forkynne deg at tiden er inne til at du nu, i legemet, skal komme til ham og motta den krone som er gjort rede for deg.» Jeg svarte ham: «Vet du dagen eller timen da jeg skal dra bort fra denne verden?» Engelen svarte: «Din Sønnns venner skal komme og begrave din kropp».

Efter å ha sagt dette, forsvant engelen, og jeg gjorde meg rede til å gå bort, idet jeg, slik jeg pleid de, vandret gjennom alle de steder, hvor min Sønn hadde lidd. Da min sjel en dag var fylt av undring over Guds kjærlighet, ble sjelen, ved denne kontemplasjon, fylt av en slik jubelfryd at den knapt kunne holde det ut, og under slike betraktninger, skiltes min sjel fra kroppen. Men hvor herlige ting min sjel da så, og hvilken heder Faderen og Sønnen og den Hellige Ånd gjorde istand for den, av hvilken hærskeare av engler den ble løftet opp, det vil du aldri kunne fatte, og jeg vil heller ikke si deg det, før din sjel og kropp skal skilles, skjønt jeg har vist deg noe av alt dette i den daglige bønn som min Sønn har inngitt deg. (Sermo Angelicus). Men de som var hos meg i huset da jeg oppgav min ånd, forstod klart, av det selsomme lysskinn, hvilke guddommelige ting som skjedde med meg.

Derefter ble, etter guddommelig tilskyndelse, min Sønnns venner sendt dit, og de begrov min sjel i Josaphats dal, og sammen med dem var engler, tallrike som solens stråler, som de onde ånder ikke våget å nærme seg. Femten dager hvilte min begravede kropp i jorden. Siden ble den tatt opp til himmelen av en stor skare engler. Og den tid og time er ikke uten det høyeste mysterium, for i den syvende time skal legemenes oppstandelse finne sted og i den åttende skal sjelenes og legemenes lykksalighet fullbyrdes.

Den første time varte fra verdens skapelse og like til den tid da Loven ble gitt ved Moses, den andre fra Moses og til min Sønnns menneskevorden. Den tredje time var den, da min Sønn innstiftet dåpen og mildnet Lovens strenghet. Den fjerde var da han selv preket med ord og best yrket ordene ved sitt eksempel. Den femte time kom da min Sønn ville lide og

dø, da han oppstod fra de døde og bekreftet sin oppstandelse ved sikre bevis. Den sjette time var da han for opp til himmelen og sendte den Hellige Ånd. Den syvende blir når han kommer for å dømme, og alle skal stå opp til doms med sine kropper. Den åttende time blir den, når alt det som er lovet og forutsagt, skal fullbyrdes; da skal det råde en fullkommen lykksalighet, da skal man få se Gud i hans herlighet, og de hellige skal stråle som solen, og ingen sorg skal mere være til.»

BOK 7

KAPITTEL 3.

GUDS SØNN TALER: «Ettersom menneskene forsmådde å lyde Gud, er det nødvendig at de lyder mennesket, sin likemann. Og fordi kongen av Gud er utpekt til å dømme og styre rettferdig, er det rimelig at han hedres og fryktes av sine undersåtter. For at kongen altså skal kunne skilles ut fra alle andre, er det nødvendig at han har en spesiell drakt, som er mer hederverdig enn andres. For likesom kongens heder består i rettferdighet og rett dom, er kongens glans og ære folkets heder. Derfor tilstedes det kongen å ha en hederverdig og respektinngyldende drakt.

Når han bærer den, må han ikke hovmode seg over at Gud lar ham bære den, men han må ydmyke seg og tenke over sitt embedes bør og byrde. På disse dager har kongen lov til å bære krone på hodet: Juledag, trettendedag, påskedag, Kristi himmelfartsdag, den dag da min jomfruelige moder ble tatt opp til himmelen, korsets opphøyelsesdag og alle helgners dag, samt på alle de dager han skal holde ting eller gi ridderslag.

For likesom hele den himmelske hærske frydes på helligdagene for mitt jordiske liv og på mine helgeners høytidsdager på grunn av mine velgjerninger, bør de rettferdige på jord glede seg over kongens rettferdighet, som betegnes ved kronen. Og hele den himmelske hærske gleder seg over en rettferdig konges belønning.

KAPITTEL 5.

GUDS SØNN TALER TIL BRUDEN: «Det står skrevet om en konge som ikke fikk sove, at

han lot lese for seg annaler og krøniker. Likeså bør den konge som du ber for og som er meget ung av år, la helgneses gjerninger og eksempler og tapre menns bedrifter lese opp for seg, for derved vendes hans sinn til Gud og han lærer hvordan han kan avbryte rikets styre med ærbar avspenning. Dessuten skal jeg sende ham to av mine venner, som skal være som mødre for ham. Av den ene skal han få melk og brød og av den andre vin og lægemidler.

Den første skal kunngjøre for ham i hvilke henseender han synder, hvordan han skal råde bot på sine forseelser, hvordan han skal få trøst i bedrøvelsen, og hvordan han kan formilde meg, når han har utfordret meg. Av den andre skal han få visdom når det gjelder vanskelige ting, løsning på hemmelige gåter og klokskap til å styre og forsvare sitt rike. Om han lystrer disse, skal han vinne Guds og menneskers yndest. Dog skal han ikke lyde disse to slik at andre rådgivere forsmås, men han må, sammen med rådene fra disse to, høre mange andre råd og velge det beste etter grundig overveielse.»

KAPITTEL 13.

JOMFRU MARIA TALER til den hellige Birgitta og sier: «Jeg vil fortelle deg hva jeg gjorde med din sønn Karls sjel, da den ble skilt fra kroppen. Jeg gjorde som den kvinne som står hos barselskvinnen og hjelper barnet, så det ikke drukner i blodstrømmen eller kveles i den trange åpning, som det kommer ut gjennom, og som også passer på at barnets uvenner, om slike er i huset, ikke får drepe det.

På samme måte gjorde jeg. Jeg stod nemlig hos denne din sønn Karl kort før han oppgav ånden, forat han ikke skulle ha den kjødelige kjærlighet så sterkt i sitt minne og ikke av den grunn skulle tenke eller tale noe som var vederstyggelig for Gud eller unnlate noe som behager Gud eller til sin sjels skade skulle gjøre noe som stred mot Guds vilje. Jeg hjalp ham endog i den trange åpning, nemlig ved sjelens utgang fra kroppen, så at han ikke skulle lide tung dødsqual og derved kanskje bli utålmodig eller kanskje fortvile og glemme Gud i dødens stund.

Jeg beskyttet også sjelen mot dens dødsfiender, nemlig djevlene, slik at ingen av dem fikk røre den; såsnart den forlot kroppen, tok jeg den i min varetekt og i mitt forsvar, og da flyktet øyeblikkelig hele djevlskaren, som i sin ondskap ville sluke og evig pine den. Men

hvordan det etter samme Karls død ble holdt dom over hans sjel, det skal vises deg når det behager meg.»

Andre åpenbaring om det samme: Etter noen dager viste Jomfru Maria seg igjen for Birgitta, mens hun våket i bønn. Hun sa da: «Ved Guds godhet er det nu tillatt deg å se hvordan det ble holdt dom over overnevntes sjel etter at den hadde forlatt kroppen. Det som da skjedde på et øyeblikk for Guds ufattelige majestet, det skal utførlig vises deg med avstand i tid og i kroppslig lignelse, slik at din forstand makter å fatte det. I samme stund så fru Birgitta at hun var blitt forflyttet til et stort og skjønt palass, der den Herre Jesus Kristus satt til doms, kronet som keiser, omgitt av utallig skare av tjenende engler og helgner. Ved siden av ham stod hans høyt ærverdige moder, som lyttet oppmerksomt til dommen.

Foran dommeren syntes det å stå en sjel, redd og bevende, naken som et nyfødt barn og likesom helt blind, slik at den ikke så noe, men i sin bevissthet dog forstod hva som ble sagt og gjort i palasset. En engel stod på høyre side og dommeren ved siden av sjelen og en djevel på venstre side, men ingen av dem kom helt bort til sjelen eller berørte den. Da ropte djevelen og sa: «Hør, du allmektige dommer! Jeg klager for din domstol over en kvinne, som både er min herskerinne og den moder som du elsker så høyt at du har gitt henne makt over himmel og jord og over alle oss ånder i avgrunnen.

Hun har nemlig gjort meg urett i det som angår denne sjel, som her står. Ifølge rettferds fordringer burde jeg, så snart denne sjel hadde forlatt kroppen, ha fått legge beslag på den og i egen person ha fått føre den frem for din domstol. Men se, du rettferdige dommer, denne kvinne, din moder, tok sjelen i sine hender nesten før den hadde fløyet ut av mannens munn, tok den i sitt sterke forsvar og førte den så til din dornstol.»

Da svarte Jomfru Maria, Guds moder slik: «Lytt, djevel, til mitt svar! Da du var blitt skapt, forstod du den rettferdighet, som fra evighet av og uten begynnelse var hos Gud, og du hadde endog fri vilje til å gjøre det som behaget deg mest. Og skjønt du foretrakk å hate Gud fremfor å elske ham, forstår du alltid meget vel hva som bør skje ifølge rettferdigheten. Jeg sier deg altså at det snarere tilkom meg enn deg å føre denne sjel frem for Gud, den sanne dommer. For da denne sjel var i kroppen, hadde den stor kjærlighet til meg og tenkte ofte i sitt hjerte på at Gud hadde verdiget å gjøre meg til sin moder og opphøye meg over all skapning. Dermed begynte den å elske Gud med så stor kjærlighet at den sa i sitt hjerte: «Jeg gleder meg så over at Gud har sin moder, jomfru Maria, mer kjær

enn alt annet, og over at det ikke finnes noen skapt ting eller noen kroppslig glede i denne verden som jeg vil ta i bytte for denne glede, som jeg setter høyere enn all jordisk fryd.

Om det var mulig at hun, i den aller minste henseende, kunne fjernes av Gud fra den verdighet hun har, da ville jeg heller la meg piske evig i avgrunn ens dyp. Inderlig takksigelse og evig ære være Gud for den velsignede nåde og den ubegrensede ære han har forunt sin høyverdige moder. Se nu, djevel, hva synes deg nu være mest rettferdig, enten at hans sjel, forsvart av meg, kommer frem for Guds domstol eller overlates i dine hender for å pines ubarmhjertig?»

Djevelen svarte: Jeg har ingen rett til å fordre at denne sjel, som har elsket deg mer enn seg selv, skal falle i mine hender før dom er felt. Men skjønt du, ifølge all rettferdighet, har vist sjelen denne nåde, så døm dog etter dens gjerninger, slik at den etter dommen kan falle i mine hender for å pines. Nu, dronning, spør jeg deg hvorfor du jaget alle oss demoner bort fra hans kropp, da sjelen skulle forlate den slik at ingen av oss kunne inngi ham skrekk eller innjage frykt i ham?»

Jomfru Maria svarte: «Det gjorde jeg for den brennende kjærlighets skyld som han hadde til mitt legeme og for den gledes skyld som han kjente over at jeg er Guds moder. Derfor utvirket jeg av min sønn den nåde at ingen ond ånd fikk nærme seg ham, hvor han enn var, ja, ikke engang der han nu er.» Derefter talte djevelen til dommeren og sa: «Jeg vet at du er selve rettferdigheten og makten. Du dømmer ikke mer urett mot en djevel enn mot en engel. La altså denne sjel tilfalle meg! Med den kunnskap jeg fikk da du skapte meg har jeg skrevet opp alle dens synder, og med den ondskap jeg hadde da jeg falt ned fra himmelen, har jeg bevart dem. For så snart denne sjel nådde frem til skjels år og alder og fullt forstod at det den gjorde var synd, da drog dens egenvilje den til heller å ville leve i verdslig hovmod og kjødelige nydelser enn å stå imot slikt.»

Engelen svarte: «Såsnart hans moder forstod at hans vilje var rettet mot synd, kom hun den til hjelp med barmhjertighetsgjerninger og daglige bønner, for at Gud måtte forbarme seg over ham og for at han ikke skulle fjerne seg fra Gud, og for disse gjerninger av hans egen mor fikk han frykt for Gud slik at han, såsnart han hadde falt i synd, ilte til skrifte.»

Djevelen svarte: «Det tilkommer meg å fortelle om hans synder.» Og han skulle til å begynne, men i samme øyeblikk begynte han å rope og søke nøye i seg selv, både i hodet og alle lemmer som han syntes å ha. Og man så ham skjelve så lang han var, og i sin store bestyrtelse ropte han: «Ve meg, elendige! Nu er mitt lange arbeide til ingen nytte. Ikke bare er nu selve teksten tilintetgjort og glemt, men forbrent like til det materialet det var

skrevet på. Materialet betyr de tilfeller da han syndet og dem husker jeg nu like lite som de synder, som ble skrevet opp på det.»

Engelen svarte: «Dette er det hans moders tårer og lange arbeide og mange bønner som har forårsaket. Den medlidende Gud hørte denne klage og gav henne denne nåde, at han for hver ny synd han begikk, fikk anger, slik at han ydmykt skriftet av kjærlighet til Gud. Derfor er disse glemt og strøket fra din hukommelse.» Djevelen svarte at han ennå hadde en sekk full av skrifter, d.v.s. de botsøvelser som denne ridder hadde tenkt å gjøre for sine synder, men som han likevel hadde forsømt. «Derfor tilkommer det meg», sa han, «å pine ham, helt til det er øvet bot for alle synder som denne ridder ikke brød seg om å rette på i sitt liv.»

Engelen sa: «Åpne sekken og begjær dom over de synder, som det tilkommer deg å pine sjelen for.» Da ropte djevelen som en gal: «Jeg er plyndret for all min makt. Nu er ikke bare sekken røvet fra meg, men også de synder som den er fylt med. Sekken, der jeg la alle de grunner jeg hadde til å straffe ham, var hans dovenskap, for av dovenskap lot han være å gjøre mange gode ting.» Engelen svarte: «Hans moders tårer har plyndret deg, revet sekken opp og ødelagt skriften, for så inderlig behaget hennes tårer Gud.»

Djevelen sa: «Ennå har jeg noe å legge fram, nemlig hans tilgivelige synder.» Engelen svarte: «Han fikk vilje til å dra på valfart, bort fra sitt fedreland, han besøkte, med mangfoldig møye, hellige steder og gjennomførte dette og oppførte seg slik at han var verdig til å vinne den hellige Kirkes avlat. Ved å forbedre seg etter sine synder ønsket han å formilde Gud, sin Skaper. Derfor er alle de tilfeller som du har sagt at du har skrevet opp som synder, tilgitt ham.» Engelen sa: «Rekk ut tungen og vis meg skriften.»

Djevelen jamret seg høyt og ropte som en gal: «Ve meg! Jeg har ikke ett eneste ord å si, for min tunge er skåret av ved roten, og alle dens krefter er borte.» Engelen svarte: «Dette har hans moder utrettet ved sine utrettelige bønner og sin møye, for hun elsket hans sjel av hele sitt hjerte. For hennes kjærlighets skyld behaget det Gud å tilgi ham alle de tilgivelige synder som han hadde begått fra barndommen av og like frem til sin død, og derfor tror din tunge at den har mistet sine krefter.» Djevelen svarte: «Ennå er det en som jeg har gjemt godt i mitt hjerte, og den kan ingen stryke ut. Det er at han erhvervet noe med urette og ikke tenkte på å levere det tilbake.»

Engelen sa: «For alt slikt har hans moder gjort fyldest med sine almisser, bønner og barmhjertighetsgjerninger, slik at rettferds strenghet forvandles til mild barmhjertighet, og Gud ga ham fullkommen vilje til ikke å spare eget gods, men, såvidt det var mulig, å gjøre fullstendig opp med den han hadde tatt noe fra, med urette. Denne vilje tok Gud for fullbyrdet gjerning, da han ikke fikk leve lenger. Nu tilkommer det hans arvinger å gjøre opp for slikt, så godt de kan.»

Djevelen innvendte: «Da jeg altså ikke har makt til å straffe ham for hans synder, bør jeg dog ha lov til å tukte ham, fordi han ikke øvet gode gjerninger og dyder, da han var frisk av både kropp og sjel. Dyder og gode gjerninger er nemlig de skatter, som han burde føre med seg til et slikt rike som Guds ærefulle rike er. Tillat meg altså å erstatte med pinsler det han ikke gjorde av gode gjerninger.» Engelen svarte: «Det står skrevet at til den som ber, skal det bli gitt, og for den som iherdig banker på, skal det bli lukket opp. Hør altså, du djevel: Hans moder har i mer enn tredve år med kjærlige bønner og fromme gjerninger iherdig banket på barmhjertighetens dør for ham og hun har utgydt mange tusen tårer, for at Gud i sin nåde skulle inngyte ham sin Hellige Ånd i hans hjerte og lede hennes bønner inn i hans hjerte, slik at han med glede i sitt sinn skulle bruke sitt gods, sin kropp og sin sjel i Guds tjeneste.

Dette var det Gud som gjorde, for denne ridder ble så brennende i sin ånd at det ikke behaget ridderen å leve for annet enn for å følge Guds vilje. Og se, da Gud var blitt anropt så lenge, inngjød han sin velsignede ånd i ridderens hjerte, og Guds jomfruelige moder gav ham av sin kraft det han selv manglet av åndelige våpen og rustning, som tilkommer de riddere som skal tre inn i himmelens rike, til den høyeste hersker. De helgener i himlenes rike som denne ridder elsket spesielt mens han levet, skjenket ham trøst med sine fortjenester. Han samlet selv en skatt, slik de pilegrimer gjør, som daglig bytter ut det forgjengelige gods mot evige rikdommer, og fordi han gjorde det, fikk han ny glede og heder, og særskilt for den brennende lengsel han hadde etter å valfarte til den hellige stad Jerusalem og for at han så ivrig attrådde (om han bare hadde kunnet det) å våge livet i krig for at det hellige land igjen skulle komme under de kristnes herrevelde og Herrens ærerike grav skulle holdes i tilbørlig respekt. Derfor har du, djevel, ingen rett til å oppveie det som han selv ikke fikk fullbyrde.»

Djevelen svarte: «Ennu mangler han kronen. Gjerne skulle jeg sørge for at han aldri får den heller.» Engelen svarte: «Det er visst og sant at alle, som reddes fra helvede ved oppriktig å angre sine synder og bringer sin vilje i overensstemmelse med Guds vilje og av hele sitt hjerte elsker Gud, de skal vinne Guds nåde. Det behager endog Gud å gi dem krone av sitt velsignede menneskelegemes seierskrone, om de bare blir rensset ifølge

rettferds krav. Derfor har du, djevel, intet med hans krone å bestille.» Da djevelen hørte dette, ropte han høyt, hylte i utålmodighet og sa: «Hele min hukommelse er tatt fra meg. Jeg husker ikke lenger hva denne ridders vilje fulgte meg i, og - dette er enda mer besynderlig - jeg har til og med glemst hvilket navn han bar på jord.» Engelen svarte: «Vit at han nu, i himmelen, kalles «tårenes sønns»». Djevelen ropte høyt og sa: «Å, for en forbannet purke hans mor er, som hadde så diger en buk at meget, meget vann kunne rummes der, og alt rum der var fylt av tårenes vann. Måtte hun være forbannet av meg og av alle som følger meg.» Engelen svarte: «Din forbannelse er Guds heder og alle hans venners velsignelse.»

Da talte dommeren Kristus og sa: «Gå bort, djevel, du min fiende.» Siden sa han til ridderen: «Kom, du min utvalgte.» Og straks flyktet djevelen bort. Da bruden så dette, sa hun: «O, evige og umålelige kraft, Jesus Kristus, Gud og Herre, det er du som inngyder hjertene alle gode tanker, bønner og tårer. Du skjuler dine nådegaver for oss og gir oss evig, ærerik belønning for dem. Deg være heder, tjeneste og takksigelse for hva du har skapt. O, milde Gud, du er meg aller kjærest, kjærere for meg enn kropp og sjel.» Engelen talte da til den sanne Kristi brud og sa: «Du skal vite at dette syn ble vist deg av Gud, ikke bare til din egen trøst, men også for at Guds uvenner skal forstå hvor meget han verdiges gjøre, forårsaket av sine venners bønner, tårer og arbeide, når de i kjærighet ber og arbeider for andre med iherdighet og god vilje. Vit også at denne ridder, din sønn, ikke hadde fått sådan nåde om han ikke fra sin barndom av hadde hatt vilje til å elske Gud og hans venner og til å forbedre sitt liv etter alle syndefall.»

KAPITTEL 15.

DA JEG SØRGET OG GRÅT PÅ GOLGATA, så jeg min Herre, naken og hudflettet, bli ført bort av jødene for å korsfestes. De holdt nøye vakt over ham. Jeg så også at det var hugget et hull i berget, og at bødlene rundt om var beredt til å gjøre sitt grusomme verk. Men Herren vendte seg til meg og sa: «Pass nøye på, for i denne bergsprekk var korsets fot festet i min lidelses tirne.» Og jeg så straks hvorledes jødene omhyggelig festet hans kors i bergsprekken med treplugger, som ble slått ned med sterke hammerslag, slik at korset skulle stå sikkert og ikke falle.

Da korset var forsvarlig festet på dette vis, la de treplanker rundt det sted hvor hans føtter skulle spikres fast. Slik kunne både han og bødlene gå opp disse trappetrinn, og bødlene kunne stå der senere, når de korsfestet ham; dette var praktisk for dem. Så gikk de

trinnene opp og førte ham frem under voldsom hån og hujing, og han gikk villig med som et saktmodig lam, som føres bort for å slaktes.

Da han stod på det øverste trinn, rakte han straks sin arm ut - frivillig og uten tvang - åpnet sin høyre hånd og la den på korset. De ville plageånder korsfestet den med uhyggelig grusomhet, gjennomboret den med en nagle på det sted benet var fastest. Siden trakk de - ved hjelp av et tau - hans venstre hånd ut med voldsom kraft og naglet den fast til korset på lignende vis. De tøyte hans kropp voldsomt ut på korset, la det ene ben over det andre og festet så de samlede føtter til korset med to nagler. Så hårdt tøyte de ut hans høyt hedrede lemmer på korset at nesten alle årer og senere brast.

Tornekronen, som de tok bort fra hodet før de korsfestet ham, satte de nu igjen på hans høyt hellige hode, og den stakk hans hederverdige hode så hårdt at hans øyne straks ble fylt av blodet som rant, hans ører ble stoppet til og hans ansikt og skjegg ble likesom overgyddt og farvet av hans rosenrøde blod. Bødlene og krigsmennene tok så trappetrinnene fort bort, og korset stod igjen der, ensomt og høyt, og min Herre var korsfestet på det. Da jeg nu, fylt av sorg, betraktet deres grusomhet, fikk jeg se hans sønderknuste mor ligge på marken, likesom skjelvende og halvdød.

Johannes og hennes søstre trøstet henne, der de stod ikke langt fra korset, på høyre side. Den nye smerte jeg da kjente, nemlig medlidenhet med Kristi allerhelligste Moder, grep meg så dypt at det var som om et skarpt sverd trengte inn i mitt hjerte med grenseløs lidelse. Omsider stod hun opp, hans sørgende Moder, likesom nummen i kroppen og så på sin Sønn. Hennes søstre holdt henne oppe, og hun stod der, fullkomment lamslått av sin sorg, ja, som en død, gjennomstukket av smertens sverd.

Da hennes sønn så henne og sine andre venner gråte, overlot han henne med sorgfull røst til Johannes, og det fremgikk såvel av hans bevegelser som av hans røst at hans hjerte - av medlidenhet med Moderen - var gjennomboret av en uendelig smertes hvasse pil. Hans skjønne og kjære øyne virket nu halvdøde, munnen var halvåpen og blodig, hans ansikt blekt og innsunket, nesten blålig og dekket av blod, og hele kroppen var blå blek og meget svekket av det stadige blodtap.

Huden og det jomfruelige kjød i hans høyt hellige legeme var så fine og tynne at det straks fremkom blå merker etter det minste slag. Iblant forsøkte han å strekke seg på korset, som følge av den overmåte bitre kval han led under den voldsomme, heftige pine. For iblant

steg smerten fra hans gjennomstukne lemmer og brystne årer helt opp til hjertet og pinte ham i det mest kvalfulle martyrium, og slik ble hans døds-kamp forlenget under tung og uhyggelig bitter lidelse. Ute av seg over denne forferdelige kval og døden nær ropte han til Faderen med høy og sorgfull røst og sa: «O, Fader, hvorfor har du forlatt meg?»

Da var hans leber bleke, tungen var blodig, og den innsunkne maven lå likesom klebet til ryggen, som om han ikke hadde innvoller, Igjen ropte han i den bitreste pine og angst: «Fader, i dine hender overgir jeg min ånd.» Så hevet han hodet litt, men det sank straks ned, og så oppgav han ånden. Da hans Moder så dette, skalv hun i hele kroppen av uendelig sorg og bedrøvelse, og hun ville ha falt om, om ikke de andre kvinnene hadde holdt henne oppe. I samme øyeblikk sank hans hender, på grunn av kroppens store tyngde, noe ned fra de steder hvor naglene hadde gjennomboret dem, og således ble kroppen holdt oppe av de nagler som føttene var festet til korset med. Fingre, armer og hender var tøyet mere ut enn før. Hans skuldre og rygg var hårdt presset mot korset.

Da ropte jødene som stod omkring, hånlige ord til hans Moder. Noen sa: «Maria, nu er din sønn død.» Andre talte hånlige ord. Mens nu folkemengden stod rundt om, kom en mann løpende i største raseri og stakk en lans så heftig i hans side at den nesten kom ut igjen på kroppens andre side. Da lansens ble trukket ut av kroppen, kom det straks en fossende blodstrøm ut av såret og lansespissen og en del av skaftet var røde og blodfarvede da de ble trukket ut av kroppen. Da hans Moder så dette, skalv hun og gråt bittert, slik at det tydelig syntes på hennes ansiktstrekk og bevegelser at hennes sjel da ble gjennomstukket av sorgens hvasse sverd.

Siden gikk folkemengden derfra, og noen av Herrens venner tok ham ned. Hans milde Moder tok ham i sine hellige armer der hun satt og la ham på fanget, såret, sønderrevet og blåblek som han var. Dypt bedrøvet tørket hun hans kropp og dens sår med sitt linklede, kysset hans øyne og lukket dem og svøpte ham i et rent klede. Så førte de ham bort under høylydt gråt og klage og la ham i graven.

KAPITTEL 21.

DA JEG BEFANT MEG VED HERRENS KRYBBE i Betlehem, fikk jeg se en meget vakker, fruktsommeligjomfru, kledd i hvit kappe og en tynn kjole, som klart lot meg se hennes jomfruelige skikkelse. Hennes moderliv var fullt og sterkt svulmende, for hennes

nedkomsts tid var inne. Sammen med henne var en meget ærverdig og gammel mann, og de hadde både en okse og et asen med seg. Da de kom inn i grotten, bandt den gamle oxen og asenet ved krybben og gikk ut og kom tilbake til jomfruen med et tent lys, som han festet i veggen. Siden gikk han ut igjen, for han skulle ikke selv være til stede ved forløsningen.

Jomfruen tok skoene av føttene, tok av den hvite kappe hun bar, drog sløret av hodet og la plaggene ved siden av seg. Så hadde hun bare kjolen på, og hennes underskjønne, gullglitrende hår lå utbredt over skuldrene. Hun tok frem to små plagg av lin og to ullplagg, meget rene og fine, som hun hadde bragt med seg for å svøpe det ventede barnet i, og dertil to andre små plagg av lin til barnets hode, og hun la disse barneplagg ved siden av seg, for å kunne bruke dem når hun trengte dem. Da alt var ordnet, falt jomfruen i ærbødighet på kne for å be, og vendte da ryggen mot vuggen, men løftet hodet mot himmelen i østlig retning.

Med hevede hender og blikket festet på himmelen stod hun likesom i betraktelse og henrykkelse, beruset av guddommelig glede. Mens hun slik var fordypet i bønn, så jeg barnet røre seg i hennes liv, og i samme stund, ja, på et øyeblikk, fødte hun sin Sønn, fra hvem det utgikk et lys så strålende at ikke engang solen kunne sammenlignes med det. Det vokslys som den gamle hadde satt inn, spredte intet lys, for den guddommelige stråleglans slukket vokslysets materielle skinn. Og så fort og så øyeblikkelig var denne fødsel at jeg ikke kunne iaktta eller skjelne hvorledes og med hvilken legemsdel jomfruen fødte. Jeg så dog straks det herlige barn ligge nakent og klart skinnende på marken. Dets hud var helt lyteløs og fri for all urenhet. Jeg så også etterbyrden ligge innsvøpt og meget vakker ved siden av barnet.

Og jeg hørte klart tonende englesang av vidunderlig skjønnhet. Jomfruens liv, som før fødselen hadde vært sterkt svulmende, trakk seg nu sammen, og hennes kropp syntes å være spinkel og av en sjelden skjønnhet. Da hun kjente at hun hadde født, tilbød hun gutten med dyp respekt og ærbødighet, med bøyet hode og foldede hender, og hun sa til ham: «Vær velkommen, min Gud, min Herre, min Sønn.»

Da begynte gutten å gråte og likesom skjelve av kulde og for det hårde gulvets skyld, der han lå, og han vendte seg sakte, strakte alle lemmer ut og søkte sin Moders varetelt, og moren tok ham i sine armer; trykket ham til brystet og varmet ham på kinn og bryst med stor glede og moderlig medfølelse. Sittende på gulvet la hun sin Sønn på fanget og grep med fingrene varsomt rundt navlestrengen, som straks ble skåret over uten at væske eller

blod trengte ut. Straks begynte hun å svøpe ham inn omhyggelig, først i lin- og siden i ullklærne, og så svøpte og lindet hun kropp, ben og armer sammen med snorer, som var festet i det ytterste ullplaggets fire hjørner. Siden svøpte hun barnets hode i de to linkleder, som hun hadde for hånden til dette bruk.

Da dette var gjort, kom den gamle inn, falt på kne på gulvet og tilbad gutten og gråt av glede. Og ved forløsningen skiftet ikke jomfruen farve og ble ikke syk eller mistet sine krefter, slik det pleier skje med andre barselkvinner; det eneste som skjedde, var at hennes liv trakk seg sammen til den tilstand det hadde hatt før gutten ble unnfanget. Så stod hun opp med barnet i armene, og hun og Josef la ham i krybben, bøyet kne og tilbad ham i usigelig fryd og glede.

BOK 8

KAPITTEL 2.

(KRISTUS TALER). «Jeg er sann konge, og ingen uten jeg er verdig å kalles konge, for fra meg stammer all ære og makt. Det var jeg som dømte den første engel, som falt for sitt hovmod, sitt onde begjær og sin misunnelses skyld. Det var jeg som dømte Adam og Kain, ja, hele verden, da jeg for menneskenes synders skyld, sendte syndfloden. Det var også jeg som lot Israels folk komme i fangenskap og som, underfullt, befridde det fra fangenskapet med tegn og under.

I meg er all rettferdighet; den har vært hos meg uten begynnelse og skal forbli der uten ende. Og aldri noensinne forminskes min rettferdighet, nei, den forblir hos meg, evig sann og uforanderlig. Og da nu Sveriges konge ydmykt spør deg hvordan han skal opptre rettferdig og klokt i sitt styre, vil jeg kunngjøre for ham ti ting som han skal gjøre: Det første bud er at han avskjediger de rådgivere som er ærgjerrige og vinningslystne, hvis tunge er dobbel og svikefull og hvis øyne har svakt syn i åndelige ting. Istedet må han velge slike som ikke selger rettferdigheten for penger, som blyges for løgn og smiger, som elsker Gud høyere enn det kjødelige og som har medlidenhet med sin nødstedte neste.

Det andre bud er at jeg vil at kongen selv må gi bidrag til ditt kloster, hvis regel jeg selv har diktert. Det tredje bud er at han skal sende sine vasaller og tjenere til hedenske land, der den katolske tro og kjærlighet kan vokse. For hans vasaller ble drept i staden København,

fordi han ettertraktet en del av et annet kristent rike. Det fjerde bud er at kongen selv daglig skal lese min Moders, den hellige jomfrus, tidebønner. Men om han har rettsutøvelse eller andre viktige plikter å ivareta, da kan han sløyfe tidebønnen om dagen. Han må også hver dag høre to privatrnesser eller en høymesse, og hver dag må han fem ganger huske på mine fem sår, som jeg utholdt for ham på korset.

Det femte bud er at han skal faste på vigiliene til min moders og til de helgeners festdager, som er innstiftet av den hellige Kirke. Fredagene må han faste på fisk, og lørdagene, om han vil, på melkemat; førtidagers-fasten må han iaktta etter landets skikk. Men i sin faste må han passe på at han er måteholden og behersket, slik at han ikke blir sløv når han skal treffe avgjørelser eller er slapp og tankeløs i de dommer han skal avsi, på grunn av utidig faste, uklok nattevåk og lange bønner. Om hans arbeide vokser, må han istedet følge min Kirkes ledes råd, makt og forordning.

Det sjette bud er at han skal gi hver tiende penning, som tilkommer det kongelige skattkammer, som en almisse til de fattige. Og om han av kjærlighet til meg vil gi noe ut over dette i fromhet, da skal visselig hans lønn bli enda større. Det syvende bud er at han hver fredag skal ta imot tretten fattige og vaske deres føtter, samt at han egenhendig gir dem mat og penger, såfremt han ikke befinner seg på reise, for da kan han la slikt være. Hver fredag, når han sitter i ro på sin kongsgård, må han være helt fri, og lytte til sine undersåtters, rikets almues, klagemål.

Og da må han i tillegg undersøke om hans embedsmenn, dommere og lensmenn, samt de kongelige skatte- og inntektskrevere, har vært trofaste og forvaltet sine embeder rettelig. Det åttende bud er at kongen selv må være klok når han gir sine gaver og ikke gi en så meget at han må være knipen mot en annen. Og om han vil belønne en rikeligere enn andre for hans hederlige vandel og for hans store innsats, må han gjøre dette efter moden overveielse og med samvittighetsfull omhu, slik at ingen får anledning til å beskyldes kongen for urettferdighet eller til å murre mot ham. Intet er nemlig så klanderverdig hos høye herrer som for stor gavmildhet eller gjerrighet.

Og intet pryder kongen mer enn det å herske høvisk og å belønne med kjærlighet dem som arbeider i hans tjeneste. Kongen kan også skjenke gaver til utlendinger som holder fred med hans rike og som lider nød, men han må gjøre dette på slik måte at hans egne embedsmenn og undersåtter ikke glemmes. Det niende bud er at kongen ikke må bryte Guds lov eller innføre nye sedvaner som strider mot lovlig hevd og heller ikke selvrådig

bestemme og dømme slik det faller ham inn, men med rettferdighet gjøre alt ifølge Guds rikes lov.

Det sømmer seg nemlig ikke for kongen å befale meget og utføre intet, å forlate rettferdigheten og herske med grusomhet. Det tiende bud er at kongen gjennom sine gjerninger skikker seg slik at han ansees for å være kongenavnet verdig, idet han unngår all vinningslyst og oppriktig elsker ydmykhet, for så meget høyere som kongen står over alle andre, så meget ydmykere må han være overfor Gud, fra hvem alle makt kommer, For i sin dom skal Gud kreve like strengt regnskap av kongen, som av folket.»

KAPITTEL 4.

GUDS SØNN TALER TIL BRUDEN OG SIER: «Jeg har tidligere meddelt kongen noen trappetrinn, på hvilke han kan stige opp til det himmelske. Ja, om han nøyaktig følger og iakttar dem, kan han stige opp til himmelen med like stor letthet som den som fører et kontemplativt liv. Nu vil jeg imidlertid gi kongen ti råd: Det første er at han ikke skal sitte til bords alene, men sammen med noen av sine undersåtter, som kan få åndelig og legemlig glede av hans nærvær. Derigjennom trekkes de nemlig bort fra synd og uhøviske gjerninger. Det andre råd er at han, når han har reist seg fra bordet, blir stående en liten stund og på ærbart vis underholder seg med sine menn, for gjennom ydmyk og fortrolig samtale vinner han sine tjeneres kjærlighet og velvilje.

Og ved slike anledninger kan kongen få høre sine menns meninger og argumenter, enten de nu bør følges eller forkastes. Det tredje råd er at han skal være barmhjertig og rettferdig i alle sine dommer og gjerninger, slik at han ikke forsømmer å øve rettferdighet på grunn av vennskap eller falsk medlidenhet, på grunn av noe enkelt gode, timelig fordel eller frykt, og ikke forsømmer eller glemmer barmhjertigheten av vrede eller utålmodighet. For det sømmer seg ikke at kongen beseires av vrede eller at dommeren feller en forhastet dom eller gjennom bønner lokkes bort fra rettferdighetens vei.

Det fjerde råd er at kongen ikke betror forvaltningen av rettsordenen til slike som han vet er partiske eller vinningslystne eller som på sviskefullt vis vet å presse ut penger; slike mennesker kommer lett bort fra rettferdigheten. Istedet må kongen tro på dem som er godlynte av natur, som går i sine foreldres gode fotspor og som setter mere pris på rettferds gjerninger enn på selv å bli rike. Det femte råd er at kongen stadig skal undersøke

hvordan lov og rettferd praktiseres i hans rike, og ikke la dem som han er istand til å tukte, få feile videre, og uten straff.

Og han må vokte seg for å avkreve for mange penger og for høy erstatning av dem som har forbrutt seg, og han må ikke ved listige knep undertrykke de uheldige. Med de ydmyke må han handle mildere, og de forherdede må han straffe strengere, mens han i alle ting iakttar rettferdighet og barmhjertighet. Og der han ser at ydmykheten er stor, må han gi barmhjertigheten forrang fremfor rettferdigheten. Det sjette råd er at kongen stadig må granske sine dommer og gjerninger. Og om han blir oppmerksom på at han har feilet ved en sinnets plutselige innskydelse, må han ikke skjemmes for å rette på eller tilbakekalle det som er blitt gjort.

For han er ikke visere enn David, som også tok feil, eller frommere enn profeten, som trodde på løgnen og ble drept av løgnen. Det syvende råd er at kongen ikke skal være altfor hastig i sin handlemåte, men forutseende og omtenkksom, idet han nøye tenker over sakens utfall og støtter seg til de vises, erfarnes og gudfryktiges råd. Disse må han lyde og ikke holde seg borte fra dem, for det vidner om et vanartet og mistenksomt sinn om man mistenker prøvede rådgivere og drøfter de råd som er gitt etter moden overveielse med sleske smigrere.

Det åttende råd er at kongen må ta seg i vare for all lettferdighet i ord og seder, ja, til og med overfor sine tjenere og fortrolige. Han må unngå smigrere og smiskere som om de var skorpioner, for de holder med ham i hans synder og er et anstøt for de gode venner. En konge bør være slik at han fryktes av de unge, hedres av de gamle, elskes av de rettferdige, og inderlig er efterlengtet av de nedtyngede. Det niende råd er at kongen ikke må ha omgang med dem som er bannlyst av Kirken eller støtte dem som håner Gud og hans bud, men han skal undervise dem med kjærlige ord og formaninger, og om de ikke bedrer seg, må kongen vise dem sin strenghet og undra dem sine velgjerninger. For det er kongens heder å elske de guddommelige ting over alt annet, samt av alle krefter å øke Guds heder. Det tiende råd er at kongen skal elske folket og almuen i sitt rike, behandle sine riddere mildt og hjemsøke fedrenes gode gjerninger på deres barn.

KAPITTEL 6.

GUDS SØNN TALER TIL BRUDEN: «Jeg har sagt deg før at kongen skal elske folket og

almuen i sitt rike. Han viser at han elsker dem når han lar dem leve ifølge de vedtatte lover, når han ikke lar grusomme fogder og skatte-inndrivere herske over almue og folk, når han ikke tynger folket med skattepålegg, som han finner på og når han ikke besværer dem med slitsom og uvanlig gjesteinnkvartering. For å føre krig mot de vantro kan dog kongen ydmykt be folk og almue om hjelp, om han behøver det. Men han må se nøye til at dette nødvendige behov ikke blir til sedvane og lov. Kongen må også søke å avskaffe sedvaner som står hindrende i veien for sjelens frelse, og særlig den gamle uskikk at når skip i storm forliser på strendene i hans rike, kan skipenes og varenes eiere plyndres for det gods som flyter iland. O, hvilken umenneskelig grusomhet er det ikke å øke fortvilelsen for de nødstedte! Er det ikke tilstrekkelig sorg for den hjem søkte å miste skipet? Skal i tillegg hans øvrige eiendeler tas fra ham? Derfor må kongen avskaffe denne sedvane og annen dårlig og syndig skikk i sitt rike, slik at han kan finne større nåde og velsignelse for mine øyne.»

KAPITTEL 10.

GUDS MODER TALER TIL BRUDEN og sier: «Si til dronningen at jeg, barmhjertighetens moder, tok imot henne da hun var som en avnaget eplekjerne, ikke vakker å se på og besk av smak og motbydelig å svelge. Dog plantet jeg henne i et fjernt land forat hun skulle bære god frukt. Likesom trær bærer blad, blomst og frukt, bør hun bære dydenes blad, idet hun gjerne lytter til Guds ord, som er nyttige for sjelen og kan sammenlignes med trærnes blad. Hun må også tale det som er til Guds heder og nestens nytte, for da bærer hun fagre blomster. Dessuten bør hun elske Gud og sin neste, for da bærer hun den ypperste frukt. Men nu taler hun gjerne uanstendige ord og slikt som kan la henne vinne verdens heder og gunst. Hun må altså omvende seg til meg, og ved sin lytten, sin tale og sine gjerninger bringe min Sønn den kjærlighetens frukt som smaker ham så godt, nemlig hennes sjel, som han så inderlig lengter etter å eie.

KAPITTEL 12.

GUDS SØNN TALER TIL BRUDEN: «Om en torn har trengt inn like ved hjertet, bør den ikke rykkes ut hastig og heftig, men skjæres bort sakte og litt etter litt. Slik kan en god kvinne, verdig all kjærlighet, iblant bli en hindring for den mann som streber mot fullkommenhet. Derfor må den gifte mann, når han innser den fare han er i, iblant bruke

milde ord, slik en formaner gjør, iblant strenge ord, som en lærer, og iblant «skjære bort», slik en læge gjør.

Man bør nemlig klokt lytte til kvinnen, slik at hun kan bli trøstet. Man bør rettlede henne høvisk og i hemmelighet, slik at hun ikke blir foraktet, ærbart oppdra henne og iblant la være å lytte til henne, slik at rettferdigheten ikke blir tilsidesatt. Derfor bør en dronning utmerke seg ved ydmykhet i sinnet, beherskelse i sine gjerninger, klokket i det som skal gjøres og medlidenhet med dem som har det vondt. For ved en kvinnes klokket ble David formildet, slik at han ikke falt i synd. Gjennom ydmykhet kom Ester på tronen og forble der, mens Jesabel ble forkastet for sitt hovmod og sin vinningslysts skyld. Maria, min moder, ble for sin medlidenhets og kjærlighets skyld moder til alle i himmel og på jord.

Da den dronning du ber for, gjennom deg begjærer et råd fra meg, må du altså på mine vegne svare henne og si at hun rar inngivelser fra to ånder, en god og en ond; og dem vil jeg fortelle deg mere om en annen gang.»

KAPITTEL 43.

GUDS SØNN TALER TIL BRUDEN OG SIER: «Den konge som søker sjelenes gavn og drar ut mot hedningene, må ha to bannere. På det første banner skal min lidelse, som betegner barmhjertigheten, være avbildet, på det andre min rettferdighets sverd. Når kongen kommer til hedningene, skal han først folde ut barmhjertighetens banner og by dem fred, Om de avslår å ta imot denne, skal han derefter heve rettferdighetens banner. Han må, når han gjør dette, stole på min godhet og ikke frykte fiendens store antall. Og han må ikke vike i forsakthet og ikke lytte til dem som sier: «La oss dra hjem igjen: Hvorfor skal vi slite mer?»»

Om kongen er redd for å rykke frem med fasthet, bør han hverken begynne på eller sikte mot dette gode verk. Det er nemlig bedre ikke å påta seg storverk enn å begynne på dem og ikke fullføre dem i kjærlighet. Kongen må forøvrig ha med seg prester av prøvet vandel og munkes fra forskjellige ordener, som i sannhet gir avkall på verden, for det finnes mange blant hedningene, som foretrekker sine villfarelser og som man visselig må gjendrive. Prestene må også undervise folket og formane det, slik at det ikke for sin vinnings lyst skyld pådrar seg bannlysning eller dør på grunn av knurring og et liv uten måtehold.»

KAPITTEL 45.

GUDS MODER TALTE TIL BRUDEN og sa: «Om kongen drar ut mot hedningene, må han ta med seg et på forhånd fastsatt antall menn, for jeg kjenner hans utferd og hans hjemkomst og vet at mange av dem som drar ut med kongen ikke vil bli mindre opprørske mot Gud enn de som gikk ut med Moses. Men likesom Moses ikke førte folket inn i det lovede land på grunn av dets utakknemlighet, så skal de som ennå ikke er født, være de som fullkommer Guds vilje. Og kongen må ikke nære altfor store forhåpninger fordi jeg kalte ham min sønn og sa at jeg aldri mer ville skilles fra ham. For det er visselig sant at om han holder sine løfter til meg, skal jeg også holde mine løfter til ham, men om han forakter meg, må han frykte at han selv vil bli foraktet.»

KAPITTEL 46.

HIMMELDRONNINGEN TALTE TIL BRUDEN og sa: «Den hellige erkebiskop Sigfrid forlot England og gjorde Guds vilje i Sveriges rike. Når denne biskop som du ber for, og som drar ut med kongen mot de vantro, er kommet til hedningene og noe av deres land er inntatt av de kristne, må han, (biskopen) først på en passende og verdig plass, oppføre en domkirke, slik at de kristne, for sine sjelers behov, kan ta sin tilflukt til den som til en moder og katolikkene slik kan bli vederkveget og åndelig trøstet. Og om biskopen ikke kan innsette mer enn en eller to prester der og finne utkomme for dem og seg selv, må han være tilfreds, for min Sønn har makt til å øke sine gaver og utvide bispedømmet. Men om han eller andre av mine venner dør før disse ord går i oppfyllelse, skal den gode vilje tilregnes dem som fullbyrdet gjerning, og de skal få lønn for den. Derfor må ingen fortrøste seg til et langt liv, men hver og en må med tålmod vente på Guds vilje».

BOK 9 «EXTRAVAGANTES»

KAPITTEL 80.

I HAR DET STYGGESTE RYKTET i hele riket og utenfor det, for man sier at I bedriver utukt med menn mot naturens orden. Dette virker sannsynlig, da I elsker visse menn mer enn Gud og Eders sjel og Eders egen hustru. For det andre kan det betviles at I har den

rette tro, for enskjønt I er blitt bannlyst av Kirken og forbudt å høre messe, har I ikke aktet på dette, men besøkt kirker og hørt messe.

For det tredje har I plyndret vår krone, vårt land og gods. For det fjerde har I forrådt Eders tjenere og undersätter skåningene, som trofast vil tjene Eder og Eders sønn, holde landet under vår krone og bekjempe kronens uvenner. Med vitende og vilje overgav I dem og hele Skåne til Eders verste fiende, slik at de aldri kan være trygge for gods og liv så lenge han lever. Om I beslutter å bedre Eders syndige liv og ta tilbake de tapte landområder, vil vi tjene Eder; vil I ikke, så gi oss Eders sønn og gi ham kronen og reis selv bort og la ham love at han vil vinne de tapte områder tilbake, lyde sitt råd og sine tjenere og styrke retten blant folkene.

BOK 10 «REGULA SALVATORIS»

INNLEDNING – KAPITTEL 2.

JEG ER SOM DEN MEKTIGSTE KONGE, som plantet vingårder. Lenge bar de den aller beste vin. Langt om lenge sådde hans verste uvenn det aller verste ugress i dem, og det vokste og bredde seg så voldsomt at kvistene bare med stor vanskelighet kunne bære vindruer. Kongens tjenere sa til ham: «Herre, vi har gått gjennom dine vingårder, og vi har funnet bare få kvister som bærer vin, men det usle ugresset, som ikke duer til annet enn å brennes opp, det har vokst seg overmåte høyt!» Husbonden svarte dem: «Jeg skal plante en ny vingård; dit skal vinkvistene bæres, og der skal de slå røtter. Jeg skal selv gjødsle der, og den skal bli full av den ypperste vin.

Og jeg skal selv våke over den, og om noe skadelig kommer inn der, skal rankene tilintetgjøres og visne bort og hastig bli til støv, slik at det ikke kan skade mer. Men når vin fra denne vingård kommer til min bolig, da skal alle glede seg og gi ære og heder til den husbond som plantet vingården og gjødslet den. Gledes skal også den som festet røttene. Og Gud skal heller ikke glemme den som bar vinkvistene dit. Gjennom denne vingård skal mange andre vingårder, som lenge har stått tørre, vokse til og igjen begynne å bære frukt etter sin fornyelses dag.»

KAPITTEL 2.

GRUNNVOLLEN FOR DENNE ORDEN og for frelsen er sann ydmykhet, ren kyskhet og frivillig fattigdom. Derfor er det ikke tillatt for noen å eie noe eget, nei, ikke engang den aller minste ting, og heller ikke tillatt å eie eller endog berøre med sine hender en eneste penning og heller ikke eie noe av gull eller sølv, såfremt det ikke er nødvendig for et vevet arbeides skyld å berøre slikt, hvilket dog bare må skje etter abbedissens råd og med hennes tillatelse. Alle nødvendige ting skal man forvente å få av abbedissen, d.v.s. ordensdrakt, sengklær og arbeidsredskap, og man må ikke ha noe som regelen ikke tillater.

KAPITTEL 6.

FOR AT TAUSHETEN SKAL BEVARES STRENGT, er det ikke tillatt for noen å si noe fra tidlig om morgenen og til min moders messe er sunget. Når denne messe er avsluttet, er det tillatt, mellom tidebønn ene og på bestemte steder, å føre åndelig samtale samt å tale om Regelens overholdelse og slik som er virkelig nødvendig, og det helt til bordbønnene er lest. Lettferdig og unyttig prat må alltid helt og holdent unngås overalt. Når takkebønnen etter middagsmåltidet er lest i kirken, kan søstrene få tale med hverandre til vesper begynner. Derefter må taushetskravet samvittighetsfullt overholdes til takkebønnen etter kveldsmåltidet er lest i kirken. Den korte stunden mellom takksigelsen og den åndelige lesning er det tillatt å tale. Men når den åndelige lesning er påbegynt, må tausheten samvittighetsfullt respekteres, helt til min ærerike moders messe blir sunget følgende morgen. Og man skal vite at søstrene i allminnelighet er forpliktet til å følge de her oppregnede «tause tiden», dog med unntagelse av de søstre som utfører slikt arbeide som ikke kan utføres på forstandig vis uten tale, for at alt skal gå forstandig til, slik at uvennlig sinnede ikke skal få anledning til å klandre oss.»

KAPITTEL 10.

«OM NOEN BER OM Å BLI OPPTATT i klosteret, må hun aldri opptas før et helt år er gått. Første gang må man altså si til henne: «Kom tilbake til oss om tre måneder; i mellomtiden skal vi rådslå om deg.» Når hun kommer tilbake til fastsatt tid, skal abbedissen spørre henne hvorfor hun ønsker å bli opptatt i klosteret og hvilke bånd det er som binder henne til verden. Etter å ha hørt hennes grunner og hensikter, skal abbedissen si til henne: «Datter, iblant kan falskhetens snare ligge skjult under det som ser godt ut, og

bristende omtanke om fremtiden bedrar mange. Kom derfor tilbake til oss om noen måneder og vis oss ditt ønske, om det står fast i det gode.» Når hun kommer tilbake og ydmyker seg som før, må man fremholde for henne det som er hårdt og strengt i klosterlivet: at man må forakte verden og glemme sine slektninger.

Om hun lover å oppfylle alt dette, da skal, ved årets slutt, hele klostersonnemøtet samtykke i å ta imot henne. Om det er en person om hvis liv ingen tvil foreligger, kan alle gi henne sitt samtykke første gang hun fremlegger sitt ønske, men hun kan ikke på noen måte opptas i klosteret, avlegge løftene og iklæs nonnedrakt, før året er ute. Etter at hun har fått tillatelse til å tre inn i klosteret, skal man sende bud etter stiftets biskop og be ham komme og innvie henne. Når nu biskopen kommer, skal han gå til kirkedøren, der hun som vil inntre i ordenen, står og venter utenfor. Han skal spørre henne: «Er du fri for alle kirkelige bånd, som ekteskap, løfter og bannlysning?» Om hun svarer: «Ja, jeg er fri,» skal biskopen fortsette: «Kanskje skamfølelse eller sorg over motgang i verden driver deg til klosteret, eller kanskje du t ynges av stor gjeld, som du ikke kan betaler»

Om hun da svarer: «Ikke på noen måte driver sorg eller skam meg til å ta dette skritt, og all min gjeld har jeg nu etter evne betalt,» skal biskopen føre henne inn i kirken med ordene: «Se, nu går hun verdig inn i denne orden.» Når hun går inn i kirken, skal man foran henne bære en rød fane, på hvis ene side mitt legems lidende billede, og på hvis andre side min moders billede, er malt, slik at den unge brud, når hun ser billedet av sin nye brudgom som lider på korset, skal lære tålmodighet og fattigdom, og når hun ser min jomfruelige moder, skal lære kyskhets og ydmykhet. Når hun er ført inn i kirken, skal hun stille seg ved kirkedøren, og biskopen skal gå litt bort fra henne, til den andre siden, for å innvie hennes ring. To tendte lys skal bæres frem til fanen foran henne og brenne så lenge messen pågår. Biskopen skal lese følgende bønn: «Allmektige, evige Gud, du som i din miskund og barmhjertighet har festet en ny brud, velsign du denne ring, slik at din tjenerinne, likesom hun i det ytre bærer den nye bruds tegn på hånden, må fortjene og bære din tro og kjærlighet i det indre. I Faderens, Sønnens og den Hellige Ånds navn!».

KAPITTEL 12.

DET SKAL VÆRE SEKSTI SØSTRE, ikke fler. De skal ha prester som hver dag skal synge kirkeårets messe og officium ifølge ritualet i den domkirke, i hvis stift klostrene ligger. Prestene skal helt og holdent være skilt fra søstrenes kloster og ha sitt eget hus, og huset skal ha inngang til kirken. Prestene skal disponere det «laveste kor», mens søstrene skal ha koret over, under taket, dog således at de kan se sakramentene og høre tidebønnene. Det

skal være tretten prester, efter mønster av tretten apostler; den trettende av disse, Paulus, var jo ikke den som led minst møye.

Videre skal det være fire diakoner, som også kan være presteviet, om de så vil, og disse skal betegne de fire store kirkefedre Ambrosius, Augustin, Gregor og Hieronymus. Til sist skal det være åtte lægmenn, som ved sitt arbeide skal skaffe prestene det nødvendige. Da man nu har seksti søstre, tretten prester, fire diakoner samt disse åtte tjenere, tilsvarende disse personers antall de tretten apostler og de toogsytti disiplene.»

KAPITTEL 14.

ABBEDISSEN SKAL VELGES AV KONVENTET med biskopens råd. Av respekt for min høysalige moder, som denne orden er viet, skal abbedissen være hode og herskerinne, for den hellige jomfru, hvis stedfortreder på jord hun er, var efter min himmelfart hode og dronning for mine apostler og følgesvenner. Abbedissen skal også blant de tretten prestene, velge en som hele søster- og brødresamfunnet samtykker i, til alles konfessor, og biskopen skal bekrefte valget og innsette ham. Efter at biskopen har gitt ham uinnskrenket myndighet til å binde og løse, til å rette og forbedre, skal alle prester og brødre adlyde ham i alt, likesom søstrene adlyder abbedissen, og uten hans bud må intet gjøres, nei, ikke det aller minste.

Dog skal konfessoren, bortsett fra når det gjelder å dømme brødre og det som har med oppfyllelsen av klosterreglene å gjøre, ikke foreta seg noe uten å rådslå med abbedissen. For eftersom hun er klosterets overhode, skal man rådføre seg med henne i alt det som angår klosterets anliggender og klosterets eiendommer.»

KAPITTEL 15.

DE TRETTE PRESTENE skal utelukkende beskjeftige seg med gudstjeneste, studier og bønn, men ikke engasjere seg i andre sysler eller ærender. Hver søndag skal de, på morsmålet, utlegge evangeliet for dagens messe, slik at alle får anledning til å lytte. Likeså skal de preke offentlig på alle de høytider, på hvilkes vigilier de faster på brød og vann, og overhodet på alle de høytider som har vigilier.»

KAPITTEL 23.

MIN MODER INNDELTE SIN DAG i tre forskjellige deler: en hvor hun priste Gud med sin munn, en annen hvor hun tjente ham med sine hender, og en tredje hvor hun viste omsorg for den svake kropp og ga den hva den trengte, på sømmelig sett. På samme måte skal søstrene, til enhver tid, når de ikke er opptatt med gudstjeneste eller lesning, arbeide med sine hender slik at de, på samme måte som de tjener meg med munnen, også skal tjene meg med sine øvrige lemmer. Og dette arbeidet skal ikke være for verdslig forfengelighets eller for vinnings skyld, men, som min moders arbeide, til Guds ære og kirkens og fattige menneskers beste. Alle sine gode gjerninger skal de utføre med abbedissens tillatelse. Var veljeg, alles Gud, i verden uten å arbeide? Arbeidet jeg kanskje ikke da jeg gikk rundt og underviste og utholdt min lidelse? Var mine apostler uten arbeide? Jeg kunne meget vel ha gitt dem alt, i tilstrekkelig mengde, men de tjente meg, sin Gud, med alle sine lemmer, slik at de gjennom kroppslig arbeide skulle bli bedre skikket til åndelig arbeide.

KAPITTEL 26.

DEN BISKOP, I HVIS STIFT KLOSTERET LIGGER, skal være såvel søstrenes som brødrenes fader og visitator, samt dømme i alle de tvister som angår søstre og brødre. Det påligger ham bestandig å gi omhyggelig akt på at Regelen overholdes på alle punkter, slik at det ikke hender at den velgjørende ordensregel blir ringeaktet av søstrene eller brødrene. Fyrsten i det rike eller det området klosteret ligger, skal være dets forsvarer, når nøden krever dette. Men paven skal ha større rett enn begge disse, d.v.s. landets fyrste og biskopen, til å være klosterfolkets beskytter i kjærlighet, om de blir tvunget til å be om hans hjelp. Om noen vil bygge et kloster av denne orden, må han ingenlunde fordriste seg til å gjøre dette uten pavens vilje og tillatelse. Når denne regel er blitt stadfestet av paven, må man rådspørre fromme brødre av Benedictus eller Bernhards regler, som i denne klosterregel må tilføye noen kapitler om hvordan det skal rådes bot på misbruk i klosteret, hvordan døde skal begraves, hvordan biskopen skal komme på visitasjon, og i anledning av hva slags saker han skal gå inn i klosteret, Og alt annet nødvendig som ikke er angitt i dette kapittel, må tas med fra de nevnte klosterregler, slik at denne klosterregel kan bli best yrket og komplett.

KAPITTEL 27.

EN GRAV SKAL FINNES PÅ ET BESTEMT STED i klosteret; den skal alltid være åpen, og søstrene skal hver helgedag og hver hverdag gå til den efter ters. Mens abbedissen med to fingre kaster litt jord i graven, skal søstrene lese salmen De profundis med følgende kollektivbønn: Herre, du som i graven bevarte uskadd den hellige kropp som du gav din Sønn i jomfru Marias liv og oppvakt e ham uskadd: Vi ber deg, bevare du våre kropper rene og ubesmittet i din høyt hellige tjeneste, og styr vår vei her i tiden, slik at våre kropper, når den store og forferdelige dommedag kommer, må oppstå blant dine helgener, og måtte våre sjeler fortjene å gledes evig hos deg og forenes med dine utvalgte i Faderens og Sønnens og den Hellige Ånds navn.» Videre skal en liten bære med jord alltid stå ved kirkens inngang, slik at den alltid kan sees av dem som går inn, og slik at disse, når de får se den, får døden i sine tanker og kan lese i sitt hjerte at de selv er støv og igjen skal bli til støv.»

KAPITTEL 29.

GUD, ALLE TINGS SKAPER, kunngjorde med sin velsignede munn for meg, uverdige kvinne, alle ord i denne klosterregel på et så vidunderlig sett at jeg ikke fullt ut kan forklare det for noe menneske. Det er heller ikke mulig for noen å forstå uten kroppslige bilder, hvordan så mange ord kan uttales eller fattes på så ytterst kort tid. Det var altså som om mange kostbare klenodier på samme tid befant seg i et kar og ble helt ut, slik at de som så det, straks kunne skjelne den ene gjenstand fra den andre, og disse gjenstander ble liggende så lenge, at han kunne samle dem i fanget, hver for seg. Slik gikk det til da Jesus Kristus åpenbarte seg for meg, opplot sin velsignede munn og begynte å tale. For da kom straks, på meget kort tid, alle artiklene i denne regel med alle de ord som inngår i den, til meg, ikke som om de var skrevet på papir; men på hvilken måte de kom, det vet alene han, fra hvem de på så vidunderlig vis ble hørt og ved hvis underbare kraft de kunne forstås og skjelnes fra hverandre i mitt sinn.

Min visjon varte også så lenge, at jeg i samarbeide med Kristi nåde, kunne samle alt i mitt minnes skjød. Etter denne visjon var mitt hjerte fylt av slik glød og slik jubel, at det ikke hadde kunnet rumme mer uten å ha bristet av glede. Ja, mitt hjerte var i noen dager som en boble fylt med for meget luft, helt til jeg for en munk og Guds venn fikk talt om alle

reglenes artikler og de ord som inngår i dem; og han skrev alt ned så for han kunne. Og da alt dette var skrevet ned, kjente jeg at mitt hjerte og min kropp litt etter litt vendte tilbake til sin naturlige tilstand. Lov og ære være Gud, den allmektige! Amen.

BOK 11 «SERMO ANGELICUS»

KAPITTEL 10.

NÅR ØRNEN, SOM FLYR HØYT OPPE I LUFTEN, har speidet ut over mange skoger, får den, på lang avstand, se et høyt tre, som har så faste røtter at det ikke kan rykkes opp av vindenes angrep, og hvis stamme er så mektig at ingen klarer å klatre den opp, og som dessuten står på et sted, hvor det virker umulig at noe skal kunne falle ned på det ovenfra. Dette tre betrakter ørnen nøye, og der bygger den det rede den vil hvile i. Gud kan sammenlignes med en slik ørn. For hans blick fanger alt det fremtidige, like fullt som det nuværende, åpent og klart. Da han skuet ut over alle de rettferdige og ærbare ekteskap som skulle inngås fra det første menneske ble skapt og like til den ytterste dag, fant han intet ekteskap som kunne måle seg med Joakims og Annas i kjærlighet til Gud og ærbarhet.

Derfor behaget det ham at et slikt ekteskap skulle bli opphav til hans rene, dydrike moders kropp: med den forstås det rede han selv skulle hvile i med trøst og lise. Fromme ekteskap kan naturlig sammenlignes med vakre trær: Trærnes rot er de to hjerters forening, som finner sted alene i den hensikt at den skal bringe Gud heder og ære. Slike ektefellers vilje kan treffende sammenlignes med grener som bærer frukt, da de i alle sine gjerninger er så gudfryktige at de, ifølge Guds bud, elsker hverandre i ærbarhet bare for å kunne føde barn til Guds ære. Sannelig, slike høye ekteskap makter ikke Fristeren å nå med sin makt og med sine svikefulle kunster, for deres ene glede ligger i det at Gud får heder og ære, og ingen annen sorg kan nå dem enn den at Gud blir hånet og krenket.

De synes å vokse på et trygt sted når verdens ære og rikdorns overflod ikke formår å lokke deres sjeler til kjærlighet til verden eller til hovmod. Da nu Gud på forhånd så at Joakims og Annas ekteskap skulle bli slik, bestemte han at hans eget bosted, nemlig hans moders kropp, skulle gjøres rede i dette ekteskap. O, Anna, du moder verd all ære, hvilken dyrebar skatt bar du ikke i ditt moderliv da Maria, som skulle bli Guds moder, hvilte der.

Man kan trøstig holde det for sant, at da det emne som Maria skulle dannes av, var blitt avlet og ført sammen i Annas moderliv, elsket Gud det høyere enn alle andre menneskekropper som var født eller skulle fødes av menn og kvinner i hele verden. Den hederverdige Anna kan altså med rette kalles den allmektige Guds skattkammer, for hun gjemte i sitt moderliv den skatt, som var mere kjær for Gud enn alt annet.

O, hvor nær var ikke Guds hjerte denne skatt bestandig! O, med hvilken mildhet og glede festet han ikke sin majestets øyne på denne skatt, han som sa i sitt evangelium: «Der din skatt er, vil også ditt hjerte være.» Høyst troverdig er det at englene jublet storlig over denne skatt, da de forstod at deres Skaper, som de elsket høyere enn seg selv, elsket den så høyt. Det ville være både rett og sømmelig om alle holdt høyt i ære den dag da det emne ble avlet og ført sammen i Annas moderliv, som Guds moders velsignede kropp skulle dannes av, den kropp som Gud selv og alle hans engler elsket med så stor kjærlighet.

Femti AFORISMER

1 Generelle aforismer

Det er ikke vanlig å koste dyr salting på råttent kjøtt. [2, 81]

Ikke kan søte og stinkende ting med fordel være på samme tid i ett kar. [2, 27]

Det timelige er skapt til menneskers nytte og nødtørft, ikke til overflod. [2, 14]

Skjønt ploegen dras av oksen, styres den dog av pløyerens vilje. [2, 28]

Det er vanskelig for mennesket å avholde sin munn fra megen og unyttig tale. [2, 26]

Den som har begynt på noe meget viktig, må ikke gå tilbake til noe mindre viktig. [4, 107]

Der hvor det utkjempes en mindre kamp, gis en mindre lønn. [2, 19]

Alt som ser kostbart ut, er støv. [4, 30]

Likesom en gnist vokser og blir til en ild, så avstedkommer eiendom fordømmelse. [Regula Salvatoris, Kap. 19]

Ofte er den som er ond i dag, god imorgen. [4, 46]

2 Aforismer fra det kristne liv

Det gavner ikke å vaske kjødet om hjertet er urent. [Extravagantes, 15]

Alle mennesker har nemlig fått gode engler til beskyttelse og onde engler til prøvelse. [1, 9]

Elsk det himmelske, for det jordiske forgår, og det evige skal jeg gi dere. [6, 54]

Hva er bedrøvelse i verden om ikke en opphøyelse til kronen? [4, 15]

Om alt gikk etter menneskers behag, mon de da ville trakte etter det himmelske? [5, 15]

Det er bedre for din frelse at du med from enfoldighet ber et Fadervår, enn at du på snusfornuftig vis disputerer om innviklede ting for fåfengt verdslig æres skyld. [6, 77]

Jeg sier dere at så ofte prelater i hovmod, forfengelighet og ærelyst bestiger store hester, bestiger djevelen deres hjerter. [7, 12]

Verdens lys skiller seg fra mørket, men ennå mer skiller helgnesens lys seg fra denne verdens lys. [1, 20]

Hvis sinnet ikke finner lyst i de syndige tanker, men kjemper mot dem og avskyr dem, da er de sjelens renselse og krone. [3, 19]

Hva gavnet det Salomo å bygge et så dyrebart tempel, når han glemte å elske den for hvis skyld han hadde bygget det? [3, 18]

Djevelen kan ikke få noen makt over mennesket, om ikke menneskets vilje først er fordervet. [4, 67]

Menneskenes frie vilje leder noen sjeler til himmelen og andre til helvedes dyp. [4, 44]

Fri vilje er gitt menneskene like fullt som englene, forat de skal strebe mot det himmelske og forsmå det jordiske. [8, 56]

Verdens visdom fører til jammerens dal. [2, 12]

Den som flittig tenker over veien til døden og hvordan denne død er samt dommen etter døden, - han er vis. [2, 25]

Guddommelig visdom ligger ikke særlig i boklig utdannelse, men i hjertet og i en god livsførsel. [2, 25]

Frykt på rett vis, elsk fromt og lengt i visdom etter det himmelske. [2, 4]

3 Aforismer om kjærlighet, lydighet og ydmykhet

Hva tjener det til å ha en dør uten lås og et håp uten kjærlighet? [2, 27]

Det høyeste gode er kjærligheten; uten den finnes ingen frelse. [Extravagantes, 13]

Kjærligheten er visselig som et tre, som alle dyder springer ut fra. Blant dem er lydighet en den fornemste. [6, 120]

Jomfrustand fortjener kronen, enke stand nærmer seg Gud, men lydighet leder alle til æren. [6, 3]

Lydighet fører til himmelen, ulydighet fører bort fra den. [5, 12, 4]

Lykkelige blir de, som tar sin tilflukt til den sanne ydmykhet. [Extravagantes, 76]

Alle kristne kropper, hvor ydmykhet hersker, er mitt tempel. [2, 9]

Et rent og ydmykt hjerte behager Gud såvel i taushet som i sang. [4, 126]

Gud finner større behag i et ydmykt hjerte i en ydmyk kirke, enn i murer, der kroppene er innenfor, men hjertene utenfor. [3, 18]

Ydmykhet er hovmod, når det anlegges for at man skal bli oppmerksom på den og bli sett av mennesker. [4, 68]

Ydmykheten er den trapp, på hvilken man fra jorden stiger opp til Guds hjerte.
[Extravagantes, 93]

4 Aforismer om Gud

Tenk ikke på annet og ønsk ikke annet enn din Gud og Skaper, for når du har ham, har du alt. [1, 7]

Altså ligger visdom om Gud ikke særskilt i boklig lærdom, men i gode gjerninger. [2, 25]

Der ikke det guddommelige arbeidets slit finnes, der vinner ikke sjelen noen ære hos Gud.
[4, 126]

Om noen befaler over andre, skal han ikke hovmodes over at han er befalingsmann, men snarere frykte, for alle er av samme natur og all makt er fra Gud. [6, 53]

Gud er nemlig ånd, og derfor vil han at kjødelige ting skal forvandles til åndelige og forgjengelige til evige. [2,3]

Enhver som står oppreist og sterk, har styrke og manns kraft fra Gud. [4, 126]

[...] det råder ikke fred mellom Gud og sjelen, om ikke synden unnflys og det onde begjær tøyles. [2, 26]

Freden er den dyd som fører Gud inn i våre hjerter og holder ham fast der. [2, 26]

Likesom mennesket er dødt uten hodet, er sjelen død uten kjærlighet til Gud; Gud er jodens liv. [4, 115]

Jo høyere verdighet et menneske har oppnådd, desto større ære bør det vise Gud. [3, 1]

Sjelens føtter er håpet, hvormed sjelen finner frem til Gud. For likesom kroppen skrider frem ved hjelp av føttene, nærmer sjelen seg Gud i kraft av den guddommelige lengsels og håpets skritt. [4, 115]

Min Sønn omvendte ikke, mens han levet i kjødet, hele Judealandet på en gang, og heller ikke omvendte apostlene alle hedningland på en gang, - det krever lengre tid for å fullkomme Guds verk. [4, 76]

Lett seirer den som har Gud til medhjelper. [6, 41]

[Läs Heliga Birgitta's Uppenbarelser på Svenska här](http://www.prophecyfilm.com/swedish/)
(<http://www.prophecyfilm.com/swedish/>)

We are looking for translators. Please contact us at:

<http://www.prophecyfilm.com/contact/>

[Vi söker översättare, vänligen kontakta oss här.](#)

The Prophecies and Revelations of
Saint Bridget (Birgitta) of Sweden

Book 1

The words of our Lord Jesus Christ to His chosen and dearly beloved bride, Saint Bridget, about the proclamation of His most holy Incarnation and the rejection, desecration and abandonment of our faith and baptism, and how He bids His beloved bride and all Christian people to love Him.

Chapter 1

“I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth, one in Divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. I am the one who spoke to the patriarchs and the prophets and the one whom they awaited. For the sake of their longing and in agreement with my promise, I assumed flesh without sin and concupiscence, by entering the womb of the Virgin like the sun shining through the clearest gem. For just as the sun does not damage the glass by entering it, likewise the virginity of the Virgin was not lost when I assumed Manhood. I assumed flesh in such a way that I did not have to forsake my Divinity, and I was no less God - with the Father and the Holy Spirit, governing and upholding all things - although I was in the womb of the Virgin in my human nature. Just as brightness is never separated from fire, so too, my Divinity was never separated from my Humanity, not even in death.

Thereafter I allowed my pure and sinless body to be wounded from the foot to the head, and to be crucified for all the sins of mankind. That same body is now offered each day on the altar so that mankind might love me more and remember my great deeds more often. But now I am totally forgotten, neglected, despised, and expelled as a king is from his own kingdom and in whose place the most wicked robber has been elected and honored.

I have indeed wanted my kingdom to be within man, and by right I should be King and Lord over him, for I made him and redeemed him. However, now he has broken and desecrated the faith which he promised me in his baptism, and he has broken and spurned my laws and commandments which I prescribed and revealed to him. He loves his own will and refuses to hear me. In addition, he exalts the most wicked robber, the devil, above me and has given him his faith. The devil really is a robber, since he steals for himself, by way of evil temptations, bad councils, and false promises, the human soul that I redeemed with my blood. But he does not do this because he is mightier than me; for I am so mighty that I can do all things with a word, and so just, that even if all the saints asked me, I would not do the least thing against justice.

But, since man, who has been given free will, willfully rejects my commandments and obeys the devil, it is only right that he also experiences his tyranny and malice. This devil was created good by me, but fell by his own wicked will, and has become, so to speak, my servant for inflicting vengeance on the workers of evil.

Yet, even though I am now so despised, I am still so merciful that whoever prays for my mercy and humbles himself in amendment shall be forgiven his sins, and I shall save him from the evil robber - the devil. But to those who continue despising me, I shall visit my justice upon them, so that those hearing it will tremble, and those who feel it will say: "Woe, that we were ever conceived or born! Woe, that we ever provoked the Lord of majesty to wrath!"

But you, my daughter, whom I have chosen for myself, and with whom I now speak in spirit: love me with all your heart - not as you love your son or daughter or parents, but more than anything in the world - since I, who created you, did not spare any of my limbs in suffering for your sake! Yet, I love your soul so dearly that, rather than losing you, I would let myself be crucified again, if it were possible. Imitate my humility; for I, the King of glory and of angels, was clothed in ugly, wretched rags and stood naked at the pillar and heard all kinds of insults and ridicule with my own ears. Always prefer my will before your own, because my Mother, your Lady, has, from the beginning to the end, never wanted anything but what I wanted.

If you do this, then your heart shall be with my heart, and it will be inflamed by my love in the same way that anything dry becomes rapidly inflamed by fire. Your soul shall be so inflamed and filled with me, and I will be in you, so that everything worldly becomes bitter to you and all fleshly lusts like poison. You will rest in the arms of my

Divinity, where no fleshly desires exist, but only spiritual delight and joy which fill the delighted soul with happiness - inwardly and outwardly - so that it thinks of nothing and desires nothing but the joy which it possesses. So love me alone, and you will have all the things you want, and you will have them in abundance. Is it not written that the oil of the widow did not decrease until the day the rain was sent to earth by God according to the words of the prophet? I am the true prophet! If you believe my words and follow and fulfill them, the oil - joy and jubilation - shall never decrease for you for all eternity.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ's words to his daughter - whom He now had taken as His bride - about the articles of the true faith, and about what kind of adornments, tokens and desires the bride must have in order to please the Bridegroom.

Chapter 2

“I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and the sea and of all the things that are in them. I am one with the Father and the Holy Spirit - not like the gods of stone nor the gods of gold, as were used by people of old, and not several gods, as people once thought - but one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons but one in divine nature, the Creator of all but created by none, unchangeable and almighty, everlasting - without beginning or end. I am the one who was born of the Virgin, without losing my Divinity but joining it to my Manhood, so that I, in one person, should be the true Son of God and the Son of the Virgin. I am the one who hung on the cross and died and was buried, yet my Divinity remained unharmed. For even though I died in the Manhood and flesh that I, the only Son, had assumed, yet I lived on in my Divinity, being one God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. I am the same one who rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, and who now speaks with you in my Spirit. I have chosen you and taken you to myself as my bride in order to show you the ways of the world and my divine secrets, for this pleases me. You are also mine by right; for when your husband died, you entrusted all your will into my hands and, after his death, you also thought and prayed about how you should become poor and abandon all things for my sake. For this reason, you are mine by right because of this great love of yours, and I will provide for you because of this.

Therefore, I take you to myself as my bride and for my own pleasure, the kind that is becoming for God to have with a chaste soul. It is the obligation of the bride to be ready when the bridegroom wants to celebrate the wedding so that she will be properly dressed

and pure. You purify yourself well if your thoughts are always on your sins, on how I cleansed you in baptism from the sin of Adam, and how often I have been patient and supported you when you fell into sin. The bride should also have the insignia of her bridegroom on her chest, which means that you should observe and take heed of the favors and good deeds which I have done for you: such as how nobly I created you by giving you a soul and body, how nobly I enriched you by giving you health and temporal things, how lovingly and sweetly I redeemed you when I died for you and restored your heavenly inheritance to you - if you want to have it. The bride should also do the will of the Bridegroom. But what is my will, except that you should want to love me above all things and not desire anything but me?

I created all things for the sake of mankind, and placed all things under his authority, but he loves all things except me, and hates nothing but me. I bought back the inheritance for him which he had lost because of his sin. But he is so foolish and without reason that he prefers this passing glory - which is like the foam of the sea that rises up for a moment like a mountain, and then quickly falls down to nothing - instead of eternal glory in which there is everlasting good.

But if you, my bride, desire nothing but me, if you despise all things for my sake - not only your children and relatives, but also honor and riches - I will give you the most precious and lovely reward! I will not give you gold or silver, but myself, to be your Bridegroom and reward - I, who am the King of Glory. But if you are ashamed of being poor and despised, then consider how I, your God, walked before you, when my servants and friends abandoned me in the world; for I was not seeking earthly friends, but heavenly friends. And if you now are troubled and afraid about the burden and difficulty of work and sickness, then consider how difficult and painful it is to burn in hell! What would you not deserve if you had offended an earthly master as you have me? For even though I love you with all my heart, still I do not act against justice in the least point.

Therefore, as you have sinned in all your limbs, so shall you also make satisfaction and penance in every limb. But, because of your good will and your purpose of atoning for your sins, I shall change my justice into mercy by foregoing painful punishment for but a little penance. Therefore, embrace and take upon yourself a little work, so that you may be made clean of sin and reach the great reward sooner. For the bride should grow tired working alongside her bridegroom so that she may all the more confidently take her rest with him.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ's words of wisdom to His bride about how she should love and honor Him, the Bridegroom, and about how the evil love the world and hate God.

Chapter 3

“I am your God and Lord, whom you worship and honor. I am the one who upholds heaven and earth with my power; they are not upheld by any pillars or anything else. I am the one who is handled and offered up each day on the altar under the appearance of bread as true God and true man. I am the same one who has chosen you. Honor my Father! Love me! Obey my Spirit! Honor my Mother as your Lady! Honor all my saints! Keep the true faith which you shall learn by him who experienced within himself the battle of the two spirits - the spirit of falsehood and the spirit of truth - and with my help won. Maintain true humility. What is true humility if not to behave as one really is, and to give praise to God for the good things he has given us?

But now, there are many who hate me and my deeds, and who account my words as sorrow and vanity, but instead, with affection and love, embrace the whoremonger: the devil. Whatever they do for my sake is done with grumbling and bitterness. They would not even confess my name or serve me, if they did not fear the opinion of other men. They love the world with such fervor that they never tire of working for it night and day, always burning with their love for it. Their service is as pleasing to me as that of someone who gives his enemy money to kill his own son! This is what they do to me. They give me some alms and honor me with their lips in order to gain worldly success and to remain in their honor and in their sin. The good spirit is therefore hindered in them and they are prevented from making any progress in doing good.

However, if you want to love me with all your heart and to desire nothing but me, I will draw you to myself through love, just as a magnet draws iron to itself. I will place you on my arm, which is so strong that no one can stretch it out, and so firm that, once outstretched, no one is able to bend it back, and is so sweet that it surpasses every fragrance and is beyond comparison to any sweet thing or delight of this world.

EXPLANATION

This man, who was the teacher of the bride of Christ, was the holy theologian and canon of Linkoping, named Master Mathias of Sweden. He wrote an excellent commentary on the whole Bible. He was ingenuously tempted by the devil with many

heresies against the Catholic faith. However, he overcame all of them with the help of Christ and could not be conquered by the devil, as is shown in the written biography of Saint Bridget. It was this Master Mathias who composed the prologue to these books which begins thus: “Stupor et mirabilia,” etc. He was a holy man with great spiritual power in both word and deed. When he died in Sweden, the bride of Christ was living in Rome. While she was praying, she heard a voice saying to her in spirit: “Happy are you, Master Mathias, for the crown that has been prepared for you in heaven! Come now to the wisdom that will never end!”

One may also read more about Master Mathias in this Book (in chapter 52), in Book V (in the answer to question 3 in the last interrogation), and in Book VI (chapters 75 and 89).

Our Lord Jesus Christ’s words to His bride about how she should not fear or think that the revelations told to her by Him come from an evil spirit, and about how to discern an evil spirit from a good one.

Chapter 4

“I am your Creator and Redeemer. Why did you fear and doubt my words? Why did you wonder whether they came from a good or an evil spirit? Tell me, what have you found in my words that your conscience did not tell you to do? Or have I ever commanded you anything against reason?”

The bride answered: “No, all you told me was completely true and reasonable and I was badly mistaken.” The Bridegroom, Jesus, answered her: “I showed you three things from which you could recognize the good spirit: I invited you to honor your God, who made you and gave you all the good things you have; your reason also tells you to honor him above all things. I further invited you to keep the true faith, that is, to believe that nothing has been created without God nor may be made without God. I also invited you to love reasonable work and continence in all things, for the world was created for man’s sake, in order that he may use it according to his reasonable needs, and not in excess.

In the same way, you may also recognize the unclean spirit, the devil, from three opposing things: He tempts and advises you to seek and desire your own praise, and to be proud of the things given you. He also tempts you into unbelief and intemperance in all

your limbs and in all things, and makes your heart inflamed by them. Sometimes he also deceives men under the guise of a good spirit. This is why I commanded you to always examine your conscience and reveal it to spiritual men of wisdom!

Therefore, do not doubt that the good spirit of God is with you when you desire nothing but God and are completely inflamed by him! Only I can do this, and it is impossible for the devil to come near you then. He also cannot come near to any evil man unless I allow it, either because of his sins, or some secret judgment that is known only to me. For he is my creature like all other things - he was created good by me, but made himself evil by his own malice – therefore, I am Lord over him.

Therefore, those who accuse me do so falsely when they say that those who serve me with great and godly devotion are insane and possessed by the devil. They consider me to be like a man who gives his chaste and trusting wife over to adultery. Such a one should I be, if I allowed a righteous and God-loving man to be handed over to the devil! But because I am faithful, the devil will never rule over the soul of any man who devoutly serves me. Although my friends sometimes seem to be insane or senseless, it is not because the devil is tormenting them, or because they serve me with fervent and godly devotion. It is rather because of some defect or weakness in the brain, or some other hidden reason, which serves to humble them. It may also happen, sometimes, that the devil receives power from me over the bodies of good men for the sake of their future reward, or that he darkens their consciences. But he can never rule the souls of those who have faith in me and who love me.

The loving words of Christ to His bride in the wonderful parable of a lovely castle, which signifies the holy Church militant, and about how the Church of God will be rebuilt by the prayers of the glorious Virgin and of the saints.

Chapter 5

“I am the Creator of all things - I, the King of Glory and the Lord of Angels! I built for myself a lovely castle and placed my chosen men in it, but my enemies undermined the foundation and overpowered my friends so much so that the marrow is violently forced out of my friends’ feet as they sit chained to the wooden stocks. Their mouth is beaten by stones, and they are tortured by hunger and thirst. Moreover, enemies are persecuting their Lord! My friends are now praying with tears and groans for help, and

justice is calling for vengeance, but mercy says to forgive.

Then God said to his heavenly host that stood around him: “What do you think about these who have conquered my castle?” They all answered as with one voice: “O Lord, all justice is in you, and in you we see all things. You are without beginning and without end, the Son of God, and all judgment is given to you. You are their judge.” He answered: “Although you know and see all things in me, still for the sake of my bride who stands here, tell me the just sentence.” They said: “This is justice: that those who undermined the wall should be punished as thieves, that those who persist in evil should be punished as intruders and violent criminals, and that those who are captive should be freed and the hungry be filled.”

Then Mary, the Mother of God (who until now had remained silent) spoke: “Oh, my Lord and most dear Son, You were in my womb as true God and man. By your grace you sanctified me, who was but an earthen vessel. I beg you, have mercy on them once more!” Then the Lord answered His Mother: “Blessed be the words of your mouth that ascend like a sweet fragrance to God. You are the Queen and glory of angels and all saints because, by you, God and all the saints are made happy! Because your will was as my own from the beginning of your youth, I will do as you wish once more.”

Then He said to the host of saints: “Because you have fought manfully, and for the sake of your love, I will let myself be appeased for now. Behold, I will rebuild my wall because of your prayers. I will liberate and heal those who were oppressed by force, and honor them a hundredfold for the indignity they have endured. But if the violators and wrong-doers pray for my mercy, I will give them peace and mercy. However, those who despise my mercy will feel my justice.”

Then he said to his bride: “My bride, I have chosen you and brought you into my Spirit. You hear my words and those of my saints. Although the saints see all things in me, nevertheless, they have spoken for your sake so that you might understand, since you, who are still in the flesh, cannot see all things in me in the same way as they who are spirits. I will now also show you what all these things signify.

The castle I spoke about previously is the Holy Church and the souls of Christians, which I built with my own blood and that of the saints. I cemented and joined it with my love and placed my friends and chosen men in it. The foundation is true faith, that is, to believe that I am a righteous and merciful judge.

Now, however, this foundation is undermined because all believe and preach that I am merciful, but almost no one preaches or believes me to be a righteous judge. They view me as an unjust judge! Unjust and unrighteous, indeed, would the judge be who, out of mercy, allowed the unrighteous to go unpunished, so that they could oppress the righteous even more! But I am a righteous and merciful judge; for I do not let even the least sin go unpunished, nor the least good go unrewarded. By the undermining of this wall's foundation, there entered into the Holy Church people who sin without fear, who deny that I am a righteous judge, and who torment my friends as severely as those who are placed in the stocks. My friends have no joy or consolation given to them but, instead, every kind of mockery and torment are inflicted upon them as if they were possessed by the devil. When they tell the truth about me, they are rejected and accused of lying. They have a fervent desire to hear or speak the truth about me, but there is no one who listens to them or speaks the truth to them. And I, the Lord and Creator of all things, am being blasphemed and rejected, for they say: 'We do not know if he is God and, if he is God, we do not care!' They overthrow my banner and trample it under their feet calling out: 'Why did he suffer? What benefit is it to us? If he wants to satisfy our lust and will, it is enough for us. He may keep his kingdom and heaven!' I want to go into them, but they say: 'We would rather die before giving up our own will!'

Behold, my bride, what kind of people they are! I made them, and could destroy and damn them with a word if I wanted to. How bold and arrogant they are toward me! But because of the prayers of my Mother and of all the saints, I am still so merciful and patient that I will send them the words of my mouth and offer them my mercy. If they want to accept it, I will be appeased. Otherwise, they will come to know my justice and be publicly humiliated like thieves in front of all angels and men, and be judged by every one of them. For just as the men who are hanged on gallows are devoured by ravens, they will also be devoured by demons, yet not die. Just as those who are punished in the stocks have no rest, they too, will have pain and bitterness all around them. The most burning river will flow into their mouths, but their bellies will not be filled, and their punishment will be renewed each day.

But my friends will be redeemed and consoled by the words that come from my mouth. They will see my justice joined with my mercy. I will clothe them in the weapons of my love and make them so strong that the adversaries of the faith will fall back like filth and feel ashamed for all eternity when they see my justice. Yes, they will surely be ashamed for having abused my patience."

The words of Christ to His bride about how His Spirit cannot remain with the unrighteous, and about the separation of the unrighteous from the good, and how good men, armed with spiritual weapons, are sent to war against the world.

Chapter 6

“My enemies are like the most violent beasts that can never be filled or have rest. Their heart is so empty of my love that they never allow the thought of my suffering into it; and not once has a word like this been uttered by their inmost heart: “O Lord, you have redeemed us, may you be praised for your bitter suffering!” How could my Spirit remain with the people who have no divine love for me, and who willingly betray others in order to satisfy their own will? Their heart is full of vile worms, that is, full of worldly desires. The devil has left his filth in their mouths, and that is why my words do not please them.

Therefore, I will sever them from my friends with my saw, and just as there is no more bitter way to die than to be sawn asunder, so there will not be a punishment in which they will not partake. They will be sawn in two by the devil and separated from me! They are so abhorrent to me that all who cling to them and agree with them will also be severed from me.

Therefore, I send out my friends in order that they might separate the devils from my members, for they are truly my enemies. I send my friends like knights to war. Anyone who mortifies and subdues his flesh and abstains from forbidden things is my true knight. For their lance, they will have the words that I spoke with my own mouth and, in their hands, the sword of the true faith. Their breasts will be covered with the armor of love, so that no matter what happens to them, they will love me no less. They shall have the shield of patience at their side, so that they may suffer and endure all things patiently. I have enclosed them like gold in a vessel; they should now go forth and walk in my ways.

According to the ways of justice, I could not enter into the glory of majesty without suffering tribulation in my human nature, so then, how else will they enter into it? If their Lord endured pain and suffering, it is not surprising that they also suffer. If their Lord endured beatings and torture, it is not too much for them to endure words and contradictions. They should not fear, for I will never abandon them. Just as it is impossible for the devil to touch and divide the heart of God, so it is impossible for the

devil to separate them from me. And since they are like the purest gold in my sight, I will never abandon them, even though they are tested with a little fire, for the fire is given to them for their greater reward and happiness.

The words of the glorious Virgin to Saint Bridget about how to dress and with what kind of clothes and ornaments her daughter should be adorned and clothed.

Chapter 7

“I am Mary who gave birth to the Son of God, true God and true man. I am the Queen of Angels. My son loves you with all of his heart. Therefore, you should love him. You should be adorned with the most proper clothes, and I will show you how and what kind they should be. Just as before you had an undershirt, a shirt, shoes, a cloak, and a brooch on your chest, so now you shall have spiritual clothes.

The undershirt you shall have is contrition for your sins; for just as an undershirt is closest to the body, so contrition and confession are the first way of conversion to God. Through these the mind, which once enjoyed sin, is purified, and the unchaste flesh restrained from evil lusts. The two shoes are two intentions: namely, the will to make amendment for your past sins, and the will to do good and refrain from evil. Your shirt is hope in God; and just as a shirt has two sleeves, so may justice and mercy be paired with your hope, so that you will hope for the mercy of God, yet not forget his justice. Think about his justice and harsh judgment in such a way that you do not forget his mercy, for he does not work justice without mercy, or mercy without justice. The cloak is faith, for just as the cloak covers everything and everything is enclosed in it, man can likewise comprehend and attain all things by faith. This cloak should be decorated with the tokens of your Bridegroom’s love - namely, how he created you, how he redeemed you, how he raised you and led you into his spirit and opened your spiritual eyes. The brooch, which should always be on your chest, is the frequent consideration of his suffering: how he was mocked and scourged, how he stood alive on the cross, bloody and wounded in all his limbs, how in death his whole body shook from the most bitter pain and anguish, and how he commended his spirit into the hands of his Father. May this brooch always be on your chest! There should also be a crown on your head, which means that you should be chaste in your desires, so much so, that you would rather endure a beating and pain than to be further stained.

Therefore, be modest and polite and do not think about or desire anything but your God and Creator - for when you have him, you have everything! Adorned in this way, you shall await your Bridegroom.”

The words of the Queen of Heaven to her beloved daughter, Saint Bridget, teaching her how she should love and praise the Son of God together with his blessed Mother.

Chapter 8

“I am the Queen of Heaven. You are concerned about how you should praise and honor me. Know and be certain that all praise of my Son also is praise of me, and those who dishonor him also dishonor me. This is so because I loved him and he loved me so ardently that both of us were like one heart. He so magnificently honored me, who was an earthen vessel, that he raised me above all the angels. Therefore, you should praise me like this: “Blessed be you, God, Creator of all things, who deigned to descend into the womb of the Virgin Mary! Blessed be you, God, who wished to be within the Virgin Mary without burdening her, and deigned to take immaculate flesh from her without sin! Blessed be you, God, who came to the Virgin, bringing joy to her soul and her whole body, and who went out of her without sin, to the joy of her whole body! Blessed be you, God, who after your heavenly ascension gladdened the Virgin Mary, your Mother, with continuous comforts and visited her with your consolation! Blessed be you, God, who assumed the body and soul of the Virgin Mary, your Mother, into heaven and honorably placed her above all the angels next to your Divinity! Have mercy on me for the sake of all her prayers!”

The words of the Queen of Heaven to her beloved daughter about the wonderful love the Son had for His Virgin Mother, and about how the Mother of Christ was conceived within the most chaste marriage and sanctified in the womb. She tells how she was assumed, body and soul, into Heaven, and about the power of her name, and about the good and evil angels assigned to men for their protection or trial.

Chapter 9

“I am the Queen of Heaven. Love my Son, for he is most worthy; when you have

him, you have all that is worthwhile. He is also most desirable; when you have him, you have all that is desirable. Love him, too, for he is most virtuous; when you have him, you have every virtue. I want to tell you how wonderful his love for my body and soul was and how much he honored my name. My Son loved me before I loved him, since he is my Creator.

He united my father and mother in a marriage so chaste that there could not be found a more chaste marriage at that time. They never wanted to come together except in accordance with the Law, and only then with the intention to bring forth offspring.

When an angel revealed to them that they would give birth to the Virgin from whom the salvation of the world would come, they would rather have died than to come together in carnal love; lust was dead in them. I assure you that when they did come together, it was because of divine love and because of the angel's message, not out of carnal desire, but against their will and out of a holy love for God. In this way, my flesh was put together by their seed and through divine love. Then, when my body had been made and formed, God infused the created soul into it from his divinity, and the soul was immediately sanctified along with the body, and the angels guarded and served it day and night. When my soul was sanctified and joined to its body, my mother felt such great joy that it would have been impossible to describe it!

Afterwards, when my lifetime had been accomplished, my Son first raised up my soul - for it was the mistress of the body - to a more excellent place than others in heaven, right next to his Divinity. Later, he also raised up my body in such a manner that no other creature's body is so close to God as mine. See how much my Son loved my soul and body! Yet, there are some people with a malevolent spirit who deny that I was assumed into Heaven, body and soul, and also others who simply do not know any better. But this is a most certain truth: I, with body and soul, was assumed to the Divinity!

Hear now how much my Son honored my name! My name is Mary, as it is said in the Gospel. When the angels hear this name, they rejoice in their mind and thank God for the great mercy that he worked through me and with me and because they see my Son's Humanity glorified in his Divinity. Those within the fire of purgatory rejoice exceedingly, just like a sick and bedridden man does if he receives a word of comfort that pleases his soul: he is suddenly overjoyed! When the good angels hear my name, they immediately move closer to the righteous for whom they are guardians, and rejoice over their progress in good deeds and virtues.

All humans have been given both good angels for their protection, and bad angels to test them. The good angels are not separated from God; they serve the soul without leaving God. They are constantly in his sight. Yet they work to inflame and incite the soul to do good. All the demons, however, shudder with fear at the name of Mary! When they hear the name, “Mary”, they immediately release a soul out of the claws with which they had held her. Just as a bird or hawk, with its claws and beak embedded into its prey, releases it immediately if it hears a sound, but soon returns when it sees that no action follows, so do the demons - frightened when they hear my name – release the soul. But they return and fly back as fast as an arrow if no improvement follows.

No one is so cold in his love of God (unless he is damned) that he will not experience the devil releasing him from his habitual sins if only he invokes my name with the true intention of never returning to his evil deeds. The devil will never return to him unless he resumes the will to commit mortal sins. Sometimes, though, the devil is allowed to trouble him for the sake of his greater reward. However, the devil shall never own him.

The words of Virgin Mary to her daughter, presenting a useful lesson about how she should live, and describing many wonderful things about the suffering of Christ.

Chapter 10

“I am the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God. I told you to wear a brooch on your chest. I will now show you more fully how, from the beginning, when I first heard and understood that God existed, I always, and with fear, was concerned about my salvation and my observance of his commandments. But when I learned more about God - that he was my Creator and the judge of all my actions - I loved him more dearly, and I was constantly fearful and watchful so as to not offend him by word or deed.

Later, when I heard that he had given the Law and the commandments to the people and worked such great miracles through them, I made a firm decision in my soul to never love anything but him, and all worldly things became most bitter to me. When still later I heard that God himself would redeem the world and be born of a Virgin, I was seized by such great love for him that I thought of nothing but God and desired nothing but him. I withdrew myself, as much as I was able, from the conversation and presence of parents and friends, and I gave away all my possessions to the poor, and kept nothing for

myself but meager food and clothing.

Nothing was pleasing to me but God! I always wished in my heart to live until the time of his birth, and perhaps, deserve to become the unworthy handmaid of the Mother of God. I also promised in my heart to keep my virginity, if this was acceptable to him, and to have no possessions in the world. However, if God wanted otherwise, my will was that his will, not mine, be done; for I believed that he could do all things and wanted nothing but what was beneficial and best for me. Therefore, I entrusted all my will to him.

When the time approached for the virgins to be presented in the temple of the Lord, I was also among them due to the devout compliance of my parents to the Law. I thought to myself that nothing was impossible for God, and since he knew that I wanted and desired nothing but him, I knew that he could protect my virginity, if it pleased him. However, if not, I wanted his will to be done. After I had heard all the commandments in the temple, I returned home, burning even more now than ever before with the love of God, being inflamed daily with new fires and desires of love.

For this reason, I withdrew myself even more from everyone, and was alone day and night, fearing greatly, and most of all, that my mouth should say anything, or my ears hear anything against the will of my God, or that my eyes see anything alluring or harmful. I was also afraid in the silence, and very worried that I might be silent about things of which I should, instead, have spoken.

While I was worried in my heart like this, alone by myself and placing all my hope in God, an inspiration about God's great power came over me, and I recalled how the angels and everything created serve him, and how his glory is indescribable and unlimited. While I was thus fascinated by this thought, I saw three wonderful things: I saw a star, but not the kind that shines in the sky; I saw a light, but not the kind that shines in this world; I smelled a fragrance, but not of herbs or anything else of this world. It was most delightful and truly indescribable, and it filled me up so completely that I jubilated with joy!

After this, I immediately heard a voice - but not from a human mouth - and when I heard it, I shuddered with the great fear that it might be an illusion, or a mockery by an evil spirit. But shortly after this, an angel of God appeared before me; he was like the most handsome of men, but not in the flesh as is the body of a created man, and he said to me: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!' When I heard this, I wondered what he

meant and why he had come to me with such a greeting, for I knew and believed that I was unworthy of any such thing - or any good thing! However, I also knew that nothing is impossible for God, if he desires it.

Then the angel spoke again: 'The child to be born in you is holy and will be called the Son of God. May his will be done as it pleases him.' But, not even then did I consider myself worthy, and I did not ask the angel why, or when, this would happen. Instead I asked him how it could be that I, an unworthy maiden, who did not know any man, should become the Mother of God. The angel answered me (as I have just said): 'Nothing is impossible for God, for whatever he wants to do will be done.'

When I had heard these words of the angel, I felt the most fervent desire to become the Mother of God, and my soul spoke out of love and desire, saying: 'See, here I am; your will be done in me!' With these words, my Son was conceived in my womb to the indescribable joy of my soul and my every limb! While I had him in my womb, I bore him without any pain, without any heaviness or discomfort. I humbled myself in all things, knowing that he whom I bore was the Almighty!

When I gave birth to him, it was also without any pain or sin, just as I had conceived him, but with such exaltation and joy of soul and body that my feet did not feel the ground where they had been standing because of this indescribable joy! Just as he had entered my limbs to the joy of all my soul, he left my body, leaving my virginity intact, and my soul and whole body in a state of indescribable joy and jubilation.

When I gazed upon and contemplated his beauty, joy seeped through my soul like dewdrops and I knew myself to be unworthy of such a son. But when I considered the places where (as I had learned from the predictions of the prophets) nails would be pierced through his hands and feet at the crucifixion, my eyes filled with tears and my heart was almost torn apart by sorrow.

When my Son saw my weeping eyes, he became almost deathly saddened. However, when I considered his divine power, I was consoled again in knowing that this was what he wanted and that it should happen in this way, and I joined all my will to his. So my joy was always mixed with sorrow.

When the time of my Son's suffering arrived, his enemies seized him and struck him on the cheek and neck, spat at him and ridiculed him. Then he was led to the pillar of torture where he voluntarily removed his clothes and placed his hands around the pillar,

and his enemies then mercilessly bound them. When he stood bound at the pillar, he had no covering at all, but stood naked as he had been born, suffering the shame of his nakedness.

Then all my Son's friends fled from him, and his enemies came together from all directions and stood there, scourging his body, which was pure from every stain and sin. I was standing nearby, and at the very first lashing, I fell down as if I were dead. When I regained consciousness, I saw his body whipped and scourged so badly that the ribs were visible! What was even more terrible – when the whip was pulled out, his flesh was furrowed and torn by it, just as the earth is by a plough! As my Son was standing there, all bloody and wounded, so that no place could be found on him that was still intact and no sound spot could be scourged, then someone present there, aroused in spirit, asked: 'Are you going to kill him before he is even judged?' And he cut off his bonds immediately.

Then my Son put his clothes back on, and I saw that the place where he had been standing was filled with blood! By observing my Son's footprints, I could see where he had walked because the ground was bloody there as well. They did not even wait for him to get dressed, but pushed and dragged him to make him hurry up. While my Son was being led away like a robber, he wiped the blood from his eyes. When he had been sentenced to death, they placed the cross on him so that he could carry it to the place of suffering. When he had carried it for a while, a man came along and took the cross to carry it for him. As my Son was going to the place of suffering, some people hit him on the neck, while others hit him in the face. He was so brutally and forcefully beaten that, although I did not see who hit him, I heard the sound of the blow clearly. When I reached the place of suffering with him, I saw all the instruments of his death lying there ready. When my Son got there, he took off his clothes by himself.

The executioners and the crucifiers said to each other: 'These are our clothes! He will not get them back because he is condemned to death!' As my Son was standing there, naked as he had been born, a man came running up and handed him a cloth with which he joyfully covered his private parts. Then the cruel executioners seized him and stretched him out on the cross. First, they fastened his right hand to the wooden beam (which was fashioned with holes for the nails), piercing the hand at the place where the bone was most solid and firm. Then they pulled out his other hand with a rope and fastened it, in a similar way, to the beam. Next they crucified the right foot - with the left foot on top of it - with two nails, so that all his sinews and veins were stretched so much that they burst. After they had done this, they put the crown of thorns^[1] on his head. It

cut into my Son's venerable head so deeply that his eyes were filled with blood as it flowed down, his ears were blocked by it, and his beard was totally soaked with it. As he stood there, so bloody and pierced, he felt sorry for me, for I was standing nearby and crying. Looking with his blood-filled eyes upon my nephew, John, he commended me to his care. At that moment I heard some people saying that my Son was a robber! Others said that he was a liar, and others that no one deserved to die more than did my Son!

My sorrow was renewed from hearing all this. And, as I said before, when the first nail was driven into him, I became overwhelmed by the sound of the first strike and fell down as if dead with darkened eyes, trembling hands, and faltering legs. In my bitter pain and great sorrow, I was not able to look up again until he had been completely nailed to the cross. But when I got up, I saw my Son hanging pitifully, and I, his most sorrowful Mother, was so grieved and heartbroken that I could barely stand up because of my great and bitter sorrow. When my Son saw me and his friends in inconsolable tears, he called out with a loud and sorrowful voice to his Father, saying: 'Father, why have you forsaken me?' It was as if he wanted to say: 'There is no one who pities me but you, Father.'

By this time, his eyes seemed half-dead. His cheeks were sunken, his face was sorrowful, his mouth open, and his tongue was bloody. His stomach was pressed in towards his back because of all the liquid that had been lost. It was as if he had no intestines. All of his body was pale and languid because of the loss of blood. His hands and feet were very rigidly outstretched, for they had been extended and made to conform to the shape of the cross. His beard and hair were completely soaked with blood. When my Son stood there so bruised and pale blue, only his heart was still vigorous, for it was of the best and strongest nature. He had taken from my flesh the most pure and well-wrought body. His skin was so thin and tender that blood flowed out of it instantly if he was scourged even slightly. His blood was so fresh that it could be seen inside the pure skin. And because he had the very best constitution, life contended with death in his pierced body. Sometimes the pain from his pierced limbs and sinews rose up to his heart, which was still completely vigorous and unhurt and tormented it with the most unendurable pain and suffering. Sometimes the pain descended from his heart into his wounded limbs and, in so doing, prolonged his bitter death.

Surrounded by these pains, my Son beheld his weeping friends who, with his help, would rather have suffered his pain themselves or have burned in hell for all time than to see him tortured in this way. His sorrow over his friends' sorrow exceeded all the bitterness and grief which he had endured in body and heart, for he loved them so

tenderly. Then, out of the exceedingly great suffering and anguish of his body, he cried out on account of his Manhood to the Father: 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' When I, his most sorrowful Mother heard his voice, my whole body trembled in the bitter pain of my heart. As often as I later thought on this cry, it was as if still present and fresh in my ears.

When his death drew near, his heart burst because of the violence of the pain. His whole body convulsed, and his head raised itself a little, and then dropped down again. His mouth was open and his tongue was completely bloody. His hands retracted a little from the place of the nail holes, and his feet were made to bear more of the weight of his body. His fingers and arms were stretched out somewhat, and his back was tightly pressed against the cross.

Then some people said to me: 'Your Son is dead, Mary!' But others said: 'He is dead, but he will rise again.' When everyone was going away, a man came and thrust his spear into his side so forcefully that it almost went out the other side! When the spear was pulled out, its point appeared to be red with blood. It seemed to me then, when I saw my beloved Son's heart pierced, that my own heart had been pierced as well!

Then he was taken down from the cross and I received his body onto my lap. He looked like a leper, and was completely covered with bruises and blood. His eyes were lifeless and filled with blood, his mouth as cold as ice, his beard like string, his face paralyzed, and his hands were so stiffened that they could not be bent over his chest, but only over his stomach, near the navel. I had him on my knee just as he had been on the cross: stiffened in all his limbs.

After this, they laid him in a clean linen cloth and I dried his limbs with my own linen cloth and closed his eyes and mouth, which he had opened when he died. Then they laid him in the grave. I would willingly have been placed alive in the grave with my Son if it had been his will! When these things were done, good John came and brought me home. Behold, my daughter, what my Son has endured for you, and love him with all your heart!

[1] Explanation from Book 7 - Chapter 15: "Then the crown of thorns, which they had removed from his head when he was being crucified, they now put back, fitting it onto his most holy head. It pricked his awesome head with such force that then and there his eyes were filled with flowing blood and his ears were obstructed."

Our Lord Jesus Christ's words to His bride about how He willingly delivered himself up to be crucified by His enemies, and about the way to be abstinent in all members of the body from all illicit movements after His most sweet example of suffering.

Chapter 11

The Son of God spoke to his bride, saying: "I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all the things that are in them, and it is my true body that is consecrated on the altar. Love me with all your heart, for I have loved you, and I delivered myself up to my enemies willingly, while my friends and my Mother remained in the most bitter sorrow and weeping. When I saw the spear, the nails, the whips, and the other instruments of torture there ready, I still went on, no less joyful, to suffer. And when my head was bleeding on all sides from the crown of thorns, and the blood was flowing on all sides, then, even if my enemies had gotten hold of my heart, I would have, still, rather allowed it to be wounded and torn asunder than lose you. For that reason, you are extremely ungrateful, if you do not love me for such a great love.

For if my head was pierced and bent down on the cross for your sake, your head should be bent down toward humility. Since my eyes were filled with blood and tears, your eyes should abstain from pleasurable sights. Since my ears were filled with blood and had to hear blasphemous and scornful words, your ears should be turned away from frivolous and foolish talk. Since my mouth was given the most bitter drink and was denied the good one, you should keep closed your mouth from all evil and open it for good. Since my hands were outstretched and pierced by nails, your deeds, which are symbolized by the hands, should be stretched out to the poor and to my commandments. Your feet, in other words, the desire with which you should walk to me, should be crucified and abstain from all evil lusts. As I have suffered in all my limbs, so may all your limbs be ready for my service. For I demand more service of you than of other people, since I have granted more mercy to you."

About how an angel prays for the bride of God, and how Christ asks the angel what it is that he prays for the bride and what is good for her.

Chapter 12

The good angel that was the guardian of the bride appeared praying to Christ for her. Our Lord answered the angel and said: "One who wants to pray for another should pray for the other's health and salvation. You are like a fire that is never extinguished, constantly burning with my love. You see and know all things when you see me. You want nothing but what I want. Therefore tell me, what is good for this new bride of mine?" The angel answered: "Lord, you know all things." The Lord said to him: "In truth, all that has been or will be is eternally in me. I know and understand all things in heaven and on earth and there is no change in me. But so that the bride may understand my will, tell me now while she is listening what is good for her." The angel said: "She has a proud and arrogant heart and therefore a cane is needed for her so that she may be tamed." Then our Lord said: "What then do you ask for her, my friend?" The angel said: "My Lord, I beg for your mercy with the rod." Our Lord said: "For your sake, I will do so with her, that I never practice justice without mercy. Therefore, my bride should love me with all her heart and with a good will."

About how the enemy of God has three devils in himself and about the terrifying judgment passed on him by Christ.

Chapter 13

"My enemy has three devils in himself. The first sits in his sexual organ, the second in his heart, the third in his mouth. The first is like a skipper who lets water in through the keel; the water, rises by increasing gradually, and then fills up all of the ship. Then the water floods over and the ship sinks down. This ship is his body that is harassed by the temptations of devils and by his own lusts as though by tempestuous waves.

First, the evil lust entered into his body through the keel, that is, through the evil desire with which he took delight in bad thoughts. And since he did not resist through repentance and penance and did not repair his body's ship with the nails of abstinence, the water of lust increased daily while he gave his consent to evil. Then the belly of the ship filled with evil desires, and the water flooded over and drowned the ship with lust so that it was unable to reach the haven of salvation.

The second devil sits in his heart and is like a worm lying inside an apple. The worm first eats the core of the apple and then leaves its filth there and crawls around inside the

whole apple until it is completely useless. This is what the devil does: First, he destroys the man's will and good desires, which are like the core where all the soul's strength and all goodness reside, and when the heart has been emptied of these goods, the devil then leaves in their place in his heart worldly thoughts and desires that he had loved more. The devil now drives his body to what pleases him, and for this reason, his strength and understanding are diminished and he begins to hate life. This man is indeed an apple without a core, that is to say, a man without a heart, for he enters my church without a heart since he has no love of God.

The third devil is like an archer who looks out through the windows and shoots at the careless. How can the devil not be in him who never speaks without mentioning the devil? That which is loved more is mentioned more often. His bitter words, with which he hurts others, are like arrows shot through as many windows as the number of times the devil is mentioned, and innocent people take offense at his words.

Therefore do I, who am the Truth, swear by my truth that I shall condemn him like a whore to the sulfurous fire, like a deceitful traitor to the mutilation of all his limbs and like a scoffer of the Lord to eternal shame! However, as long as his soul and body are united, my mercy stands ready for him. What I demand of him is that he should attend the divine services and prayers more often, not to fear any humiliation or desire any honor, and that evil or bad words will never be mentioned by his mouth.

EXPLANATION

This man was an abbot of the Cistercian order. He buried an excommunicated person. When he had read the last funeral prayer over him, Saint Bridget heard in ecstasy of spirit the following words of our Lord: "This man did as he should not have done and buried an excommunicated man. But now you should know and be sure that he is the one that is going to be buried first after the departed. For he sinned against the Father, who told us to never show respect to persons against justice or to honor the rich unjustly. But he honored the unworthy for a small perishable thing and laid him among the worthy, as he should not have done. He also sinned against the Holy Spirit, who is the communion and fellowship of the righteous, when he buried an unrighteous man with the good and righteous. He also sinned against me, the Son, for I have said: "The one who rejects me shall be rejected." But this man honored and exalted the one whom my church and my Vicar had rejected." When the abbot heard these words, he was stricken with remorse and repented from his sins and then died on the fourth day.

The words of Christ to his bride about the method and the veneration she should maintain in prayer, and about the three kinds of people who serve God in this world.

Chapter 14

“I am your God who was crucified on the cross; true God and true man in one person who is present everyday in the hands of the priest. When you pray any prayer to me, always end your prayer with the intention that my will always shall be done and not yours. For when you pray for the already condemned, I do not hear you. Sometimes you also pray for some things that are against your own welfare and that is why it is necessary for you to entrust your will to me, for I know all things and do not provide you with anything but what is beneficial. Many pray without the right intention and that is why they do not deserve to be heard.

There are three kinds of people who serve me in this world: The first are those who believe me to be God, the Creator and giver of all things and mighty ruler over everything. They serve me with the intention of gaining honor and worldly things, but the things of heaven are considered as nothing to them so that they would gladly do without it if they, instead, could gain the perishable and present things. According to their desire, worldly pleasure falls to them in everything and so they lose the eternal things, but I recompense them with worldly benefits for all the good things they have done for my sake right down to the last farthing and the very last moment.

The second are those who believe me to be God almighty and a strict judge, and these serve me because of fear of punishment but not out of love for the heavenly glory. If they were not afraid of suffering, they would not serve me.

The third are those who believe me to be the Creator of all things and true God and who believe me to be just and merciful. These do not serve me because of any fear of punishment but because of divine love and charity. Rather, they would prefer and endure every punishment, if they could bear it, than to even once provoke me to wrath. These truly deserve to be heard in their prayers, for their will is according to my will.

But the ones who belong to the first kind shall never escape from the place of punishment and torment or get to see my face. The ones who belong to the second kind shall not be punished and tormented as much, but will still be unable to see my face,

unless he corrects his fear through penitence and amendment.

The words of Christ to his bride wherein he describes himself as a great king, and about the two treasuries symbolizing the love of God and the love of the world, and a teaching about how to proceed and improve in this life.

Chapter 15

“I am like a great and mighty king. Four things belong to a king: First, he must be rich; second, generous; third, wise and fourth, charitable. I am in truth the King of the angels and of all Humanity. I also have those four qualities that I mentioned: First, I am the richest of all, for I give to everyone according to their needs but possess after this donation not less than before. Second, I am the most generous, since I am ready to give to anyone who prays with love for my mercy. Third, I am the wisest of all, since I know what is best for each and everyone. And fourth, I am charitable, since I am more ready to give than anyone is to ask.

I have, as it were, two treasuries. The first treasury stores heavy things as lead, and the house where they are stored is surrounded with sharp and stinging spikes. But to the one who first begins to turn and roll these heavy things, and then learns how to carry them, they seem as light as feathers. And so the things that before looked heavy, become very light, and the things that before were thought to be bitter and stinging, become sweet. The second treasury stores things that seem to be like shining gold with precious stones and delicious drinks. But the gold is really filth and the drinks are poison. There are two ways into these treasuries, even though there used to be only one way.

At the crossroads, that is, at the beginning of these two ways, there stood a man who cried out to three men who were walking on a different way, and he said: ‘Hear, hear my words! But if you do not want to hear with your ears, then at least see with your eyes that what I say is true. But if you do not want hear or see, then at least use your hands to touch and prove that my words are true and not false.’ Then the first of them said: ‘Let us hear and see if his words are true.’ The second man said: ‘All he says is false.’ The third said: ‘I know that everything he says is true, but I do not care about what he says.’

What are these two treasuries if not my love and the love of the world? There are two ways into these two treasuries: privation and a complete denial of one’s own will lead

to my love, while the fleshly lust and a man's own will lead to the love of the world. To some people, my love appears to be a heavy burden of lead, for when they should be fasting or keeping vigil in my service or restrain their flesh from sinful desires, they feel as if they are carrying heavy lead. And if they have to hear words or insults, they think it is heavy and hard, or if they must spend time in purity or prayer, it is as if they were sitting between spikes or thorns and they worry every moment.

The one who wants to remain in my love should first begin to lift and turn the burden over, that is, he should attempt to do the good through his good will and constant desire. Then he should gradually lift the burden a little, that is, do the good he can do, thinking thus to himself: 'This I can do well if God gives me his help and grace.' Then he may persevere in the undertaken task and with great joy bear that which before seemed heavy to him so that every trouble in fasts and vigils or any other trouble will seem to be as light as feathers to him.

My friends rest in such a place, which, to the wicked and lazy, seems to be surrounded with things like spikes and thorns, but to my friends it is as the highest peace and soft as roses. The right way into this treasury is to deny and despise your own will, which happens when a man contemplates my suffering and my love, and does not care about his own will or lust but resists it with all his power and might and constantly strives for the things that are higher and better. And although this way is somewhat heavy in the beginning, it pleases so much in the continuation of it that the things that before seemed impossible to bear later become very light, so that he can rightfully say to himself: 'The yoke and work of God is good and sweet.'

The second treasury is the world. In it there are gold, precious stones, and drinks that seem delicious and pleasant-smelling but are bitter as poison when they are tasted. Each and everyone who carries and owns this gold, must - when his body is weakened and his limbs lose their strength, when his marrow is wasted and his body falls dead to the ground - leave the gold and the precious stones behind for they are of no more use to him than filth. And the drinks of the world, that is, her delights, seem delicious, but once in the stomach, they make the heart heavy and the head weak and ruin the body, and then man dries and withers away like grass, and when the pangs of death approach, all these pleasures become as bitter as poison. The way leading to this treasury is his self-will and lust, whenever a man does not care about resisting his evil desires and does not contemplate on what I have commanded or done, but immediately does whatever comes to mind, whether it may be licit or not.

Three men are walking on this way, and by these I mean all evil and unrighteous men who love the world and all their self-will. I cried out to these three men as I stood at the crossroads or the beginning of the ways, for when I came to the world in human flesh and body, I showed mankind two ways, as it were, namely, the one to follow and the one to avoid, in other words, the way leading to life and the one to death. For before my coming in the flesh, there was only one way, and on it, all men - good and bad - wandered toward hell.

I am the one who cried out, and my cry was this: 'People, hear my words that lead to the way of life, for they are true! Use your senses to understand that what I say is true. If you do not want to hear my words or cannot listen to them, then at least see them, that is, with faith and reason, see that my words are true. For just as something visible can be discerned with the eyes of the flesh, so too can invisible things be discerned and believed by the eyes of faith. There are many simple men in the Church and Christendom who do few good deeds but still are saved through their faith wherein they believe me to be the Creator of all things and the Redeemer of souls. There is no one who cannot understand and believe that I am God, if he considers how the earth bears fruit and how the heavens give rain, how the trees bloom, how each and every animal exists in its own kind, how the stars serve man, and how troubles and sorrows come and often happen against the will of man. From all these things, man can see that he is mortal and that it is God who arranges and directs all these things. For if God did not exist, everything would be disorganized. Thus, all things are of God, and everything is rationally arranged for the use and knowledge of mankind. And there is not the least little thing that is created or exists in the world without reasonable cause.

So, if a man cannot understand or comprehend my virtues and powers as they are because of his weakness, he can still see them with faith and believe. But if you people in the world do not want to use your reason to consider my power, you can still use your hands to touch and sense the deeds that I and my saints have done. They are namely so obvious that no one can doubt them to be the deeds of God. Who raised the dead and gave sight to the blind if not God? Who cast out the evil devils from men if not God? What have I taught if not things beneficial for the prosperity of soul and body and easy to bear?

But what the first man said means that some people say: 'Let us listen and test if what he says is true!' They stand a while in my service, not for the sake of love or charity but as an experiment and to imitate others; and they do not give up their own will but exercise it along with my will. They are in a dangerous position, for they want to serve

two masters, even though they can serve neither one well. When they are called, they shall be rewarded by the master that they have loved the most.

What the second man said means that some people say: 'All his words are false and the Scripture is false.' I am God and the Creator of all things and without me nothing has been made. I laid down the New and the Old Laws; they came out of my mouth, and there is no falsehood in them because I am the Truth. Therefore, those who say that I have spoken falsely and that the Holy Scripture is false shall never see my face; for their conscience tells them that I am truly God, since all things happen according to my will and ordination. The sky gives them light, nor can they give any light to themselves. The earth bears fruit, the air makes the earth fertile, all the animals have a specific ordinance, the devils fear and confess me to be God and righteous men suffer incredible things for their love of me. All these things they see, and yet they do not see me. They could also see me and understand my justice, if they considered and thought on how the earth swallowed the ungodly and how the fire consumed the unrighteous. So could they likewise see me in my mercy when the water flowed for the righteous out of the rock or the water of the ocean parted for them, when the fire avoided harming them or when heaven gave them food like the earth. Because they see all these things and still say I am a liar, they shall never see my face.

What the third man said means that some people say: 'We know full well that he is the true God, but we do not care about it.' These people will suffer and be tormented for all eternity, because they despise me, who am their God and Lord. Is it not a great contempt of them to use my good gifts but nonetheless refuse to serve me? For if they had earned these things by their own diligence and not wholly and entirely from me, their contempt would be small.

But I will give my grace to those who begin to turn over my burden, that is, to those who voluntarily and with a passionate desire attempt to do the little good they can. I will work with the people who lift my weights, that is, those who advance in good deeds day by day for the sake of my love, and I will be their strength and enlighten them so that they will want to do more good. But those who sit in the place that seems to sting them, but really is most peaceful, they work patiently day and night without tiring, increasing more and more in the ardent fire for my honor, thinking that what they do for my sake is very little. These are my most dear friends, and they are very few, since the drinks found in the other treasury are more pleasing to the others.

About how the bride perceived a saint speaking to God about a woman who was being horribly tormented by the devil and who was later delivered from him through the prayers of the glorious Virgin Mary.

Chapter 16

The bride saw a saint speaking to God, saying: “Why is the soul of this woman so afflicted by the devil when you have redeemed her by your blood?” The devil replied instantly and said: “Because she is mine by right.” Then our Lord said: “With what right is she yours?” The devil answered: “There are two ways; one leads to the kingdom of Heaven and the other to hell. When she saw these two ways, her conscience and reason told her that she should choose my way. And since she had a free will for choosing the way that she wanted, it seemed to her more beneficial to turn her will toward committing sin, and so she began to walk on my way.

Thereafter, I deceived her with three sins: namely, gluttony, love of money, and sensuality. Consequently, I now dwell in her belly and in her nature, and I hold her with five hands. With the first hand I hold her eyes, so she will not see spiritual things. With my second hand I hold her hands, so she will not do any good deeds. With the third hand I hold her feet, so she will not walk to that which is good. With the fourth hand I hold her reason and understanding, so she will not be ashamed to sin. And with the fifth hand I hold her heart, so she will not return to the right way through remorse and penance.”

Then the Blessed Virgin Mary said to her dear Son: “My beloved Son, compel him to tell the truth about the things I want to ask him.” The Son said: “You are my Mother, you are the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of mercy, you are the consolation of the souls in purgatory and the joy of those who make their way in the world; you are the Mistress of the angels and the most Holy before God, and you are also in authority over the devil. Therefore, command this devil what you want, and he will answer you.”

Then the Holy Virgin Mary asked the devil, saying: “Tell me, devil, what intention had this woman before she entered the church?” The devil answered her: “She had an intention to abstain from sin.” Then the Virgin Mary said to the devil: “Since the will that she previously had led her to hell, tell me now, where does the will that she presently has lead her - namely, her will to abstain from sin?” The devil answered reluctantly: “This will of abstaining from sin leads her toward Heaven.”

Then the Virgin Mary said: “Because you accepted that it was your just right to lead her away from the way of the Holy Church because of her former will to sin, then it is now right and just that her present will shall lead her back to the Church and to the mercy of God. But now, devil, I will ask you another question. Tell me, what intention does she have in her present state of conscience?” The devil answered: “She has remorse in her mind for the things she has done, and great sadness, and resolves to never again commit such sins but wants to amend as much as she is able.”

Then the Virgin Mary asked the devil: “Tell me, could these three sins, namely, sensuality, gluttony, and greed, exist together in a heart at the same time as the three good deeds of remorse, sorrow, and the resolution to improve oneself?” The devil answered: “No.” The Holy Virgin Mary then said: “Therefore, tell me, which of these should flee and vanish from her heart, the three virtues or the three vices and sins; for you are saying that they cannot occupy the same heart or place together.” The devil said: “I say that the sins must give way.”

Then the Virgin Mary answered: “Therefore, the way to hell is closed to her and the way to the kingdom of Heaven is open.” Now the Holy Virgin Mary asked the devil further: “Tell me, if a robber was waiting outside the house of the bride and wanted to rob and rape her, what should the bridegroom do?” The devil answered: “If the bridegroom is good and noble-minded, he should defend her and risk his life for her life.” The Virgin Mary then said: “You are the wicked robber, and the soul is my Son’s bride, for he redeemed her with his own blood. You violated and seized her by force. But since my Son is the Bridegroom of the soul and Lord over you, then it is right for you to flee from him.”

EXPLANATION

This woman was a harlot. She wanted to return to the world because the devil tormented her day and night, so much so that he visibly pressed down her eyes, and in the sight of many, dragged her out of bed. Saint Bridget then said openly in the presence and hearing of many trustworthy men: “Move away, devil, for you have troubled and occupied this creature of God enough!” After she had said this, the woman laid a half hour as if dead with her eyes to the ground, and then she got up and said: “In truth, I saw the devil going out through the window in the most hideous of shapes, and I heard a voice saying to me: ‘You are in truth liberated from the devil, woman!’” From that moment on, this woman was delivered from all impatience and suffering and was no longer tormented by impure thoughts, and then she died a good death.

The words of our Lord Jesus Christ to his bride wherein he compares a sinner to three things: namely, an eagle, a fowler, and a fighting man.

Chapter 17

“I am Jesus Christ who am speaking with you. I was in the womb of the Virgin as true God and true man but was, nonetheless, with the Father and controlled and ruled all things, although I was in the Virgin. This most wretched enemy of mine is like three things: First, he is like an eagle that flies in the air while other birds fly under it. Second, he is like a fowler that gently blows and plays on a pipe plastered with glue, causing the birds to be enchanted by his tunes so that they fly toward the pipe and get stuck in the glue. Third, he is like a fighting man who is first in every battle.

He is like an eagle, because in his pride he cannot tolerate anyone being over him, and he injures everyone he can reach with his claws of malice. Therefore, I will cut off the wings of his violence and pride. I will remove his malice from the earth and give him over to the unquenchable boiling kettle, which is the suffering of hell, where he will be tormented without end, if he does not better himself.

He is also like a fowler because he attracts everyone to himself with sweet words and promises, so that anyone who comes to him gets caught in damnation and perdition and can never escape from it. Therefore, the birds of hell shall destroy his eyes so that he will never see my glory but only the eternal darkness of hell. They shall cut off his ears so that he will not hear the words of my mouth. They shall inflict him with pain and bitterness from the feet to the head so that he will endure as many torments as the number of men he led to damnation.

He is also like a fighting man who is first in all evil, not willing to give way to anybody but determined to press everyone down. Therefore, he shall be first in every torment; his suffering shall always be renewed and his lament will never end. However, my mercy stands ready for him as long as his soul is with the body.

EXPLANATION

This man was a very powerful knight who hated the church and the priesthood

greatly and inflicted it with insulting words. The previous revelation is about him as well as the following. The Son of God says: “O worldly knight, ask the wise about what happened to prideful Haman who despised my people. Did he not die shamefully and with great disgrace? Likewise does this man scoff at me and my friends. Just as the people of Israel did not mourn Haman’s death, so will my friends not mourn this man’s death, but he will die a most bitter death if he does not better himself.” This is what happened to him.

The words of Christ to his bride about how there should be humility in the house of God, and about how such a house signifies purity of life, and about how buildings and alms should be donated only from goods that are righteously acquired, and about how to restore wrongly acquired goods.

Chapter 18

“In my house should all humility be, which now is completely rejected. There should be a strong wall between the men and the women, because even though I am able to defend everyone and hold them all without a wall, still, for the sake of precaution and because of the devil’s cunning, I want that a wall should separate the two dwelling-houses. It should be strong, and not very high but moderate. The windows should be very simple and clear, and the roof moderately high, so that nothing can be seen there that does not belong to humility. For those who now build houses for me are like master builders, who, when the lord or the master of the house enters into them, grab him by the hair and trample him under their feet; they raise the filth up high and trample the gold underfoot. This is what many do to me now.

They build up the filth, that is, they build up perishable and worldly things to the sky, but the souls that are more precious than all gold, they could not care any less about. If I want to go in to them through my preachers or through good thoughts, they grab me by the hair and trample me under their feet, that is, they insult me and consider my deeds and my words to be as despicable as filth. They consider themselves to be much wiser. But if they wanted to build up things for me and for my honor, they should first build up the souls to the kingdom of Heaven.

The one who wants to build my house should, with the utmost precision, take care about not letting a penny that has not been properly and justly acquired, go to the

building. There are indeed many who know full well that they have wrongly acquired goods and yet are not sorry for it nor have the will of making restitution or giving it back to the people they have cheated and plundered, although they could give it back and make restitution for the injustice if they wanted. But since they know and think to themselves that they cannot keep these things forever, they give a part of their wrongly acquired goods to the churches or monasteries, as if they wanted to appease me by their gift. But the other goods that are properly acquired, they keep for their descendants. In truth, this does not please me.

The one who wants to please me with his gifts should first have the will to better and correct himself and then do the good deeds he is able to do. He should also cry and mourn over the evil things and deeds he has done and then make restitution if he can; and if he cannot, he should have the will of making restitution for the deceitfully acquired goods. Thereafter, he should take great care to never again commit such things. But if it is not possible to find anyone to give back the unlawfully acquired goods to, then he could give it to me, for I am able to pay back everyone what is theirs. If he cannot give it back but has the intention of humbling and improving himself before me with a broken heart, then I am rich enough to give it back and I can restore the property of all those who have been cheated, either now in this world or in the next to come.

I want to explain to you the meaning of the house that I want to build. This house is the life of purity, and I myself, who created all things and through whom all has been made and exists, am its foundation. There are four walls in this house. The first is my justice, by which I will judge those who are adversarial to this house. The second wall is the wisdom by which I will enlighten the builders of this house with my knowledge and understanding. The third wall is my power, by which I will strengthen them against the temptations of the devil. The fourth wall is my mercy, which receives everyone who prays for it. In this wall is the door of grace through which all, who pray for it, are accepted in. The roof of this house is the love with which I cover the sins of those who love me so that they will not be judged for their sins. The window of the roof, whereby the sun enters, is the thought and consideration of my mercy, and through it the warmth of my Divinity is let in to the builders of the house. But that the wall should be strong and big means that no one is able to undermine my words or overthrow them. That the wall should be moderately high means that my wisdom can be understood and perceived in part, but never fully. The simple but clear windows mean that my words are simple, yet through them the light of divine knowledge is let into the world. The moderately high roof means that my words shall be revealed, not in an incomprehensible way, but in an understandable way that one may easily perceive and comprehend.

The words of our God and Creator to his bride about the splendor of his power, wisdom, and virtue, and about how those who are now called powerful and wise, sin the most against him.

Chapter 19

“I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth. I have three qualities: I am most mighty, most wise, and most virtuous. I am namely so mighty that all the angels in Heaven honor me, the demons in hell dare not look upon me, and all the elements obey my command. I am also so wise that no one can fathom or understand my wisdom, and I have so great insight that I know all that has been and will come to be. I am thereto so rational that not the least little worm or any other animal, no matter how ugly it may seem, has been made without a cause. I am also so virtuous that all good flows from me as from a good spring, and all sweetness emanates from me as from a good wine. Therefore, no one can be mighty, wise, or virtuous without me.

And therefore do the mighty men of the world sin against me very much, for I gave them strength and power so they could honor and glorify me; but they awarded the honor to themselves, as if they had it from themselves. These miserable wretches do not realize their own powerlessness: for if I were to send them the least sickness, they would immediately wither away and everything would become worthless to them. How then could they be able to withstand my strength and power or the eternal torments? But even more do those, who are now said to be wiser than others, sin against me. For I gave them mental powers, understanding, and wisdom so they would love me, but they do not want to understand anything other than that which is to their own temporal benefit and greed. They have their eyes in the back of their head and look only to their own lusts and pleasures, and they are so blind in serving me that they do not give thanks to me, who gave them everything. For no one, neither good nor bad, could feel and understand anything without me, although I allow the wicked to turn their will to their desires. Moreover, no one can be virtuous without me.

Therefore, I could now use the words of the proverb that everyone commonly cites: ‘The patient man is despised by everyone.’ So am I now considered by mankind to be utterly foolish for my patience, and that is why I am despised by everyone. But woe to them, when my time of patience is over and they will come to know my judgment! They

will then be like mud before me that falls down to the deepest depths and does not stop until it comes down to the lowest part of hell.

The Virgin Mother's and the Son's pleasant dialogue with each other and with the bride, and about how the bride should prepare herself for the wedding.

Chapter 20

The Mother of God, the Virgin Mary appeared saying to her Son: “O my Son, you are the King of glory. You are Lord over all lords. You created heaven and earth and all the things in them. Therefore, may your every desire be done, may all your will be done!”

The Son answered: “It is an ancient proverb that says that what a youth learns in his youth, he preserves in his old age. So have also you, my dear Mother, from your youth learned to follow my will and to surrender all your will for my sake. Therefore you did well to say: ‘May your will be done.’ You are like precious gold that is laid on a hard anvil and hammered, for you were hammered with every kind of tribulation, and through my suffering you endured more pain than anyone before. For when my heart burst from the violent pain and bitterness on the cross, your heart was also wounded as if by the sharpest steel, and you would have willingly let it be cut into pieces, had that been my will. But even if you had been able to stop my suffering and wished for my life, still you did not want to if it was not my will. Therefore you did well to say: ‘Your will be done.’”

Thereafter, the Virgin Mary said to the bride of God: “My Son’s bride, love my Son, for he loves you, and honor his saints who stand in his presence, for they are like countless stars whose light and brilliance cannot be compared to any worldly light. Just like the light of the world differs from darkness, yet even more does the light of the saints differ from the light of this world. In truth, I tell you that if the saints were seen in their brightness as they really are, no human eye could set eyes on them or endure it without losing their sight and life.”

Thereafter, the Son of God spoke to his bride and said: “My bride, you should have four qualities: First, you should be ready for the wedding of my Divinity wherein no fleshly lusts are found, but only the most sweet spiritual desire, the one that is becoming for God to have with a chaste soul. The love for your children, your friends, or your temporal belongings should not draw you away from my love. May it not happen to you

what happened to those foolish virgins who were not ready when the Lord wanted to call them to the wedding and were therefore excluded.

Second, you should believe my words, for I am the Truth, and from my mouth has never anything come but truth, and nobody can find anything other than truth in my words. Sometimes I have a spiritual meaning with what I am saying, and sometimes I expressly mean what the words say, and my words should then be understood as they are, without any interpretation. Therefore, no one can justly accuse me of lying.

Third, you should be obedient in order for you to do righteous penance and reparation in all the limbs with which you sinned; for even though I am merciful, I do not forego justice. Therefore, obey with humility and gladness those whom you are charged to obey, so that you do not do even the things which seem beneficial and reasonable to you if it goes against obedience. For it is better to surrender your own will for the sake of obedience, even if it is good, and to follow the will of your superior, as long as it does not go against the salvation of the soul or is unreasonable in any other way.

Fourth, you should be humble, for you are united in a spiritual marriage. Thus, you should be humble and modest at the arrival of your bridegroom. Your handmaid should be sober and restrained, which means that your body should be abstinent from all superfluous things and well disciplined. For you will become fruitful with spiritual offspring for the benefit and good of many, just as a shoot is grafted onto a dry stem and makes the stem begin to blossom; so through my grace you shall bear fruit and blossom. My grace will gladden and intoxicate you, and the whole host of Heaven will rejoice because of the sweet wine I will give you. You must not lack trust in my goodness.

I assure you that just as Zechariah and Elizabeth rejoiced in their souls with an unspeakable joy over the promise of a future child, you too, shall rejoice over my grace that I want to give you, and thereto, others will rejoice through you. With these two, Zechariah and Elizabeth, an angel spoke; but I, the God and Creator of the angels, want to speak to you. These two, Zechariah and Elizabeth, gave birth to my most dear friend John, but I want many sons to be born to me through you, not of the flesh but of the spirit. In truth, I tell you, John was like a tube or flower full of sweetness and honey, for never did anything unclean or superfluous enter his mouth, and he never received the necessities of life over the limits of what he needed. And semen never went out of his body and that is why he can rightly be called an angel and a virgin for the divine life that he lived.”

The Bridegroom's words to his bride found in the most delightful parable about a sorcerer by which the devil is ingeniously signified and described.

Chapter 21

The Bridegroom of the kingdom of Heaven, Jesus, spoke to his bride in a parable presenting the example of a frog and said: "Once there was a sorcerer who had the most shining gold. A simple and mild man came to him and wanted to buy this gold from him. The sorcerer said to the simple man: 'You will not receive this gold, unless you give me better gold and in larger quantity.' The man said: 'I have such a great desire for your gold that I will give you what you want rather than losing it.' He then gave the sorcerer better gold and in larger quantity and received the shining gold from him and put it in a casket, thinking of making himself a ring from it for his finger.

After a short time, the sorcerer approached that simple man and said: 'The gold you bought from me and laid in your casket is not gold, as you thought, but the most ugly frog. It has been fostered in my chest and fed with my food. And in order for you to test and know that this is true, you may open the casket and you will see how the frog will jump to my chest where it was fostered.' When the man wanted to open it and find out if it was true, the frog appeared in the casket. The cover of the casket was hanging on four hinges that were about to break and fall off soon. Immediately when the cover of the casket was opened, the frog saw the sorcerer and jumped into his chest.

When the servants and friends of the simple man saw this, they said to him: 'Lord, this most fine gold is in the frog, and if you want, you can easily get the gold.' The man said: 'How can I get it?' They replied: 'If someone took a sharp and heated spear and thrust it into the hollow part of the frog's back, he would quickly get the gold out. But if he cannot find any hollow in the frog, he should then, with the greatest force and effort, thrust his spear into it, and this is how you will get back the gold you bought.'

Who is this sorcerer if not the devil, inciting and counseling mankind to fleshly lusts and honor, which are nothing else but vanity and destruction? He promises that what is false is true and makes what is true seem to be false. He possesses this most precious gold, namely, the soul, who I, through my divine power, created more precious than all the stars and planets. I created it immortal and imperishable and more pleasing to me than everything else and I prepared for her an eternal resting place with me. I bought her

from the violence of the devil with better and more valuable gold when I gave my own flesh for her, spotless from every sin, and suffered such a bitter torment that none of my limbs were without wounds or pain. I placed the redeemed soul in the body as in a casket, until the time when I would place her in the presence of my divine honor and glory in the kingdom of Heaven. But now, the redeemed soul of man has become like the most ugly and shameless frog, jumping in its arrogance and living in filth through its sensuality. She has taken my gold away from me, that is, all my justice.

That is why the devil rightly can say to me: ‘The gold you bought is not gold but a frog, fostered in the chest of my lust. Separate therefore the body from the soul and you shall see that she will jump directly to the chest of my lust where it was fostered.’ My answer is this: ‘Since the frog is hideous to look at, frightful to hear, and poisonous to touch, and does not bring me any good nor any pleasure or comfort but only does so for you, in whose chest she was fostered, you can have it, since she is yours by right. And when the door is opened, that is, when the soul is separated from the body, she will fly directly to you to remain with you for all eternity.’

Such is the soul of the man I am talking about to you. She is namely like the most vile frog, full of filthiness and lust, fostered in the chest of the devil. To the casket, that is, to his body, I am now coming closer through his coming death. The casket is hanging by four hinges that are about to fall off, for his body is supported by four things: namely, strength, beauty, wisdom, and sight, which are all now beginning to perish and fade for him. When his soul begins to separate from the body, she flies straightaway to the devil on whose milk it was fostered, that is, his lust, since she has forgotten my love with which I took upon myself the suffering and pain she deserved. She does not repay my love with love, and deprives me of my rightful possession, because she should love me more than anyone else since I redeemed her. But she finds a greater pleasure in the devil. The voice of her prayer is like the voice of the frog, and her appearance is abominable and hideous in my sight. Her ears will never hear my joy, and her poisoned senses will never feel my Divinity.

But, I am still merciful, and if anyone were to touch his soul, even though she is unclean, and examine her to see if there is any remorse or good will in it, and thrust a sharp and burning spear into his mind, which means the fear of my severe judgment, then he could still find my mercy, if he only would obey me. And if there is no remorse and love in him, still there is hope, if someone were to pierce him with a sharp and bitter correction and rebuked him strictly. For as long as the soul lives with the body, my mercy is open and ready for everyone.

Consider therefore how I died because of my love, and yet nobody repays me with love, but they even take from me what is mine by right; for it would be true justice if men improved their lives in proportion to the pain and suffering of their redemption. But now they want to live all the worse in proportion to the bitter pain and death I suffered when redeeming them; and the more I show them the hatefulness and ugliness of sin, the more boldly they want to sin. Behold, therefore, and consider that I do not get angry without cause, for they have changed my mercy into wrath. I redeemed them from sin, and they entangle themselves even more in sin.

But you, my bride, give me what you are obliged to give me, that is, may you keep your soul pure for me, because I died for you in order that you might keep her pure for me.”

The Mother’s most lovely question to the bride, the humble answer of the bride to the Mother, and the Mother’s useful answer to the bride, and about the improvement of good people among the evil.

Chapter 22

The Mother of God spoke to her Son’s bride, saying: “You are my Son’s bride. Tell me what is on your mind and what you are praying for.” The bride answered: “My Lady, you know it very well, for you know all things.” Then the Holy Virgin said: “Even though I know all things, I would still like to hear you tell me while those standing here present are listening.” The bride said: “My Lady, I fear two things: First, for my sins, for which I do not cry and make amends for as I would like. Second, I am sad because your Son’s enemies are so many.”

Then the Virgin Mary answered: “In regard to the first one, I give you three cures: First, think about how all things that have spirit, such as frogs and other animals, have troubles sometimes, and yet their spirits do not live eternally but die with the body. But your soul and every human soul does live forever. Second, think about the mercy of God, because there is no man who is so sinful that his sin is not immediately forgiven, if he only prays for God’s forgiveness with an intention to better himself and with true repentance for his former sins. Third, think and visualize about how great the glory of the soul is when she lives forever with God and in God.

And regarding the second, namely, that the enemies of God are so many, I give you three cures also: First, consider that your God and your Creator and theirs is judge over them, and they will never judge him again, even though he patiently bears their malice for a time. Second, consider that they are the sons of damnation and how heavy and intolerable it will be for them to burn for all eternity in hell. They are like the most wicked servants who will lose the inheritance of the kingdom of Heaven, while the sons will partake of the inheritance. But now maybe you will say: 'Should not one preach to them?' Yes, of course one should preach to them! Consider how good people are often found among the evil, and that the sons of evil sometimes turn away from the good, just like the prodigal son who demanded his inheritance from his father and went away to a faraway kingdom and lived an evil life. But sometimes they are seized by remorse through the preaching and return to the Father, and they are more welcome to him than as if they had never been sinful before. Therefore, one should preach especially to them, because, even though the preacher almost only sees evil people, he, nonetheless, thinks to himself: 'Perhaps there are some among them who will become the sons of my Lord; I will therefore preach to them.' This kind of preacher will receive the greatest reward. Third, consider that the wicked are allowed to live as a trial for the good, so that, if they are sorrowful for the behavior of the wicked, they might be rewarded with the fruit of patience, as you will understand better by the following parable.

The rose smells sweet, is beautiful to look upon, is soft to the touch, and yet it only grows among thorns that are sharp to the touch, hideous to look upon, and do not have a pleasant scent. Similarly, good and righteous men, even though they are soft in their patience, beautiful in their virtues, and sweet smelling in their good example, still cannot become perfected or be put to the test except among the evil. Sometimes the thorn also protects the rose so that it will not be picked before it has bloomed; likewise, the evil give the good an occasion and a reason not to fall into sin, and sometimes the good are restrained by their malice so that they do not fall into immoderate cheerfulness or lust or any other sin. A wine will never become good unless it is stored in the dreg, and neither can the good and righteous remain and improve in virtues if they are not tested through afflictions and persecutions by the unrighteous. So tolerate willingly the enemies of my Son, and remember that he is their judge, and that he, if justice demanded to destroy them all, could easily exterminate them in a moment. Therefore, may you tolerate them as long as he tolerates them."

The words of Christ to his bride about a false man, who is called an enemy of God, and

about his hypocrisy and all his characteristics.

Chapter 23

“This man appears to the people to be a well-dressed, strong, and attractive man, who is brave in his Lord’s battle, but when his helmet is removed from his head, he is ugly and disgusting to look at and is useless for work. His brain is seen to be bare. His ears are on his forehead and his eyes are in his neck. His nose is dissevered and his cheeks are altogether sunken like those of a dead man. On the right side, his chin and half of his lips have all fallen off, so that nothing is left on the right side except his throat which is seen to be all uncovered. His chest is full of swarming worms and his arms are like two snakes. The most poisonous scorpion lives in his heart. His back is like burnt coal. His intestines are stinking and rotting like pus-filled, unclean flesh. His feet are dead and useless to walk with.

I will tell you what all this signifies. On the outside he appears to people to be decorated with good habits, wisdom and bravery in the service and honor of me, but he is by no means like that. For if the helmet were removed from his head, that is, if it were shown to people how he really is spiritually in his soul, he would be uglier than all men. His brain is bare because his foolish customs and frivolity clearly demonstrate to good men that he is unworthy of such an honor. For if my wisdom pleased him, he would understand how much his honor is greater than others, thereby clothing himself in the most rigorous of conduct and divine virtues as compared to others.

The ears are on his forehead because, instead of having the humility due to his high dignity in being a light for others to teach them good things, he only wants to hear about his own praise and glory, thereby becoming so prideful that he only wants to be called great and good by everyone. He has eyes in his neck, because all his thoughts are turned to the present instead of the eternal. He thinks about how to please men and about the requirements for the needs of the flesh, but not about how he may please me and benefit souls. His nose is dissevered, since he has lost all rational discretion whereby he might see and distinguish between sin and virtue, between worldly honor and eternal honor, between worldly and eternal riches, between the short pleasures of the world and the eternal pleasures.

His cheeks are sunken, that is, all the veneration he should have for me, with the beauty of the virtues whereby he might please me, are entirely dead in the service of me:

for he is ashamed to sin in front of men but not in front of me. One part of his cheekbone and lips has fallen off so that nothing remains except for his throat, for the imitation of my works and the preaching of my words, in addition to a divine and fervent prayer, have totally fallen off from him so that nothing remains in him except his gluttonous throat. But to imitate the wicked and to be involved in worldly affairs seems altogether healthy and beautiful to him.

His chest is full of worms, because in his chest, where the remembrance of my suffering and the thought and consideration of my deeds and commandments should be, there is only a care for the things of the world with the desire and greed of the world, which are like worms devouring his conscience so that he does not think of spiritual or divine things. In his heart, where I would wish to dwell and my love should be, there now sits the most evil scorpion with a stinging tail and an enticing face and tongue; because pleasing and reasonable words proceed from his mouth, but his heart is full of injustice and deceit, because he does not care if the church he is supervising gets destroyed, as long as he can fulfill his own will.

His arms are like two snakes, because in his malice he reaches out his arms to the simple-minded and calls them to himself with simplicity, but, when he gets a suitable opportunity, he causes them to fall pitifully. Like a snake, he coils himself into a ring, because he hides his malice and unrighteousness, so that barely anyone can understand his treacherous plans. He is like the most vile snake in my sight, for just as the snake is more detestable than any other animal, so is he more ugly in my sight than any other man, since he counts my justice as nothing and holds me to be as a man who is unwilling to judge righteously.

His back is like coal, but it should be like ivory since his deeds should be more mighty and pure than others in order to be able to better carry the weak through his patience and his example of a good life. But now he is like coal, because he is too impatient to endure a single word for my honor, unless he benefits from it. Yet he seems to be mighty to the world. Therefore, when he thinks he stands, he will fall, since he is as hideous and lifeless as coal before me and my saints.

His intestines stink, because his thoughts and desires smell like rotting flesh before me with a stench that no one can tolerate. Neither can any of my saints tolerate him, but everyone turns his face away from him and demands a judgment over him. His feet are dead. His two feet are his two dispositions towards me, that is, his will to make amends for the sins he has done and his will to do good deeds. But these feet are altogether dead

in him, because all the marrow of love is consumed in him and nothing is left in him except the hardened bones. And in this way he stands before me. However, as long as the soul is with the body, he can find my mercy.

EXPLANATION

Saint Lawrence appeared and said: “When I was in the world, I had three things: self-purity, mercy to my neighbor, and love of God. Therefore I preached the word of God fervently, distributed the goods of the Church wisely, and suffered the scourging, fire, and death gladly. But this bishop tolerates and pretends not to notice the incontinence of the clergy, and he liberally distributes the goods of the Church to the rich and shows love only toward himself and his own friends. Therefore, I declare to him that the lightest cloud now has ascended into heaven, but dark smoke of fire overshadows it so that it cannot be seen by many. This cloud is the prayer of the Mother of God for the Holy Church. The fire of greed, ungodliness, and unrighteousness darken it so much that the mercy of the Mother of God cannot easily enter the hearts of the wretched. Therefore, let the bishop quickly turn to the divine love by correcting himself and his subordinates, admonishing them with his good example and word, and leading them to a better life. Otherwise, he will feel the hand of the judge which is his vengeance and justice, and his church will be purged by fire and the sword and afflicted by plundering and tribulation so that it will be a long time before anyone consoles her.”

God the Father's words before the host of the kingdom of Heaven, and the answer of the Son and Mother to the Father asking for mercy for the daughter, that is, the Church.

Chapter 24

God the Father spoke while the whole host of heaven was listening, and said: “Before you all, I complain over giving my daughter to a man who tortures her greatly and without measure, crushing her feet in the stocks so severely that all the marrow has gone out of her feet.” The Son answered him: “Father, she is the one I redeemed with my blood and espoused to myself, but now she has been brutally violated.” Then the Mother of God spoke and said: “You are my God and my Lord, and your blessed Son's limbs were enclosed within my body, who is your true Son and my true Son. I refused you nothing on earth. Have mercy on your daughter for the sake of my prayers.”

Thereafter the angels spoke, saying: “You are our Lord and Creator; in you we possess every good thing, and we need nothing but you. We all rejoiced when your bride went forth from you, but now we are rightly sad, because she has been given into the hands of the worst man who insults her with all kinds of mocking and abuse. Have mercy on her for the sake of your great mercy, for her misery is very great, and there is no one to console and save her but you Lord, God Almighty.”

Then God the Father answered the Son, saying: “O my Son, your grievance is my grievance, your word my word, your deeds my deeds. You are in me and I am in you inseparably. Your will be done!” Then he said to the Mother of the Son: “Since you did not refuse me anything on earth, I will not refuse you anything in heaven, and your will shall be fulfilled.” Then he said to the angels: “You are my friends, and the flame of your love burns in my heart. Therefore, I shall have mercy on my daughter for the sake of your prayers.”

The words of the Creator to his bride about how His justice endures evil men for a threefold reason, and how His mercy spares the evil for a threefold reason.

Chapter 25

“I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth. You wondered, my bride, why I am so patient with the evil. That is because I am merciful: for my justice endures and spares them for a threefold reason and my mercy spares them for a threefold reason. First, my justice endures them so that their time may be fully completed. For just as a righteous king might be asked, if he holds someone imprisoned, why he does not put them to death, and he answers: ‘Because it is not yet time for the inquisition of the court where they may be heard so that those who hear it can take greater warning.’ In this way do I tolerate the evil until the time comes for their malice to be made known to others as well. Did I not foretell the rejection of Saul and that he would be expelled from his kingdom and dethroned long before it was made known to men? And I tolerated him for a long time so that his malice would be shown and proven to others. Second, because of the few good deeds that the evil do for which they should be rewarded even down to the last farthing, there shall not be the least little good they have done for me that will go unrewarded; herein they will receive their wage for the good they have done. Third, in order to reveal God’s glory and patience. It was for this reason that I tolerated Pilate, Herod, and Judas, even though they were evil and damned. And if anyone questions why I tolerate this or

that person, let him regard Judas and Pilate.

My mercy also spares the evil for a threefold reason: First, because of my great love, for their eternal torment will be long. For that reason, because of my great love, I tolerate them until the last moment so that their torment will be delayed by the long extension of time here in the world. Second, so that their nature will be consumed by the sins, because the human nature gets consumed by sin so that they would experience the bodily death more bitterly if their nature was healthier and stronger. For a healthy nature dies a more prolonged and bitter death. Third, for the improvement and strength of good people and the conversion of some of the evil. For when good and righteous people are tormented by the evil, it benefits the good and righteous since it helps them to abstain from sin or to gain greater merit.

Likewise, the evil sometimes live for the good of other evil persons. For when the evil reflect on the fall, wickedness, and heinous deeds of some people, they think to themselves and say: 'What good does it do us to follow them or to live like them? While our Lord is so patient, it is better for us to repent.' And in this way they sometimes return to me, because they fear to do the things those evil men did, and their conscience tells them they should not do these things. Therefore, it is said, that if someone has been stung by a scorpion, he can be cured by being anointed with the oil wherein another reptile has died. In the same way, sometimes an evil man, who sees another person who is also evil fall and beholds his unrighteousness and vanity, is struck by remorse for his sins and is cured by the mercy and grace of God.

The angelic host's words of praise to God, and about how children would have been born if the first parents had not sinned, and about how God showed miracles to the people through Moses and also later through himself to us on his own coming; and about the breakdown of the bodily marriage in this time, and the conditions of a spiritual marriage.

Chapter 26

The angelic host was seen standing before God, and the entire host said: "Praised and honored be you, Lord God, who are and were without end! We are your servants and we praise and honor you for a threefold reason: First, because you created us to rejoice with you and gave us an indescribable light in which to rejoice forever. Second, because

all things are created and maintained by your goodness and constancy, and all things stand according to your will and remain through your word. Third, because you created mankind and took Manhood for their sake! We rejoice greatly for this Manhood, and also for your most chaste Mother who was worthy to bear you whom the heavens cannot comprehend and enclose. Therefore, your honor and blessing are above all things for the dignity of the angels that you have exalted greatly in honor. May your everlasting eternity and constancy be over all things that are and can be constant! May your love be over mankind whom you created! O Lord God, you alone should be feared for your great power, you alone should be desired for your great love, you alone should be loved for your constancy. May all praise and honor be to you forever without end. Amen!”

Then our Lord answered: “You honor me worthily for every created creature. But, tell me, why do you praise me for mankind which has provoked me to wrath more than any other creature? I created him more superior and dignified than all the lower creatures under the sky, and for none else did I suffer such indignities as for mankind and none was redeemed at so great a cost. Or what creature does not abide by its created order other than man? He inflicts me more with sorrow than any other creature. For just as I created you to praise and honor me, so I made man to honor me. I gave him a body like a spiritual temple, and I made and placed the soul in it like a beautiful angel, for the human soul has power and strength like an angel. In this temple, I, the God and Creator of mankind, wished to be like the third so that he would enjoy me and find delight in me. Then I made him another temple, similar to himself, out of his rib.

But now, my bride, for whose sake all these things are being said and shown, you might ask, how children would have been born by them if they had not sinned? I shall answer you: In truth, by the love of God and the mutual devotion and union of the flesh wherein they both would have been set on fire internally, love’s blood would have sown its seed in the woman’s body without any shameful lust, and so the woman would have become fertile. Once the child was conceived without sin and lustful desire, I would have sent a soul into the child from my divinity, and the woman would have carried the child and given birth to it without pain. When the child was born, it would have been perfect like Adam when he was first created. But this honor was despised by man when he obeyed the devil and coveted a greater honor than I had given to him. After the disobedience was enacted, my angel came over them and they were ashamed over their nakedness, and they immediately experienced the lust and desire of the flesh and suffered hunger and thirst. Then they also lost me, for when they had me, they did not feel any hunger or sinful fleshly lust or shame, but I alone was all their good and pleasure and perfect delight.

But when the devil rejoiced over their perdition and fall, I was moved with compassion for them and did not abandon them but showed them a threefold mercy: I clothed them when they were naked and gave them bread from the earth. And for the sensuality the devil had aroused in them after their disobedience, I gave and created souls in their seed through my Divinity. And all the evil the devil tempted them with, I turned to good for them entirely.

Thereafter, I showed them how to live and worship me, and I gave them permission to have relations, because before my permission and the enunciation of my will they were stricken with fear and were afraid to unite and have relations. Likewise, when Abel was killed and they were in mourning for a long time and observing abstinence, I was moved with compassion and comforted them. And when they understood my will, they began again to have relations and to procreate children, from which family I, their Creator, promised to be born. When the wickedness of the children of Adam grew, I showed my justice to the sinful, but mercy to my elect; of these I was appeased so that I kept them from destruction and raised them up, because they kept my commandments and believed in my promises.

When the time of mercy came, I showed my mighty miracles and works through Moses and saved my people according to my promise. I fed them with angel manna and went before them in a pillar of cloud and fire. I gave them my Law and revealed to them my secrets and the future through my prophets. Thereafter, I, the Creator of all things, chose for myself a virgin born of a father and mother; and from her did I take human nature and condescended to be born of her without sin. Just like the first children would have been born in paradise through the divine love of their father's and mother's mutual love and affection without any shameful lust, so my Divinity took Manhood from a virgin without any shameful lust and without hindering or damaging her virginity.

I came in the flesh as true God and man and fulfilled the Old Law and all the scriptures just as it earlier had been prophesied about me, and I initiated the New Law, for the Old Law was narrow and hard to bear and was nothing but a figure of future things to come. For in the Old Law it had been allowed for a man to have several wives, so that the people would not be left without any offspring or would have to intermarry with the gentiles. But in my New Law it is permitted for one man to have one wife, and it is forbidden for him during her lifetime to have several wives. Those who unite with divine love and fear for the sake of procreation and to raise children for the honor of God are my spiritual temple where I wish to dwell as the third with them.

But people in this age are joined in marriage for seven reasons: First, because of facial beauty. Second, because of wealth. Third, because of the despicable pleasure and indecent joy they get out of their impure intercourse. Fourth, because of feasts with friends and uncontrolled gluttony. Fifth, because of vanity in clothing and eating, in joking and entertainment and games and other vanities. Sixth, for the sake of procreating children but not to raise them for the honor of God or good works but for worldly riches and honor. Seventh, they come together for the sake of lust and they are like brute beasts in their lustful desires.[1]

They come to the doors of my church with one mind and consent, but all their desires and inner thoughts are completely against me. They prefer their own will, which aims at pleasing the world, instead of my will. If all their thoughts and wishes were directed toward me, and if they entrusted their will into my hands and entered into wedlock in fear of me, then I would give them my consent and be as the third with them. But now is my consent, which should be their most precious thing, gone from them, because they have lust in their heart and not my love. Thereafter, they go up to my altar where they hear that they should be one heart and one soul, but then my heart flees from them because they have not the warmth of my heart and know not the taste of my body.

They seek the warmth and sexual lust that will perish and love the flesh that will be eaten by worms. Therefore do such people join in marriage without the bond and union of God the Father and without the Son's love and without the Holy Spirit's consolation. When the couple comes to the bed, my Spirit leaves them immediately and the spirit of impurity approaches instead because they only come together for the sake of lust and do not discuss or think about anything else with each other. But my mercy is still with them if they will be converted to me. Because of my great love, I place a living soul created by my power into their seed. Sometimes I let evil parents give birth to good children, but more often, evil children are born of evil parents, since these children imitate the evil and unrighteous deeds of their parents as much as they are able and would imitate it even more if my patience allowed them. Such a married couple will never see my face unless they repent. For there is no sin so heavy or grave that penitence and repentance does not wash it away.

For that reason, I wish to turn to the spiritual marriage, the kind that is appropriate for God to have with a chaste soul and chaste body. There are seven good things in it opposed to the evils mentioned above: First, there is no desire for beauty of form or bodily beauty or lustful sights, but only for the sight and love of God. Second, there is no

desire to possess anything else than what is needed to survive, and just the necessities with nothing in excess. Third, they avoid vain and frivolous talk. Fourth, they do not care about seeing friends or relatives, but I am their love and desire. Fifth, they desire to keep the humility inwardly in their conscience and outwardly in the way they dress. Sixth, they never have any will of leading lustful lives. Seventh, they beget sons and daughters for their God through their good behavior and good example and through the preaching of spiritual words.

They preserve their faith undefiled when they stand outside the doors of my church where they give me their consent and I give them mine. They go up to my altar when they enjoy the spiritual delight of my Body and Blood in which delight they wish to be of one heart and one body and one will with me, and I, true God and man, mighty in heaven and on earth, shall be as the third with them and will fill their heart. The worldly spouses begin their marriage in lustful desires like brute beasts, and even worse than brute beasts! But these spiritual spouses begin in love and fear of God and do not bother to please anyone but me. The evil spirit fills and incites those in the worldly marriage to carnal lust where there is nothing but unclean stench, but those in the spiritual marriage are filled with my Spirit and inflamed with the fire of my love that will never fail them.

I am one God in three Persons, and one in Divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Just as it is impossible for the Father to be separated from the Son and the Holy Spirit to be separated from them both, and as it is impossible for warmth to be separated from fire, so it is impossible for these spiritual spouses to be separated from me; I am always as the third with them. Once my body was ravaged and died in torments, but it will never more be hurt or die. Likewise, those who are incorporated into me with a true faith and a perfect will shall never die away from me; for wherever they stand or sit or walk, I am always as the third with them.”

[1] Natural Family Planning is sinful birth control (NFP)

Saint Caesar of Arles: “AS OFTEN AS HE KNOWS HIS WIFE WITHOUT A DESIRE FOR CHILDREN...WITHOUT A DOUBT HE COMMITS SIN.” (W. A. Jurgens, *The Faith of The Early Fathers*, Vol. 3: 2233)

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (#’s 53-56), Dec. 31, 1930: “But no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately

frustrate its natural powers and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.

“Small wonder, therefore, if Holy Writ bears witness that the Divine Majesty regards with greatest detestation this horrible crime and at times has punished it with death. As St. Augustine notes, ‘Intercourse even with one’s legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of offspring is prevented.’ Onan, the son of Judah, did this and the Lord killed him for it (Gen. 38:8-10).”

In reality, the argument against Natural Family Planning can be summed up very simply. Catholic dogma teaches us that the primary purpose of marriage (and the conjugal act) is the procreation and education of children.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 17), Dec. 31, 1930: “The primary end of marriage is the procreation and the education of children.”

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 54), Dec. 31, 1930: “Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural powers and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.”

“Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offence against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.”

Therefore, even though NFP does not directly interfere with the marriage act itself, as its defenders love to stress, it makes no difference. NFP is condemned because it subordinates the primary end (or purpose) of marriage and the marriage act (the procreation and education of children) to the secondary ends.

NFP subordinates the primary end of marriage to other things, by deliberately

attempting to avoid children (i.e., to avoid the primary end) while having marital relations. NFP therefore inverts the order established by God Himself. It does the very thing that Pope Pius XI solemnly teaches may not lawfully be done. And this point crushes all of the arguments made by those who defend NFP; because all of the arguments made by those who defend NFP focus on the marriage act itself, while they blindly ignore the fact that it makes no difference if a couple does not interfere with the act itself if they subordinate and thwart the primary PURPOSE of marriage.

Despite this Magisterial teaching which condemns Natural Family Planning, simple logic will tell Catholics that it is wrong. If the Church has condemned artificial contraception because it prevents the conception of offspring, why would it be permissible to do the same thing by means of a different method? It is as if the desire or thought to murder someone is not sinful according to NFP advocates, but only the act of murder.

In publications promoting NFP, the fertile period of the wife is sometimes classified as “not safe” and “dangerous,” as though generating new life were considered a serious breach of national security and a little infant a treacherous criminal! This is truly abominable.

Could it be more clear that those who subscribe to this type of behavior and this method shut God and children out and replace them with their own selfish agenda?

Tobias 6:17 – “The holy youth Tobias approaches his bride Sara after three days of prayer, not for fleshly lust but only for the love of posterity. Having been instructed by the Archangel Saint Raphael that to engage in the marital act he must be moved rather for love of children than for lust. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the Devil hath power.”

The word matrimony means “the office of motherhood.” Those who use NFP attempt to avoid matrimony (the office of motherhood) and shut out God from themselves.

Natural Family Planning also involves a lack of faith on the part of those who use and promote it. Do the couples who use NFP, or the priests who promote it, possess supernatural faith in the providence of God? Do they believe that God is the one who sends life? Does anyone have a right to have 3 children when God willed them to have 10?

God is perfectly aware of each couple's needs, and he knows precisely what they can handle. Those with the true Catholic Faith should be totally unconcerned with charts and calendars. These are all unnatural instruments which frustrate God's will. Disregard this nonsense and accept the fact that God will not send you any children that you cannot handle. He will not burden you with anything too heavy, for His yoke is always easy and His burden always light. If NFP'ers had their way, there wouldn't be any families with over 10 children, nor the many saints who came from these families (e.g., Saint Catherine of Siena, 23rd child of 25). Priests who promote "Natural" Family Limitation, and couples who use it, are guilty of serious sin. It is contrary to the teaching of the Church, and it is contrary to the natural law. It is an insult to the providence of God, and it is an utter lack of faith. Why will you not practice chastity instead of committing the mortal sin of NFP. True sanctification comes through the virtue of chastity! As you can read, no reason, however grave can be accepted which subordinates the primary end (or purpose) of marriage and the marriage act (the procreation and education of children) to the secondary ends.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (#'s 53-56), Dec. 31, 1930: "But no reason, however grave..."

Hell will be long for those who practice NFP against the natural law. We implore all priests and laymen to accept the Church's teaching on this topic, and regain faith in God's providence. If you have been convinced to believe in this abominable heresy that contradicts the natural law, repent and confess your sin immediately.

[Here is a more detailed article about Natural Family Planning \(NFP\) Click here!](#)

The Virgin Mary's words to the bride about how there are three things in the dance and company of the world, and about how this world is symbolized by the dance, and about Mary's suffering at her Son's death.

Chapter 27

The Virgin Mary, the Mother of God spoke to the bride and said: "My daughter, I want you to know that where there is a dance, there are three things: namely, empty joy, loud shouting, and useless and vain work. But when someone enters the dance house

sorrowful or sad, then his friend, who attends in the joy of the dance sees his friend coming there sad and sorrowful, immediately leaves the joy of the dance and separates himself from the dance and mourns with his sorrowing friend.

This dance is this world that is always caught up in trouble, even though it seems like joy to foolish men. In this world there are three things: empty joy, frivolous words, and useless work, because everything that a man gathers by his work he must leave behind himself. The one who joins in this worldly dance should consider my labor and sorrow and then mourn with me, who was separated from all worldly joy, and then separate himself from the world.

At my Son's death I was like a woman whose heart had been pierced by five spears. The first spear was his shameful and blameworthy nakedness, for I saw my most beloved and mighty Son stand naked at the pillar without any clothing to cover him at all. The second spear was the accusation against him, for they accused him of being a traitorous betrayer and liar, him, whom I knew to be righteous and true and never to have offended or wished to offend or injure anyone. The third spear was his crown of thorns that pierced his sacred head so violently that the blood flowed down into his mouth and his beard and ears. The fourth spear was his sorrowful voice on the cross with which he cried out to the Father, saying: 'O Father, why have you abandoned me?' It was as if he wanted to say: 'O Father, there is no one who pities me but you.' The fifth spear which pierced my heart, was his most bitter and cruel death. My heart was pierced with as many spears as the arteries from which his most precious blood flowed out of him. In truth, the pain in his pierced sinews, arteries, feet, hands and body went mercilessly to his heart and from the heart back to his sinews; for his heart was healthy and strong and of the finest nature, and life contended long with death; and thus his life was prolonged in the midst of the most bitter pain.

But when his death drew near and his heart burst from the unendurable pain, then his whole body shook and his head, which was bent backwards, raised itself a little. His half-closed eyes opened, and likewise his mouth was opened so that his bloodied tongue was seen. His fingers and arms, which were as if paralyzed, stretched themselves out. But when he had given up his spirit, his head sank toward his chest, his hands lowered themselves a little from the place of the wounds and his feet had to bear most of the weight of the body.

Then my hands became numb, my eyes were darkened, and my face became pale as a dead man. My ears could hear nothing, my mouth could not speak, my feet trembled,

and my body fell to the ground. When I got up from the ground and saw my Son looking horribly disfigured and more miserable than a leper, I submitted my entire will to his knowing with certainty that everything had happened according to his will and could not have happened unless he had allowed it. I therefore thanked him for everything, and so there was always some joy mixed with my sadness, because I saw that he, who had never sinned, had, in his great love, wanted to suffer this much for the sins of mankind. Therefore, may all those who are in the world contemplate how I suffered when my Son died and always have it in front of their eyes and in their thoughts!”

The words of the Lord to the bride about how a man came to be judged before God’s tribunal, and about the fearsome and horrendous judgment passed on him by God and all the saints.

Chapter 28

The bride of Christ saw God looking angry, and he said: “I am without beginning and without end. There is no change in me either of year or day, but all time in this world is like a single second or moment to me. Everyone who sees me, sees and knows and understands everything that is in me in a moment. But since you, my bride, are in a material body, you cannot perceive and understand like a spirit, and therefore, for your sake, I will explain to you what has happened.

I was seated as a judge, for all judgment has been given to me, and a man came before my judgment seat to be judged. The voice of the Father thundered and said to him: ‘Woe unto you that you ever were born!’ God did not say this because he had repented of having created him, but it was just like anyone mourning for another and feeling compassion for him. Thereafter, the voice of the Son answered saying: ‘I shed my blood for you and suffered the most bitter and harsh pain for you, but you have separated yourself entirely from it and will have nothing to do with it.’

The voice of the Holy Spirit said: ‘I have searched all the corners of his heart to see if I might find some tenderness or love in his heart, but he is as cold as ice and as hard as stone, and I have nothing to do with him.’ These three voices have not been heard audibly as if there were three gods, but they were heard for your sake, my bride, because you would not be able to understand these spiritual mysteries otherwise.

Thereafter, the three voices of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were immediately transformed into a single voice, and this voice thundered and said: 'By no means shall the kingdom of Heaven be given to you!' The Mother of mercy, the Virgin Mary, was silent and did not open up her mercy, for he who was to be judged was unworthy to receive or enjoy her mercy; and all the saints cried out with one voice saying: 'It is divine justice for him to be eternally exiled and separated from your kingdom and from your joy.'

All those who were in the fires of purgatory said: 'No pain here is so bitter or harsh that it is enough to punish your sins; you deserve to endure much greater torments and you will therefore be severed from us.' But then the wretched man himself cried out in a fearsome voice, saying: 'Woe, woe for the seed that came together in my mother's womb and from which I received my body!' He called out a second time, saying: 'Accursed be the moment when my soul was joined to my body and accursed be he who gave me a body and soul!' He called out a third time: 'Accursed be the moment when I came forth alive from the womb of my mother!'

Then came three horrendous voices against him from hell saying: 'Come to us, accursed soul, like liquid copper draining down, to eternal death and life everlasting!' They called out a second time: 'Come, accursed soul, empty of all goodness, and receive our malice! For there will be none of us who will not fill you with his own malice and pain.' They called out a third time: 'Come, accursed soul, heavy like the stone that sinks down perpetually and never reaches the bottom where it can rest! You will sink deeper into the deep than we, so that you will not stop until you have reached the lowest part of hell.'

Then our Lord said: 'Just like the man who had several wives who sees one of them fall away from him and turns away from her, and turns to the others who remain steadfast in his will and rejoices with them, so too have I turned my face and my mercy away from him, and I turn to my servants and rejoice with them. Therefore, when you have heard of his fall and misery, you shall serve me with so much greater sincerity and purity in proportion to the greater mercy I have shown to you. Flee the world and her desire! I did not accept such a bitter suffering for the sake of worldly glory or because I was unable to fulfill it more quickly or easily, - for I could have - but, justice demanded that because humanity sinned in every limb, so must also satisfaction be made in every limb. This was why the Divinity felt compassion for mankind, and in his burning and great love for the Virgin, assumed Manhood from her through which he would suffer all the punishment mankind was destined to suffer. Since I took your punishment upon me out of love, you should remain in true humility, just like my servants, so that you will not

be ashamed before anyone and fear nothing but me. Guard your mouth in such a way that, if such were my will, you would never speak. Do not be saddened about worldly things, for they will perish, and I am able to make whomever I want rich or poor. Therefore, my bride, place all your hope in me and I will help you”

EXPLANATION

This man whose judgment is here proclaimed was a nobleman, canon and subdeacon, who received a false dispensation and married a rich virgin but was surprised by a sudden death and thus lost what he desired.

The words of the Virgin to the daughter about two wives, one of whom is called Pride and the other Humility (the latter signifying the most sweet Virgin Mary), and about how the Virgin Mary comes to meet those who love her at the moment of their death.

Chapter 29

The Virgin Mary, the Mother of God spoke to the Son’s bride and said: “There are two wives. One of them has no special name, because she is too unworthy to have a name. The other wife is Humility, and she is called Mary. The devil himself is lord over the first wife because he has control over her. This wife’s knight said to her: ‘O my wife, I am ready to do anything I can for you, if only I can satisfy my sexual lust with you just once. I am mighty and strong and brave of heart, I fear nothing and am ready to go to my death for you.’ She answered him: ‘My servant, your love for me is great. But I am seated on a high throne, and I have only this one throne, and there are three gates between us.

The first gate is so narrow that all that a man is wearing on his body gets pulled off and torn to pieces if he enters by this gate. The second one is so sharp that it cuts through even to the very sinews of the man. The third gate is burning with such a fire that there is no escape or rest for him from its heat but, instead, anyone entering through this gate is immediately melted down like copper. In addition, I am seated so high up on my throne that anyone who wants to sit next to me – for I have only one throne – will fall down into the greatest depth under me.’ The knight answered her: ‘I will give my life for you and the fall does not bother me.’

This wife is Pride and the one who wants to come to her must go, as it were, through

three gates. Through the first gate enters the one who gives all he has for human praise and for the sake of pride. And if he does not own anything, he uses all of his will to have a reason to be proud and win praise of men. Through the second gate enters the one who sacrifices all his work and everything he does, all his time and all his thoughts and all his strength so that he may fulfill his pride. And even if he could give his own flesh over to be wounded for the sake of pride and honor and riches, he would do so willingly. Through the third gate enters the one who never rests or has peace but entirely burns like fire with the thought of how he may attain some honor or something he may feel worldly pride over. But when he attains his desire, he cannot stay in the same state but falls painfully and miserably; however, pride still remains in the world.”

“But I,” Mary said, “am the one who is most humble. I am seated on a spacious throne and above me there is neither sun nor moon nor stars nor even a sky, but a wonderful and unimaginable clear light proceeding from the beauty of God’s majesty. Below me there is neither earth nor stone but only an incomparable sweet rest in God’s virtue. Around me there is neither barrier nor wall but only the glorious host of angels and holy souls. And although I am seated so high, I still hear my friends who are in the world, daily pouring out their sighs and tears to me. I view their work and their perfection to be greater than that of those who fight for their wife Pride.

I shall therefore visit them with my mercy and help and place them near me on my throne, for it is very spacious and can house everyone. But they cannot come to me or sit with me yet, for there are still two walls between us which I shall lead them securely over so that they may come to my throne. The first wall is the world, and it is narrow. Therefore, my servants in the world shall be consoled by me. The second wall is death. Therefore, I, their most dear Lady and Mother, shall come to meet them and run to them at their death, so that even in death they will feel encouraged and consoled! I will place them together with me on the throne of heavenly joy, so that they, in limitless joy, may rest eternally in the delight of God and in his sweet arms and love of eternal glory and unimaginable joy.”

The words of our loving Lord to his bride about how the many false Christians are being multiplied, and about how they are crucifying him again, and about how he is still prepared to suffer death once more for the sake of sinful people, if this were possible.

Chapter 30

“I am the God who created all things for the benefit of man in order that all things should serve and help him. But mankind misuses all the things I created for his benefit unto his own damnation, and he cares less about God and loves him less than the created world. The Jews prepared three kinds of torture tools for my suffering: First, the wood on which I, scourged and crowned, was crucified. Second, the iron by which they pierced through my hands and feet. Third, the gall that they gave me to drink. Thereafter, they insulted me calling me a fool because of the death I gladly endured, and they called me a liar because of my teachings. Such men are now many in the world and there are very few who console me.

They crucify me on the wood through their will to sin, they scourge me through their impatience (no one can namely endure a single word for my sake) and they crown me with the thorns of their pride when they want to be raised higher and have more honor than I want them to have. They pierce my hands and feet with hardened iron when they praise their sin and harden themselves so that they should not have to fear me. As the drink of gall, they offer me sorrow. They call me a liar and a fool for the suffering which I went to and gladly endured.

I am powerful enough to kill and drown all my enemies and the entire world in one moment for the sake of their sins, if I wanted. But if I did drown them, the ones remaining would serve me out of fear, and that would not be right, because mankind should serve me out of love and not because of fear. If I myself came to them in a visible shape, their eyes would not endure to see me or their ears to hear me. For how could a mortal human endure to look upon an immortal? Truly, in my love, I would gladly die again for the sake of mankind, if it were possible.

Then the Holy Virgin Mary appeared and the Son of God said to her: “What do you wish, my chosen Mother?” And she said: “O my Son, have mercy on your creation for the sake of my love.” He answered: “I will show them my mercy once again, for your sake.” Thereafter, our Lord spoke to his bride and said: “I am your God and the Lord of the angels. I am Lord over life and death. I myself want to live in your heart. See what a great love I have for you! The heavens and the earth and all the things in them cannot contain me, and yet I want to live in your heart, which is only a little piece of flesh. Whom could you then fear or what could you need when you have inside you God Almighty in whom all good things are?

There should be three things in the heart where I live: First, there should be a bed where we may rest. Second, there should be a seat where we may sit. Third, there should be a lamp that gives us light. In your heart there should be a bed to rest in so that you can rest from evil thoughts and worldly desires and always remember and contemplate the joy of eternity. The seat should be your will of staying close to me, even if it sometimes happens that you have to go out. For it is against nature to be always standing or sitting. But the one who is always standing is the one who always has the will of being with the world and never to sit with me. The light shall be the faith by which you believe that I am able to do all things and am almighty over all things.”

About how the bride saw the most sweet Virgin Mary adorned with a crown and other adornments of indescribable beauty, and about how Saint John the Baptist explains to the bride the meaning of the crown and the other adornments.

Chapter 31

The bride of God saw the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God, wearing a priceless and beautiful crown on her head and her wonderfully shining and indescribably beautiful hair hanging down over her shoulders, with a golden tunic shining with an indescribable light, and a blue mantle of the color azure or a clear sky. When the bride of God, Saint Bridget, was full of wonder at such a lovely sight, and in her wonderment was standing there totally enraptured and amazed, then blessed John the Baptist appeared to her and said: “Listen closely to what all this signifies. The crown signifies that she is the Queen and Lady and Mother of the King of angels; the hair hanging down signifies that she is an unstained and pure virgin; the sky colored mantle signifies that all worldly things were as dead in her heart and will; the golden tunic signifies that she was fervent and burning in the love of God, both inwardly and outwardly. Her Son, Jesus Christ, placed seven lilies in her crown, and between the lilies he placed seven gems.

The first lily is her humility; the second lily is her fear; the third, her obedience; the fourth, her patience; the fifth, her steadfastness; the sixth, her kindness, for she is kind and gives to all who beg of her with love and a will to amend; the seventh, her mercy in difficulties, for in whatever difficulty a man may be in, if he calls on her with all his heart, he will receive mercy and help from her because she is full of compassion and mercy.

Between these shining lilies her Son placed seven precious gem stones. The first

gem is her incomparable virtue, for there is no virtue in any other spirit or in any other body, which she does not have in a higher fashion. The second gem is her perfect purity, for the Queen of the kingdom of Heaven was so pure that from her first entrance into the world up to the final day of her death, not a single stain of sin was ever to be found in her; and none of all the devils could ever find enough impurity in her to fit on the head of a needle-point. She was truly the most pure, for it was not fitting for the King of glory to lie in any vessel but the purest, chosen before all angels and men and more pure than they. The third gem was her beauty, for God is praised constantly by his saints for his Mother's beauty, and all the holy angels and holy souls are filled with joy over her beauty. The fourth precious gem in the crown is the Virgin Mother's wisdom, for she is filled with all divine wisdom in God and all wisdom is fulfilled and perfected through her. The fifth gem is her power and might, for she is so powerful and strong with God in her that she can subdue anything that has been created. The sixth gem is her clarity, for she shines so clear that she even illuminates the angels, whose eyes are clearer than light, and the devils do not dare to look upon her clarity. The seventh gem is the fullness of every delight and joy and all spiritual sweetness, for her fullness is such that there is no joy that she does not increase, no delight that is not made fuller and more perfect by her and through the blessed vision of her, for she is filled with grace and mercy above all the holy saints. She is the most pure vessel in which the Bread of angels laid and in which all sweetness and all beauty is found.

Between the seven lilies in her crown, her Son placed these seven gemstones. Therefore may you, her Son's bride, honor and praise her with all your heart, for she is in truth worthy of all praise and all honor with her Son!"

About how, on God's exhortation, the bride of Christ chose poverty for herself and renounced riches and carnal behavior, and about the truth of the things revealed to her, and about three remarkable things that Christ showed her.

Chapter 32

Our Lord said to his bride: "You should be like a person who leaves and like one who gathers. For you should leave riches and gather virtues, leave perishable things and gather eternal things, leave visible things and gather invisible. I shall namely give you the exultation of the soul instead of the pleasures of the flesh, the joy of heaven instead of the joy of the world, the honor of the angels instead of the honor of the world, the sight of

God instead of the sight of your friends; I, the giver and Creator of all good things, will give you myself, instead of the possession of worldly goods.

Answer me on the three things I am going to ask you. First, do you want to be rich or poor in this world?" She answered: "O my Lord, I would rather be poor since riches do me no good; instead they bother and distract me very much and draw me away from serving you." "Tell me, second, do you find anything reprehensible or false according to your conscience and heart in the words that you heard from my mouth?" She answered: "Certainly not, all your words are reasonable." Our Lord said for the third time: "What delights you more, the sensual lust of the flesh you earlier had or the spiritual consolation and delight that you now have?" She answered: "I feel ashamed and disgraced in my heart to think of my earlier fleshly lust and it is now to me like poison and tastes all the more bitter in proportion to my earlier ardent love for it. I would rather die than ever return to such a lust; it cannot be compared to this spiritual delight and happiness."

"Thus," our Lord said, "you confess in your mind that all the things I have told you are true. Why then are you afraid and worried that I am delaying the things I told you would happen? Behold the prophets and remember the apostles and the holy teachers of the Church. Did they find anything in me except the truth? That is why they did not care about the world or the desire for it. Why else did the prophets foretell the future things so far in advance unless it was because God wanted them first to proclaim the words with the deeds coming after so that the ignorant should be taught in the faith? In truth, all the mysteries of my Holy Incarnation were proclaimed to the prophets before I assumed manhood and became man, even the star that went before the three kings. They believed the words of the prophet and deserved to see what they believed in, and they were made certain immediately after they saw the star. In the same way now, my words should first be announced so that, when the deeds come later, they will be believed more surely.

I showed you three things. First, the conscience of a man whose sin I revealed and proved to you by the most clear and evident signs. But why did I do so? Could I not have killed him myself? Or could I not have drowned him in a moment, if I wanted? Of course I could have. But, so that others may be instructed and my words revealed showing how just and patient I am and how unhappy this man is whom the devil rules, I endure him still. Because of his evil will of remaining in sin and through his sinful lust in it, the devil's power over him has increased so much that neither gentle words nor harsh threats nor the fear of hell can make him turn back from his sin. And this is true justice too, because, since he always had the will of sinning, even though he did not fulfill his sin by deed, he rightly deserves to be handed over to the devil for all eternity. For the smallest

sin, lusted after, is enough to damn anyone from the kingdom of Heaven, who does not repent.

I showed you two others. The devil tormented the body of one but was not in his soul. He darkened the other's conscience through his intrigues and yet did not get into his soul and had no power over him. But now you might ask: 'Is not the soul the same as the conscience? Is the devil not in the soul when he is in the conscience?' By no means! The body has two eyes to see with, and even if they lose their sight, the body can still be healthy. So it is with the soul. For even though the reason and conscience are sometimes distracted and troubled, nevertheless, the soul does not always get hurt by the sin. And thus, the devil had power over his conscience but not over his soul.

I shall show you a third man whose soul and body are completely ruled by the devil, and unless he is forced by my power and by my special grace, he will never be expelled from the man or leave him. From some people, the devil goes out willingly and quickly, but out of others, only reluctantly and by force. For in some people the devil enters because of the sin of their parents or because of some hidden judgment of God; this happens for example with children and witless men. He enters into others because of their infidelity or for the sake of some other sin. From these, the devil goes out willingly if he is exorcised by people who know conjurations or the art on how to exorcise devils. If they undertake such an exorcism for the sake of vainglory or for some worldly gain, then the devil has the power of entering into the one exorcising him, or again, into the same person he got exorcised from, for neither of them had any love of God. From those whose soul and body the devil possesses completely, he never goes out, unless he is forced through my power. Just as vinegar, if mixed with a sweet and good wine, spoils all the sweetness of the wine and can never be separated from it, so too will the devil not go out of the soul whom he possesses, unless he is forced through my divine power.

What is this wine if not the human soul that was sweeter to me above all created beings and so dear to me that I let my sinews be slashed and my body lacerated to the ribs for her sake? I suffered death for her sake rather than lose her. This wine was conserved in dregs, for I placed the soul in a body where it was kept according to my will as in a sealed vessel. But now this sweet wine has been mixed with the worst vinegar, that is, with the malice of the devil, whose evilness is more bitter and abominable to me than any vinegar. By my power, this vinegar shall be separated from this man whose name I will tell you, so that I may show my mercy and wisdom through him, but my judgment and justice through the former man."

EXPLANATION

The first man was a high-born and proud cantor who, without the pope's permission, went to Jerusalem and was attacked by the devil. About this demon-possessed man more can be read in book III, chapter 31 and in book IV, chapter 115. The second demon-possessed man in the same chapter became a Cistercian monk. The devil tormented him so much that four men could barely hold him down. His outstretched tongue looked like an ox tongue. The shackles on his hands were invisibly broken in pieces. After a month and two days this man was cured by Saint Bridget. The third demon-possessed man was a bailiff of Ostergotland. When he was admonished to do penance, he said to the one advising him: "Cannot the owner of the house sit where he likes? The devil has my heart and my tongue, how can I do penance?" He also cursed the saints of God and died the same night without the sacraments and confession.

Our Lord's words of admonishment to the bride about true and false wisdom, and about how good angels aid the wise who are good while devils aid the wise who are evil.

Chapter 33

"My friends are like scholars who have three things: First, a reasonable understanding above what is natural to the brain. Second, wisdom without human aid, for I myself teach them inwardly. Third, they are full of the sweetness and divine love with which they defeat the devil. But nowadays people study in a different way. First, they want to be wise out of vainglory in order to be called good clerks and masterly scholars. Second, they want to be wise in order to own and win riches. Third, they want to be wise in order to win honors and privileges.

That is why I leave them when they go to their schools and enter there, since they study because of pride, but I taught them humility. They enter the schools for the sake of greed, but I had no place to rest my head. They enter in order to win privileges, envying those more highly placed than themselves, but I was judged by Pilate and mocked by Herod. That is why I will leave them, because they are not learning my wisdom. But, since I am good and kind, I give each one what he prays for. The one who prays for bread will receive bread. And the one who prays for straw will be given straw.

My friends pray for bread, because they seek and learn the wisdom of God where my love is. But others, however, pray for straw, that is, worldly wisdom. For just as straw is useless for man to eat but, is instead, the food of irrational animals, so too there is neither use for the worldly wisdom that they seek nor nourishment for the soul, but only a small name and useless work. For when a man dies, all his wisdom is eradicated into nothing and he can no longer be seen by those who used to praise him.

I am like a mighty lord with many servants who, on their lord's way, give to the people what they need. In this way the good angels and the evil angels stand in my service. The good angels minister to those who study my wisdom, that is, those who work in my service, nourishing them with consolation and pleasing work. But the worldly wise are assisted by evil angels who inspire them with what they want and form them after their will, inspiring them with thoughts of great speculation with much work. But if they would look to me, I could give them bread and wisdom without any work or trouble and a sufficient amount of the world to satisfy them. But they can never be filled of the world, since they turn that which is sweet into bitterness for themselves.

But you, my bride, should be like cheese, and your body like the mold wherein the cheese is formed until it has received the form of the mold. In this way, your soul, which is as delightful and sweet to me as cheese, must be tried and cleansed in the body, until body and soul united agree to maintain the same form of abstinence, so that the flesh obeys the spirit and the spirit leads the flesh toward all virtues.

The teaching of Christ to his bride about how she should live, and also about how the devil admits to Christ that the bride loves Christ above all things, and about how the devil asks Christ why he loves her so much, and about the love that Christ has for the bride.

Chapter 34

“I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth. I was true God and true man in the Virgin's womb and I rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. You, my new bride, have come to an unknown place. Therefore, you must do four things: First, you must know the language of the place. Second, you must have proper clothes. Third, you must know how to organize your days and your time according to the custom of the place. Fourth, you must become accustomed to the new food.

So, since you have come from the instability of the world to stability, you must learn a new language, that is, the abstinence from useless and vain words and sometimes even from permissible ones in order to observe the importance and virtue of silence. Second, your clothes should be humble both in the interior and exterior so that you do not extol yourself inwardly as being holier than others nor are outwardly ashamed to be seen as humble before people. Third, your time should be ordered in such a way that, just as you before used to have much time for the needs of the body, so now you should only have time for the soul, that is, to never again want to sin against me. Fourth, your new food is abstinence from gluttony and from delicacies with all prudence, as far as your human nature can endure it. The abstinence that goes beyond the capacity of human nature is not pleasing to me, for I demand the rational and the taming of lusts.

Then the devil appeared in the same moment. Our Lord said to him: “You were created by me and have seen all justice in me. Answer me now whether this new bride of mine is lawfully mine by proven justice. For I allow you to see and understand her heart so that you may know how to answer me. Does she love anything else as much as me or would she take anything in exchange for me?”

The devil answered: “She loves nothing as much as you, and rather than losing you, she would suffer any torment, if only you gave her the virtue of patience. I see like a bond of fire descending from you to her and it ties her heart so much that she thinks of and loves nothing but you.” Then our Lord said to the devil: “Tell me how she pleases your heart or how you like this great love I have for her.” The devil said: “I have two eyes; one is corporeal, although I am not corporeal, and with this eye I perceive temporal things so clearly that there is nothing so secret or dark that it could hide itself from me. The second eye is spiritual, and I see so clearly with it that there is no pain so small that I cannot see and understand to which sin it belongs. And there is no sin so small or slight that I do not see it, unless it has been purged by repentance and penance. But, although there are no body parts more sensitive and vulnerable than the eyes, I would still much rather desire that two burning torches without end penetrated my eyes than for her to see with the eyes of the spirit.

I also have two ears. One is corporeal, and no one can speak so secretly and silently that I do not immediately hear and know it through this ear. The second ear is spiritual, and no one can have such a secret thought or desire for any sin, that I do not hear it through this ear, unless it has been washed away by penance. And I would gladly prefer that the suffering of hell, surging forward like a stream and spreading the most terrible

hot fire without end flowed through my ears than that she should hear anything with the ears of the spirit. I also have a spiritual heart, and I would gladly let it be ceaselessly cut to pieces and constantly renewed to the same suffering in order for her heart to grow cold in your service and love.

But, since you are righteous, I now have a question for you that you may answer. Tell me, why do you love her so much? Why did you not choose someone holier, richer and prettier for yourself?" Our Lord answered: "Because justice demanded this. You were created by me and have seen all justice in me. Tell me, while she is listening, why it was justice that you should have such a bad fall and what you were thinking when you fell!"

The devil answered: "I saw three things in you. I saw your glory and honor being above all things, and I thought about my own glory. For this reason I became proud and decided to not merely become your equal, but to be even higher than you. Second, I saw that you were mightier than all others, and therefore I desired to be more mighty than you. Third, I saw what would happen in the future, and since your glory and honor are without beginning and would be without end, I envied you and thought that I would gladly be tortured forever by the most bitter punishment if, thereby, you would die. And with such thoughts and desires I fell, and immediately hell was created."

Our Lord answered: "You asked me why I love my bride so much. Assuredly, it is because I change all your malice into good. For since you became proud and did not want to have me, your Creator, as your equal, therefore, humiliating myself in all things, I gather sinners to myself and make myself their equal by giving them my glory. Second, since you had such an evil desire that you wanted to be more mighty than I, therefore I make sinners more mighty than you and partakers in my power. Third, because of your envy against me, I am so full of love that I offered myself up and sacrificed myself for the sake of everyone through my death." Thereafter, our Lord said: "Now, devil, your dark heart is enlightened. Tell me, while she is listening, what love I have for her."

The devil answered: "If it were possible, you would gladly suffer the same pain in each and every limb just as you once suffered on the cross in all your limbs, before losing her." Then our Lord answered: "Since I am so merciful that I do not refuse my mercy and forgiveness to anyone asking for it, ask me then humbly for mercy yourself, and I will give it to you." The devil answered: "Never shall I do this. For when I fell, a punishment was established for every sin and for every worthless word and thought. And every spirit or devil that fell will have his punishment. And before I would bend my knee before you, I would rather swallow all the punishments in me, as long as my mouth could be opened

and closed in punishment, so that my punishment would be forever renewed.”

Then our Lord said to his bride: “See how hardened the lord of the world is and how mighty he is against me because of my hidden justice. I could indeed destroy him in a moment through my power, but I do no more injustice to him than to a good angel in the kingdom of Heaven. But when his time comes, and it is now approaching, I shall judge him with his followers. Therefore, my bride, may you always persevere in good deeds. Love me with all your heart. Fear nothing but me. I am namely the Lord over the devil and over all things created.”

The Virgin Mary’s words to the bride about her own sorrow at the suffering of Christ, and about how the world was sold through Adam and Eve and bought back as with one heart through Christ and his Virgin Mother.

Chapter 35

Mary, the Mother of God spoke to the bride of Christ and said: “My daughter, consider the suffering of my Son, for his limbs were like my own limbs and his heart like my own heart. For just as other children use to be carried in the womb of their mother, so was he in me. But he was conceived through the burning charity of God’s love. Others, however are conceived through the lust of the flesh. Thus, John the evangelist, his cousin, rightly says: ‘The Word was made flesh.’ He came through love and was in me. The Word and love created him in me. He was truly for me like my own heart. For when I gave birth to him, I felt as though half my heart was born and went out of me. And when he endured suffering, it felt like my own heart was suffering. Just as when something is half inside and half outside - the half outside feels pain and suffering, but the inside also feels a similar pain - so it was for me when my Son was scourged and wounded; it was as if my own heart was scourged and wounded.

I was also the one closest to him at his suffering and I was never separated from him. I stood very near his cross, and just like that which is closest to the heart stings the worst, so his pain was heavier and worse for me than for others. When he looked at me from the cross and I saw him, then tears flowed from my eyes like blood from veins. And when he saw me so stricken with pain and overwhelming sorrow, he felt such a sorrow over my pain that all the pain of his own wounds became as subsided and dead for the sake of the pain he saw in me. I can therefore boldly say that his pain was my pain since

his heart was my heart. For just as Adam and Eve sold the world for an apple, so my Son and I bought back the world as with one heart. Consider therefore, my daughter, how I was at the death of my Son, and it will not be hard for you to give up the world and her cares.”

Our Lord's answer to an angel who was praying that sorrow in body and soul should be given to the bride, and about how even greater sorrow should be given to more perfect souls.

Chapter 36

An angel was praying for his Lord's bride and our Lord answered him: “You are like a knight of the Lord who never took off his helmet for the sake of sloth and who never turned his eyes away from the battle for the sake of fear. You are steadfast as a mountain and burning like a flame. You are so pure that there is no stain in you. You beg me to have mercy on my bride. You know and see all things in me. Nevertheless, while she is listening, tell me what kind of mercy you are asking for her; for mercy is namely threefold.

One is the mercy by which the body is punished and tortured and the soul is spared, as it happened with my servant Job whose flesh had to suffer all kinds of pain and torment but whose soul was protected. The second mercy is the one by which soul and body are spared from torment, as it was in the case of the king who lived in all sorts of lust and worldly pleasure and had no pain either in body or soul while he lived in the world. The third mercy is the one by which soul and body are punished, so that they have distress in their flesh and sorrow in their heart, as it happened with Peter and Paul and other saints.

For there are three states for humans in the world: The first state is that of those who fall into sin and get up again; these do I sometimes allow to suffer in their bodies so that they may be saved. The second state is that of those who would gladly live forever to be able to sin forever and who have all of their will and thought directed to the world, and if they do anything for me at any time, they do it with the intention of their worldly possessions growing and prospering. Neither punishment of the body nor very much pain of the heart is given to these people, but instead they are allowed to follow their own power and will, because they will receive a reward here for the least little good they have

done for me to then be tormented for all eternity. For since their will to sin is everlasting, their torment shall also be everlasting. The third state is that of those who are more afraid of sinning against me and offending me than they fear any torment. They would rather endure to be tortured with unbearable pain in eternity than consciously provoke me to wrath. Sorrow of body and heart are given to these men, as with Peter and Paul and other saints, so that they may amend for all their sins in this world, or so that they may be chastised for a time for the sake of their greater glory and as an example to others. I have shown this threefold mercy to three persons in this kingdom whose names are well known to you.

But now, my angel and servant, tell me, for what kind of mercy do you pray for my bride?" He answered: "I pray for the mercy of her soul and body, so that she may amend for all her sins in this world and so that none of her sins may come before your judgment." Our Lord answered: "May it be done according to your will." Then he said to the bride: "You are mine and I will do with you as I please. Love nothing as much as me. Purify yourself constantly from sin every hour according to the advice of those I have entrusted you to. Hide no sin! Leave nothing unexamined! Do not consider any sin to be light or worthy of disregard! For anything you forget, I will remind you of and judge. None of the sins you have done will come before my judgment if they are punished and expiated through your penance while you live. But those sins for which you made no penance will be purged either in purgatory or by some secret judgment of mine, unless you make a full satisfaction and amendment for them here in the world."

The words of the Virgin Mother to the bride about the excellence of her Son, and about how Christ is now being crucified more cruelly by his enemies, the evil Christians, than he once was by the Jews, and about how such people will receive a harder and more bitter punishment.

Chapter 37

The Queen of Heaven said: "My Son had three good things: The first one was that no one ever had such a beautiful body as he did, since he had two perfect natures, namely, his Divinity and Manhood. His body was so pure that, just as no stain can be found in the clearest of eyes, so not a single defect could be found on his body. The second good was that he never sinned. Other children, however, sometimes bear the sins of their parents and sometimes their own; but he never sinned and yet bore the sins of

everyone. The third good was that some men die for the sake of God and to receive a greater reward, but he died just as much for the sake of his enemies as for me and his friends.

When his enemies crucified him, they did four things to him: First, they crowned him with a crown of thorns. Second, they pierced his hands and feet. Third, they gave him gall to drink. Fourth, they pierced his side. But now I complain that the enemies of my Son, who are now in the world, crucify him more cruelly in a spiritual sense than the Jews who crucified his body. For even though the divinity is unable to suffer and die, still they crucify him through their own vices and sins. For if a man insults and injures an image of his enemy, the image does not feel the damage done to it; nevertheless, the perpetrator should be accused and judged for his evil intention to do harm as though it was a deed. In the same way, the vices and sins by which they crucify my Son spiritually are more abominable and heavy to him than the vices of those who crucified his body.

But now you may ask: 'How do they crucify him?' First off, they fasten him on the cross they have prepared for him when they do not heed the commandments of their Creator and Lord, but dishonor him when he warns them through his servants to serve him, and they despise this and instead do what pleases them. Then they crucify his right hand when they hold justice to be as injustice, saying: 'Sin is not so heavy and abominable to God as it is said. God does not punish anyone for all eternity; he only threatens us with these hard things to scare us. Why else would he redeem man if he wanted us to perish?' They do not consider that the least little sin a man finds delight in is enough to damn him to an eternal torment, and that God does not let the least little sin go unpunished, just like he does not let the least little good deed go unrewarded.

Therefore, they shall be tormented for all eternity because of their constant intention of sinning, and my Son, who sees the heart, counts that as a deed. For they would fulfill their will with deeds if my Son tolerated or allowed it. Then they crucify his left hand when they turn virtue into sin and the will to continue in sin until the end, saying: 'If we just once say at the end of our life, "O God, have mercy on me," God's mercy is so great that we will be forgiven.' But this is not virtue - to want to sin without bettering oneself, and wanting to receive a reward without having to work for it, not unless a real contrition is found in the heart that the man wants to change if only he could do so were it not for illness or some other hindrance.

Thereafter, they crucify his feet when they take pleasure in sinning without once thinking of my Son's bitter suffering or without once thanking him from their inmost

heart with words like these: 'My Lord and God, how bitter your suffering was, praise and honor be to you for your death' – such words are never heard from their mouth. They then crown him with the crown of derision when they mock his servants and consider it useless to serve him. They give him gall to drink when they rejoice and glory in sin. And not once does the thought arise in their heart of how grave and manifold and dangerous this sin is. They pierce his side when they have the will to continue in sin.

In truth, I tell you - and you can say this to my friends - that such people are more unjust in the sight of my Son than those who judged him, more unkind than those who crucified him, more shameless than those who sold him, and they shall therefore receive a greater torment than the others. Pilate knew very well that my Son had not sinned and did not deserve to die. But he, nonetheless, felt compelled to judge my Son to death because he feared the loss of his worldly power and the revolt of the Jews. But what would these have to fear if they served my Son, or what honor or dignity would they lose if they honored him? They will therefore be judged with a more severe sentence than Pilate's, for they are worse than him in my Son's sight. For Pilate judged him because of the request and will of others and due to fear, but these judge him for their own advantage and without any fear when they dishonor him by committing the sin that they could abstain from if they wanted. But they do not abstain from sin nor are they ashamed of the sins that they have done, for they do not consider that they are unworthy of the good deeds of the One whom they do not serve.

They are also worse than Judas, for when Judas had betrayed his Lord, he knew very well that he was God and that he had sinned heavily against him, but he despaired and hastened his days toward hell, thinking himself to be unworthy to live. But these know their sin very well and yet they continue in it without feeling any remorse about it in their hearts. They want to take the kingdom of Heaven with violence and power when they think they can get it, not through their good deeds but through a vain hope, but it is only given to those who work and suffer something for the sake of God.

They are also worse than those who crucified my Son. For when these saw the good works of my Son, namely, the raising of the dead and the cleansing of lepers, they thought to themselves: 'This man does unheard of and extraordinary miracles. He overcomes anyone he wants with a word, he knows all our thoughts, and he does whatever he wants. If he is successful, we will all have to submit to his power and become his subjects.' Therefore, in order to avoid being subjected to him, they crucified him because of their envy. But if they had known that he was the King of glory, they never would have crucified him.

But these people see his great deeds and miracles everyday, and they take advantage of his good deeds and hear how they should serve him and come to him, but they think to themselves: 'If we must leave all our temporal belongings and follow his will and not our own, it would be heavy and unbearable.' They despise his will so that it should not be placed over their own will, and crucify my Son through their hardened heart when they add sin upon sin against their conscience. They are worse than those who crucified my Son, for the Jews did it for the sake of envy and because they did not know that he was God, but these know him to be God, and yet, in their own malice and presumption and greed, they crucify him spiritually more cruelly than the Jews did physically. For they themselves have been redeemed, but the Jews had not yet been redeemed. Therefore, my bride, obey my Son and fear him, for just as he is merciful, he is also just."

The most pleasant conversation of God the Father with the Son, and about how the Father gave the new bride to the Son, and how the Son received her with pleasure to himself, and about how the bridegroom teaches the bride about patience, obedience and simplicity through an example.

Chapter 38

The Father spoke to the Son, saying: "I came with love to the Virgin and took your true body from her. You are therefore in me and I in you. Just as fire and heat are never separated, so it is impossible to separate the Divinity from the Manhood." The Son answered: "May all glory and honor be to you Father; may your will be done in me and mine in you." The Father answered him again: "Behold, my Son, I am entrusting this new bride to you like a sheep to be guided and educated. As the owner of the sheep, you will get from her cheese to eat and milk to drink and wool to clothe yourself with. But you, bride, should obey him. You have three things you must do: you have to be patient, obedient and willing to do what is good."

Then the Son said to the Father: "Your will with power, power with humility, humility with wisdom, wisdom with mercy; may your will be done, which is and always will be without beginning or end in me. I take her to myself into my love, into your power and into the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which are not three gods but one God." Then the Son said to his bride: "You have heard how the Father entrusted you to me like a sheep. You must therefore be simpleminded and patient like a sheep and fruitful in producing

food and clothing.

Three people are in the world. The first is completely naked, the second is thirsty, and the third is hungry. The first signifies the faith of my Church, and it is naked because everyone is ashamed and afraid to speak of the true faith and of my commandments. And if some people do speak or teach about such things, they are despised and accused of being liars. Therefore, my words which proceed from my mouth, should clothe this faith like wool. For just as wool grows on the body of a sheep by the heat, so too my words proceed from the heat of my Divinity and Manhood to your heart. They will clothe my holy faith with the testimony of truth and wisdom and prove that the faith which is now regarded as vain is true, so that the ones who, up to now, have been lazy in clothing their faith in deeds of love after hearing my words of love, will be converted and enkindled again in order to speak with certitude of faith and act with power.

The second one signifies my friends who have a thirsting desire to make my honor perfect and are saddened at my dishonor. They shall be filled with the sweetness that they heard in my words, and enkindled with a greater love for me, and along with them, others who are now dead in sin, will also be enkindled in my love, when they hear of the mercy I have done with sinners.

The third one signifies those who think thus in their hearts: 'If only we knew the will of God and how we should live, and if anyone taught us about the good way, we would gladly do what we could for the honor of God.' These are hungry to get to know my way and will, but no one feeds them, since no one shows them completely what they should do, and if they are shown or taught what to do, no one lives according to the words with their deeds. And for this reason, the words seem as dead to them. Therefore, I myself shall show and teach them what they should do and I will fill them with my sweetness.

For worldly things, which are seen and desired now almost by everyone, cannot fill mankind but only arouse his desire and greed of the world to win more and more things. But my words and my love will feed men and fill them with an overflowing consolation. Therefore, my bride, who are my sheep, you must take great care to keep your patience and obedience. You are all mine by right and should therefore follow my will. The one who wants to follow the will of another should have three things: First, he should have the same will and opinion as the other; second, have similar deeds; third, he should move away from his enemies. But who are my enemies if not pride and every sin? You should therefore move away from them, if you desire to follow my will."

Christ speaks about how faith, hope and love were found perfectly in him at the moment of his death and are found imperfectly in us wretches.

Chapter 39

The Son of God said: “I had three things in my death: First, faith, when I bent my knees and prayed to the Father, knowing that he was able to save me from the suffering. Second, hope, when I steadfastly waited and said: ‘Not as I will.’ Third, love, when I said: ‘Thy will be done.’ I also had bodily agony from the natural fear of suffering when the sweat of blood went out of my body. Thus, in order that my friends should not fear that they are abandoned when the moment of tribulation comes to them, I showed them in myself that the weak flesh always flees from suffering.

But now you may ask how the sweat of blood went out of my body. Just like the blood of a sick person dries up and is consumed in all his veins, so was my blood consumed by the natural fear of death. My Father wanted to show the way by which Heaven would be opened and the exiled man to be able to enter therein, and therefore he delivered me out of love to my suffering in order that my body would be glorified in honor after the suffering had been fulfilled. For justice did not allow my Manhood to enter into glory without suffering, although I was able to do so by the power of my Divinity.

How then should those deserve to enter into my glory who have little faith, vain hope, and no love? If they believed in the eternal joy of Heaven and in the horrific torments of hell, they would desire nothing but me. If they believed that I see and know all things and have power over all things and that I demand a judgment over all, they would hate the world, and they would fear more to sin before me than before men. If they had a firm and steadfast hope, then their every thought and desire would be directed toward me. If they had a divine love for me, then they would at least think in their soul about what I did for their sake, how much I labored in preaching, how great my pain was in my suffering and how great my love was at my death when I preferred to die rather than to lose and forsake them.

But their faith is sick and wavering, threatening to fall soon, because they believe only when suffering and temptation does not attack them, and they lose their hope as soon as they are met with adversity. Their hope is vain, because they hope that their sin

will be forgiven without justice and a right judgment. They hope with self-reliance to receive the kingdom of Heaven for nothing and wish to receive my mercy without the severity of justice. Their love for me is completely cold, for they are never enkindled in seeking or calling me unless they are forced to it by tribulation. How can I be warmed by such people who have neither a right faith nor a firm hope nor a burning love for me?

And therefore, when they cry out to me and say ‘O God, have mercy on me’, they do not deserve to be heard or to enter into my glory since they did not want to follow their Lord in suffering, and, therefore, they should not follow him to the glory. For no knight can please his Lord and be taken back into his mercy after his fall, unless he first humbles himself in penance for his contempt.”

Our Creator asks three questions of his bride. The first is about the servitude of the husband and the dominion of the wife; the second about the work of the husband and the spending of the wife; and the third about the contempt of the Lord and the honoring of the servant.

Chapter 40

“I am your Creator and Lord. Answer me on the three things I am going to ask you. How is the state of the house where the wife is dressed like a lady and her husband like a slave? Is this right? She answered in her conscience: “No Lord, it is not right.” Our Lord said: “I am the Lord of all things and the King of angels. I dressed my servant, namely, my Manhood, with only usefulness and necessity, for I desired nothing from this world except meager food and clothing. But you, who are my bride, want to live like a lady, and wish to have wealth and honor and be held in honor. What is the benefit of all these things? All things are indeed vanity and all things must be left. Mankind was not created for any superfluity but only to have what the necessity of nature requires. This superfluity was invented by pride and it is now held and loved as the law.

Second, tell me if it is right for the man to work from morning to evening and then for the wife to spend everything that has been gathered in a single hour?” She answered: “No, this is not right; the wife is instead obliged to live and act after the will of her man.” Our Lord said: “I acted like the man who works from morning to evening, for from my youth up to the time of my suffering, I worked in showing the way to Heaven by preaching and by fulfilling what I preached with deeds. But the wife, that is, the soul, who

should be like my wife, wastes all my work when she lives frivolously so that nothing of what I have done and suffered for her sake can benefit her; nor do I find any virtue in her in which I can delight in.

Third, tell me, is it not wrong and abominable for the master of the house to be despised and for the slave to be honored?" She answered: "Yes, it indeed is." Our Lord said: "I am the Lord of all things. My house is the world, and mankind should, by right, be my servant. But I, the Lord, am now despised in the world and the man honored. Therefore shall you, whom I have chosen, take care to do my will, because everything in the world is nothing but sea foam and a false dream."

Our beloved Creator's words in the presence of the heavenly host and the bride, in which he complains about five men signifying the pope and his clergy, the evil laity, the Jews and the heathens; and also about the help he sends to his friends, signifying all mankind, and about the harsh judgment he executes on his enemies.

Chapter 41

"I am the Creator of all things. I was born of the Father before Lucifer. I am inseparably in the Father and the Father in me and one Spirit in us both. Accordingly, there is one God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and not three gods. I am the one who promised the eternal inheritance to Abraham and led my people out of Egypt through Moses. I am the one who spoke through the prophets. The Father sent me to the womb of the Virgin without separating himself from me but remaining inseparably with me so that mankind, who had abandoned God, would return to God through my love.

But now, in your presence, my heavenly host, although you see and know all things in me, yet for the sake of the knowledge and teaching of my bride standing here, who cannot understand spiritual things except through a corporal parable, I make a complaint before you over these five men who are standing here, for they provoke me to wrath in many ways. Just as I, once, in the Law, with the name of Israel, signified the whole Israelite nation, so now by these five men I signify every man in the world.

The first man signifies the leader of the Church and his priests; the second, the evil laity; the third, the Jews; the fourth, the heathens; and the fifth, my friends. But from you, Jew, I exclude all the Jews who are Christians in secret and who serve me secretly in

a pure love, a right faith, and a perfect deed. And from you, heathen, I exclude all those who would gladly walk in the way of my commandments, if they only knew and were taught how they should walk and live, and who with their deeds do as much as they know and are able. These shall by no means be judged with you. I now complain over you, o head of my Church, who sit on my seat which I gave to Peter and his successors to sit on with a threefold dignity and power: First, so that they would have the power of binding and loosing souls from their sins. Second, so that they would open Heaven for the penitent. Third, so that that they would close Heaven to the damned and to those who despise my Law. But you, who should be healing souls and presenting them to me, you are in truth a murderer of souls. I appointed Peter as shepherd and guardian of my sheep. But you, however, scatter and wound them. You are worse than Lucifer. For he was envious of me and desired to kill none but me so that he could rule in my place. But you are so much worse, for you do not only kill me by driving me off from yourself by your bad deeds, but you also kill souls by your bad example. I redeemed the souls with my blood and entrusted them to you as to a faithful friend, but you deliver them back again to the enemy from whom I redeemed them. You are more unrighteous than Pilate. He judged no one else but me to death, but you not only judge me as if I were a powerless lord and worthy of no good thing, no, you also judge and condemn the souls of the innocent and let the guilty go free without any rebuke. You are more cruel than Judas who only sold me, but you not only sell me, but also the souls of my chosen men for your own shameful profit and vain name's sake. You are more despicable than the Jews, for they only crucified my body, but you crucify and torture the souls of my chosen men for whom your malice and your sins are more bitter than from any wound from a sword. And so, since you are like Lucifer and more unrighteous than Pilate and more cruel than Judas and more despicable than the Jews, I complain over you with justice.

To the second man, that is, to the laity, our Lord said: "I created all things for your benefit. You gave your consent to me and I to you. You gave me your faith and promised by oath that you would serve me. But now, you have deserted me like a man who does not know his God. You hold my words for a lie and my deeds as vanity, and you say that my will and my commandments are too heavy. You have violated the faith you promised me. You have broken your oath and abandoned my name. You have separated yourself from the number of my saints and have come to belong to the number of the devils and you have become their friend. You think that no one is worthy of praise and honor but yourself. Everything that belongs to me and that you are bound to do for me appears heavy and bitter for you, but the things that please yourself are very easy for you. Therefore, I complain over you with right, for you have broken the faith you gave me in baptism and later; and for the love I have shown you in word and deed, you mock me and

call me a liar, and for my suffering you call me a fool.”

To the third man, that is, to the Jews, he said: “I began my deed of love with you and I chose you as my people. I led you out of slavery, I gave you my Law, I brought you into the land I had promised your fathers, and I sent you prophets to console you. Thereafter, I chose a virgin for myself from among you from which I assumed Manhood. But now I complain over you since you do not want not believe in me, but say: ‘The Christ has not yet come; he is still to be expected.’ ”

Our Lord said to the fourth man, that is, to the heathens: “I created and redeemed you like the Christian man, and I created all good things for your sake. But you are like a man out of his senses, because you do not know what you are doing. You are also like a blind man, because you do not see where you are going. You honor and worship the created things instead of the Creator, and the false instead of the true, and you bend your knee before things that have less worth than yourself. That is why I complain about you.”

To the fifth man, he said: “My friend, come closer!” And he directly said to the heavenly host: “My beloved friends, I have a friend with which I signify and mean many friends. He is like a man trapped among evil people and harshly shackled in captivity. If he speaks the truth, they beat his mouth with stones. If he does something good, they thrust a spear into his breast. Alas, my friends and saints, how long shall I endure such men, and how long shall I tolerate such contempt?”

Saint John the Baptist answered: “You are like the most pure mirror, for we see and know all things in you as in a mirror without any help of words and speech. You are the sweetness that no one can describe in which we taste all good things. You are like the sharpest of swords for you judge in righteousness.”

Our Lord answered him: “Indeed, my friend, you said the truth, for my chosen men see all goodness and righteousness in me, and even the evil spirits see it in their own conscience but not in the light. Just like a man placed in a dark prison, who had earlier learned the letters, knows that which he had learned before even though he is in darkness and currently cannot see, so it is with the devils. Even though they do not see my righteousness in the light of my clarity, they still know and see it in their conscience. I am also like a sword that separates things into two parts. In this way I give each and every person what they deserve.”

Then Our Lord said to Saint Peter: “You are the founder and defender of the faith

and of my Church. While my host is listening, state the sentence of the five men!” Peter answered: “O Lord, all praise and honor to you, for the love you have shown to your earth. Blessed be you by all your host, for you allow us to see and know all things in you that have been and will be, and that is why we see and know all things in you. It is true justice that the first man who sits upon your seat, while having the deeds of Lucifer, should shamefully lose the seat he dared to sit on and become a partaker in the torment of Lucifer. The right judgment of the second man is that he, who has fallen away from your faith, should fall down to hell with his head down and feet up, for he loved himself and despised you who should have been his head. The right judgment of the third man is that he will not see your face and that he should be tormented for his malice and greed, since unbelievers do not deserve to see your glory and beauty. The right judgment of the fourth is that he should be locked up like a man out of his senses and banished to the city of darkness. The right judgment of the fifth is that help should be sent to him.”

Then our Lord answered: “I swear by God the Father, whose voice John the Baptist heard in the Jordan; I swear by the body which John baptized, saw, and touched in the Jordan; I swear by the Holy Spirit who revealed himself in the form of a dove at the Jordan, that I shall do justice with these five men.”

Then our Lord said to the first of these five men: “The sword of my severity will go into your body; it shall enter at the top of your head and penetrate you so deeply and violently that it can never be drawn out. Your chair will sink like a heavy stone and never stop before it comes to the lowest of depths. Your fingers, that is, your assistants and advisers, will burn in the inextinguishable sulfurous fire. Your arms, that is, your office-holders, who should have reached out for the help and benefit of souls but instead reached out for worldly honor and profit, will be judged to the torment and suffering of which David speaks: ‘His sons shall be fatherless and his wife a widow and others shall take his property.’ Who is ‘his wife’ if not the soul which shall be excluded from the glory of Heaven and be widowed and lose God? ‘His sons’, that is, the virtues they appeared to have, and my simple and humble men who were under them, shall be separated from them. Their honor and property will be given to others, and they will inherit eternal shame instead of their dignity and glory. Their headgear will sink down into the filth of hell, and they will never be able to get up out of it. Just as they rose above others through their honor and pride, so in hell they will sink so much deeper than others so that it will be impossible for them to ever stand up again. Their limbs, that is, all the priests who followed and helped them in wickedness, will be cut off from them and severed just like the wall that is torn down where not a single stone is left upon another stone and the cement no longer adheres to the stones. No mercy will come to them, for my love will

never warm them nor restore or build them up into an eternal house in Heaven, but instead they shall be excluded from all good and endlessly tormented with their headmen and leaders.

But to the second I say: Since you do not want to keep the faith you promised me and have love toward me, I shall send an animal to you that will rise from the surging torrent, and it shall swallow you. Like the torrent always flows downward, so this animal will drag you down to the lowest hell, and just like it is impossible for you to travel upstream against the surging torrent, it will be just as hard for you to ever ascend from hell.

To the third I say: Since you, Jew, do not want to believe that I have come, you will see me when I come on judgment day, but not in my glory but in your conscience, and you will come to know that all the things I said were true. Then there is nothing left for you but to be tormented as you deserve.

To the fourth I say: Since you do not care to believe and do not want to know me, your darkness will become light for you, and your heart will be enlightened so that you may know that my judgments are true, but you will still not come to the light.

To the fifth I say: I shall do three things to you. First, I shall fill you inwardly with my fervor. Second, I shall make your mouth harder and firmer than any stone, so that the stones turn back to the ones throwing them at you. Third, I shall arm you with my weapons so well that no spear will harm you but instead everything will melt before you like wax in the heat of the fire. Be therefore made strong and stand like a man. For just like a knight in battle who hopes for help of his lord and continues fighting as long as he still has some life-force in him, so may you too stand firm and fight like a man; for the Lord, your God, whom none are able to withstand, will give you help. And since your number is small, I will honor you and multiply you greatly. Behold, my friends, you see these things and know them in me, and in this way they stand before me.

The words I have now spoken will be fulfilled. But these other men shall never enter my kingdom, as long as I am King, unless they better themselves. For Heaven will only be given to those who humble themselves and to those who mourn over their sins with penance." Then all the host answered: "Praise be to you, Lord God, who are without beginning and without end."

The Virgin Mary's words of advice to the bride about how she should love her Son above all things, and about how every virtue and gift of grace is contained in the glorious Virgin.

Chapter 42

The Mother of God spoke: "I had three things by which I pleased my Son: First, humility in such a way that no created creature, whether angel or man, was more humble than I. Second, I had obedience, for I strove to obey my Son in all things. Third, I had a special charity.

For this reason I am honored threefold by my Son: First, I have been made more honorable than angels and men, so that there is no virtue in God that does not shine in me, even though he is the source and beginning of all virtues and the Creator of all things; but I, however, am the creature to whom he has given more grace than all others. Second, for my obedience I received such power that there is no sinner so unclean that he will not receive forgiveness if he turns to me with a will and purpose of amendment and a contrite heart for his sins. Third, for my charity, God is so close to me that the one who sees God sees me, and the one who sees me can see the Divinity and the Manhood in me and me in God as though in a mirror. For the one who sees God, sees three persons in him, and the one who sees me, sees, as it were, three persons. For the Divinity enclosed me in soul and body in himself and filled me with every virtue, so that there is no virtue in God that does not shine and appear in me, although God himself is the Father and giver of all virtues. For as it is with two bodies joined together, that whatever one body receives the other body also receives, so God has done with me.

There is no sweetness that is not found in me. It is like someone who has a sweet nut and gives a part of it to another. My soul and body are clearer than the sun and purer than a mirror, and just as three persons would be seen in the mirror if they stood near it, so the Father and Son and Holy Spirit may also be seen in my purity since I once had my Son in my womb with his Divinity. He is now seen in me with his Divinity and Manhood as in a mirror, for I have been glorified with the honor and glory of the resurrection. Therefore may you, my Son's bride, strive to follow my humility and love nothing but my Son."

The words of the Son to his bride about how people may rise up from a small good deed

to the highest good and fall down from a small evil to the greatest punishment and torment.

Chapter 43

The Son of God said to his bride: “A great reward sometimes arises from a little good. The date-palm has a wonderful smell, and in its fruit there is a stone. If it is planted in rich soil, it feels well, blossoms and makes good fruit and grows into a great tree. But if it is planted in dry soil, it dries out. Very dry and empty of all goodness is the soil that delights in sin, and it does not become better even if the seed of the virtues is sown in there. But rich is the soil of the mind that understands and confesses its sin and cries over their sin which has provoked their Creator to anger. If the date-stone, that is, if the thought of my severe judgment and power is sown in such a mind, it immediately strikes three roots in the mind.

The first one is that he thinks about how he can do nothing without my help, and for this reason he opens his mouth in prayer to me. The second is that he begins to give some small alms to me for the sake of my honor. The third is that he separates himself from worldly affairs in order to better serve me. He then begins to restrain himself from superfluities through daily fasting and abstains from and denies his own will and lust, and this is the trunk of the tree.

After this, the branches of love grow when he leads and draws everyone he can toward the good. Then the fruit grows when he also instructs others in goodness as much as he can and with all piety tries to find ways of increasing my honor. Such a fruit is the best one and most pleasing to me. And so, from a small good, man rises up to perfection. When he first takes root through a little piety, the body grows through abstinence, the branches are multiplied through charity and the fruit is increased through preaching.

In the same way, a man falls down from a small evil to the greatest damnation and torment. Do you know what the heaviest burden is for the things that grow? Surely it is the child who is conceived but cannot be born and dies inside the womb of the mother. And because of this the mother also ruptures and dies, and the father carries her and the child to the grave and buries her with the rotting fetus. This is what the devil does to the soul. The iniquitous soul is indeed like the wife of the devil: she follows his will in everything, and she conceives a child with the devil when sin pleases her and she rejoices in it.

For just as a mother conceives a child and bears fruit through the little seed that is nothing but an unclean rottenness, so too, the soul bears much fruit for the devil when she delights in sin. Thereafter, the strength and limbs of the body get formed as sin gets added to sin and increases daily. When the sins increase, the mother swells up and wants to give birth, but cannot, since her nature is consumed in sin, and her life becomes detestable. She would gladly desire to sin even more, but she cannot, and it is not allowed by God.

Then the fear arrives because she cannot fulfill her will, and her strength and joy are gone. Pain and sorrow are everywhere. While she is now despairing of being able to do any good thing or any good deed, her womb ruptures, and she dies while blaspheming and insulting God's judgment and punishment. Then she is dragged by her father, the devil, down to the grave of hell where she is buried for all eternity with the rot of her sin and the child of her evil lust. Behold how sin increases from a small evil and grows unto damnation."

The Creator's words to his bride about how he is now despised and reproached by men who pay no attention to what he did in love for them, when he admonished them through the prophets and suffered for their sake, and about how they do not care about the anger he exercised against the stubborn by punishing them severely.

Chapter 44

"I am the Creator and Lord of all things. I created the world and the world despises me. I hear a voice from the world like that of a bumblebee who gathers honey on the earth. For when a bumblebee is flying and begins to land on the ground, it emits a very raspy voice. I now hear this raspy and ignorant voice in the world, saying: 'I do not care what comes after this.' In truth, now everyone is shouting: 'I do not care what comes after this and may I have my own will!'

Indeed, mankind does not care about what I did for the sake of love by preaching and suffering for them and by admonishing them through the prophets, and they do not care about what I did in my anger by executing my vengeance upon the evil and disobedient. They see that they are mortal and that death can strike them unexpectedly, but they do not care. They hear and see my justice which I exercised on Pharaoh and on

Sodom for the sake of sin, and how I execute vengeance on other kings and rulers, and how I daily allow it to happen through the sword and other afflictions, but it is as if they were blind to all these things.

And for this reason they fly like bumblebees wherever they desire, and sometimes they fly as if they were jumping and running, for they exalt themselves in their pride, but they come down quickly by returning to their lust and gluttony. They also gather sweetness for themselves from the earth, for man works and gathers for the needs of the body and not for the soul, and for worldly honor but not the eternal. They transform the temporal things into a suffering for themselves, and what is useless, into eternal torment. But, for the sake of the prayers of my Mother, I will send my clear voice to these bumblebees, from which my friends are excluded (for they are in the world only in body), and it shall preach mercy. If they will listen to it, they will be saved.

The answer of the Virgin Mother and the angels, the prophets, the apostles, and the devils to God, in the presence of the bride, testifying about his many virtues and his perfection in creation, incarnation and redemption, and about how evil men nowadays contradict all these things, and about the severe judgment they receive.

Chapter 45

The Mother of God said: “Bride of my Son, clothe yourself and stand firm, for my Son is approaching you. His flesh was pressed as in a winepress. For since mankind sinned in all limbs, my Son made atonement in all his limbs. His hair was pulled out, his sinews extended, his joints were dislocated, his bones mangled, and his hands and feet were pierced through. His mind was saddened, his heart afflicted by sorrow, his intestines was forced in toward his back, for mankind had sinned in all limbs.”

Then the Son spoke, while the heavenly host was present, and he said: “Although you know all things in me, still I speak for the sake of my bride standing here. I ask you, angels: What is it that was without beginning and shall be without end? And what is it that created everything and was created by none? Proclaim it and give your testimony!” All the angels answered as with one voice and said: “Lord, it is you. We give testimony to you about three things: First, that you are our Creator and that you created all things in Heaven and on earth. Second, that you are without beginning and will be without end, and your kingdom and power will stand for all eternity. Without you nothing has been

created and without you nothing can be created. Third, we testify that we see all justice in you and all the things that have been and will be, and all things are present to you without beginning or end.”

Then he said to the prophets and patriarchs: “I ask you: Who brought you out of slavery into freedom? Who divided the waters for you? Who gave you the Law? Who gave you the prophetic spirit to speak about future things?” They answered him, saying: “You, Lord. You brought us out of slavery. You gave us the Law. You moved our spirit to speak and prophesy about future things.”

Then he said to his Mother: “Give true testimony about what you know of me.” She answered: “Before the angel, whom you sent, came to me, I was alone in soul and body. But after the angel’s words, your body was within me with Divinity and Manhood, and I felt your body in my body. I bore you without pain and suffering. I gave birth to you without anguish and travail. I wrapped you in poor clothes and I fed you with my milk. I was with you from your birth until your death.”

Thereafter he said to the apostles: “Say who it was that you saw, heard, and touched?” They answered: “We heard your words and wrote them down. We heard and saw the great works that you did when you gave us the New Law. You commanded the demons with one word to leave humans and they obeyed you and went out, and with your word you raised the dead and healed the sick. We saw you in a human body. We saw your great power and divine glory with your human nature. We saw you handed over to your enemies and we saw you hanging on the cross. We saw you suffer the most bitter pain and we saw you be laid in the grave. We touched you when you were raised from the dead. We touched your hair and your face. We touched the place of your wounds and your limbs. You ate with us and you gave us your eloquence. You are truly the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin. We also observed when you ascended with your Manhood to the right hand of the Father where you now are and will be without end.”

Then God said to the unclean demon spirits: “Although you hide the truth in your conscience, still I now command you to say the truth about who it was that reduced your power.” They answered him: “Just like thieves do not tell the truth unless their feet are pressed in the hard wood, so we do not speak the truth unless we are forced by your divine and formidable power. You are the one who, with your power, descended into hell. You reduced our power in the world. You took out from hell what was yours by right, namely, your friends.”

Then our Lord said: “Behold, all those who have a spirit and are not clothed in a body, bear witness to the truth for me. But those who have a spirit and a body, namely humans, contradict me. Some know the truth of me but do not care about it. Others do not know it and, therefore, they do not care about it but say it is all false.” He again said to the angels: “They say that your witness is false, that I am not the Creator of all things and that all things are not known in me. Therefore, they love the created things more than me, who am the Creator.” He said to the prophets: “They contradict you and say that the Law is useless, that you can be saved through your own power and wisdom, that the spirit was false and that you spoke according to your own will.” He said to his Mother: “Some say that you are not a Virgin and others, that I did not take a body from you. Others know it but do not care about it.” He said to the apostles: “They contradict you, for they say that you are liars and that the New Law is irrational and useless. Others believe it to be true but do not care about it. I ask you now: Who will be their judge?”

They all answered him, saying: “You, God, who are without beginning and without end. You, Jesus Christ, who are with the Father, to you is all judgment given by the Father; you are their judge.” Our Lord answered: “I who grieved for them am now their judge. But even though I know and can do all things, still, give me your judgment over them.”

They answered him: “Just as the whole world perished once at the beginning of the world in Noah’s flood, so too now the world deserves to perish by fire, since the wickedness and injustice are much greater now than what it was then.”

Then our Lord answered: “Since I am just and merciful, I shall make no judgment without mercy nor mercy without justice, and therefore, I will once more send my mercy to the world for the sake of the prayers of my Mother and my saints. But if they do not want to listen, the most severe and harsh justice will follow and come to them.”

The words of praise of the Mother and the Son to each other in the presence of the bride, and about how Christ is now regarded as shameful, dishonest, and despicable by people, and about the horrifying and eternal damnation of these people.

Chapter 46

The Queen of Heaven spoke to her Son and said: “Blessed be you my God, who are

without beginning and without end. You had the most noble and beautiful body. You were the most brave and virtuous man. You are the most worthy creature.”

The Son answered: “The words proceeding from your mouth are sweet to me and delight my inmost heart like the sweetest drink. You are more sweet to me than any other creature in existence. For just as different faces can be seen in a mirror by a person but none pleases him more than his own, so too, even though I love my saints, I love you with a special love, because I was born from your blessed flesh. You are like myrrh whose fragrance ascended up to the Divinity and led the Divinity to your body. This same fragrance drew your body and soul up to God, where you now are with soul and body. Blessed be you, for the angels rejoice in your beauty and all are saved by your virtue and power when they call on you with a sincere heart. All the demons tremble in your light and do not dare to stay in your splendor, for they always want to be in darkness.

You gave praise to me for a threefold reason, for you said that I had the most noble body; second, that I was the most brave man; and third, you said that I was the most worthy creature. These three things are only contradicted by those who have a body and soul, that is, human beings. They say that I have a shameful body and that I am the most despicable man and the lowliest of creatures. For what is more shameful than to tempt others to sin? For they claim that my body tempts to sin when they say that sin is not as abominable or displeasing to God as much as is said. They say that nothing exists unless God wants it to be so and that nothing is created but by him. ‘Why should we not use the created things to our benefit? Our natural frailty demands it and this is how everyone has lived before us and still do live.’ This is how people now speak about me and my Manhood, in which I, the true God, appeared among men. For I advised them to abstain from sinning and showed what a serious and grave matter it is, and this they say was shameful, as if I had advised them to do something useless and shameful. They say that nothing is honorable but sin and that which pleases their will.

They also say that I am the most shameful man. For what is more shameful than someone who, when he speaks the truth, gets his mouth beaten with stones and gets hit in the face and, on top of that, hears people insulting him, saying: ‘If he were a man, he would revenge himself over such an injustice.’ This is what they do to me. I speak to them through the learned fathers and Holy Scripture, but they say that I lie. They beat my mouth with stones and their fists when they commit adultery, murder, and lying, saying: ‘If he were manly, if he were the almighty God, he would revenge himself for such sins and transgressions.’ But I endure this with patience, and everyday I hear them saying that the torment is neither eternal nor as severe and bitter as it is said, and my words are

judged and said to be lies.

Third, they judge me to be the most ugly and worthless creature. For what is more worthless in the house than a dog or a cat that someone would be glad to exchange for a horse, if he could? But mankind holds me to be of less worth than a dog, for he would not wish to take me if it meant that he would lose the dog, and he would reject and deny me before losing the dog's hide. What is the thing that pleases the mind so little that one does not think of it and desires it more fervently than me? For if they regarded me more worthy than any other created creature, they would love me more than other things. But now they have nothing so small that they do not love it more than me. They grieve over everything but me. They grieve for their own and their friends' losses. They grieve for an injurious word. They grieve over offending or hurting people more highly placed and powerful than they, but they do not grieve about offending or hurting me, who am the Creator of all things. What man is so despicable that he is not listened to if he begs about something and is not given a gift in return if he has given something? But I am utterly vile and despicable in their eyes, for they do not consider me worthy of any good, even though I have given them all good things.

But you, my most dear Mother, have tasted more of my wisdom than others, and never has anything but the truth ever left your mouth, just as nothing but the truth has ever left my own mouth. I will now justify myself in the sight of all the saints. First, against him, who said that I had a shameful body. I shall prove that I indeed have the most noble body without deformity or sin, and he shall fall into eternal shame and reproach which all will see. To the one who said that my words were a lie and that he did not know if I was God or not, I shall prove that I truly am God, and he will flow down like mud to hell. But the third, who regarded me as useless, I shall judge to eternal damnation so that he will never see my glory and my joy."

Thereafter he said to his bride: "Stand firm in my service. You have come to a wall, as it were, in which you are enclosed, so that you cannot flee nor dig through its foundations. Endure this small tribulation willingly, and you will experience eternal rest in my arms. You know the will of the Father, you hear the words of the Son, you feel my Spirit, and you have delight and consolation in the conversation with my Mother and my saints. Therefore, stand firm, or else you will come to feel my justice by which you will be forced to do what I am now kindly urging you to do."

Our Lord's words to his bride about the contempt of the New Law, and about how that

same Law is now rejected and despised by the world, and about how bad priests are not God's priests but God's betrayers, and about the punishment and damnation they receive.

Chapter 47

“I am the God who in ancient days was called the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. I am the God who gave the Law to Moses. This law was like clothing. For as a mother with her child in the womb prepares her infant's clothing, so too I, God, prepared the New Law, for the Old Law was nothing but the clothing and shadow and sign of future things to come. I clothed and wrapped myself in the clothing of this Law. And then when a boy grows up somewhat, his old clothes are laid down and new clothes are taken up. In this way, I fulfilled the Old Law when I put aside the used clothing of the Old Law, and assumed the new clothing, that is, the New Law, and I gave this clothing and myself to everyone who wanted to have it. This clothing is not very tight nor difficult to wear but is well suited everywhere. For my Law does not order people to fast or work too much nor to kill themselves or to do anything beyond the limits of possibility, but it is beneficial for the soul and conducive to the restraining, mortification, and chastisement of the body. For when the body gets too attached to sin, then sin consumes the body.

Two things are found in the New Law: First, a prudent temperance in soul and body and the right use of all things. Second, a readiness for heeding and keeping the Law; for the person who cannot endure to stay in one thing can stand in another. Hereby follows that a person who cannot endure to be a virgin can live in an honorable marriage, and he who falls into sin may get up again and better himself.

But this Law is now rejected and despised by the world. For they say that the Law is narrow, heavy, and ugly. They say it is narrow, for the Law orders one to be satisfied with the necessary and to flee the superfluous. But they want to have all things without reason like senseless cattle and above the necessity of the body, and that is why the Law is too narrow for them. Second, they say it is heavy, because the Law says that one should have enjoyment with reasonable temperance and at established times. But they want to fulfill their lust more than what is good and more than what is established. Third, they say it is unsightly, because the Law bids them to love humility and to accredit every good to God. But they want to be proud and exalt themselves for the good things that God has given them, and that is why the Law seems ugly and vain to them.

See how despised and maltreated my clothes are. I fulfilled everything in the Old Law before I began the New Law. For the Old Law was too difficult, and my intention was that the New Law should remain until I came in judgment. But they shamefully threw away the clothing with which I covered the soul, that is, the right faith. And above this, they add sin to sin, since they also want to betray me. Does not David say in the psalm: 'He who ate my bread thought treason against me'? In these words I want you to note two things. First, he does not say "thinks" but "thought", as if it had already happened. Second, he denotes one man as a betrayer. But I say that it is those who are now present who betray me, not those who have been or who will come, but those who are now alive. I also say that it is not only one man but many.

But now you may ask me: 'Are there not two kinds of bread, one invisible and spiritual, of which angels and saints live, and the other earthly, by which men are fed? But angels and saints do not want anything other than that which is according to your will, and men can do nothing other than that which pleases you. How, then, can they betray you?'

I will answer you in the presence of my heavenly host who knows and sees all things in me, but I say this for your sake so that you may understand: There are indeed two kinds of bread. One is that of the angels who eat my bread in my kingdom so that they may be filled with my indescribable joy. They do not betray me, since they want nothing other than what I want. But those who betray me are the ones who eat my bread at the altar. I truly am that bread. This bread has three characteristics: form, flavor, and roundness. I am indeed the Bread. And, like the bread, I have three things in me: flavor, form, and roundness. I have flavor, for just as all food is tasteless without bread and gives no strength, so without me, everything that exists is tasteless, powerless, and vain. I have also the form of the bread, since I am of the earth. I was born of the Virgin Mother, and my Mother is of Adam, and Adam is of the earth. I have also roundness wherein there is no end or beginning, since I am without beginning and without end. And no one is able to see or find an end or beginning in my wisdom, power, or charity. I am in all things, over all things, and outside of all things. Even if someone were to fly like the fastest arrow perpetually without end, he would still never find an end or a limit to my power and virtue on account of these three things: namely, flavor, form, and roundness. I am that bread that is seen and touched on the altar and is transformed into my body that was crucified. For just as a dry and easily inflammable piece of wood is quickly consumed if it is placed on the fire, and nothing remains of the wood but all of it is fire, so when these words are said, 'This is my body,' that which before was bread instantly becomes my

body, but is not inflamed by fire like wood but by my Divinity.

That is why those who eat my bread betray me. What murder could be more unmanly and abhorrent than when someone kills himself? And what betrayal is worse than when two are joined by an indissoluble bond, and one betrays the other, as is the case of married people? But what does the man do in order to betray his wife? Indeed, he insincerely says to her: 'Let us go to such and such a place so I can fulfill my will with you.' She goes with him in true simplicity, ready for her husband's every wish. But when he finds the proper time and place, he brings against her three means of betrayal: Either something so heavy that it kills her with one blow, or something so sharp that it cuts right through her intestines, or something to smother the spirit of life in her directly. Then, when she is dead, the betrayer thinks to himself: 'Now I have done wrong. If my crime becomes known publicly, I will be judged to death.' Therefore, he goes and lays his dead wife's body in some hidden place, so that his sin may not be revealed.

This is what the priests who are my betrayers do to me. For they and I are joined together by a single bond when they take the bread and pronounce the words that change it into my true body, which I assumed from the Virgin. No angel could do this, for I gave this dignity to priests alone and elected them for the highest office. But now they act towards me like betrayers, for they show me a happy and kind face and lead me to a hidden place to betray me. These priests show me a happy face when they appear to be good and simple, and they treacherously lead me to a hidden place when they approach the altar. There I am ready like a bride or bridegroom to do all of their will, but they betray me.

First they lay something heavy over me when the divine office, which they say for me, is heavy and burdensome to them. They would rather speak a hundred words for the honor of the world than one for my honor. They would rather give a hundred coins of gold for the glory of the world than one penny for my sake. They would rather work a hundred times for their own benefit and that of the world than once for my honor. They press me down with this heavy burden, so that it is as though I am dead in their hearts. Second, they pierce me with a sharp blade that penetrates the intestines whenever the priest goes to the altar with the knowledge that he has sinned and repented, but yet is firmly resolved to sin again when his office is done, thinking thus to himself: 'I truly repent of my sin, but I will not give up the woman with whom I have sinned so that I may not be able to sin any longer with her.' These priests pierce me with the sharpest blade. Third, they smother the spirit when they think inwardly to themselves in this way: 'It is good and delightful to be with the world and good to live in lust and I cannot restrain

myself. I will do my will in my youth; when I grow old, I will become restrained and better myself.' And by this wretched thought the spirit of life is smothered.

But now you may ask how their hearts becomes so cold and tepid toward me and everything good so that they can never be warmed or rise again to my love. Just as ice cannot catch fire even if it is laid on the fire, but only melts into water, so too, even if I give them my grace and they hear my words of admonishment, they cannot rise up to the warmth of life, but wither and fade away from everything good.

See how they betray me in that they show themselves to be simple without being so, and are burdened and depressed of my honor, which they instead should delight and rejoice in, and also in that their will is to sin and to continue in sin until the end. They conceal me and place me in a hidden place, when they think to themselves: 'I know I have sinned greatly, but if I refrain from my office, everyone will reproach and condemn me as evil.' And so they shamelessly go up to the altar and place me before them and touch me, who am true God and true man. I am as it were in a hidden place with them, since no one knows or sees how evil and abominable they are. I, true God and man, lie there as in a hidden place, for even if the worst priest said the words "This is my body," he still consecrates my true body, and I, true God and true man, would lie there before him. But when he puts my body to his mouth, then I am no longer present to him through the grace of my Divinity and Manhood; only the form and flavor of bread remain for him, but not because I am not truly present for the evil as with the good due to the office of the sacrament, but because the evil and good do not gain the same benefit or perfection from my body. Behold how these priests are not my priests but true betrayers, since they sell and betray me like Judas. I observe the pagans and the Jews, but I do not see anyone worse than these priests, for they are in the same sin that made Lucifer fall from Heaven.

But now I will also tell you their judgment and whom they are like. Their judgment is damnation. David condemned those who were disobedient to God, and because he was a righteous prophet and king, he did not condemn out of wrath or bad will or impatience, but out of divine justice. So do I too, who am better than David, condemn those who are now priests, not out of wrath or bad will but out of justice.

Accursed be therefore everything of what they take from the earth for their own benefit, for they do not praise their God and Creator who has given them this. Accursed be their food and drink that enters their mouths and nourishes their bodies to become food for worms and destines their souls for hell. Accursed be their bodies that will rise again in hell to suffer and burn for all eternity. Accursed be the years in which they lived

uselessly. Accursed be the moment that begins hell for them and that never will end. Accursed be their eyes with which they saw the light of Heaven. Accursed be their ears with which they heard my words and did not care. Accursed be their taste with which they tasted my gifts. Accursed be their touch with which they touched me. Accursed be their smell with which they smelled the delightful things of the world and forgot me, the most delightful of all.

But now you may ask: How will they be accursed spiritually? Well, their sight will be accursed, because they shall not see the vision of God in himself but only the darkness and sufferings of hell. Their ears will be accursed, because they shall not hear my words but only the screams and horrors of hell. Their taste will be accursed, because they shall not taste my eternal goods and joy but only eternal bitterness. Their touch will be accursed, because they shall not touch me but only eternal fire in hell. Their smell will be accursed, because they shall not smell the sweet smell of my kingdom that surpasses all sweet scents, but only have the foul stench of hell which is more bitter than bile and worse than sulfur. They shall be accursed by Heaven and earth and all brute creatures, for these obey God and glorify him, whereas they reject him.

Therefore, I who am the Truth, swear in my truth, that if they die like this and in such a disposition that they are in now, neither my love nor my virtue will ever encompass them, but instead, they will be damned for all eternity, and not only priests, but also everyone who rejects the commandments of God!

About how, in the presence of the heavenly host and of the bride, the Divinity spoke to the Manhood against the Christians, just as God spoke to Moses against the people of Israel, and about how damned priests love the world and despise Christ, and about their condemnation and damnation.

Chapter 48

A great host was seen in Heaven and God said to it: "My friends, who know and understand and see all things in me, I am speaking in your presence, for the sake of my bride standing here, like someone who speaks to himself, for in this way does my Divinity converse with my Humanity. Moses was with God on the mountain forty days and nights, and when the people saw that he had been gone so long, they took gold and threw it into the fire and shaped a calf out of it, calling it their god.

Then God said to Moses: 'The people have sinned. I will wipe them out, just like something written is erased from a book.' Moses answered: 'No, my Lord, do not. Remember that you led them up from the Red Sea and worked wonders for them. If you erase and destroy them, where is your promise then? I beg you, do not do this, for then your enemies will say: The God of Israel is evil who led the people up from the sea but killed them in the desert.' And God was appeased by these words.

I am this Moses, figuratively speaking. My Divinity speaks to my Manhood just as to Moses, saying: 'Behold what your people have done and see how they have despised me. All the Christians shall be killed and their faith eradicated.' My Humanity answers: 'No, Lord. Remember that I led the people through the sea in my blood when I was bruised from the top of my head to the sole of my foot. I have promised them eternal life; have mercy on them for the sake of my suffering.' After hearing these words the Divinity was appeased and said: 'Thy will be done, for all judgment is given to you.' See what love, my friends!

But now in your presence, my spiritual friends, angels and saints, and in the presence of my bodily friends who are in the world and yet not in the world except with their body, I complain that my people are gathering firewood and lighting a fire, throwing gold into the fire so that a calf emerges for them to adore and worship as a god. It stands like a calf on four feet having a head, a throat, and a tail. When Moses delayed on the mountain a long time without returning, the people said: 'We do not know what may have happened to him after this long time.' And they were displeased that he had led them out of captivity and slavery, and they said: 'Let us find another god to go before us.'

This is what these damned priests are now doing to me. For they say: 'Why should we have a more austere life than others? What is our reward for this? It is better for us to live in peace and as we want. Let us love the world that we are certain about, for we are uncertain about his promise.' Then they gather firewood when they devote all their senses to the love of the world. They light a fire when they have a complete desire for the world. They burn when their lust glows in their mind and proceeds in an act. They throw in gold, which means that all the honor and love they should show to me, they show to get the honor of the world.

Then the calf emerges, which means a complete love of the world. It has four feet of sloth, impatience, superfluous rejoicing, and greediness. For these priests who should be my servants are slothful in honoring me, impatient in suffering anything for my sake,

excessive in rejoicing, and never satisfied with the things they have. This calf also has a head and throat, which means a complete will for gluttony that can never be satisfied, not even if the whole sea were to flow into it. The tail of the calf is their malice, for they do not let anyone keep his property if they can take it from him. By their bad example and their contempt, they injure and pervert everyone who serves me. Such is the love for the calf that is in their hearts, and in such they rejoice and lust. They think about me as those others did about Moses, and say: 'He has been gone for a long time. His words appear vain and his deeds burdensome. Let us have our own will, let our power and will be our god.' And they are not even satisfied by these things and forget me entirely, but instead, they have me as their idol.

The heathens used to worship wood and stones and dead men, and among others, an idol called Beelzebub was worshipped whose priests used to offer him incense with devotional genuflections and shouts of praise. And everything in their offering that was useless, they dropped on the ground, and the birds and flies ate it up. But everything that was useful, the priests hid away for themselves. They locked the door on their idol and kept the key for themselves so that nobody could go in.

This is what the priests are doing to me in this time. They offer me incense, that is, they speak and preach beautiful words in order to win praise for themselves and some temporal benefit, but not out of love of me. Just as the scent of the incense cannot be captured but only felt and seen, so their words do not attain any benefit for souls so that it can take root and be kept in their hearts, but they are only heard and seem to please for a short time. They offer me prayers, but not the kind that are pleasing to me. Like those who shout praise with their mouths and are silent in their hearts, they stand next to me shouting with their mouths while in their hearts and thoughts they wander around in the world. But if they were speaking with a mighty or powerful man, then their hearts would follow their own speech and words so that no one would be able to remark on them.

But in my presence the priests are like men who are mentally deranged, for they say one thing with their mouths and have another in their hearts. No one who hears their words can be certain about their meaning. They bend their knees for me, that is, they promise me humility and obedience, but in truth, their humility is as Lucifer's, and they are obedient to their own desires and not me. They also lock me in constantly and keep the key for themselves. They open up for me and praise me when they say: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' But then they lock me in again by fulfilling their own will, while my will is as an imprisoned and powerless man who can neither be seen nor heard. They keep the key for themselves when they, by their bad example, also lead

astray others who want to do my will. And, if they could, they would gladly forbid my will from being fulfilled and accomplished, except when it suits their own will. They also hide anything in the offering that is necessary and useful to them, that is, they demand all their honor and privileges, but the human body, who falls to the ground and dies and for which they should offer the best sacrifice, him they consider as useless and leave the body to the flies, that is, to the worms on the ground. They do not care or bother about their obligation for the salvation of souls.

But what was said to Moses? ‘Kill those who made this idol!’ And some were killed, but not all. In the same way, my words will now come and kill them, some in body and soul by eternal damnation, others unto life so that they should convert and live, others through a fast death, for these priests are altogether abhorrent to me. But what shall I liken them to? They are indeed like the fruit of the thorn-bush, which is beautiful and red on the outside, but inside is full of impurity and stinging thorns. In the same way, these come to me as men who are red with love, and they seem to be pure to men, but inside they are full of all filth. If this fruit is laid in the earth, other thorn-bushes grow up from it. In the same way, these hide their sin and malice in their heart as in the earth, and they become so rooted in evil that they do not even blush to appear in public and boast about their sin. Hence other men not only find a reason to sin but also become deeply wounded in their souls, thinking thus to themselves: ‘If priests do this, it is even more permitted for us to do it.’ And they are not only like the fruit of the thorn-bush, but also the thorns, for they disdain to be moved by reproach and admonition, and they consider no one to be as wise as them and think that they can do everything they want.

Therefore, I swear by my Divinity and Manhood, in the hearing of all the angels, that I shall break down the door they have closed on my will, and my will shall be fulfilled, and their will shall be annihilated and locked in eternal torment and anguish. For as it was once said: ‘I shall begin my judgment with the priests and at my altar.’”

The words of Christ to his bride about how Christ is likened to Moses, in a figurative way, leading the people out of Egypt; and about how the damnable priests, whom he chose in the place of the prophets as his most beloved friends, now cry: “Depart from us!”

Chapter 49

The Son of God spoke: “Earlier, I likened myself to Moses in a figurative way. When he led the people out, the water stood like a wall to the right and to the left. I am in truth this Moses, figuratively speaking, who led my Christian people out, that is, I opened heaven for them and showed them the way. But now I have chosen other friends for myself more loved and intimate than the prophets, namely, my priests, who not only hear my words and see, when they see me myself, but also touch me with their hands, which none of the prophets or angels could do.

These priests, whom I have chosen in place of the prophets as my friends, cry out to me, but not with such desire and love as the prophets did, no, the priests and the prophets cry out with two opposing voices. For the priests do not cry out as the prophets did: ‘Come, Lord, for you are sweet,’ but they cry out: ‘Depart from us, for your words are bitter and your deeds heavy and they make us ashamed!’ Hear what these accursed priests say! I stand before them like the most meek and gentle sheep from which they get wool for their clothing and milk for their food, and yet they despise me for such a great love. I stand before them like a guest saying: ‘Friend, give me the necessities of life for my body, for I need it, and you will receive the greatest reward from God in return!’

But even though I appeared with the simplicity of a sheep, they drive me away as a wolf lying in wait for the master’s sheep. They do not want to show me any hospitality and refuse to take me into their house, but instead, they affront me like a traitor unworthy of receiving hospitality from them. But what will the guest do when he has been rejected? Should he not bring out arms against the master of the house who drove him away? By no means, for this would not be just since the owner can deny or give his belongings to whomever he wants. But what shall then the guest do? He should indeed say to the one who drove him away: ‘My friend, since you do not want to take me into your house, I will go to another who will show mercy to me.’ And when he comes to another, he hears him saying: ‘You are welcome, my Lord, all that I have is yours. You shall now be the Lord, and I want to be your servant and guest.’ Those are the kind of lodgings I am pleased to stay in, where I hear such a voice.

I am indeed like a guest driven away by men. But even though I can enter any place by my power, still, on account of justice I do not, but I only enter to those who receive me with a good will as their true Lord, not as a guest, and entrust all their will into my hands.”

The Mother and Son’s words of blessing and praise for each other, and about the grace

granted by the Son to his Mother for the souls in purgatory and those in this world.

Chapter 50

The Mother of God spoke to her Son and said: “Blessed be your name, my Son, without end and blessed be your Divinity that is without beginning and without end! In your Divinity there are three wonderful things: namely, power, wisdom, and virtue. Your power is like the most violently burning fire before which everything that is solid and strong is reckoned as dry straw in a fire. Your wisdom is like the ocean that can never be emptied because of its greatness and vastness, and which, when it rises up and flows over, covers valleys and mountains. Neither can your wisdom be comprehended nor fathomed about how wisely you created mankind and placed him over all your creation. How wisely you arranged the birds in the air, the animals on the earth and the fishes in the sea, giving to each one its own time and order. How marvelously you give life to everything and take it away! How wisely you give wisdom to the unwise and take it away from the proud! Your virtue is like the light of the sun which shines in the sky and fills the earth with its light. Likewise, your virtue satisfies high and low and fills all things. Therefore, blessed be you, my Son, for you are my God and my Lord!”

The Son answered: “My most dear Mother, your words are sweet to me, for they come from your soul. You are like the dawn that breaks forth with clarity. You outshine all the heavens and your light and your clarity surpass all the angels. By your clarity, you drew to yourself the true sun, that is, my Divinity, so much so that the sun of my Divinity came to you and settled on you. By his warmth you are warmed in my love over all others and by his splendor you are enlightened in my wisdom more than all others. The darkness of the earth was chased away and all the heavens were enlightened through you. I say in my truth that your purity pleased me more than all the angels, and it drew my Divinity to you so that you were enkindled by the warmth of my Spirit; and through it you enclosed the true God and Man in your womb whereby mankind has been enlightened and the angels made joyful. Therefore, may you be blessed by your blessed Son! And for this reason, no prayer of yours will ever come to me without being heard, and through you, anyone who prays for mercy with the intention of mending their sinful ways will receive grace for your sake. For just as heat comes from the sun, so too all mercy is given through you. You are like a filled and flowing spring from which mercy flows to the help of the wretched.”

The Mother answered the Son: “All virtue and glory be yours, my Son! You are my

God and my mercy; all good that I have comes from you. You are like the seed that was never sown but still grew and gave fruit a hundredfold and a thousandfold. For all mercy comes from you and since it is innumerable and ineffable, it can indeed be signified by the number one hundred, which signifies perfection, for all perfection comes from you and everyone is perfected in virtue by you.”

The Son answered the Mother: “Indeed, my Mother, you likened me rightly to the seed that was never sown but still grew, since I came with my Divinity to you, and my Manhood was not sown by intercourse but still grew in you, and from it mercy flowed out from you to all. Therefore, you have spoken rightly. Since you now draw mercy out of me with the most sweet words of your mouth, ask me what you want, and it shall be given to you.”

The Mother answered: “My Son, since I have won mercy from you, I beg for mercy and help for the wretched. For there are namely four places: The first is Heaven, where the angels and the souls of the saints need nothing but you whom they have - for in you they have every good. The second place is hell, and those who stay there are filled with malice and excluded from all mercy. Therefore, nothing good can enter into them any more. The third is the place of those being purged in purgatory, and those who stay there need a threefold mercy since they are tormented in a threefold way. They suffer through their hearing, for they hear nothing but pain, sorrow, and misery. They suffer through their sight, for they see nothing but their own misery. They are tormented through their touch, for they feel the heat of the unbearable fire and of the harsh torment. My Lord and my Son, give them your mercy for the sake of my prayers!”

The Son answered: “I will gladly give them a threefold mercy for your sake. First, their hearing shall be relieved, their sight will be eased, and their torment will be reduced and relieved. And all those who are in the greatest and most severe torment of the fires of purgatory shall from this moment come to the middle torment; those who are in the middle torment shall come to the lightest; and those who are in the lightest torment shall come home to rest.”

The Mother answered: “Praise and honor to you, my Lord!” And she immediately said to her Son: “My beloved Son, the fourth place is the world, and its inhabitants are in need of three things: First, repentance for their sins. Second, penance and atonement. Third, the strength to do good deeds.”

The Son answered: “Everyone who calls on your name and has hope in you along

with a purpose of amendment for his sins shall be given these three things as well as the kingdom of Heaven. Your words are so sweet to me that I cannot deny you anything you plead for, for you want nothing other than what I want. You are indeed like a shining and burning flame by which the extinguished lights are enkindled and the burning lights are strengthened, for by your love which arose in my heart and drew me to you, those who are dead in sin will come to life again and those who are tepid and black like smoke will become strong in my love.”

The Mother blesses the Son in the hearing of the bride, and about how the glorious Son makes a wonderful comparison of his most sweet Mother to a flower that grew in a valley but rose up over mountains.

Chapter 51

The Mother of God spoke to her Son and said: “Blessed be your name, my Son Jesus Christ, and all honor to your Manhood above all that is created! Glory to your Divinity above all good things, which are one God with your Manhood!” The Son answered: “My Mother, you are like a flower that grew in a valley. Around the valley there were five high mountains, and the flower grew out of three roots with a straight stem without any knots. This flower had five leaves that were filled with all sweetness. The valley with its flower grew above these five mountains, and the leaves of the flower spread themselves above every height of heaven and above all the choirs of angels. My beloved Mother, you are this valley for the sake of the great humility you had in comparison with all others. Your humility grew higher than five mountains.

The first mountain was Moses because of his power. For he had power over my people through the Law, as if it were enclosed in his hand. But you enclosed the Lord of all law in your womb and, therefore, you are higher than this mountain. The second mountain was Elijah, who was so holy, that he with soul and body, was assumed into my holy place. But your soul, my most dear Mother, was assumed above all the choirs of angels to the throne of God along with your most pure body. You are therefore higher than Elijah. The third mountain was the strength of Samson that surpassed all other men. Yet the devil defeated him with his treachery. But you defeated the devil with your strength and power. You are therefore stronger than Samson. The fourth mountain was David, who was a man according to my heart and will, but yet fell into sin. But you, my beloved Mother, followed my will in all and never sinned. The fifth mountain was

Solomon, who was full of wisdom but nevertheless was fooled. But you, my Mother, were full of all wisdom and were never fooled or deceived. You are therefore higher than Solomon.

The flower grew from three roots, because of the three things you had from your youth: obedience, charity, and divine understanding. Out of these three roots grew the most straight stem without any knots, which means that your will was never bent to anything but my will. This flower also had five leaves that grew above all the choirs of angels. My dear Mother, you are indeed the flower with these five leaves.

The first leaf is your nobleness, which is so great that my angels, who are noble before me, when seeing and considering your nobleness, saw that it was above them and more eminent than their holiness and nobleness. You are therefore higher than the angels. The second leaf is your mercy, which was so great that you, when you saw the misery of all the souls, had compassion over them and suffered the greatest torment at my death. The angels are full of mercy, and yet they never endure sorrow or pain, but you, my loving Mother, were merciful to the wretched when you felt all the sorrow and torment of my death, and you wanted to suffer torment for the sake of mercy rather than being separated from it. Therefore, your mercy surpassed the mercy of all the angels. The third leaf is your loving kindness. The angels are loving and kind and want good for everyone, but you, my dearest Mother, had before your death a will like an angel in your soul and body and did good to everyone. And still you do not refuse anyone who reasonably prays for his own good. Therefore, your kindness is higher and greater than the angels. The fourth leaf is your beauty. The angels behold the beauty of each other and wonder over the beauty of all souls and all bodies, but they see that the beauty of your soul is above all that is created and that the nobleness of your body surpasses all created beings. And so, your beauty surpassed all the angels and everything created. The fifth leaf was your divine joy, for nothing pleased you but God, just as nothing but God delights the angels. Each and every one of them knows and knew his own joy in himself, but when they saw the joy in you to God, they beheld in their conscience how their joy flamed up in them like a light in the love of God. They saw that your joy was like a flaming bonfire, burning with the hottest fire, with flames so high that it came near to my Divinity. And for this reason, my most sweet Mother, your divine joy burned well above all the choirs of angels. Since this flower had these five leaves, namely, nobleness, mercy, loving kindness, beauty, and the highest joy in God, it was full of all sweetness.

But the one who wants to taste of its sweetness should approach the sweetness and assume it into himself. This is also what you did, my most sweet Mother. You were so

sweet to my Father that he assumed all of you into his Spirit, and your sweetness delighted him above all other things. The flower also bears a seed by the heat and power of the sun and from it grows a fruit. In this way the blessed sun, my Divinity, assumed Manhood from your virginal womb. For just as the seed makes and grows flowers of the same kind as the seed wherever it is sown, so my limbs were like yours in shape and appearance, even though I was a man and you a woman and a virgin. This valley was uplifted with its flower above all mountains when your body together with your most holy soul was lifted up above all the choirs of angels.”

The Mother blesses her Son and prays to him that his words might be spread all over the world and take root in the hearts of his friends. And about how the Virgin is compared to a wonderful flower growing in a garden, and about the words of Christ that were sent through the bride to the pope and to other prelates of the Church.

Chapter 52

The Holy Virgin spoke to the Son and said: “Blessed be you, my Son and my God, Lord of angels and King of glory! I beg of you that the words that you have spoken may take root in the hearts of your friends and that their minds may cling as firmly to these words as the pitch with which Noah’s ark was plastered, which neither storm-waves nor winds could break and dissolve. May they be spread out all over the world like branches and sweet flowers whose fragrance is spread far and wide, in order that they also may bear fruit and become sweet like the date whose sweetness delights the soul exceedingly much.”

The Son answered: “Blessed be you, my most beloved Mother! My angel Gabriel said to you: “Blessed art thou, Mary, among women!” And I bear witness to you that you are blessed and most holy above all the choirs of angels. You are like a flower in a garden that is surrounded by other fragrant flowers, but surpasses them all in scent, beauty, and virtue. These flowers are all the chosen men from Adam to the end of the world which were planted in the garden of the world and shone and smelled in manifold virtues. But among all of those who were and who will afterward come, you were the greatest in the fragrance of humility and a good life, in the beauty of the most pleasing virginity, and in the virtue of abstinence. For I bear witness to you that you were more than any martyr at my suffering, more than any confessor in your abstinence, and more than any angel in your mercy and good will. Therefore, for your sake, I will enroot and fasten my words like

the strongest pitch in the hearts of my friends. They shall spread out like fragrant flowers and bear fruit like the sweetest and most wonderful date-palm.”

Thereafter, our Lord spoke to his bride: “Tell my friend, your father, whose heart is according to my heart, that he carefully present these written words to his own father and also give them to the archbishop and later to the other bishop. And when these have been thoroughly instructed, he may send them to the third bishop. Tell him also on my behalf: “I am your Creator and the Redeemer of souls. I am God whom you love above all things. See and consider how the souls which I redeemed with my blood are like the souls of men who know nothing about God, and they are imprisoned by the devil in such cruelty that he torments them in all their limbs as in a hard press. Therefore, if you savor my wounds in your soul, and if you account anything of the scourging and suffering that I endured as precious, then show by your deeds how much you love me. The words that I have spoken with my own mouth shall be made known publicly and brought to the head of the Church.

I shall namely give you my grace and my Spirit so that, wherever there is a quarrel between two, you may be able to reconcile them in my name through the power given to you, if they believe in my words. And as a further clarification of my words, you shall bring to the pope the testimonies of those who taste and delight in my words. For my words are like fat which melts more quickly when the warmth is greater inside, but if no warmth is found, the fat is thrown up and does not reach the intestines. This is how my words are, since the more a man eats and chews on them with a burning love for me, the more he is fed with the desire for heaven and the sweetness of the divine inner love, and the more he burns in my love and charity. But those who do not delight in my words may be likened to having lard in their mouths which they immediately spit out of their mouths and trample under their feet once they have tasted it. Some people despise my words in this way because they have no taste for the sweetness of spiritual things. But the lord of the land, whom I have chosen as my member and made truly mine, will help you manfully and provide you with the necessary things for your journey out of righteously acquired goods.”

The Mother and Son’s words of blessing for each other, and about how the Virgin is likened to the ark wherein the staff, the manna, and the tablets of the Law were, and many wonderful things are revealed in this comparison.

Chapter 53

The Virgin Mary spoke to the Son and said: “Blessed be you, my Son, my God, and Lord of angels! You are the one whose voice the prophets heard, whose body the apostles saw, and the one whom the Jews and your enemies laid their hands on. You are one God with your Divinity and Manhood and Holy Spirit. For the prophets heard the Spirit, the apostles saw the glory of your Divinity, and the Jews crucified your Manhood. Therefore, may you be blessed without beginning and without end.”

The Son answered: “Blessed be you, for you are Virgin and Mother. You are the Ark of the Old Law in which there were three things: the staff of Aaron that blossomed, the manna of angels, and the tablets of the Law.

Three things were done with the staff: First, it was transformed into a snake without venom. Second, the ocean was divided by it. Third, it brought forth water out of the rock. I, who lay in your womb and assumed Manhood from you, liken myself with this staff. First, I am as terrifying to my enemies as the snake was to Moses. For they flee from me as from the sight of a snake, and they are terrified of me and abhor me like a venomous snake; and yet I am without the venom of malice and am instead all full of mercy. I allow myself to be held by them, if they want. I return to them if they search for me. I run to them like a mother to her lost and recovered son, if they call on me. I give them my mercy and forgive their sins, if they cry out to me. This is what I do for them, and yet they abhor me like a venomous snake.

Second, the ocean was divided by this staff when the way to heaven, which was closed for the sake of sin, was opened through the shedding of my blood and my pain. The ocean was indeed divided and a way was made, where there before had been no way, when the pain in all my limbs went to my heart, and my heart burst from the violence of the pain. Later, when the people had been led through the ocean, Moses did not lead them to the promised land immediately but to the desert, so that they would be tested and instructed there. This is how it is now, for when the people have accepted my faith and my commandments, they are not led into heaven immediately; for it is necessary that men should be tested in the desert - that is, in the world - as to how much they love God.

However, the people provoked God into anger by three things in the desert: First, because they made an idol and prayed to it. Second, because they longed after the fleshpots that they had in the land of Egypt and third, through their pride, when they, without the will of God, wanted to go and fight against their enemies. People sin against

me even now in the world in the same way.

First, they honor and worship an idol: for they love the world and all the things in it more than me, who am their Creator. Therefore, the world is their god, and not I. For I said in my gospel: “Where a man’s treasure is, there his heart is also.” So, mankind’s treasure is the world, since their heart yearns towards it and not to me. Therefore, just as the Jews fell in the desert with a sword in their bodies, so too shall these people fall with the sword of eternal damnation in their soul and they shall live in damnation without end.

Second, they sinned through their longing for fleshpots. I gave mankind everything he needed to use in an honorable and moderate way, but he wants to have all things without moderation and reason. For, if his bodily nature could bear it, he would without end have sex, drink without restraint, desire without measure and limit, and, as long as he could sin, he would never desist from sin. Therefore, the same thing will happen to them that happened to the Jews in the desert, that is, they will die a sudden death in their body. For what is this temporal life other than a single moment compared to eternity? For this reason, they shall die a sudden death in their bodies to be torn away from this short life and live with torment in their souls for all eternity.

Third, they sinned in the desert through their pride, since they wanted to go to battle without God’s will. Likewise, people want to go to Heaven through their pride, and they do not trust in me but in themselves, doing their own will and abandoning mine. Therefore, they shall be killed in their souls by devils just as the Jews were killed by their enemies, and their torment shall be everlasting. They thus hate me like a snake, worship an idol instead of me, long for their own desires more than me, and love their own pride instead of my humility. Yet, I am still so merciful that I will turn to them like a loving father and take them to me if they turn to me with a repentant heart.

Third, the rock gave water through this staff. This rock is the hard heart of mankind, for if it is pierced with my fear and love, there immediately flow tears of repentance and penance out of it. No one is so unworthy and no one is so evil that he will not have tears flowing from his eyes and all his limbs awakened to devotion if he turns to me in a heartfelt contemplation of my suffering and bethinks how my power and goodness makes the earth and trees bear fruit.

Second, the manna of angels lay in the ark of Moses. So, too, in you my beloved Mother and Virgin, lay the bread of angels and of holy souls and of righteous men on

earth, whom nothing pleases but my sweetness; for all of the world is dead to them, so that they would gladly go even without bodily nourishment if it were my will.

Third, in the ark were the tablets of the Law. So, too, in you lay the Lord of all laws. Therefore, may you be blessed above everything created in Heaven and on earth!”

Then Christ spoke to his bride and said: “Tell my friends three things. When I was bodily in the world, I adjusted my words so that good men were made stronger and more fervent in doing good things, and evil men became better, as was seen in the conversion of Magdalene, Matthew, and many others. I also adjusted my words so that my enemies were not able to refute them. For that reason, may they to whom my words are sent, work with fervor, so that through my words, the good may become more ardent in goodness, the evil repent from wickedness, and that they themselves be on guard against my enemies so that my words are not obstructed. In truth, I do no greater injustice to the devil than to the angels in Heaven. For if I wanted, I could speak my words so that the whole world hears them. I could also open up hell so that everyone may see its torments, but this would not be justice, since all men would then serve me out of fear, when they should serve me out of love. For no other than the one who has love shall enter the kingdom of Heaven. For I would be doing injustice to the devil if I took away from him one who is rightfully his, because of sin, and who is devoid of good deeds. I would also do injustice to the angel in Heaven, if I placed the spirit of an unclean man as an equal to the one who is pure and most fervent in my love.

Therefore, no one shall enter Heaven, but the one who has been purged like gold in the fire of purgatory or who has proved himself over a long duration of time in good deeds on earth so that there is no stain in him left to be purged away. If you do not know to whom my words should be sent, I will tell you: The one who is worthy to have my words is the one who wants to gain merit through good deeds in order to come to the kingdom of Heaven or who already has deserved it with their good deeds in the past. To such as these shall my words be opened up to and enter into them. Those who have a taste for my words and who humbly hope that their names are written in the Book of Life keep my words. But those who have no taste for my words, consider them first, but then throw up and vomit them out immediately.”

The words of an angel to the bride about whether the spirit of her thoughts is good or bad, and about how there are two spirits, one uncreated and one created, and about their characteristics.

Chapter 54

A holy angel spoke to the bride and said: “There are two spirits, one uncreated and one created. The uncreated Spirit has three characteristics: First, he is hot; second, sweet; and third, pure. First, he gives off warmth, and his warmth does not come from created things but from himself, since he, together with the Father and the Son, is Creator of all things and Almighty. He gives off warmth when the whole soul burns for the love of God. Second, he is sweet, when nothing pleases the soul and nothing delights it but God and the recollection of his deeds. Third, he is so pure that no sin can be found in him, nor any deformity or corruption or mutability. He does not give off warmth like earthly fire, and he does not make things melt like the visible sun, but his warmth is the inner love and desire of the soul that fills the soul and engrosses her in God. He is sweet to the soul, not as a desirable wine or fleshly lust or any other worldly thing, but instead, the sweetness of this Spirit is incomparable to all temporal sweetness and unimaginable to those who have not tasted it. Third, this Spirit is as pure as the rays of the sun in which no blemish can be found.

The second spirit that is created also has three characteristics. He is burning, bitter, and unclean. First, he is burning and consuming like fire, for he completely enkindles the soul he possesses with the fire of lust and evil desire, so that the soul that is filled by him can neither think nor desire anything other than fulfilling this desire; and the consequence of this is that her temporal life is sometimes lost along with all honor and consolation. Second, he is bitter as gall, since he so inflames the soul with his evil lust, that future joys seem like nothing to her and eternal goods but foolishness. And all the things that are of God and which she, the soul, is obligated to do for God, become as bitter and despicable to her as vomit and gall. Third, he is unclean, since he makes the soul so vile and inclined to sin that she does not feel ashamed for any sin, and she would not abstain from any sin, if she did not fear being shamed and judged before men more than before God. This is why this spirit is like a burning fire, because he burns of desire to do evil and enkindles others along with itself. This is why he is bitter, because all good is bitter to him and he wants to make it bitter for others as well as for himself. This is why he is unclean, because he delights in impurity and wants that others shall become like himself.

But now you might ask and say to me: “Are you not also a created spirit like him? Why, then, are you not like that?” I answer you: I am indeed created by the same God as

he, for there is only one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and these are not three gods, but one God. Both of us were well made and created for the good, since God has created nothing but good. But I am like a star, for I remained in the goodness and love of God in which I was created. He, however, is like coal, since he left the love of God. Just as a star has brightness and splendor, whereas coal has blackness and filth, so the good angel, who is like a star, has his splendor, that is, the Holy Spirit - since everything he has, he has from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, from whose love he becomes set on fire and from whose splendor he shines - constantly clinging to him and conforming himself after his will without ever wanting anything other than what God wants. And this is why he is burning; this is why he is pure.

The devil however is like ugly coal, and is uglier and more deformed than any other created creature. For just as he once was more beautiful than others, so he had to become uglier than others since he opposed himself against his Creator. Just as the angel of God shines with the light of God and burns incessantly by his love, so the devil is always burning and anguishing in his malice. His malice is insatiable, just as the goodness and grace of the Holy Spirit are inexpressible. For no one in this world is so rooted in the devil that the Holy Spirit does not sometimes visit and touch his heart. Likewise is no one so good that the devil does not gladly try to touch him with temptation. Many good and righteous men are tempted by the devil with God's permission, and this is not because of their wickedness but for their greater glory. Indeed, the Son of God, who is one in Divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, was tempted when he had assumed Manhood; and how much more should not his elect be tempted then, so that their reward and glory may become greater!

Again, many good people sometimes fall into sin, and their conscience is darkened by the treachery of the devil, but then they get up again, being stronger and more steadfast than before through the virtue and power of the Holy Spirit. There is no one who does not understand in his conscience whether the suggestion of the devil leads to the ugliness of sin or to the good, if he would only think about and examine his conscience carefully. Therefore may you, bride of my Lord, not doubt whether the spirit of your thoughts is good or bad, for your conscience tells you which things to exclude and which to do.

But what should the one who is full of the devil do, since the good Spirit cannot enter him who is full of evil? He should do three things: First, he should make a pure and complete confession of his sins. Even if he cannot directly feel a complete remorse for his sins due to his hardened heart, still the confession will benefit him so much that the devil

ceases with his treachery and yields to the good spirit. Second, he should be humble and wish to amend for all the sins he has committed and do the good deeds he can, and then the devil will begin to leave. Third, he should beseech God with humble prayer in order that he may get the good Spirit back and have contrition for the sins he has committed along with true divine love, since the love for God kills the devil. This devil is so envious and full of malice that he would rather die a hundred times than see someone do God the least little good deed out of love.”

Thereafter, the Holy Virgin spoke to the bride, saying: “New bride of my Son, put on your clothes and fasten your brooch, that is, my Son’s suffering!” She answered her: “My sweet Lady, put it on me yourself.” And the Virgin said: “Yes, I shall do it. I also want to tell you how my Son was disposed and why the holy fathers longed for him so fervently. He stood, as it were, in between two great cities, and a voice from the first city cried out to him saying: “O man, standing in between the cities, you are a wise man, for you know how to beware of coming dangers and injuries. You are also strong in the suffering of overhanging evils, and you are brave as well since you fear nothing. We have longed for and awaited you. Therefore, open our gate, for our enemies are besieging it so that it cannot be opened.”

A voice from the second city was heard saying thus: “You, the most kind and strong of men, hear our complaint and lament! We sit in darkness and suffer unbearable hunger and thirst. Consider our misery and our great distress. We are beaten like grass cut by a scythe. All goodness has dried and withered away in us; and all our strength has faded away in us. We beg you to come to us and save us, for you alone are the one we have awaited and hoped for as our liberator! Come and release us from our distress, turn our lamentation into joy, and be our help and salvation! Come, most blessed and worthy body, which proceeded from the pure Virgin!” My Son heard these two voices from the two cities, that is, from Heaven and hell. That is why he had mercy on them and opened up the gates of hell through his most bitter suffering and the shedding of his blood and brought his friends out of there. He opened up Heaven, too, to the joy of the angels, and led the ones into Heaven whom he had rescued from hell. My daughter, think on these things and have them always before your eyes!”

About how Christ is likened to a mighty lord who built a great city and a marvelous castle, signifying the world and the church, and how the judges and defenders and workers in the church of God have been changed into a bad bow.

Chapter 55

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "I am like a powerful lord who built a great city and named it after himself. Thereafter, he built a castle in the city in which there were many rooms for storing all kinds of useful necessities. Then, when he had built the castle and arranged all his things, he divided his people into three groups, saying: 'I am going away to a far away country. Stand firm and work manfully for my glory! I have made arrangements for your food and your necessities, and you have judges to judge you and defenders to defend you from your enemies. I have also arranged for working men who shall feed you and give me a tenth part of their work, saving it for my use and my honor.'

But after some time had gone by, the name of the city was forgotten. Then the judges said: 'Our lord has traveled to a far away country. Let us judge righteous judgments and do justice so that, when our lord returns, we may not be punished and be accused but receive honor and blessing.' Then the defenders said: 'Our lord trusts us very much and has left the defense of his house to us. Let us therefore abstain from superfluous food and drink so that we may not become unfit for battle. Let us also abstain from excessive sleep so that we may guard ourselves and not be trapped unawares. May we be well armed and constantly watchful so that we may not be found unprepared when enemies come. The honor of our lord and the salvation of our people depend very much on us.' Then the workers said: 'The glory of our lord is great and his reward is glorious and grand. Let us therefore work mightily and give him not only a tenth of our work but also offer him everything above our living expenses! Our reward shall become more glorious the greater the love he sees in us.'

Thereafter, some time went by, and the name of the city and the lord of the castle became forgotten. Then the judges said to themselves: 'The delay of our lord is long, and we do not know if he will return or not. Let us therefore judge according to our own will and do what we please.' The defenders said: 'We are fools, because we work and know not what reward we shall receive. Let us enter into a covenant with our enemies instead and sleep and drink with them, for we do not care about whose enemies they have been.' Thereafter, the workers said: 'Why do we save our gold for others, when we do not know who will get it after us? It is better that we use it ourselves and dispose of it after our own will. Let us therefore give the tenth to the judges and placate them so that we then can do what we want.'

In truth, I am like this mighty lord, for I built myself a city, that is, the world, and placed a castle there, that is, the church. The name of the world was divine wisdom, for

the world had this name from the beginning, since it was created in divine wisdom. This name was venerated by all, and God was praised in his wisdom and wondrously proclaimed by his creatures. But now the name of the city has been dishonored and changed, and a new name has been taken, that is, human wisdom.

For the judges, who before had made judgments in righteousness and the fear of the Lord, have now turned to pride and are trying to deceive simple men. They desire to be eloquent so that they may win human praise, and they speak and preach that which pleases men so that they may obtain favors. They tolerate calmly all words so that they may be called good and patient, and they accept bribes to overturn righteous judgments. They are wise for the sake of their own temporal benefit and their own will, but dumb when it comes to my praise. They trample and press down simple men under their feet and force them into silence. They extend their greed to all and make right into wrong. This is the kind of wisdom that is loved now, while my wisdom is forgotten.

The defenders of the church, who are the noblemen and knights, see my enemies and the attackers of my Church but do not care about it. They hear their words of blasphemy and mockery but do not care about it. They perceive and understand the deeds of those who attack my commandments and still bear them patiently. They behold them daily committing all kinds of mortal sins, as if they were allowed, and feel no compunction about it, but sleep and associate with them, binding themselves by oath to their company.

The workers, that is, the entire people, reject my commandments and withhold my gifts and my tenth. They offer gifts to their judges and show them honor and reverence in order to win their favor and goodwill. In truth, I can boldly say that the sword of fear for me and for my Church is thrown away in the world, and that a sack of money has been put in its place.”

The words in which God explains the nearest preceding chapter, and about the judgment that he makes against such people, and about how God for a while endures the evil for the sake of the good.

Chapter 56

“I told you before that the sword of my Church is thrown away and that a sack of

money has been put in its place, which is open at one end. The other end is so deep, that whatever one puts into it never reaches the bottom, and so the sack never gets filled. This sack is greed, which exceeds all measures and now has become so powerful that the Lord is scorned and nothing is desired but money and the selfish will of man. But I am like a lord who is both father and judge. When he shall go forth and judge, the bystanders say to him: 'Lord, proceed quickly and make your judgment!' The Lord answers them: 'Wait a little until tomorrow, because perhaps my son will still amend himself in the meantime.'

When he comes back the next day, the people say to him: 'Proceed, Lord, and make your judgment! Why are you postponing the judgment for so long and do not judge the guilty?' The Lord answers them: 'Wait a little while longer, to see if my son betters himself, and if he then does not repent, I shall make a just judgment over him.' In this way I patiently endure mankind even until the last moment, since I am both father and judge. But my justice is unchangeable, and even though it sometimes is postponed a long time, I will still either punish sinners who do not better themselves or show them mercy if they amend themselves.

I also told you before that I divided the people into three groups: namely, judges, defenders, and workers. What do these judges signify if not the priests who have turned the divine wisdom into an evil and useless wisdom? Like clerks who take many words and assemble them into a few words, which say the same thing as the many did, so too have these present-day clerics taken my ten commandments and assembled them into a single one. And what is this single word if not: 'Reach out your hand and give us money!' This is their wisdom, to speak beautifully, to act badly and to pretend to be my servants while yet acting maliciously against me. For the sake of gifts, they gladly put up with sinners in their sins and bring about the downfall of simpleminded people through their bad example. Furthermore, they hate those who walk on my way. Second, the defenders of the Church, that is, the knights, are unfaithful, since they have broken their promise and their oath and gladly endure those who sin against the faith and law of my Holy Church. Third, the workers, that is, the whole people, are like untamed bulls which have three things: First, they dig the earth with their feet; second, they fill themselves to satiety; third, they fulfill their own lusts according to their own desire. Likewise does now the whole people crave after temporal goods with all of their desire, filling itself with immoderate gluttony and worldly vanity and practicing its carnal lust and delight without reason.

But even though my enemies are many, I still have many friends among them, although hidden. As it was said to Elijah, who thought none of my friends were left in the

world but himself: "I have seven thousand men who have not bowed their knees to Baal." So, even though my enemies are many, I still have some friends hidden among them who cry daily because my enemies are superior and because my name is despised. Therefore, for the sake of their prayers, I shall do like a charitable and good king who knows the evil deeds of the city but patiently endures its residents and sends letters to his friends to forewarn them of their danger. In this way I send my words to my friends; and they are not so obscure as the words in the Apocalypse which I revealed to John in an obscure way in order that they would be interpreted by my Spirit at the time that pleased me. Nor are they so hidden that they cannot be proclaimed - as when Paul saw many of my hidden secrets that he was not allowed to speak about - but they are so plain, that all, both small and big, can understand them, and so easy, that all who want to, can grasp and understand them.

Therefore, let my friends see to it that my words reach my enemies, so that they, perhaps, convert themselves and feel sorrow and remorse for their sins, when their peril and my judgment are made known to them. Otherwise, the city will be judged so severely that, just as a wall is torn down without leaving stone upon stone, so that not even two stones join to each other in the foundation, so shall it be with the city, that is, with the world.

The judges shall burn in the hottest fire. There is no fire hotter than the one that is fed with some fat. These judges were fat, since they had more opportunities of fulfilling their lust and will than others; they surpassed others in honor and temporal abundance, and abounded more in malice and unrighteousness. Therefore, they will burn in the hottest pan, that is, in the torments of hell!

The defenders shall be hanged on the highest gallows. A gallows consists of two vertical timber beams with a third placed above the others horizontally. This gallows with two wooden beams signifies their cruel and severe torment, which is, so to speak, made from two pieces of wood. The first beam signifies that they did not hope for my eternal reward nor worked for it with their good deeds. The second beam signifies that they did not trust in my power and goodness, when they thought I was not able to do all things or did not want to provide for them sufficiently. The wooden crossbeam signifies their evil conscience, for they understood very well what they should do but, instead, did evil and felt no shame about acting against their conscience. The rope of the gallows signifies the everlasting fire which can neither be extinguished by water nor cut by scissors nor be destroyed and broken by old age. On this gallows of the most cruel torment and inextinguishable fire, they will hang and feel shame and distress like unhappy traitors,

since they were disloyal. They will hear insults, since my words displeased them. A woe shall be in their mouths, since their own honor and praise delighted them. They shall be mangled on this gallows by living crows, that is, by devils who can never get their fill, and even though they be wounded, they shall never be consumed, but they shall live in torment without end and their torturers shall also live without end. There shall be a woe that will never end and a misery that will never be mitigated. Woe unto them, that they were ever born! Woe unto them, that their life was so long!

And lastly concerning the workers, their just sentence will be the same as for bulls. For the bulls have very hard flesh and skin. Therefore, their judgment shall be the sharpest steel. This most sharp steel is the death of hell that will torment those who scorned me and loved their own will instead of my commandments.

The letter, that is, my words, are now written. May my friends work wisely and reasonably so that it comes to my enemies, for perhaps they will want to hear them and repent from their wickedness. But if some, after having heard my words, should say: "Let us wait a little moment, the judgment is not yet coming, it is not yet his time," then I swear by my Divinity which cast out Adam from paradise and sent ten plagues over Pharaoh, that I will come to them faster than they think.

I swear by my Manhood, which I assumed without sin from the Virgin for the salvation of mankind, and in which I endured sorrow in my heart and suffered bodily torment and death for the eternal life of men, and in which I rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven and am seated at the right hand of the Father, true God and true Man in one person, that I shall fulfill my words.

I swear by my Spirit, which descended over the apostles on the day of Pentecost and inflamed them so that they spoke in the language of all peoples, that unless they better themselves and return to me like weak servants, I shall execute vengeance over them in my wrath. Then there shall be a woe in soul and body! Woe unto them that they came alive into the world and lived in the world! Woe unto them, for their lust was small and vain but their torment shall be everlasting! Then they shall perceive what they now scorn to believe, namely, that my words were words of love. Then they shall understand that I admonished them like a father, even though they did not want to hear me. In truth, if they do not want to believe in my words of goodwill, they will have to believe in the deeds when they come.

The words of our Lord to the bride about how he is loathsome and despicable food for the souls of Christians, and how the world, instead, is loved and found to be delightful by them, and about the terrifying judgment that is executed over such people.

Chapter 57

The Son of God spoke to his bride: “Christians are now acting towards me as the Jews acted towards me. The Jews drove me out of the temple and had a complete will to kill me, but since my hour had not yet come, I escaped from their hands. Christians act towards me in the same way now. They drive me out of their temple (that is, out of their soul, which should be my temple) and they would gladly want to kill me if they could. I am like rotten and stinking flesh in their mouths. I seem, to them, to be like a man who utters lies, and they do not care about me at all. They turn their backs to me, but I will turn my neck to them, since there is nothing but craving in their mouths and irrational beastly lust in their flesh. Only pride is delightful in their ears, only the lust of the world delights their eyes. My suffering and my love are detestable to them and my life heavy and burdensome. Therefore, I shall do as the animal which had many dens: when hunters pursued and drove it from one den, it escaped into another. This is what I will do, because Christians are chasing me away with their bad deeds and driving me out of the den of their hearts.

Therefore, I want to go to the heathens in whose mouths I am now bitter and distasteful, but I will become sweeter than honey in their mouths. Nevertheless, I am still so merciful that I will happily receive each and everyone who begs for my forgiveness and says: ‘Lord, I know that I have sinned severely and I gladly want to better myself through your grace. Have mercy on me for the sake of your bitter suffering.’ But to those who harden themselves in their evil, I shall come like a warrior that has three characteristics: namely, dreadfulness, strength, and severity. I shall come and be so terrifying to the Christians that they will not dare to move the least finger against me. I shall also come to them with such strength that they will be like mosquitoes before me. Third, I shall come to them with such severity that they will feel a woe in this world and a woe without end.”

The words of the Mother to the bride about how sweet the Mother and the Son are to each other. How Christ is bitter, bitterer, and most bitter for the evil, and how he is sweet, sweeter, and most sweet for the good.

Chapter 58

The Mother of God said to the bride: “Consider, new bride of my Son, the suffering of my Son, which surpassed in bitterness the suffering of all the saints. Just as a mother would feel the most bitter sorrow and anguish if she saw her son being cut to pieces alive, so, too, was I grieving at the torments of my Son when I saw his bitter sufferings.” Then she spoke to her Son, saying: “Blessed be you, my Son, for you are holy, as it is sung: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Sabaoth.’ Blessed be you, for you are sweet, sweeter, and most sweet! You were holy before you assumed Manhood, holy in my womb, and holy after you assumed Manhood. You were sweet before the creation of the world, sweeter to the angels, and most sweet to me when you assumed Manhood from me.”

The Son answered: “Blessed be you, my beloved Mother, above all the angels. Just as I, in a threefold way, was most sweet for you, as you were saying now, so I am bitter, bitterer, and most bitter for the wicked. I am bitter for those who say I have created many things without a reason and who scornfully say I have created mankind for death and not for life. What a miserable and foolish thought! Did I, who am the most righteous and virtuous, create the angels without a reason? Would I have enriched mankind with so many good things if I had created him for damnation? By no means! I created all things well and gave every good to mankind out of my love. But he, however, turned all good things into evil for himself. It is not because I created anything evil, but mankind moves his will in another way than he should, and not according to God’s law, and this is evil.

But I am bitterer for those who say that I have given them a free will to sin and not to do good, who say I am unjust since I condemn some and justify others, and who blame me for their own wickedness because I withhold my grace from them. I am most bitter for those who say that my law and commandments are exceedingly harsh and difficult and that no one is able to keep them, who say my suffering is worth nothing for them, and who therefore count it for nothing.

Therefore, I swear by my life, as once I swore through the prophets, that I shall justify myself before the angels and all my saints. Those for whom I am bitter shall understand that I created all things reasonably and well for the use and education of mankind, and that not the smallest worm exists without a reason. Those for whom I am bitterer shall understand that I wisely gave men a free will for their own good. They will also know that I am just, giving the eternal kingdom to good men, but everlasting torment to the wicked. For it would not be proper for the devil, who was created good by me but who fell through his own malice, to have fellowship with the good. The wicked

will also understand that it is not my fault that they are evil, but their own fault. For if it were possible, I would gladly take upon myself the same torment for each and every man that I once suffered on the cross for all, if thereby they could return to their promised inheritance. But the will of mankind is always opposed to mine. I gave him liberty to serve me, if he would, and to gain the eternal reward; but if he does not want to, he should be tormented together with the devil and his followers, for whose malice, hell was justly created.

But because I am full of charity, I do not want mankind to serve me out of fear or be forced to do so like an irrational animal but out of love for God, for no one who serves me unwillingly or out of fear of torment can see my face. But those for whom I am most bitter will understand in their consciences that my law was most easy and my yoke most sweet. They will feel inconsolable sadness that they despised my law and instead loved the world, whose yoke is heavier and much more difficult than my yoke.”

Then the Mother of God answered: “Blessed be you, my Son, my God, and my Lord! Since you were most sweet for me, I beg of you that others may be made partakers of my sweetness!” The Son answered: “Blessed be you, my most dear Mother! Your words are sweet and full of love. Therefore shall each and everyone who takes your sweetness into his mouth and keeps it perfectly be benefited thereby. But the one who takes it and spits it out again will be tormented all the more bitterly.” Then the Virgin answered: “Blessed be you, my Son, for all your mercy and love!”

The words of Christ, in the presence of the bride, about how Christ is likened to a peasant, good priests to a good shepherd, bad priests to a bad shepherd, and good Christians to a wife. Many useful things are also explained in this parable.

Chapter 59

“I am the one who never said anything false. The world considers me to be a peasant whose name seems contemptible. My words are counted as foolish and my house is considered a despicable shed. This peasant had a wife who wanted nothing other than what he wanted, who owned everything with him and had him as her master, obeying him in all things as her master. This peasant also had many sheep, and he hired a shepherd to watch over them for five gold coins and for the necessities of his bodily needs. Since this was a good shepherd, he used the gold to his benefit and the food for his

sustenance. After some time had gone by, this shepherd moved and another shepherd came who was worse, who bought himself a wife with the gold and brought her his food, constantly taking his rest with her without caring about the sheep that were being lamentably scattered by cruel beasts.

When the peasant saw how his sheep were being scattered, he cried out saying: 'My shepherd is unfaithful to me! My sheep are scattered by the most cruel beasts. Some of them are completely devoured by the beasts with body and fleece, while others are dead but their bodies left uneaten.' Then the wife said to her husband the peasant: 'My Lord, it is certain that we will not get back the bodies that are devoured, but the bodies who have remained unharmed, even though they are without life, should be brought home and made use of by us. For it would be unbearable for us if we lost everything.' The husband answered her: 'But what shall we do? Since the animals had venomous teeth, the flesh of the sheep has also become poisoned with deadly venom, the hide is ruined, and the wool is all tangled.' The wife answered: 'If everything is infected and ruined and everything taken from us, what shall we then live on?'

The husband answered her: 'I see that there are sheep still alive in three places. Some are like the dead sheep and do not dare to breathe out of fear. Other sheep are lying deep in filth and cannot raise themselves up. Still others lie in hiding places and dare not come forth. Come therefore, my wife, and let us lift up the sheep that are trying to raise themselves up but cannot do so without help, and let us make use of them to our own benefit.'

Behold, I the Lord am this peasant, for men consider me to be a donkey raised in its stall according to its ways and habits. My name is the foundation of the Holy Church, but she is now considered to be contemptible, since the sacraments of the Church, namely baptism, confirmation, anointing, penance, and matrimony, are taken, as it were, with derision and given to others for the sake of greed. My words and deeds are considered and judged to be foolish and vain, for the words that I spoke in parables with my own mouth, have now been converted from a spiritual understanding to temporal entertainment. My house is looked on as contemptible, for the things of the earth are loved instead of the things of Heaven.

With this first shepherd I had, I symbolize my friends the priests, which I used to have in the Holy Church; for by a single word, I mean and signify many. I entrusted them with my sheep, that is, to consecrate my most venerable body and to rule and defend the souls of my chosen ones. I also gave them five good things more precious than all gold:

First, an insight and understanding about all abstruse things so that they will be able to distinguish between good and evil, and between truth and falsehood. Second, I gave them understanding and wisdom in spiritual things; this has now been forgotten and human wisdom is loved instead. Third, I gave them chastity; fourth, temperance in all things and abstinence for the restraining and guidance of their body; fifth, steadfastness in good habits, words, and deeds.

After this first shepherd, that is, after these friends of mine, who used to be in my Church in days of old, other unrighteous shepherds came that bought a wife for themselves with the gold, that is, they took to themselves the body of a woman and intemperance instead of chastity and these five good things, and that is why my Spirit departed from them. For when they have a complete will to sin and to satisfy their wife, that is, to satisfy their lust, then my Spirit is absent from them, since they do not care about the perdition of the sheep so long as they can fulfill their evil lust. But the sheep that are completely devoured are those whose souls are in hell and whose bodies are buried in the grave awaiting the resurrection of the eternal damnation. The sheep whose flesh remains but whose spirit is taken away, are those who neither love me nor fear me nor feel any devotion or care toward me. My Spirit is far away from them, since their flesh is poisoned by the venomous teeth of the beasts, that is, their soul and their thoughts, which are symbolized by the sheep's flesh and intestines, are in every way as disgusting to me and as repulsive to taste as is poisoned meat. From their hide, that is, from their body, has all goodness and charity dried out and it is unfit for any service in my kingdom and shall be delivered to the everlasting fire of hell after the judgment. Their wool, that is, their deeds, are so altogether useless that there is nothing in them that would make them worthy to receive my love and grace.

But what shall we do then, my wife, that is, good Christians, whom the wife symbolizes, what should we do? I see that sheep are alive in three places. Some of them look like the dead sheep and do not dare to breathe out of fear. These are the gentiles who would gladly have the right faith, if only they knew how, but who do not dare to breathe, that is, they do not dare to leave the faith that they have and take the right faith. The second sheep are those lying in hiding places who do not dare to come forth, and these are the Jews who live, so to speak, under a veil, and who would gladly come forth if they knew for certain that I was born. They namely hide themselves under a veil, since their hope for salvation is in the figures and signs that used to symbolize me in the Old Law but which in truth have been fulfilled in me, and because of this vain hope they are afraid to come forth to the right faith. The third sheep that lie in the filth are Christians in the state of mortal sin. They would gladly raise themselves up because of their fear of the

torment, but they cannot due to their heavy sins and because they have no divine love. Therefore, my wife, that is, good Christians, help me! For just as a wife and a man should be one flesh and one limb, so the Christian is my limb and I am his, since I am in him and he is in me.

Therefore, o wife of mine, that is, good Christians, run with me to the sheep that still have a breath of life and let us lift them up and refresh them! Have compassion on me, for I bought them at a very high price! Let us lift them up, you with me and me with you, you at the back and I at the head! I gladly carry them with my hands. Once I carried them all on my back when it was all lacerated and fastened to the cross. O my friends, I love these sheep so dearly that, if it were possible for me to suffer such a death for each sheep as I once suffered on the cross for all of them, I would rather redeem them than want to lose them. That is why I cry out to my friends with all my heart that they should not spare goods or work for my sake; for if I was not spared from reproaching and insulting words while I was in the world, they should not spare themselves in speaking the truth about me. I was not ashamed to suffer a contemptible death for their sake, but stood there naked, just as I was born, before the eyes of my enemies. I was struck in the teeth with their fists. I was dragged by the hair with their fingers and scourged by their scourges. I was fastened to the cross with their tools, and I hung on the cross between thieves and robbers. Therefore, my friends, do not spare yourself in working for me since I endured such things out of love for you. Work manfully and bring help to all my sheep in distress.

I swear by my Manhood, which is in the Father as the Father is in me, and by my Divinity, which is in my Spirit as the Spirit is in the Divinity and the same Spirit is in me and I in him, and these are one God in three persons, that I shall run out to meet those halfway who work in carrying my sheep with me and help them, and I shall give them the most precious reward, namely, myself unto their everlasting joy.”

The words of the Son to the bride about the three kinds of Christians that are symbolized by the Jews living in Egypt, and about how the things which have been revealed to the bride should be transmitted, published and preached to ignorant persons by the friends of God.

Chapter 60

The Son of God spoke to the bride and said: “I am the God of Israel and the one who spoke with Moses. When Moses was sent to my people, he begged for a sign, saying: ‘The people will not believe me otherwise.’ But if the people to whom Moses was sent were the Lord’s people, why did they not believe? You should know that this people consisted of three kinds of men: Some believed in God and Moses. Others believed in God but distrusted Moses, in that they thought that he, perhaps of his own invention and presumption, had presumed to say and do these things. The third were those who neither believed in God nor in Moses.

In the same way, there are now three kinds of men among Christians who are symbolized by the Hebrew people: There are some who rightly believe in God and in my words. There are others who believe in God but distrust my words, because they cannot distinguish between the good and the evil spirit. The third are those who neither believe in me nor in you to whom I have spoken my words. But, as I said, even though some of the Hebrews distrusted Moses, nevertheless they all went through the Red Sea with him and into the desert where those who had not believed worshipped idols and provoked God into wrath, which is why they also died in the most miserable of deaths. But only those who had an evil faith did so.

Therefore, my friend shall carry my words to those who believe him, since the human soul is slow to believe. And these shall afterwards spread them to others who do not know how to distinguish between the good and the evil spirit. But if the hearers beg them for a sign, let them show those men the staff, just as Moses did, that is, let them explain my words to them. For just as the staff of Moses was straight and terrifying (for it was transformed into a snake), so are my words straight so that no falsehood can be found in them. They are terrifying, since they proclaim the righteous judgment. Let them also explain and testify that, by a word and sound of a single mouth, the devil yielded from the creature of God - he who could move mountains, if he were not restrained by my power. What kind of power belonged to him when, with God’s permission, he was driven away by the sound of a single word?

Therefore, just as those Hebrews, who neither believed in God nor in Moses, yet went out of Egypt for the promised land when they, as it were, were forced along together with the others, so too, many Christians go out unwillingly together with my chosen men since they do not trust in my power to heal them. They do not believe in my words and they have a false hope in my power. Nevertheless, my words shall be fulfilled without their will and shall be, as it were, forced along to fulfillment until they get to the place that pleases me.”

Book 2

The Son's instruction to the bride about the devil; the Son's answer to the bride about why he does not remove evildoers before they fall into sin; and about how the kingdom of heaven is given to baptized persons who die before reaching the age of discretion.

Chapter 1

The Son spoke to the bride, saying: "When the devil tempts you, tell him these three things: 'The words of God cannot be anything but true.' Second: 'Nothing is impossible for God, because he can do all things.' Third: 'You, devil, could not give me so great a fervor of love as that which God gives me.' " Again the Lord spoke to the bride, saying: "I look at people in three ways: first, their outer body and what condition it is in; second, their inner conscience, what it tends toward and in what way; third, their heart and what it desires. Like a bird that sees a fish in the sea and assesses the depth of the water and also takes note of storm winds, I, too, know and assess the ways of each person and take note of what is due to each, for I am keener of sight and can assess the human situation better than a person knows his own self.

Therefore, because I see and know all things, you might ask me why I do not take evildoers away before they fall into the depths of sin. I myself asked the question and I myself will answer it for you: I am the Creator of all things, and all things are foreknown to me. I know and see all that has been and all that will be. But, although I know and can do all things, still, for reasons of justice, I no more interfere with the natural constitution of the body than I do with the inclination of the soul. Each human being continues in existence according to the natural constitution of the body such as it is and was from all eternity in my foreknowledge. The fact that one person has a longer life and another a shorter has to do with natural strength or weakness and is related to a person's physical constitution. It is not due to my foreknowledge that one person loses his sight or another becomes lame or something like that, since my foreknowledge of all things is such that no one is the worse for it, nor is it harmful to anyone.

Moreover, these things do not occur because of the course and position of the heavenly elements, but due to some hidden principle of justice in the constitution and conservation of nature. For sin and natural disorder bring about the deformity of the

body in many ways. This does not happen because I will it directly, but because I permit it to happen for the sake of justice. Even though I can do all things, still I do not obstruct justice. Accordingly, the length or brevity of a person's life is related to the weakness or strength of his physical constitution such as it was in my foreknowledge that no one can contravene.

You can understand this by way of a simile. Imagine that there were two roads with one road leading up to them. There were a great many graves in both roads, crossing and overlapping one another. The end of one of the two roads dropped directly downward; the end of the other tended upward. At the crossroads was written: 'Whoever travels this road begins it in physical pleasure and delight and ends it in great wretchedness and shame. Whoever takes the other road begins it in moderate and endurable exertion but reaches the end in great joy and consolation.' A person walking along on the single road was completely blind. However, when he reached the crossroads, his eyes were opened, and he saw what was written about how the two roads ended.

While he was studying the sign and thinking it over to himself, there suddenly appeared next to him two men who were entrusted with guarding the two roads. As they observed the wayfarer at the crossroads, they said to each other: 'Let us carefully observe which road he chooses to take and then he will belong to that one of us whose road he selects.' The wayfarer, however, was considering to himself the ends and advantages of each road. He made the prudent decision of selecting the road whose beginning involved some pain but had joy at the end, rather than the road that began in joy but ended in pain. He decided that it was more sensible and endurable to get tired from a little exertion at the start but rest in safety at the end.

Do you understand what all this means? I shall tell you. These two roads are the good and the evil within human reach. It lies within a person's power and free will to choose whatever he or she likes upon reaching the age of discretion. A single road leads up to the two roads of the choice between good and evil; in other words, the time of childhood leads up to the age of discretion. The man walking on this first road is like a blind man because he is, as it were, blind from his childhood up until he reaches the age of discretion, not knowing how to distinguish between good and evil, between sin and virtue, between what is commanded and what is forbidden.

The man walking on this first road, that is, in the age of boyhood, is like a blind man. However, when he reaches the crossroads, that is, the age of discretion, the eyes of

his understanding are opened. He then knows how to decide whether it is better to experience a little pain but eternal joy or a little joy and eternal pain. Whichever road he chooses, he will not lack those who carefully count his steps. There are many graves on these roads, one after the other, one over against the other, because, both in youth and in old age, one person may die earlier, another later, one in youth, another in old age. The end of this life is fittingly symbolized by graves: it will come to everyone, one in this way, another in that, according to each one's natural constitution and exactly as I have foreknown it.

If I took anyone away against the body's natural constitution, the devil would have grounds of accusation against me. Accordingly, in order that the devil might not find anything in me that goes against justice in the least, I no more interfere with the natural constitution of the body than I do with the constitution of the soul. But consider my goodness and mercy! For, as the teacher says, I give virtue to those who do not have any virtue. By reason of my great love I give the kingdom of heaven to all of the baptized who die before reaching the age of discretion. As it is written: It has pleased my Father to give the kingdom of heaven to such as these. By reason of my tender love, I even show mercy to the infants of pagans.

If any of them die before reaching the age of discretion, given that they cannot come to know me face to face, they go instead to a place that it is not permitted for you to know but where they will live without suffering. Those who have advanced from the one road reach those two roads, that is, the age of discretion between good and evil. It is then in their power to choose what pleases them most. Their reward will follow the inclination of their will, since by that time they know how to read the sign written at the crossroads telling them that it is better to experience a little pain at the start and joy ready and waiting for them than experience joy at the start and pain at the end. Sometimes it does happen that people are taken away earlier than their natural physical constitution would normally allow, for example, through homicide, drunkenness, and things of that kind.

This is because the devil's wickedness is such that the sinner in this case would receive an extremely long-lasting punishment if he were to continue in the world for any great length of time. Therefore, some people are taken away earlier than their natural physical condition would allow due to the demands of justice and because of their sins. Their removal has been foreknown to me from all eternity, and it is impossible for anyone to contravene my foreknowledge. Sometimes good people are also taken away earlier than their natural physical constitution would allow. Because of the great love I

have toward them, and because of their burning love and their efforts to discipline the body for my sake, justice sometimes requires that they be taken away, as foreknown to me from all eternity. Thus, I no more interfere with the natural constitution of the body than I do with the constitution of the soul.”

The Son's indictment of a certain soul who was to be condemned in the presence of the bride, and Christ's answer to the devil about why he permitted this soul and permits other evildoers to touch and take or receive his own true body.

Chapter 2

God appeared angry and said: ”This work of my hands, whom I destined for great glory, holds me in much contempt. This soul, to whom I offered all my loving care, did three things to me: He averted his eyes from me and turned them toward the enemy. He fixed his will on the world. He put his confidence in himself, because he was free to sin against me. For this reason, because he did not bother to have any regard for me, I brought my sudden justice upon him. Because he had fixed his will against me and put false confidence in himself, I took away from him the object of his desire.” Then a devil cried out, saying: ”Judge, this soul is mine.” The Judge answered: ”What grounds do you bring against him?” He answered: ”My accusation is the statement in your own indictment that he despised you, his Creator, and because of that his soul has become my handmaid.

Besides, since he was suddenly taken away, how could he suddenly begin to please you? For, when he was of sound body and living in the world, he did not serve you with a sincere heart, since he loved created things more fervently, nor did he bear illness patiently or reflect on your works as he ought to have. In the end he was not burning with the fire of charity. He is mine because you have taken him away suddenly.”

The Judge answered: ”A sudden end does not condemn a soul, unless there is inconsistency in her actions. A person's will is not condemned forever without careful deliberation.” Then the Mother of God came and said: ”My Son, if a lazy servant has a friend who is on intimate terms with his master, should not his intimate friend come to his aid? Should he not be saved, if he asks for it, for the sake of the other?” The Judge answered: ”Every act of justice should be accompanied by mercy and wisdom - mercy

with respect to remitting severity, wisdom to ensure that equity is maintained. But if the transgression is of such a kind as not to deserve remission, the sentence can still be mitigated for the sake of friendship with out infringing justice. Then his Mother said: "My blessed Son, this soul had me constantly in mind and showed me reverence and was often moved to celebrate the great solemnity for my sake, even though he was cold toward you. So, have mercy on him!"

The Son answered: "Blessed Mother, you know and see all things in me. Even though this soul kept you in mind, he did so more for the sake of his temporary than his spiritual welfare. He did not treat my most pure body as he should have. His foul mouth kept him from enjoying my charity. Worldly love and dissolution hid my suffering from him. His taking my pardon too much for granted and not thinking about his end accelerated his death. Although he received me continuously, it did not improve him much, because he did not prepare himself properly. A person who wishes to receive his noble Lord and guest should not only get the guest room ready but also all the utensils. This man did not do so, since, although he cleaned the house, he did not sweep it reverently with care. He did not strew the floor with the flowers of his virtues or fill the utensils of his limbs with abstinence. Therefore, you see well enough that what must be done to him is what he deserves.

Although I may be invulnerable and beyond comprehension and am everywhere by reason of my divinity, my delight is in the pure, even if I enter the good and the damned alike. The good receive my body, which was crucified and ascended into heaven, which was prefigured by the manna and by the widow's flour. The wicked do so likewise, but, whereas for the good it leads to greater strength and consolation, for the wicked it leads to an even more just condemnation, inasmuch as they, in their unworthiness, are not afraid to approach so worthy a sacrament." The devil answered: "If he approached you unworthily and his sentence was made stricter because of this, why did you permit him to approach you and touch you despite his unworthiness?"

The Judge answered: "You are not asking this out of love, since you have none, but my power compels you to ask it for the sake of this bride of mine who is listening. In the same way in which both the good and bad handled me in my human nature in order to prove the reality of my human nature as well as my patient humility, so too good and wicked alike eat me at the altar - the good unto their greater perfection, the bad in order that they may not believe themselves to be already damned and so that, having received my body, they might be converted, provided they decide to reform their intention. What

greater love can I show them than that I, the most pure, will enter even the impurest of vessels (although like the material sun I cannot be defiled by anything)? You and your comrades despise this love, for you have hardened yourselves against love.”

Then the Mother spoke again: ”My good Son, whenever he approached you, he was still reverent toward you, though not as he should have been. He also repents of having offended you, though not perfectly. My Son, for my sake, consider this to his advantage.” The Son answered: ”As the prophet said, I am the true sun, although I am far better than the material sun. The material sun does not penetrate mountains or minds, but I can do both.

A mountain can stand in the way of the material sun with the result that the sunlight does not reach the land nearby, but what can stand in my way except the sinfulness that prevents this soul from being affected by my love? Even if a part of the mountain were removed, the neighboring land would still not receive the warmth of the sun. And if I were to enter into one part of a pure mind, what consolation would it be to me if I could smell a stench from another part? Therefore, one should get rid of everything that is dirty, and then sweet enjoyment will follow upon beautiful cleanliness.” His Mother answered: ”May your will be done with all mercy!”

EXPLANATION

This was a priest who had often received warnings regarding his incontinent behavior and who did not want to listen to reason. One day when he went out to the meadow to groom his horse, there came thunder and lightning that struck and killed him. His whole body was left unscathed except for his private parts, which could be seen to be completely burned. Then the Spirit of God said: ”Daughter, those who get themselves entangled in such wretched pleasures deserve to suffer in their souls what this man suffered in his body.”

Words of amazement from the Mother of God to the bride, and about five houses in the world whose inhabitants represent five states of people, namely unfaithful Christians, obstinate Jews and pagans separately, Jews and Pagans together, and the friends of God. This chapter contains many useful remarks.

Chapter 3

Mary said: "It is a terrible thing that the Lord of all things and the King of glory is despised. He was like a pilgrim on earth, wandering from place to place, knocking on many doors, like a wayfarer seeking welcome. The world was like an estate that had five houses. When my Son came dressed as a pilgrim to the first house, he knocked on the door and said: 'Friend, open up and let me enter to rest and stay with you, so that the wild animals do not harm me, so that storm-showers and rain may not fall upon me! Give me some of your clothes to warm me from the cold, to cover me in my nakedness! Give me some of your food to refresh me in my hunger and something to drink to revive me. You will receive a reward from your God!'

The person inside answered: 'You are far too impatient, so you are unable to live with us peaceably. You are far too tall. For that reason we are unable to clothe you. You are far too greedy and gluttonous, so we are unable to satisfy you, for there is no end to your greedy appetite.' Christ the pilgrim responded from outside: 'Friend, let me in cheerfully and voluntarily. I do not need much room. Give me some of your clothes, since there are no clothes in your house so small that they will not be able to offer me at least some warmth! Give me some of your food, since even a tiny morsel can satisfy me and a mere drop of water will refresh and strengthen me.' The person inside replied: 'We know you well enough.

You are humble in speech but importunate in your requests. You seem easily contented but are in fact insatiable when it comes to having your fill. You are far too cold and hard to clothe. Go away, I will not take you in!' Then he came to the second house and said: 'Friend, open up and look at me! I will give you what you need. I will defend you from your enemies.' The person inside answered: 'My eyes are weak. It would hurt them to look at you. I have plenty of everything and I have no need of anything of yours. I am strong and powerful. Who can harm me?' Coming, then, to the third house, he said: 'Friend, lend me your ears and hear me! Stretch forth your hands and take hold of me! Open your mouth and taste me!'

The inhabitant of the house answered: 'Shout louder so I can hear you better! If you are nice, I will draw you to myself. If you are pleasant, I will let you in.' Then he went to the fourth house whose door was about half-open. He said: 'Friend, if you were to consider that your time has been uselessly spent, you would take me in. If you were to

understand and to listen to what I have done for you, you would have compassion on me. If you paid heed to how much you have offended me, you would sigh and beg for forgiveness.' The man answered: 'We are nearly dead from waiting and longing for you. Have compassion on our wretchedness and we will be most ready to give ourselves to you. Behold our misery and look on the anguish of our body, and we will be ready for your every wish.' Then he came to the fifth house, which was completely open. He said: 'Friend, I would gladly enter here, but know that I seek a softer resting-place than that provided by a feather-bed, a greater warmth than can be had from wool, a fresher food than fresh animal meat can offer.'

Those who were inside answered: 'We have hammers lying here at our feet. We will gladly use them to shatter our feet and legs, and we will give you the marrow flowing from them to be your resting-place. We will gladly open up our inmost parts and entrails for you. Come right in! There is nothing softer than our marrow for you to rest upon, and nothing better than our inmost parts to warm you. Our heart is fresher than the fresh meat of animals. We shall be happy to cut it up for your food. Just come in! For you are sweet to taste and wonderful to enjoy!' The inhabitants of these five houses represent five different states of people in the world. The first are the unfaithful Christians who call my Son's sentences unjust, his promises false, and his commandments unbearable.

These are the ones who in their thoughts and in their minds and in their blasphemy say to my Son's preachers: 'Almighty he may well be, but he is far away and cannot be reached. He is high and wide and cannot be clothed. He is insatiable and cannot be fed. He is most impatient and there is no getting along with him.' They say he is far away because they are weak in good deeds and charity and do not try to rise up to his goodness. They say he is wide, because their own greediness knows no limit: they are always pretending they lack or need something and are always imagining problems before they come. They also charge him with being insatiable, because heaven and earth are not enough for him, but he demands even greater gifts from mankind.

They think it foolish to give up everything for the sake of their soul in accordance with the precept, and harmful to give the body less. They say he is impatient, because he hates vice and sends them things against their will. They think nothing is fine and useful except that which the pleasure of the body suggests to them. Of course, my Son is indeed almighty in heaven and on earth, the Creator of all things and created by none, existing prior to everything, after whom no one is to come. He is indeed farthest away and widest and highest, within and without and above all things.

Yet although he is so powerful, still in his love he wants to be clothed with human help - he who has no need of clothing, who clothes all things and is himself clothed eternally and unchangeably in perpetual honor and glory. He, who is the bread of angels and of men, who feeds all things and himself needs nothing, wants to be fed with human love. He who is the restorer and author of peace asks for peace from men. Therefore, whoever wants to welcome him in a cheerful mind can satisfy him with even a morsel of bread, so long as his intention is good. He can clothe him with a single thread, so long as his love is burning. A single drop can still his thirst, provided a person has the right dispositions.

So long as a person's devotion is fervent and steadfast, he is capable of welcoming my Son into his heart and speaking with him. God is spirit and, for that reason, he has willed to transform creatures of flesh into spiritual beings and ephemeral beings into eternal ones. He thinks that whatever happens to the members of his body also happens to himself. He takes into account not only a person's work or abilities, but also the fervor of his will and the intention with which a work is carried out. In truth, the more my Son cries out to these people through hidden inspirations, and the more he admonishes them through his preachers, the more they harden their will against him.

They do not listen or open the door of their will to him or let him in by means of charitable acts. Therefore, when their time comes, the falsehood they rely on will be annihilated, truth will be exalted, and the glory of God made manifest. The second ones are obstinate Jews. These people seem to themselves to be reasonable in every way and they regard wisdom as being legal justice. They assert their own deeds and hold them to be more honorable than the works of others. If they hear of the things my Son has done, they hold them in contempt. If they hear his words and commandments, they react with scorn.

Worse still, they would regard themselves as sinful and unclean if they were but to hear and reflect on anything having to do with my Son and as even more wretched and miserable if they were to imitate his works. But while the winds of worldly fortune still blow upon them, they think themselves most lucky. So long as their physical forces are sound, they believe themselves to be most strong. For that reason, their hopes will come to nothing and their honor will turn into shame.

The third ones are the pagans. Some of them cry out in mockery each day: 'Who is

this Christ? If he is gracious in giving present goods, we shall gladly receive him. If he is gentle in condoning sins, we shall even more gladly honor him.' But these people have closed the eyes of their mind so as not to perceive the justice and mercy of God. They stop up their ears and do not hear what my Son has done for them and for everyone. They shut their mouths and do not inquire what their future will be like or what is to their advantage. They fold their arms and refuse to make an effort to search out the way in which they might escape lies and find the truth. Therefore, since they do not want to understand or take precautions, although they can and have the time to do so, they and their house will fall and be enveloped by the tempest.

The fourth ones are those Jews and pagans who would like to be Christians, if they only knew how and in what way to please my Son and if only they had a helper. They hear from people in neighboring regions everyday, and also know from the appeals of love within themselves, as well as from other signs, how much my Son has done and suffered for everyone. This is why they cry out to him in their conscience and say:

'O Lord, we have heard that you promised to give yourself to us. So we are waiting for you. Come and fulfill your promise! We see and understand that there is no divine power in those who are worshipped as gods, no love of souls, no appreciation of chastity. We only find in them carnal motives, a love for the honors of the present world. We know about the Law and hear about the great works you have performed in mercy and justice, We hear from the sayings of your prophets that they were awaiting you whom they had foretold. So come, kind Lord! We would like to give ourselves to you, because we understand that in you there is love for souls, the right use of all things, perfect purity, and life everlasting. Come without delay and enlighten us, for we are nearly dead from waiting for you!' That is how they cry out to my Son. This explains why their door is half-open, because their intention is complete with respect to the good, but they have not yet attained its fulfillment. These are people who deserve to have the grace and consolation of my Son.

In the fifth house are the friends of my Son and me. The door of their mind is completely open for my Son. They are glad to hear him calling. They not only open when he knocks but joyfully run to meet him as he comes in. With the hammers of the divine precepts they shatter anything they find distorted in themselves. They prepare a resting-place for my Son, not out of the feathers of birds but out of the harmony of the virtues and the curbing of evil affections, which is the very marrow of all the virtues. They offer my Son a kind of warmth that does not come from wool but from a love so fervent that

they not only give their belongings to him but their very selves as well. They also prepare food for him that is fresher than any meat: it is their perfect heart that does not desire or love anything but its God.

The Lord of Heaven dwells in their hearts, and God who nourishes all things is sweetly nourished by their charity. They keep their eyes continually on the door lest the enemy enter, they keep their ears turned toward the Lord, and their hands ready for doing battle against the enemy. Imitate them, my daughter, as far as you are able, because their foundation is built on solid rock. The other houses have their foundations in mud, which is why they will be shaken when the wind comes.”

The words of the Mother of God to her Son on behalf of his bride, and about how Christ is compared to Salomon, and about the severe sentence against false Christians.

Chapter 4

The Mother of God spoke to her Son, saying: ”My Son, look how your bride is crying because you have few friends and many enemies.” The Son answered: ”It is written that the sons of the kingdom will be cast out and will not inherit the kingdom. It is likewise written that a certain queen came from far away to see the riches of Salomon and to hear his wisdom. When she saw it all, she was breathless from sheer amazement. The people of his kingdom, however, paid no attention to his wisdom nor admired his riches. I am prefigured by Solomon, although I am far richer and wiser than Solomon was, inasmuch as all wisdom comes from me and anyone who is wise gets his wisdom from me. My riches are eternal life and indescribable glory. I promised and offered these goods to Christians as to my own children, in order that they might possess them forever, if they imitated me and believed in my words. But they pay no attention to my wisdom.

They hold my deeds and my promises in scorn and regard my riches as worthless. What shall I do with them then? Surely, if the sons do not want their inheritance, then strangers, that is, pagans will receive it. Like that foreign queen, whom I take to represent faithful souls, they will come and admire the wealth of my glory and charity, so much so that they will fall away from their spirit of infidelity and be filled with my Spirit. What, then, shall I do with the sons of the kingdom? I will deal with them in the manner of a skillful potter who, when he observes that the first object he has made out of clay is

neither beautiful nor useable, throws it to the earth and crushes it. I will deal with Christians in the same way. Although they ought to be mine, since I formed them in my image and redeemed them with my blood, they have turned out to be pitifully deformed. Therefore, they will be trampled down like earth and thrown into hell.”

The Lord's words in the presence of the bride concerning his own majesty, and a wonderful parable comparing Christ to David, while Jews, bad Christians, and pagans are compared to David's three sons, and about how the church subsists in the seven sacraments.

Chapter 5

“I am God, not made of stone or wood nor created by another but the Creator of the universe, abiding without beginning or end. I am he who came into the Virgin and was with the Virgin without losing my divinity. Through my human nature I was in the Virgin while still retaining my divine nature, and I am that same person who, through my divine nature, continued to rule over heaven and earth together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Through my Spirit I set the Virgin on fire - not in the sense that the Spirit that set her on fire was something separate from me, but the Spirit that set her on fire was the same one who was in the Father and in me, the Son, just as the Father and the Son were in him, these three being one God, not three gods.

I am like King David who had three sons. One of them was called Absalom, and he sought the life of his father. The second, Adonijah, sought his father's kingdom. The third son, Solomon, obtained the kingdom. The first son denotes the Jews. They are the people who sought my life and death and scorned my counsel. Consequently, now that their requital is known, I can say what David said upon the death of his son: 'My son, Absalom!' that is: O my Jewish children, where is your longing and expectation now? O my children, what will be your end now? I felt compassion for you because you longed for me to come - for me whom you learned from many signs had come - and because you longed for quickly fading glory, all of which now has faded. But I feel greater compassion for you now, like David repeating those first words over and over, because I see that you will end in a wretched death.

Therefore, again like David, I say with all my love: 'My son, who will let me die in

your stead?' David knew well that he could not bring back his dead son by dying himself, but, in order to show his deep fatherly affection and the eager yearning of his will, even though he knew it was impossible, he was prepared to die in the place of his son. In the same way, I now say: O my Jewish children, although you had ill-will toward me and did as much as you could against me, if it were possible and if my Father allowed it, I would willingly die once again for you, for I take pity on the misery you have brought upon yourselves as required by justice. I told you what was to be done by my words and showed you by my example. I went ahead of you like a hen protecting you with wings of love, but you spurned it all. Therefore, all the things that you longed for have fled away. Your end is misery and all your labor wasted.

Bad Christians are denoted by David's second son who sinned against his father in his old age. He reasoned with himself in this way: 'My father is an old man and failing in strength. If I say anything wrong to him, he does not respond. If I do anything against him, he does not avenge himself. If I assail him, he endures it patiently. Therefore, I will do what I want.' With some of his father David's servants, he went up to a grove of few trees in order to play the king. But when the wisdom and intention of his father became evident, he changed his plan and those who were with him fell into discredit.

This is what Christians are doing to me now. They think to themselves: 'God's signs and decisions are not as manifest now as they were before. We can say what we like, since he is merciful and pays no attention. Let us do as we please, since he gives way easily.' They have no faith in my power, as if I were weaker now in accomplishing my will than I was before.

They imagine my love to be less, as if I am no longer as willing to have mercy on them as on their fathers. They also think that my judgment is a thing to be laughed at and that my justice is meaningless. Therefore, they, too, go up to a grove with some of David's servants in order to play the king with presumption. What does this grove of few trees denote, if not the Holy Church subsisting through the seven sacraments as through just a few trees? They enter into this church along with some of David's servants, that is, with a few good works, in order to gain God's kingdom with presumption.

They do a modest number of good works, confident that thereby, no matter what state of sin they are in or whatever sins they have committed, they can still gain the kingdom of heaven as if by hereditary right. David's son wanted to obtain the kingdom against David's will but was driven away in disgrace, inasmuch as both he and his ambition were unjust, and the kingdom was given to a better and wiser man. In the same

way, these people will also be driven away from my kingdom.

It will be given to those who do the will of David, since only a person who has charity can obtain my kingdom. Only a person who is pure and is led by my heart can approach me who am the most pure of all.

Solomon was the third son of David. He represents the pagans. When Bathsheba heard that someone other than Solomon - whom David had promised would be king after him - had been elected by certain persons, she went to David and said: 'My lord, you swore to me that Solomon would be king after you. Now, however, someone else has been elected.

If this is the case and it goes on in this way, I will end up being sentenced to the fire as an adulteress and my son will be regarded as illegitimate.' When David heard this, he stood up and said: 'I swear to God that Solomon will sit on my throne and be king after me.' He then ordered his servants to set Solomon on the throne and proclaim as king the man of David's choice. They carried out the orders of their lord and raised up Solomon to great power, and all those who had given their vote to his brother were scattered and reduced to servitude. This Bathsheba, who would have been accounted an adulteress had another king been elected, stands for nothing other than the faith of the pagans.

No kind of adultery is worse than selling oneself into prostitution away from God and from the true faith and believing in a god other than the Creator of universe. Just as Bathsheba did, some of the Gentiles come to me with humble and contrite hearts, saying: 'Lord, you promised that in the future we would be Christians. Carry out your promise! If another king, if another faith other than yours should gain the ascendancy over us, if you remove yourself from us, we will burn in misery and die like an adulteress who has taken an adulterer instead of a lawful husband. Besides, although you live forever, nevertheless, you will die to us and we to you in the sense that you will remove your grace from our hearts and we will set ourselves up against you due to our lack of faith. Therefore, fulfill your promise and strengthen our weakness and enlighten our darkness! If you delay, if you remove yourself from us, we will perish.' Having heard this, I will stand up like David through my grace and mercy.

I swear by my divine nature, which is joined to my humanity, and by my human nature, which is in my Spirit, and by my Spirit, which is in my divine and human natures, these three being not three gods but one God, that I will fulfill my promise. I will send my friends to bring my son Solomon, that is, the pagans, into the grove, that is, into the

church, which subsists through the seven sacraments as through seven trees (namely baptism, penance, the anointment of confirmation, the sacrament of the altar and of the priesthood, matrimony, and extreme unction). They will take their rest upon my throne, that is, in the true faith of the Holy Church.

Moreover, the bad Christians will become their servants. The former will find their joy in an everlasting heritage and in the sweet nourishment that I will prepare for them. The latter, however, will groan in the misery that will begin for them in the present and last forever. And so, since it is still the time for vigilance, may my friends not fall asleep, may they not grow weary, for a glorious reward awaits their toil!"

The Son's words in the presence of the bride concerning a king standing on a battlefield with friends to his right and enemies to his left, and about how the king represents Christ who has Christians to the right and pagans to the left, and about how the Christians are rejected and he sends his preachers to the pagans.

Chapter 6

The Son said: "I am like a king standing in a battlefield with friends standing to his right and enemies to his left. The voice of someone shouting came to those who stood on the right where everyone was well armed. Their helmets were fastened and their faces were turned to their lord. The voice shouted to them: 'Turn to me and trust me! I have gold to give you.' When they heard this, they turned toward him. The voice spoke a second time to those who had turned around: 'If you want to see the gold, unfasten your helmets, and if you want to keep it, I will fasten your helmets on again as I wish.' When they assented, he fastened their helmets on back to front. The result was that the front part with the apertures to see through was at the back of their heads while the helmets' back part covered their eyes so that they were unable to see. Shouting like this, he led them after him like blind men.

When this had been done, some of the king's friends reported to their lord that his enemies had tricked his men. He said to his friends: 'Go out among them and cry out: Unfasten your helmets and see how you have been deceived! Turn back to me and I will welcome you in peace!' They did not want to listen, but regarded it as mockery. The servants heard this and reported it to their lord. He said: 'Well then, since they have

scorned me, go quickly toward the left-hand side and tell those who stand on the left these three things: The way that leads you to life has been prepared for you. The gate is open. And the lord himself wants to come to meet you with peace. Believe therefore firmly that the way has been prepared! Have a steadfast hope that the gate is open and his words are true! Go to meet the lord with love, and he will welcome you with love and peace and lead you to everlasting peace!' When they heard the messengers' words, they believed in them and were welcomed in peace.

I am that king. I had Christians to my right, since I had prepared an eternal reward for them. Their helmets were fastened and their faces were turned toward me so long as they wholly intended to do my will, to obey my commandments, and so long as all their desire aimed at heaven. By and by the devil's voice, that is, pride, sounded in the world and showed them worldly riches and carnal pleasure. They turned toward it by yielding their assent and desires to pride. Because of pride, they took off their helmets by putting their desires into effect and preferring temporal to spiritual goods. Now that they have put aside the helmets of God's will and the weapons of virtue, pride has got such a hold of them and so bound them to itself that they are only too happy to go on sinning right to the end and would be glad to live forever, provided they could sin forever.

Pride has so blinded them that the apertures of the helmets through which they should be able to see are at the back of their heads and in front of them is darkness. What do these apertures in the helmets represent if not the consideration of the future and the provident circumspection of present realities? Through the first aperture, they should see the delight of future rewards and the horrors of future punishments as well as the awful sentence of God. Through the second aperture, they should see God's commandments and prohibitions, also how much they may have transgressed God's commandments and how they should improve. But these apertures are at the back of the head where nothing can be seen, which means that the consideration of heavenly realities has fallen into disregard.

Their love for God has grown cold, while their love for the world is considered with delight and embraced in such away that it leads them like a well-oiled wheel whither it will. However, seeing me dishonored and souls falling away and the devil gaining control, my friends cry out daily to me in their prayers for them. Their prayers have reached heaven and come to my hearing. Moved by their prayers, I have daily sent my preachers to these people and shown them signs and increased my graces to them. But, in their scorn for it all, they have piled sin upon sin.

Therefore, I shall now say to my servants and I shall put my words most assuredly into effect: My servants, go to the left-hand side, that is, to the pagans, and say: 'The Lord of heaven and the Creator of the universe would have the following said to you: The way of heaven is open for you. Have the will to enter it with a firm faith! The gate of heaven stands open for you. Hope firmly and you will enter through it! The King of heaven and the Lord of angels will personally come out to meet you and give you everlasting peace and blessing. Go out to meet him and receive him with the faith he has revealed to you and that has made ready the way to heaven! Receive him with the hope by which you hope, for he himself has the intention of giving you the kingdom.

Love him with your whole heart and put your love into practice and you will enter through the gates of God from which those Christians were thrust away who did not want to enter them and who made themselves unworthy by their own deeds.' By my truth I declare to you that I will put my words into practice and will not forget them. I will receive you as my children and I will be your father, I, whom Christians have held in scornful scorn.

You then, my friends, who are in the world, go forth without fear and shout out loud, announce my will to them and help them to carry it out. I will be in your hearts and in your words. I will be your guide in life and your savior in death. I will not abandon you. Go forth boldly - the more the toil, the greater the glory!

I can do all things in a single instant and with a single word, but I want your reward to grow through your own efforts and my glory to grow through your bravery. Do not be surprised at what I say. If the wisest man in the world could count up how many souls fall into hell each day, they would outnumber the sands of the sea or the pebbles on the shore. This is a matter of justice, because these souls have separated themselves from their Lord and God. I am saying this so that the devil's numbers may decrease, and the danger become known, and my army be filled up. If only they would listen and come to their senses!"

Jesus Christ speaks to the bride and compares his divine nature to a crown and uses Peter and Paul to symbolize the clerical and the lay state, and about the ways of dealing with enemies, and about the qualities that knights in the world should have.

Chapter 7

The Son spoke to the bride, saying: "I am King of the crown. Do you know why I said 'King of the crown'? Because my divine nature was and will be and is without beginning or end. My divine nature is aptly likened to a crown, because a crown has neither starting-point nor end. Just as a crown is reserved for the future king in a kingdom, so too my divine nature was reserved for my human nature to be its crown.

I had two servants. One was a priest, the other a layman. The first was Peter who had a priestly office, while Paul was, as it were, a layman. Peter was bound in marriage, but when he saw that his marriage was not consistent with his priestly office, and considering that his upright intention might be endangered by a lack of continence, he separated himself from the otherwise licit marriage, in which he divorced himself from his wife's bed, and he devoted himself to me wholeheartedly.

Paul, however, did observe celibacy and kept himself unstained by the marriage-bed. See what great love I had for these two! I gave the keys of heaven to Peter so that whatever he bound or loosed on earth might be bound or loosed in heaven. I allowed Paul to become like Peter in glory and honor. As they were equals together on earth, so now they are united in everlasting glory in heaven and glorified together. However, although I mentioned these two expressly by name, by and through them I mean to denote other friends of mine as well. In similar fashion, under the earlier Covenant, I used to speak to Israel as if I were addressing just one person, although I meant to designate the entire people of Israel by that one name. In the same way now, using these two men, I mean to denote the multitude of those whom I have filled with my glory and love.

With the passage of time, evils began to multiply and the flesh began to grow weaker and to be more than usually prone to evil. Therefore, I set up norms for each of the two, that is, for the clergy and laity, represented here by Peter and Paul. In my mercy I decided to allow the clergy to own a moderate amount of church property for their bodily needs in order that they might grow more fervent and constant in serving me. I also allowed the laity to join in marriage according to the rites of the church. Among the priests there was a certain good man who thought to himself: 'The flesh drags me toward base pleasure, the world drags me toward harmful sights, while the devil sets various traps to get me to sin. Therefore, in order not to be ensnared by carnal pleasure, I will observe moderation in all my actions. I will be moderate in my rest and recreation.

I will dedicate the proper time to work and prayer and restrain my carnal appetites through fasting. Second, in order that the world may not drag me away from the love of God, I will give up all worldly things, for they are all perishable. It is safer to follow Christ in poverty. Third, in order not to be deceived by the devil who is always showing us falsehoods instead of the truth, I will submit myself to the rule and obedience of another; and I will reject all selfishness and show that I am ready to undertake whatever is commanded me by the other person.' This man was the first to establish a monastic rule. He persevered in it in praiseworthy fashion and left his life as an example to be imitated by others.

For a time the class of the laity was well organized. Some of them tilled the soil and bravely persevered in working the land. Others sailed on ships and carried merchandise to other regions so that the resources of one region supplied the needs of another. Others were diligent craftsmen and artisans. Among these were the defenders of my church who are now called knights.

They took up arms as avengers of the Holy Church in order to do battle against her enemies. There appeared among them a good man and friend of mine who thought to himself: 'I do not till the soil as a farmer. I do not toil on the seas as a merchant. I do not work with my hands as a skilled craftsman.

What, then, can I do or with what works can I please my God? I am not energetic enough in the service of the church. My body is too soft and weak to bear physical injuries, my hands lack the force to strike down enemies, and my mind grows uneasy in pondering the things of heaven. What can I do then?

I know what I can do. I will go and bind myself by a stable oath to a secular prince, swearing to defend the faith of the Holy Church with my strength and with my blood.' That friend of mine went to the prince and said: 'My lord, I am one of the defenders of the church. My body is all too weak to bear physical injuries, my hands lack the force to strike down others; my mind is unstable when it comes to thinking about and carrying out what is good; my self-will is what pleases me; and my need for rest does not let me take a strong stance for the house of God. I bind myself therefore with a public oath of obedience to the Holy Church and to you, o Prince, swearing to defend her all the days of my life in order that, although my mind and will may be lukewarm with respect to the struggle, I can be held and compelled to toil because of my oath.' The prince answered him: 'I will go with you to the house of the Lord and be a witness to your oath and your promise.' Both of them came up to my altar, and my friend genuflected and said: 'I am

too weak of body to bear physical injuries, my self-will is all too pleasing to me, my hands are too lukewarm when it comes to striking blows.

Therefore, I now pledge obedience to God and to you, my chief, binding myself by an oath to defend the Holy Church against her enemies, to comfort the friends of God, to do good to widows, orphans, and God's faithful, and never to do anything contrary to God's church or the faith. Moreover, I will submit myself to your correction, if I should happen to err, in order that, bound by obedience, I might fear sin and selfishness all the more and apply myself more fervently and readily to carrying out God's will and your own will, knowing myself to be only the more worthy of condemnation and contempt if I should presume to violate obedience and transgress your commands.' After this profession had been made at my altar, the prince wisely decided that the man should dress differently than other laymen as a sign of his self-renouncement and as a reminder to him that he had a superior to whom he had to submit.

The prince also placed a sword in his hand, saying: 'This sword is for you to use to threaten and slay the enemies of God.' He placed a shield on his arm, saying: 'Defend yourself with this shield against the missiles of the enemy and patiently endure whatever is thrown against it. May you sooner see it shattered than run away from battle!' In the presence of my priest who was listening, my friend made the firm promise to observe all of this. When he had made his promise, the priest gave him my body to provide him strength and fortitude so that, once united with me through my body, my friend might never be separated from me. Such was my friend George as well as many others. Such, too, should the knights be. They should get to hold their title as a result of merit and to wear their knightly attire as a result of their actions in defense of the Holy Faith.

Hear how my enemies are now going against the earlier deeds of my friends. My friends used to enter the monastery out of their wise reverence and love for God. But those who are in monasteries nowadays go out into the world because of pride and greed, following self-will, fulfilling the pleasure of their bodies. Justice demands that people who die in such a disposition should not experience the joy of heaven but rather obtain the endless punishment of hell. Know, too, that the cloistered monks who are forced against their will to become prelates out of love for God are not to be counted among their number. The knights who used to bear my arms were ready to lay down their lives for justice and shed their blood for the sake of the holy faith, bringing justice to the needy, putting down and humbling the doers of evil.

But hear how they have now been corrupted! Now they would rather die in battle for the sake of pride, greed, and envy at the promptings of the devil instead of living after my commandments and obtaining eternal joy. Just wages will therefore be dealt out at the judgment to all the people who die in such a disposition, and their souls will be yoked to the devil forever. But the knights who serve me will receive their due wages in the heavenly host forever. I, Jesus Christ, true God and man, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever, have said this.”

Christ's words to the bride about a certain knight's desertion from the true army, that is, from humility, obedience, patience, faith, etc., to the false one, that is, to the opposing vices, pride, etc., and the description of his condemnation, and about how one can meet with condemnation because of an evil will just as much as because of evil deeds.

Chapter 8

“I am the true Lord. There is no other lord greater than I. There was no lord before me nor will there be any after me. All lordship comes from me and through me. This is why I am the true Lord and why no one but I alone can truly be called Lord, for all power comes from me.

I was telling you earlier that I had two servants, one of whom manfully took up a praiseworthy way of life and kept at it manfully to the end. Countless others followed him in that same way of knightly service. I will now tell you about the first man to desert the profession of knighthood as instituted by my friend. I will not tell you his name, because you do not know him by name, but I will disclose his purpose and desire.

A man who wanted to become a knight came to my sanctuary. When he went in, he heard a voice: 'Three things are necessary if you want to be a knight: First, you must believe that the bread you see on the altar is true God and true man, the Creator of heaven and earth. Second, once you take up your knightly service, you must exercise more self-restraint than you were accustomed to doing before. Third, you should not care about worldly honor. Rather I will give you divine joy and everlasting honor.

Hearing this and pondering these three things to himself, he heard an evil voice in his mind making three proposals contrary to the first three. It said: 'If you serve me, I will

make you three other proposals. I will let you take what you see, hear what you like, and obtain what you desire.' When he heard this, he thought to himself: 'The first lord bade me to have faith in something I do not see and promised me things unknown to me. He bade me abstain from the delights that I can see, and that I desire, and to hope for things of which I am uncertain. The other lord promised me the worldly honor that I can see and the pleasure that I desire without forbidding me to hear or see the things I like.

Surely, it is better for me to follow him and to have what I see and to enjoy the things that are sure rather than to hope for things of which I am uncertain.' With thoughts such as these, this man was the first to commence the desertion from the service of a true knight. He rejected the true profession and broke his promise. He threw down the shield of patience at my feet and let the sword for the defense of the faith drop from his hands and left the sanctuary. The evil voice told him: 'If, as I said, you would be mine, then you should walk proudly in the fields and streets. That other Lord commands his men to be constantly humble. Therefore, be sure not to avoid any sign of pride and ostentation! While that other Lord made his entrance in obedience and subjected himself to obedience in every way, you should let no one be your superior. Bend not your neck in humility to another. Take up your sword to shed the blood of your neighbor and brother in order to acquire his property!

Strap the shield to your arm and risk your life for the sake of winning renown! Instead of the faith that he holds out, give your love to the temple of your own body without abstaining from any of the pleasures that delight you.' While the man was making up his mind and strengthening his resolve with such thoughts, his prince laid his hand on the man's neck in the appointed place. No place whatsoever can harm anyone who has a good will or help anyone whose intention is wicked. After the confirmation of his knighthood, the wretch betrayed his knightly service, exercising it only with a view to worldly pride, making light of the fact that he was now under a greater obligation to live an austere life than before. Countless armies of knights imitated and still imitate this knight in his pride, and he has sunk all the deeper into the abyss due to his knightly vows.

But, given that there are many people who want to rise in the world and achieve renown but do not manage to do so, you might ask: Are these people to be punished for the wickedness of their intentions as much as those who achieve their desired success? To this I answer you: I assure you that anyone who fully intends to rise in the world and does all he can to do so in order to gain an empty title of worldly honor, although his intention never achieves its effect due to some secret decision of mine, such a man will be

punished for the wickedness of his intention just as much as the one who does manage to achieve it, that is, unless he rectifies his intention through penance.

Look, I will put to you the example of two persons known well enough to many people. One of them prospered according to his wishes and obtained almost everything he desired. The other had the same intention, but not the same possibilities. The first one obtained worldly renown; he loved the temple of his body in its every lust; he had the power he wanted; everything he put his hand to prospered. The other was identical to him in intention but received less renown. He would willingly have shed his neighbor's blood a hundred times over in order to be able to realize his plans of greed.

He did what he could and carried out his will in accordance with his desire. These two were alike in their horrible punishment. Although they did not die at exactly the same time, I can still speak of one soul rather than two, since their condemnation was one and the same. Both had the same thing to say when body and soul were separated and the soul departed. Once having left the body, the soul said to it: 'Tell me, where now are the sights to delight my eyes that you promised me, where is the pleasure you showed me, where are the pleasant words that you bade me use?' The devil was there and answered:

'The promised sights are no more than dust, the words are but air, the pleasure is but mud and rot. Those things are of no value to you now.' The soul exclaimed then: 'Alas, alas, I have been wretchedly deceived! I see three things.

I see him who was promised to me under the semblance of bread. He is the very King of kings and Lord of lords. I see what he promised, and it is indescribable and inconceivable. I hear now that the abstinence he recommended was really most useful.' Then, in an even louder voice, the soul cried out 'woe' three times: 'Woe is me that ever I was born! Woe is me that my life on the earth was so long! Woe is me that I shall live in a perpetual and neverending death!'

Behold what wretchedness the wretched will have in return for their contempt of God and their fleeting joy! You should therefore thank me, my bride, for having called you away from such wretchedness! Be obedient to my Spirit and to my chosen ones!"

Christ's words to the bride giving an explanation of the immediately preceding chapter,

and about the devil's attack on the aforementioned knight, and about his terrible and just condemnation.

Chapter 9

“The entire span of this life is but as a single hour for me. Therefore, what I am telling you now has always been in my foreknowledge. I told you before about a man who began the true knighthood, and about another who deserted it like a scoundrel. The man who deserted from the ranks of true knights threw down his shield at my feet and his sword at my side by breaking his sacred promises and vows. The shield he threw down symbolizes nothing other than the upright faith by which he was to defend himself against the enemies of the faith and of his soul.

The feet, on which I walk toward humanity, symbolize nothing other than the divine delight by which I attract a person to myself and the patience by which I patiently bear with him. He threw this shield down when he entered my sanctuary, thinking to himself: I want to obey the lord who counseled me not to practice abstinence, the one who gives me what I desire and lets me hear things pleasant to my ears. This was how he threw down the shield of my faith by wanting to follow his own selfish desire rather than me, by loving the creature more than the Creator.

If he had had an upright faith, if he had believed me to be almighty and a just judge and the giver of eternal glory, he would not have wished for anything but me, he would not have feared anything but me. But he threw down my faith at my feet, despising it and counting it for nothing, because he did not seek to please me and had no regard for my patience. Then he threw down his sword at my side. The sword denotes nothing other than the fear of God, which God's true knight should continuously have in his hands, that is, in his acts. My side symbolizes nothing other than the care and protection with which I shelter and defend my children, like a mother hen sheltering her chicks, so that the devil does not harm them and no unendurable trials come upon them.

But that man threw away the sword of my fear by not bothering to think about my power and by not having any regard for my love and patience.

He threw it down at my side as if to say: 'I neither fear nor care about your defense. I got what I have by my own doing and my noble birth.' He broke the promise he made to me. What is the true promise that a man is bound to vow to God? Surely, it is deeds of

love: that whatever a person does, he should do out of love for God. But this he set aside by twisting his love for God toward self-love; he preferred his selfishness to future and eternal delight.

In this way he separated himself from me and left the sanctuary of my humility. The body of any Christian ruled by humility is my sanctuary. Those ruled by pride are not my sanctuary but the sanctuary of the devil who steers them toward worldly desire after his own purposes. Having gone out of the temple of my humility, and having rejected the shield of holy faith and the sword of fear, he walked out proudly to the fields, cultivating every selfish lust and desire, scorning to fear me and growing in sin and lust.

When he reached the final end of his life and his soul had left the body, the demons charged out to meet him. Three voices from hell could be heard speaking against him. The first said: 'Is not this the man who deserted from humility and followed us in pride? If his two feet could take him up even higher in pride so as to surpass us and hold the primacy in pride, he would be quick to do so.' The soul answered him: 'I am the one.' Justice answered him: 'This is the reward of your pride: you will descend handed by one demon down to the next until you reach the lowest part of hell. And given that there was no demon who did not know his own particular punishment and the torment to be inflicted for every useless thought and deed, neither will you escape punishment at the hands of any one of them but share in the malice and evil of them all.' The second voice cried out saying: 'Is not this the man who separated himself from his professed service to God and joined our ranks instead?'

The soul answered: 'I am the one.' And Justice said: 'This is your allotted reward: that everyone who imitates your conduct as a knight will add to your punishment and sorrow by his own corruption and pain and will strike you at his coming as though with a deadly wound. You will be like a man afflicted by a severe wound, indeed like one afflicted by wound upon wound until his whole body is full of wounds, who endures intolerable suffering and bewails his fate constantly. Even so, you will experience misery upon misery. At the height of your pain, your pain will be renewed, and your punishment will never end and your woes will never decrease.' The third voice cried out: 'Is not this the man who exchanged his Creator for creatures, the love of his Creator for his own selfishness?' Justice answered: 'It certainly is.'

Therefore, two holes will be opened in him. Through the first the re will enter into him every punishment earned for his least sin up to his greatest, inasmuch as he

exchanged his Creator for his own lust. Through the second there will enter into him every kind of pain and shame, and no divine consolation or charity will ever come to him, inasmuch as he loved himself rather than his Creator. His life will last forever and his punishment will last forever, for all the saints have turned away from him.' My bride, see how miserable those people will be who despise me and how great will be the pain they purchase at the price of so little pleasure!"

As God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, Christ speaks to the bride about how the devil is symbolized by Pharaoh, present-day knights by the people of Israel, and the Virgin's body by the bush, and about how present-day knights and bishops are, at present, preparing a home for the devil.

Chapter 10

"It is written in the law of Moses that Moses was watching over the flocks in the desert when he saw a bush that was on fire without being burned up, and he became afraid and covered his face. A voice spoke to him from the bush: 'I have heard of my people's suffering and feel pity for them, for they are oppressed in harsh slavery.' I who am now speaking with you am that voice heard from the bush. I have heard the misery of my people. Who were my people if not Israel? Using this same name I now designate the knights in the world who have taken the vows of my knighthood and who should be mine but are being attacked by the devil.

What did Pharaoh do to my people Israel in Egypt? Three things. First, when they were building his walls, they were not to be helped by those gatherers of straw who earlier had helped them in making bricks. Instead, they had to go themselves and gather the straw wherever they could throughout the entire country. Second, the builders did not get any thanks for their labor, despite their producing the number of bricks set them as a goal. Third, the foremen beat them harshly whenever they fell short of their normal production. In the midst of their great affliction, this people of mine built two cities for pharaoh.

This pharaoh is none another than the devil who attacks my people, that is, the knights, who ought be my people. Truly I tell you that if the knights had kept the arrangement and rule established by my first friend, they would have been among my

dearest friends. Just as Abraham, who was the first to be given the commandment of circumcision and was obedient to me, became my dearest friend, and anyone who imitated Abraham's faith and works shared in his love and glory, so too the knights were especially pleasing to me among all the orders, since they promised to shed for me that which they held most dear, their own blood. By this vow they made themselves most pleasing to me, just as Abraham did in the matter of circumcision, and they purified themselves daily by living up to their profession and by taking up the practice of holy charity.

These knights are now so oppressed by their wretched slavery under the devil that the devil is wounding them with a lethal wound and throwing them into pain and suffering. The bishops of the church are building two cities for him just like the children of Israel. The first city stands for physical toil and meaningless anxiety over the acquisition of worldly goods. The second city stands for spiritual unrest and distress, inasmuch as they are never allowed to rest from worldly desire. There is toil on the outside and restlessness and anxiety on the inside, rendering spiritual things a burden.

Just as Pharaoh did not supply my people with the things necessary for making bricks or give them fields full of grain, or wine and other useful things, but the people had to go and find them for themselves in sorrow and tribulation of heart, so the devil deals likewise with them now. Although they toil for and covet the world with their inmost heart, they are still unable to fulfill their desire and sate the thirst of their greed. They are consumed on the inside with sorrow and on the outside with toil. For that reason, I pity them their sufferings, because my knights, my people, are building homes for the devil and toiling ceaselessly, because they cannot get what they desire, and because they worry themselves over meaningless goods, although the fruit of their anxiety is not a blessing but rather the reward of shame.

When Moses was sent to the people, God gave him a miraculous sign for three reasons. First, it was because each person in Egypt worshipped his own individual god, and because there were innumerable beings who were said to be gods. Therefore it was fitting that there should be a miraculous sign so that, through it and by the power of God, people would believe that there was one God and one Creator of all things because of the signs, and so that all the idols would be proved worthless. Second, a sign was also given to Moses as a symbol prefiguring my future body. What did the burning bush that was not consumed symbolize if not the Virgin who conceived by the Holy Spirit and gave birth without corruption? From this bush I came forth, assuming a human nature from

the virginal body of Mary. Similarly, the serpent given as a sign to Moses symbolized my body. In the third place, a sign was given to Moses in order to confirm the truth of coming events and to prefigure the miraculous signs to be done in the future, proving the truth of God to be so much the truer and more certain the more clearly those things signified by the signs were in time fulfilled.

I am now sending my words to the children of Israel, that is, to the knights. They need no miraculous signs for three reasons. This is, first of all, because the one God and Creator of all things is already worshipped and known through Holy Scripture as well as through many signs. Second, they are not now waiting for me to be born, because they know that I was truly born and became incarnate without corruption, inasmuch as scripture has been completely fulfilled. And there is no better or more certain faith to be held and believed than the one that has already been preached by me and by my holy preachers. Nevertheless, I have done three things through you by which it may be believed. First, these are my true words and do not differ from the true faith.

Second, a demon went out of a possessed man at my word. Third, I gave a certain man the power to unite mistrustful hearts in mutual charity. Therefore, do not have any doubts about those who will believe in me. Those who believe in me believe also in my words. Those who savor me savor also my words. It is written that Moses covered his face after speaking with God.

You, however, do not need to cover your face. I opened your spiritual eyes so that you might see spiritual things. I opened your ears so that you might hear the things that are of the Spirit. I will show you a likeness of my body as it was during and before my passion, and such as it was after the resurrection, as Magdalene and Peter and others saw it. You will also hear my voice as it spoke to Moses from within the bush. This same voice is now speaking within your soul.”

Christ's delightful words to the bride about the glory and honor of the good and true knight, and about how the angels come out to meet him, and about how the glorious Trinity welcomes him affectionately and takes him to a place of indescribable rest as a reward for but a little struggle.

“I told you before about the end and punishment of that knight who was the first to desert from the knightly service he had promised me. I will now describe for you by way of metaphors (for otherwise you are unable to understand spiritual things) the glory and honor of him who first manfully took up the true knightly service and manfully kept at it to the end. When this friend of mine came to the end of his life and his soul left his body, five legions of angels were sent to greet him. Along with them there also came a multitude of demons in order to find out if they could lay any claim to him, for they are full of malice and never rest from malice.

A bright clear voice was then heard in heaven, saying: 'My Lord and Father, is not this the man who bound himself to your will and carried it out to perfection?' The man himself then answered in his own conscience: 'Indeed I am.' Three voices were then heard. The first was that of the divine nature, which said: 'Did I not create you and give you a body and soul? You are my son and you have done your Father's will. Come to me, your almighty Creator and dear Father! An eternal inheritance is owed to you, for you are a son. Your Father's inheritance is owed to you, for you have been obedient to him.

So, dear son, come to me then! I will welcome you with joy and honor.' The second voice was that of the human nature, which said: 'Brother, come to your brother! I offered myself for you in battle and shed my blood for you. You, who obeyed my will, come to me! You, who paid blood for blood and were prepared to offer death for death and life for life, come to me! You, who imitated me in your life, enter now into my life and into my neverending joy! I recognize you as my true brother.' The third voice was that of the Spirit (but the three are one God, not three gods) that said: 'Come, my knight, you whose interior life was so attractive that I longed to dwell with you!

In your exterior conduct you were so manly that you deserved my protection. Enter, then, into rest in return for all your physical troubles! In return for your mental suffering, enter into a consolation beyond description! In return for your charity and your manly struggles, come into me and I will dwell in you and you in me! Come to me, then, my excellent knight, who never yearned for anything but me! Come and you will be filled with holy pleasure!' Afterward five voices were heard from each of the five legions of angels.

The first one spoke, saying: 'Let us march ahead of this excellent knight and carry his weapons ahead of him, that is, let us present to our God the faith he preserved unshaken and defended from the enemies of justice.' The second voice said: 'Let us carry

his shield ahead of him, that is, let us show our God that patience of his which, although it is already known to God, will be even more glorious because of our testimony. By his patience he not only bore adversities patiently but also thanked God for those same adversities.'

The third voice said: 'Let us march ahead of him and present his sword to God, that is, let us show him the obedience by which he remained obedient in both difficult and easy times in accordance with his pledge.' The fourth voice said: 'Come and let us show our God his horse, that is, let us offer the testimony of his humility. As a horse carries the body of a man, so his humility both preceded and followed him, carrying him forth to the performance of every good work. Pride found nothing of its own in him, which is why he rode in safety.' The fifth voice said: 'Come and let us present his helmet to our God, that is, let us bear witness to the divine yearning he felt for God!

He meditated on him in his heart at all times. He had him on his lips, in his works, and yearned for him above all things. Out of his love and veneration he caused himself to die to the world. So, let us present these things to our God, for, in return for a little struggle, this man has deserved eternal rest and joy with his God for whom he yearned so much and so often!' Accompanied by the sounds of these voices and a wonderful choir of angels, my friend was carried to eternal rest.

His soul saw it all and said to itself in exultation: 'Happy am I to have been created! Happy am I to have served my God whom I now behold! Happy am I, for I have joy and glory that will never end!' In such a way did my friend come to me and receive such a reward. Although not everyone sheds his blood for the sake of my name, nevertheless, everyone will receive the same reward, provided they have the intention of giving their lives for me if the occasion presents itself and the needs of the faith demand it. See how important a good intention is!"

Christ's words to the bride about the unchanging nature and eternal duration of his justice, and about how, after taking a human nature, he revealed his justice through his love in a new light, and about how he tenderly exercises mercy toward the damned and gently teaches his knights mercy.

“I am the true King. No one deserves to be called king except me, because all honor and power come from me. I am he who rendered judgment upon the first angel to fall through pride, greed, and envy. I am he who rendered judgment upon Adam and Cain as well as upon the whole world by sending it the flood due to the sins of the human race. I am the same one who allowed the people of Israel to come into captivity and miraculously led it out with miraculous signs. All justice is to be found in me. Justice always was and is in me without beginning or end. It does not at any time grow less in me but remains in me true and unchangeable. Although at the present time my justice seems to be somewhat gentler and God seems to be a more patient judge now, this represents no change in my justice, which never changes, but only shows my love the more. I now judge the world by that same justice and that same true judgment as when I permitted my people to become slaves in Egypt and made them suffer in the desert.

My love was hidden prior to my incarnation. I kept it hidden in my justice like light obscured by a cloud. Once I had taken a human nature, although the law that had been given was changed, justice itself was not changed but was all the more clearly visible and was shown in a more abundant light in love through God's Son. This happened in three ways. First, the law was mitigated, since it had been severe because of disobedient and hardened sinners and it was difficult in order to tame the proud. Second, the Son of God suffered and died. Third, my judgment now appears to be farther away and both seems to be postponed out of mercy and to be gentler toward sinners than before. Indeed, the acts of justice concerning the first parents or the flood or those who died in the desert seem rigid and strict. But that same justice is still with me and ever has been. However, mercy and love are now more apparent. Earlier, for wise reasons, love was hidden in justice and displayed with mercy, albeit in a more hidden manner, because I never carried out and never do carry out justice without mercy or kindness without justice. Now, however, you might ask: if I show mercy in all my justice, in what way am I merciful toward the damned? I will answer you by way of a parable.

It is as if a judge were seated in judgment and his brother came along to be sentenced. The judge says to him: 'You are my brother and I am your judge and, although I sincerely love you, I cannot nor is it right for me to counteract justice. In your conscience you see what is just with respect to what you deserve. It is necessary to sentence you accordingly. If it were possible to go against justice, I would willingly take your sentence upon myself.' I am like that judge. This person is my brother because of my human nature. When he comes to be judged by me, his conscience informs him of his

guilt and he understands what his sentence should be. Since I am just, I reply to the soul - figuratively speaking - and tell it: 'You see all that is just for you in your conscience. Tell me what you deserve.' The soul answers me then: 'My conscience informs me of my sentence. It is the punishment due to me, because I did not obey you.' I answer: 'I, your judge, took on myself all your punishment and made your danger known to you as well as the way to escape punishment. It was simple justice that you could not enter heaven before atoning for your guilt. I took on your atonement, because you were incapable of bearing it your self.

Through the prophets I showed you what would happen to me, and I did not omit a single detail of what the prophets foretold. I showed you all the love I could in order to make you turn to me. However, since you have turned away from me, you deserve to be sentenced, because you scorned mercy. However, I am still so merciful that, if it were possible for me to die again, for your sake I would again endure the same torment I once endured on the cross rather than see you sentenced to such a sentence. Justice, however, says that it is impossible for me to die again, even if mercy tells me to want to die for your sake again, if it were possible. This is how I am merciful and loving even toward the damned. I loved mankind from the start, even when I seemed to be angry, but nobody cared about or paid any attention to my love.

Because I am just and merciful, I warn the so-called knights that they should seek my mercy, lest my justice find them. My justice is as immovable as a mountain, it burns like fire, it is as frightening as thunder, and as sudden as a bow fitted with an arrow. My warning is threefold. First, I warn them as a father does his children, in order to make them turn back to me, because I am their Father and Creator. Let them return, and I will give them the patrimony due to them by right. Let them return, because, although I have been spurned, I will still welcome them with joy and go out to meet them with love. Second, I ask them like a brother to recall my wounds and my deeds. Let them return, and I will receive them like a brother. Third, as their Lord I ask them to return to the Lord to whom they pledged their faith, to whom they owe their allegiance and to whom they have sworn themselves by oath.

Wherefore, o knights, turn back to me, your father, who brought you up with love. Think on me, your brother, who became as one of you for your sakes. Turn back to me, your kind Lord. It is highly dishonest to pledge your faith and allegiance to another lord. You pledged me that you would defend my church and help the needy. See now how you pledge allegiance to my enemy, and throw away my banner and hoist the banner of my

enemy!

Wherefore, O knights, come back to me in true humility, since you deserted me through pride. If anything seems hard to suffer for me, consider what I did for you! For your sakes, I went to the cross with my feet bleeding; my hands and feet were pierced for you; I spared not a single limb of mine for you. And yet you ignore all this by running away from me. Come back, and I will give you three kinds of help. First, fortitude, so as to be able to withstand your physical and spiritual enemies. Second, a brave generosity, so that you may fear nothing but me and may deem it a joy to exert yourselves for my sake. Third, I shall give you wisdom to make you understand the true faith and the will of God. Therefore, come back and take your stand like men! For I, who am giving you this warning, am the same one whom the angels serve, the one who freed those forefathers of yours who were obedient but sentenced the disobedient and humbled the proud. I was first in war, first in suffering. Follow me, then, so that you will not be melted like wax by fire. Why are you breaking your promise? Why do you scorn your oath? Am I of less value or more unworthy than some worldly friend of yours to whom, once you pledge your faith, you keep it? To me, however, the giver of life and honor, the preserver of health, you do not render what you have promised.

For this reason, good knights, fulfill your promise and, if you are too weak to do so in deeds, at least have the will to do so! I feel pity due to the slavery the devil has imposed on you and so I will accept your intention as a deed. If you come back to me in love, then exert yourselves in the faith of my church, and I will come out to meet you like a kind father together with all my army. I will give you five good things as a reward. First, neverending praise will always sound in your ears. Second, the face and glory of God will always be before your eyes. Third, the praise of God will never leave your lips. Fourth, you will have everything your soul can desire, and you will desire nothing more than you have. Fifth, you will never be separated from your God, but your joy will endure without end and you will live your life in joy without end.

Such will be your reward, my knights, if you defend my faith and exert yourselves more for the sake of my honor than for your own. If you have any sense, remember that I have been patient with you and that you have insulted me in a way you yourselves would never tolerate. However, although I can do all things by reason of my omnipotence, and although my justice cries out to be revenged upon you, still my mercy, which is in my wisdom and goodness, spares you. Therefore, ask for mercy! In my love I grant that which a person asks me for in humility.”

Christ's strong words to the bride against present-day knights, and about the proper way of creating knights, and about how God gives and bestows strength and help to them in their actions.

Chapter 13

“I am one God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit in a trinity of persons. None of the three can be separated or divided from the others, but the Father is in both the Son and the Spirit, and the Son is in both the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit is in both. The Divinity sent its Word to the Virgin Mary through the angel Gabriel. Yet the same God, both sending and being sent by himself, was with the angel, and he was in Gabriel, and he was in the Virgin prior to Gabriel. After the angel had delivered his message, the word was made flesh in the Virgin. I, who speak with you, am that Word.

The Father sent me through himself together with the Holy Spirit into the womb of the Virgin, although not in such away that the angels would be left without the vision and presence of God. Rather, I, the Son, who was with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the virginal womb, remained the same God in the sight of the angels in heaven together with the Father and the Spirit, ruling and sustaining all things. However, the human nature assumed by the only Son lay in the womb of Mary. I, who am one God in my divine and human natures, do not disdain to speak with you and thus manifest my love and strengthen the holy faith.

Although my human form seems to be here before you and to be speaking with you, nonetheless it is truer to say that your soul and your conscience are with me and in me. Nothing in heaven or on earth is impossible or difficult for me. I am like a powerful king who comes to a city with his troops and takes up the whole place, occupying all of it. In like manner, my grace fills all of your limbs and strengthens them all. I am within you and with out you. Although I may be speaking with you, I remain the same in my glory. What could possibly be difficult for me who sustains all things with my power and arranges all things in my wisdom, surpassing everything in excellence? I, who am one God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, without beginning or end, who assumed a human nature for the sake of the salvation of humankind, the divine nature remaining intact, who suffered, rose again, and ascended into heaven, I am now truly

speaking with you.

I told you earlier about the knights who were once most pleasing to me because they were bound to me by the bond of charity. They bound themselves by their oath to offer up their body for my body, their blood for my blood. This is why I gave them my consent, why I joined them to myself in a single bond and a single company. Now, however, my grievance is that these knights, who ought to be mine, have turned away from me. I am their Creator and redeemer as well as their helper. I made a body with all its limbs for them. I made everything in the world for their use. I redeemed them with my blood. I bought an eternal inheritance for them with my passion. I protect them in every danger.

Now, however, they have turned away from me. They hold my passion for naught, they neglect my words that should delight and nourish their soul. They despise me, preferring with all their heart and soul to offer up their body and let it be wounded in return for human praise, to shed their blood for the sake of satisfying their greed, happy to die on account of worldly, devilish, empty speech. But still, although they have turned away, my mercy and justice is upon them. I mercifully watch over them so that they may not be handed over to the devil. In justice I bear with them patiently and, if they would turn back again, I would welcome them joyfully and gladly run out to meet them.

Tell that man who wants to put his knighthood at my service that he can please me once again through the following ceremony. Anyone who wants to be made a knight should proceed with his horse and armor to the churchyard and leave his horse there, since it was not made for human pride but in order to be useful in life and in defense and in fighting the enemies of God. Then let him put on his cloak, placing its clasp to his forehead, similar to what a deacon does when he puts on his stole as a sign of obedience and holy patience. In like manner, he should put on his cloak and place the clasp to his forehead as a sign both of his military vows and of the obedience undertaken for the defense of Christ's cross.

A banner of the secular government should be carried before him, reminding him that he should obey his worldly government in all the things that are not against God. Once he has entered the churchyard, the priests should go out to meet him with the banner of the church. On it the passion and wounds of Christ should be depicted as a sign that he is obliged to defend the church of God and comply with her prelates. When he enters the church, the banner of the temporal government should remain outside the church while the banner of God should go before him into the church as a sign that divine

authority precedes secular authority and that one should care more about spiritual things than temporal things.

When Mass has been said up to the Agnus Dei, the presiding officer, that is, the king or someone else, should go up to the knight at the altar and say: 'Do you want to be made a knight?' When the candidate answers, I do,' the other should add the words: 'Promise to God and to me that you will defend the faith of the Holy Church and obey its leaders in all the things pertaining to God!'

When the candidate answers 'I do,' the other should place a sword in his hands, saying: 'Behold, I place a sword in your hands so that you may not spare even your own life for the sake of God's church, so that you may crush the enemies of God and protect the friends of God.' Then he should give him the shield and say: 'Behold, I give you a shield so that you may defend yourself against the enemies of God, so that you may offer assistance to widows and orphans, so that you may add to the glory of God in every way.' Then he should place his hand on the other's neck, saying: 'Behold, you are now subject to obedience and to authority. Know, then, that you must carry out in practice what you have bound yourself to by your pledges!' After this, the cloak and its clasps should be fitted on him in order to remind him daily both of his vows to God and that, by his profession before the church, he has bound himself to do more than others to defend the church of God.

Once these things are done and the Agnus Dei has been said, the priest celebrating the Mass should give him my body in order that he may defend the faith of the Holy Church. I will be in him and he in me. I will furnish him with help and strength, and I will make him burn with the fire of my love so as to desire nothing but me and to fear nothing but me, his God. If he should happen to be on a campaign when he undertakes this service for my glory and the defense of my faith, it will still benefit him, provided his intention is upright.

I am everywhere by virtue of my power, and all people can please me by an upright intention and a good will. I am love, and no one can come to me but a person who has love. Therefore I do not order anyone to do this, since in that case they would be serving me out of fear. But those who want to undertake this form of knightly service can be pleasing to me. It would be fitting for them to show through humility that they want to return to the true exercise of knighthood, inasmuch as desertion from the profession of true knighthood occurs through pride.”

EXPLANATION

This knight was believed to have been Sir Karl, the son of St. Bridget.

About Christ as symbolized by a goldsmith and the words of God as gold, and about how these words should be transmitted to people with the love of God, an upright conscience, and their five senses under control, and about how the preachers of God should be diligent rather than lazy in selling the gold, that is, in transmitting the word of God.

Chapter 14

“I am like a skilled goldsmith who sends his servant to sell his gold throughout the land, telling him: 'You must do three things. First of all, you must not entrust my gold to anyone except those who have calm and clear eyes. Second, do not entrust it to people who have no conscience. Third, put my gold on sale for ten talents weighed twice over! A person who refuses to weigh my gold twice will not get it. You must beware of three weapons my enemy uses against you. First of all, he wants to make you slow to put my gold on display. Second, he wishes to mix inferior metal into my gold so that those who see and test it think my gold is just rotten clay.

Third, he instructs his friends to contradict you and to claim constantly that my gold is no good.' I am like that goldsmith. I forged everything in heaven and on earth, not with hammers and tools but by my power and strength. All that is and was and will be is foreknown to me. Not the least little worm or the smallest grain can exist or continue in existence without me. Not the least little thing escapes my foreknowledge, since everything comes from me and is foreknown to me. Among all the things I have made, however, the words I have spoken with my own lips are of the greatest value, just as gold is more valuable than other metals.

This is why my servants, whom I dispatch with my gold throughout the world, must do three things. First of all, they are not to entrust my gold to people who do not have calm and clear eyes. You may ask: 'What does it mean to have clear eyesight?' Well, a clear-sighted person is one who has divine wisdom along with divine charity. But how are

you to know this? It is obvious. That person is clear-sighted and can be entrusted with my gold who lives according to reason, who removes himself from worldly vanity and curiosity, who seeks nothing so much as his God. But that person is blind who has knowledge but does not put the divine charity he understands into practice. He seems to have his eyes on God but he does not, for his eyes are on the world and he has turned his back to God.

Second, my gold is not to be entrusted to someone with no conscience. Who has a conscience if not the person who manages his temporal, perishable goods with a view to eternity, who has his soul in heaven and his body on earth, who ponders daily how he is going to depart from earth and answer to God for his deeds? My gold should be entrusted to such a person. Third, he should put my gold on sale for ten talents weighed two times over. What do the scales with which the gold is weighed symbolize if not conscience? What do the hands that weigh the gold symbolize if not a good will and desire? What are the counterweights to be used if not spiritual and corporal works?

A person who wants to buy and keep my gold, that is, my words, should examine himself uprightly on the scales of his conscience and consider how he is to pay for it with ten talents carefully weighed out in accordance with my wishes. The first talent is the person's disciplined eyesight. This makes him consider the difference between corporal and spiritual vision, what use there is in physical beauty and appearance, how much excellence there is in the beauty and glory of the angels and of the heavenly powers that surpass all the stars of the sky in splendor, and what joyful delight a soul possesses in God's commandments and in his glory.

This talent, I mean, physical vision and spiritual vision, which is found in God's commandments and in chastity, are not to be measured on the same scale. Spiritual vision counts for more than the corporal kind and weighs more, inasmuch as a person's eyes must be open to what is beneficial for the soul and necessary for the body, but closed to foolishness and indecency.

The second talent is good hearing. A person should consider the worth of indecent, silly, and derisive language. Surely, it is worth nothing more than an empty puff of air. This is why a person should hear God's praises and hymns. He should listen to the deeds and sayings of my saints. He should hear what he needs in order to foster his soul and body in virtue. This kind of hearing weighs more on the scales than the hearing of indecency. This good kind of hearing, when it is weighed on the scales against the other

kind, will sink the scales all the way down, while the other, empty kind of hearing will get lifted up and weigh nothing at all.

The third talent is that of the tongue. A person should weigh the excellence and usefulness of edifying and measured speech on the scales of his conscience. He should also take note of the harmfulness and uselessness of vain and idle speech. He should then put away vain speech and love the good kind.

The fourth talent is taste. What is the taste of the world if not misery? Toil at the start of an enterprise, sorrow as it continues, bitterness at the end. Accordingly, a person should carefully weigh spiritual taste against the worldly kind, and the spiritual will outweigh worldly taste. The spiritual taste is never lost, never becomes wearisome, never diminishes. This kind of taste begins in the present through the restraint of lust and through a life of moderation and lasts forever in heaven through the enjoyment and sweet delight of God.

The fifth talent is that of the sense of touch. A person should weigh how much care and misery he feels because of the body, all the worldly cares, all the many problems with his neighbor. Then he experiences misery everywhere. Let him also weigh how great the peace of soul and of a well-disciplined mind is, how much good there is in not being worried about vain and superfluous possessions. Then he will experience consolation everywhere. Whoever wants to measure it well should put the spiritual and physical senses of touch on the scales, and the result will be that the spiritual outweighs the corporal. This spiritual sense of touch begins and develops through the patient endurance of setbacks and through perseverance in the commandments of God, and it lasts forever in joy and peaceful rest. A person who gives more weight to physical rest and to worldly feelings and joy than to those of eternity is not worthy to touch my gold or to enjoy my happiness.

The sixth talent is human work. A person should carefully weigh in his conscience both spiritual and material work. The former leads to heaven, the latter to the world; the former to an eternal life without suffering, the latter to tremendous pain and suffering. Whoever desires my gold should give more weight to spiritual work, which is done in my love and for my glory, than to material work, since spiritual things endure, while material things will pass away.

The seventh talent is the orderly use of time. A person is given certain times to

devote to spiritual things alone, other times for bodily functions, without which life is impossible (if these are used reasonably, they are counted as a spiritual use of time), and other times for physically useful activity. Since a person must render an account of his time as well as of his deeds, he should therefore give priority to the spiritual use of time before turning to material labor, and manage his time in such away that spiritual things are given more priority than temporal things so that no time is allowed to pass without the examination and right balance required by justice.

The eighth talent is the just administration of the temporal goods given to one, meaning that a rich person, as far as his means allow, should give to the poor with divine charity. But you might ask: 'What should a poor person who owns nothing give?' He should have the right intention and think the following thoughts: 'If I had anything, I would gladly give it generously.' Such an intention is counted for him as a deed. If the poor man's intention is such that he would like to have temporal possessions like others but only intends to give a small sum and mere trifles to the poor, this intention is reckoned for him as a small deed. Therefore a rich person with possessions should practice charity. A needy person should have the intention of giving, and it will gain him merit. Whoever gives more weight to the temporal than to the spiritual, whoever gives me one shilling and the world a hundred and himself a thousand does not use a fair measuring standard. A person who uses a measuring standard like that does not deserve to have my gold. I, the giver of all things, who can also take all things away, deserve the worthier share. Temporal goods were created for human use and necessity, not for superfluity.

The ninth talent is the careful examination of times gone and past. A person should examine his deeds, what sort of deeds they were, their number, how he has corrected them and with what merit. He should also consider whether his good works were fewer than his bad. If he should find his bad works to be more numerous than his good, then he should have a perfect purpose of amendment and be truly contrite for his misdeeds. This intention, if it be true and firm, will weigh more in God's sight than all his sins.

The tenth talent is the consideration of and planning for future time. If a person has the intention of not wanting to love anything but the things of God, of not desiring anything but what he knows to be pleasing to God, of willingly and patiently embracing difficulties, even the pains of hell, were that to give God any consolation and were it to be God's will, then this talent excels all the rest. Through this talent all dangers are easily avoided. Whoever pays these ten talents will get my gold.

However, as I said, the enemy wants to impede the people delivering my gold in three ways. First he wants to make them slow and lazy. There is both a physical and a spiritual laziness. The physical kind is when the body tires of working, getting up, and so forth. Spiritual laziness is when a spiritually minded person, knowing the sweet delight and grace of my Spirit, prefers to rest in that delight rather than to go out and help others to partake of it with him. Did not Peter and Paul experience the overflowingly sweet delight of my Spirit? If it had been my will, they would rather have lain hidden in the lowest part of the earth with the interior delight they had than to go out into the world.

However, in order that others might be made participants in their sweet delight and in order to instruct others along with themselves, they preferred to go out for other people's sake as well as for their own greater glory and not to remain by themselves without strengthening others with the grace given them. In like manner my friends, although they would like to be alone and to enjoy that sweet delight they have already, should now go forth so that others might also become participants in their joy. Just as someone with abundant possessions does not use them for himself alone but entrusts them to others, so too my words and my grace should not be kept hidden but should be broadcast to others so that they, too, may be edified.

My friends can give aid to three kinds of people. First, to the damned; second, to sinners, that is, to those who fall into sins and get up again; third, to the good who stand firm. But you may ask: 'How can a person give aid to the damned, seeing that they are unworthy of grace and it is impossible for them to return to grace?' Let me answer you by way of a simile. It is as though there were countless holes at the bottom of a certain precipice and anyone falling into them would necessarily sink to the depths. However, if someone were to block up one of the holes, the person falling would not sink down as deeply as if no hole had been blocked up. This is what happens to the damned. Although by reason of my justice and their own hardened malice they have to be condemned at a definite and foreknown time, still their punishment will be lighter if they are held back by others from doing certain evils and instead urged to do something good. That is how I am merciful even toward the damned. Although mercy pleads for leniency, justice and their own wickedness countermand it.

In the second place, they can give aid to those who fall down but get back up again by teaching them how to get up, by making them take care not to fall, and by instructing them how to improve and to resist their passions.

In the third place, they can be of benefit to the righteous and perfect. Do not they themselves fall as well? Of course they do, but it is for their greater glory and the devil's shame. Just as a soldier lightly wounded in battle gets all the more stirred up because of his wound and becomes that much keener for battle, so too the diabolical temptation of adversity stirs up my chosen ones all the more for the spiritual struggle and for humility, and they make all the more fervent progress toward winning the crown of glory. Therefore my words should not be kept hidden from my friends, for, having heard of my grace, they will get all the more stirred up as to devotion toward me.

My enemy's second method is to use deception in order to make my gold look like clay. For this reason, when any of my words are being transcribed, the transcriber should bring two trusty witnesses or one man of proven conscience to certify that he has examined the document. Only then may it be transmitted to whomever he wants, in order not to come uncertified into the hands of enemies who could add something false, which could lead to the words of truth being denigrated among simple folk.

My enemy's third method is to make his own friends preach resistance to my gold. My friends should then say to those who contradict them: "The gold of these words contains, as it were, only three teachings. They teach you to fear rightly, to love piously, to desire heaven intelligently. Test the words and see for yourselves, and, if you find anything else there, contradict it!" "

Christ's words to the bride about how the way to paradise was opened by his coming, and about the ardent love he showed us in bearing so many sufferings for us from his birth to his death, and about how the way to hell has now been made wide and the way to paradise narrow.

Chapter 15

"You are wondering why I am telling you such things and why I am revealing such marvels to you. Is it for your sake alone? Of course not, it is for the edification and salvation of others. You see, the world was like a kind of wilderness in which there was one road leading down to the great abyss. In the abyss were two chambers. One was so deep that it had no bottom and the people who went down into it never came up again.

The second was not so deep or frightening as the first. Those who went down into it had some hope of help; they experienced longing and delay but not misery, darkness but not torment. The people who lived in this second chamber kept sending their cries daily to a magnificent city nearby that was filled with every good thing and every delight.

They cried out hardily, for they knew the way to the city. However, the wild forest was so thick and dense that they were unable to cross it or make any advance because of its density, and they had not the strength to forge a path through it. What was their cry? Their cry was this: 'O God, come and give us help, show us the way and enlighten us, we are waiting for you! We cannot be saved by anyone but you.' This cry came to my hearing in heaven and moved me to mercy. Appeased by their crying, I came to the wilderness like a pilgrim.

But before I began to work and make my way, a voice spoke out ahead of me, saying: 'The ax has been laid to the tree.' This voice was none other than John the Baptist. He was sent before me and cried out in the desert: 'The ax has been laid to the tree,' which is to say: 'Let the human race be ready, for the ax is now ready, and he has come to prepare a way to the city and is uprooting every obstacle.' When I came, I worked from sunrise to sunset, that is, I devoted myself to the salvation of humankind from the time of my incarnation until my death on the cross. At the start of my undertaking, I took flight into the wilderness away from my enemies, more precisely, from Herod who was pursuing me; I was put to the test by the devil and suffered persecution from men. Later, while enduring much toil, I ate and drank and sinlessly complied with other natural needs in order to build up the faith and to show that I had truly taken a human nature.

While I prepared the way to the city, that is, to heaven, and uprooted all the obstacles that had sprung up, brambles and thorns scratched my side and harsh nails wounded my hands and feet. My teeth and my cheeks were badly mishandled. I bore it with patience and did not turn back but went ahead all the more zealously, like an animal driven by starvation that, when it sees a man holding a spear against it, charges into the spear in its desire to get at the man. And the more the man thrusts the spear into the entrails of the animal, the more the animal thrusts itself against the spear in its desire to get at the man, until at last its entrails and entire body are pierced through and through. In like manner, I burned with such love for the soul, that, when I beheld and experienced all these harsh torments, the more eager men were to kill me, the more ardent I became to suffer for the salvation of souls.

Thus I made my way in the wilderness of this world and prepared a road through my blood and sweat. The world might well be called a wilderness, since it was lacking in every virtue and remained a wilderness of vice. It had only one road on which everyone was descending into hell, the damned toward damnation, the good towards darkness. I heard mercifully their longstanding desire for future salvation and came like a pilgrim in order to work. Unknown to them in my divinity and power, I prepared the road that leads to heaven. My friends saw this way and observed the difficulties of my work and my eagerness of heart, and many of them followed me in joy for a long time.

But now there has been a change in the voice that used to cry out: 'Be ready!' My road has been altered, and thickets and thorn bushes have grown up, and those who were advancing on it have halted. The way to hell has been opened up. It is broad, and many people travel by it. However, in order not to let my road become altogether forgotten and neglected, my few friends still travel it in their longing for their heavenly homeland, like birds moving from bush to bush, hidden, as it were, and serving me out of fear, since everyone nowadays thinks that to travel by the way of the world leads to happiness and joy.

For this reason, because my road has become narrow while the road of the world has been widened, I am now shouting out to my friends in the wilderness, that is, in the world, that they should remove the thorn bushes and brambles from the road leading to heaven and recommend my road to those who are making their way.

As it is written: 'Blessed are those who have not seen me and have believed'. Likewise, happy are they who now believe in my words and put them into practice. As you see, I am like a mother who runs out to meet her roving son. She holds out a light for him on the way so that he can see the road. In her love, she goes to meet him on the way and shortens his journey. She goes up to him and embraces and greets him. With love like that I shall run out to meet my friends and all the people returning to me, and I shall give their hearts and souls the light of divine wisdom. I will embrace them with glory and surround them with the heavenly court where there is neither heaven above nor earth below but only the vision of God; where there is neither food nor drink, but only the enjoyment of God.

The road to hell is open for the wicked. Once they enter into it, they will never come up again. They will be without glory or bliss and will be filled with misery and everlasting reproach. This is why I speak these words and reveal this love of mine, so that those who have turned away may turn back to me and recognize me, their Creator, whom they have

forgotten.”

Christ's words to the bride about why he speaks with her rather than with others better than she, and about three things commanded, three forbidden, three permitted, and three recommended to the bride by Christ; a most excellent lesson.

Chapter 16

“Many people wonder why I speak with you and not with others who live a better life and have served me for a longer time. I answer them by way of a parable: A certain lord owns several vineyards in several different regions. The wine of each vineyard has the particular taste of the region where it comes from. Once the wine has been pressed, the owner of the vineyards sometimes drinks the mediocre and weaker wine and not the better kind. If any of those present sees him and asks their lord why he does so, he will answer that this particular wine tasted good and sweet to him at the time. This does not mean that the lord gets rid of the better wines or holds them in disdain, but that he reserves them for his use and privilege on an appropriate occasion, each of them for the occasion for which it is suited. This is the way I deal with you.

I have many friends whose life is sweeter to me than honey, more delicious than any wine, brighter in my sight than the sun. However, it pleased me to choose you in my Spirit, not because you are better than they are or equal to them or better qualified, but because I wanted to - I who can make sages out of fools and saints out of sinners. I did not grant you so great a grace because I hold the others in disdain. Rather, I am reserving them for another use and privilege as justice demands. Humble yourself then in every way, and do not let anything trouble you but your sins. Love everyone, even those who seem to hate and slander you, for they are only providing you with a greater opportunity to win your crown! Three things I command you to do. Three things I command you not to do. Three things I permit you to do. Three things I recommend you to do.

I command you to do three things, then. First, to desire nothing but your God; second, to cast off all pride and arrogance; third, always to hate the lust of the flesh. Three things I order you not to do. First, neither to love vain, indecent speech nor, second, excessive eating and superfluity in other things, and, third, to flee from worldly merriment and frivolity. I permit you to do three things. First, to sleep moderately for the

sake of good health; second, to carry out temperate vigils to train the body; third, to eat moderately for the strength and sustenance of your body.

I recommend three things to you. First, to take pains to fast and carry out good works that earn the promise of the kingdom of heaven; second, to dispose of your possessions for the glory of God; third, I counsel you to think on two things continually in your heart. First, think on all that I have done for you by suffering and dying for you. Such a thought stirs up love for God. Second, consider my justice and the coming judgment. This instills fear in your mind. Finally, there is a fourth thing which I both order and command and recommend and permit. This is to obey as you ought. I order this, inasmuch as I am your God. I command you not to act otherwise, inasmuch as I am your Lord. I permit this to you, inasmuch as I am your bridegroom. I also recommend it, inasmuch as I am your friend.”

Christ's words to the bride about how God's divinity can truly be named virtue, and about the manifold downfall of humankind instigated by the devil, and about the manifold remedy to aid humankind that was given and provided for through Christ.

Chapter 17

The Son of God spoke to the bride saying: "Do you firmly believe that what the priest holds in his hands is the body of God?" She answered: "I firmly believe that, just as the word sent to Mary was made flesh and blood in her womb, so too that which I now see in the hands of the priest I believe to be true God and man." The Lord answered her: "I am the same who am speaking to you, remaining eternally in the divine nature, having become human in the womb of the Virgin but without losing my divinity. My divinity can rightly be named virtue, since there are two things in it: power most powerful, the source of all power, and wisdom most wise, the source and seat of all wisdom. In this divine nature all things that exist are ordered wisely and rationally.

There is not one little tittle in heaven that is not in it and that has not been established and foreseen by it. Not a single atom on earth, not one spark in hell is outside its rule and can hide itself from its foreknowledge. Do you wonder why I said 'not one little tittle in heaven'? Well, a tittle is the final stroke on a glossed word. Indeed God's word is the final stroke on all things and was ordained for the glorification of all things.

Why did I say 'not a single atom on earth,' if not because all earthly things are transitory? Not even atoms, however small they are, are outside of God's plan and providence. Why did I say 'not one spark in hell,' if not because there is nothing in hell except envy? Just as a spark comes from fire, so all kinds of evil and envy come from the unclean spirits, with the result that they and their followers always have envy but never love of any kind.

Therefore, perfect knowledge and power are in God, which is why each thing is so arranged that nothing is greater than God's power, nor can anything be caused to be made contrary to reason, but all things have been made rationally, suitable to the nature of each thing. The divine nature, then, inasmuch as it can rightly be named virtue, showed its greatest virtue in the creation of the angels. It created them for its own glory and for their delight, so that they might have charity and obedience: charity, by which they love none but God; obedience, by which they obey God in all things. Some of the angels went wickedly astray and wickedly set their will against these two things. They turned their will directly against God, so much so that virtue became odious to them and, therefore, that which was opposed to God became dear to them. Because of this disordered direction of their will, they deserved to fall. It was not that God caused their fall, but they themselves brought it about through the abuse of their own knowledge.

When God saw the reduction in the numbers of the heavenly host that had been caused through their sin, he again showed the power of his divinity. For he created human beings in body and soul. He gave them two goods, namely the freedom to do good and the freedom to avoid evil, because, given that no more angels were to be created, it was fitting that human beings should have the freedom of rising, if they wished, to angelic rank. God also gave the human soul two goods, namely a rational mind to order to distinguish opposite from opposite and better from best; and fortitude in order to persevere in the good. When the devil saw this love of God for mankind, he considered thus in his envy: 'So then, God has made a new thing that can rise up to our place and by its own efforts gain that which we lost through neglect!

If we can deceive him and cause his downfall, he will cease his efforts, and then he will not rise up to such a rank.' Then, having thought out a plan of deception, they deceived the first man and prevailed over him with my just permission. But how and when was the man defeated? To be sure, when he left off virtue and did what was forbidden, when the serpent's promise pleased him more than obedience to me. Due to this disobedience he could not live in heaven, since he had despised God, and not in hell either, since his soul, using reason, carefully examined what he had done and had

contrition for his crime.

For that reason, the God of virtue, considering human wretchedness, arranged a kind of imprisonment or place of captivity, where people might come to recognize their weakness and atone for their disobedience until they should deserve to rise to the rank they had lost. The devil, meanwhile, taking this into consideration, wanted to kill the human soul by means of ingratitude. Injecting his filth into the soul, he so darkened her intellect that she had neither the love nor the fear of God. God's justice was forgotten and his judgment scorned. For that reason, God's goodness and gifts were no longer appreciated but fell into oblivion.

Thus God was not loved, and the human conscience was so darkened that humanity was in a wretched state and fell into even greater wretchedness. Although humanity was in such a state, still God's virtue was not lacking; rather, he revealed his mercy and justice. He revealed his mercy when he revealed to Adam and other good people that they would obtain help at a predetermined time. This stirred up their fervor and love for God. He also revealed his justice through the flood in Noah's day, which filled human hearts with the fear of God. Even after that the devil still did not leave off further molesting humankind, but attacked it by means of two other evils. First, he inspired faithlessness in people; second, hopelessness. He inspired faithlessness in order that people might not believe in the word of God but would attribute his wonders to fate. He inspired hopelessness lest they hope to be saved and obtain the glory they had lost.

The God of virtue supplied two remedies to fight these two evils. Against hopelessness he offered hope, giving Abram a new name and promising him that from his seed there would be born the one who would lead him and the imitators of his faith back to the lost inheritance. He also appointed prophets to whom he revealed the manner of redemption and the times and places of his suffering. With respect to the second evil of faithlessness, God spoke to Moses and revealed his will and the law to him and backed his words up with portents and deeds. Although all this was done, still the devil did not desist from his evil. Constantly urging humankind on to worse sins, he inspired two other attitudes in the human heart: first, that of regarding the law as unbearable and losing peace of mind over trying to live up to it; second, he inspired the thought that God's decision to die and suffer out of charity was too incredible and far too difficult to believe.

Again God provided two further remedies for these two evils. First, he sent his own Son into the womb of the Virgin so that nobody would lose peace of mind over how hard

the Law was to fulfill, since, having assumed a human nature, his Son fulfilled the requirements of the Law and then made it less strict. With respect to the second evil, God displayed the very height of virtue. The Creator died for creation, the righteous one for sinners. Innocent, he suffered to the last drop, as had been foretold by the prophets. Even then the wickedness of the devil did not cease, but again he rose up against humanity, inspiring two further evils. First, he inspired the human heart to hold my words in contempt and, second, to let my deeds fall into oblivion.

God's virtue has again begun to indicate two new remedies against these two evils. The first is to return my words to honor and to undertake to imitate my deeds. This is why God has led you in his Spirit. He has also revealed his will on earth to his friends through you, for two reasons in particular. The first is in order to reveal God's mercy, so that people might learn to recall the memory of God's love and suffering. The second is to remind them of God's justice and to make them fear the severity of my judgment.

Therefore, tell this man that, given that my mercy has already come, he should bring it out into the light so that people might learn to seek mercy and to beware of the judgment on themselves. Moreover, tell him that, although my words have been written down, still they must first be preached and put into practice. You can understand this by way of a metaphor. When Moses was about to receive the Law, a staff was made and two stone tablets were hewn. Nevertheless, he did not work miracles with the staff until there was a need for it and the occasion demanded it. When the acceptable time came, then there was a show of miracles and my words were proved by deeds.

Likewise, when the New Law arrived, first my body grew and developed until a suitable time and from then on my words were heard. However, although my words were heard, still they did not have force and strength in themselves until accompanied by my deeds. And they were not fulfilled until I fulfilled all the things that had been foretold about me through my passion. It is the same now. Although my loving words have been written down and should be conveyed to the world, still they cannot have any force until they have been completely brought out into the light.”

About three wonderful things that Christ has done for the bride, and about how the sight of angels is too beautiful and that of devils too ugly for human nature to bear, and about why Christ has condescended to come as a guest to a widow like her.

Chapter 18

“I have done three wonderful things for you. You see with spiritual eyes. You hear with spiritual ears. With the physical touch of your hand you feel my spirit in your living breast. You do not see the sight you see as it is in fact. For if you saw the spiritual beauty of the angels and of holy souls, your body could not bear to see it but would break like a vessel, broken and decayed due to the soul's joy at the sight. If you saw the demons as they are, you would either go on living in great sorrow or you would die a sudden death at the terrible sight of them. This is why spiritual beings appear to you as if they had bodies.

The angels and souls appear to you in the likeness of human beings who have soul and life, because angels live by their spirit. The demons appear to you in a form that is mortal and belongs to mortality, such as in the form of animals or other creatures. Such creatures have a mortal spirit, since when their body dies, their spirit dies too. However, devils do not die in spirit but are forever dying and live forever. Spiritual words are spoken to you by means of analogies, since you cannot grasp them otherwise. The most wonderful thing of all is that you feel my spirit move in your heart.”

Then she replied: “O my Lord, Son of the Virgin, why have you condescended to come as a guest to so base a widow, who is poor in every good work and so weak in understanding and discernment and ridden with sin for so long?” He answered her: “I can do three things. First, I can make a poor person rich and a foolish person of little intelligence capable and intelligent. I am also able to restore an aged person to youth. It is like the phoenix that brings together dried twigs. Among them is the twig of a certain tree that is dry by nature on the outside and warm on the inside. The warmth of the sunbeams comes to it first and kindles it, and then all the twigs are set on fire from it. In the same way you should gather together the virtues by which you can be restored from your sins.

Among them you should have a piece of wood that is warm on the inside and dry on the outside; I mean your heart, which should be dry and pure from all worldly sensuality on the outside and so full of love on the inside that you want nothing and yearn for nothing but me. Then the fire of my love will come into the heart first and in that way you will be enkindled with all the virtues. Thoroughly burned by them and purged from sins, you will arise like the rejuvenated bird, having put off the skin of sensuality.”

Christ's words to the bride about how God speaks to his friends through his preachers and through sufferings, and about Christ as symbolized by an owner of bees and the church by a beehive and Christians by bees, and about why bad Christians are allowed to live among good ones.

Chapter 19

“I am your God. My Spirit has led you to hear and see and feel: to hear my words, to see visions, to feel my Spirit with the joy and devotion of your soul. All mercy is found in me together with justice, and there is mercy in my justice. I am like a man who sees his friends fall away from him, down on to a road where there is a horrible yawning gap out of which it is impossible to climb. I speak to these friends through those people who have an understanding of scripture. I speak with a lash, I warn them of their danger. But they just act contrariwise. They head for the impasse and do not care about what I say.

I have only one thing to say: 'Sinner, turn back to me! You are headed for danger; there are traps along the way of a kind that are hidden from you due to the darkness of your heart.' They scorn what I say. They ignore my mercy. However, though my mercy is such that I warn sinners, my justice is such that, even if all the angels were to drag them back, they could not be converted unless they themselves direct their own will toward the good. If they turned their will to me and gave me their heart's consent, not all the demons together could hold them back.

There is an insect called the bee that is kept by its lord and master. The bees show respect in three ways to their ruler, the queen bee, and derive benefit from her in three ways. First, the bees carry all the nectar they find to their queen. Second, they stay or go at her beck and call, and wherever they fly and wherever they appear, their love and charity is always for the queen. Third, they follow and serve her, sticking steadily close by her side. In return for these three things, the bees receive a threefold benefit from their queen.

First, her signal gives them a set time to go out and work. Second, she gives them direction and mutual love. Because of her presence and rule and because of the love she has toward them and they toward her, all the bees are united with one another in love, and each one rejoices over the others and at their advancement. Third, they are made

fruitful through their mutual love and the joy of their leader. Just as fish discharge their eggs while playing together in the sea, and their eggs fall into the sea and bear fruit, so bees are also made fruitful through their mutual love and their leader's affection and joy. By my wondrous power, a seemingly lifeless seed comes forth from their love and will receive life through my goodness.

The master, that is, the owner of the bees, speaks to his servant in his concern for them: 'My servant,' he says, 'it seems to me that my bees are ill and do not fly at all.' The servant answers: 'I do not understand this illness, but if it is so, I ask you how I can learn about it.' The master answers: 'You can infer their illness or problem by three signs. The first sign is that they are weak and sluggish in flight, which means that they have lost the queen from whom they receive strength and consolation. The second sign is that they go out at random and unplanned hours, which means that they are not getting the signal of their leader's call.

The third sign is that they show no love for the beehive, and therefore return home carrying nothing back, sating themselves but not bringing any nectar to live on in the future. Healthy and fit bees are steady and strong in their flight. They keep regular hours for going out and returning, bringing back wax to build their dwellings and honey for their nourishment.' The servant answers the master: 'If they are useless and infirm, why do you allow them to go on anymore and do not do away with them?' The master answers: 'I permit them to live for three reasons, inasmuch as they provide three benefits, although not by their own power.

First, because they occupy the dwellings prepared for them, horseflies do not come and occupy the empty dwellings and disturb the good bees that remain. Second, other bees become more fruitful and diligent at their work due to the badness of the bad bees. The fruitful bees see the bad and unfruitful bees working only to satisfy their own desires, and they become the more diligent in their work of gathering for their queen the more eager the bad bees are seen to be in gathering for their own desires. In the third place, the bad bees are useful to the good bees when it comes to their mutual defense. For there is a flying insect accustomed to eating bees. When the bees perceive this insect coming, all of them hate it in common.

Although the bad bees fight and hate it out of envy and self-defense, while the good ones do so out of love and justice, both the good and bad bees work together to attack these insects. If all the bad bees were taken away and only the good ones were left, this

insect would quickly prevail over them, since then they would be fewer. That is why,' the master said, 'I put up with the useless bees. However, when autumn comes, I shall provide for the good bees and shall separate them from the bad ones that, if they are left outside the beehive, will die from the cold.

But if they remain inside and do not gather, they will be in danger of starvation, inasmuch as they have neglected to gather food when they could.' I am God, the Creator of all things; I am the owner and the lord of the bees. Out of my ardent love and by my blood I founded my beehive, that is, the Holy Church, in which Christians should be gathered and dwell in unity of faith and mutual love. Their dwelling-places are their hearts, and the honey of good thoughts and affections should inhabit it. This honey ought to be brought there through considering my love in creation and my toils in redemption and my patient support and mercy in calling back and restoring.

In this beehive, that is, in the Holy Church, there are two kinds of people, just as there were two kinds of bees. The first ones are those bad Christians who do not gather nectar for me but for themselves. They return carrying nothing back and do not recognize their leader. They have a sting instead of honey and lust instead of love. The good bees represent good Christians. They show me respect in three ways. First, they hold me as their leader and lord, offering me sweet honey, that is, works of charity, which are pleasing to me and useful to themselves. Second, they wait upon my will. Their will accords with my will, all their thought is on my passion, all their actions are for my glory. Third, they follow me, that is, they obey me in everything.

Wherever they are, whether outside or inside, whether in sorrow or in joy, their heart is always joined to my heart. This is why they derive benefit from me in three ways. First, through the call of virtue and my inspiration, they have fixed and certain times, night at nighttime and daylight at daytime. Indeed, they change night into day, that is, worldly happiness into eternal happiness, and perishable happiness into everlasting stability. They are sensible in every respect, inasmuch as they make use of their present goods for their necessities; they are steadfast in adversity, wary in success, moderate in the care of the body, careful and circumspect in their actions. Second, like the good bees, they have mutual love, in such a way that they are all of one heart toward me, loving their neighbor as themselves but me above all else, even above themselves.

Third, they are made fruitful through me. What is it to be fruitful if not to have my Holy Spirit and be filled with him? Whoever does not have him and lacks his honey is

unfruitful and useless; he falls down and perishes. However, the Holy Spirit sets the person in whom he dwells on fire with divine love; he opens the senses of his mind; he uproots pride and incontinence; he spurs the soul on to the glory of God and the contempt of the world.

The unfruitful bees do not know this Spirit and therefore scorn discipline, fleeing the unity and fellowship of love. They are empty of good works; they change daylight into darkness, consolation into mourning, happiness into sorrow. Nevertheless, I let them live for three reasons. First, so that horseflies, that is, the infidels, do not get into the dwelling-places that have been prepared. If the wicked were removed all at once, there would be too few good Christians left, and, because of their small numbers, the infidels, being greater in number, would come and live side by side with them, causing them much disturbance. Second, they are tolerated in order to test the good Christians, for, as you know, the perseverance of good people is put to the test by the wickedness of the wicked.

Adversity reveals how patient a person is, while prosperity makes plain how persevering and temperate he is. Since vices insinuate themselves into good characters from time to time and virtues can often make people proud, the wicked are allowed to live alongside the good in order that good people may not become enervated from too much happiness or fall asleep out of sloth, and also in order that they may frequently fix their gaze on God. Where there is little struggle, there is also little reward. In the third place, they are tolerated for their assistance so that neither the gentiles nor other hostile infidels might harm those seeming to be good Christians, but that they might rather fear them because there are more of them. The good offer resistance to the wicked out of justice and love of God, while the wicked do so only for the sake of self-defense and to avoid God's wrath. In this way, then, the good and wicked help each other, with the result that the wicked are tolerated for the sake of the good and the good receive a higher crown on account of the wickedness of the wicked.

The beekeepers are the prelates of the church and the princes of the land, whether good or bad. I speak to the good keepers and I, their God and keeper, admonish them to keep my bees safe. Have them consider the comings and goings of the bees! Let them take note of whether they are sick or healthy! If they happen not to know how to discern this, here are three signs I give them to recognize it. Those bees are useless that are sluggish in flight, erratic in their hours, and contribute nothing to bringing in honey. The ones that are sluggish in flight are those who show greater concern for temporal goods than for eternal ones, who fear the death of the body more than that of the soul, who say

this to themselves: 'Why should I be full of disquiet, when I can have quiet and peace? Why should I die to myself when I can live?'

These wretches do not reflect on how I, the powerful King of glory, chose to be powerless. I know the greatest quiet and peace and, indeed, I am peace itself, and yet I chose to give up peace and quiet for their sake and freed them through my own death. They are erratic in their hours in that their affections tend toward worldliness, their conversation toward indecency, their labor toward selfishness, and they arrange their time according to the cravings of their bodies. The ones who have no love for the beehive and do not gather nectar are those who do some good works for my sake but only out of fear of punishment. Even though they do perform some works of piety, still they do not give up their selfishness and sin. They want to have God but without giving up the world or enduring any wants or hardship.

These bees are the kind that hurry home with empty feet, but their hurry is unwise, since they do not fly with the right sort of love. Accordingly, when autumn comes, that is, when the time of separation comes, the useless bees will be separated from the good ones and they will suffer eternal hunger in return for their selfish love and desires. In return for scorning God and for their disgust at virtue they will be destroyed by excessive cold but without being consumed.

However, my friends should be on their guard against three evils from the bad bees. First, against letting their rottenness enter the ears of my friends, since the bad bees are poisonous. Once their honey is gone, there is nothing sweet left in them; instead they are full of poisoned bitterness. Second, they should guard the pupils of their eyes against the wings of the bad bees that are as sharp as needles. Third, they should be careful not to expose their bodies to the tails of the bees, for they have barbs that sting sharply. The learned who study their habits and temperament can explain the meaning of these things. Those who are unable to understand it should be wary of the risks and avoid their company and example.

Otherwise, they will learn by experience what they did not know how to learn by listening." Then his Mother said: "Blessed are you, my Son, you who are and were and always will be! Your mercy is sweet and your justice great. You seem to remind me, my Son - to speak figuratively - of a cloud rising up to heaven preceded by a light breeze. A dark spot appeared in the cloud, and a person who was out of doors, feeling the light breeze, raised his eyes and saw the dark cloud and thought to himself: 'This dark cloud

seems to me to indicate rain.' And he prudently hurried into a shelter and hid himself from the rain.

Others, however, who were blind or who perhaps did not care, made little of the light breeze and were unafraid of the dark cloud, but they learned by experience what the cloud meant. The cloud, taking over the whole sky, came with violent commotion and so furious and mighty a fire that living things were expiring at the very commotion. The fire was consuming all the inner and outer parts of man so that nothing remained.

My Son, this cloud is your words, which seem dark and incredible to many people since they have not been heard much and since they have been given to ignorant people and have not been confirmed by portents. These words were preceded by my prayer and by the mercy with which you have mercy on everyone and, like a mother, draw everyone to yourself.

This mercy is as light as a light breeze because of your patience and sufferance. It is warm with the love with which you teach mercy to those who provoke you to anger and offer kindness to those who scorn you. Therefore, may all those who hear these words raise their eyes and see and know their source. They should consider whether these words signify mercy and humility. They should reflect on whether the words signify present or future things, truth or falsehood. If they find that the words are true, let them hurry to a shelter, that is, to true humility and love of God. For, when justice comes, the soul will then be separated from the body and engulfed by fire and burn both outwardly and inwardly. It will burn, to be sure, but it will not be consumed. For this reason, I, the Queen of mercy, cry out to the inhabitants of the world: may they raise their eyes and behold mercy! I admonish and beseech like a mother, I counsel like a sovereign lady.

When justice comes, it will be impossible to withstand it. Therefore, have a firm faith and be thoughtful, test the truth in your conscience, change your will, and then the one who has shown you words of love will also show the deeds and proof of love!" Then the Son spoke to me, saying: "Above, regarding the bees, I showed you that they receive three benefits from their queen. I tell you now that those crusaders whom I have placed at the borders of Christian lands should be bees like that. But now they are fighting against me, for they do not care about souls and have no compassion on the bodies of those who have been converted from error to the Catholic faith and to me.

They oppress them with hardships and deprive them of their liberties. They do not instruct them in the faith, but deprive them of the sacraments and send them to hell with

a greater punishment than if they had stayed in their traditional paganism.

Furthermore, they fight only in order to increase their own pride and augment their greed. Therefore, the time is coming for them when their teeth will be ground, their right hand mutilated, their right foot severed, in order that they may live and know themselves.”

God's grievance concerning three men now going around in the world, and about how from the start God established three estates, namely those of the clergy, the defenders, and the laborers; and about the punishment prepared for the thankless and about the glory given to the thankful.

Chapter 20

The great host of heaven was seen, and God spoke to it, saying: ”Although you know and see all things in me, however, because it is my wish, I will state my complaint before you concerning three things. The first is that those lovely beehives, which were built in heaven from all eternity and from which those worthless bees went out, are empty. The second is that the bottomless pit, against which neither rocks nor trees are of any help, stands ever open. Souls descend into it like snow falling from the sky down to earth. Just as the sun dissolves snow into water, so too souls are dissolved of every good by that terrible torment and are renewed unto every punishment. My third complaint is that few people notice the fall of souls or the empty dwellings from which the bad angels have strayed. I am therefore right to complain.

I chose three men from the beginning. By this I am figuratively speaking of the three estates in the world. First, I chose a cleric to proclaim my will in his words and to demonstrate it in his actions. Second, I chose a defender to defend my friends with his own life and to be ready for any undertaking for my sake. Third, I chose a laborer to labor with his hands in order to provide bodily food through his work.

The first man, that is, the clergy, has now become leprous and mute. Anyone who looks to see a fine and virtuous character in him shrinks back at the sight and shudders to approach him because of the leprosy of his pride and greed. When he wants to listen to him, the priest is mute about praising me but a chatterbox in praising himself.

So, how is the path to be opened that leads the way to great joy, if the one who

should be leading the way is so weak? And if the one who should be proclaiming it is mute, how will that heavenly joy be heard of? The second man, the defender, trembles at heart and his hands are idle. He trembles at causing scandal in the world and losing his reputation. His hands are idle in that he does not perform any holy works. Instead, everything he does, he does for the world. Who, then, will defend my people if the one who should be their leader is afraid?

The third man is like an ass that lowers its head to the ground and stands with its four feet joined together. Sure, indeed, the people are like an ass that longs for nothing but things of the earth, which neglects the things of heaven and goes in search of perishable goods. They have four feet, since they have little faith and their hope is idle; third, they have no good works and, fourth, they are entirely intent upon sinning. This is why their mouth is always open for gluttony and greed. My friends, how can that endless yawning pit be reduced or the honeycomb be filled by people such as these?"

God's Mother replied: "May you be blessed, my Son! Your grievance is justified. Your friends and I have only one word of excuse for you to save the human race. It is this: 'Have mercy, Jesus Christ, Son of the living God!' This is my cry and the cry of your friends." The Son replied: "Your words are sweet to my ears, their taste delights my mouth, they enter my heart with love. I do have a cleric, a defender, and a peasant. The first pleases me like a bride whom an honest bridegroom yearns and longs for with divine love. His voice will be like the voice of clamorous speech that echoes in the woods. The second will be ready to give his life for me and will not fear the reproach of the world. I shall arm him with the weapons of my Holy Spirit. The third will have so firm a faith that he will say: 'I believe as firmly as if I saw what I believe. I hope for all the things God has promised.' He will have the intention of doing good and growing in virtue and avoiding evil.

In the first man's mouth I shall put three sayings for him to proclaim. His first proclamation will be: 'Let him who has faith put what he believes into practice!' The second: 'Let him who has a firm hope be steadfast in every good work.' The third: 'Let him who loves perfectly and with charity yearn fervently to see the object of his love!' The second man will work like a strong lion, taking careful precautions against treachery and persevering steadfastly. The third man will be as wise as a serpent that stands on its tail and lifts its head to the skies. These three will carry out my will. Others will follow them. Although I speak of three, by them I mean many." Then he spoke to the bride, saying: "Stand firm! Do not be concerned about the world or about its reproaches, for I, who

heard every kind of reproach, am your God and your Lord.”

The words of the glorious Virgin to her daughter about how Christ was taken down from the cross and about her own bitterness and sweetness at the passion of her Son, and about how the soul is symbolized by a virgin and the love of the world and the love of God by two youths, and about the qualities the soul should have as a virgin.

Chapter 21

Mary spoke: "You should reflect on five things, my daughter. First, how every limb in my Son's body grew stiff and cold at his death and how the blood that flowed from his wounds as he was suffering dried up and clung to each limb. Second, how his heart was pierced so bitterly and mercilessly that the man speared it until the lance hit a rib, and both parts of the heart were on the lance. Third, reflect on how he was taken down from the cross! The two men who took him down from the cross made use of three stepladders: one reached to his feet, the second just below his armpits and arms, the third to the middle of his body.

The first man got up and held him by the middle. The second, getting up on another ladder, first pulled a nail out of one arm, then moved the ladder and pulled the nail from the other hand. The nails extended through the crossbeam. The man who had been holding up the weight of the body then went down as slowly and carefully as he could, while the other man got up on the stepladder that went to the feet and pulled out the nails from the feet. When he was lowered to the ground, one of them held the body by the head and the other by the feet. I, his mother, held him about the waist. And so the three of us carried him to a rock that I had covered with a clean sheet and in that we wrapped his body. I did not sew the sheet together, because I knew that he would not decay in the grave.

After that came Mary Magdalene and the other holy women. Angels, too, as many as the atoms of the sun, were there, showing their allegiance to their Creator. None can tell what sorrow I had at the time. I was like a woman giving birth who shakes in every limb of her body after delivery. Although she can scarcely breathe due to the pain, still she rejoices inwardly as much as she can because she knows that the child she has given birth to will never return to the same painful ordeal he has just left. In the same way, although

no sorrow could compare with my sorrow over the death of my Son, still I rejoiced in my soul because I knew my Son would no longer die but would live forever.

Thus my sorrow was mixed with a measure of joy. I can truly say that there were two hearts in the one grave where my Son was buried. Is it not said: 'Where your treasure is, there is your heart as well'? Likewise, my heart and mind were constantly going to my Son's grave." Then the Mother of God went on to say: "I shall describe this man by way of a metaphor, how he was situated and in what kind of state and what his present situation is like. It is as though a virgin was betrothed to a man and two youths were standing before her. One of them, having been addressed by the virgin, said to her:

'I advise you not to trust the man to whom you are betrothed. He is unbending in his actions, tardy in payment, miserly in giving gifts. Rather, put your trust in me and in the words I speak to you, and I shall show you another man who is not hard but gentle in every way, who gives you what you want right away and gives you plenty of pleasant and delightful gifts.'

The virgin, hearing this and thinking about it to herself, answered: 'Your words are good to hear. You yourself are gentle and attractive to my eyes. I think I will follow your advice.' When she took off her ring in order to give it to the youth, she saw three sayings inscribed on it. The first was: 'When you come to the top of the tree, beware lest you lay hold of a dry branch of the tree to support yourself and fall!' The second saying was: 'Beware lest you take advice from an enemy!'

The third saying was: 'Place not your heart between the teeth of a lion!' When the virgin saw these sayings, she pulled her hand back and held onto the ring, thinking to herself: 'These three sayings I see may perhaps mean that this man who wants to have me as his bride is not to be trusted. It seems to me that his words are empty; he is full of hatred and will kill me.' While she was thinking this, she looked again and noticed another inscription that also had three sayings.

The first saying was: 'Give to the one who gives to you!' The second saying was: 'Give blood for blood!' The third saying was: 'Take not from the owner what belongs to him!' When the virgin saw and heard this, she thought again to herself: 'The first three sayings inform me how I can escape death, the other three how I can obtain life. Therefore, it is right for me to follow the words of life.' Then the virgin prudently summoned to herself the servant of the man to whom she had first been betrothed. When he came, the man who wanted to deceive her withdrew from them.

So it is with the soul of that person who was betrothed to God. The two youths standing before the soul represent the friendship of God and the friendship of the world. The friends of the world have come closer to him up until now. They spoke to him of worldly riches and glory and he almost gave the ring of his love to them and consented to them in every way. But by the aid of my Son's grace he saw an inscription, that is, he heard the words of his mercy and understood three things through them. First, that he should beware lest, the higher he rose and the more he relied on perishable things, the worse would be the fall that threatened him.

Second, he understood that there was nothing in the world but sorrow and care. Third, that his reward from the devil would be evil. Then he saw another inscription, I mean, he heard its consoling messages. The first message was that he should give his possessions to God from whom he had received them all. The second was that he should render the service of his own body to the man who had shed his blood for him. The third was that he should not alienate his soul from the God who had created and redeemed it. Now that he has heard and carefully considered these things, God's servants approach him and he is pleased with them, and the servants of the world draw away from him.

His soul is now like a virgin who has risen fresh from the arms of her bridegroom and who ought to have three things. First, she should have fine clothes so as not to be laughed at by the royal maidservants, should some defect be noticed in her clothes. Second, she should comply with the will of her bridegroom so as not to cause him any dishonor on her account, should anything dishonorable be discovered in her actions. Third, she should be completely clean lest the bridegroom discover in her any stain because of which he might scorn or repudiate her.

Let her also have people to guide her to the bridegroom's suite so as not to lose her way about the precincts or in the elaborate entrance. A guide should have two characteristics: first, the person following him should be able to see him; second, one should be able to hear his directions and where he steps. A person following another who leads the way should have three characteristics. First, he should not be slow and sluggish in following. Second, he should not hide himself from the person leading the way. Third, he should pay close attention and watch the footsteps of his guide and follow him eagerly. Thus, in order that his soul may reach the suite of the bridegroom, it is necessary that it be guided by the kind of guide who can successfully lead it to God his bridegroom.”

The glorious Virgin's doctrinal teaching to her daughter about spiritual and temporal wisdom and about which of them one ought to imitate, and about how spiritual wisdom leads a person to everlasting consolation, after a little struggle, while temporal wisdom leads to eternal damnation.

Chapter 22

Mary spoke: "It is written that 'if you would be wise you should learn wisdom from a wise person.' Accordingly, I give you the figurative example of a man who wanted to learn wisdom and saw two teachers standing before him. He said to them: 'I would really like to learn wisdom, if only I knew where it would lead me and of what use and purpose it is.' One of the teachers answered: 'If you would follow my wisdom, it will lead you up a high mountain along a path that is hard and rocky underfoot, steep and difficult to climb. If you struggle for this wisdom you will gain something that is dark on the outside but shining on the inside. If you hold onto it, you will secure your desire.

Like a circle that spins around, it will draw you to itself more and more, sweetly and ever more sweetly, until in time you are imbued with happiness from every side.' The second teacher said: 'If you follow my wisdom, it will lead you to a lush and beautiful valley with the fruits of every land. The path is soft underfoot and the descent is little trouble. If you persevere in this wisdom, you will gain something that is shiny on the outside, but when you want to use it, it will fly away from you. You will also have something that does not last but ends suddenly. A book, too, once you have read it through to the end, ceases to exist along with the act of reading, and you are left idle.'

When the man heard this, he thought to himself: 'I hear two amazing things. If I climb up the mountain, my feet get weak and my back grows heavy. Then, if I do obtain the thing that is dark on the outside, what good will it do me? If I struggle for something that has no end, when will there be any consolation for me? The other teacher promises something that is radiant on the outside but does not last, a kind of wisdom that will end with the reading of it. What use do I have of things with no stability?' While he was thinking this in his mind, suddenly another man appeared between the two teachers and said: 'Although the mountain is high and difficult to climb, nevertheless there is a bright cloud above the mountain that will give you comfort.

If the promised container that is dark on the outside can somehow be broken, you will get the gold that is concealed within and you will be in happy possession of it forever.' These two teachers are two kinds of wisdom, namely the wisdom of the spirit and the wisdom of the flesh. The spiritual kind involves giving up your self-will for God and aspiring to the things of heaven with your every desire and action.

It cannot be truly called wisdom if your actions do not accord with your words. This kind of wisdom leads to a blessed life. But it involves a rocky approach and a steep climb, inasmuch as resisting your passions seems a hard and rocky way. It involves a steep climb to spurn habitual pleasures and not to love worldly honors. Although it is difficult, yet for the person who reflects on how little time there is and how the world will end and who fixes his mind constantly on God, above the mountain there will appear a cloud, that is, the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

A person worthy of the Holy Spirit's consolation is one who seeks no other consoler but God. How would all the elect have undertaken such hard and arduous tasks, if God's Spirit had not cooperated with their goodwill as with a good instrument? Their good will drew this Spirit to them, and the divine love they had for God invited it, for they struggled with heart and will until they were made strong in works.

They won the consolation of the Spirit and also soon obtained the gold of divine delight and love that not only made them able to bear a great many adversities but also made them rejoice in bearing them as they thought of their reward. Such rejoicing seems dark to the lovers of this world, for they love darkness. But to the lovers of God it is brighter than the sun and shines more than gold, for they break through the darkness of their vices and climb the mountain of patience, contemplating the cloud of that consolation that never ends but begins in the present and spins like a circle until it reaches perfection. Worldly wisdom leads to a valley of misery that seems lush in its plenty, beautiful in reputation, soft in luxury. This kind of wisdom will end swiftly and offers no further benefit beyond what it used to see and hear.

Therefore, my daughter, seek wisdom from the wise one, I mean, from my Son! He is wisdom itself from whom all wisdom comes. He is the circle that never ends. I entreat you as a mother does her child: love the wisdom that is like gold on the inside but contemptible on the outside, that burns inside with love but requires effort on the outside and bears fruit through its works. If you worry about the burden of it all, God's Spirit will be your consoler.

Go and keep on trying like someone who keeps going on until the habit is acquired. Do not turn back until you reach the peak of the mountain! There is nothing so difficult that it does not become easy through steadfast and intelligent perseverance. There is no pursuit so noble at the outset that it does not fall into darkness by not being brought to completion. Advance, then, toward spiritual wisdom! It will lead you to physical toil, to despising the world, to a little pain, and to everlasting consolation. But worldly wisdom is deceitful and conceals a sting. It will lead you to the hoarding of temporary goods and to present prestige but, in the end, to the greatest unhappiness, unless you are wary and take careful precautions.”

The glorious Virgin's words explaining her humility to her daughter, and about how humility is likened to a cloak, and about the characteristics of true humility and its wonderful fruits.

Chapter 23

“Many people wonder why I speak with you. It is, of course, to show my humility. If a member of the body is sick, the heart is not content until it has regained its health, and once its health is restored the heart is all the more gladdened. In the same way, however much a person may sin, if he turns back to me with all his heart and a true purpose of amendment, I am immediately prepared to welcome him when he comes. Nor do I pay attention to how much he may have sinned but to the intention and purpose he has when he returns.

Everyone calls me 'Mother of mercy.' Truly, my daughter, the mercy of my Son has made me merciful and the disclosure of his mercy has made me compassionate. For that reason, that person is miserable who, when she or he is able, does not have recourse to mercy. Come, therefore, my daughter, and hide yourself beneath my cloak! My cloak is contemptible on the outside but very useful on the inside, for three reasons. First, it shelters you from the stormy winds; second, it protects you from the burning cold; third, it defends you against the rain-showers from the sky.

This cloak is my humility. The lovers of the world hold this in contempt and think that imitating it is a silly superstition. What is more contemptible than to be called an idiot and not to get angry or answer in kind? What is more despicable than the giving up

of everything and being in every way poor? What seems sorrier to worldly souls than to conceal one's own pain and to think and believe oneself unworthier and lowlier than everyone else? Such was my humility, my daughter. This was my joy, this my one desire. I only thought of how to please my Son. This humility of mine was useful for those who followed me in three ways.

First, it was useful in pestilent and stormy weather, that is, against human taunts and scorn. A powerful and violent storm wind pounds a person from all directions and makes him freeze. In the same way, taunting easily crushes an impatient person who does not reflect on future realities; it drives the soul away from charity. Anyone carefully studying my humility should consider the kinds of things I, the Queen of the universe, had to hear, and so he should seek my praise and not his own.

Let him recall that words are nothing but air and he will soon grow calm. Why are worldly people so unable to put up with verbal taunts, if not because they seek their own praise rather than God's? There is no humility in them, because their eyes are made bleary by sin. Therefore, although the written law says one should not without due cause give one's ear to insulting speech or put up with it, still it is a virtue and a prize to listen patiently to and put up with insults for the sake of God.

Second, my humility is a protection from the burning cold, that is, from carnal friendship. For there is a kind of friendship in which a person is loved for the sake of present commodities, like those who speak in this way: 'Feed me for the present and I will feed you, for it is no concern of mine who feeds you after death! Give me respect and I will respect you, for it does not concern me in the least what kind of future respect there is to come.' This is a cold friendship without the warmth of God, as hard as frozen snow as regards loving and feeling compassion for one's fellow human being in need, and sterile is its reward.

Once a partnership is broken up and the desks are cleared away, the usefulness of that friendship immediately disappears and its profit is lost. Whoever imitates my humility, though, does good to everyone for the sake of God, to enemies and friends alike: to his friends, because they steadily persevere in honoring God; and to his enemies, because they are God's creatures and may become good in the future.

In the third place, the contemplation of my humility is a protection against rain-showers and the impurities coming from the clouds. Where do clouds come from, if not

from the moisture and vapors coming from the earth? When they rise to the skies due to heat, they condense in the upper regions and, in this way, three things are produced: rain, hail, and snow. The cloud symbolizes the human body that comes from impurity. The body brings three things with it just as clouds do. The body brings hearing, seeing, and feeling. Because the body can see, it desires the things it sees. It desires good things and beautiful forms; it desires extensive possessions.

What are all these things if not a sort of rain coming from the clouds, staining the soul with a passion for hoarding, unsettling it with worries, distracting it with useless thoughts and upsetting it over the loss of its hoarded goods? Because the body can hear, it would fain hear of its own glory and of the world's friendship. It listens to whatever is pleasant for the body and harmful to the soul. What do all these things resemble if not swiftly melting snow, making the soul grow cold toward God and blear-eyed as to humility?

Because the body has feeling, it would fain feel its own pleasure and physical rest. What does this resemble if not hail that is frozen from impure waters and that renders the soul unfruitful in the spiritual life, strong as regards worldly pursuits and soft as regards physical comforts? Therefore, if a person wants protection from this cloud, let him run for safety to my humility and imitate it. Through it, he is protected from the passion for seeing and does not desire illicit things; he is protected from the pleasure of hearing and does not listen to anything that goes against the truth; he is protected from the lust of the flesh and does not succumb to illicit impulses.

I assure you: The contemplation of my humility is like a good cloak that warms those wearing it; I mean those who not only wear it in theory but also in practice. A physical cloak does not give any warmth unless it is worn. Likewise, my humility does no good to those who just think about it, unless each one strives to imitate it, each in his own way. Therefore, my daughter, don the cloak of humility with all your strength, since worldly women wear cloaks that are a proud thing on the outside but are of little use on the inside. Avoid such garments altogether, since, if the love of the world does not first become abhorrent to you, if you are not continually thinking of God's mercy toward you and your ingratitude toward him, if you do not always have in mind what he has done and what you do, and the just sentence that awaits you in return, you will not be able to comprehend my humility.

Why did I humble myself so much or why did I merit such favor, if not because I

considered and knew myself to be nothing and to have nothing in myself? This is also why I did not seek my own glory but only that of my Donor and Creator. Therefore, daughter, take refuge in the cloak of my humility and think of yourself as a sinner beyond all others! For, even if you see others who are wicked, you do not know what their future will be like tomorrow; you do not even know their intention or their awareness of what they are doing, whether they do it out of weakness or deliberately. This is why you should not put yourself ahead of anyone and why you must not judge anyone in your heart.”

The Virgin's exhortation to her daughter, complaining about how few her friends are; and about how Christ speaks to the bride and describes his sacred words as flowers and explains who the people are in whom such words are to bear fruit.

Chapter 24

Mary was speaking: ”Imagine a large army somewhere and a person walking alongside it heavily weighed down, carrying a great load on his back and in his arms. With his eyes full of tears, he might look at the army to see if there should be someone to have compassion on him and relieve his burden. That is the way I felt. From the birth of my Son until his death, my life was full of tribulation. I carried a heavy load on my back and persevered steadfastly in God's work and patiently bore everything that happened to me. I endured carrying a most heavy load in my arms, in the sense that I suffered more sorrow of heart and tribulation than any creature.

My eyes were full of tears when I contemplated the places in my Son's body destined for the nails as well as his future passion, and when I saw all the prophecies I had heard foretold by the prophets being fulfilled in him. And now I look around at everyone who is in the world to see if there happens to be some who might have compassion on me and be mindful of my sorrow, but I find very few who think about my sorrow and tribulation. This is why, my daughter, although I am forgotten and neglected by many people, you must not forget me! Look at my struggles and imitate them as far as you can! Contemplate my sorrow and tears and be sorry that the friends of God are so few. Stand firm! Look, my Son is coming.”

He came at once and said: ”I who am speaking with you am your God and Lord. My words are like the flowers of a fine tree. Although all the flowers spring up from the tree's

one root, not all of them come to fruition. My words are like flowers that spring up from the root of divine charity. Many people take them, but they do not bear fruit in all of them nor reach maturity in them all. Some people take them and keep them for a time but later reject them, for they are ungrateful to my Spirit. Some take and keep them, for they are full of love, and the fruit of devotion and holy conduct is produced in them.

You, therefore, my bride, who are mine by divine right, must have three houses. In the first, there should be the necessary nourishment to enter the body; in the second the clothes that clothe the body on the outside; in the third the tools necessary for use in the house. In the first there should be three things: first, bread; then drink; and third, meats. In the second house there should be three things: first, linen clothing; then woolen; then the kind made by silkworms. In the third house there should also be three things: first tools and vessels to be filled with liquids; second, living instruments, such as horses and asses and the like, by which bodies can be conveyed; and, third, instruments that are moved by living beings.”

Christ's advice to the bride about the provisions in the three houses, and about how bread stands for a good will, drink for holy forethought, and meats for divine wisdom, and about how there is no divine wisdom in erudition but only in the heart and in a good life.

Chapter 25

“I who am speaking with you am the Creator of all things, created by none. There was nothing before me and there can be nothing after me, since I always was and always am. I am the Lord whose power none can withstand and from whom all power and sovereignty come. I speak to you as a man speaks to his wife: My wife, we should have three houses. In one of them there should be bread and drink and meats. But you might ask: What does this bread mean? Do I mean the bread that is on the altar? This is indeed bread, prior to the words “This is my body,” but, once the words have been spoken, it is not bread but the body that I took from the Virgin and that was truly crucified on the cross. But here I do not mean that bread. The bread that we should store in our house is a good and sincere will. Physical bread, if it is pure and clean, has two good effects. First, it fortifies and gives strength to all the veins and arteries and muscles. Second, it absorbs any inner impurity, bringing it along for removal as it goes out, and so the person is

cleansed. In this way a pure will gives strength.

If a person wishes for nothing but the things of God, works for nothing but the glory of God, desires with every desire to leave the world and to be with God, this intention strengthens him in goodness, increases his love for God, makes the world loathsome to him, fortifies his patience and reinforces his hope of inheriting glory to the extent that he cheerfully embraces everything that happens to him. In the second place, a good will removes every impurity. What is the impurity harmful to the soul if not pride, greed, and lust? However, when the impurity of pride or of some other vice enters the mind, it will leave, provided the person reasons in the following way: 'Pride is meaningless, since it is not the recipient who should be praised for goods given him, but the giver. Greed is meaningless, since all the things of earth will be left behind. Lust is nothing but filth. Therefore I do not desire these things but want to follow the will of my God whose reward will never come to an end, whose good gifts never grow old: Then every temptation to pride or greed will leave him and he will persevere in his good intention of doing good.

The drink we should have in our houses is holy forethought about everything to be done. Physical drink has two good effects. First, it aids good digestion. When a person proposes to do something good and, before doing it, considers to himself and turns carefully over in his mind what glory will come out of it for God, what benefit to his neighbor, what advantage to his soul, and does not want to do it unless he judges there to be some divine usefulness in his work, then that proposed work will turn out well or be, so to speak, well digested. Then, if any indiscretion occurs in the work he is doing, it is quickly detected. If anything is wrong, it is quickly corrected and his work will be upright and rational and edifying for others.

A person who does not show holy forethought in his work and does not seek benefit to souls or the glory of God, even if his work turns out well for a time, nevertheless it will come to nothing in the end. In the second place, drink quenches thirst. What kind of thirst is worse than the sin of base greed and anger? If a person thinks beforehand what usefulness will come of it, how wretchedly it will end, what reward there will be if he makes resistance, then that base thirst is soon quenched through God's grace, zealous love for God and good desires fill him, and joy arises because he has not done what came into his mind. He will examine the occasion and how he can avoid in the future those things by which he was almost tripped up, had he not had forethought, and he will be more careful in the future about avoiding such things. My bride, this is the drink that should be stored in our pantry.

Third, there should also be meats there. These have two effects. First, they taste better in the mouth and are better for the body than just bread alone. Second, they make for tenderer skin and better blood than if there were only bread and drink. Spiritual meat has a like effect. What do these meats symbolize? Divine wisdom, of course. Wisdom tastes very good to a person who has a good will and wants nothing but what God wants, showing holy forethought, doing nothing until he knows it to be for God's glory.

Now, you might ask: 'What is divine wisdom?' For many people are simple and only know one prayer - the Our Father, and not even that correctly. Others are very erudite and have wide knowledge. Is this divine wisdom? By no means. Divine wisdom is not precisely to be found in erudition, but in the heart and a good life. That person is wise who reflects carefully on the path toward death, on how he will die, and on his judgment after death. That person has the meats of wisdom and the taste of a good will and holy forethought, who detaches himself from the vanity and superfluities of the world and contents himself with the bare necessities, and struggles in the love of God according to his abilities.

When a person reflects on his death and on his nakedness at death, when a person examines God's terrible court of judgment, where nothing is hidden and nothing is remitted without a punishment, when he also reflects on the instability and vanity of the world, will he not then rejoice and sweetly savor in his heart the surrender of his will to God together with his abstinence from sins? Is not his body strengthened and his blood improved, that is, is not every weakness of his soul, such as sloth and moral dissolution, driven away and the blood of divine love rejuvenated? This is because he reasons rightly that an eternal good is to be loved rather than a perishable one.

Therefore divine wisdom is not precisely to be found in erudition but in good works, since many are wise in a worldly way and after their own desires but are altogether foolish with regard to God's will and commandments and the disciplining of their body. Such people are not wise but foolish and blind, for they understand perishable things that are useful for the moment, but they despise and forget the things of eternity. Others are foolish with regard to worldly delights and reputation but wise in considering the things that are of God, and they are fervent in his service.

Such people are truly wise, for they savor the precepts and will of God. They have truly been enlightened and keep their eyes open in that they are always considering in

what way they may reach true life and light. Others, however, walk in darkness, and it seems to them more delightful to be in darkness than to inquire about the way by which they might come to the light. Therefore, my bride, let us store up these three things in our houses, namely a good will, holy forethought, and divine wisdom. These are the things that give us reason to rejoice. Although I speak my advice to you, by you I mean all my chosen ones in the world, since the righteous soul is my bride, for I am her Creator and Redeemer.”

The Virgin's advice to her daughter about life, and Christ's words to the bride about the clothes that should be kept in the second house, and about how these clothes denote the peace of God and the peace of one's neighbor and works of mercy and pure abstinence, and an excellent explanation of all these things.

Chapter 26

Mary spoke: ”Place the brooch of my Son's passion firmly on yourself, just as St. Lawrence placed it firmly on himself. Each day he used to reflect in his mind as follows: 'My God is my Lord, I am his servant. The Lord Jesus Christ was stripped and mocked. How can it be right for me, his servant, to be clothed in finery? He was scourged and fastened to the wood. It is not right, then, that I, who am his servant, if I really am his servant, should have no pain or tribulation.' When he was stretched out over the coals and liquid fat ran down into the fire and his whole body caught fire, he looked up with his eyes toward heaven and said: 'Blessed are you, Jesus Christ, my God and Creator!

I know I have not lived my days well. I know I have done little for your glory. This is why, seeing that your mercy is great, I ask you to deal with me according to your mercy.' And at this word his soul was separated from his body. Do you see, my daughter? He loved my Son so much and endured such suffering for his glory that he still said he was unworthy of reaching heaven. How then can those people who live by their own desires be worthy? Therefore, keep ever in mind the passion of my Son and of his saints. They did not endure such sufferings for no reason, but in order to give others an example of how to live and to show what a strict payment will be demanded for sins by my Son who does not want there to be the least sin without correction.”

Then the Son came and spoke to the bride, saying: ”I told you earlier what should be

stored in our houses. Among other things, there should be clothing of three kinds: first, clothing made of linen, which is produced in and grows from the earth; second, that made of leather, which comes from animals; third, that made of silk, which comes from silkworms. Linen clothing has two good effects. First, it is soft and gentle against the naked body. Second, it does not lose its color, but the more it is washed, the cleaner it becomes. The second kind of clothing, that is, leather, has two effects.

First, it covers a person's shame; second, it provides warmth against the cold. The third kind of clothing, that is, silken, also has two effects. First, it can be seen to be very beautiful and fine; second, it is very expensive to buy. The linen clothes that are good for the naked parts of the body symbolize peace and concord. A devout soul should wear this with respect to God, so that she can be at peace with God both by not wanting anything other than what God wants or in a different way than he wants, and by not exacerbating him through sins, since there is no peace between God and the soul unless she stops sinning and controls her concupiscence.

She should also be at peace with her neighbor, that is, by not causing him problems, by helping him if he has problems, and by being patient if he sins against her. What is a more unfortunate strain on the soul than always to be longing to sin and never to have enough of it, always to be desiring and never at rest? What stings the soul more sharply than to be angry with her neighbor and to envy his goods? This is why the soul should be at peace with God and with her neighbor, since nothing can be more restful than resting from sin and not being anxious about the world, nothing gentler than rejoicing in the good of one's neighbor and wishing for him what one wishes for oneself.

This linen clothing should be worn over the naked parts of the body, because, more properly and importantly than the other virtues, peace should be lodged closer to the heart, which is where God wants to take his rest. This is the virtue that God instills and keeps instilled in the heart. Like linen, this peace is born in and grows from the earth, since true peace and patience spring up from the consideration of one's own weakness. A man who is of the earth ought to consider his own weakness, namely that he is quick to anger if offended, quick to feel pain if hurt. And if he reflects in this way he will not do unto another what he himself cannot bear, reflecting to himself that: 'Just as I am weak, so too is my neighbor.'

Just as I do not want to put up with such things, neither does he.' Next, peace does not lose its color, that is, its stability, but stays increasingly constant, since, considering

his neighbor's weakness in himself, he becomes more willing to put up with injuries. If a man's peace gets soiled by impatience in any way, it grows ever cleaner and brighter before God the more frequently and quickly it is washed through penance. He also becomes so much the happier and more prudent in toleration, the more often he gets irritated and then gets washed again, since he rejoices in the hope of the reward that he hopes will come to him on account of his inner peace, and he is all the more careful about not letting himself fall due to impatience.

The second kind of clothing, namely leather, denotes works of mercy. These leather clothes are made from the skins of dead animals. What do these animals symbolize if not my saints, who were as simple as animals? The soul should be covered with their skins, that is, she should imitate and carry out their works of mercy. These have two effects. First, they cover the shame of the sinful soul and cleanse her so as not to appear stained in my sight. Second, they defend the soul against the cold. What is the cold of the soul if not the soul's hardness with respect to my love? Works of mercy are effective against such coldness, wrapping the soul so that she does not perish from the cold. Through these works God visits the soul, and the soul comes ever closer to God.

The third kind of clothing, that made of silk by silkworms, which seems very expensive to buy, denotes the pure habit of abstinence. This is beautiful in the sight of God and the angels and men. It is also expensive to buy, since it seems hard to people to restrain their tongue from idle and excessive talk. It seems hard to restrain the appetite of the flesh from superfluous excess and pleasure. It also seems hard to go against one's own will. But although it may be hard, it is in every way useful and beautiful. This is why, my bride, in whom I mean all the faithful, in our second house we should store up peace toward God and neighbor, works of mercy through compassion on and help for the wretched, and abstinence from concupiscence.

Although the latter is more expensive than the rest, it is also so much more beautiful than the other clothes that no other virtue seems beautiful without it. This abstinence should be produced by silkworms, that is, by the consideration of one's excesses against God, by humility, and by my own example of abstinence, for I became like a worm for the sake of humankind. A person should examine in his spirit how and how often he has sinned against me and in what way he has made amends. Then he will discover by himself that no amount of toil and abstinence on his part can make amends for the number of times he has sinned against me.

He should also ponder my sufferings and those of my saints as well as the reason why I endured such sufferings. Then he will truly understand that, if I demand such a strict repayment from my saints, who have obeyed me, how much more I will demand in vengeance from those who have not obeyed me. A good soul should therefore readily undertake to practice abstinence, recalling that her sins are evil and surround the soul like worms. Thus, from these low worms she will collect precious silk, that is, the pure habit of abstinence in all her limbs. God and all the host of heaven rejoice in this. Eternal joy will be awarded to the person storing this up who would otherwise have had eternal grief, had abstinence not come to his assistance.”

Christ's words to the bride about the instruments in the third house, and about how such instruments symbolize good thoughts, disciplined senses, and true confession; there is also given an excellent explanation of all these things in general and about the locks of these houses.

Chapter 27

The Son of God spoke to the bride, saying: ”I told you earlier that there should be instruments of three kinds in the third house. First, instruments or vessels into which liquids are poured. Second, instruments with which the land outside is prepared, such as hoes and axes and tools for repairing things that get broken. Third, living instruments, such as asses and horses and the like for conveying both the living and the dead. In the first house, where there are liquids, there should be two kinds of instruments or vessels: first those into which sweet and fluid substances are poured, such as water and oil and wine and the like; second, those into which pungent or thick substances are poured, such as mustard and flour and the like. Do you understand what these things signify? The liquids refer to the good and bad thoughts of the soul.

A good thought is like sweet oil and like delicious wine. A bad thought is like bitter mustard that makes the soul bitter and base. Bad thoughts are like the thick liquids that a person sometimes needs. Although they are not much good for nourishing the body, still they are beneficial for the purgation and curing of both body and brain. Although bad thoughts do not fatten and heal the soul like the oil of good thoughts, still they are good for the purgation of the soul, just as mustard is good for the purgation of the brain. If bad thoughts did not sometimes get in the way, human beings would be angels and not

human, and they would think they got everything from themselves.

Therefore, in order that a man might understand his weakness, which comes from himself, and the strength that comes from me, it is sometimes necessary that my great mercy allows him to be tempted by bad thoughts. So long as he does not consent to them, they are a purgation for the soul and a protection for his virtues. Although they may be as pungent to take as mustard, still they are very healing for the soul and lead it toward eternal life and toward the kind of health that cannot be gained without some bitterness. Therefore, let the vessels of the soul, where the good thoughts are placed, be carefully prepared and always kept clean, since it is useful that even bad thoughts arise both as a trial and for the sake of gaining greater merit. However, the soul should strive diligently so as not to consent to them or delight in them. Otherwise the sweetness and the development of the soul will be lost and only bitterness will remain.

In the second house there should also be instruments of two kinds: first, outdoor instruments, such as the plow and the hoe, to prepare the ground outside for sowing and to root up brambles; second, instruments useful for both indoor and outdoor purposes, such as axes and the like. The instruments for cultivating the soil symbolize the human senses. These should be used for the benefit of one's neighbor just as the plow is used on the soil. Bad people are like the soil of the earth, for they are always thinking in an earthly fashion. They are barren of compunction for their sins, because they think nothing is a sin. They are cold in their love for God, because they seek nothing but their own will.

They are heavy and sluggish when it comes to doing good, because they are eager for worldly reputation. This is why a good person should cultivate them through his exterior senses, just as a good farmer cultivates the earth with a plow. First, he should cultivate them with his mouth, by saying things to them that are useful for the soul and by instructing them about the path to life; next, by doing the good deeds he can. His neighbor can be formed in this way by his words and motivated to do good. Next, he should cultivate his neighbor by means of the rest of his body in order that he may bear fruit.

He does this through his innocent eyes that do not look on unchaste things, so that his unchaste neighbor may also learn modesty in his whole body. He should cultivate him by means of his ears that do not listen to unsuitable things as well by means of his feet that are quick to do the work of God. I, God, shall give the rain of my grace to the soil

thus cultivated by the work of the cultivator, and the laborer shall rejoice over the fruit of the once barren earth as it begins to put forth shoots.

The instruments needed for indoor preparations, such as the ax and similar tools, signify a discerning intention and the holy examination of one's work. Whatever good a person does should not be done for the sake of reputation and human praise but out of love for God and for the sake of an eternal reward. This is why a person should carefully examine his works and with what intention and for what reward he has done them. If he should discover any kind of pride in his works, let him immediately cut it out with the ax of discretion.

In this way, just as he cultivates his neighbor who is, as it were, outside the house, that is, outside the company of my friends due to his bad deeds, so too he may bear fruit for himself on the inside through divine love. Just as the work of a farmer will soon come to naught if he has no instruments with which to repair things that have been broken, so too, unless a person examines his work with discernment, and how it may be lightened if it is too burdensome or how it may be improved if it has failed, he will achieve no results. Accordingly, one should not only work effectively outdoors, one must also consider attentively on the inside how and with what intention one works.

There should be living instruments in the third house to convey the living and the dead, such as horses and asses and other animals. These instruments signify true confession. This conveys both living and dead. What does living denote if not the soul that has been created by my divinity and lives forever? This soul comes closer and closer to God each day through a true confession. Just as an animal becomes a stronger beast of burden and more beautiful to behold the more often and better it is fed, so too confession - the more often it is used and the more carefully it is made as to both lesser and greater sins - conveys the soul increasingly forward and is so pleasing to God that it leads the soul to God's very heart. What are the dead things conveyed by confession, if not the good works that die through mortal sin? Good works dying through mortal sins are dead in the sight of God, for nothing good can please God unless sin is first corrected either through a perfect intention or in deed.

It is not good to combine sweet-smelling and stinking substances in the same vessel. If anyone kills his good works through mortal sins and makes a true confession of his crimes with the intention to improve and to avoid sin in the future, his good works, which earlier were dead, come to life again through confession and the virtue of humility and

they gain him merit for eternal salvation. If he dies without making confession, although his good works cannot die or be destroyed but cannot merit eternal life due to mortal sin, still they can merit a lighter punishment for him or contribute to the salvation of others, provided he has done the good works with a holy intention and for the glory of God. However, if he has done the works for the sake of worldly glory and his own benefit, then his works will die when their doer dies, inasmuch as he has received his reward from the world on whose behalf he labored.

Therefore, my bride, by whom I mean all my friends, we should store up in our houses those things that give rise to the spiritual delight God wants to have with a holy soul. In the first house, we should store, first, the bread of a sincere will that wants nothing but what God wants; second, the drink of holy forethought by not doing anything unless it is thought to be for God's glory; third, the meats of divine wisdom by always thinking on the life to come and on how the present should be ordered.

In the second house, let us store up the peace of not sinning against God and the peace of not quarreling with our neighbor; second, works of mercy through which we may be of practical benefit to our neighbor; third, perfect abstinence by which we restrain those things that tend to disturb our peace. In the third house, we should store up wise and good thoughts in order to decorate our home on the inside; second, temperate, well-disciplined senses to be a light for our neighbors on the outside; third, true confession that helps us to revive, should we grow weak.

Though we have the houses, the things stored in them cannot be kept safe without doors, and doors cannot swing without hinges or be locked without locks. This is why, in order that the stored goods be kept safe, the house needs the door of steadfast hope so as not to be broken down by adversity. This hope should have two hinges in order that a person may not despair of achieving glory or of escaping punishment, but always in every adversity have the hope of better things, being confident in the mercy of God. The lock should be divine charity that secures the door against the entrance of the enemy.

What good is it to have a door without a lock, or hope without love? If someone hopes for eternal rewards and in the mercy of God, but does not love and fear God, he has a door without a lock through which his mortal enemy can enter whenever he likes and kill him. But true hope is when a person who hopes also does the good deeds he can. Without these good deeds he cannot attain heaven, that is, if he knew and was able to do them but did not want to.

If anyone realizes that he has committed a transgression or has not done what he could, he should make the good resolution of doing what good he can. As to what he cannot do, let him hope firmly that he will be able to come to God thanks to his good intention and love for God. So, let the door of hope be secured with divine charity in such away that, just as a lock has many catches inside to prevent the enemy from opening it, this charity for God should also entail the concern not to offend God, the loving fear of being separated from him, the fiery zeal to see God loved, and the desire to see him imitated. It should also entail sorrow, for a person is not able to do as much as he would like or knows he is obliged to do, and humility, which makes a person think nothing of all that he accomplishes in comparison to his sins.

Let the lock be made strong by these catches, so that the devil cannot easily open the lock of charity and insert his own love. The key to open and close the lock should be the desire for God alone, along with divine charity and holy works, so that a person does not wish to have anything except God, even if he can get it, and all this because of his great charity. This desire encloses God in the soul and the soul in God, since their wills are one.

The wife and husband alone should have this key, that is, God and the soul, so that, as often as God wants to come in and enjoy good things, namely the virtues of the soul, he may have free access with the key of stable desire; as often again as the soul wants to go into the heart of God, she may do so freely, since she desires nothing but God. This key is kept by the vigilance of the soul and the custody of her humility, by which she ascribes every good she has to God. And this key is kept also by the power and charity of God, lest the soul be overturned by the devil.

Behold, my bride, what love God has for souls! Stand therefore firm and do my will!"

Christ's words to the bride about his unchanging nature and about how his words are accomplished, even if they are not immediately followed by deeds; and about how our will should be wholly entrusted to God's will.

The Son spoke to the bride, saying: "Why are you so upset because that man claimed my words were false? Am I worse off because of his disparagement or would I be better off because of his praise? I am, of course, unchangeable and can become neither greater nor less, and I have no need of praise. A person who praises me does gain a benefit from his praise of me, not for me but for himself. I am truth, and falsehood never proceeds or can proceed from my lips, since everything I have said through the prophets or other friends of mine, whether in spirit or in body, is accomplished as I intended it at the time.

My words were not false if I said one thing at one time, another at another time, first something more explicit, then something more obscure. The explanation is that, in order to prove the reliability of my faith as well as the zeal of my friends, I revealed much that could be understood in different ways, both well and badly, by good and bad people according to the different effects of my Spirit, thus giving them the possibility of carrying out different good acts in their different circumstances.

Just as I assumed a human nature into one person in my divine nature, so too I have also spoken at times through my human nature as being subject to my divine nature, but at other times through my divine nature as the Creator of my human nature, as is clear from my gospel. And in this way, although ignorant people or detractors might see divergent meanings in them, still they are true words in agreement with truth. It was also not unreasonable for me to have handed down some things in an obscure manner, since it was right that my plan should in some way be hidden from the wicked, and at the same time that all good people should eagerly hope for my grace and obtain the reward for their hope. Otherwise, if it had been implied that my plan would come about at a specific point in time, then everyone would have given up both their hopes and their charity due to the great length of time.

I also promised a number of things that, however, did not occur because of the ingratitude of the people then living. Had they left off their evildoing, I would certainly have given them what I had promised. This is why you ought not be upset over claims that my words are lies. For what seems to be humanly impossible is possible for me. My friends are also surprised that the words are not followed up by deeds. But this, again, is not unreasonable.

Was not Moses sent to Pharaoh? Yet signs did not immediately follow. Why? Because, if the signs and portents had immediately followed, neither the hardheartedness

of Pharaoh nor the power of God would have been manifested nor would the miracles have been clearly shown. Pharaoh would still have been condemned for his own wickedness, even if Moses had not come, although his hardheartedness would not have been so manifest. This is also what is happening now. So, be brave! The plow, though drawn by oxen, is still steered by the will of the plowman. Likewise, although you may hear and know my words, they do not turn out or get accomplished according to your will, but according to mine. For I know the lay of the land and how it should be cultivated. But you should entrust all your will to me and say: 'May your will be done!' ”

John the Baptist admonishes the bride through a parable in which God is symbolized by a magpie, the soul by its chicks, the body by its nest, worldly pleasures by wild animals, pride by birds of prey, worldly mirth by a snare.

Chapter 29

John the Baptist spoke to the bride, saying: ”The Lord Jesus has called you out of darkness into light, from impurity into perfect purity, from a narrow into a broad place. Who is able to explain these gifts or how could you thank him as much as you should for them? Just do all that you can! There is a kind of bird called a magpie. She loves her chicks, because the eggs from which the chicks came were once in her womb. This bird makes a nest for herself out of old and used things for three purposes.

First, as a resting place; second, as a shelter from rain and heavy drought; third, in order to feed her young when they are hatched from the eggs. The bird hatches her young by lovingly settling herself on top of the eggs. When the chicks are born, the mother entices them to fly in three ways. First, by the distribution of food; second, by her solicitous voice; third, by the example of her own flying. Since they love their mother, the chicks, once they have got used to their mother's food, first travel little by little beyond the nest with their mother leading the way. Then they go further away as their strength allows, until they become accomplished in the use and skill of flight.

This bird stands for God, who exists eternally and never changes. From the womb of his divinity all rational souls proceed. A nest is prepared for each soul out of used things, inasmuch as the soul is joined to a body of earth through which God nourishes it with the food of good affections, defends it from the birds of evil thoughts, and gives it respite

from the rain of bad actions. Each soul is joined to the body in order that it may rule the body and nowise be ruled by it and so that it may spur the body to struggle and provide for it intelligently. Thus, like a good mother, God teaches the soul to advance toward better things, and teaches it to leave its confinement for broader spaces. First, he feeds it by giving it intelligence and reason according to each one's capacity, and by pointing out to the mind what it should choose and what it should avoid.

As the magpie first leads its chicks beyond the nest, so too the human person first learns to think thoughts of heaven, and also to think how confined and base the nest of the body is, how bright the heavens and how delightful eternal things are. God also leads the soul out with his voice when he calls: 'He who follows me will have life; he who loves me will not die.' This voice leads toward heaven. Anyone who does not hear it is either deaf or ungrateful for his mother's love. Third, God leads the soul out through his own flying, that is, through the example of his human nature. This glorious human nature had, as it were, two wings. Its first wing was that there was only purity and no defilement in it; its second wing was that he did all things well. Upon these two wings God's human nature flew through the world. For this reason, the soul should follow them as far as it can, and if it cannot do so in deeds, let it at least try to do so in intention.

When the young chick is flying, it has to beware of three dangers. The first is wild animals. It must not land next to them on the ground, because the chick is not as strong as they are. Second, it must beware of birds of prey, since the chick does not yet fly as swiftly as those birds do, which is why it is safer to stay in hiding. Third, it should take care not to be lured by a baited snare. The wild animals that I mentioned are worldly pleasures and appetites. The young chick should beware of them, for they seem good to know, fine to own, beautiful to behold. But when you think you have got hold of them, they quickly go away. When you think they give you pleasure, they bite you without mercy.

In the second place, the chick should beware of birds of prey. These represent pride and ambition. These are the birds that always want to rise higher and higher and to be ahead of the other birds and hate all those behind them. The chick should beware of them and should want to remain in humble hiding, so that it does not grow proud of the grace it has received or despise those that are behind it and have less grace, and does not think itself better than others. Third, the chick should beware of being lured by a baited snare. This represents worldly mirth. It may seem good to have laughter on one's lips and pleasant sensations in one's body, but there is a barb in these things. Immoderate

laughter leads to immoderate mirth, and the pleasure of the body leads to inconstancy of mind, which gives rise to sadness, either at death or earlier, along with distress. You should therefore hurry, my daughter, to leave your nest through the desire for heaven! Beware of the beasts of desire and the birds of pride! Beware of the bait of empty mirth!”

Then the Mother spoke to the bride and said: ”Beware of the bird that is daubed with pitch, for anyone who touches it gets stained. This represents worldly ambition, unstable as the air, repulsive in its way of seeking favor and keeping bad company. Care nothing for honors, do not bother about favors, pay no attention to praise or reproach! From these things come inconstancy of soul and the lessening of love for God. Be steadfast! God, who has begun to bring you out of the nest, will keep nourishing you until death. After death, however, you will hunger no more. He will also protect you from sorrow and defend you in life, and after death you will have nothing to fear.”

The Mother's entreaty to her Son for his bride and for another holy person, and about how the Mother's entreaty is received by Christ, and about certainty regarding the truth or falsity of a person's holiness in this life.

Chapter 30

Mary spoke to her Son saying: ”My Son, grant your new bride the gift that your most worthy body may take root in her heart, so that she herself may be changed into you and be filled with your delight!” Then she said: ”This holy man, when he was living in time, was as steadfast in the holy faith as a mountain unbroken by adversity, undistracted by pleasure. He was as flexible toward your will as the moving air, wherever the force of your Spirit led him. He was as ardent in your love as fire, warming those grown cold and overtaking the wicked. Now his soul is with you in glory, but the vessel he used is buried and lies in a more humble place than is fitting. Therefore, my Son, raise his body up to a higher station, do it honor, for it honored you in its own small way, raise it up, for it raised you up on high as much as it could by means of its toil!”

The Son answered: ”Blessed are you, who overlook nothing in the affairs of your friends. You see, Mother, it is no use for good food to be given to wolves. It is not right to bury in mud the sapphire that keeps all the members healthy and strengthens the weak. It is no use to light a candle for the blind. This man was indeed steadfast in faith and

fervent in charity, just as he was ready to do my will with the greatest of continence. Therefore, he tastes to me like good food prepared through patience and tribulation, sweet and good in the goodness of his will and affections, even better in his manly struggles to improve, excellent and most sweet in his praiseworthy way of finishing his works. Therefore it is not right for such food to be lifted up before wolves, whose greed is never sated, whose lust for pleasure flees from the herbs of virtue and thirsts for rotten meat, whose shrewd speech is harmful to everyone.

He resembled the sapphire of a ring through the brightness of his life and reputation, proving himself to be a bridegroom of his church, a friend of his Lord, a preserver of the holy faith and a scorner of the world. Therefore, dear Mother, it is not right for such a lover of virtue and so pure a bridegroom to be touched by impure creatures, or for so humble a friend to be handled by lovers of the world. In the third place, by his fulfillment of my commandments and by the teaching of a good life, he was like a lamp on a lampstand. Through this teaching, he strengthened those who were standing, lest they fall. Through this teaching he raised up those who were falling down. Through it he also offered inspiration to those who would come after him to seek me.

They are unworthy to see this light, blinded as they are by their own love. They are unable to perceive this light, for their eyes are sick with pride. People with scabby hands cannot touch this light. This light is hateful to the greedy and to those who love their own will. This is why, before he can be raised up to a higher station, justice requires those who are unclean to be purified and those who are blind to be enlightened.

However, regarding that man whom the people of the earth are calling a saint, three things show that he was not holy. The first is that he did not imitate the life of the saints before he died; second, that he was not joyfully ready to suffer martyrdom for God's sake; third, that he did not have an ardent and discerning charity like the saints. Three things make someone appear holy to the crowd. The first is the lie of a deceiving and ingratiating man; the second is the easy credulity of the foolish; the third is the cupidity and lukewarmness of prelates and examiners. Whether he is in hell or in purgatory is not given you to know until the time comes for telling it.”

Book 3

Warnings and instructions to the bishop about how to eat and dress and pray, and about how he should behave before meals, at meals, and after meals, and likewise about his sleep and how he should carry out the office of bishop always and everywhere.

Chapter 1

“Jesus Christ, God and man, who came to earth in order to take on a human nature and save souls through his blood, who disclosed the true way to heaven and opened its gates, he himself has sent me to all of you. Hear, daughter, you to whom it has been given to hear spiritual truths. If this bishop proposes to walk the narrow path taken by few and to be one of those few, let him first lay aside the burden that besets him and weighs him down - I mean his worldly desires - by using the world only for needs consistent with the modest sustenance of a bishop. This is what that good man Matthew did when he was called by God.

Leaving behind the heavy burden of the world, he found a light burden. In the second place, the bishop should be girded for the journey, to use the words of scripture. Tobias was ready for his journey when he found the angel standing there girded. What does it mean to say that the angel was girded? It means that every bishop should be girded with the belt of justice and divine charity, ready to walk the same path as he who said: 'I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life for my sheep.' He should be ready to speak the truth in his words, ready to perform justice in his actions both regarding himself and regarding others, not neglecting justice due to threats and taunts or false friendships or empty fears. To each bishop thus girded shall Tobias, that is, the righteous, come and they shall follow on his path.

In the third place, he should eat bread and water before he undertakes his journey, just as we read about Elijah, who, aroused from sleep, found bread and water at his head. What is this bread given to the prophet if not the material and spiritual goods bestowed upon him? For material bread was given to him in the desert as a lesson. Although God

could have sustained the prophet without material food, he wanted material bread to be prepared for him so that people might understand it to be God's wish that they make use of God's good gifts in temperate fashion for the solace of the body. Moreover, an infusion of the Spirit inspired the prophet when he went on for forty days in the strength of that food. For, if no interior unction of grace had been inspired in his mind, he would certainly have given up during the toil of those forty days, for in himself he was weak but in God he had the strength to complete such a journey.

Therefore, inasmuch as man lives by God's every word, we urge the bishop to take the morsel of bread, that is, to love God above all things. He will find this morsel at his head, in the sense that his own reason tells him that God is to be loved above all things and before all things, both because of creation and redemption and also because of his enduring patience and goodness. We bid him also to drink a little water, that is, to think inwardly on the bitterness of Christ's passion. Who is worthy enough to be able to meditate on the agony of Christ's human nature, which he was suffering at the moment when he prayed for the chalice of the passion to be taken from him and when drops of his blood were flowing to the ground? The bishop should drink this water together with the bread of charity and he will be strengthened for journeying along the path of Jesus Christ.

Once the bishop has set out on the path to salvation, if he wants to make further progress, it is useful for him to give thanks to God with all his heart from the very first hour of the day, considering his own actions carefully and asking God for help to carry out his will.

Then, when he is getting dressed, he should pray in this manner: 'Ashes must with ashes be, dust with dust. Yet, since I am bishop by the providence of God, I am putting these clothes made from the dust of the earth on you, my body, not for the sake of beauty or ostentation but as a covering, so that your nakedness might not be seen. Nor do I care whether your clothing is better or worse, but only that the bishop's habit should be acknowledged out of reverence for God, and that through his habit the bishop's authority may be recognized for the correction and instruction of others. And so, kind God, I beg you to give me steadfastness of mind so that I do not take pride in my precious ashes and dust nor foolishly glory in the colors of mere dust. Grant me fortitude so that, just as a bishop's garb is more distinguished and respected than that of others due to his divine

authority, the garb of my soul may be acceptable before God, lest I be thrust down all the deeper for having held authority in an undistinguished and unworthy manner or lest I be ignominiously stripped for having foolishly worn my venerable garb to my own damnation.'

After that he should read or sing the hours. The higher the rank a person rises to, the more glory he or she should render to God. However, a pure heart pleases God just as much in silence as in singing, provided a person is occupied with other righteous and useful tasks. After Mass has been said, the bishop should fulfill his episcopal duties, taking diligent care not to give more attention to material things than to spiritual. When he comes to the dinner table, this should be his thought: 'O Lord Jesus Christ, you command that the corruptible body be sustained with material food, help me to give my body what it needs in such a way that the flesh does not grow shamelessly insolent against the soul due to superfluous eating nor sluggish in your service out of imprudent abstinence.

Inspire in me a suitable moderation so that when this man of earth nourishes himself with things of the earth, the Lord of the earth may not be provoked to anger by his creature of earth.' While at table, the bishop is allowed to have the kind of moderate refreshment and conversation in which foolish vanity is avoided and no word is uttered or heard that may offer the hearers an occasion of sin. Rather, it should all be proper and salutary.

If bread and wine are missing from the material table, everything loses its taste; in the same way, if good doctrine and exhortation are missing from the episcopal and spiritual table, everything set on it seems tasteless to the soul. And so, in order to avoid any occasion of frivolity, something should be read or recited at table that can be of profit to those seated there. When the meal is ended and the thanksgiving blessing has been prayed to God, the bishop should plan what he has to do or read books that can lead him on toward spiritual perfection. After dinner, though, he may entertain himself with the companions of his household. However, just as a mother giving milk to her baby anoints her nipples with ashes or some other bitter substance until she weans the baby from milk and accustoms it to solid foods, so too the bishop should bring his companions closer to God through the kind of conversation by which they may come to fear and love God, becoming in this way not only their father through the divine authority in him but also

their mother through the spiritual formation he gives them.

If he is consciously aware that anyone in his household is in the state of mortal sin and has not repented despite admonishments, then he should separate himself from him. If he retains him out of convenience and temporal consolation, he will have no immunity from the other's sin. When he goes to bed, he should carefully examine the deeds and impressions of the day that has gone, thinking the following thoughts: 'O God, Creator of my body and soul, look on me in your mercy.

Grant me your grace, so that I do not grow lukewarm in your service by oversleeping nor grow weak in your service due to disturbed sleep, but grant me for your glory that measure of sleep that you have prescribed for us in order to give the body rest. Give me fortitude so that my enemy, the devil, may not disturb me nor drag me away from your goodness.' When he gets up out of bed, he should wash away in confession any lapses that the flesh may have suffered, so that the sleep of the following night might not begin with the sins of the previous.”

The Virgin's words to her daughter about the opportune solution to the difficulties meeting the bishop on the narrow path, and about how patience is symbolized by clothing and the Ten Commandments by ten fingers, and the longing for eternity and the distaste for worldliness by two feet, and about three enemies to the bishop along his way.

Chapter 2

Again the Mother of God speaks: "Tell the bishop that, if he sets out on this path, he will meet with three difficulties. The first difficulty is that it is a narrow path; the second, that there are sharp thorns on it; the third, that it is a rocky and uneven path. I will give you three pieces of advice in this regard. The first is that the bishop should wear rugged and tightly knit clothes in preparation for the narrow path. The second is that he should hold his ten fingers in front of his eyes and look through them as through bars so as not to be scratched by the thorns.

The third is that he should step cautiously and test each and every step he takes to see if his foot gets a firm hold when he sets it down, and he should not hastily set down both feet at the same time without first assuring himself of the condition of the path. This narrow path symbolizes nothing other than the malice of wicked people toward the righteous, the kind of people who deride righteous deeds and pervert the paths and upright warnings of the righteous, who give little weight to anything having to do with humility and piety. In order to confront such people the bishop should clothe himself in the garment of steadfast patience, since patience makes burdens pleasant and joyfully accepts the insults it receives.

The thorns symbolize nothing other than the hardships of the world. In order to confront them, the ten fingers of God's commandments and counsels should be held up so that, when the thorn of hardship and poverty scratches him, he may recall the sufferings and poverty of Christ. When the thorn of anger and envy scratches him, he should recall the love of God that we are commanded to keep. True love does not insist on getting what is its own, but opens itself up wholly to the glory of God and the benefit of one's neighbor.

That the bishop ought to step cautiously means that he should everywhere have an attitude of intelligent caution. For a good person should have two feet, so to speak. One foot is a longing for eternity. The other is a distaste for the world. His longing for eternity should be circumspect, in the sense that he must not long for eternal things for himself alone as though he were worthy of them; rather, he should place all his longing and desire as well as his reward in the hands of God. His distaste for the world should be cautious and full of fear, in the sense that this distaste must not be the result of his hardships in the world or impatience with life nor should it be for the sake of living a quieter life or being released from carrying out work beneficial to others. Rather, it should only be the result of his abhorrence of sin and his longing for eternity.

Once these three difficulties have been overcome, I would warn the bishop about three enemies on his path. You see, the first enemy tries to whistle in the bishop's ears so as to block his hearing. The second stands in front of him in order to scratch out his eyes. The third enemy is at his feet, shouting loudly and holding a noose in order to ensnare his feet when he lifts them off the ground. The first are those people or those impulses that try to draw the bishop away from the right path, saying: 'Why do you take so much

work on yourself and why are you making your way on so narrow a path? Go off instead to the verdant path where so many people are walking. What does it matter to you how this person or those people behave? Why do you bother to offend or censure those people who could honor and appreciate you? If they do not offend you and those close to you, what do you care how they live or whether they are offending God? If you yourself are a good man, why do you bother to be judging others? Better to exchange gifts and services! Make use of human friendships in order to win praise and a good reputation during your lifetime.'

The second enemy wants to blind you like the Philistines did Samson. This enemy is worldly beauty and possessions, sumptuous clothing, the various trappings of pomp, human privileges and favors. When such things are presented to you and please the eyes, reason is blinded, love for God's commandments grows lukewarm, sin is carried out freely and, once committed, is taken lightly. Therefore, when the bishop has a moderate supply of necessary goods, he should be content. For all too many people nowadays find it more pleasant to stand around with Samson at the millstone of desire rather than to love the church with a praiseworthy disposition for pastoral ministry.

The third enemy shouts loudly and carries a noose and says: 'Why are you walking with such caution and with your head bowed down? Why do you humble yourself so much, you who should be and could be honored by many people? Be a priest so as to sit among those of the first rank! Be a bishop so as to be honored by the many! Advance to higher ranks in order to obtain better service and enjoy greater relaxation! Store up a treasure with which you can help yourself as well as others and be comforted by others in return and happy wherever you are!'

When the heart becomes inclined to such feelings and suggestions, the mind soon steps toward earthly appetites, lifting as it were the foot of base desire, with which it gets so entangled in the trap of worldly care that it can scarcely rise up to the consideration of its own wretchedness or to that of the rewards and punishments of eternity. Nor is this surprising, since scripture says that whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task for the honor of God. Now, however, there are many who want the honors but shirk the task in which is found the eternal salvation of the soul. This is why this bishop should stay in the position that he holds and not seek a higher one, until it pleases God to give him another."

A complete explanation to the bishop from the Virgin about how he should exercise his episcopal office in order to give glory to God, and about the double reward for having held the rank of bishop in a true way and about the double disgrace for having held it in a false way, and about how Jesus Christ and all the saints welcome a true and up right bishop.

Chapter 3

The Mother of God was speaking: "I wish to explain to the bishop what he should do for God and what will give glory to God. Every bishop must hold his miter carefully in his arms. He must not sell it for money nor give it up to others for the sake of worldly friendship nor lose it through negligence and lukewarmness. The bishop's miter signifies nothing other than the bishop's rank and power to ordain priests, to prepare the chrism, to correct those who go astray, and to encourage the negligent by his example. To hold his miter carefully in his arms means that he should reflect carefully on how and why he received his episcopal power, how he wields it, and what its effects and purpose are.

If the bishop would examine how he received his power, he should first examine whether he desired the episcopate for his own sake or for God's. If it was for his own sake, then his desire was no doubt carnal; if it was for God's sake, that is, in order to give glory to God, then his desire was meritorious and spiritual.

If the bishop would consider for what purpose he has received the episcopate, then surely it was in order that he might become a father to the poor and a consoler and intercessor for souls, because the bishop's goods are intended for the good of souls. If his means are consumed inefficaciously and wasted in a prodigal manner, then those souls will cry out for revenge on the unjust steward. I will tell you the reward that will come from having held the rank of bishop. It will be a double reward, as Paul says, both corporal and spiritual.

It will be corporal, because he is God's vicar on earth and is therefore accorded divine honor by men as away of honoring God. In heaven it will be corporal and spiritual because of the glorification of body and soul, because the servant will be there with his

Lord, due both to the way he lived as a bishop on earth and to his humble example by which he incited others to the glory of heaven along with himself. Everyone who has the rank and garb of a bishop but flees the episcopal way of life will merit a double disgrace.

That the bishop's power is not to be sold means that the bishop should not knowingly commit simony or exercise his office for the sake of money or human favor or promote men whom he knows to be of bad character because people petition him to do so. That the miter should not be given up to others on account of human friendship means that the bishop should not disguise the sins of the negligent or let those whom he can and should correct go unpunished, or pass over the sins of his friends in silence due to worldly friendship or take the sins of his subordinates on his own back, for the bishop is God's sentinel.

That the bishop should not lose his miter through negligence means that the bishop should not delegate to others what he should and can do more profitably himself, that he should not, for the sake of his own physical ease, transfer to others what he himself is more perfectly able to carry out, since the bishop's duty is not to rest but to work. Nor should the bishop be ignorant of the life and conduct of those to whom he delegates his tasks. Instead he should know and review how they observe justice and whether they conduct themselves prudently and without cupidity in their assignments. I want you to know, too, that the bishop, in his role as shepherd, ought to carry a bouquet of flowers under his arms in order to entice sheep both far and near to run gladly after its scent.

This bouquet of flowers signifies the bishop's pious preaching. The two arms from which the bouquet of divine preaching hangs are two kinds of works necessary to a bishop, namely, public good works and hidden good works. Thus, the nearby sheep in his diocese, seeing the bishop's charity in his works and hearing it in his words, will give glory to God through the bishop. Likewise, the faraway sheep, hearing of the bishop's reputation, will want to follow him. This is the sweetest bouquet: not to be ashamed of God's truth and humility, to preach good doctrine and to practice as one preaches, to be humble when praised and devout in humiliation. When the bishop has traveled to the end of this path and reaches the gate, he must have a gift in his hands to present to the high king. Accordingly, may he have in his hands a vessel precious to him, an empty one, to offer to the high king.

The empty vessel to be offered is his own heart. He must struggle night and day in order for it to be empty of all lusts and the desire for fleeting praise. When such a bishop is led into the kingdom of glory, Jesus Christ, true God and man, will come out to meet him together with the whole host of saints. Then he will hear the angels saying: 'Our God, our joy and every good! This bishop was pure in body, manly in his conduct. It is befitting that we should present him to you, for he longed for our company everyday. Satisfy his longing and magnify our joy at his coming!' Then, too, other saints will say: 'O God, our joy is both from you and in you and we need nothing else.'

Yet, our joy is heightened by the joy of the soul of this bishop who longed for you while he was still able to long. The sweet flowers of his lips increased our numbers. The flowers of his works consoled those dwelling far and near. Therefore, let him rejoice with us, and rejoice yourself over him for whom you longed so much when you died for him.' Finally the King of glory shall say to him: 'Friend, you have come to present to me the vessel of your heart emptied of your selfish will. Therefore, I will fill you with my delight and glory. My happiness will be yours and your glory in me will never cease.' "

The Mother's words to her daughter about the covetousness of bad bishops; she explains in a long parable that many persons through their good intentions attain the spiritual rank that intemperate bishops reject despite having been called to it in a physical sense.

Chapter 4

The Mother of God speaks to the Son's bride saying: "You are crying because God loves people so much but people love God so little. So it is. Where, indeed, is that ruler or bishop who does not covet his office in order to obtain worldly honors and wealth but, rather, desires it in order to help the poor with his own hands? Since rulers and bishops do not want to come to the wedding feast prepared for everyone in heaven, the poor and weak will come instead, as I will show you by way of an example.

In a certain city lived a wise, handsome, and wealthy bishop who was praised for his wisdom and handsome looks, but did not, as he ought to, return thanks to God who had

given him that very wisdom. He was praised and honored for his wealth, too, and he handed out numerous gifts with a view to worldly favor. He longed for even greater possessions so as to be able to give more gifts and win greater honor. This bishop had a learned priest in his diocese who thought to himself as follows: 'This bishop,' he said, 'loves God less than he should. His whole life tends toward worldliness.

Therefore, if it is pleasing to God, I would like to have his episcopate in order to give glory to God. I do not desire it for worldly reasons, seeing that worldly honor is but empty air, nor for the sake of wealth, which is as heavy as the heaviest of burdens, nor for the sake of physical rest and comfort, since I only need a reasonable amount of rest so as to keep my body fit for God's service. No, I desire it for the sake of God alone. And, although I am unworthy of any honor, still, in order to win more souls for God and to benefit more people by my word and example and to support more people through church revenues, I would gladly take on the burdensome task of being bishop.

God knows that I would rather die a painful death or put up with bitter hardships than to have the rank of bishop. I am as susceptible to suffering as the next man, but, still, he who aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. For this reason, I readily desire the honorable title of bishop along with a bishop's burden, although I do so in the same way as I desire death. I desire the honor as a means to saving more souls. I desire the burden for my own salvation and in order to show my love for God and souls. I desire the office for the sole purpose of being able to distribute the goods of the church to the poor more generously, to instruct souls more outspokenly, to instruct those in error more boldly, to mortify my flesh more completely, to exercise self-control more assiduously as an example to others.'

This canon prudently reproved his bishop in private. However, the bishop took it badly and embarrassed the priest in public, imprudently boasting of his own competence and moderation in everything. The canon, however, saddened over the bishop's improprieties, bore the insults with patience. But the bishop ridiculed the charity and patience of the canon and spoke against him so much that the canon was given the blame and thought to be a lying fool, while the bishop was seen as being just and circumspect.

At length, as time went by, both the bishop and the canon passed away and were called to God's judgment. In his sight and in the presence of the angels, a golden throne

appeared with the miter and insignia of a bishop next to it. A large number of demons were following the canon, desirous of finding some fatal fault in him. As to the bishop, they felt as sure about having him as a whale does of the calves that she keeps alive in her belly amid the waves. There were many indictments leveled against the bishop; why and with what intention he undertook the office of bishop, why he grew proud about the goods intended for souls, the way he directed the souls entrusted to him, in what way he had responded to the grace God had given him.

When the bishop could make no just reply to the charges, the judge replied: 'Put excrement on the bishop's head instead of a miter and pitch on his hands instead of gloves, mud on his feet instead of sandals. Instead of a bishop's shirt and linen garment put the rags of a whore on him. Let him have disgrace instead of honor. Instead of a train of servants, let him have a raging mob of demons.' Then the judge added: 'Put a crown as radiant as the sun on the canon's head, gilded gloves on his hands, place shoes on his feet. Let him don the clothes of a bishop with every honor.'

Dressed in his episcopal garb, surrounded by the heavenly host, he was presented to the judge as an honored bishop. The bishop, however, went off like a thief with a rope about his neck. At the sight of him the judge averted his merciful eyes as did all his saints with him.

That is the way in which many persons through their good intentions and in a spiritual sense attain the rank of honor scorned by those who were called to it in a physical sense. All these things took place instantaneously before God, although, for your sake, they were acted out in words, for a thousand years are as a single hour before God. It happens every day that, inasmuch as bishops and rulers do not want to have the office to which they were called, God chooses for himself poor priests and parish clerks who, living according to their own better conscience, would be glad to be of benefit to souls for the glory of God if they could, and they do what they can. For this reason, they will take the places prepared for the bishops.

God is like a man who hangs a golden crown outside the door of his house and cries out to passersby: 'Anyone of any social standing can earn this crown! He who is most nobly clothed in virtue will obtain it.' Know that if bishops and rulers are wise in worldly wisdom, God is wiser than they in a spiritual sense, for he raises up the humble and does not give his approval to the proud. Know, too, that this canon who was praised did not

have to groom his horse when he went off to preach or carry out his duties, nor did he have to light the fire when he was about to eat.

No, he had the servants and the means he needed to live in a reasonable fashion. He had money, too, although not for his own greedy use, for not even if he had had all the wealth in the world would he have given a single shilling to become bishop. But not for all the world would he have refused to become bishop, if that was God's will. He gave his will to God, ready to be honored for the honor of God and ready to be cast down out of love and fear of God.”

Ambrose's words to the bride about the prayer of good persons for the people; rulers of the world and the church are compared to helmsmen, while pride and the rest of the vices are compared to storms, and the passage into truth is compared to a haven; also, about the bride's spiritual calling.

Chapter 5

“It is written that the friends of God once cried out asking God to rend the heavens and come down to free his people of Israel. In these days, too, God's friends cry out saying: 'Kindest God, we see innumerable people perishing in perilous storms, for their helmsmen are greedy and are always desirous of putting to land in those countries where they think they will get a greater profit. They lead the people toward places where there is a tremendous hurling of the waves, while the people themselves do not know any safe haven. So this countless people is therefore in awful peril and very few of them ever reach their proper haven. We beg you, King of all glory, graciously light up the haven so that your people may escape their danger, not having to obey the wicked helmsmen but being led to the haven by your blessed light.'

By these helmsmen I mean all those who wield either material or spiritual power in the world. Many of them love their own will so much that they do not bother themselves about the needs of the souls under them or about the fierce storms of the world, since they are of their own free will caught up in the storms of pride, greed, and impurity. The wretched populace imitates their deeds, thinking that they are on a straight course. In

this way the rulers bring themselves and their subjects to perdition by following their every selfish desire. By the haven I mean the passageway to truth.

For many people this passageway has grown so dark that when someone describes for them how to get to the haven of their celestial fatherland by way of the sacred gospel of Christ, then they call him a liar and instead follow the ways of those who wallow in each and every sin, rather than trusting in the words of those who preach the gospel truth.

By the light requested by the friends of God I mean a divine revelation made in the world in order that God's love might be renewed in human hearts and his justice not be forgotten or neglected. Therefore, because of his mercy and the prayers of his friends, it has pleased God to call you in the Holy Spirit in order that you may spiritually see, hear, and understand so that you may reveal to others that which you hear in the Spirit according to the will of God.”

Ambrose's words to the bride offering an allegory about a man, his wife and his housemaid, and about how this adulterer symbolizes a wicked bishop while his wife symbolizes the church and his housemaid the love of this world, and about the harsh sentence on those more attached to the world than to the church.

Chapter 6

“I am Bishop Ambrose. I am appearing to you and speaking with you in allegory because your heart is unable to receive a spiritual message without some physical comparison. Once there was a man whose lawfully wedded wife was charming and prudent. However, he liked the housemaid better than his wife. This had three consequences. The first is that the words and gestures of the housemaid delighted him more than those of his wife. The second is that he dressed the housemaid up in fine clothes without caring that his wife was dressed in common rags. The third is that he was accustomed to spending nine hours with the housemaid and only the tenth hour with his wife. He spent the first hour at the housemaid's side, enjoying himself in gazing on her beauty. He spent the second hour sleeping in her arms. He spent the third hour cheerfully doing manual labor for the sake of the housemaid's comfort.

He spent the fourth hour taking physical rest with her after his physical toil. He spent the fifth hour restless in his mind and worrying about how to provide for her. He spent the sixth hour at rest with her, seeing now that she fully approved of what he had done for her. At the seventh hour the fire of carnal lust entered into him. He spent the eighth hour satisfying his willful lust with her. In the ninth hour he neglected certain tasks that he nevertheless would have liked to carry out. He spent the tenth hour doing some tasks that he did not feel like doing. And only during this hour did he stay with his wife. One of his wife's relatives came to the adulterer and reproached him strongly, saying: 'Turn the affection of your mind toward your lawfully wedded wife. Love her and clothe her as is fitting, and spend nine hours with her and only the tenth hour with the housemaid. If not, beware, because you will die a horrible and sudden death.'

By this adulterer I refer to someone who holds the office of bishop for the sake of providing for the church but, in spite of that, leads an adulterous life. He is joined to the holy church in spiritual union so that she should be his dearest bride, but he withdraws his affections from her and loves the servile world much more than his noble lady and bride. Thus, he does three things. First, he rejoices more in the fraudulent adulation of the world than in an obedient disposition toward the holy church. Second, he loves worldly decorations, but cares little about the lack of material or spiritual decoration of the church. Third, he spends nine hours on the world and only one of ten on the holy church. Accordingly, he spends the first hour in good cheer, gazing on the beauty of the world with delight.

He spends the second hour sleeping sweetly in the arms of the world, that is, amid its high fortifications and the vigilance of its armies, happily confident in possessing physical security because of these things. He spends the third hour cheerfully doing manual labor for the sake of worldly advantage in order that he might obtain the physical enjoyment of the world. He spends the fourth hour gladly taking physical rest after his physical toil, now that he has sufficient means. He spends the fifth hour restless in his mind in different ways, worrying about how he can appear to be wise in worldly matters.

During the sixth hour he experiences an agreeable restfulness of mind, seeing that worldly people everywhere approve of what he has done. In the seventh hour he hears and sees worldly pleasures and readily opens his lust for them. This causes a fire to burn

impatiently and intolerably in his heart. In the eighth hour he carries out in act what before had merely been his burning desire. During the ninth hour he negligently omits certain tasks he had wanted to do for worldly motives, so as not to offend those for whom he has a mere natural affection. In the tenth hour he cheerlessly performs a few good deeds, afraid that he might be held in scorn and gain a bad reputation or receive a harsh sentence if for some reason he wholly neglected to do them.

He is accustomed to spending only this tenth hour with the holy church, doing what good he does not out of love but out of fear. He is, of course, afraid of the punishment of the fires of hell. If he could live forever in physical comfort and with plenty of worldly possessions, he would not care about losing the happiness of heaven.

Therefore, I swear by that God who has no beginning and who lives without end, and affirm with certainty that, unless he returns to the holy church soon and spends nine hours with her and only the tenth with the housemaid, that is, with the world - not by loving it but by possessing the wealth and honor of his episcopal office with reluctance, and arranging everything in humility and reasonably for the glory of God - then the spiritual wound in his soul will be as grave as - to make a physical comparison - the wound of a man struck so horribly on his head that his whole body is destroyed down to the soles of his feet, with his veins and muscles bursting, and his bones getting shattered and the marrow flowing out terribly in all directions.

As harshly tormented as seems the heart in a body struck so violently in its head and the parts of the body closest to the head that the very soles of its feet are in pain, although they are at the farthest remove, equally harshly tortured will that miserable soul closest to the blast of divine justice appear when in its conscience it sees itself being unbearably wounded on every side.”

The Virgin's words to the bride comparing a world-loving bishop to a bellows full of air or to a snail lying in filth, and about the sentence dealt out to such a bishop who is the very opposite of Bishop Ambrose.

“Scripture says: 'He who loves his own soul in this world will lose it.' Now this bishop loved his own soul with his every desire, and there were no spiritual inclinations in his heart. He might well be compared to an air-filled bellows next to a forge. Just as there is air left in the bellows once the coals are spent and the red-hot metal is flowing, so too, although this man has given his nature everything it craves, uselessly wasting his time, the same inclinations are still left in him like the air in the bellows. His will is inclined to worldly pride and lust. Because of these vices, he offers an excuse and a sinful example to people with hardened hearts who, wasted in sins, are flushed down to hell.

This was not the attitude of the good bishop Ambrose. His heart was filled with God's will. He ate and slept with temperance. He expelled the desire for sin and spent his time usefully and morally, He might well be called a bellows of virtue. He healed the wounds of sin with words of truth. He inflamed those who had grown cold in God's love by the example of his own good works. He cooled those who were burning with sinful desire by the purity of his life. In this way, he helped many people to avoid entering the death of hell, for divine love remained in him as long as he lived.

This bishop, on the other hand, is like a snail that reclines in its native filth and drags its head on the ground. In similar fashion, this man reclines and has his delight in sinful abomination, letting his mind be drawn to worldliness rather than to the thought of eternity, I would have him reflect on three things: First, the way in which he has exercised his priestly ministry. Second, the meaning of that gospel phrase: 'They have sheep's clothing but are ravenous wolves on the inside.' Third, the reason why his heart burns for temporal things but is cold toward the Creator of all things.”

The Virgin's words to the bride about her own perfection and excellence, and about the inordinate desires of modern teachers and about their false reply to the question asked them by the glorious Virgin.

Chapter 8

The Mother speaks: "I am the woman who has always been in God's love. I was from

my infancy entirely in the company of the Holy Spirit. If you want an example, think of how a nut grows. Its outer shell grows and widens, while its inner kernel also widens and grows, so that the nut is always full and there is no room in it for anything extraneous. In the same manner, too, I was full of the Holy Spirit from my infancy. As my body grew and I became older, the Holy Spirit filled me up with such abundance that he left no room in me for any sin to enter. Thus, I am she who never committed either venial or mortal sin. I so burned with love for God that I liked nothing but to carry out God's will, for the fire of divine love blazed in my heart.

God, blessed above all forever, who created me through his power and filled me with the power of his Holy Spirit, had an ardent love for me. In the fervor of his love he sent me his messenger and gave me to understand his decision that I should become the Mother of God. When I understood what the will of God was, then, through the fire of love that I bore in my heart towards God, a word of true obedience at once left my lips, and I gave this answer to the messenger, saying: 'May it be done to me according to your word.' At that very instant the Word was made flesh in me. The Son of God became my son.

The two of us had one son who is both God and man, as I am both Mother and Virgin. As my Son Jesus Christ, true God and wisest of men, lay in my womb, I received such great wisdom through him that I not only could understand the learning of scholars, I could even discern whether their hearts were true, whether their words proceeded from love for God or from mere scholarly cleverness. Therefore, you who hear my words should tell that scholar that I have three questions for him: First, whether he desires to win the favor and friendship of the bishop in a corporal sense more than he desires to present the bishop's soul to God in a spiritual sense. Second, whether his mind rejoices more in owning a great many florins or in owning none. Third, which of the following two choices he prefers: to be called a scholar and take his seat among the honored ranks for the sake of worldly glory or to be called a simple brother and take his seat among the lowly.

Let him ponder these three questions carefully. If his love for the bishop is corporal rather than spiritual, then it follows that he tells him things the bishop likes to hear rather than prohibiting him from doing all the sinful things he likes to do.

If he is happier about owning a lot of florins rather than none, then he loves riches

more than poverty. He then gives the impression of advising his friends to acquire as much as they can rather than to give up gladly what they can do without. If, for the sake of worldly honor, he prefers his scholarly reputation and sitting in a seat of honor, then he loves pride more than humility and, therefore, appears to God more like an ass than a scholar. In that case he is chewing on empty straw, which is the same as scholarly knowledge without charity, and he does not have the fine wheat of charity, since divine charity can never grow strong in a proud heart.”

After the scholar had excused himself with the excuse that he had a greater desire to present the soul of the bishop to God in a spiritual sense and that he would rather have no florins and, in the third place, that he did not care about the title of scholar, the Mother said again: ”I am she who heard the truth from the lips of Gabriel and believed without doubting. This is why Truth took for himself flesh and blood from my body and remained in me.

I gave birth to that same Truth who was in himself both God and man. Inasmuch as Truth, who is the Son of God, willed to come to me and to dwell in me and to be born from me, I know fully well whether people have truth on their lips or not. I asked the scholar three questions. I would have approved of his answer, had there been truth in his words. However, there was no truth in them. Therefore, I will give him three warnings. The first is that there are some things that he loves and desires in this world but which he will not obtain at all. The second is that he will soon lose the thing that he has worldly joy in possessing. The third is that the little ones will enter heaven. The great ones will be left standing outside, because the gate is narrow.”

The Virgin's words to the bride about how those who can see and hear and so forth escape dangers by virtue of the sunlight and so forth, but dangers befall those who are blind and deaf and so forth.

Chapter 9

The Mother speaks: ”Although a blind man does not see it, the sun still shines clearly in splendor and beauty even while he is falling down the precipice. Travelers who

have clear eyesight are thankful for the clear light that helps them avoid the dangers of their journey. Although the deaf man does not hear it, still the violent avalanche comes crashing down upon him terribly from on high, but he who can hear it coming escapes to safer places. Although a dead man cannot taste it while he lies rotting among worms, a good drink still tastes sweet. A living man can sip it and be glad at heart, feeling himself emboldened for any brave deed.”

The Virgin speaks to her daughter, offering assurance about the words spoken to her; and about the danger and approaching collapse of the church, and about how, unfortunately, the overseers of the church largely devote themselves nowadays to a life of debauchery and greed and waste the goods of the church in their pride, and about how the wrath of God is aroused against such as these.

Chapter 10

The Mother speaks: ”Do not be afraid of the things you are about to see, thinking they come from the evil spirit. Just as light and heat accompany the approach of the sun but do not follow after a dark shadow, in the same way two things accompany the coming of the Holy Spirit into the heart: ardent love for God and the complete illumination of holy faith. You are experiencing both these things now. These two do not follow upon the devil whom we can liken to a dark shadow. Therefore, send my messenger to the man I mentioned to you. Although I know his heart and how he will respond, and the imminent end of his life, you should still send him the following message.

I would have him know that the foundation of the holy church is so heavily deteriorated on its right side that its vaulted roof has many cracks at the top, and that this causes the stones to fall so dangerously that many of those who pass beneath it lose their lives. Several of the columns that should stand erect are almost level with the ground and even the floor is so full of holes that blind people entering there have dangerous falls. Sometimes it even happens that, along with the blind, people with good eyesight have bad falls because of the dangerous holes in the floor. As a result of all this, the Church of God is dangerously tottering, and if she is tottering so badly, what awaits next if not her collapse?

I assure you that if she is not helped by repairs, her collapse will be so great that it will be heard throughout all of Christendom.

I am the Virgin whose womb the Son of God condescended to enter, without the least contagious trace of carnal lust. The Son of God was born from my closed womb, giving me solace but no pain at all. I stood next to the cross when he victoriously overcame hell through his patient suffering and opened up heaven with the blood of his heart. I was also on the mountain when God's Son, who is also my Son, ascended into heaven. I have the clearest knowledge of the whole of the catholic faith that he preached and taught to everyone who wanted to enter heaven.

I am that same woman, and now I stand over the world in continuous prayer, like a rainbow above the clouds that appears to bend toward the earth and to touch it with both ends. I see myself as a rainbow bending down toward both the good and the wicked inhabitants of the earth by means of my prayers. I bend down toward good people in order that they may be steadfast in the commandments of the holy church, and I bend down toward bad people in order that they may not add to their wickedness and grow worse. I would have the man I mentioned to you know that foul and horrible clouds are rising up in one direction against the shining rainbow. By these clouds I mean those who lead a life of carnal debauchery, those who are as insatiable as the ocean chasm in their greed for money, and those who arrogantly and irrationally spend their means as wastefully as a torrential stream pours out its water.

Many of the overseers of the church are guilty of these three things, and their horrendous sins rise up to heaven in the sight of God, as opposed to my prayers as foul clouds are opposed to the shining rainbow. The men who should be placating the wrath of God along with me are instead provoking God's wrath against themselves. Such men should not be promoted in the church of God. I, the Queen of Heaven, will come to the aid of anyone who, knowing his own insufficiency, is willing to take on the task of making the church's foundation stable and restoring the blessed vineyard that God founded with his blood, and, together with the angels, I will root up loose roots and throw any trees without fruit into the fire and plant fruitful shoots in their stead. By this vineyard I mean the church of God in which the two virtues of humility and divine charity must be restored.”

ADDENDUM

The Son of God speaks of the papal nuncios: "You have entered the company of rulers and are going to rise still higher. Worthy is he who works to exalt humility, for pride has already risen far too high. He who has charity for souls will also receive the highest honors, for ambition and simony are now prevalent among many people. Happy is he who tries to root out the vices of the world as far as he can, for vice is now grown abnormally strong.

It is also most efficacious to have patience and to pray for it, for, in the days of many who are yet living, the sun will be rent in two, the stars thrown into confusion, wisdom will be made foolish, the humble on earth will groan and the bold will prevail. The understanding and interpretation of these things belongs to the wise men who know how to make the rough smooth and to provide for the future." The foregoing revelation was for the cardinal of Albano who was then a prior.

The bride's trusting words to Christ, and about how John the Baptist offers assurance to the bride that Christ speaks to her, and about the happiness of the good rich man, and about how an imprudent bishop is compared to a monkey because of his foolishness and wicked life.

Chapter 11

The bride spoke to Christ humbly in her prayer saying: "O my Lord Jesus Christ, so firmly do I believe in you that even if the serpent lay in front of my mouth, he should not enter unless you permitted it for my own good."

John the Baptist answered: "The one who appears to you is the very Son of God by nature, whom I myself heard the Father bearing witness to when He said: 'This is my Son.' From him proceeds the Holy Spirit who appeared above him in the form of a dove as I was baptizing him. He is the son of the Virgin according to the flesh. I touched his body with my very own hands.

Believe firmly in him and enter into his life. He is the one who has shown the true

path by which poor and rich can enter heaven. But you might ask, what should the inner disposition of a rich person be if he is to enter heaven, given that God himself has said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven? To this I answer you: A rich man who is disposed in such away that he is afraid to have any ill-gotten goods, who is concerned not to spend his means wastefully or contrary to God's will, who holds his possessions and honors with reluctance and would willingly be separated from them, who is disturbed by the loss of souls and the dishonor done to God, and, although he is compelled by the plans of God to own the world to some extent, is vigilant concerning the love of God in his every intention, this is the kind of rich man who bears fruit and is happy and dear to God.

This bishop, however, is not rich in that way. He is like a monkey with four distinguishing features. The first is a costume that has been made for him that hangs down and hides his torso but leaves his private parts completely exposed. The second is that he touches stinking things with his fingers and puts them to his mouth. The third is that he has a humanlike face, although the rest of his coloring and appearance is that of a brute animal. The fourth is that, although he has both hands and feet, he tramples on the dirt with his hands and fingers. This foolish bishop is like a monkey, curious about the vanity of the world, too deformed for any action deserving praise.

He wears a costume, that is, his episcopal ordination, which is honorable and precious in the sight of God, but his naked private parts are exposed, since the frivolity of his character and his carnal lust are displayed to others and bring ruin to souls. This goes against what that noble knight says about how a man's more shameful parts are given the greater honor, meaning by this that the animal urges of priests should be hidden by good works, so that the weak may not be scandalized by their example.

A monkey also touches and sniffs at stinking things. What do you do with a finger if not point to something you have seen, just as when I beheld God in his human nature and pointed to him with my finger, saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God'? What are the fingers of a bishop if not his praiseworthy virtues through which he should point to God's justice and charity?

But, instead, this man's actions point to the fact that he is nobleborn and rich, worldly wise and lavish with his money. What is this if not to touch stinking rot with his fingers? Is glorying in the flesh or in a great household anything else than glorying in

puffed-up sacks? A monkey has a human face but looks like a brute animal in other respects.

This man, too, possesses a soul stamped with the seal of God but deformed through his own greed. In the fourth place, just as a monkey touches and tramples on the dirt with his feet and hands, so too this man covets the things of the earth in his appetites and actions, turning his face away from heaven and lowering it to the earth like an oblivious animal. Does a man like that lessen the wrath of God? No, indeed, he rather provokes God's justice against himself."

ADDENDUM

The following revelation was made about a cardinal legate during the jubilee year. The Son of God speaks: "O proud debater, where is your pomp, where is your equestrian finery now? You did not want to understand while you were being held in honor. This is why you have now fallen into dishonor. Answer my question then, although I know all things, while this new bride is listening." And immediately it was as if an amazingly misshapen person appeared, trembling and naked. The judge said to him: "O soul, you taught that the world and its riches should be spurned. Why then did you follow after them?"

The soul answered: "Because their filthy stench smelled better to me than your sweet fragrance." And as soon as he said this, a daemon poured a vessel of sulphur and poison into the soul. Again the judge spoke: "O soul, you were set up to be a shining lamp for the people, why did you not shine forth by word and example?" The soul answered: "Because your love had been wiped out from my heart. I roamed about like one who had lost his memory and like a vagabond, looking at things in the present and not thinking of the future." When the soul had said this, it was deprived of the light of its eyes. The daemon who was seen to be present said: "O judge, this soul is mine. What shall I do?" The judge said: "Purge and scrutinize it as in a winepress until the council is held at which the allegations of both friends and enemies will be discussed."

The bride speaks to Christ, pouring forth prayers for the bishop mentioned above, and about the answers that Christ, the Virgin, and Saint Agnes gave to the bride.

Chapter 12

“O my Lord, I know that no one can enter heaven unless drawn by the Father. Therefore, most kind Father, draw this ailing bishop to you. And you, Son of God, help him if he makes the effort. And you, Holy Spirit, fill this cold and empty bishop with your love.”

God the Father answers: “If he who draws something is strong but the thing drawn too heavy, his effort is soon wasted and comes to naught. Besides, if the one drawn is bound up, then he can neither help himself nor the person drawing him. If the one drawn is unclean, then he is loathsome to the one who draws him and comes in contact with him. The attitude of this bishop is like that of a man standing at a fork in the road trying to decide which way to take.”

The bride answered: “O my Lord, is it not written that no one stands still in this life but advances either toward that which is better or toward that which is worse?”

The Father answered: “Both things could be said here, since this man stands, as it were, between two roads, one of joy and one of sorrow. The horror of eternal punishment upsets him, and he would prefer to obtain the joy of heaven. However, he thinks the road that leads to joy is too rough to tread. But he certainly does start walking when he goes after objects he fervently desires.”

Blessed Agnes speaks: “The attitude of this bishop is like that of a man standing between two roads. He knew one of them was narrow at first but delightful in the end; he knew the other was pleasant for a while but ended in a bottomless pit of anguish. As the traveler thought about these two roads, he was more attracted to the road that was pleasant at the start. However, since he was afraid of the bottomless pit, the following thought occurred to him. He said: 'There must be a shortcut on the pleasurable road. If I can find it, I can go safely on for a long time and, when I get to the pit at the end, provided I find the shortcut, nothing will harm me.' So he walked safely on along the road, but when he came to the pit, he took a terrible fall right into it, since he had not found the shortcut he was expecting.

Nowadays there are a lot of people with the same idea as this man. They think to themselves as follows. They say: 'It is burdensome to take the narrow path. It is hard to give up our self-will and our privileges.' In this way they place a false and dangerous confidence in themselves. They say: 'The road is long. God's mercy is great. The world is pleasant and was made for pleasure. There is nothing to prevent me from making use of the world for a time as I wish, since I mean to follow God at the end of my life. After all, there is a kind of shortcut from the path of worldliness and that is contrition and confession. If I can manage that, I will be saved.'

The thought that a person can keep desiring sin until the end of life and then go to confession is a very weak hope, because they fall into the pit sooner than they expect. At times, too, they undergo such pain and so sudden a death that they are completely incapable of repenting in a fruitful manner. It serves them right. For, when they had the opportunity, they did not want to have any foresight for coming evils, but they arbitrarily set the time for God's mercy by their definition. They made no resolution not to sin so long as they could continue enjoying sin. In the same way, too, this bishop was standing between these two roads. Now, however, he is drawing nearer to the more pleasurable path of the flesh. Let us say that he has three pages set before him to read.

He reads the first page over and over with pleasure, but he reads the second page only once in a while and with no pleasure at all, while he reads the third only rarely and does so with sadness. The first page represents the wealth and privileges he delights in. The second is the fear of Gehenna and the future judgment that is upsetting to him. The third is the love and filial fear of God that he rarely peruses. If he would take to heart all that God has done for him or how much he has lavished on him, the love of God would never be extinguished in his heart."

The bride answered: "O Lady, pray for him." And then Blessed Agnes said: "What is the role of justice if not to judge and what is the role of mercy if not to encourage?" The Mother of God speaks: "The bishop will be told this: Although God can do all things, a man's personal cooperation is still necessary if he is to avoid sin and gain the love of God. There are three means to avoid sin and three means to obtain love. The three by which sin is avoided are: Perfect penance; second, the intention of not wanting to commit the sin again; third, to improve one's life according to the advice of those whom one knows to have given up the world. The three means that work together to obtain love are humility,

mercy, and the effort to love. Whoever prays even one Our Father for the sake of gaining God's love will soon experience the effect of God's love drawing close to him.

About the other bishop, about whom I was speaking with you before, I must say in conclusion that the pits appear too wide for him to leap over, the walls too high to climb, the bars too strong to break. I stand here waiting for him, but he turns his head away toward the activities of three groups of people that he enjoys watching. The first group is a dancing chorus. He tells them: 'I like listening to you, wait up for me!' The second group is engaged in speculation. He tells them: 'I want to see what you see - I enjoy that sort of thing a lot.' The third group is enjoying itself and relaxing in quiet, and he wants to enjoy privilege and quiet with them.

To be a dancing chorus in the world means nothing other than to pass from one fleeting delight to another, from one desire for honor to another. To stand and speculate means nothing other than to take the soul away from divine contemplation and to think about the collecting and distributing of temporal goods. To relax in quiet means nothing other than to relax in body. While watching these three crowds, the bishop has climbed up a high mountain but he does not care about the words I have sent to him, nor does he care about the terms of my message that are that, if he keeps his promise, I will also keep mine.”

The bride answers: "O gentle Mother, do not abandon him!" The Mother says to her: "I will not abandon him until dust returns to dust. More than that, if he breaks through the bars, I will come to meet him like a handmaid and will help him like a mother." And the Mother added: "Are you, daughter, thinking of what would have been the reward of that canon of Orléans, if his bishop had been converted? I will answer you: You see how the earth bears grass and flowers of different species and kinds. In the same way, too, if every person had uprightly remained in their own station from the beginning of the world, then everyone would have received a great reward, inasmuch as everyone who is in God would have gone from one delight to the next, not because of any sense of tediousness in their pleasure, but because their delight grows continuously more delightful and their indescribable joy is continuously made new.”

EXPLANATION

This was the bishop of Växjö. When he was in Rome, he was greatly worried about his return. It was heard in the spirit: "Tell the bishop that his delay is more useful than his haste. Those in his company who have gone ahead of him will follow after him. This is why when he returns to his country, he will find my words to be true." This is the way it all turned out. On his return, he found the king in capture and the whole kingdom in an uproar. Those in his company who had gone ahead of him were impeded for a long time on the way and arrived after him. "Know also that the lady who is in the company of the bishop will return safely but will not die in her home country." And so it turned out, for she went a second time to Rome, and she died and was buried there.

ABOUT THE SAME BISHOP

When Lady Bridget came down from Monte Gargano to the city of Mafredonia in the kingdom of Sicily, the same bishop was in her company. On the mountain it happened that he had such a bad fall from his horse that he broke two ribs. When the lady was about to go out to St. Nicholas of Bari in the morning, he called her to him saying: "Lady, it is so hard for me to stay here without you. It is also a burden that you should be delayed on my account, especially given the raids going on. I ask you," he said, "for the love of Jesus Christ, to pray to God for me and touch your hand to my aching side!

I hope that my pain will be lessened through the touch of your hands." With tears in her eyes, she answered in compassion: "Sir, I regard myself as nothing, for I am a great sinner in God's sight. But let us all pray to God and he will answer your faith." They prayed, and when she stood up, she touched the bishop's side, saying: "May the Lord Jesus Christ heal you." Immediately the pain went away. And the bishop got up and followed her all the way back to Rome.

The Mother's words to the daughter in which the words and deeds of Christ are explained and wonderfully described as a treasure, his divine nature as a castle, sin as bars, virtues as walls, and the beauty of the world and the delight of friendship as two moats, and about how a bishop ought to behave with respect to the care of souls.

Chapter 13

The Mother speaks to the bride of her Son, saying: "This bishop prays to me in his love, and, for that reason, he should do what pleases me most. There is a treasure I know of that whoever possesses it will never be poor, whoever sees it will never know distress and death, and whoever desires it will joyfully receive whatever he wishes. The treasure is locked up in a strong castle behind four bars. Outside the castle stand high walls large and thick. Beyond the walls are two wide and deep moats. And so I ask the bishop to jump over the two moats in a single leap, and climb the walls in a single bound, and break through the bars with a single blow and then to bring me the thing that pleases me most.

I will now tell you the meaning of all this. When you use the word 'treasure,' you refer to something that is rarely used or moved about. In this case, the treasure is my dearest Son's precious words and the deeds he did during and before his passion, along with the miracles he worked when the Word was made flesh in my body and that he continues to do when, at God's word, the bread on the altar each day is changed into that same flesh. All these things are a precious treasure that has become so neglected and forgotten that there are very few people who recall it or draw any profit from it. However, the glorious body of God my Son is to be found in a fortified castle, that is, in the strength of his divine nature. Just as a castle is a defense against enemies, so the strength of my Son's divine nature is a defense for the body of his human nature, so that no enemy can harm him. The four bars are four sins that exclude many people from the participation in and the goodness of the strength of the body of Christ.

The first sin is pride along with the desire for worldly honors. The second is the desire for worldly possessions. The third is the repulsive lust to fill the body up intemperately, and its utterly repulsive satisfaction. The fourth is anger and envy and the neglect of one's own salvation. Many people have an excessive love for these four sins and possess them habitually, which takes them very far away from God. They see and receive the body of God, but their soul is as far from God as thieves are when the way to what they want to steal is blocked by strong bars.

This is why I said that he should break through the bars with a single blow. The blow symbolizes the zeal for souls with which a bishop ought to break sinners through

deeds of justice done for the love of God in order that, once the bars of vice have been broken, the sinner can reach the precious treasure. Although he cannot strike down every sinner, he should do what he can and ought to do, especially for those who are under his care, sparing neither great nor small, neighbor nor relation, friend nor enemy. This is what Saint Thomas of England did. He suffered much for the sake of justice and met with a harsh death in the end, all because he did not refrain from striking bodies with the justice of the church in order that souls might endure less suffering.

This bishop should imitate Thomas's way of life, so that everyone who hears him may understand that he hates his own sins as well as other people's sins. The blow of divine zeal will then be heard throughout the heavens before God and his angels. Many people will then be converted and mend their ways, saying: 'He does not hate us but our Sins.' They will say: 'Let us repent and we will become friends both of God and of the bishop.'

The three walls surrounding the castle are three virtues. The first virtue is giving up carnal pleasures and doing the will of God. The second is to prefer to suffer reproaches and curses for the sake of truth and justice rather than to obtain worldly honors and possessions by dissimulating the truth. The third is to be ready to forgo both life and possessions for the sake of any Christian's salvation. However, look at what people do nowadays. They think these walls are too high to climb over at all.

Accordingly, neither their hearts nor their souls approach the glorious body with any constancy, for they are far from God. This is why I told my friend to climb the walls in a single bound. A bound is what you call it when the feet are held far apart in order for the body to move quickly. A spiritual bound is similar, for, when the body is on earth and the love of the heart is in heaven, then you climb the three walls quickly. When a man meditates on the things of heaven, he is ready to give up his own will, to suffer rejection and persecution for the sake of justice, and to die willingly for the glory of God.

The two moats outside the wall represent the beauty of the world and the company and enjoyment of worldly friends. There are many people who are content to take it easy in these moats and never care whether they will see God in heaven. The moats are wide and deep, wide because the wills of such people are far from God, and deep because they confine many souls in the depths of hell. This is why the moats should be jumped over in

a single leap. A spiritual leap is nothing other than to detach one's whole heart from things that are empty and to take the leap from earthly goods to the kingdom of heaven.

I have shown how to break through the bars and leap over the walls. Now I will show how this bishop should bring me the most precious thing there ever was. God's divine nature was and is from eternity without beginning, since neither beginning nor end can be found in it. But his human nature was in my body and took flesh and blood from me. Therefore, it is the most precious thing there ever was or is. Accordingly, when the righteous soul receives God's body with love and when his body fills the soul, the most precious thing there ever was is there. Although the divine nature exists in three Persons without beginning and without end in itself, when God sent his Son to me with his divine nature and the Holy Spirit, he received his blessed body from me. I will now show the bishop how this precious thing is to be brought before the Lord. Wherever God's friend comes across a sinner whose words show little love for God but much love for the world, that soul is empty with respect to God.

Accordingly, God's friend should show his love for God by his sorrow that a soul redeemed by the Creator's blood should be an enemy to God. He should show compassion for the wretched soul by using two voices, as it were, toward it: one in which he entreats God to have pity on the soul, and another in which he shows the soul its own danger. If he can reconcile and unite the two of them, God and the soul, then the hands of his love will offer to God the most precious gift, for the thing most dear to me is when the body of God, which was once inside me, and the human soul, which God has created, come together in friendship.

This is hardly surprising. You know well that I was present when my Son, the great knight, went forth from Jerusalem to fight a battle so brutal and difficult that all the sinews of his arms were strained. His back was bloodied and livid, his feet pierced by nails, his eyes and ears full of blood. His head sank when he gave up his spirit. His heart was sundered by the point of a spear. He won souls by suffering greatly. He who now dwells in glory stretches out his arms to men, but few there are who bring him his bride. Consequently, a friend of God should spare neither life nor possessions in helping others while he helps himself by bringing them to my Son.

Tell this bishop that, given that he prays for my friendship, I will bind myself to him

with a bond of faith. The body of God, which was once within me, will welcome his soul with great love. As the Father was in me together with the Son who had my body and soul in himself, and as the Holy Spirit who is in the Father and the Son was everywhere with me and had my Son within him, so too my servant will be bound to the same Spirit. If he loves the sufferings of God and has his precious body in his heart, then he will have God's human nature that has the divine nature within and without it. God will be in him and he in God, just as God is in me and I in him. As my servant and I share one God, we will also share one bond of love and one Holy Spirit who is one God with the Father and the Son.

One thing more: If this bishop keeps his promise with me, I will help him during his lifetime. At the end of his life I will help and assist him and bring his soul before God, saying: 'My God, this man served you and obeyed me, and therefore I present his soul to you!' O daughter, what is a person thinking of when he despises his own soul? Would God the Father in his unfathomable divinity have let his own innocent Son suffer so much in his human nature, if he had not an honest desire and longing for souls and for the eternal glory that he has prepared for them?"

This revelation was about the bishop of Linköping who was afterwards made archbishop. There is more on the same bishop in Book 6, chapter 22, beginning: "This prelate."

ADDENDUM ABOUT THE SAME MAN

"The bishop for whom you weep came to an easy purgatory. Know for certain that, although in the world he had many who blocked his way, they have now received their sentence, and he shall be glorified due to his faith and purity."

The Mother's words to her daughter, using a marvelous comparison to describe a certain bishop, likening the bishop to a butterfly, his humility and pride to its two wings, the three facades covering up the vices of the bishop to the insect's three colors, his deeds to the thickness of its coloring, his double will to the butterfly's two feelers, his greed to its mouth, his puny love to its puny body.

Chapter 14

The Mother speaks to the bride of her Son, saying: "You are a vessel that the owner fills and the teacher empties. However, it is one and the same person who fills and empties you. A person who can pour wine and milk and water together into a vessel would be called an expert teacher if he could separate each of these liquids blended together and restore each to its own proper nature. This is what I, the Mother and Teacher of all mankind, have done and am doing to you. A year and a half ago, all sorts of matters were spoken to you, and now they all seem to be blended together in your soul, and it would seem disgusting if they were all poured out together, since their purpose would not be understood. This is why I gradually distinguish them as I see fit.

Do you recall that I sent you to a certain bishop whom I called my servant? Let us compare him to a butterfly with two wide wings spattered in the colors white, red, and blue. When you touch it, the pigment sticks to your fingers like ashes. This insect has a puny body but a big mouth, two feelers on its forehead, and a hidden place in its belly through which it emits the filth of its belly. The wings of this insect, that is, the bishop's wings, are his humility and pride. Outwardly he appears humble in his words and gestures, humble in his dress and actions, but inwardly there is a pride that makes him great in his own sight, rendering him swollen up with his own reputation, ambitious for people's appreciation, judgmental of others, and arrogant in preferring himself to others. On these two wings he flies before people with the apparent humility that aims at pleasing individuals and being the talk of everyone, as well as with the pride that makes him consider himself to be holier than others.

The three colors of the wings represent his three facades that cover up his vices. The color red means that he continually lectures on the sufferings of Christ and the miracles of the saints in order to be called holy, but they are far from his heart indeed, since he has not much liking for them. The color blue means that, on the outside, he does not seem to care about temporal goods, seeming to be dead to the world and to be all for the things of heaven under his facade of heavenly blue. But this second color makes him no more stable or fruitful before God than the first. The color white implies that he is a religious in his dress and commendable in his ways. However, his third color holds just as much charm and perfection as the first two. As a butterfly's pigment is thick and stays on your fingers, leaving behind nothing but a kind of ashy substance, so too his deeds seem to be

admirable, inasmuch as he desires solitude , but they are empty and ineffectual as to their usefulness to him, since he does not sincerely yearn for or love that which is lovable.

The two feelers represent his duplicitous will. You see, he wants to lead a life of comfort in this world and to have eternal life after death. He does not want to be cheated out of being held in great esteem on earth while receiving an even more perfect crown in heaven. This bishop is just like a butterfly, thinking he can carry heaven on one feeler and earth on the other, although he cannot put up with the least little difficulty for God's glory. So he relies on God's church and thinks he can benefit it by his word and example, as if the church could not thrive without him. He presumes that his own good deeds will make worldly people bear spiritual fruit. Hence he reasons like a soldier who has already fought the fight. 'Since,' he says, 'I am already called devout and humble, why should I strive after a life of greater austerity? Although I may sin in a few pleasures without which my life would be unhappy, still my greater merits and good deeds will be my excuse. If heaven can be won for a cup of cold water, what need is there to struggle beyond measure?'

A butterfly has a big mouth as well, but its greed is even bigger, so much so that if it could eat up every single fly but one, it would want to eat that one up, too. Likewise, if this man could add a shilling to the many he already has in such a way that it would go unnoticed in secret, he would take it, although the hunger of his greed would not be stilled even then.

A butterfly also has a hidden outlet for its impurities. This man, too, gives improper vent to his anger and impatience, displaying his secret impurities to others. And as a butterfly has a little body, this man has little charity, while his lack of charity is made up for only by the width and breadth of his wings." The bride answered: "If he has just one spark of charity, there is always some hope of life and charity and salvation for him." The Mother said: "Did not Judas also have some charity left when he said after he had betrayed his Lord: 'I have sinned in betraying innocent blood'? He wanted to make it look as though he had charity, but he had none."

The Mother's words to her daughter in which another such bishop is allegorically described as a gadfly, his wordy eloquence as flying, his two concerns as two wings, his

flattery of the world as a sting; and about the Virgin's amazement at the life of these two bishops; also, about preachers.

Chapter 15

The Mother speaks again to the bride, saying: "I have shown you another bishop whom I called the pastor of the flock. Let us compare him to a gadfly with an earthy color that flies about noisily. Wherever he alights, his bite is terrible and painful. This pastor has an earthy color, for, although he was called to poverty, he would rather be rich than poor, he would rather be in charge than submit, he would rather have his own will than be disciplined through obedience to others. He flies about noisily in the sense that he is full of wordy eloquence in his pious preaching, and lectures about worldly vanities instead of spiritual doctrine, praising and following worldly vanities rather than the holy simplicity of his order.

He has two wings as well, that is, two ideas: The first is that he wants to offer people charming and soothing speech so that he may win their esteem. The second is that he wants everyone to yield to him and obey him. The sting of a gadfly is unbearable. Likewise, this man stings souls to damnation. Although he should be a doctor of souls, he does not tell the people who come to him about their danger and infirmity nor does he use a sharp scalpel, but speaks soothingly to them in order to be called meek and so as not to cause anyone to avoid him. These two bishops are quite simply astonishing. One of them makes an appearance of being poor, solitary, and humble in order to be called spiritual. The other one wants to possess the world in order to be called merciful and generous. The one wants to seem to own nothing and yet longs to possess everything secretly. The other openly wants to have many possessions in order to have a lot to give away and thus win the esteem of others. Accordingly, as the proverb goes, since they serve me in a way I cannot see (because I do not accept it), I shall reward them in a way they will not see.

Do you wonder why such men are praised for their preaching? I will tell you: Sometimes a bad man speaks to good people and the good Spirit of God is poured into them, not because of the goodness of the teacher but through the teacher's words in which the good Spirit of God is found for the good of the listeners. Sometimes a good

man speaks to bad people who are made good by hearing it both because of the good Spirit of God and the goodness of the teacher. Sometimes a cold man speaks to cold people in such away that these cold hearers recount what they have heard to fervent people who had not been there, rendering their listeners more fervent. So, do not worry about what kind of people you are sent to. Wonderful is God who tramples gold underfoot and places mud amidst the rays of the sun!"

The Son's explanation to the bride that the damnation of souls does not please God; also, about the astonishing questions of the younger bishop to the older bishop, and about the answers of the older bishop to the younger one.

Chapter 16

The Son speaks to the bride, saying: "Why do you think these two men are being shown to you? Is it because God enjoys censuring and condemning them? Of course not. No, it is done in order better to reveal God's patience and glory and also so that those who hear it may fear God's judgment. But now, come and listen to an astonishing conversation. Look there, the younger bishop has asked the older one a question, saying: 'Brother, hear and answer me. Once you had been bound to the yoke of obedience, why did you forsake it? Once you had chosen poverty and the religious state, why did you abandon them? Once you had entered the religious state and made yourself dead to the world, why did you seek the episcopate?' The older man answered: 'The obedience that taught me to be an inferior was a burden to me. That is why I preferred my freedom. The yoke that God says is pleasant was bitter to me.

That is why I sought and chose bodily comfort. My humility was pretended. That is why I craved honors. And, since it is better to push than to pull, I desired the episcopate accordingly.' The younger man asked again: 'Why did you not do honor to your episcopal see by giving it worldly honor? Why did you not acquire riches by means of worldly wisdom? Why did you not spend your possessions according to the demands of worldly honor? Why did you humble yourself outwardly rather than acting in accord with worldly ambition?'

The older man answered: 'The reason I did not strew worldly honors upon my see was that I was hoping myself to be honored so much the more by appearing to be humble and spiritual rather than worldly minded. Therefore, in order to be praised by worldly people, I made a show of holding everything in contempt; I appeared humble and devout in order to be held in esteem by spiritual men. The reason I did not acquire riches through worldly wisdom was in order that spiritual men might not notice it and hold me in contempt because of my secularity. The reason I was not liberal in giving gifts was that I preferred to have few rather than many companions for the sake of my own peace and quiet. I preferred having my money-chest full to handing away gifts.'

Again the younger man asked: 'Tell me, why did you give a pleasant and sweet drink out of a dirty vessel to an ass? Why did you give the bishop husks from the pigsty? Why did you fling down your crown under your feet? Why did you spit out wheat but chew weeds? Why did you free others from their chains but bind yourself with fetters? Why did you apply medicine to the wounds of others but poison to your own?' The older man answered: 'I gave my ass a sweet drink from a disgusting, dirty vessel in the sense that, although a scholar, I preferred to handle the divine sacraments of the altar for the sake of my worldly reputation rather than to apply myself to everyday cares. Inasmuch as my secrets were unknown to men but known to God, I grew a great deal in presumption and in that way added to the heavy justice of my terrible condemnation.'

To the second question, I answer that I gave the bishop husks from the pig-sty in the sense that I followed the promptings of nature through self-indulgence and did not stand firm in self-restraint. As to the third question, I cast my episcopal crown underfoot in the sense that I preferred to do acts of mercy for the sake of human favor rather than acts of justice for the glory and love of God.

As to the fourth question, I spat out wheat but chewed straw in the sense that I did not preach God's words out of love for God nor did I like doing the things I told others to do. As to the fifth question, I freed others but bound myself in the sense that I absolved the people who turned to me with contrition, but I myself liked doing the things that they lamented through their penance and rejected through their tears. As to the sixth question, I anointed others with healing ointment but myself with poison in the sense that while I preached about purity of life and made others better, I made myself worse. I laid down precepts for others but was myself unwilling to lift a finger to do those very

things. Where I saw others making progress, that is where I failed and wasted away, since I preferred to add a load to my already committed sins than to lessen my load of sins by making reparation.'

After this a voice was heard, saying: 'Give thanks to God that you are not among these poisonous vessels that, when they break, return to the poison itself.' Immediately, the death of one of the two was then announced.”

The Virgin's words to her daughter praising the life and order of St. Dominic, and about how he turned to the Virgin at the hour of his death, and about how in modern times few of his friars live by the sign of Christ's passion given them by Dominic, but many of them live by the mark of incision given them by the devil.

Chapter 17

Again the Mother speaks to the bride, saying: "Yesterday I told you about two men who belonged to the Rule of St. Dominic. Dominic held my Son as his dear Lord and loved me his Mother more than his own heart. My Son gave this holy man the inspired thought that there are three things in the world that displease my Son: pride, greed, and carnal desire. By his sighs and entreaties, St. Dominic procured help and medicine so as to combat these three evils. God had compassion on his tears and inspired him to set up a codified rule of life in which the holy man opposed three virtues to the three evils of the world.

Against the vice of greed he laid it down that one should own nothing without the permission of one's superior. Against pride he prescribed wearing a humble and simple habit. Against the bottomless voracity of the flesh, he prescribed abstinence and times for practicing self-discipline. He placed a superior over his friars in order to preserve peace and protect unity.

In his desire to give his friars a spiritual sign, he symbolically impressed a red cross on their left arm near the heart, I mean through his teaching and fruitful example, when he taught and admonished them continually to recall the suffering of God, to preach

God's word more fervently, not for the world's sake but out of love for God and souls. He also taught them to submit rather than to govern, to hate their self-will, to bear insults patiently, to want nothing beyond food and clothing, to love truth in their hearts and to proclaim it with their lips, not to seek their own praise but to have the words of God on their lips and to teach them always, without omitting them out of shame or uttering them in order to win human favor.

When the time came for his deliverance, which my Son had revealed to him in spirit, he came in tears to me, his Mother, saying: 'O Mary, Queen of Heaven, whom God predestined for himself to unite his divine and human natures, you alone are that virgin and you alone are that most worthy mother. You are the most powerful of women from whom Power itself went forth. Hear me as I pray to you! I know you to be most powerful and therefore I dare to come before you. Take my friars, whom I have reared and nurtured beneath the austerity of my scapular, and protect them beneath your wide mantle! Rule them and nurture them anew, so that the ancient enemy may not prevail against them and may not ruin the new vineyard planted by the right hand of your Son! My Lady, by my scapular with its one piece in front and one at the back, I am referring to nothing other than the twofold concern that I have shown for my friars.

I was anxious night and day for them and about how they might serve God by practicing temperance in a reasonable and praiseworthy fashion. I prayed for them that they might not desire any worldly thing that could offend God or that might blacken their reputation for humility and piety among their fellows. Now that the time for my reward has come, I entrust my members to you. Teach them as children while you carry them as their mother.' With these and other words, Dominic was called to the glory of God.

I answered him as follows, using figurative language: 'O Dominic, my beloved friend, since you love me more than yourself, I shall protect your sons beneath my mantle and rule them, and all those who persevere in your role shall be saved. My mantle is wide with mercy and I deny mercy to no one who happily asks for it. All those who seek it find protection in the bosom of my mercy.'

But, my daughter, what do you think the rule of Dominic consists in? Surely, it consists in humility, continence, and the contempt of the world. All those who make a commitment to these three virtues and lovingly persevere in them will never be

condemned. They are the ones who keep the rule of Blessed Dominic. Now hear something truly amazing: Dominic placed his sons beneath my wide mantle, but, look and see, now there are fewer of them beneath my wide mantle than there were in the austerity of his scapular. Yet not even during Dominic's lifetime did everyone have a true sheepskin or a Dominican character. I can illustrate their character better by way of a parable.

If Dominic came down from the heights of heaven where he lives and said to the Thief who was coming back from the valley and had been looking over the sheep with a view to slaughtering and destroying them, he would say 'Why are you calling after and leading away the sheep that I know to be mine by evident signs?' The Thief might answer: 'Why, Dominic, do you appropriate to yourself what is not your own? It is outrageous pilferage to usurp another's property for oneself.' If Dominic tried to reply that he had raised and tamed them and led and taught them, the Thief would say: 'You may have brought them up and taught them, but I have led them back to their own self-will by gentle coaxing.

You may have mixed leniency with austerity for them, but I enticed them more coaxingly and showed them things better to their liking, and, see, more of them are running to my pasture at my call. This is how I know the sheep eagerly following me are mine, given that they are free to choose to follow the one who attracts them more.' If Dominic should answer in turn that his sheep are marked with a red sign in the heart, the Thief would say; 'My sheep are marked with my sign, a mark of incision on their right ear. Since my sign is more obvious and visible than your sign, I recognize them as my sheep.'

The Thief stands for the devil who has incorporated many of Dominic's sheep into himself. They have an incision on the right ear in the sense that they do not listen to the words of life of the one saying: 'The path to heaven is narrow.' They only put into practice those words they like hearing. Dominic's sheep are few, and they have a red sign in their heart in the sense that they lovingly keep in mind God's suffering and lead a happy life in all chastity and poverty, fervently preaching the word of God.

For this is the Rule of Dominic as people commonly express it; 'To be able to carry all that you own on your back, to want to own nothing but what the Rule allows, to give

up not only superfluous things but even at times to refrain from licit and necessary things on account of the impulses of the flesh.' ”

The Mother's words to her daughter about how friars would now listen and in fact do listen sooner to the devil's voice than to that of their father Dominic, about how few of them follow in his footsteps now, about how those seeking the episcopate for worldly honor and for their own comfort and freedom do not belong to the rule of St. Dominic, about the terrible condemnation of such men, and about the condemnation experienced for one such episcopate.

Chapter 18

The Mother speaks to the bride, saying: "I told you that all those who belong to the Rule of Dominic are beneath my mantle. Now you are going to hear just how many they are. If Dominic were to come down from the place of delights where he has true happiness and were to cry out as follows: 'My dear brothers, you my followers, there are four good things in reserve for you: honor in return for humility, everlasting riches in return for poverty, satisfaction without boredom in return for continence, eternal life in return for the contempt of the world,' they would scarcely listen to him. On the contrary, if the devil suddenly came up from his hollow and proclaimed four different things, and said: 'Dominic promised you four things. Look here, I have what you want in my hand.

I offer honors, I hold wealth in my hand, instant gratification is there, the world will be delicious to enjoy. Take what I offer you, then! Use these things that are certain! Lead a life of joy so that after death you may rejoice together!' If these two voices were now to sound in the world, more people would run to the voice of the robber and devil than to the voice of Dominic, my great good friend. What shall I say of the friars of Dominic?

Those who are in his rule are indeed few, fewer still those who follow in his footsteps by imitating him. For not everyone listens to the one voice, because not everyone is of one and the same sort - not in the sense that not everyone comes from God or that not everyone can be saved, if they want, but in the sense that not everyone listens to the voice of the Son of God saying: 'Come to me and I will refresh you, by giving you myself!'

But what shall I say of those friars who seek the episcopate for worldly reasons? Do they really belong to the rule of Dominic? Certainly not. Or are those who accept the episcopate for a good reason excluded from the Rule of Dominic? Of course not. Blessed Augustine lived by a Rule before he became a bishop, but when he was bishop he did not give up his rule of life, although he attained the highest honors. For he accepted the honor with reluctance, and they did not bring more comfort to him but more work, because, when he saw he could do good to souls, he gladly gave up his own desires and physical comfort for God's sake in order to win more souls for God. Accordingly, those men who aspire to and accept the episcopate in order to be of greater benefit to souls do belong to the Rule of Dominic. Their reward will be twofold, both because of the noble order that they had to leave and of the burden of the episcopal office to which they were called.

I swear by that God by whom the prophets swore, who did not swear their oath in impatience but because they took God as a witness to their words.

Likewise, by the same God I declare and swear that to those friars who have scorned the rule of Dominic there will come a mighty hunter with ferocious hounds. It is as if a servant were to say to his master: 'There have come into your garden many sheep whose meat is poisoned, whose fleeces are matted with filth, whose milk is useless, and who are very insolent in their lusts. Command them to be slaughtered, so that there will be no shortage of pasture for the profitable sheep and so that the good sheep will not be confused by the insolence of the bad.'

The master would answer him: 'Shut the entrances so that only such sheep as approved by me can get in, such sheep as it is right to foster and nourish, such as are upright and peaceful.' I tell you that some of the entrances will be shut at first, but not all of them. Later the hunter will come with his hounds and he will spare neither their fleeces from arrows nor their bodies from wounds until their life has been put to an end. Then guards will come and carefully inspect and examine the kind of sheep that get admitted to the pasture of the Lord."

The bride said in reply: "My Lady, do not be angry if I ask a question.

Given that the pope relaxed the austerity of the rule for them, should they be censured for eating meat or anything else set before them?" The Mother answered: "The

pope, taking into consideration the weakness and inadequacy of human nature, as put forward by some, reasonably allowed them to eat meat so that they might be more able to work and more fervent in preaching, not that they might appear lazy and lax. For this reason, we excuse the pope for permitting it.” Then the bride said: ”Dominic arranged for a habit made not of the best nor the worst cloth, but something in between. Should they be censured for wearing finer clothing?” The Mother answered: ”Dominic, who dictated his rule inspired by the Spirit of my Son, prescribed that they should not have clothing made from better or more expensive materials so as not to be criticized and branded for wearing a fine and expensive habit and become proud because of it.

He also arranged that they should not have clothing made of the poorest or roughest material so as not to be bothered too much by the roughness of their clothing when they rested after work. Instead, he arranged for them to have clothing of moderate and adequate quality that they would not grow proud over or feel vain about, but that would keep out the cold and safeguard their continual progress in a life of virtue. Therefore, we commend Dominic for his arrangements but rebuke those friars of his who make changes in their habit for the sake of vanity rather than usefulness.”

Again the bride said: ”Should those friars who build tall and sumptuous churches for your Son be rebuked? Or are they to be censured and criticized if they ask for a lot of donations in order to construct such buildings?” The Mother answered: ”When a church is wide enough to hold all the people coming into it, when its walls are tall enough that the people going into it are not crowded together, when its walls are thick and strong enough to withstand any wind, when its roof is tight and firm enough that it does not leak then they have built it sufficiently. A humble heart in a humble church is more pleasing to God than high walls in which there are bodies inside but hearts outside. Accordingly, they have no need to fill their chests with gold and silver for works of construction, for it did not do Solomon any good to have built such sumptuous buildings when he neglected to love God for whom they were being built.”

As soon as these things had been both said and heard, the older bishop, who above was said to have died, shouted out saying: ”O! O! O! My miter is gone! That which was hidden beneath it can now be seen. Where is the honorable bishop now? Where is the venerable priest? Where is the poor friar? Gone is the bishop who was anointed with oil for his apostolic office and a life of purity. Left behind is the slave of dung stained with

grease. Gone is the priest who was consecrated by holy words so as to be able to transform inanimate lifeless bread into the living God. Left behind is the deceitful traitor that greedily sold him who redeemed all men in his love.

Gone is the poor friar who renounced the world through his vow. Now I stand condemned by my pride and ostentation. Yet am I compelled to say the truth: He who condemned me is a just judge. He would rather have set me free through as bitter a death as that which he suffered when he hung on the wood of the cross than that I should receive such a condemnation as I now experience - but his justice, which he cannot contravene, spoke against it.”

The bride's reply to Christ about how she is afflicted by various useless thoughts, and about how she cannot get rid of them, and Christ's reply to the bride about why God permits this, and about the usefulness of such thoughts and fears with respect to her reward, provided she detests the thoughts and has a prudent fear of God, and about how she should not make light of venial sin lest it lead to mortal sin.

Chapter 19

The Son speaks to the bride: "What are you worried and anxious about?" She answered: "I am afflicted by various useless thoughts that I cannot get rid of, and hearing about your terrible judgment upsets me." The Son answered: "This is truly just. Earlier you found pleasure in worldly desires against my will, but now different thoughts are allowed to come to you against your will.

But have a prudent fear of God, and put great trust in me, your God, knowing for certain that when your mind does not take pleasure in sinful thoughts but struggles against them by detesting them, then they become a purgation and a crown for the soul. But if you take pleasure in committing even a slight sin, which you know to be a sin, and you do so trusting to your own abstinence and presuming on grace, without doing penance and reparation for it, know that it can become a mortal sin. Accordingly, if some sinful pleasure of any kind comes into your mind, you should right away think about where it is heading and repent. After human nature was weakened, sin has frequently

arisen out of human infirmity. There is no one who does not sin at least venially, but God has in his mercy given mankind the remedy of feeling sorrow for each sin as well as anxiety about not having made sufficient reparation for the sins for which one has made reparation.

God hates nothing so much as when you know you have sinned but do not care, trusting to your other meritorious actions, as if, because of them, God would put up with your sin, as if he could not be glorified without you, or as if he would let you do something evil with his permission, seeing all the good deeds you have done, since, even if you did a hundred good deeds for each wicked one, you still would not be able to pay God back for his goodness and love. So, then, maintain a rational fear of God and, even if you cannot prevent these thoughts, then at least bear them patiently and use your will to struggle against them. You will not be condemned because of their entering your head, unless you take pleasure in them, since it is not within your power to prevent them.

Again, maintain your fear of God in order not to fall through pride, even though you do not consent to the thoughts. Anyone who stands firm stands by the power of God alone. Thus fear of God is like the gateway into heaven. Many there are who have fallen headlong to their deaths, because they cast off the fear of God and were then ashamed to make a confession before men, although they had not been ashamed to sin before God. Therefore, I shall refuse to absolve the sin of a person who has not cared enough to ask my pardon for a small sin. In this manner, sins are increased through habitual practice, and a venial sin that could have been pardoned through contrition becomes a serious one through a person's negligence and scorn, as you can deduce from the case of this soul who has already been condemned.

After having committed a venial and pardonable sin, he augmented it through habitual practice, trusting to his other good works, without thinking that I might take lesser sins into account. Caught in a net of habitual and inordinate pleasure, his soul neither corrected nor curbed his sinful intention, until the time for his sentencing stood at the gates and his final moment was approaching. This is why, as the end approached, his conscience was suddenly agitated and painfully afflicted because he was soon to die and he was afraid to lose the little, temporary good he had loved. Up until a sinner's final moment God abides him, waiting to see if he is going to direct his free will away from his attachment to sin.

However, if a soul's will is not corrected, that soul is then confined by an end without end. What happens is that the devil, knowing that each person will be judged according to his conscience and intention, labors mightily at the end of life to distract the soul and turn it away from rectitude of intention, and God allows it to happen, since the soul refused to remain vigilant when it ought to have.

Furthermore, do not grow overconfident and presumptuous, if I call anyone my friend or servant as I once called this man. I also called Judas a friend and Nebuchadnezzar a servant. I myself said: 'You are my friends if you carry out my commandments.' In the same way, I now say: 'The people who imitate me are my friends; those who persecute me by scorning my commandments are my enemies.' After it had been said that I had found a man after my own heart, did not David commit the sin of murder? Solomon, who received such wonderful gifts and promises, sinned against goodness and, due to his ingratitude, the promise was fulfilled not in him but in me, the Son of God.

Accordingly, just as when you dictate you add a closing formula at the end, I will also add this closing formula to my locution: If anyone does my will and gives up his own, he will receive the inheritance of eternal life. He who hears my will but does not persevere in doing it, will end up like the worthless and ungrateful servant. However, you should not lose hope, if I call anyone an enemy, since as soon as an enemy changes his will for the better he will be a friend of God. Was not Judas together with the twelve when I said: 'You, my friends, who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones.' At the time Judas was indeed following me, but he will not sit with the twelve. In what way, then, have the words of God been fulfilled? I answer: God, who sees people's hearts and wills, judges and rewards according as he sees.

A human being judges according to what she or he sees on the surface. Therefore, in order that no good person should grow proud or any bad person should lose hope, God has called both good and bad to the apostolate, just as every day he calls both good and bad to higher rank so that everyone whose way of life accords with his office will be glorified in eternity. He who assumes the honor but not the burden is glorified in time and perishes in eternity. Because Judas did not follow me with a perfect heart, the words 'you who have followed me' did not apply to him, inasmuch as he did not persevere to the

point of reward. However, the words did apply to those persons who were to persevere both then and in the time to come, for the Lord, for whom all things are present, sometimes says things in present time that apply to the future, and sometimes speaks about things that are going to be accomplished as if they have already been accomplished. Sometimes, too, he mixes past and future and uses the past for the future, so that no one may presume to analyze the immutable purpose of the Trinity.

Hear one thing more: 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' This man was called to the episcopate but he was not chosen, for he proved ungrateful to the grace of God. Hence, he is a bishop in name but is unworthy of his service and is numbered among those who go down but do not come up again."

ADDENDUM

The Son of God speaks: "Daughter, you are wondering why the one bishop died peacefully, but the other one died a horrible death when the wall fell and utterly crushed him, and he survived for a short while but with a great deal of pain. I answer you: Scripture says - no rather, I myself have said it - that the righteous person, no matter what kind of death he dies, is in the hands of God, but worldly people consider a person righteous only if his departure is peaceful and without pain or shame. God, however, recognizes as righteous the one who has been proved by longstanding temperance or who suffered for the sake of righteousness. The friends of God suffer in this world in order to receive a lesser punishment in the future or to win a greater crown in heaven.

Peter and Paul died for the sake of righteousness, although Peter died a more painful death than Paul, for he loved the flesh more than Paul; he also had to be more conformed to me through his painful death since he held the primacy of my church. Paul, however, inasmuch as he had a greater love of continence and because he had worked harder, died by the sword like a noble knight, for I arrange all things according to merit and measure. So, in God's judgment it is not how people end their lives or their horrible death that leads to their reward or condemnation, but their intention and will. The case is similar concerning these two bishops. One of them suffered more painfully and died a more terrible death. This reduced his punishment, although it did not gain him the reward of glory, because he did not suffer with a right intention. The other bishop died in glory, but this was due to my hidden justice and did not gain an eternal reward for him,

because he did not rectify his intention while he was alive.”

The Mother's words to the daughter about how the talent represents the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and about how St. Benedict added to the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to him, and about how the Holy Spirit or the demonic spirit enters the human soul.

Chapter 20

The Mother speaks: "Daughter, it is written that the man who received five talents earned another five. What does a talent signify if not a gift of the Holy Spirit? Some receive knowledge, others wealth, others wealthy contacts. However, everyone should yield double profits to the Lord, for example, as regards knowledge, by living usefully for themselves and instructing others, as regards wealth and other gifts, by using them rationally and charitably helping others. In this way the good abbot Benedict added to the gift of grace he had received by scorning the goods that are fleeting, by forcing his body to serve his soul, by putting nothing ahead of charity. Anxious not to let his ears be corrupted by empty talk or his eyes by seeing pleasurable sights, he fled to the desert in imitation of that man who, when he had not yet been born, recognized the coming of his dear Savior and leaped for joy in the womb of his mother.

Benedict would have gained heaven without the desert, inasmuch as the world was dead to him and his heart was completely full of God. However, it pleased God to call Benedict to the mountain so that many would come to know him and many would be inspired by his example to seek a life of perfection. This blessed man's body was like a sack of earth that enclosed the fire of the Holy Spirit and shut out the fire of the devil from his heart. Physical fire is enkindled by both air and a man's breath. Similarly, the Holy Spirit enters the human soul, either through personal inspiration or by lifting the mind up to God through some human action or divine locution. The spirit of the devil likewise visits its own people. However, the two spirits differ immeasurably, for the Holy Spirit makes the soul hot in her search for God but does not make her burn in her body. He shines his light in purity and modesty but does not darken the mind with evil. The evil Spirit, on the other hand, causes the mind to burn with carnal desires and makes it terribly embittered. He darkens the soul by making her unreflective and pushes her

remorselessly toward the things of the earth.

In order that the good fire that was in Benedict might ignite many people, God called him to the mountain and, after many other flames had been called together along with him, Benedict made a great bonfire of them by the Spirit of God. He composed a rule of life for them through the Spirit of God. Through this rule many people have attained the same perfection as he. Now, however, there are many firebrands cast off from the bonfire of St. Benedict and they lie spread out everywhere, having coldness instead of heat, darkness instead of light. If they were gathered together in the fire, they would surely give off fire and heat.”

The Mother's words to her daughter, showing the greatness and perfection of the life of St. Benedict by means of a comparison; also, the soul that bears worldly fruit is represented as a fruitless tree, the pride of mind as flint, and the cold soul as crystal; and about three noteworthy sparks arising from these three things, i.e., from the crystal, the flint, and the tree.

Chapter 21

The Mother speaks: "I told you before that the body of blessed Benedict was like a sack that was disciplined and ruled but did not rule. His soul was like an angel, giving off a lot of heat and flame. I will show you this by means of a comparison. It is as though there were three fires. The first of them was lit with myrrh and produced a sweet odor. The second was lit with dry kindle. It produced hot embers and a splendid blaze. The third was lit with olive oil. It produced flames, light, and heat. These three fires refer to three persons, and the three persons refer to three states in the world.

The first was the state of those who reflected on God's love and surrendered their wills into the hands of others. They accepted poverty and humility in place of worldly vanity and pride, and loved continence and purity in place of intemperance. Theirs was the fire of myrrh, for, just as myrrh is pungent but keeps demons away and quenches thirst, so too their abstinence was pungent to the body yet quenched their inordinate desires and drained away all the power of the demons.

The second state was that of those who had the following thought: 'Why do we love worldly honors? They are nothing but the air that brushes past our ears. Why do we love gold? It is nothing but yellow dirt. What is the end of the body if not rot and ashes? How does it help us to desire earthly goods?

All things are vanity. Therefore, we shall live and work for one purpose alone, that God may be glorified in us and that others may burn with love for God through our word and example.' The fire of such people was that of the dry kindle, inasmuch as they were dead to the love of the world and all of them produced hot embers of justice and the blaze of holy evangelization.

The third state was that of those with a fervent love for the passion of Christ who longed with all their hearts to die for Christ. Theirs was the fire of olive oil. The olive contains oil that gives off a scorching heat when it is burned. In the same way, these people were drenched in the oil of divine grace. Through it they produced the light of divine knowledge, the heat of fervent charity, the strength of upright conduct.

These three fires spread far and wide. The first of them was lit in hermits and religious, as described by Jerome who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, found their lives wonderful and exemplary. The second fire was lit in the confessors and doctors of the church, while the third was in the martyrs who despised their own flesh for God's sake, and others who would have despised it had they obtained help from God. Blessed Benedict was sent to people belonging to these three states or fires. He fused the three fires together in such a way that the unwise were enlightened, the cold-hearted were inflamed, the fervent became more fervent still. Thus, with these fires began the Benedictine order that guided each person according to his disposition and intellectual capacity along the way of salvation and eternal happiness.

From the sack of Blessed Benedict blew the sweetness of the Holy Spirit through which many monasteries were started. However, now the Holy Spirit has left the sack of many of his brothers, for the heat of the ashes has been extinguished and the firebrands lie scattered about, giving off neither heat nor light but the smoke of impurity and greed. However, God has given me three sparks so as to bring consolation to many people. The three stand for many sparks. The first spark was obtained with a crystal from the heat and light of the sun and has already settled on the dry kindle in order that a great fire

may be made from it. The second spark was obtained with hard flint.

The third spark came from a fruitless tree whose roots were growing and that was spreading its foliage. The crystal, that cold and fragile stone, represents the soul who, while she may be cold in her love for God, still seeks perfection in her heart and will and prays for God's help. Her intention thus leads her to God and earns for her an increase of trials that makes her grow cold toward base temptations, until God enlightens the heart and settles in the soul now emptied of desire, so that she no longer wants to live for anything but the glory of God. Flint represents pride. What is harder than the intellectual pride of a person who wants to be praised by everyone, yet longs to be called humble and to seem devout?

What is more loathsome than a soul that places herself ahead of everyone else in her thoughts and cannot put up with being rebuked or taught by anyone? Nevertheless, many proud persons pray humbly to God that pride and ambition be removed from their hearts. God, therefore, with the cooperation of their good will, presents adversities to their hearts and at times consolations that draw them away from worldly things and spur them on toward heavenly. The fruitless tree represents the soul that is fed on pride and bears worldly fruit and desires to have the world and all its privileges.

However, because this soul has a fear of eternal death, she uproots many of the saplings of sins she would otherwise commit if she had no such fear. Because of her fear, God draws near to the soul and inspires his grace in her so that the useless tree might become fruitful. By means of such sparks of fire, the order of Blessed Benedict, which now seems abject and abandoned to many people, should be renewed.”

The Mother's words to her daughter about a monk with a harlot's heart in his breast, and about how he apostatized from God through his own will and greed and his desertion of the angelic life.

Chapter 22

The Mother speaks to the bride again: "What do you see that is blameworthy in this

man here?" She answered: "That he rarely says Mass." The Mother said to her: "It is not for that reason that he is to be sentenced. There are many men who, mindful of their deeds, refrain from saying Mass but are no less acceptable to me. What else do you see in him?" And she said: "That he does not wear the habit established by blessed Benedict." The Mother replied: "It often happens that a custom gets started, and those who know it to be a bad custom but still follow it deserve blame. However, those who do not know the correct traditions and would even prefer a simpler habit, had it not been for the long-standing custom, are not to be so easily and thoughtlessly condemned. Listen, however, and I will tell you three reasons why he should be blamed.

First, because his heart, in which God should rest, is in the breast of harlots. Second, because he has given up the little he possessed but longs for the greater possessions of others; having promised to deny himself, he completely follows his own will and whim. Third, because God made his soul as beautiful as an angel and for that reason he should be leading an angelic life, but now his soul instead bears the image of that angel who apostatized from God through pride. People account him a great man, but God knows what sort he is before God. God is like a person who closes his fist about something and keeps it hidden from others until he opens his fist. God chooses weak creatures and keeps their crowns hidden in the present life until he rewards each person according to his deeds."

EXPLANATION

This man was a very worldly minded abbot who cared nothing for souls and who died suddenly without the sacraments. The Holy Spirit said about him: "O soul, you loved the earth and now the earth has received you. You were dead in your life and now you will not have my life nor be a sharer with me, since you loved the company of him who apostatized from me through pride and despised true humility."

The answer of God the Father to the bride's prayers for sinners, and about three witnesses on earth and three in heaven, and about how the whole Trinity bears witness to the bride, and about how she is his bride through faith, like all those who follow the orthodox faith of the holy church.

Chapter 23

“O my most sweet God, I pray for sinners, to whose company I belong, that you deign to have mercy on them.” God the Father answered: “I hear and know your intention, your loving entreaty will therefore be fulfilled. As John says in today's epistle, or, rather, as I say through John: 'There are three witnesses on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and three in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are your witnesses. The Spirit, who protected you in the womb of your mother, bears witness concerning your soul that you belong to God through the baptismal faith that your parents professed in your stead.

The baptismal water bears witness that you are the daughter of Christ's human nature through regeneration and the healing of original sin. The blood of Jesus Christ that redeemed you bears witness that you are the daughter of God and removed from the power of the devil by the sacraments of the church. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three Persons but one in substance and power, we bear witness that you are ours through faith, just as are all those who follow the orthodox faith of the holy church. And so that you give witness that you want to do our will, go and receive the body and blood of Christ's human nature from the hand of the priest in order that the Son may bear witness that you belong to him whose body you receive to strengthen your soul. The Father, who is in the Son, bears witness that you belong to the Father and to the Son. The Holy Spirit, who is in the Father and the Son, the Spirit being in both, bears witness that, through true faith and love, you belong to the Three Persons and One God.”

To the prayers of the bride for infidels, Jesus Christ replies that God is glorified through the evil of evil men, although not by their own power and volition; he illustrates this for her by means of an allegory in which a maiden represents the church or the soul and her nine brothers represent the nine orders of angels, the king represents Christ, while his three sons represent the three states of mankind.

Chapter 24

“O my Lord Jesus Christ, I pray that your faith may be spread among the infidels,

and that good people may be set even more aflame with your love and that wicked people may convert.” The Son answered: ”You are grieved because little honor is given to God and with all your heart you wish that God's honor were perfected. I will offer you an allegory that will help you to understand that honor is given to God even through the evil of evil men, although not by their own power and volition. Once there was a wise and beautiful, rich and virtuous maiden. She had nine brothers, each of whom loved her as his very heart, and you might say that each one's heart was in her. In the kingdom where the maiden lived, there was a law that said that whoever showed honor would be honored, whoever robbed would be robbed, whoever committed rape would be beheaded.

The king of the realm had three sons. The first son loved the maiden and offered her golden shoes and a golden belt, a ring for her hand and a crown for her head. The second son coveted the property of the maiden and robbed her. The third son coveted her maidenhood and sought to rape her. The king's three sons were captured by the maiden's nine brothers and presented to the king. Her brothers told him: 'Your sons desired our sister.

The first honored and loved her with his whole heart. The second one despoiled her. The third was ready to risk his life just to rape her. They were seized at the very moment when they were fully intent on carrying out what we have said.' Once the king heard this, he answered them, saying: 'They are all my sons, and I love all of them equally. However, I neither can nor wish to go against justice. Instead I intend to judge my sons as I would my servants. You, my son, who wanted to honor the maiden, come and receive honor and the crown along with your father! You, my son, who coveted the maiden's property and snatched it away, you shall go to prison until the stolen goods have been restored. Indeed, I have heard evidence concerning you that you were sorry for your crime and would have returned the stolen goods, but were prevented from doing so by your sudden and unexpected arrest. For this reason you will remain incarcerated until the last farthing is restored. But you, my son, who made every attempt to rape this maiden, are not sorry for your crime.

Therefore, your punishment will be multiplied by the number of ways in which you attempted to deflower the maiden.' All the brothers of the maiden answered: 'May you, the judge, be praised for your justice! For you would never have issued such a judgment had there not been virtue in you and fairness in your justice and mercy in your fairness.'

The maiden symbolizes the holy church. She is by nature outstanding by reason of her faith, beautiful by reason of the seven sacraments, laudable by reason of her conduct and virtue, lovable by reason of her fruits, for she reveals the true way to eternity. The holy church has three sons, so to speak, and these three stand for many. The first are those who love God with their whole heart. The second are those who love temporal goods for their own honor. The third are those who put their own will ahead of God. The maidenhood of the church represents human souls created solely by divine power.

Accordingly, the first son offers golden shoes by having contrition for his misdeeds, omissions, and sins. He offers clothes by following the precepts of the law and keeping the evangelical counsels as far as possible. He puts together a belt by firmly resolving to persevere in continence and chastity. He places a ring on her hand by firmly believing in what the catholic church teaches about the future judgment and life everlasting. The gem of the ring is hope, steadfastly hoping that no sin is so abominable that it cannot be wiped away through penance and the resolution to improve. He puts a crown on her head by having true charity. Just as a crown has various jewels, so too charity has various virtues. And the head of the soul or, rather, of the church is my Body. Whoever loves and reverences it is rightly called a son of God.

A person who loves the holy church and his own soul in such away has nine brothers, that is, the nine orders of angels, for he will be their companion and fellow in eternal life. The angels embrace the holy church with all their love, as if she were in the heart of each one of them. It is not stones and walls that make up the holy church but the souls of the righteous, and, for this reason, the angels rejoice over their honor and progress as though over their own.

The second brother or, rather, son, represents those who reject the authority of the holy church and live for worldly honor and the love of the flesh, who deform the beauty of virtue and live after their own desires, but repent toward the end and are sorry for their evil deeds. They must go to purgatory until they can be reconciled to God through the works and prayers of the church. The third son represents those who are a scandal to their own soul, not caring whether they perish forever, as long as they can carry out their desires. The nine orders of angels seek justice because of these people, inasmuch as they refuse to be converted through penance.

Thus, when God delivers his sentence, the angels praise him for his unbending fairness. When God's honor is thus perfected, they rejoice over his might, because even the evil of evil men serves to give him honor. This is why, when you see immoral persons, you should have compassion on them and rejoice over the eternal honor of God. God does not will anything evil, for he is the Creator of all things and the only being truly good in himself, but, as a most just judge, he still permits many things to be done in regard to which he is honored in heaven and on earth on account of his fairness and his hidden goodness.”

The Mother's lament to her daughter that the most innocent lamb, Jesus Christ, is neglected by his creatures in modern times.

Chapter 25

The Mother speaks: ”My lament is that on this day the most innocent lamb was carried who best knew how to walk. On this day, that little boy was silent who best knew how to speak. On this day, the most innocent little boy who never sinned was circumcised. This is why, although I cannot be angry, still I seem to be angry because the supreme Lord who became a little boy is forgotten and neglected by his creatures.”

Christ's explanation to the bride of the ineffable mystery of the Trinity, and about how diabolical sinners obtain God's mercy through contrition and a will to improve, and his response as to how he has mercy on everyone, both Jews and others, and about the double judgment, that is, the sentence for those who are to be condemned and for those who are to be saved.

Chapter 26

The Son speaks: ”I am the Creator of heaven and earth, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, true God. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God, not three gods but one God. Now you might ask, if there are three Persons, why are there not three

gods? My answer is that God is nothing other than power itself, wisdom itself, goodness itself, from which come all power beneath or above the heavens, all conceivable wisdom and the kindness. Thus, God is triune and one, triune in Persons, one in nature. The power and the wisdom is the Father, from whom all things come and who is prior to all, deriving his power from nowhere else but himself for all eternity.

The power and wisdom are also the Son, equal to the Father, deriving his power not from himself but as begotten ineffably from the Father, the beginning from the beginning, never separated from the Father. The power and wisdom are also the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, eternal with the Father and the Son, equal in majesty and might. Thus, one God and three Persons. The three have the same nature, the same operation and will, the same glory and might.

God is thus one in essence, but the Persons are distinct in the proper quality of each. The Father is wholly in the Son and Spirit, and the Son is wholly in the Father and Spirit, and the Spirit is wholly in both, in one divine nature, not as prior and posterior but in an ineffable way. In God there is neither prior nor posterior, nothing greater or less than another, but the Trinity is wholly and ineffably equal. Well has it been written that God is great and greatly to be praised.

However, now I can complain that I am little praised and unknown to many people, because everyone is following his own will but few follow mine. Be you steadfast and humble, and do not exalt yourself in your mind if I show you other people's trials, and do not betray their names unless you are instructed to do so. Their trials are not shown to you to shame them but in order that they may be converted and come to know God's justice and mercy. Nor should you shun them as condemned, for even if I should say today that a certain person is wicked, should he call on me tomorrow with contrition and a will to improve, I am prepared to forgive him. And that person whom I yesterday called wicked, today, due to his contrition, I declare him to be so dear a friend of mine that if his contrition remains steadfast, I forgive him not only his sin but even remit the punishment of sin.

You might understand this with a metaphor. It is as though there were two drops of quicksilver and both were heading toward each other in haste. If nothing but a single atom remained to keep them from joining, still God would be powerful enough to prevent

them from coming together. Likewise, if any sinner were so rooted in diabolical deeds that he was standing at the very brink of destruction, he could still obtain forgiveness and mercy, if he called upon God with contrition and a will to improve. Now, given that I am so merciful, you might ask why I am not merciful toward pagans and Jews, some of whom, if they were instructed in the true faith, would be ready to lay down their lives for God. My response is that I have mercy on everyone, on pagans as well as Jews, nor is any creature beyond my mercy.

With leniency and mercy I will judge both those people who, learning that their faith is not the true one, fervently long for the true faith, as well as those people who believe the faith they profess to be the best one, because no other faith has ever been preached to them, and who wholeheartedly do what they can. You see, there is a double judgment, namely the one for those to be condemned and the one for those to be saved. The sentence of condemnation for Christians will have no mercy in it. To them will belong eternal punishment and shadows and a will hardened against God. The sentence for those Christians to be saved will be the vision of God and glorification in God and goodwill toward God. Excluded from these rewards are pagans and Jews as well as bad and false Christians. Although they did not have the right faith, they did have conscience as their judge and believed that the one whom they worshipped and offended was God.

But the ones whose intention and actions were and are for justice and against sin will, along with the less bad Christians, share a punishment of mercy in the midst of sufferings due to their love of justice and their hatred of sin. However, they will not have consolation in the service of glory and of the vision of God. They will not behold him due to their lack of baptism, because some temporal circumstance or some hidden decision of God made them draw back from profitably seeking and obtaining salvation. If there was nothing that held them back from seeking the true God and being baptized, neither fear nor the effort required nor loss of goods or privileges, but only some impediment that overcame their human weakness, then I, who saw Cornelius and the centurion while they were still not baptized, know how to give them a higher and more perfect reward in accordance with their faith.

One thing is the ignorance of sinners, another that of those who are pious but impeded. Likewise, too, one thing is the baptism of water, another that of blood, another that of wholehearted desire. God, who knows the hearts of all people, knows how to take

all of these circumstances into account. I am begotten without beginning, begotten eternally from the beginning. I was born in time at the end of times. From the commencement I have known how to give individual persons the rewards they deserve and I give to each according as he deserves. Not the least little good done for the glory of God will go without its reward. This is why you should give many thanks to God that you were born of Christian parents in the age of salvation, for many people have longed to obtain and see that which is offered to Christians and yet have not obtained it.”

The bride's prayer to the Lord for Rome, and about the vast multitude of holy martyrs resting in Rome, and about the three degrees of Christian perfection, and about a vision of hers and how Christ appears to her and expounds and explains the vision to her.

Chapter 27

“O Mary, I have been unkind, but still I call you to my aid. I pray to you that you may graciously pray for the excellent and holy city of Rome. I can physically see that some of the churches are abandoned where the bones of the saints lie in rest. Some of them are inhabited, but the heart and conduct of their rectors are far from God. Procure mercy for them, for I have heard it is written that there are seven thousand martyrs for any day in the year at Rome. Although their souls do not receive less honor in heaven because their bones are held in contempt here on earth, nevertheless I ask you that greater honor may be given to your saints and to the relics of your saints here on earth and that the devotion of the people may be stirred up in this way.”

The Mother answered: “If you measured out a plot of land a hundred feet in length and as much in width and sowed it so full of pure grains of wheat that the grains were so close together that there was just the space of a thumb left between them, and even if each grain gave fruit a hundredfold, there would still be more Roman martyrs and confessors from the time when Peter came to Rome in humility until Celestine left from the throne of pride and returned to his solitary life.

But I am referring to those martyrs and confessors who against infidelity preached true fidelity and against pride preached humility and who died or were ready in intention

to die for the truth of the faith. Peter and many others were so wise and zealous in spreading the word of God that they would readily have died for each and every person if they had been able. However, they were also concerned lest they be taken suddenly from the presence of those people whom they nourished with their words of consolation and preaching, for they desired to save souls more than to save their own lives and reputation. They were also prudent and hence went to work in secret during times of persecution in order to win and gather together a greater number of souls. Between these two, I mean, between Peter and Celestine, not everyone has been good, but not everyone has been bad either.

Now let us set up three degrees or ranks, as you yourself were doing: positive, comparative, and superlative, or good, better, and best. To the first rank belong those whose thoughts were the following: 'We believe whatever the holy church teaches. We do not want to defraud anyone but to give back whatever has been fraudulently taken, and we want to serve God with all our heart.' There were people like that in the time of Romulus, the founder of Rome, and, after their own beliefs, they thought as follows: 'We understand and recognize through creatures that God is the Creator of all things and therefore we want to love him above all else.' There were also many who thought like this: 'We have heard from the Hebrews that the true God has revealed himself through manifest miracles. So, if we only knew where to place our trust, we would place it there.' We can say that all of these belonged to the first rank.

At the appointed time, Peter arrived in Rome. He raised some people to the positive rank, others to the comparative rank, and still others to the superlative. To the positive rank belonged those who accepted the true faith and lived in matrimony or in another honorable state. To the comparative rank belonged those who gave up their possessions out of love for God, and set others the example of a good life in words and example and deed and did not put anything ahead of Christ. To the superlative rank belonged those who offered their physical lives out of love for God. But let us make a search of these ranks to find out where there is now a more fervent love of God. Let us search among the knights and the learned. Let us search among the religious and those who have scorned the world. These people would be thought to belong to the comparative and superlative ranks. Yet, indeed, very few are found.

There is no life more austere than the life of a knight, if he truly follows his calling.

While a monk is obliged to wear a cowl, a knight is obliged to wear something heavier, namely, a coat of mail. While it is hard for a monk to fight against the will of the flesh, it is harder for a knight to go forth among armed enemies. While a monk must sleep on a hard bed, it is harder still for the knight to sleep with his weapons. While a monk finds abstinence a burden and trouble, it is harder for the knight to be constantly burdened by fear for his life. Christian knighthood was not established out of greed for worldly possessions but in order to defend the truth and spread the true faith. For this reason, the knightly rank and the monastic rank should be thought to correspond to the superlative or comparative rank. However, those in every rank have deserted their honorable calling, since the love for God has been perverted into worldly greed. If but a single florin were offered them, most of them in all three ranks would keep silent about the truth rather than lose the florin and speak the truth.”

The bride speaks again: ”I also saw what looked like many gardens on earth. I saw roses and lilies in the gardens. In one spacious plot of land I saw a field a hundred feet in length and as much in width. In each foot of land there were seven grains of wheat sown and each grain gave fruit a hundredfold.

Then I heard a voice saying: 'O Rome, Rome, your walls have crumbled. Your city gates are therefore unguarded. Your vessels are being sold. Your altars have therefore been abandoned. The living sacrifice along with the incense of matins is burned in the portico. The sweet and holy fragrance does not come from the holy of holies.' ”

At once the Son of God appeared and said to the bride: ”I will tell you the meaning of the things you have seen. The land you saw represents the entire territory where the Christian faith is now. The gardens represent those places where God's saints received their crowns. However, in paganism, that is, in Jerusalem and in other places, there were many of God's elect, but their places have not been shown to you now. The field that is a hundred paces in length and as much in width stands for Rome. If all the gardens of the whole world were to be brought alongside Rome, Rome would certainly be as great as to the number of martyrs (I am speaking materially), because it is the place chosen for the love of God.

The wheat you saw in each foot of land represents those who have entered heaven through mortification of the flesh, contrition, and innocence of life. The few roses represent the martyrs who are red from the blood they shed in different regions. The

lilies are the confessors who preached and confirmed the holy faith by word and deed. Today I can say of Rome what the prophet said of Jerusalem: 'Once righteousness lodged in her and her princes were princes of peace. Now she has turned to dross and her princes have become murderers.'

O Rome, if you knew your days, you would surely weep and not rejoice. Rome was in olden days like a tapestry dyed in beautiful colors and woven with noble threads. Its soil was dyed in red, that is, in the blood of martyrs, and woven, that is, mixed with the bones of the saints. Now her gates are abandoned, in that their defenders and guardians have turned to avarice. Her walls are thrown down and left unguarded, in that no one cares that souls are being lost. Rather, the clergy and the people, who are the walls of God, have scattered away to work for carnal advantage. The sacred vessels are sold with scorn, in that God's sacraments are administered for money and worldly favors.

The altars are abandoned, in that the priest who celebrates with the vessels has hands empty as to love for God but keeps his eyes on the collection; although he has God in his hands, his heart is empty of God, for it is full of the vain things of the world. The holy of holies, where the highest sacrifice used to be consumed, represents the desire to see and enjoy God. From this desire, there should rise up love for God and neighbor and the fragrance of temperance and virtue. However, the sacrifice is now consumed in the portico, that is, in the world, in that the love for God has completely turned into worldly vanity and lack of temperance.

Such is Rome, as you have seen it physically. Many altars are abandoned, the collection is spent in taverns, and the people who give to it have more time for the world than for God. But you should know that countless souls ascended into heaven from the time of humble Peter until Boniface ascended the throne of pride. Yet Rome is still not without friends of God. If they were given some help, they would cry out to the Lord and he would have mercy on them.”

The Virgin instructs the bride about knowing how to love and about four cities where four loves are found and about which of these is properly called perfect love.

Chapter 28

The Mother speaks to the bride, saying: "Daughter, do you love me?" She answers: "My Lady, teach me to love, for my soul is defiled with false love, seduced by a deadly poison, and cannot understand true love." The Mother says: "I will teach you. There are four cities where there are four kinds of love, that is, if we are to call each of them love, given that no love can properly be found except where God and the soul are united in the true union of the virtues. The first city is the city of trial. This is the world.

A man is placed there to be tested as to whether he loves God or not.

This is in order that he may come to know his own weakness and acquire the virtues by which he may return to glory, so that, having been cleansed on earth, he may receive a glorious crown in heaven. One finds disordered love in this city, because the body is loved more than the soul, because there is a more fervent desire for temporal than spiritual good, because vice is honored and virtue despised, because travels abroad are more appreciated than one's home country, because a little mortal being gets more respect and honor than God whose reign is everlasting.

The second city is the city of cleansing where the dirt of the soul is washed away. God has willed to set up places where a person who has become proud in the negligent use of his freedom yet without losing his fear of God may be cleansed before receiving his crown. One finds imperfect love in this city, inasmuch as God is loved because of a person's hope of being released from captivity but not out of an ardent affection. This is due to weariness and bitterness in atoning one's guilt. The third city is the city of sorrow. This is hell. Here one finds a love for every kind of evil and impurity, a love for every kind of envy and obstinacy. God governs this city as well. This he does by means of balanced justice, the due moderation of punishments, the restraint of evil, and the fairness of the sentences that takes each sinner's merits into account.

Some of the condemned are greater sinners, others lesser. The conditions for their punishment and retribution are set up accordingly. Although all the condemned are enclosed in darkness, not all of them experience it in one and the same way. Darkness differs from darkness, horror from horror, hell-fire from hell-fire. God's rule is one of justice and mercy everywhere, even in hell. Thus, those who have sinned deliberately have their particular punishment, those who have sinned out of weakness have a

different one, those who are being held only because of the damage done by original sin have a different one again. While the torment of these latter consists in the lack of the beatific vision and of the light of the elect, still they come close to mercy and joy in the sense that they do not experience horrible punishments, since they bear no effects of any evil deeds of their own doing. Otherwise, if God did not ordain the number and limit of the punishments, the devil would never show any limits in tormenting them.

The fourth city is the city of glory. Here one finds perfect love and the ordered charity that desires nothing but God or but for the sake of God. Hence, if you would reach the perfection of this city, your love needs four qualities: it must be ordered, pure, true, and perfect. Your love is ordered when you love the body only for the sake of sustaining yourself, when you love the world without superfluities, your neighbor for God's sake, your friend for the sake of purity of life, and your enemy for the sake of the reward. Love is pure when sin is not loved alongside virtue, when bad habits are scorned, when sin is not taken lightly.

Love is true when you love God with all your heart and affections, when you take the glory and fear of God into prior consideration in all your actions, when you commit not the least little sin while trusting to your good deeds, when you practice temperance prudently without growing weak from too much fervor, when you do not have an inclination to sin out of cowardice or ignorance of temptations. Love is perfect when nothing is as enjoyable to a person as God. This kind of love begins in the present but is consummated in heaven. Love, then, this perfect and true kind of love! Everyone who does not have it shall be cleansed, no matter whether he is faithful or fervent or a child or baptized. Otherwise he will go to the city of horror.

Just as God is one, so too there is one faith, one baptism, one perfection of glory and reward in the church of Peter. Accordingly, anyone who longs to reach the one God must have one and the same love and will as the one God. Miserable are those who say: 'It is enough for me to be the least in heaven. I do not want to be perfect.' What a senseless thought! How can someone who is imperfect be there where everyone is perfect either through innocence of life or the innocence of childhood or by cleansing or by faith and goodwill?"

The bride's praise for the Virgin containing an allegory about Solomon's temple and the unexplainable truth of the unity of the divine and human natures, and about how the temples of priests are painted with vanity.

Chapter 29

“Blessed are you, Mary, Mother of God. You are Solomon's temple whose walls were of gold, whose roof shone brightly, whose floor was paved with precious gems, whose whole array was shining, whose whole interior was fragrant and delightful to behold. In every way you are like the temple of Solomon where the true Salomon walked and sat and where he placed the ark of glory and the bright lamp. You, Blessed Virgin, are the temple of that Salomon who made peace between God and man, who reconciled sinners, who gave life to the dead and freed the poor from their oppressor. Your body and soul became the temple of the Godhead. They were a roof for God's love, beneath which the Son of God lived with you in joy after having proceeded from the Father.

The floor of the temple was your life arrayed in the careful practice of the virtues. No privilege was lacking to you, but everything you had was stable, humble, devout, and perfect. The walls of the temple were foursquare, for you were not troubled by any shame, you were not proud about any of your privileges, no impatience disturbed you, you aimed at nothing but the glory and love of God. The paintings of your temple were the constant inspirations of the Holy Spirit that raised your soul so high that there is no virtue in any other creature that is not more fully and perfectly in you. God walked in this temple when he poured his sweet presence into your limbs. He rested in you when the divine and human natures became joined.

Blessed are you, Virgin most blessed! In you God almighty became a little boy, the Lord most ancient became a tiny child, God the eternal and invisible Creator became a visible creature. I beg you, therefore, since you are the kindest and most powerful Lady, look upon me and have mercy on me! You are indeed the Mother of Solomon, although not of him who was the son of David but of him who is the Father of David and the Lord of that Solomon who built the wonderful temple that truly prefigured you. A son will listen to his Mother, especially to so great a Mother as you. Your son Solomon was, as it were, once asleep in you.

Entreat him, then, that he may be wakeful and watch over me so that no sinful pleasure may sting me, so that my contrition for sins may be lasting, so that I may be dead to the love of the world, patient in perseverance, fruitful in penance. There is no virtue in me but there is this prayer: 'Have mercy, Mary!' My temple is completely the opposite of yours. It is dark with vice, muddied with lust, ruined by the worms of desire, unsteady due to pride, ready to fall due to worldly vanity."

The Mother answered: "Blessed be God who has inspired your heart to offer this greeting to me so that you may understand how much goodness and sweetness there is in God. But why do you compare me to Solomon and to the temple of Solomon, when I am the Mother of him whose lineage has neither beginning nor end, of him who is said to have neither father nor mother, that is, of Melchisedech? He is said to have been a priest and it is to priests that the temple of God is entrusted, which is why I am Virgin and Mother of the high priest. And yet, I tell you that I am both the mother of King Solomon and the Mother of the peace-making priest, for the Son of God, who is also my Son, is both priest and King of kings.

It was indeed in my temple that he dressed himself spiritually in the priestly garb in which he offered a sacrifice for the world. In the royal city he was crowned with a royal but cruel crown. Outside the city, like a mighty warrior, he held the field and kept the war away. My grievance is that this same Son of mine is now forgotten and neglected by priests and kings. The kings pride themselves on their palaces, their armies, their worldly successes and honors. The priests grow proud of the goods and possessions that belong to souls. You said the temple was painted in gold. But the temples of priests are painted in worldly vanity and curiosity, since simony rules at the highest levels. The ark of the covenant has been taken away, the lamp of the virtues extinguished, the table of devotion abandoned."

The bride answered: "O Mother of mercy, have mercy on them and pray for them!" The Mother said to her: "From the beginning God so loved his own that not only are they heard when they pray for themselves, but others also experience the effects of their prayers thanks to them. Two things are necessary if prayers for others are to be heard, namely the intention of giving up sin and the intention of making progress in virtue. My prayers will benefit anyone who has both of these."

Saint Agnes's words to the bride about the love the bride should have for the Virgin, using the metaphor of flowers, and the glorious Virgin's description of God's boundless and everlasting kindness as compared to our lack of kindness and ingratitude, and about how the friends of God should not lose their peace in the midst of hardship.

Chapter 30

Blessed Agnes speaks to the bride, saying: "My daughter, love the Mother of mercy. She is like the flower or reed shaped like a sword. This flower has two sharp extremities and a graceful tip. In height and width it excels all other flowers. Similarly, Mary is the flower of flowers, a flower that grew in a valley and extended over all the mountains. A flower, I say, that was raised in Nazareth and spread itself on Mount Lebanon. This flower had, first of all, height, in the sense that the blessed Queen of heaven excels every creature in dignity and power. Mary also had two sharp edges or leaves, that is, the sorrow in her heart over her Son's passion along with her steadfast resistance to the attacks of the devil by never consenting to sin.

The old man prophesied truly when he said: 'A sword shall pierce your soul. In a spiritual sense she received as many sword-strokes as the number of wounds and sores she saw her Son receive and that she also had already foreseen. Mary had also a great width, I mean, her mercy. She is and was so kind and merciful that she preferred to suffer any hardship rather than let souls be lost. United now with her Son, she has not forgotten her native goodness but, rather, extends her mercy to all, even to the worst of men. Just as the sun brightens and sets ablaze the heavens and earth, so too there is no one who does not experience Mary's sweet kindness, if he asks for it. Mary also had a graceful tip, I mean, her humility.

Her humility made her pleasing to the angel when she called herself the Lord's handmaid, although she was being chosen to be his Lady. She conceived the Son of God in humility, not wanting to please the proud. She ascended the highest throne through humility, loving nothing but God himself. Come forward, then, Conduit, and greet the Mother of mercy, for she has now arrived!"

Then Mary appeared and replied: "Agnes, you used a noun, add an adjective, too!" Agnes said to her: "I might say 'most beautiful' or 'most virtuous,' for that belongs rightfully to no one but you, the Mother of everyone's salvation." The Mother of God answered Blessed Agnes: "You speak truthfully, for I am the most powerful of all. Therefore, I myself will add an adjective and a noun, namely 'Conduit' of the Holy Spirit. Come, Conduit, and listen to me! You are sad because this saying is bandied about among men: 'Let us live as we like, since God is easily pleased. Let us make use of the world and its honor while we can, since the world was made for the sake of mankind.' Indeed, my daughter, a saying like that does not come from love of God nor does it tend or lead toward the love of God. However, God does not forget his love because of it but in every hour displays his kindness in return for human ingratitude. He is like a craftsman crafting some great work. At times he heats up the iron, at times he lets it cool. God is the supreme craftsman who made the world out of nothing and has shown his love to Adam and his posterity.

But the human race cooled down to such an extent that they committed enormous crimes and almost regarded God as nothing. For that reason, God had mercy and gave a benevolent warning first, but then revealed his justice by means of the flood. After the flood, God made his pact with Abraham, showing him signs of affection, and led his children by means of great signs and wonders. He gave the law to his people from his own lips, confirming his words and precepts by the most evident of signs. As time went by, again the people grew cold and fell into such insanity that they started to worship idols. Wanting to heat up the cold-hearted once more, God in his kindness sent his own Son into the world.

He taught the true way to heaven and gave an example of true humility to imitate. Although many have now quite forgotten him in their neglect, he still displays and reveals his merciful words. However, things will not be accomplished all at once, no more now than before. Prior to the coming of the flood, the people were warned first and were given time for repentance. Similarly, before Israel entered the promised land, the people were first tested and the promise was delayed for a time. God could have led the people for forty days without delaying for forty years, but his justice demanded that the ingratitude of the people should become apparent and that God's mercy should be made manifest so as to render his future people so much the more humble.

It would be great audacity to ask why God made his people suffer so much or why there can be eternal punishment, given that a life in sin cannot last forever. It would be as great audacity as to try to reason out and comprehend the eternity of God. God is eternal and incomprehensible. His justice and recompensation is eternal, his mercy is beyond understanding. If God had not already shown justice to the first angels, how would we know of his justice and his fair judgment of everything?

If, again, he had not had mercy on humanity by creating it and then freeing it through innumerable miracles, how would we know that his goodness was so great or his love so immense and so perfect? Because God is eternal, his justice is eternal and there is neither increase nor decrease in it. It is as when someone plans ahead to do his work in such a way and on such a day.

When God exercises his justice or mercy, he manifests it by accomplishing it, since present, past, and future are known to him from eternity.

God's friends should persevere patiently in the love of God and not lose their peace, even though they may see worldly men and women prospering. God is like a good washing-woman who puts the dirty clothes in the waves to make them cleaner and brighter by the motion of the water, paying close attention to the water currents so that the clothes do not sink beneath the waves. Likewise, God places his friends in the waves of poverty and hardship in the present time in order to cleanse them for eternal life, while keeping close watch so that they are not plunged into excessive sorrow or unbearable hardship.”

Christ's words to the bride offering the admirable allegory of a doctor and king, and about how the doctor symbolizes Christ, and about how those whom people think will be condemned are frequently saved while those whom people or worldly opinion think will be saved are condemned.

Chapter 31

The Son speaks to the bride, saying: "A doctor came to a distant and unknown realm

in which the king did not rule but was ruled, because he had the heart of a hare. Seated on his throne, he seemed like an ass with a crown. His people devoted themselves to gluttony, forgetting honesty and justice, and hating everyone who spoke to them about the good that awaited in the future. When the doctor presented himself to the king, saying he was from a lovely country and affirming that he had come because of his knowledge of human infirmities, the king, in wonder at the man and his words, answered:

'I have two prisoners to be beheaded tomorrow. One of them can scarcely breathe, but the other is more robust and stouter now than when he entered prison. Go to them, look at their faces and see which of them is in better health.' After the doctor had gone and examined them, he said to the king: 'The man whom you say is robust is almost a corpse and will not survive. As for the other, however, there is good hope.' The king asked him: 'How do you know that?'

The doctor said: 'Because the first man is full of harmful humors and vapor and cannot be cured. The other man, who is exhausted, can easily be saved with some fresh air.' Then the king said: 'I shall call together my noblemen and counselors so that they may see your wisdom and skill and you will win honor in their sight.' The doctor said to him: 'No, do that by no means.'

You know your people are jealous of honor. If they cannot persecute a man with their actions, they destroy him with talk. Wait and I will make my wisdom known to you alone in private. This is how I have been taught. I have learned to display more wisdom in private than in public. I do not seek to win glory in your land of darkness, but I glory in the light of my fatherland. Besides, the healing time will not come until the south wind begins to blow and the sun appears at the meridian.' The king to him: 'How can that happen in my country? The sun rarely rises here, since we are beyond the climates, and the north wind always prevails among us. What good to me is your wisdom or such a long delay for healing? I see that you are full of talk.' The doctor answered: 'The wise man must not be hasty. However, in order that I may not seem to you to be unreliable and unfriendly, let me take charge of these two men. I will take them to the borders of your kingdom where the air is more suitable, and then you will see how much actions are worth and how much talk is worth.'

The king said to him: 'We are occupied with greater and more useful matters. Why do you distract us? Or what benefit does your teaching confer on us? We have our delight in present goods, in the things we see and own. We do not aspire to future and uncertain rewards. But, take the men, as you request. If you manage to show us something great and wonderful through them, we ourselves will proclaim you glorious and have you proclaimed glorious.' So he took the men and led them off to a temperate clime. One of them passed away and died, but the other, refreshed by the gentle air, recuperated.

I am that doctor who sent my words to the world in my longing to cure souls. Although I see the infirmities of many people, I only showed you two through whom you might admire my justice and mercy. I showed you one person whom the devil secretly possessed and who was to receive an eternal punishment. However, to people his works seemed to be righteous and were praised as such. I showed you a second person whom the devil openly controlled, but whom I said was to be healed in his time, although not in away open for men to see, as you were thinking. It was divine justice that the evil spirit began to control him by degrees, but the same justice also demanded that it should leave him by degrees, as in fact it did leave him up until the soul had been released from the body. Then the devil accompanied the soul to her judgment.

The judge said to him: 'You have chastised and sifted her like wheat. Now it belongs to me to crown her with a double crown because of her confession. Go away from the soul whom you chastised for so long.' And he said: 'Come, happy soul, perceive my glory and joy with the senses of your spirit!' To the other soul he said: 'Since you did not have the true faith and yet were honored and praised as being one of the faithful, and since you did not have the perfect deeds of the righteous, you will not have the wages of the faithful. During your lifetime you wondered why I would die for you and why I humbled myself for you.

Now I answer you that the faith of the holy church is true and leads souls upward, while my passion and blood allows them to enter heaven. Therefore, your faithlessness and your false love will press you down into nothingness, and you will be nothing with respect to eternal spiritual goods. As to why the devil did not go out of that other man in the sight of everyone, I answer: 'This world is like a lowly hovel compared to the tabernacle that God inhabits, and the people provoke God to anger. This is why he went out by degrees just as he had entered him.' ”

The Virgin's words to the bride that show in an allegory how God the Father chose her from among the saints to be his mother and the port of salvation.

Chapter 32

The Mother speaks to the bride saying: "A certain person searching for precious stones came upon a magnet. He took it in his hand and kept it in his treasury. With its help he led his ship to a safe port. Likewise, my Son searched among the many precious stones that are the saints, but he chose me especially as his mother in order that by my help humanity might be led to the port of heaven. As a magnet attracts iron to itself, so too I attract hard hearts to God. This is why you should not be troubled if your heart sometimes feels hard, because this is for your greater reward."

The Son's words to the bride showing through the example of two men how he judges by the interior and not by the exterior.

Chapter 33

The Son of God speaks to the bride: "You are wondering about two men, one of whom was like a square-set stone, the other like a pilgrim to Jerusalem. However, neither of them achieved what you expected. The first man to whom you were sent was like a square-set stone, firm in his convictions but, like Thomas, piously doubting. Accordingly, since it was not yet the time when wicked deeds were fulfilled, he tasted the wine but did not drink it. Regarding the second man, I said that he would be a fellow traveler to Jerusalem. This happened so that you might learn the true state of the man who was reputed to be righteous and holy. He is a religious in his habit and a monk in his profession but an apostate in his ways, a priest by his rank but a slave to sin, a pilgrim by reputation but a vagabond in intention, rumored to be bound for Jerusalem but really headed for Babylon. Moreover, he left in disobedience and against the apostolic rules.

Also, he is so infected with heresy that he believes and says that he will become pope in the future and bring about a complete restoration. His books give evidence of this as well. This is why he will die a sudden death and, if he does not beware, he will join the company of the father of lies. Thus, you should not be troubled if certain things are said in an obscure way or if predictions do not turn out as you expect, since God's words can be understood in various ways. Whenever this happens I will point out the truth. But I am God, the true pilgrim bound for Jerusalem. I myself will be your fellow traveler.”

EXPLANATION

The Spirit of God speaks: ”You have heard that the man I told you was like a square-set stone and a pious doubter has died. May you know that he will not be in the number of those who tempted God in the desert nor with those who sought a sign like that of the prophet Jonah, nor with those who stirred up persecution against me. No, he will be with those who had zeal and charity although not yet perfectly.”

The Mother's words to her daughter symbolizing the soul by a ring and the body by a cloth, and about how the soul should be purified through discretion and the body should be cleansed but not killed by abstinence.

Chapter 34

The Mother speaks: ”A ring is given to someone but it is too tight for his finger. So he asks advice of an enemy as to what should be done. The enemy answers him: 'Cut the finger off so the ring will fit on it.' A friend says to him: 'Certainly not! Instead, make the ring wider with a hammer.' Someone wants to filter and strain a drink for a powerful lord by using an unclean cloth and asks advice of an enemy. He answers: 'Cut everything that is unclean from the cloth and use the clean parts you find to filter your lord's drink.'

A friend tells him: 'By no means do that! Instead, the cloth should be washed and cleansed first and then the drink should be filtered!' The same thing applies even in spiritual matters. The ring represents the soul, the cloth represents the body. The soul, which should be placed on God's finger, should be made wider with the hammer of

discretion and purification. The body should not be killed but cleansed through abstinence so that the words of God can be spread abroad by means of it.”

Book 4

John the Evangelist's words to the bride about how no good deed goes unrewarded, and about how the Bible excels all other writings, and about the king - robber, traitor, prodigal, and so forth, and about St. John's advice to the king, and about how he should scorn riches and honors for the sake of God.

Chapter 1

A male person appeared to the bride. His hair seemed as if shorn with reproach; his body was drenched in oil and completely naked, though he was in no way ashamed. He said to the bride: "The scripture, which you call holy, says that no good deed will go unrewarded. This is the scripture that is known for you as the Bible but which, for us, is as bright as the sun, incomparably more splendid than gold, bearing fruit like the seed that produces fruit a hundredfold. Just as gold excels other metals, so the scripture, which you say is Holy though we call it Golden, excels all other books, because in it the true God is glorified and announced, the deeds of the patriarchs are unfolded, the inspirations of the prophets are explained.

Since, therefore, no good deed goes unrewarded, hear what I say: This king is a robber in God's sight and a traitor of souls and a prodigal squanderer of riches. As no traitor is worse than the one that betrays someone who loves him, so this king has in a spiritual sense betrayed many people by, in a bodily sense, approving the unjust, unjustly exalting the impious, oppressing the just, ignoring transgressions that should be corrected. Again, no thief is worse than he who betrays someone who lays his head upon his bosom. Likewise, the people of this land were, so to speak, in his bosom, but this king has wretchedly plundered them by allowing the property of some to be taken away, by imposing unbearable burdens on others, by ignoring the abuses of still others, by always exercising justice in a remiss way. In the third place, no thief is worse than one who steals from his unwilling master who has entrusted everything to him and given him his keys. Thus this king was given the keys of power and glory, which he has used in an unjust and wasteful manner, not for the glory of God. However, seeing that he has given up some of

the things he likes out of love for me, I have three counsels for him.

The first is that he should be like the man in the gospel who left the pods of the swine and returned to his father. Let this king likewise scorn riches and honors, which are nothing but swine pods compared to eternal goods, and let him return to his Father God with humility and devotion. Second, let him leave the dead to bury the dead, and let him follow the narrow path of the crucified God. Third, let him leave behind the heavy weight of his sins and enter on the path that is narrow at the start but joyful in the end.

And you who see me, know that I am he who fully understood the golden scripture and in my understanding added to it. I was ignominiously stripped bare, but, because I bore it patiently, God has clothed my soul in immortal dress. I was also doused in oil, which is why I now enjoy the oil of everlasting happiness. Because I was made the guardian of the Mother of God, I left the world in the easiest of deaths after her own, and my body is now in a place of the greatest rest and security.”

The bride's amazing and remarkable vision and God's explanation of it. According to the explanation, the baptized are symbolized by an animal, the heathen by a fish, and God's friends by three crowds of people.

Chapter 2

Then there appeared to the bride a balance, as it were, with two scale-pans hanging above the ground. Their tops and chains went up to the clouds, and their rings went into the sky. In the first scale-pan was a fish. Its scales were razor-sharp, its look like that of a basilisk, its mouth like that of a unicorn spouting venom, its ears like the sharpest spears, like sheets of steel. In the other scale-pan was an animal with a hide like flint. Its huge mouth spouted hot flames. Its eyelids were like the hardest swords. Its hard ears let fly sharp arrows as from a hard, taut bow.

Then there appeared three crowds of people on the earth. The first was small; the second was smaller; the third was the smallest. A voice called to them from heaven

saying: "O, friends, I have a violent thirst for the heart of this amazing animal, if only someone would present it to me out of love! I have also a most fervent desire for the blood of the fish, if only someone could be found to bring me it!"

The crowd answered with a single voice as though from the mouth of all: "O our Maker, how shall we present you with the heart of such a great animal, whose hide is harder than flint? If we try to draw near to its mouth, we get burned by the flames of its fire. If we look at its eyes, we get stabbed by the sparks of its arrows. And even if there were any hope of getting the animal, who will be able to catch the fish? Its scales are sharper than the edge of a sword, its eyes blind us, its mouth pours forth its incurable venom into us!"

The voice from heaven answered saying: "O, friends, the animal and the fish seem invincible to you, but it is easy for the Almighty. From heaven I shall supply wisdom and grant strength to anyone looking for a way to fight the animal. I shall give myself in reward to anyone who is prepared to die for me."

The first crowd answered: "O great Father, you are the giver of every good thing. We are your work and shall gladly give you our heart in your honor. All the rest that remains outside our heart we will keep for the sustenance and refreshment of our body. Therefore, since death seems hard to us and our bodily weakness burdensome and our knowledge slight, govern us inwardly and outwardly and receive graciously what we offer you. Reward us with as much and whatever you like."

The second crowd answered: "We acknowledge our weaknesses and are aware of the world's emptiness and fickleness. Therefore, we shall gladly give you our heart and surrender all our will into the hands of others, for we would rather submit to others than own even the least of worldly goods."

The third crowd answered: "Lord, you desire the heart of the animal and thirst for the blood of the fish: We shall gladly give you our heart and we are prepared to die for you. Grant us wisdom, and we shall look for a way to get at the heart of the animal."

After this came the sound of a voice from heaven saying: "O, friend, if you want the

heart of the animal, make a hole in the middle of your hands with a sharp bore. Then take the eyelids of a whale and attach them to your own eyelids with strong pitch. Take a plate of steel and tie it to your heart, so that the length and breadth of the steel covers your heart. Then close your nostrils and hold your breath in your throat!

Go boldly forth against the raging animal with your mouth shut and holding your breath. When you get up to the animal, use both your hands to lay hold of its ears. Its arrows will not hurt you but will go through the open holes in your hands. Run up to the animal with your mouth shut and, as you approach it, blow on it with all your breath. When you do so, the flames of the animal will not hurt you but will return on the animal itself and burn it. Take especial care with the sword-edges coming out of the animal's eyes. Latch on to them with your own eyes protected by the whale's eyelids. As a result of their powerful connection, either the animal's swords will be deflected or they will go through its heart. Look carefully for the animal's heartbeat and fix the edge of your mighty steel there and pierce the flint of its hide. If the flint breaks, you can be sure that the animal will die and its heart will be mine. For every pound it weighs, I will give a hundred to the laborer. However if it does not break and the animal injures him, I will care for his wounds and revive him if he dies.

If anyone wants to present me with the fish, let him walk to the shore with a net in his hands - one that is made not out of cords but from very precious metal. Let him enter the water but not more than up to the knees, so that the waves do not harm him. He should set his foot on a solid place where there is sand and no mud. He should put out one of his eyes and hold it toward the fish. Then the sight of the fish, which is like that of a basilisk, will have no effect on him. He should bear a shield of steel on his arm, and then the sting of the snake will not hurt him. Let him then cast his net over the fish with skill and might so that the fish will not be able to cut through it with its razors or break it or escape by any kind of powerful thrust.

When he feels he has the fish, let him hoist his net over above him, and if he holds it for ten hours above the waters, the fish will die. He should carry it then to the shore and inspect it with the eye that he did not put out, using his hands to open it along the backbone where the blood is more plentiful. May he thus present it to his Lord. If the fish should escape or swim to the other shore and harm him with its venom, I will be able to

cure the infection. Nor will there be less reward for the blood of the fish than for the heart of the animal.”

God speaks again: ”The meaning of the scales of the balance is as if one were to say: 'Be lenient and patient, wait and have mercy.' It is to see another's wrongdoing and admonish him continually to make him desist from evil. Likewise, I, the God and Creator of all, sometimes sink down like a scale toward people and admonish them, being lenient and testing them with tribulations. Sometimes I rise up in people's minds through my enlightenment, inflaming them and visiting them with special grace. The meaning of the chains of the balance that go up to the clouds is that I, the God of all, uphold everyone, heathen as well as Christian, friends as well as enemies, and enlighten and visit them with my grace, in order to see if there are any who wish to respond to my grace by turning their will and affections away from evil. The animal signifies those who have received holy baptism but, having reached the age of discretion and not imitating the words of the holy gospel, have let their heart and mouth slip away toward earthly things and do not bother about the spiritual life.

The fish signifies heathens adrift on the waves of concupiscence. Their blood, that is, their faith, is slight and their knowledge of God little.

Thus, I desire both the animal's heart and the fish's blood, should there be any persons found who would attempt to present me with them for the sake of love. The three crowds are my friends: The first are those who make a reasonable use of the world; the second are those who give up what they have in humble obedience; the third are those who are prepared to die for God.”

*A wonderful conversation between God and the bride by way of question and answer.
It concerns the king and his hereditary rights and those of his successors in the kingdom, and also how some territories should be reclaimed by the successors in the kingdom and some not.*

Chapter 3

“O Lord,” said the bride, “do not get angry at me for asking, but I heard it read out loud that nothing should be unjustly acquired nor should anything unjustly acquired be retained. Now the present king has territory that some people say he holds by right while others deny it. And indeed it is strange that you tolerate in this man what you reproach in others.”

God answered: “No people were left after the flood except for those who stayed on the ark during it. From these was born a race that went to the east, and among them some who went to Sweden. Another clan went west and from these arose the people who went to Denmark. Now those who first began to cultivate the land that was not surrounded by water did not occupy any territory belonging to the people who lived across the waters or on islands. Rather, they were each content with what they found, as is written of Lot and Abraham. Abraham said, 'If you go to the right, I will keep to the left,' as if to say 'Whatever you appropriate to yourself, this will belong to you and your heirs.' As time went on there came judges and kings who were satisfied with their boundaries and did not occupy the territory of the people who lived on islands or across the water. Rather, each remained within the boundaries and limits of their forefathers.”

She answered: “What if a part of the kingdom is transferred by way of donation, should not a successor reclaim it?” God: “In a certain kingdom, crown goods belonging to the king were kept in safe storage for him. The people, thinking themselves unable to survive without a king, elected one and entrusted to him the crown goods to be guarded and reconsigned to the future king. If the elected king should want to transfer or reduce a part of the crown goods, surely the future king could and should reclaim it, inasmuch as no reduction of the crown goods should take place. The king can neither diminish nor transfer the crown of the kingdom in his day, unless, perhaps, for some prudent reason. What do the crown goods of the kingdom denote if not his royal authority? What is the kingdom if not the people subject to him? What is the king if not mediator and savior of the kingdom and of the people? Accordingly, the savior and defender of the crown should by no means divide or reduce the crown goods to the detriment of a future king.”

The bride answered: “What if the king is forced by necessity or violence to transfer a part of the crown goods?” God said: “If two men had a quarrel, and the stronger of them would not make any concession unless a finger of the other man were cut off, to whom

would the cut-off finger belong if not to him who had suffered the damage? This is also the case concerning the kingdom. If, due to necessity or captivity, a king should lose part of the kingdom, the future king can certainly reclaim it, for the king is not master of the realm but the helmsman, and necessity does not make a law.”

She answered: ”What if, during his lifetime, a king were to cede part of the crown goods to a lord, and, upon the king's death, that lord and his successors were to retain the concession as though they owned it, should it not be reclaimed?” The Lord: ”That territory should certainly return to its legitimate owner.”

She replied: ”What if a part of the crown goods were mortgaged to someone for debt and then, both after his death and after he had received income from it for many years, it should come into the hands of another person with no right to the land, since it had been neither ceded nor mortgaged to him but had accrued to him by chance, and if he does not want to give it up without being paid, what should be done?” The Lord said: ”If someone held a lump of gold in his hand and said to a bystander: 'This lump is yours, if you like, for so and so many pounds,' then that many pounds should surely be given to him. If land has been lawfully acquired and is held in peaceful ownership, it should be reclaimed with prudence and brought back after calculating the damages. When a king is elected, he is lifted up on a stone seat to be seen by the people. This indicates that he has dominion and possession of the northern parts of the kingdom, and also that the southern parts belong to the kingdom both by hereditary right and by sale and purchase. The king shall accordingly safeguard the land that has been acquired in order not to lose his dominion and or suffer subjugation should he act otherwise.”

Again she answered: ”O Lord, do not get angry if I ask just one thing more. The present king has two sons and two kingdoms. In one of the kingdoms the king is elected by hereditary right, in the other by popular vote. Now, however, the opposite has been done, inasmuch as the younger son has received the hereditary kingdom, while the older son holds the elective kingdom.” God answered: ”There were three incongruities in the electors as well as a fourth that they had in plenty: inordinate love, feigned prudence, the flattery of fools, and lack of confidence in God and in the common people.

Hence, their election was against justice, against God, against the good of the nation

and against the welfare of the people. Therefore, in order to provide for peace and for the welfare of the people, it is necessary for the older son to receive the hereditary kingdom and for the younger son to come to the elective one. Otherwise, if the earlier actions are not repealed, the kingdom will suffer loss, the people will be afflicted, discord will arise, the sons shall pass their days in sorrow, and their kingdoms will no longer be kingdoms.

Instead it will be as is written: 'The mighty will move from their seats and those that walk upon the earth shall be exalted.'

Hear now: I will give you the example of two kingdoms. In one there is election, in the other hereditary succession. The first kingdom, where there is election, has been ruined and afflicted, because the rightful heir was not elected. This was due to the electors as well as to the greed of the one who sought the kingdom. Now, God does not punish the son for his father's sins nor does his anger endure forever, but he works and maintains justice both on earth and in heaven. For this reason that kingdom will not return to its previous glory and happy state until the rightful heir appears on either the father's or the mother's side."

God's words to the bride about two spirits, good and bad; and about the remarkable and useful struggle in the mind of a certain lady arising from the inspirations of the good spirit and from the temptations of the evil spirit; and about what choice should be made in these matters.

Chapter 4

God speaks to the bride: "Thoughts and influences are suggested and infused in human hearts by two spirits, that is to say, from the good spirit and from the bad. The good spirit urges people to think on the future goods of heaven and not to love temporal goods. The bad spirit urges them to love what they see, makes light of sin, offers the excuse of weakness, and adduces the example of weak sinners. Let me exemplify how each spirit inflames the heart of that lady known to you. The good spirit tells her the following, suggesting it to her thoughts: 'Riches are a burden, worldly honor is but air, carnal delights but a dream, fleeting joy and all worldly things are emptiness, the future

judgment is inevitable and the inquisitor very harsh. It is too hard, then, it seems to me, to have to give a strict account of fleeting wealth, to win spiritual disgrace for the sake of air, to endure long-lasting hardship for momentary delight, and to render a reckoning to him to whom all things are known before they happen. For this reason, it is safer to give up much in order to make the account smaller rather than to get attached to much and then have to account for much.'

To counter this, the bad spirit replies with these inspirations: 'Dismiss such thoughts, since God is mild and easily placated. Own things boldly, give liberally of your possessions. You were born to have wealth. It has been granted to you so that you may win praise and can give to those who ask of you. If you give up your wealth, you will become a servant to your servants. You will lose honor and gain scorn, for a poor person finds no comfort. It will be hard for you to adjust to new habits, to tame the flesh in strange ways, and to live without being waited upon. So stay where you are with the honor you have received, and maintain your regal position. Manage your household in praiseworthy fashion so that you will not be accused of inconstancy should you change your state. Continue as you began, and you will be glorious before God and men.'

The good spirit again speaks to the woman's mind and advises her:

'I know two things to be eternal - heaven and hell. No one who loves God above all things will enter into hell. Those who do not love God will not gain heaven. The incarnate God himself trod the path to heaven and confirmed it with signs and by his death. How glorious it is to be in heaven, how bitter is the malice of the devil, and how empty are the things of the earth! His Mother and all the saints imitated God: they preferred to endure every punishment and lose everything - they even despised their very selves - so as not to lose heavenly and eternal possessions. Consequently, it is safer to surrender honor and wealth in due season than to hold on to them until the end. Otherwise, the memory of sins might perhaps fade away as the pain of old age increases, and those who care nothing about my salvation will carry off what I have gathered.'

The evil influence answered to the contrary: 'Leave off thinking on these things. We are weak human beings, but Christ was both God and man. We ought not compare our deeds to those of the saints who had more grace and intimacy with God. Let it be enough for us to hope for heaven and to live as befits our weakness, redeeming our sins through

almsgiving and prayers. It is foolish and childish to take up unaccustomed practices and not be able to carry them through to the end.'

The good influence answered: 'I am unworthy to be compared with saints. Nevertheless, it is quite safe to aim at perfection by degrees. What is to hinder me taking up unaccustomed practices? God is able to help me. It often happens that some poor man follows in the path of a mighty and wealthy nobleman. Although the nobleman reaches the inn sooner and enjoys a delicious meal and rests on a soft bed, yet the poor man reaches the same inn, though later, and there he partakes of the leftovers from the nobleman's meal. If he had not followed in the nobleman's path and sought the same inn, he would not have enjoyed his nobleman's meal.

In the same way I say now that, although I am unworthy to be compared with saints, I do wish to follow along their path, so that at least I might be able to partake of their merits. I am concerned about two things in my soul.

The first is that, if I stay in my homeland, pride might get the better of me. The love of my parents, who request my help, makes me downcast in my mind; the abundance of servants and clothing is a burden to me. The thought of coming down from my proud throne and humbling my body by going on a pilgrimage is more attractive and consoling to me than remaining in a state of honor and accumulating sin upon sin. Second, I am concerned about the poverty of the people and their cries of discontent. Instead of helping them, my presence is a daily burden. That is why I need good advice.'

The bad influence answered: 'Going on pilgrimage is characteristic of an inconstant mind. Mercy is more acceptable than sacrifice. If you leave your homeland, greedy men, having heard of your reputation, will despoil you and carry you off. Then, instead of freedom, you will experience captivity; instead of wealth, poverty; instead of honor, shame; instead of quiet, tribulation.' The good spirit answered with an inspiration: 'I have heard of a certain captive in a tower who found greater comfort in captivity and darkness than he had ever before while living in abundance and temporal comfort. If it should please God to afflict me, it will be in order to increase my merit. After all, he is gentle in encouragement and quick to send help, especially as I am leaving my homeland because of my sins and in order to gain the love of God.'

The bad influence answered in turn: 'What will happen if you should be unworthy of divine consolation and impatient about poverty and humility? Then you will regret having taken such rigorous discipline upon yourself. Then you will have a staff in your hand instead of a ring, a cloth on your head instead of a crown, and lowly sackcloth instead of a crimson gown.' The good spirit answered in turn: 'I have heard that Holy Elizabeth, daughter of the king of Hungary, having been raised in luxury and nobly married, endured great poverty and abasement. She obtained from God greater comfort in poverty and a more sublime crown than if she had remained in all worldly honor and comfort.'

The bad inspiration answered: 'What will you do if God delivers you into the hands of men and your body is violated? How will your sense of modesty allow you to endure? Will you not sorrow over your own stubbornness and be inconsolable then? Will it not scandalize your whole family and cause them to mourn? Feelings of impatience, anxiety, and thanklessness toward God will surely surge up in your heart. You will want to end your days! And how will you dare to show yourself when you have been defamed in everyone's mouth?' In turn the good thought answered: 'I have heard it read that the holy virgin Lucy, when she was led off to a brothel, remained steadfast in faith and trusted in the goodness of God, saying: 'However much my body may suffer, I am still a virgin and shall receive a twofold crown.' Seeing her faith, God preserved her unharmed. Thus I say: God, who permits no one to be tempted beyond their power, shall protect my spirit, faith, and my will. I entrust myself wholly to him. May his will toward me be done!'

Accordingly, since this lady is shaken by such thoughts, I offer her three counsels. First, that she should recall the honor for which she has been chosen; second, what love God has shown her in her marriage; third, how benevolently she has been spared in this mortal life. I also give her three warnings. First, that she will render an account to God for all her temporal goods down to how the least obol was earned and spent; second, that her time is very short and she will die before she knows it; third, that God does not show the lady of the house more leniency than the maidservant.

Therefore, I advise her to do three things. First, to repent of her sins, to make amendment after a fruitful confession, and to love God with her whole heart. Second, I advise her wisely to seek to avoid the pains of purgatory. Just as a person who does not

wholeheartedly love God deserves a great punishment, so too someone who does not atone for his or her sins while it is possible deserves purgatory. Third, I advise her for a time to leave her bodily friends for God's sake and to come to a place where there is a shortcut between heaven and death in order to avoid the pains of purgatory, because indulgences are obtained there that offer souls advancement and redemption, which have been granted by the holy pontiffs and earned by the blood of God's saints."

The words of St. Peter to the bride about how he desired the salvation of peoples; and his advice to her about obtaining remembrance, and about the great miracles that are yet to be fulfilled in the city of Rome.

Chapter 5

St. Peter speaks to the bride of Christ: "My daughter, you compared me to a plow, which makes wide furrows and clears away roots. This was indeed true. I was so zealous against sin and so aflame for virtue that I was ready to spare neither life itself nor any effort in order to convert the whole world to God. God was so sweet for me in thought, so sweet in conversation, so sweet in action that all things became bitter for me to think about apart from God. Yet God, too, was bitter to me, not because of him, but because of me. How bitterly I wept as often as I thought about how I had offended and denied him, for I had learned by then what it meant to love perfectly, and my tears became as sweet to me as sweet-tasting food.

As to your request for a spirit of remembrance, I answer you: Have you not heard how forgetful I was? I may have been fully taught as to the way of God and had sworn an oath to stand and die with God, but I denied the truth when I was questioned by a woman. And why? Because God had left me to myself, and because I did not know myself. But then what did I do? Then I really did consider what I was - nothing in myself. Then I got up and ran toward the truth, toward God, and he impressed such a remembrance of his name on my heart that I could never forget him again either in the face of tyrants or of torture or of death.

So do the same thing yourself: Turn in humility to the teacher of remembrance and ask remembrance of him. He is the only one who can do all things. Yet I will help you so that you may be made a participant of the seed that I planted on earth.

Moreover, I will tell you: Rome was once a city of fighters, and her streets were paved in gold and silver. Now, however, her gemstones have turned into mud, her inhabitants are but few; their right eye has been plucked out, and their right hand cut off; toads and vipers dwell with them, and for fear of their venom tame animals dare not appear, nor do my fish lift their heads. Yet fish shall gather in her, though not as many as before; still they will be as sweet and as daring - so much so that, through their cooperation, the toads and frogs will climb down, the snakes will be changed into lambs, and lions will be like doves at their windows.”

Again he added: ”I tell you further that you will live to hear the words: 'Long live the vicar of Peter!' And you will see him with your own eyes, for I will cause the mountain of delights to fall and those sitting on it will come down from it. Those who refuse to come down willingly will be forced down against everyone's expectations, for God wants to be exalted with mercy and truth.”

St. Paul tells the bride the noble story about how he was called by God through the prayers of Blessed Stephen, and about how the wolf became a lamb, and about how it is good to pray for everyone.

Chapter 6

St. Paul speaks to the bride of Christ, saying: ”My daughter, you compared me to a lion that was raised among wolves but was rescued from them in a wonderful way. I was indeed a greedy wolf, my daughter, but God made a lamb out of the wolf for two reasons. The first was because of his great love, for he makes the vessels of his grace out of unworthy materials, and he makes friends out of sinners. The second was because of the prayers of St. Stephen, the first martyr.

Let me describe how I was and what I had in mind at Stephen's stoning and why I deserved his prayers. I neither rejoiced nor delighted in St. Stephen's sufferings, nor did I envy his glory. Still I wanted him to die because, to my mind, I did not see him as having the true faith. When I saw his immense zeal and his patient endurance of suffering, I grieved terribly over his lack of faith - when in fact he was the truly faithful one and I altogether blind and faithless. Out of compassion for him I prayed and begged with my whole heart that his bitter sufferings might bring him to glory and reward.

Because of this, his prayers benefited me first of all, for, through them, I was rescued from the many wolves and made into a gentle lamb. This is why it is good to pray for everyone, because the prayer of the righteous benefits those who are closer and better prepared to receive grace. However, I now complain that this man who spoke so eloquently among the learned and was so patient before those who stoned him has been wholly forgotten in the hearts of many people and especially neglected by those who ought to serve him night and day. They bring him their broken and empty vessels, dirty and disgusting. Therefore, as it is written, they shall be clothed 'in double confusion and shame' and shall be thrown out of the houses of pleasure.”

A wonderful and remarkable vision about a soul who is to be judged and about the devil's accusations and the glorious Virgin's intervention. The explanation of this vision denotes heaven by a palace, Christ by the sun, the Virgin by a woman, the devil by an Ethiopian, the angel by a knight. It mentions two irremediable places of punishment and a third, a remediable one, as well as many other wonderful things, suffrages in particular.

Chapter 7

A person who was keeping vigil in prayer and was not asleep had a spiritual vision. It was as though she saw an unfathomably vast palace where there were countless figures dressed in white and shining clothes, each of whom seemed to have his or her own seat. In the principal part of the palace there was a judgment seat on which the sun seemed to sit. The rays that came from the sun were unfathomably long, deep, and wide. Next to

this seat stood a maiden with a precious crown on her head, and all the servants of the sun that sat on the seat praised him with hymns and songs.

There appeared then an Ethiopian, terrible in aspect and bearing, as though full of envy and burning with great anger. He cried out and said: "O, just judge, render judgment on this soul for me and hear his works! Little remains of his life. Allow me to punish the body along with the soul until their separation from each other." After he had said this, it seemed to me that there stood near the seat one like a knight in arms, pure and wise in his words and modest in his bearing. He said: "O, judge, see, here are the good works that he has done up to this hour."

The voice of the sun seated on the seat was immediately heard: "There is more vice than virtue here, and it is not just that vice should be joined to the summit of virtue." The Ethiopian answered: "Then it is just for this soul to be joined to me, for while he has some vice in himself, there is total wickedness in me." The knight answered: "God's mercy accompanies every person until death, until the very last moment, and then comes the judgment. Soul and body are still joined together in the man of whom we speak and he still has the power of discernment.

The Ethiopian answered: "Scripture, which cannot lie, says: 'You shall love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself.' Look how this man did all his works from fear and not from love, as he ought. You will find that all the sins he confessed were confessed with little contrition. So he deserves hell, because he failed to deserve the kingdom of heaven. Thus his sins are made known here in the presence of divine justice, because he has never until now felt any contrition due to divine love for the sins he has committed." The knight answered: "He surely hoped to have true contrition and believed he would have it before death."

The Ethiopian replied: "You have collected every good deed he has ever done, and you know all his words and thoughts for the salvation of his soul. The whole lot of them cannot be compared to the grace of contrition arising from divine love along with holy faith and hope, and they can hardly obliterate his sins. God's eternal justice ordains that no sinner may enter heaven without perfect contrition. It is therefore impossible that God should render a judgment against his eternally foreknown ordinance. This soul is

therefore to be sentenced to hell and joined to me for eternal punishment.” On these words the knight fell silent and gave no answer.

Then countless demons appeared, flying off like sparks from a hot fire and crying out with one voice. To him who sat like the sun on the judgment seat they said: ”We know that you are one God in three Persons without beginning or end. There is no other god than you. You are love itself along with mercy and justice. You existed in yourself from the beginning without loss or change, as is proper to God. Outside of you is nothing, and nothing outside of you has any joy. Your love created the angels from no other matter than from your divine power. You acted as mercy dictated. However, when we became inflamed with inner pride, envy, and greed, your justice-loving charity cast us together with our burning malice out of heaven into the unfathomable and shadowy abyss that is now called hell. This is what your charity did then. Your charity even now cannot be separated from justice in your judgments, whether it is fulfilled according to mercy or according to equity. We will go even further: If the one whom you love more than anyone, I mean, if the sinless Virgin who begot you had sinned mortally and had died without godly contrition, your love for justice is such that her soul would never have reached heaven but would have been with us in hell. So, Judge, why do you not sentence this soul to us, so that we may punish him according to his works?”

After this a trumpet-like sound was heard at which those who heard it fell silent, and immediately a voice spoke and said: ”Be silent, all of you angels and souls and demons, and hear what God's Mother has to say!” Then the Virgin herself appeared before the judgment seat, and it looked as though she were hiding some large objects beneath her mantle. She said: ”You, enemies! You attack mercy, and you love justice but without charity. Though these good works of this soul may be deficient and, for that reason, he should not enter heaven, yet look what I have beneath my mantle!” Then the Virgin opened the folds of her mantle on either side. On the one side could be seen a little church, as it were, with monks in it. On the other side appeared men and women, God's friends, both religious and others, all of them crying out with one voice and saying: ”Have mercy, merciful Lord!”

There was silence then, and the Virgin spoke, saying: ”Scripture says: A person with perfect faith can move the world's mountains by means of it. What about the voices of

those who both have faith and have served God with burning love? What can and should these be able to accomplish? What will those friends of God do whom this man, seeking only the reward of heaven for his good works, has asked to pray for him in order that he might be saved from hell and reach heaven? Are not all their tears and prayers able to snatch him and raise him up so that he can obtain God's love and contrition before his death? Besides, I will also join my own pleas to the prayers of all those saints in heaven whom he especially honored."

Then she added: "O demons, by the power of the judge I order you to attend to what you in justice now see." Then all of them answered as with one voice: "We see that in the world a little water and a lot of air placate the wrath of God. So, too, by your prayer God is placated and inclined toward mercy and charity." Then the sun's voice was heard to say: "Thanks to the prayers of my friends, this man will yet receive enough godly contrition before death so as not to go to hell, but he will be purged among those who have the heaviest punishment in purgatory. Once his soul has been purged, he will receive a reward in heaven in the company of those who had faith and hope but only small charity on earth." Once this had been said, the demons fled.

Then it seemed as though a terrible and dark place was opened up before the bride. In it there appeared a burning furnace. The fire burned on no other fuel than demons and living souls. Above the furnace appeared the soul whose sentence was mentioned earlier. Its feet were affixed to the furnace, and it stood upright like a man. The soul stood neither on the uppermost part of the furnace nor the lowest but, as it were, on one side of it. The shape of the furnace was terrible and awesome. Its fire seemed to push upward through the bottom of the soul's feet, as when water pushes itself upward through pipes, and it went up over his head with such violent pressure that the soul's pores were like veins coursing with hot fire. His ears looked like a blacksmith's bellows that continuously fanned the whole brain with their flapping. His eyes looked like they were inside out, sunken all the way in and attached to the back of his head. His mouth was open, and his tongue was pulled out through his nostrils and was hanging down to his lips. His teeth were like iron nails attached to his gums. His arms were so long that they reached down to the feet. Both hands seemed to be holding and squeezing a greasy, tar-like thing that was on fire. The skin that covered the soul looked like an animal hide just hanging over his body, and he was dressed in a cloth that was like a sheet drenched with sperm. This

cloth was so icy cold that anyone who saw it shivered. Pus oozed out of it as from a wound with putrid blood. A stench came from it that was so bad that it could not be compared to the worst stench in the world.

After the sight of this torment, the soul's voice was heard to cry out woe five times, weeping with all his might. He said: "Woe is me, first of all, because I loved God so little in return for his great virtues and for the grace given me. Woe is me, second, because I did not fear God's justice as I should have. Woe is me, third, because I loved the pleasure of my sinful body and flesh. Woe is me, fourth, for all my worldly riches and pride. Woe is me, fifth, that I ever laid eyes on you, Louis and Johanna!"

Then an angel said to me: "Let me explain this vision for you. The palace you saw is an image of heaven. The great crowd of those who were seated and dressed in white and shining clothes are the angels and the souls of the saints. The sun signifies Christ in his divine nature; the woman stands for the Virgin who gave birth to God; the Ethiopian accusing the soul is the devil; the knight reporting the good works of the soul is an angel. The furnace denotes hell. Hell is so hot inside that if the whole world and everything in it were on fire, it could not compare to that vast furnace. The various voices heard in the furnace all speak against God. They begin and end their speech with laments. The souls look like people whose limbs are forever being stretched without relief or pause.

Know, too, that the fire that you saw in the furnace burns in eternal darkness, and the souls burning in it do not all have the same punishment. The darkness that appeared around the furnace is called limbo. It comes from the darkness that is in the furnace. Yet both make up one place and one hell. Anyone entering it will never dwell with God.

Above the darkness is found the greatest punishment of purgatory sustainable by souls. Beyond this lies another place of lesser punishment, where there is only a weakened condition as to fortitude, beauty, and the like. It is like when people have been sick, and once the sickness and pain are gone, they have nothing left of their strength until they gradually recover it.

Beyond that is a third place where there is only the punishment of the longing for God. To help your mind understand it better, I will offer you a comparison. It is as when

copper is mixed with gold, and the two are melted together in a very hot fire so long as necessary to purge it until the copper is consumed and only pure gold is left. The stronger and thicker the copper is, the hotter the fire must be, until the gold flows like water and is all on fire. The master then takes the gold to another place where it obtains its true form to be seen and touched. Afterward he puts it in a third place where it is stored to be presented to the owner.

This is also the case in spiritual matters. The greatest punishment of purgatory is in the first level above the darkness where you saw the aforesaid soul being purged. The demons can touch it there; poisonous vermin and wild beasts are symbolically present there. There is heat and cold, darkness and confusion, all coming from the punishment of hell. Some souls are punished less there, some more, according as sins were atoned for or not while the soul remained in the body.

The master, that is, God's justice, then carries the gold, that is, the souls, to other places where they only suffer from a lack of strength. There they dwell as long as necessary until they attain relief either from their own special friends or from the continuous works of the Holy Church. The more help a soul gets from her friends, the quicker she convalesces and is released from that place. After this a soul is brought to the third place where there is no other punishment but the longing to enter God's presence and behold him in blessedness. Many souls dwell there for a very long time, except for those who had a perfect longing to enter God's presence and behold him while they still lived in the world.

Know, too, that many people die in the world who are so just and innocent that they enter right away into the presence and vision of God. There are also those who have made so much atonement for their sins with their good works that their souls shall know no punishment. However, there are few who do not come to the place of longing for God. Hence all the souls dwelling in these three places participate in the prayers of the Holy Church and in the good works done in the world, especially in those that they did in their lifetimes and in those that are done by their friends after their death.

Know also that, just as sins are of many different kinds and forms, so too the punishments are of many and different kinds. Hence, just as a hungry man rejoices over

a morsel of food that reaches his mouth, a thirsty man over a drink, a sad man is gladdened by joy, a naked one by clothing, a sick one on coming into bed, so souls rejoice and participate in those goods that are done for them in the world." The angel added: "Blessed be the person in the world who helps souls with prayers and good deeds and physical labor. God's justice, which cannot lie, declares that souls must either be purged after death through the punishment of purgatory or released ahead of time through the good works of friends."

After this many voices were heard from purgatory, saying: "O, Lord Jesus Christ, just judge, send your love to those who have spiritual power in the world, and then we will be able to participate more than now in their chants, readings, and offerings."

Above the space from which their cries were heard there seemed to appear a house in which many voices were heard, saying: "May God reward those who send us help in our weakness!" It seemed that the rays of dawn appeared in this house, and beneath the rays a cloud appeared that had nothing of the light of dawn, and from it came a great voice saying: "O Lord God, through your unfathomable power grant hundredfold wages to each of those in the world who with their good works raise us up to the light of your divinity and the vision of your face!"

The angel's words to the bride about the meaning of the punishment of a man's soul judged by God in the above chapter; and also about the lessening of the punishment because he had spared his enemies before death.

Chapter 8

The angel said: "The soul whose predicament you saw and whose sentence you heard finds himself in the most severe punishment of purgatory. This consists in his not knowing whether he will come to rest after purgation or whether he has been condemned. This is God's justice, because this man possessed great knowledge and discernment, but he used them in a material way for worldly ends and not in a spiritual way for the sake of his soul, for he forgot and neglected God altogether while he lived.

Now his soul suffers from the burning fire and shivers from the cold. He is blind in the darkness, fearful of the horrible sight of demons, deaf from the devil's howling, hungry and thirsty within himself, and clothed in shame on the outside. Yet God granted him one grace after death, namely, that of not coming into contact with the demons. This was because he had shown leniency to his chief enemies for the sole sake of God's honor. He pardoned their grave offences and made friendship with his chief enemy.

Know, too, that, in accordance with God's just decision, whatever good he did, whatever he pledged and donated of his legitimate wealth diminishes and relieves his pain, especially with the aid of the prayers of God's friends. Any other, less legitimately acquired possessions that he gave away benefit their previous, legitimate owners, either in a spiritual or bodily way, provided they are worthy of it according to God's dispensation.”

The angel's words to the bride about the judgment of God's justice against the above mentioned soul, and about the satisfaction to be made in this life for this soul while in purgatory.

Chapter 9

The angel speaks again: ”You heard before that, through God's love and thanks to the prayers of God's friends, this man received contrition for his sins a short while before death, and that this contrition saved him from hell. Accordingly, God's justice decided that he should burn for six ages in purgatory after death, unless he obtains help from God's friends in the world. These ages represent those that he lived from the first hour in which he knowingly committed a mortal sin until the time when he achieved fruitful repentance through God's love.

The first age means that he did not love God for the death of Christ's noble body and the many sufferings Christ endured for nothing other than the salvation of souls. The second age means that he did not love his own soul, as a Christian ought, and did not

return thanks to God for his baptism and because he was not a Jew or a pagan. The third age means that he knew well enough what God commanded him to do but had little desire to carry it out. The fourth age means that he knew well enough what God had forbidden to those wanting to reach heaven but that he dared to go against it, following not the motions of his conscience but rather his passions and desires. The fifth age means that he did not make proper use of the means of grace and of confession, although he had plenty of time. The sixth age means that he cared little about the body of Christ and did not wish to receive it frequently, since he did not want to refrain from sin, nor did he possess enough divine charity to receive the body of Christ until the end of his life.”

Then a man of very modest appearance appeared. His clothes were white and shining like a priestly alb; he was girded with a linen belt and a red stole about his neck and under his arms. He commenced speaking in this way: ”You who see this, pay close attention and commit to memory what you see and hear. You and all who live in the world cannot understand God's power and what he established before time in the same way as we can who are with him. All those things that take place in an instant for God are incomprehensible to you except by means of words and images after a worldly fashion.

I am one of those whom this man, now condemned to purgatory, honored with his gifts in his life. For this reason God has graciously granted me that if anyone will do what I advise, then this man's soul will be transferred to a higher place where he will obtain his true form and know no pain other than such as a person would suffer after having had a great illness once all the pain has gone away, lying there like someone without any strength, yet full of joy in the certain knowledge that he would survive.

As you heard, the soul of this man cried out its woe five times. Therefore I have five consoling things to tell him. His first woe was that he had loved God little. In order to free him from this, let thirty chalices in which God's blood is offered up be donated for his soul so that God himself might be more honored. His second woe was that he had not had any fear of God. To release him from this, let thirty priests be chosen, who are deemed to be pious, each of whom should say thirty masses whenever he can: nine masses of martyrs, nine of confessors, nine of all saints; the twenty-eighth mass is to be that of angels, the twenty-ninth that of Holy Mary, the thirtieth that of the Blessed Trinity. They should all have the intention of praying for his soul, so that God's anger

may be appeased and his justice turned toward mercy.

His third woe was because of his pride and greed. To release him from this, one must invite thirty paupers and humbly wash their feet and give them food, money, and clothing to comfort them. Both the person who washes and those who get washed shall humbly beseech God, for the sake of his humility and his bitter passion, to pardon this man's soul for the greed and pride of which he was guilty. His fourth woe was carnal lust. If, then, someone should help both a virgin and a widow to enter into the convent and should, moreover, provide for a girl to join in true wedlock, giving them all enough property to allow them to eat and dress sufficiently, then God will pardon the sins this man committed in the flesh, inasmuch as these are the three ways of life commanded and chosen by God to be states of life in the world.

His fifth woe was that he had committed many sins that caused harm to a great number of people. In particular, he had made every effort to ensure the marriage of the two persons mentioned earlier, who were as closely related by blood as if they both came from the same family. Moreover, he procured their union more for his own sake than for the sake of the realm. He did so without asking the pope's permission and against the praiseworthy ordinances of the Holy Church. Many a person has become a martyr because he would not tolerate such deeds being done against God and his Holy Church and against Christian morality.

If anyone wishes to make reparation for so great a sin, he should go to the pope and say: 'A certain man committed such and such a sin,' without naming the person explicitly, 'but in the end he repented and obtained absolution though without atoning for the sin. Therefore, impose on me whatever penance you want that I can endure, for I am ready to atone for that sin on his account.' Truly, even if no greater penance should be imposed on him than an 'Our Father,' it will suffice to lessen this soul's punishment in purgatory."

Christ's complaint to the bride about the Romans, and about the cruel sentence Christ hands down against them, should they die in their sins.

Chapter 10

God's Son speaks these words, saying: "O, Rome, you repay me badly for my many favors. I am God, who created all things, and I manifested my great love through the harsh death of my body, a death I willed to endure for the salvation of souls. Three are the paths on which I wished to come to you, and truly you wished to betray me on all of them. You hung a large rock overhead to crush me on the first path. You placed a sharp spear on the second path to block my way to you. You dug a moat in the third path for me to fall into unawares and drown. What I have said now should not be understood in a physical but a spiritual sense. I am speaking to the inhabitants of Rome who act in this way but not to my friends who reject their works.

The first path by which I am accustomed to enter the human heart is the fear of God. They have hung over it an enormous rock, that is, the great presumption of a hardened heart that does not fear the judge whom none can withstand. They say in their hearts: 'Should the fear of God come to me, the presumption of my heart shall crush it.' The second path by which I come is the inspiration of divine counsel, which often also comes through preaching and teaching. People block me from this path with a spear through their delight in sinning against my precepts and through their firm resolution to persevere in wickedness until they can no longer keep it up. This is the spear that blocks God's grace from coming to them. The third path is the Holy Spirit's enlightenment in each person's heart by which people can understand and ponder the nature and greatness of what I have done for them and what I suffered for them. They dig a deep moat for me by saying in their hearts: 'I love my pleasure more than his charity. I'm satisfied by just thinking about the enjoyments of the present life.' So they drown divine love and all my deeds, as it were, in a deep moat.

The inhabitants of Rome do all this to me, and certainly show it in their words and deeds. They count my words and deeds for nothing, cursing and insulting me and my Mother and my saints both in jest and in earnest, whether happy or angry, instead of giving me thanks. They do not live according to Christian customs, as the Holy Church commands, having no more love for me than the demons. The demons prefer to endure their wretchedness forever and hold on to their own wickedness rather than to see me

and join me in perennial glory. These are the people who refuse to receive my body, which is consecrated from the altar bread, as I myself established, and whose reception is a great help against the devil's temptations. How wretched they are who scorn such help while they are still healthy and reject it like poison, because they do not wish to refrain from sin!

I shall now come by a way unknown to them through the power of my divinity, bringing vengeance on the scorers of my humanity. And just as they have prepared three obstacles on their paths to prevent my coming to them, so too I shall prepare three other obstacles for them, the bitterness of which they shall know and taste both dead and alive. My rock is a sudden and unforeseen death that shall crush them so that all their merriments will be left behind, and their souls will be forced to come alone to my judgment. My spear is my justice, and it shall separate them from me so that they will never taste of the one who redeemed them and will never behold the beauty of the one who created them. My moat is the shadowy darkness of hell into which they shall fall, living there in everlasting wretchedness. All my angels in heaven and all the saints shall condemn them, and all the demons and all the souls in hell shall curse them.

Yet I take note of them, and I am saying this about those people with the disposition described above, whether they are religious or secular clergy or laymen or women or their sons and daughters old enough to understand that God forbids every sin, but who nonetheless voluntarily get caught up in sins and shut out God's love and belittle the fear of him.

My will is still the same as it was when I hung upon the cross. I am the same now as I was then, when I forgave the thief his sins upon his asking for mercy and opened for him the gates of heaven. For the other thief, however, who despised me, I unlocked hell's barriers, and there he remains, forever tormented for his sins.”

St. Agnes's words of praise and blessing to the glorious Virgin herself, and about how she prays to the Virgin for the daughter, and about the answer of the Lord and of his sweet Virgin and their consoling words to the bride, and about this world as symbolized by a pot.

Chapter 11

Agnes speaks: "O, mother Mary, virgin of virgins, you can rightly be called the dawn lit by the true sun, Jesus Christ. Do I call you dawn because of your royal lineage or wealth or honors? Certainly not. You are rightly called the dawn because of your humility, the light of your faith, and your singular vow of chastity. You are the herald introducing the true sun, you are the joy of the righteous, you are the expulsion of demons, you are the consolation of sinners. For the sake of that wedding that God celebrated in you at the time, I pray that your daughter shall remain in your Son's honor and love."

God's Mother answers: "What do you mean by this wedding? Tell me for the sake of her who is listening!" Agnes answers: "You are truly mother and virgin and bride. The most beautiful wedding was celebrated in you at the time when a human nature was joined to God in you without any admixture or loss in his divinity. Virginitude and motherhood were united while virginal modesty remained intact, and you became at the same time both mother and daughter of your Creator. This day you gave birth in time to him who was eternally begotten of the Father and has wrought all things with the Father.

The Holy Spirit, within and without you and all around you, made you fruitful as you gave your consent to God's herald. God's Son himself, who was born of you this day, was within you even before his herald came to you. Have mercy, then, on your daughter!

She is like a poor little woman dwelling in a valley with nothing other than some small living creature, such as a hen or a goose. She had so much affection for the lord living on the mountain of the valley that, out of love, she offered the lord of the mountain whatever living creature she had. The lord answers her: 'I have plenty of everything and have no need of your gifts. But are you perhaps giving a little something in order to receive something greater?' She says to him: 'I am not offering this because you need it but because you have permitted such a poor little woman as myself to live with you on your mountain and because your servants show me respect. Therefore, I give you the little comfort I have so that you know that I would do more, if I could, and that I am not ungrateful for your grace.' The lord answers: 'Since you love me with such charity, I will

bring you up to my mountain and give you and yours clothing and food each and every year.' Such is the disposition of your daughter now. She surrendered to you the one living thing she had, that is, the love of the world and of her children. Hence, it is for you to provide for her in your kindness.”

In answer the Mother says to the bride of the Son: ”Stand firm, daughter. I shall ask my Son, and he will give you food each and every year and place you on the mountain where thousands upon thousands of angels are his servants. Indeed, if you counted all the persons born from Adam up to the last one who will be born at the end of the world, you shall find more than ten angels for each human being. The world, in fact, is no more than a cooking pot. The fire and ashes beneath the pot are the friends of the world, but God's friends are like the choice morsels of food inside the pot. When the table is ready, then the delicious food will be presented to the lord for him to enjoy. But the pot itself will be smashed, though the fire shall not be extinguished.”

The Virgin Mother's words to the daughter about the vicissitudes of God's friends in this world, who are at times spiritually distressed and at other times comforted, and about the meaning of spiritual distress and comfort, and about how God's friends must rejoice and be comforted in their time.

Chapter 12

The Mother speaks: ”In this world God's friends must sometimes find themselves spiritually distressed, at other times spiritually comforted. Spiritual consolation means the infusion of the Holy Spirit, contemplating God's great works, admiring his forbearance, and putting all this cheerfully into practice. Spiritual distress is when the mind is involuntarily disturbed by unclean and vexing thoughts, when it suffers anguish over dishonor shown to God and over the loss of souls, when one's heart is forced to occupy itself with worldly concerns for a good reason. God's friends can also at times be comforted with a temporal kind of comfort, such as edifying conversation, decent entertainment, or other activities in which there is nothing demeaning or indecent, as you will understand from the following comparison.

If a fist were always held tightly closed, then either the muscles would be strained or the hand would grow weak. It is similar in spiritual matters. If the soul always remained in contemplation, then she would either forget herself and perish through pride, or else her crown of glory would be lessened. The reason why God's friends are at times comforted by the infusion of the Holy Spirit and are at other times, with God's permission, distressed is that their distress tears up the roots of sin and firmly plants the fruit of righteousness.

But God, who sees hearts and understands all things, moderates the temptations of his friends in such a way that the temptations lead to their progress, for he does everything and allows everything to happen with due weight and measure. Since you have been called in God's Spirit, do not worry about God's forbearance, for it is written that no one comes to God unless the Father draws him. A shepherd uses a bunch of flowers to draw his sheep and entice them into the barn, and carefully locks the barn. The sheep, then, cannot get out but run around in circles because the barn is secured by means of walls, a high roof, and locked gates. In this way they get so used to eating hay that they become tame enough to eat hay out of the hand of the shepherd. This very thing has been done with you. That which before seemed unbearable and difficult to you has now become so easy that now nothing delights you so much as God.”

Christ's words to the bride as to which tears are acceptable to God and which are not, and about what kind of alms should be requested or given to the poor for the sake of departed souls, and about Christ's advice and exhortation to the bride.

Chapter 13

The Son speaks: "You wonder why I do not listen to that man whom you see shedding many tears and donating a great deal to the poor in my honor.

I answer you in the first place: Where water flows from two springs, it frequently happens when they meet that the cloudy and muddy water of one source pollutes and defiles the purer water of the other spring. And who can drink such muddied water?

It is similar with the tears of many people. Some people's tears arise at times due to the debasement of the inclinations of nature, at other times due to worldly distress and the fear of hell. Such people's tears are muddy and stinking, for they do not come from the love of God. Those tears are sweet to me that arise from considering God's kindnesses as well as one's own sins and from love for God. Tears such as these raise the soul up from earthly things to heaven and bring about her new birth for eternal life. There are two kinds of birth, physical and spiritual. Physical birth means a person is born from impurity to impurity. It bewails physical damage; it gladly puts up with worldly toils. The child of such a birth is not the child of such tears by which eternal life is gained. That other birth begets rather a child of tears and bewails the loss of souls and takes utmost care that its child should not offend God. Such a mother is closer to the child than the one who begets it physically, for blessed life is gained through a birth like this.

Second, in regard to his giving alms to the poor, I answer you: If you bought a cloak for your son with your servant's money, would not the cloak rightly belong to the one who owned the money? Of course it would. It is similar in spiritual matters. A man who oppresses his subjects or neighbors in order to help the souls of his loved ones with their money rather provokes me to wrath than placates me, because unjustly expropriated possessions benefit their previous legitimate owner and not those persons for whom they are given.

However, because this man has been kind to you, kindness will be done to him, both spiritually and physically - spiritually by the offering of prayers to God for his sake. You cannot believe how much the prayers of the humble please God. I will show you it through a comparison. If someone were to offer a great amount of silver to a king, any bystanders there would say: 'What a great present!' However if the same person were to pray one 'Our Father' for the king, they would laugh at him. It is the opposite with God. If anyone offers one 'Our Father' for another's soul, it is more acceptable to God than a great amount of gold, as could be seen in the case of good Gregory, who raised up even a pagan emperor to a higher station through his prayers.

Again, tell him this: 'Because you have shown me kindness, I pray to God, the rewarder of all, to repay you in his graciousness.' Tell him this as well: 'My dear friend, I

give you one counsel and I make one request of you. I counsel you to open the eyes of your heart through the consideration of the instability and vanity of the world. Think about how the love of God has grown cold in your heart and about how heavy the penalty will be and how horrible the future judgment. Attract God's love to your heart by making use of all your time, temporal goods and works, affections, and thoughts for the glory of God, and entrust your sons to God's plan and dispensation without letting your love of God grow any less for their sake. Second, I ask you to pray earnestly to God, who can do all things, that he may grant you patience and fill your heart with his blessed love.”

Christ's comforting words to the bride in her fear, telling her not to be afraid of what she has seen and heard, because it comes from the Holy Spirit, and about the devil as symbolized by a snake and a lion, the consolation of the Holy Spirit as symbolized by a tongue, and about how to resist the devil.

Chapter 14

The Son says: "Why are you afraid and anxious that the devil may insert things into the words of the Holy Spirit? Have you ever heard of anyone who kept his tongue safe and sound by placing it between the teeth of an angry lion? Has anyone ever sucked sweet honey from the tail of a snake? No, never. Now what does the lion or snake symbolize if not the devil - a lion in evil and a snake in cunning? What does the tongue symbolize if not the consolation of the Holy Spirit? What does it mean to place one's tongue between the teeth of a lion if not to utter the words of the Holy Spirit - who appeared in the shape of a tongue - in order to gain human favor and praise? Anyone who speaks God's praises for human gratification has surely been bitten and deceived by the devil, because those words, though they come from God, are not coming from a mouth that has the love of God, and so that person's tongue, that is, the consolation of the Holy Spirit, will be taken away from him or her. However, a person who desires nothing but God, and finds all worldly affairs bothersome, whose body does not seek to see or hear anything but what comes from God, whose soul rejoices in the infusion of the Holy Spirit, such a person cannot be deceived, for the evil spirit yields to the good spirit and does not dare to approach it.

What does sucking honey from a snake's tail mean if not waiting for the consolation of the Holy Spirit to come from the suggestions of the devil? That consolation will never come, because the devil would rather let himself be slain a thousand times over than offer any word of consolation to a soul the utterance of which might lead the soul to the meaning of life. Fear not, for God, who began a good work with you, will carry it through to a good end. But know that the devil is like an unleashed dog that comes running to you with his temptations and suggestions when he sees you lacking the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. However, if you should place a hard object in his way to hurt or paralyze his teeth, he will immediately leap away from you and will not harm you. The hard object placed in the devil's way signifies divine charity and obedience to God's commands. When the devil sees that these virtues are perfect in you, his teeth, that is, his attempts and his intention, will immediately be frustrated, because he sees that you would suffer anything rather than go against God's commands."

Christ's words to the bride about why the good suffer in this life while the bad prosper, and how God shows her through a parable that he sometimes promises temporal goods but that these should be taken to mean spiritual goods, and about why God has not predicted every single event to happen at particular times, although all times and seasons are known to him.

Chapter 15

The Son of God says: "You are wondering why you have heard that a certain friend of God, who should be honored, is suffering hardships, while, on the other hand, you have heard that a certain enemy of God, who you thought should be whipped, has been honored, as was told you in another divine vision. I answer: My words should be taken in both a spiritual and a bodily sense. What is the suffering of the world if not a kind of preparation and elevation to the crown of reward? And what does worldly prosperity mean for someone who abuses grace if not a kind of descent into perdition? To suffer in the world is truly an ascension to life. But, for the unrighteous, prospering in the world is truly a descent into hell. In order to build up your patience by means of God's word, I will

tell you a parable.

Imagine a mother with two sons, one of whom was born in a dark prison, knowing and hearing nothing, only shadows and his mother's milk. The other was born in a small cottage and had human food, a bed to rest on, and the attendance of a maidservant.

The mother said to the one who was born in prison: 'My son, if you leave the darkness, you will have more delicious food, a softer bed, and a safer dwelling.' When the boy heard that, he left. If, however, his mother had promised him loftier things, such as galloping horses or ivory homes or a great household, he would not have believed it, for he had never known anything but shadows and his mother's milk. Similarly, God, too, sometimes makes a promise of lesser things but means something greater by them in order that people may learn to ponder the things of heaven by means of earthly ones.

But the mother said to the other son: 'My son, what use is it to you to live in this disgusting cottage? Take my advice, and it will be to your advantage. I know two cities: The inhabitants in the first experience endless and indescribable joy and everlasting honor. In the second city, fighters are in training, and everyone who fights is made a king, yet every loser wins.' On hearing that, the boy went out to the stadium, then returned and said to his mother: 'I saw a remarkable game in the stadium: Some people were being knocked down and trampled upon, others were being stripped and bruised, yet all of them kept quiet, all of them were playing, and no one raised his head or hand against those who knocked them down.'

His mother answers: 'The city you saw is only the outskirts of the city of glory. In these outskirts, the Lord wishes to test and see who is fit to enter into the city of glory. He gives a higher crown of glory to all those he has seen to be more vigilant in the contest. This is why there are people residing in the outskirts who make a test of the ones who are to be crowned in glory. You saw the people lying prostrate being stripped and insulted but keeping quiet. This was because our clothes have been defiled by the darkness in our cottage.

A great contest and struggle is necessary in order to wash them thoroughly.' The boy answers: 'It is a tough thing to be trampled down and keep quiet. In my opinion it is

better to return to my cottage.' His mother says: 'If you remain in our cottage, vermin and snakes will come out of the shadows, and when you hear them your ears shall tremble, and their bite will freeze the very strength within you, and you will wish never to have been born rather than to live with them.' When the boy heard this, he felt desire for bodily goods, but his mother was thinking of it in a spiritual sense. Thus, he felt more encouraged each day and was spurred on to the crown of reward.

God acts in a similar way. Sometimes he promises and grants bodily or carnal goods, but really intends spiritual goods by them, so as both to spur the mind on in its fervor toward God by means of the gifts received and to keep it humble in its spiritual understanding so that it does not fall into presumption. That is how God treated Israel. First he promised and gave them temporal goods, and also performed miracles for them, so that they might learn about invisible and spiritual goods by means of such things. Then, when their understanding had attained a better knowledge of God, he used obscure and difficult words to speak to them through the prophets, adding at times words of comfort and joy, as, for example, when he promised them a return to the fatherland, perpetual peace, and a restoration of all that was in ruins. Though the people were carnal minded, and understood and desired all these promises in a carnal way, still God in his foreknowledge decided beforehand that some promises would be fulfilled in a physical sense, but others spiritually.

You might ask: Why did not God, to whom all hours and seasons are known, openly foretell that particular events would take place at specific times? And why did he say some things but with other things in mind? I answer you: Israel was carnal and only desired carnal things and could only apprehend the invisible by way of the visible. Therefore, God deigned to teach his people in many different ways, so that believers in God's promises would receive a loftier crown due to their faith, so that students of virtue would become more fervent, so that slackers would become more fervently enkindled toward God, so that wrongdoers would more freely cease their sinning, so that sufferers would bear their trials more patiently, so that those who toiled would persevere more cheerfully, so that the hopeful would receive a loftier crown due to the obscurity of the promise. If God had only promised spiritual goods to the carnal minded, they all would have grown lukewarm in their love for heaven. If he had only promised carnal goods, what difference would there then be between man and beast? Instead, in his kindness

and wisdom, in order that they might govern their bodies with justice, with the moderation of those who are about to die, God gave humankind bodily goods. In order that they might desire the things of heaven, he displayed to them heavenly favors and wonders.

In order that they might fear sin, he displayed his terrible judgments and the possessions brought about by the bad angels. In order that they might expect and desire the one who would explain the promises and grant wisdom, obscure and doubtful words were mixed together with words of encouragement.

So too, even today, God reveals spiritual decisions in bodily terms. When he speaks of bodily glory, he means the spiritual kind. This is in order that all teaching authority might be attributed to God alone. What is worldly glory if not wind and toil and the loss of divine consolation? What is suffering if not a preparation in virtue? To promise worldly glory to a righteous soul, what does that mean if not the removal of spiritual comfort? But to promise sufferings in the world, what does that mean if not the medicine and antidote for a great illness? Therefore, my daughter, God's words can be understood in many ways, though this does not imply any mutability in God but simply that his wisdom is to be admired and feared. Just as I expressed many things in bodily terms through the prophets, which were also fulfilled in a bodily fashion, while I expressed other things in bodily terms that came about or were intended in a spiritual sense, so too I do the same thing now. When these things happen, I shall indicate their cause to you.”

The Virgin tells the daughter how the devil often cunningly leads one and another of God's servants beneath the veil of devotion in order to cause them distress, and to which people indulgences are granted, and she uses a goose to symbolize how the church is constituted and a hen to symbolize God, and she explains which people deserve to be called God's little chickens.

Chapter 16

God's Mother says to the bride of Christ: ”Why did you give hospitality to that man

who has a boastful tongue, a strange way of life and worldly customs? She answers: "Because he was thought to be a good man, and I did not want to get into trouble for disdainning a man with a reputation for talking. However, if I had known beforehand that it was displeasing to God, I would no more have received him than I would have a snake." The Mother says to her: "Your goodwill set a guard and a restraint on his tongue and heart, so that he did not cause you any worries. The devil in his cunning brought you a wolf in sheep's clothing in order to create an occasion of causing you distress and spreading talk about you." She answers: "He seems devout and penitent to us. He visits the saints and says he wants to keep away from sin."

The Mother answers: "If you have a feathered goose, tell me, do you eat the meat or the feathers? Is it not so that the feathers are revolting to the stomach, but the meat provides true food and refreshment? This can be applied spiritually to the arrangement and constitution of the Holy Church. She is like a goose in that she has within her the body of Christ, as it were, the freshest of meat. The sacraments are like the inner parts of the goose. Its wings symbolize the virtues and acts of the martyrs and confessors. Its down represents the charity and patience of the saints, and its feathers indulgences that holy men have granted and gained. People who receive indulgences with the intention of gaining absolution for their previous sins while remaining in their previous vicious habits only get the feathers of the goose. Their souls are neither fed nor refreshed. When they eat the feathers, they just throw up.

However, people who receive indulgences and are minded to flee from sin, to restore goods unjustly taken, to make satisfaction for wounds unjustly inflicted, not to earn a single penny through base profit, not to live a single day except according to God's will, to submit their will to God in fortune and misfortune, and to flee worldly honors and friendships such as these will gain pardon of their sins and be like angels of God in the sight of God.

The people who enjoy the absolution of previous sins yet do not have the will of giving up the previous vanities and inordinate affections of their mind, but who want to hold on to their unjust acquisitions, who want to love the world in themselves and in their families, who blush for humility and do want not to flee from corrupt habits or to restrain their bodies from superfluity, for such as these the feathers, that is, the

indulgences, only result in a throwing up. This means that they obtain contrition and confession by which sin is thrown out and God's grace is gained. Then, if they wish to cooperate in order to obtain it for themselves, and have an upright intention, they shall fly as if on wings away from the hands of the devil and into the bosom of God."

She answers: "O, Mother of mercy, pray for this man, so that he may find favor in your Son's sight!" She says to her: "The Holy Spirit does visit him, but there is something rocklike in front of his heart that prevents God's grace from entering. God, you see, is like a hen warming her eggs out of which come living chickens. All the eggs under the hen receive her warmth, but not any other eggs lying about. The mother does not herself break the shell of the egg in which the chick is being formed, but the chick tries to break the shell with its own beak. When the mother sees that, she prepares a warmer place for her chick to hatch.

Likewise, God visits everyone with his grace. Some people say to themselves: 'We want to keep away from sin and strive for perfection as far as we are able.' The Holy Spirit visits such people more frequently, so that they are more perfectly able to do so. Those people who entrust all their will to God and do not want to do even the least little thing against God's love but imitate, instead, those others whom they see tending toward perfection, abiding by the counsel of humble persons, and struggling wisely against carnal tendencies, these God places underneath himself, as a hen does with her chicks, and he makes his yoke light for them and comforts them in difficulties. Those people who follow their own will, however, and think that the little good they do is worthy of reward in God's sight, and do not strive for greater perfection but stay on in whatever delights their mind, using the example of others to excuse their own weaknesses and the corruption of others as a way to lessen their own guilt, such people do not turn into God's little chicks, because they do not possess the will to break through the hardness and vanity of their hearts. Rather, if they could, they would prefer to live for as long as they were able to persevere in sin.

That good man, Zacchaeus, did not act so, nor did Mary Magdalene. Instead, insofar as they had offended God in all their limbs, they gave him all their limbs in reparation for their offenses. Insofar as they had risen mortally in worldly rank, they lowered themselves humbly through the contempt of the world. Indeed, it is difficult to love God

and the world at the same time, unless you are like the animal that has eyes both fore and aft, and no matter how careful it is, such an animal will suffer. People who are like Zacchaeus and Magdalene have chosen the safer part.”

EXPLANATION

This was a bailiff of Östergötland who came to the jubilee year more out of fear than of love. Concerning him, Christ says in Rome: ”Everyone who has escaped some danger should be careful not to fall back again into it. Overconfident sailors are at peril even in port. This man should thus beware of returning to his former office. Otherwise, if he is not careful, he will lose the object of his desires, the goods he has gathered will fall to strangers, his sons will not receive their inheritance, and he himself will die a painful death among foreigners.”

When he returned, however, he once again became a tax collector, and everything turned out as foretold.

St. Agnes's excellent instruction to the daughter about living in a good and praiseworthy fashion, and about avoiding a bad life displeasing to God. A carriage symbolizes here fortitude and patience; its four wheels symbolize these four virtues: the complete surrender of everything for God's sake, humility, loving God wisely, and restraining the flesh discerningly. Certain other things are also added about members of religious orders.

Chapter 17

Agnes speaks to the bride of Christ: ”Did you see Lady Pride in her carriage of pride today?” The bride answers her: ”I saw her, and I got upset, because flesh and blood, dust and dirt was looking to be praised instead of humbling herself as she ought rightly to do. Such a display means nothing other than a lavish wasting of God's gifts, mere vulgar adulation, a trial to the righteous, a misery to the poor, a provocation to God, a forgetting of one's nature, an aggravation of one's future judgment, and the loss of souls.”

Agnes answers: "My daughter, be happy that you have been saved from things like that. Let me tell you about a carriage in which you can rest securely. The carriage where you should sit is fortitude and patience in suffering. When people begin to keep the flesh in check and to entrust all their will to God, then either the mind is troubled by pride, puffing people up above and beyond themselves, as though they were righteous and had become like God, or else impatience and lack of discernment break them so that they either fall back into their old habits or fail in strength and so become unfit for the work of God. This is why a discerning patience is necessary so that a person does not relapse impatiently or persevere undiscerningly but, rather, adapts to his or her own capacity and circumstances.

The first wheel of this carriage is a wholehearted intention to surrender everything for the sake of God and to desire nothing but God. Many there are who give up temporal possessions in order to avoid the bother but keep enough for their use and desire. Their wheel is not easily steered or guided, for when they feel the pinch of poverty, they desire adequate comfort, and when problems weigh down on them, they demand prosperity. When humiliation tries them, they murmur against God's providence and seek to obtain honors.

When asked to do something that goes against their inclinations, they desire their freedom. Accordingly, a person's will is pleasing to God when it seeks nothing of its own both in good times and in bad.

The second wheel is humility. This makes people regard themselves as unworthy of any good thing, keeping their sins in mind at all times and looking on themselves as guilty in God's sight. The third wheel is a wise love for God. A wise love for God obviously belongs to people who examine themselves and detest their vices, who are saddened by the sins of their neighbors and relatives but rejoice in their spiritual progress toward God, who do not want their friends to live for enjoyment and comfort but to serve God, and who are wary of their friends' worldly advancement, in case it entails offenses against God. Such, then, is the wise love that detests vice, that does not fawn on people in order to gain favor or honor but loves those people more who are seen to be more fervent in their charity for God.

The fourth wheel is the discerning restraint of the flesh. A married person may

reason in this manner: 'Look, the flesh is pulling me about inordinately. If I live according to the flesh, I know for certain that I will anger the Creator of the flesh, who is able to wound and enfeeble, to kill and to give life. Therefore, for the love and fear of God, I will restrain my flesh with a good will. I will live in a decent and orderly way to the honor of God.' A person with such thoughts, who also seeks the help of God, has a wheel that is acceptable to God. If he or she belongs to a religious order and reasons thus: 'Look, the flesh is pulling me toward pleasure, and I even have the place, the time, the means, and the age to enjoy it, yet with God's help, and for the sake of my holy vows, I will not sin just to gain a momentary pleasure. I made a great vow to God: I entered poor and shall depart poorer and undergo judgment for each and every action. Therefore, I will abstain so as not to offend my God or scandalize my neighbor or do myself injury.' Abstinence like that deserves a great reward.

Another person may be living amid honors and pleasures and may reason in this way: 'Look, I have plenty of everything, but there are needy poor and we all have one God. What have I done to deserve what I have or what have they done not to deserve it? What, after all, is the flesh but food for worms? What are all these pleasures but a source of nausea and sickness, a waste of time and an inducement to sin? Therefore, I shall keep my flesh in check, so that worms do not run riot in it, and so that I do not receive a heavier sentence or waste my time of penance. Perhaps my poorly trained flesh will not be easily bent to the coarse fare of a pauper, but I shall withdraw it by degrees from certain delicacies that it can easily do without, so that it gets what it needs but nothing beyond that.' Someone with such thoughts, and who makes an effort to act on them according to his or her ability, can be called both confessor and martyr, for it is a kind of martyrdom to have access to pleasure and not to make use of it, to live in honor yet to despise honor, to have a great reputation yet to think little of oneself. Such a wheel is very pleasing to God.

Well, my daughter, I have described for you the image of a carriage. Its driver is your angel, so long as you do not shake off his bridle and yoke from your neck, that is, so long as you do not dismiss his saving inspirations by opening up your senses and your heart to vain or obscene things. Now I want to tell you about the kind of carriage in which that lady was seated. That carriage is obviously impatience - her impatience with God and with her fellow man and with herself. She is impatient with God when she criticizes

his secret decisions, for things do not go as well for her as she would like. She maligns her fellow man, for she cannot get at his possessions. She is moreover impatient with herself, for she impatiently reveals the hidden things of her heart.

The first wheel of this carriage is pride, in that she gives preference to herself and is judgmental of others; she despises the lowly and is ambitious for honor. The second wheel is disobedience to God's precepts. This leads her to make excuses in her heart for her own weaknesses, to make light of her guilt, to be presumptuous in her heart and to defend her own wickedness. The third wheel is greediness for worldly possessions. This leads her to spend her possessions wastefully, to neglect and forget her own situation and the coming world, to fret at heart, to be lukewarm in the love of God. The fourth wheel is her self-love. This bars out reverence and fear of God and distracts her attention from her own death and judgment.

The driver of this carriage is the devil. He fills her with audacity and glee in every undertaking he inspires in her. The two horses drawing the carriage are the hope of a long life and the intention to keep on sinning until the very end. The bridle is her guilty fear about going to confession. Through her hope of a long life and her intention to persevere in sin, this guilty fear pulls the spirit from the straight path and ladens it so heavily with sin that neither fear nor shame nor warning can make her get up. Just when she thinks she is on firm footing, she will sink down to the depths unless the grace of God comes to her aid."

ADDITION

Christ speaks of the same lady: "She is a viper with the tongue of a harlot, the bile of dragons in her heart, and bitter poison in her flesh. Her eggs will therefore be poisonous. Happy are they who have no experience of the burden of them!"

The daughter's words of praise to the glorious Virgin, and the gracious response of the Virgin to the daughter. In it the Virgin grants her daughter many graces as well as many other good things both from herself and from the apostles and saints.

Chapter 18

“O sweet Mary,” says the bride, “blessed are you with an eternal blessing, for you were a Virgin before childbirth, a Virgin after childbirth, a Virgin together with your spouse, an undoubted Virgin for a doubting spouse. So blessed are you, for you are Mother and Virgin, God's dearest one, purer than all the angels, the one most full of faith in the company of the apostles, alone in the bitterest sorrow of your heart, whose abstinence outshines that of all the confessors, whose chaste continence excels that of all the virgins. So may all things up above and down below bless you, for, through you, God the Creator became a man; through you the righteous find grace, sinners find pardon, the dead find life, the exiled return to their homeland.”

The Virgin answers: “It is written that when Peter bore witness to my Son and called him the Son of God, he received the answer: 'Blessed are you, Simon, for body and blood have not revealed this to you.' So I say now: This salutation was not revealed to you by your bodily soul but by him who was without beginning and is without end. Be therefore humble, and I will be merciful to you. John the Baptist, as he promised, will be gentle to you; Peter will be mild, and Paul strong as a giant. John the Baptist is going to say to you: 'Daughter, sit on my lap!' Peter will say: 'My daughter, open your mouth, and I shall feed you with sweet food!' Paul will dress you and arm you with the arms of love. And, who am the Mother, will present you to my Son.

But, my daughter, you can understand all this even in a spiritual sense.

John, whose name means the grace of God, denotes true obedience. He was and is sweet and gentle indeed - sweet to his parents for his wondrous grace, sweet to humankind for his extraordinary preaching, sweet to God for his holiness of life and obedience. He was obedient in his youth, obedient in fortune and misfortune; obedient, and constantly humble when he might have been honored; obedient, too, in his death. This is why obedience says: 'Sit on my lap!' That means: Rise to lowly things, and you will have lofty ones. Give up bitter things and you will get sweet ones. Give up your own will, if you want to be little. Despise earthly things, and you will become heavenly. Despise superfluity, and you will have spiritual abundance.

Peter denotes holy faith: the faith of the Holy Church. Just as Peter remained steadfast until the end, so too the faith of the Holy Church will remain steadfast without end. This is why Peter, that is, the holy faith, says: 'Open your mouth and you will have good food!' This means: Open the intellect of your soul, and in the Holy Church you will find the sweetest of foods, that is, the very body of the Lord in the sacrament of the altar, the new and the old law, the teachings of the doctors, the patience of the martyrs, the humility of the confessors, the pureness of the virgins, and indeed the foundation of all the virtues. Accordingly, seek the holy faith in the church of St. Peter, keep in mind the sought-after faith, and then put it into practice.

Paul denotes patience, for he was zealous toward those who fought against holy faith, joyful in hardships, long-suffering in hope, patient in infirmities, compassionate with those in pain, humble in virtues, hospitable with the poor, merciful toward sinners, the teacher and master of all, persevering in the love of God until the end. Thus, Paul, that is, patience, will arm you with the arms of the virtues, for true patience, founded upon and strengthened by the examples and patience of Christ and his saints, enkindles the love of God in the heart, makes the spirit burn for strong action, renders a man humble, mild, merciful, zealous for heaven, mindful of himself, and persevering in the tasks undertaken.

And so, the Mother of mercy, shall introduce to my Son everyone whom obedience nourishes in the lap of humility, everyone whom the faith feeds with the food of sweetness, everyone whom patience dresses in the arms of virtue, and my Son will crown that person with his sweet crown. In him is incomprehensible strength, incomparable wisdom, unspeakable goodness, wonderful love. Then no one will be able to snatch that person away from his hand. But, my daughter, though I am speaking to you, yet by you I mean all of those who follow the holy faith with deeds of love. Just as by the one man, Israel, all Israelites were meant, so by you are understood all the true faithful.”

The daughter's words to the Lady in praise of her virtue and beauty, and the Virgin's answer confirming her praise, and the Son's comparison of his Mother to a goldsmith.

Chapter 19

“Sweet Mary, fresh beauty, shining beauty! Come and listen to me, so that my ugliness may be purified and my love enkindled! Your beauty gives three gifts to the head. First, the cleansing of the memory so that God's words enter smoothly; second, the pleasant retention of the words heard; third, their zealous communication to one's neighbor. Your beauty also grants three things to the heart. First, it removes the heavy burden of sloth, when your love and humility are contemplated; second, it brings tears to the eyes, when your poverty and patient suffering are brought to mind; third, it gives the heart a sweet inner fire, when the memory of your devotion is sincerely recalled.

Truly, my Lady, you are the most precious beauty, the most desirable beauty, for you are the help given to the sick, the comforter in sorrow, everyone's mediator. Thus, all those who have heard that you would be born, and those who know you to have already been born, can surely exclaim: 'Come, beauty most splendid, and light up our darkness. Come, beauty most precious, and take away our reproach. Come, beauty most sweet, and lessen our bitterness. Come, beauty most powerful, and undo our captivity. Come, beauty most fair, and destroy our foulness!' Therefore, may such great beauty be blessed and revered, the beauty that all the patriarchs longed to see, of which all the prophets sang, in which all the elect rejoice!”

The Mother answers: ”May God, my beauty, be blessed! It is he who has given you such words to speak! And so I tell you that the most ancient beauty, the eternal and highest beauty, which made and created me, shall be your comfort. The beauty that is oldest and yet new, renewing all things, which was in me and was born of me, shall teach you wonders. The most desirable beauty, which gives joy and delight to all, shall inflame the spirit of your love.

So trust in God, for when the heavenly beauty appears, all earthly beauty will crumble and be regarded as dung.”

Then God's Son said to his Mother: ”O blessed Mother, you are like a goldsmith preparing a beautiful object. All those who see the object are filled with gladness and present precious stones or gold in order to perfect it. Thus, dear Mother, you offer help to

everyone struggling to rise to God, and leave no one without your consolation. You can therefore well be called the blood of the heart of God. Just as each member of the body receives life and strength from the blood, so too everyone comes to life again after sin and is made more fruitful before God through you.”

St. Agnes's lesson to the daughter about not relapsing and not advancing properly, and about the right way to begin or continue with abstinence, and about what kind of continence is pleasing to God.

Chapter 20

Agnes speaks: "Daughter, stand firm and do not relapse, for a serpent lies at your heels ready to bite. Yet, do not rush unduly ahead either, for the tip of a sharp lance is in front of you, and if you advance at the wrong speed, you will be wounded. What does a relapse mean if not letting trials lead to regrets about having taken on a more austere and wholesome way of life and to a desire of returning to old habits and delighting the mind with dirty thoughts? Such thoughts, even if they give some pleasure to the mind, only obscure every good thing and by degrees lead away from all goodness. Nor should you rush unduly ahead, that is, punish yourself beyond your strength or imitate the good works of others beyond your capacity. God has ordained from eternity that heaven should be opened to sinners through works of love and humility, yet by preserving moderation and discretion in every way. Now, then, the envious devil persuades the imperfect man to fast beyond his strength, to promise to do unaccustomed things that he cannot manage, to desire to imitate more perfect models without considering his own strengths and weaknesses. The devil does this either in order that, when the man's strength fails him, he should continue with his badly begun vows out of human embarrassment rather than for the sake of God, or in order that he should quickly give up the struggle because of his indiscretion and weakness.

For this reason, use as your measure your own self, that is, your strengths and weaknesses, since some people are stronger by nature, others weaker, some more fervent by the grace of God, others keener due to good habits. Hence, regulate your life in

agreement with the advice of God-fearing men, so that the serpent does not sting you due to your thoughtlessness, and so that the poisonous tip of the sword, that is, the poisonous suggestion of the devil, does not delude your mind so as to make you want to seem more than you are or long to become something beyond your strength and powers.

There are, indeed, some people who believe they can reach heaven by their own merits, and God spares them from the devil's temptations due to his hidden plan. There are others who think they can make reparation to God for their transgressions with their own works. The error of all of these is altogether damning, for even if a person were to kill his body a hundred times over, he could not make up a thousandth of the account he owes to God, because it is God who gives us the ability and the will, seasons and health, who fills us with a desire for the good, who gives us riches and honor, who kills and gives life, raises up and lays low. All things are in his hand. Hence to him alone should all honor be given, and no one deserves to be counted for anything before God.

Since you are wondering about the lady who came for indulgences but was corrupted, I answer you: There are some women who have the virtue of continence but do not love it. They experience neither a great longing for pleasure nor violent temptation. If honorable proposals of marriage were made to them, they would accept. However, since no great offers are made to them, they look down on lesser offers. In this way, continence sometimes gives rise to pride and presumption, which, by divine permission, leads to a fall, such as you have now heard. If a woman were so minded as not to want to be stained even once, not even if the whole world were offered her, it would be impossible for such a woman to be left to shame. If, however, in his secret justice, God permitted such a one to fall, it would rather lead to her reward than to sin, provided that she fell against her will.

Know, then, that God is like an eagle that from on high views everything down below. If an eagle should see anything rising up from the ground, it immediately swoops down and snatches it. If it catches sight of something poisonous coming against it, it would pierce it like an arrow. If something unclean is dropped on it from above, it gets rid of it with a great shake just like a goose does. God acts like that as well. If he sees human hearts rising against him due to the weakness of the flesh or the devil's temptations against the will of the spirit, he immediately swoops down through an

inspiration of contrition and penance and brings it to naught, making the person return to God and come to himself again. If the poison of carnal desire or greed enters the heart, God quickly pierces the mind with the arrow of his love, so that the person does not persevere in sin and get separated from God.

If some impurity of pride or the dirt of lust defiles the spirit, he shakes it quickly off, just like a goose, through constant faith and hope, so that the spirit does not become hardened in vice or the soul that is joined to God become stained unto damnation.

Therefore, my daughter, in all your feelings and actions, consider God's justice and mercy, and always keep the end in sight.”

The bride's words to God concerning his virtue and splendor, and the Virgin's consoling answer to the daughter, and about how God's good servants should not stop preaching and admonishing people, whether the people convert or not; the Virgin shows this by means of a comparison.

Chapter 21

“Blessed are you, my God, who are three and one: three persons in one nature. You are goodness and wisdom itself; you are beauty and power itself; you are justice and truth itself. All things live and subsist through you. You are like a flower that grows alone in a field. All those who draw near to it receive sweetness for their palate, an uplift for their spirits, a delight for their eyes and strength in every other limb. Likewise, all who come near to you become more beautiful by leaving sin behind, more wise by following your will rather than the flesh, more righteous by seeking the advantage of the soul and the glory of God. Therefore, most kind God, grant me to love that which pleases you, to resist temptations bravely, to scorn all worldly things and to keep you constantly in my memory.”

The Mother answers: ”This salutation came to you through the merits of good Jerome, who left false wisdom and found true wisdom, who scorned earthly honor and was rewarded with God himself. Happy is such a Jerome, happy those who imitate his life and doctrine. He was a lover of widows, a mirror for those advancing toward perfection, a

teacher of all truth and purity. But tell me, my daughter, what is troubling you in your heart?" She said:

"A thought occurred to me that said, 'If you are good, your goodness is enough for you. Why judge and admonish and teach your betters, something that belongs neither to your state nor position?' This thought so hardens the spirit that it even neglects its own progress and grows completely cold to God's love."

The Mother answers: "This thought has also held back many advanced souls from God. The devil hinders good people from speaking to the wicked so that they may not be brought to feel compunction. He also hinders them from speaking to the good so that they will not be raised to a higher rank, for, when good people hear good doctrine, they are raised to a greater reward and a higher rank. For example, the eunuch who was reading Isaiah would have received one of the lesser punishments in hell, but Philip met him and taught him a shortcut to heaven and so raised him up to a level of happiness. Likewise, Peter was sent to Cornelius. If Cornelius had died beforehand, he would indeed have come to a place of rest because of his faith, but then came Peter and led him to the gateway to life. Similarly, Paul came to Denis and led him to the reward of blessedness. For this reason, the friends of God should not grow tired in God's service but should labor on in order that the wicked may be made better and the good may attain a greater perfection.

Anyone with the will to whisper in the ears of every passerby that Jesus Christ truly is the Son of God, and who struggles as far as he or she can for the conversion of others, even though no one or only a few convert, will still obtain the same reward as if all of them had converted. I will show you this by means of a comparison. If, on the order of their lord, two mercenaries dig through the hard rock of a mountain, and one of them were to find choice gold there, but the other none, both of them would be deserving of the same wages because of their work and their intention. In the same way, Paul, who converted many people, and the other apostles, who converted fewer, were nevertheless all united in their intention. God's dispensation, however, remains hidden. One should therefore never give up, not even if only a few or none at all are open to God's words. As the thorn protects the rose and the donkey carries his master, so too the devil, like a thorn of sin, is as useful to the elect through the tribulations he causes as thorns are to roses. In this way, they are not stupidly overcome by the presumption of their hearts.

Thus, just like a donkey, he conveys them to God's consolation and a greater reward.”

About how human malice in modern times surpasses the cunning of the devil, and about how people are now quicker to sin than the devil is to tempt, and about the sentence pronounced against such people, and how God's friends should labor with courage and haste in their preaching; also, concerning the infusion of knowledge in God's friends.

Chapter 22

The Son speaks: "If I could get upset, I would rightly be able to say now: I regret having made humankind. They have become like animals that of their own free will run into the nets. However much you cry out to them, they still follow their own selfish appetites. And not all the blame can be put on the devil's violent attempts on humankind - no, rather, the people themselves outstrip his malice. Like hunting dogs that are first led on leashes, but then, once they are accustomed to catching and devouring animals, speedily reach the prey ahead of their leader, so also humankind, now accustomed to sinning and fascinated by it, is quicker to sin than the devil is to tempt. That is not strange. It has been a long time since the Apostolic See, the head of the world, was pleasing to God by its sanctity of life and example, as it was in earlier times, and all the other members have therefore been made weak and listless. They do not consider the reason why God in his riches became poor and needy - in order to teach us to scorn perishable things and to love heavenly ones. Man is poor by nature but has become rich by means of false riches. This is what everyone tries to imitate, and few are found who do not imitate it.

Hence, the plowman shall come from the Almighty. Whetted by the wisest One, he does not seek property or beautiful bodies nor has any respect for the power of the mighty nor fears the threats of princes nor is swayed by human favor. He shall sow human flesh and raze to the ground the homes of spirits; he shall deliver bodies to maggots and souls to the ones whom they served. Therefore, may my friends, to whom I am sending you, labor with courage and with haste, for what I am telling you will not take

place in the last days, as I said before, but in these very days. Many of those yet living will see with their own eyes the fulfillment of the scripture that says: 'May their wives be widows and their sons fatherless,' and they shall lose all that they desire.

However, I, merciful God, shall receive all those that come to me in humility. I shall give myself to those who fulfill the works of righteousness, for it is right to clean out the house in which the king shall enter, to wash the glass so that the drink may be clear, to thresh the grain briskly from its husks, and to press down hard on whatever is being molded into a form so that it attains the shape of the form. As summer comes after winter, so too I shall grant consolation after their hardships to those who long to be as little children and who place more value on the things of heaven than on those of earth. However, just as a man is not born and dies at one and the same time, so all this will be fulfilled in its own time.

Know, too, that I intend to treat some people according to the common proverb: 'The whip will spur him on' - the pain will compel him to speed up. I will treat others as it is written: 'Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.' To a third set of people I shall speak soothingly and inspiringly: 'Come, ignorant and simple persons, and I shall give you a mouth and a wisdom such as the tongue-waggers will not be able to oppose.' This is what I have already done in these days: I have filled the simple with my wisdom, and they are proof against the learned. I cast out the boastful and mighty, and they quickly subsided. That is no wonder: For I commanded the wise to cut off the serpents' tongues, as you heard, and they refused. Not even their mother, who was the scourge of the commons, was willing to quench their throats in order to quench the fire of desire kindled in her children's hearts, as I bade. This is why I have cut them down in their season of happiness and have cut off their own tongues."

The words of John the Evangelist to the glorious Virgin about a mere sinful hypocrite, and the Virgin's answer regarding his characteristics, and about the devil's deceptions toward him, and about how the good spirit is recognized by seven signs and the bad spirit is discerned by as many signs.

Chapter 23

John the Evangelist said to God's Mother: "Hear me, Virgin and Mother of one Son, not several sons, Mother of the only begotten Son of God, the fashioner and redeemer of all things. Listen, I say, as you surely do listen, to how this man has been deceived by the devil, how he is struggling to obtain something impossible, how and in what matters he has been instructed by the spirit of lies, how far he has removed himself from God in his sheep's clothing but with his lion's heart. I taught that there are three who bear witness in heaven and on earth: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The evil spirit, however, bears witness to this man that he has become completely holy. Yet the Father does not strengthen him with his power nor does the Son visit him with his wisdom nor does the Holy Spirit inflame him with his love. That is no wonder, for he aspires to power against the power of the Father; he wants to be wise against the wisdom of the Son; he is inflamed but not as the Holy Spirit sets aflame. So ask your Son either to take him away soon, so that no more souls may be lost, or to humble him quickly for his errors."

The Mother answered: "Hear me, then, virgin, though you are a male and not a female person. You are the one whom it pleased God to call away from the world through the easiest of deaths after my own. Indeed, it was as though I had fallen asleep when my soul and body were separated, but then I awoke in everlasting joy. No wonder, indeed, for I had suffered more bitterly than all the others at my Son's death, and it pleased God thus to separate me from the world through the easiest of deaths. But you were closest to me among the apostles, and the object of greater signs of affection than all the others, and my Son's passion was bitterer for you than for the rest, because you beheld it at a closer distance than others, and you also lived longer than the others, as if you became a martyr through the deaths of them all. It therefore pleased God to call you from the world through the easiest of deaths after my own, for the Virgin had been entrusted to a virgin. Therefore, what you asked for shall be done without delay.

My daughter, let me show you what sort of person this man is of whom we are speaking. He is like a servant of that coin-maker, the devil. The devil melts down and then stamps his coin - that is, his servant - with his suggestions and temptations, until he has fashioned him after his liking. Once he has corrupted and twisted a person's will

toward the pleasures of the flesh and the love of the world, he then impresses his image and signature on the person, and it becomes apparent enough from external signs who it is whom that person wholeheartedly loves. When a man carries out in act the desire of his mind and wants to get more involved in worldly affairs than his state in life requires, and would do and desire even more things, if he were able, then he is shown to be the devil's perfect coin.

You should realize, however, that God's coin differs from the devil's coin. God's coin is of gold, shining, pliable, and precious. Every soul with the stamp of God on it shines with divine love, is pliable in her patience, and precious in her continual good works. Accordingly, every good soul is melted down by God's power and tested with many temptations. Through them the soul, contemplating her defects and her origins as well as God's kindness and patience toward her, is rendered all the more precious to God, the more humble, patient, and conscientious she is found to be.

The devil's coin, however, is of copper and lead. It is copper, because it bears a likeness to gold: It is hard and pliable, yet not the way gold is.

Likewise, the unrighteous soul seems to herself to be righteous, judges everyone, is more interested in herself than in others, is unpliant with respect to humble actions, soft in acting in her own interest, intractable in her own plans, admirable to the world, despicable to God. The devil's coin is also leaden in that it is ugly, soft and pliable, and heavy. Likewise, the unrighteous soul is ugly in her lustful desires, burdensome in her longing for the world, as pliable as a reed that bends in the direction of whatever the devil inspires in her mind, sometimes, indeed, being even more ready to do it than the devil is to tempt her to it. This is the disposition of the coin-maker's servant. He gets bored in keeping the observances of his rule, as he vowed, and thinks up ways of gaining people's appreciation through a pretended holiness, all the while feeding his body sumptuously. The devil, then, soon filled his head with lies at night. They deluded him into believing impossible things that will not come to be. Instead, his life will be cut short, and he will not obtain the honor for which he so longs.

Whenever one comes across an unknown coin, one sends it to a wise expert who has sufficient knowledge of its weight and shape. But where will we find such an expert? Even if we did find him, he may care little or nothing about whether the coin is counterfeit or

genuine. There is only one solution in such a case, as I will explain by way of a comparison. If you handed a florin to a dog, it would not bother to take it. But if the florin were coated with fat, there is no doubt that the dog would take it then. The present case is like that. If you went to a theological expert and said: 'That man is a heretic,' he would not be bothered, for his love of God is altogether grown cold. However, if you said: 'He has plenty of florins,' then everyone would rush to him. Therefore, it will soon be as Paul says: 'I will destroy and humble the wisdom of the wise, and I will exalt the humble.'

My daughter, you can recognize both the Holy Spirit and the unclean spirit through seven signs. First, the Spirit of God makes a man deem the world worthless and consider in his heart all worldly honor as mere air. Second, it endears God to the soul, and all delight in the flesh grows cold. Third, it inspires him to patience and to glorying only in God. Fourth, it stimulates the mind to be loving and compassionate with one's neighbor and even with one's enemies. Fifth, it inspires him to all kinds of abstinence, even from licit things. Sixth, it makes him trust in God in the midst of hardships and even to glory in hardships. Seventh, it gives him the desire of wanting to depart and to be with Christ, rather than to prosper in the world and become soiled.

The evil spirit has seven effects to the contrary. First, it makes the world seem sweet, and heaven distasteful. Second, it makes a man seek honors and forget about the meaning of his life. Third, it arouses hatred and impatience in the heart. Fourth, it makes him bold toward God and obstinate in his own plans. Fifth, it leads him to make light of his sins and to make excuses for them. Sixth, it inspires in him frivolity of mind and every carnal impurity.

Seventh, it inspires in him the hope of a long life and a feeling a shame about going to confession. Guard your thoughts carefully, then, so that you do not get deceived by this spirit.”

EXPLANATION

This was a priest of the Cistercian order who, after eighteen years of apostasy, repented and returned to the monastery. He said that it was impossible for anyone to be damned and denied that God spoke with anyone in this world or that anyone could see the face of God prior to God's judgment. When Lady Bridget heard this, the Holy Spirit

said to her: "Go and tell that brother this: 'Brother, you do not see as I do how the devil still keeps your mind and tongue tied even in your old age. God is eternal, and his reward is eternal. Therefore, return quickly and wholeheartedly to God and to the true faith, for you will assuredly not get up out of this bed but die. However, if you believe, you will be a vessel for God's honor.' "

He was reduced to tears and thanked Lady Bridget, and he reformed his life so perfectly that, when his brothers were called together at the hour of his death, he told them: "O my brothers, I am assured that God all merciful has accepted my contrition and will grant me pardon. Pray for me, because I believe everything that the Holy Church believes." Then, after having received God's sacraments, he passed away.

The Virgin's words to the daughter about how God's servants should behave toward impatient people, and about how pride is likened to a vat.

Chapter 24

The Mother speaks: "When a vat of beer is heated up and starts to swell and rise, it steams and foams up, sometimes more, sometimes less, and then suddenly settles down again. People standing around the vat understand that these exhalations quickly sink down and that they arise due to the strength of the beer and are a way of releasing the heat. So they wait patiently for it to end and for the beer or the wine to be ready. Two things happen when people standing around the vat put their noses too close to the bubbles: They suffer either a violent sneezing or a bad headache.

It is the same in the spiritual life. It sometimes happens that some people's hearts swell and rise due to the pride and impatience of their minds.

When virtuous men see such a swelling up, they understand that it proceeds either from spiritual instability or carnal motives. Therefore, they put up patiently with that person's insulting words and look toward the end, knowing that the calm follows the storm, and that patience is stronger than a besieger of cities, since it conquers the man within, which is the most difficult thing to do. There are, however, those who are overly

impatient, and they repay insult for insult. Paying no attention to the glorious reward of patience, nor to the contemptibility of worldly favor, these people incur an illness of mind due to their impatient temptations - they bring their noses too close to the bubbling vat, that is, they take the insults, which are nothing but air, too much to heart.

So, whenever any of you see people being impatient, guard your tongues with God's help, and do not leave off doing the good work you have begun because of impatient words. Pretend instead, and as far as justice allows, that you have not heard what you have heard, until those people who are looking for an argument say explicitly what they mean in their hearts.”

The Mother's admonishment to the daughter about how a person should not pay attention to carnal desires but should nourish the body on a moderate diet of necessities, and about how a person should stand by his or her body but not in the body.

Chapter 25

The Mother speaks: ”You should be like a bride standing before the bed-curtain, ready to do as the bridegroom wishes as soon as he calls. This bed-curtain is the body that veils the soul and has to be constantly washed, tried, and tested. The body is like a donkey that needs a diet moderate enough so as not to become gluttonous, sensible work so as not to become proud, and constant beating so as not to grow lazy.

So, stand by the bed-curtain, that is, stand by the body but not in the body in the sense of attending to the desires of the flesh but nourishing the body on a moderate diet of necessities. That person stands by the body and not in the body who keeps his or her body from unnecessary desire for food. Stand also behind the bed-curtain in the sense of scorning the lust of the flesh, doing honor to God, and spending your energies entirely for him.

In this way stood those who spread their bodies out like clothes for God, who were at all times ready to do as he wished, whenever it pleased him to call them. They did not

have a long way to go to him whom they kept ever present. Heavy burdens did not weigh upon their necks, for they scorned every burden and were in the world in body alone. This is why they flew free and unimpeded to heaven. Nothing impeded them but a dry and well-disciplined garment, and when they had taken it off, they obtained their heart's desire.

This man had a dangerous fall but wisely raised himself up. He defended himself like a man, fought steadfastly, and persevered with persistence. This is why he shall now receive an eternal crown and find himself already in the presence of God.”

The Virgin's admonition to the daughter about which virtuous acts merit eternal life and which do not, and about the great merit there is in obedience.

Chapter 26

“A tree has many blossoms, but not all of them come to fruition. Likewise there are many virtuous acts, yet they do not all merit a reward in heaven, if they are not done with wise discretion. For example, fasting, prayer, visits to shrines of the saints are virtuous acts, but if they are not done with the spirit of a person who hopes to enter heaven with humility, considering himself a useless servant in every way and showing wise discretion in everything, then they are of little value for eternity.

Consider the case of two men, one of whom is under obedience, while the other is free and unbound. If the one who is free fasts, he will get an ordinary reward. However, if the one who is under obedience eats meat on a day of fasting in accordance with the ordinance of his rule and for the sake of obedience, though he would rather fast if it had not been against obedience, then he will get a double reward: first, because of his obedience; second, because he put off his own desire and did not carry out his own wishes.

You should therefore be like a bride who prepares the bridal chamber before the bridegroom comes. Be also like a mother who prepares the baby's clothes before it is born. Again, be like a tree that bears flowers before the coming of the fruits. Finally, be

like a clean glass ready to receive the drink before it is poured.”

The Virgin's complaint to the daughter about a man of counterfeit devotion, comparing him to a poorly armed squire in a physical battle.

Chapter 27

The Mother speaks: "That man there says he loves me, but he turns his back to me when he is serving me. When I speak to him, he says: 'What's that you say?' and he averts his eyes from me and looks at other things more to his delight. He is strangely armed. He is like a soldier in a physical battle who has the visor of his helmet at the back of his head and carries his shield on his shoulders when he should have it on his arm. His scabbard is empty, for he had cast off his sword. His cloak, which should protect his chest and body, is lying under him on the saddle, and his saddle is not strapped to the horse.

This is the way this man is armed spiritually in God's sight. Accordingly, he does not know how to distinguish between friend and foe nor how to inflict injury on the enemy. The spirit that fights in him is like one who reasons as follows: 'I want to be among the last line of soldiers in the fight, so that I can keep the thicket of the woods in sight, in case the first soldiers lose the battle. But if they win, I will run up front quickly so that I will be counted among the first soldiers.'

Thus, the man who gave up the fight acted according to the wisdom of the flesh and not for the love of God.”

The Virgin's words about three kinds of hardship, symbolized by three kinds of bread.

Chapter 28

The Mother speaks: "When you make dough, you have to knead and work it a lot. Fine wheaten bread is set before lords, but coarser bread is set before commoners, and an

even worse kind of bread is given to dogs.

The kneading stands for hardship. A spiritual person suffers great hardship when God does not receive honor from his creatures and when there is little charity in them. Those who suffer in this way are the kind of fine wheat in which God and all the heavenly host rejoice. All those troubled by worldly adversity are like the coarser kind of bread. For many people, however, this coarser kind is good enough for them to reach heaven. Those who suffer because they are not able to do all the evil they wish are like the bread of the dogs in hell.”

The Mother's words to the daughter about how there are devils to make people fall, others to slow down their progress, and still others to tempt them in fasting, and about the way to oppose these devils.

Chapter 29

The Mother speaks: ”All these beings that you see surrounding you are your spiritual enemies, that is, spirits of the devil. The ones who can be seen with poles that have nooses are the ones who want you all to fall into mortal sins. Those whom you see with grappling hooks in their hands are the ones who desire to slow you down in God's service and make you reluctant to do good. Those holding the instruments with spikes like pitchforks to get a hold of and stimulate human desire are the ones who tempt you to take on good deeds that exceed your capacity - whether they are fasts, vigils, prayers, and toils or just spending your money in an unreasonable manner. Since these spirits are so eager to harm people, you must have the intention of not wanting to offend God. Furthermore, you must ask God to give you aid against their cruelty. In this way, then, their threats will not harm you.”

The Mother's words to the daughter about how the precious and beautiful things of the world do not harm God's servants, even though they make use of them, so long as they use them in God's honor, and she points to the example of Paul.

Chapter 30

“It is written that Paul, that good apostle, said that he was a wise man in the presence of the prince who had arrested Peter, and he called Peter a truly poor man. Paul did not sin in this, because his words were for the honor of God.

This is also the case with those who desire and long to speak God's words. Unless they are dressed in suitable attire, they cannot come before the lords. Thus, they do not sin by dressing suitably, so long as they do not in their heart and mind regard the gold and clothes and precious gems as being more precious than their old accustomed clothing, since all the things that seem precious are but earth.”

The Mother's words to the daughter showing her, by means of a comparison, that God's preachers and friends will not receive a lesser reward in God's sight if people are not converted by the preaching they have done with an upright intention than they would if the people do convert.

Chapter 31

God's Mother speaks: “Someone hires a worker for a job and tells him: 'Carry sand from the shore and examine each load to see if you can find a grain of gold there.' His wages will not be less if he finds nothing than if he uncovers a great amount.

This is also the case of a person who for the love of God labors in word and deed for the advancement of souls. His wages will not be less if he converts none of them than if he converts many. It is just as in the teacher's example. He said, 'A warrior who goes off to war on the orders of his lord, who is willing to struggle mightily but returns wounded and without having captured the enemy, will for the sake of his good intention receive no less a reward, though the battle was lost, than if he had obtained victory.'

It is the same with the friends of God. For each word and deed they do for God's sake and for the benefit of souls, and for each hour of hardship they suffer for God's sake, they will be rewarded, whether many convert or none at all.”

The Mother's words to the daughter about her infinite mercy toward sinners and toward those who praise and honor her.

Chapter 32

The Mother speaks: "You have an expression that says, 'That sort of thing could make me leave my homeland.' I tell you so now: Nobody in the world is so great a sinner - provided he says in his heart that my Son is the Creator and Redeemer of the universe and dear to him in his inmost heart - that I am not prepared to come to him immediately, like a loving mother to her son, and hug him and say: 'What would you like, my son?' Even if he had deserved the lowest punishment in hell, nevertheless, if only he has the intention of not caring for worldly honors or greed or carnal lust, such as the church condemns, and desires nothing but his own sustenance, then he and I will right away get along quite well together.

Tell the man who composes songs of praise for me - not for the sake of his own praise or reward but in praise of him who is worthy of all praise because of all his works - that just as worldly princes give a worldly reward to the people who praise them, so I will give him a spiritual remuneration. Just as there are many notes on a single syllable, so it pleases God to give him a crown in heaven for each syllable in his song. It will be said of him: 'Here comes the praiser, who did not compose his song for any temporal good but for God's sake alone.' "

EXPLANATION

This man had temptations concerning the Holy Trinity. In an ecstasy he saw what looked like the faces of three women. The first said: "I have attended many weddings, but I have never seen one to be three." The second answered: "If there are three and one, it is necessary that one of them must be prior and another posterior, or else two in one." And the third added: "They cannot have created themselves, so who made them?" Then the Holy Spirit said openly: "We will come to him and make our abode in him." And when he

awoke, he was free of the temptation.

After this, Christ said to Lady Bridget: "I am one and three. I want to show you what the Father's power is, what the Son's wisdom is, what the Holy Spirit's might is, in order to make known that I, God, am three and one: Father and Son and Holy Spirit." This revelation is complete once it is preached from the pulpit.

Christ said again: "Tell him that he gains greater merit in my sight through his illness than through his health. Lazarus grew brighter due to his pain, and Job more beloved due to his suffering. However, my chosen ones are not displeasing to me when they have good health, since their heart is always with me and their body remains in wise abstinence and pious works."

The bride's notable words about the city of Rome. They take the form of an inquiry, pointing to the Romans' earlier consolation, devotion, and good order, among both clerics and lay people, and asking why all this has now sadly been turned into desolation and disorder and abomination, as is clear from all the aforesaid, and about how unhappy Rome is both materially and spiritually.

Chapter 33

Reverend Sir, in addition to the other points of discussion, the pope should be told about the pitiable state of this city. Once it was a happy city, both materially and spiritually, but now it is unhappy, both materially and spiritually. It is materially unhappy, because its secular leaders, who should be its defenders, have turned into its cruelest plunderers. That is why its buildings lie in ruins. That is why many of its churches have been completely deserted, in which are preserved the relics of the saints whose blessed bones shine with glorious miracles and whose souls have been crowned in God's kingdom on high. With their ceilings fallen in and their doors removed, the temples of these saints have been converted into latrines for men, dogs, and beasts. The city is spiritually unhappy, because many of the decrees issued in the church by holy popes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God and the salvation of

souls have now been abolished. In their place, alas, many new abuses have been adopted under the inspiration of the evil spirit for the dishonor of God and the perdition of souls.

The Holy Church had decreed that the clerics who were to go on to holy orders should follow a blessed way of life, serving God with solid devotion, and presenting to others a way of life worthy of the heavenly homeland through their good works. Ecclesial proceeds used to be given to such as these. Against this custom of the church, however, a grave abuse has arisen. This is that the goods of the church are given to laymen who, because of their canonical title, do not get married but, instead, shamelessly keep concubines in their homes by day and in their beds at night, asserting boldly: "We are not allowed to marry, because we are canons."

Priests, deacons, and subdeacons, once upon a time, greatly abhorred the infamy of an impure life. Now, however, some of them are plainly delighted to see their whores walking about with swollen bellies in the midst of other women. They do not even blush when they are told by their friends: "A daughter or son will soon be borne for you, sir." Such men are more justly called the devil's pimps than ordained priests of the supreme God.

The holy fathers such as Benedict and others established monastic rules with the permission of the supreme pontiff. They built monasteries where the abbots used to live together with the friars, devoutly celebrating the night-hours and day-hours of the office and carefully forming the monks in a life of virtue. It was a pleasure, indeed, to visit monasteries then, when the chant of the monks used to give honor and glory to God by day and night, when people of evil living were set right by the very beauty of the monks' lives, when good people were strengthened by the godly teaching of prelates, and when the souls in purgatory obtained a blessed rest through their devout prayers. That monk was then held in highest honor who observed the rule most carefully, and he had the respect of God and men. A monk, however, who did not bother to keep the rule knew without a doubt that he would incur scandal and damnation. Moreover, everyone used to be able to see and recognize a monk by his habit.

However, contrary to that excellent arrangement, a detestable abuse has now sprung up in many places. Abbots dwell more frequently in their own castles or wherever

they like, whether in the city or outside it. This is why it is now painful to visit monasteries. Very few monks show up in the choir at the time for the divine office, and sometimes none at all. There are few readings, and sometimes no chants, and many days masses are not even said. Good people are disturbed by the bad reputation of the monks, and bad people are made much worse by contact with them. Furthermore, it is to be feared that few souls receive any alleviation of their punishments from the prayers of such as these.

Many monks live in town. Some of these have their own homes, and when their friends come to visit, they pick up their own children with a joyful hug, saying: "Here's my son!" A monk can scarcely be recognized nowadays in habit. The cloak that used to reach down to the feet now scarcely covers the knees. The long sleeves, which used to be decently wide, are now tight fitting and crimped. A sword hangs at their side instead of a stylus and writing tablets.

Hardly a single garment can be found on them to denote a monk, except for a scapular, which is often hidden from view as though it were some kind of scandal to be wearing a monkish garment. It does not even embarrass some of them to have a coat of mail and other weapons beneath their cloaks so that they can do what they like after their drinking-bouts.

There have been saints who gave up great wealth and started monastic orders based on poverty, who practiced contempt toward any kind of cupidity and, consequently, did not wish to have anything of their own. They abhorred all kinds of conceit and worldly pomp. They dressed in the poorest of clothes, utterly detesting the concupiscence of the flesh, and thus maintaining their purity of life. They and their followers are called mendicant friars, and the Roman pontiffs confirmed their rules with joy, seeing that they wanted to follow such a way of life for the glory of God and the benefit of souls. Yet it is a sorrow to behold even their rules now converted into detestable occasions of abuse and scarcely observed in the way that Augustine, Dominic, and Francis prescribed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, rules faithfully observed by many a wealthy nobleman for such a long time!

To be sure, as rumor now has it, there are many men called wealthy who, as far as valuables and money are concerned, are poorer than those who have taken a vow of

poverty. Thus, most of them have their own possessions, which their rule forbids, and find greater joy in their accursed property than in holy and glorious poverty. They pride themselves, moreover, on having as expensive and precious material in their habits as found in the vestments of wealthy bishops.

Furthermore, blessed Gregory and other saints had convents built in which women could live in such seclusion that they were hardly to be seen even in daytime. Now, however, there is so much abuse in the convents that their doors are kept open for clerics and laymen alike, whomever it pleases the sisters to let in, even at night. Accordingly, such places are more like brothels than holy cloisters.

It also used to be the church's rule that no one was to receive money for hearing confessions, although, as was only just, penitentiaries were allowed to accept money from persons in need of testimonial letters. A contrary abuse has now arisen according to which rich persons offer however much they like, once they have made their confession, while poor people, before their confession is heard, are forced by the penitentiary to come to an agreement. Indeed, when penitentiaries give oral absolution, they are not ashamed to take money in their hands and put it in their pockets.

It was likewise established in the church? That at least once a year every person should confess his or her sins and receive the body of Christ. This applied to lay people, because clerics and religious did this more often during the year. Second, it was established that people unable to practice continence should live in matrimony. A third rule was that, with the exception of those who were seriously ill or in great difficulties, all Christians were to fast during Lent and on ember days and the vigils of other feast days, which are still well enough known to almost everybody. The fourth rule was that everyone was to abstain from any kind of worldly labor on feast days. The fifth was that no Christian should make financial or any other kind of profit through usury.

Contrary to these five excellent statutes, there have arisen five immoral and seriously harmful abuses. The first is that for every one person who goes to confession and receives the body of Christ, not counting priests, religious, and certain women, there are one hundred who come of age and die here in Rome without ever having gone to confession or received the body of Christ any more often than genuine idolaters. The

second abuse is that many men take legally wedded wives, but, if they have a disagreement with them, they abandon them for as long as they like, without the requisite authorization from the church, and take mistresses in their wives' place, loving them and holding them in honor. Some of them do not even shrink from keeping a mistress in the same house as their wife, but rather rejoice to hear them both giving birth at the same time.

The third abuse is that many people in good health eat meat during Lent and very few are content with one meal a day. Some, too, are found who do abstain from meat and eat Lenten fare during the day but indulge themselves with meat at night in secret taverns.

Indeed, sometimes clerics do this together with laymen. They are just like the Saracens who fast by day and indulge themselves with meat at night. The fourth abuse is that, while some laborers do abstain from work on feast days, there are wealthy men who do not leave off sending their hired hands to work in the vineyards, plow the fields, cut down trees in the woods, and carry the wood home on feast days. In this way, poor people enjoy no more quiet rest on feast days than on workdays. The fifth abuse is that Christians practice usury just like the Jews, and, in fact, Christian usurers are greedier than Jewish ones.

Further, it was the custom of the church to bring such people as described above into line by means of anathema, but, contrary to this, the following abuse has now arisen. There are, namely, a great number of people who are no more afraid of being condemned than they are of being commended. Even if they know that they have been publicly excommunicated, they do not even bother to avoid entering the church or other dealings and conversations with people. In fact, few priests forbid excommunicates from going into a church. Few as well shun dealings and conversations with excommunicates, if they are bound to them by any kind of friendship. Nor is sacred burial denied to excommunicated people, if they are rich.

Accordingly, Reverend Sir, do not be surprised if I have described the city of Rome as unhappy due to such abuses and many others opposed to ecclesiastical statutes. Hence, it is to be feared that the Catholic faith will soon perish, unless some such man arrives who, with a real and not a counterfeit faith, loves God above all things and his

neighbor as himself and abolishes all these abuses. Have compassion, then, on the church and on those of her clergy who love God wholeheartedly and abhor all these wicked customs. They have been like orphans due to the pope's absence, but they have defended the see of their father like sons and have wisely opposed the traitors, persevering in the midst of much hardship.

The bride's vision about various punishments being prepared for a certain soul as yet alive in body, and about how all these kinds of punishments, if his soul should be converted before death, would be converted into the greatest honor and glory.

Chapter 34

“It seemed to me that I saw some people standing around getting ropes ready, while some were standing and getting horses ready, and others were busy forging tongs or constructing a gallows. While I was looking at all this, a maiden appeared who seemed to be troubled. She asked if I understood it all. When I answered that I did not understand, she said: “All this that you see is the spiritual punishment being prepared for the soul of that man whom you know. The ropes are for tying to the horse that will drag his soul. The tongs are for tearing his nose, eyes, ears, and lips off. The gallows is for hanging him.”

Since I was upset over this, the maiden told me: “Do not be upset. There is still time. If he wants, he will be able to break the ropes, knock down the horses, melt the tongs like wax, and remove the gallows. Moreover, he can obtain such an ardent love of God that these symbols of punishments will become for him the highest marks of honor, so much so that the ropes that were to bind him in contempt will be turned into belts of gold for him. Instead of the horses that were to drag him across the plains, angels will be sent to escort him into the presence of God. Instead of the tongs with which he was to be terribly mutilated, his nostrils will be filled with a fine fragrance and his mouth with a fine taste, his eyes with the loveliest of sights, his ears with the most delightful of melodies.”

EXPLANATION

This man was a marshal of the king. He came to Rome with so much humility and contrition that he would frequently go around the stations with bared head, praying to God and getting others to pray that he would not return to his country if that meant a relapse into his former sins. God heard his petition. When he left Rome and came to Montefiascone, he fell ill and died there.

Another revelation also concerns him: "Daughter, see what God's mercy accomplishes, what a good intention accomplishes. This soul was in the jaws of the lion, but his good intention snatched him away from the lion's teeth, and he is now on the way to the homeland, and he will partake of all the goods that occur in the church of God."

The bride's words to Jesus Christ about her desire for the salvation of souls, and the answer given her through the Holy Spirit, namely that people's excesses and superfluity in food and drink are an obstacle to the visitations of the Holy Spirit given to them.

Chapter 35

"O sweet Jesus, creator of all that has been created! Would that these people knew and understood the warmth of your Holy Spirit! Then they would long more for heaven and abhor the things of the earth. An answer immediately came to me in spirit, saying: "Their excesses and superfluity are an obstacle to the visitations of the Holy Spirit. You see, excesses in food and drink and in banqueting with friends prevent both the Holy Spirit from becoming sweet to them and their having had enough of worldly pleasure. Excess of gold and silver, equipment, clothing, and income prevent the spirit of my love from inflaming and kindling their hearts. Excess of servants and horses and animals are an obstacle to the approach of the Holy Spirit. No, indeed, they withdraw themselves from their servants, my angels, while their betrayers, the devils, draw near to them. They are therefore ignorant of the sweetness and the visitation by which I, who am God, visit holy souls and my friends."

God's words to the bride about how the religious used to enter monasteries out of holy

fear and divine charity, but now God's enemies, that is, false religious, go off into the world out of wicked pride and cupidity; similarly, about knights and their knightly service.

Chapter 36

“Hear now what my enemies do as opposed to what my friends once did. My friends used to enter monasteries out of wise fear and divine charity. But those who are now in the monasteries go off into the world out of pride and cupidity, following their selfish will and living for the pleasures of their body. The judgment for those who die with such a disposition is that they shall neither experience nor obtain heavenly joy but only endless punishment in hell. Know, too, that those who live in a cloister but are forced by divine charity and against their own will to become superiors shall not be counted in that number. Knights, moreover, who used to bear arms, were prepared to give their lives for justice and to shed their blood for the sake of the holy faith by helping the needy to obtain justice and by restraining evildoers and keeping them humble.

Yet, now hear how far they have turned away. Nowadays they prefer to die in war for the sake of pride and cupidity and envy, on the promptings of the devil, rather than to live according to my commands in order to obtain everlasting joy. Therefore, the wages of a just condemnation shall be given to all those who die with such a disposition. This means that devils will be given to their souls to be eternally joined with them as their wages. However, those who do serve me are to receive their soldier's wages together with the heavenly army forever without end.”

Christ's words to the bride asking her how it stands with the world, and she answers that it is like an open sack to which everyone senselessly runs, and about Christ's severe and just condemnation of such people.

Chapter 37

The Son speaks: "Daughter, how stands the world now?" She answers: "Like an open sack to which everyone runs, like a man running without caring what he is following." The Lord answers: "Therefore, I am right to go with my plow over the earth, plowing over Gentiles and Christians, sparing neither old nor young, neither poor nor rich. Each shall be judged according to his or her own righteousness, and each shall die in his or her own sin, and their homes shall be left without inhabitants. However, I shall not do this until the consummation."

She replied: "O Lord, do not get angry if I speak. Send some of your friends to warn and admonish them about their danger!" And the Lord said: "It is written that when the rich man despaired of his own salvation in hell, he asked that someone might be sent to warn his brothers so that they would not perish in the same way. The answer to him was: 'That shall in no way be done, for they have Moses and the prophets to teach them.' So I tell you now: They have the Gospels and the sayings of the prophets, they have the words and examples of the holy doctors, they have reason and intelligence. Let them make use of these things, and they will be saved. If I send you, you would not be able to cry out loud enough to be heard. If I send my friends, there are but few of them, and if they cry out, they will scarcely be heard.

However, I will send my friends to those I choose, and they shall prepare the way for God."

Jesus Christ's words to the bride about not putting trust in dreams but, rather, being wary of them, no matter how happy or sad they are, and about how the devil mixes falsehoods with truth in dreams, because of which many errors occur in the world, and about how the prophets did not err, because they truly loved God above all things.

Chapter 38

The Son speaks: "Why do happy dreams lift you up so much? And why do sad dreams depress you so? Did I not tell you that the devil is envious and can accomplish no more without God's permission than a piece of straw beneath your feet? I also told you that he is the father and inventor of lies and that he mixes some truth in with all his

falsehoods. I tell you, accordingly, that the devil never sleeps but goes around looking for an occasion to ensnare you.

You must therefore be careful so that the devil does not deceive you, using his subtle knowledge to discover your inner states by means of your outer movements. Sometimes he induces happy moods into your heart to make you feel empty joy; at other times he gives you sad ones to make you omit in your sorrow the good deeds that you could do and to make you sad and wretched before anything sad has occurred.

Sometimes the devil also puts a great many falsehoods into the kind of deluded heart that desires worldly esteem and so deceives many people, such as false prophets. This happens to people who love other things more than God. This is why it happens that a lot of truth is found in the midst of a great many false words, for the devil could never deceive anyone if he did not mix some truth in with the falsehood, as was clear in the case of the man you saw in a seizure. Although he was confessing that there is one God, his indecent gestures and strange words showed that the devil was possessing him and dwelling in him.

Now, however, you might ask: Why do I permit the devil to lie? I answer: I have permitted and do permit this due to the sins of the people and of the priests who have wanted to know things that God did not want them to know, who desired success in areas where God saw that it was not beneficial to their salvation. Thus, it is because of sins that God permits many things to occur that would not occur if humankind had not abused grace and reason. Those prophets who longed for nothing but God and did not wish to speak God's words except for God's sake, these did not fall victims to deception but spoke and loved the words of truth.

Yet, as not all dreams should be welcomed, so not all dreams should be rejected, since God sometimes reveals good things in dreams, including the hour of their death to bad people in order that they might repent of their sins.

Sometimes he also reveals good things to good people in order that they might make greater progress toward God. So, whenever and as often as such things occur to you, do not lay them to heart but ponder them and study them with your wise spiritual friends, or

else dismiss them and shut them out of your heart as if you had not seen them, because people who delight in such things are very often fooled and become disturbed. So, be firm in your faith in the Holy Trinity, love God with your whole heart, be obedient in failure as well as in success, do not think yourself better than anyone but tremble even when you do good, do not trust your own sense more than others but entrust your entire will to God, ready to do everything God wants. Then you will not need to be afraid of dreams. If they are happy dreams, do not trust or desire them without considering God's glory in them; if they are sad, do not be saddened but place yourself entirely in God's hands.”

The Mother says then: ”I am the Mother of mercy. I get the clothes ready for my daughter while she sleeps; I get food ready for my daughter while she gets dressed; I get a crown and every good reward ready for my daughter while she is working.”

The Mother's words to the Son about the bride, and Christ's answer to his Mother. Then the Mother's words about what is meant by the lion and the lamb, and about how God permits some things to happen because of human ingratitude and impatience that otherwise would not happen to them.

Chapter 39

The Mother speaks to her Son Jesus, saying: ”Our daughter is like a lamb that puts its head in the lion's mouth.” The Son answers her: ”It is better for the lamb to put its head in the lion's mouth and become one flesh and one blood with the lion than that the lamb should suck blood from the lion's flesh and make the lion angry and then the lamb, whose food is hay, would get sick. Yet, my dear Mother, since you bore all wisdom and the fullness of all intelligence in your womb, get her to understand the meaning of the lion and of the lamb.”

The Mother answers: ”Blessed are you, my Son, who, while remaining eternally with the Father, came down to me, yet never separating yourself from the Father. It is you who are the lion of Judah's tribe. You are the lamb without stain whom John pointed out with his finger. A person puts her head into the lion's mouth when she entrusts her whole will

to God and has no intention of carrying out her own will, even if she is able, unless she knows that it is pleasing to you.

A person sucks the lion's blood when she becomes impatient with the plan of your justice, wishing and striving to obtain other things than those that you have decided for her, or when she wants to live in a state of life other than that the one that is pleasing to you and beneficial for herself. God is not pleased with such desires but rather provoked to anger. Just as the lamb feeds on hay, so too a person should be satisfied with humble conditions and a lowly state in life. It is because of human ingratitude and impatience that God allows many things to occur for the salvation of humankind that would not happen if people were more patient.

Therefore, my daughter, give your will to God. If sometimes you feel less patient, begin all over again through penance, for penance works like a good washerwoman does on stains, and contrition is like a good bleacher.”

Christ's words to the bride explaining the meaning of a Christian death and in what way a person dies well or badly, and about how the friends of God should not be troubled if they see God's servants dying a harsh bodily death.

Chapter 40

The Son speaks: ”Do not be afraid, daughter: This sick woman will not die, for her works are pleasing to me.” When the woman did die, the Son said again: ”Do you see, daughter? What I told you was true: The woman is not dead, for her glory is great. The separation of body and soul is for the righteous no more than a dream, for they wake up to life eternal. That which should be called death is when the soul lives separated from the body in an eternal death.

There are many people who, while not mindful of the life to come, do wish to die a Christian death. Now, what does a Christian death mean, if not to die as I died: innocently, willingly, and patiently? Am I then contemptible because my death was contemptible and harsh? Or are my chosen ones foolish, because they had to bear

contemptible sufferings? Or was this the will of fortune or did the movement of the stars cause it? Of course not. I and my chosen ones did indeed suffer harshly, but in order to show by word and example that the way to heaven is difficult, and in order to make people realize fully how necessary purification is for the wicked, seeing that the innocent elect suffered so greatly.

Know, then, that a person dies a contemptible and evil death when he dies while living a dissolute life and with the intention of sinning, when he has worldly success and desires to live for a long time but does not remember to give thanks to God. A person lives and dies happily who loves God with his whole heart, though he may be struck down by a despicable death or afflicted by a chronic illness, because his harsh death lessens his sins as well as the punishment for sin and increases his reward.

Look, I will remind you of two men, both of whom died a despicable and bitter death according to human opinion. Yet, if they had not received such a death through my great mercy, they would not have been saved. However, because the Lord does not twice smite the contrite of heart, both of them attained their crown.

This is why the friends of God should not be saddened if they suffer violent temporal pain or die a bitter death. It is a blessed thing to weep for a time and to be troubled in this world so as not to come to the heaviest purgatory, where there will be no escape and no more time for working.”

The Mother's words to the daughter about how priests with lawful faculties of absolution, no matter what kind of sinners they themselves are, are able to absolve from sins; the same applies to the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Chapter 41

The Mother speaks: ”Go to him who has the faculty of absolution. No matter how leprous the doorkeeper is, he can still open the door as well as a healthy man, provided he has the keys. It is the same with absolution and the sacrament of the altar. No matter

who the minister is, provided he has a lawful faculty of absolution, he can absolve from sins. Therefore, no priest is to be rejected.

However, I would forewarn you about two things. The first is that he will not get what he so longs for in the flesh. The other is that his life will soon be cut short. Just as an ant that carries its load of grain day and night sometimes falls down and dies right when it gets close to the nest, and the grain remains outside it, so too, right when this man has begun to reach the goal of his efforts, he will die and be punished, and his empty efforts will come to naught.”

The Mother's words to the daughter describing good character and righteous works in God's friends as door posts; and about how God's servants should stay away from disparagement.

Chapter 42

The Mother speaks: ”God's friends are said to be like two door posts through which others can enter. Therefore, one must guard carefully against anything rough or hard or any other kind of obstacle getting in the way of those going in. These door posts symbolize nothing other than the moral composure and righteous works and edifying words that should be found everyday in the lives of God's friends. One must therefore guard attentively against anything hard, that is, disparaging or coarse speech, being found in the mouths of God's friends, or any worldly tendencies noticeable in their actions that may cause those seeking entrance to run away and shudder to enter there.”

The Mother's words to the daughter likening bad pastors to a worm gnawing away at the roots of a tree.

Chapter 43

The Mother speaks: "They are like a worm that sees excellent seed but does not care how much fruit is lost or falls off, so long as it can tear away at the roots or the parts closest to the ground. In the same way, these men do not care that souls are being lost, so long as they can get their profits and earthly possessions. The justice of my Son will therefore come upon them, and they shall soon be taken away." She replies: "All the time that for us seems long is no more than the least grain of the balance before God. Your Son's patience with evildoers is great indeed." The Mother replies: "I tell you truly: Their judgment shall not be delayed but shall come to them with horror, and they shall be dragged away from pleasure into shame."

Christ's words to the bride likening the body to a ship and the world to the sea, and about how free will can lead souls to heaven or to hell, and the comparison of earthly beauty to a glass.

Chapter 44

The Son speaks: "Listen, you who long for the harbor after the storms of this world. Whoever is at sea has nothing to fear so long as that person stays there with him who can stop the winds from blowing, who can order any bodily harm to go away and the rocky crags to soften, who can command the storm-winds to lead the ship to a restful harbor. So it is in the physical world.

There are those who lead the body like a ship across the waters of the world, bringing some people consolation but others distress, for human free will leads some souls to heaven, others to the depths of hell. The human will is pleasing to God when it desires to hear nothing more fervently than God's praise nor to live for anything other than God's service, for God dwells happily in such a will and lightens every danger and smoothes away all the crags by which the soul is often endangered.

What do these rocky crags represent if not evil desire? It is delightful to see and own worldly possessions, to rejoice in the elegance of one's body and to taste whatever delights the flesh. Such things often endanger the soul. But when God is on board the

ship, all these things grow weak, and the soul scorns them all, for all bodily and earthly beauty is like a glass that is painted on the outside but full of earth on the inside. When the glass gets broken, it is no more useful than the dark soil of the earth, which has been created for no other purpose than to be used, if one owns any, in order to gain heaven. All those people who no more desire to hear of their own or the world's esteem than they do the noxious air, those who mortify every limb of their body and hate the abominable lust of their flesh, all these can rest here in quiet and wake up with joy, because God is with them at all times.”

The bride's lamentation before the divine majesty, because the four sisters, Humility, Abstinence, Contentment, and Charity, daughters of Jesus Christ the King, are now, alas, regarded as worthless, and the sisters Pride, Desire, Excess, and Simony, daughters of King Devil, are now called noblewomen.

Chapter 45

I make my complaint, not only on my own behalf but also on behalf of many of God's elect, before your Majesty, concerning the plight of four sisters, daughters of a mighty king, each of whom held position and power within her inherited estate. All those who wished to look on the beauty of these sisters received solace from their beauty and good example from their piety. The first sister was called Humility in managing every deed to be done. The second sister was called Abstinence from all sinful intercourse. The third sister was called Contentment without any excess. The fourth sister was called Charity regarding the affliction of one's neighbors. These four sisters are now regarded as worthless on their own inherited estate and scorned by almost everyone.

In their place four other, illegitimate sisters have been installed. Though they are the offspring of a fornicator, they are now called noblewomen. The first of these is Lady Pride, who lives to please the world. The second is called Lady Desire, who follows the body's every appetite. The third is called Lady Excess beyond the limits of necessity. The fourth is called Lady Simony, against whose deception almost nobody can protect himself, since, whether things are rightly or wrongly acquired, she greedily takes it all in.

These four ladies contradict the precepts of God, wishing to render them worthless, and they are an occasion of eternal damnation to many souls.

Therefore, act in accordance with the love that God has shown you, and swiftly help to raise up the four sisters called virtues, which proceed from the very virtue of Jesus Christ the high king, and which have now been laid low in the Holy Church, the inherited estate of Christ. Lay low instead the vices that are called ladies in this world, the traitors of souls, born of that traitor the devil, vice itself.

The bride's warning to a certain nobleman about restoring unjustly acquired property, and about the voice of an angel announcing a harsh sentence against him.

Chapter 46

Sir, I warn you about the danger your soul is in, and remind you that we read about a certain king in the Old Testament who felt a desire for another man's vineyard and offered him the full price for it. However, since the owner did not want to sell it, the king was angered and unjustly expropriated it for himself with violence. The Holy Spirit spoke to him a little later through the mouth of a prophet, sentencing the king and queen to die a wretched death for their injustice. The prophecy was fulfilled in them, and their children had not the least benefit of the possession of that vineyard.

Now, then, since you are Christian and keep the whole faith and know with certainty that God is the same now in his power and justice as he was then, you ought to know, accordingly, that, if you have a desire to possess something unjustly, either by forcing the owner to sell it against his will or by not making a fair offer, that same powerful and just judge will be the avenger. You, moreover, should fear for such a sentence overtaking you as is said to have befallen that queen. You should sorrow that your children will not be made rich by your ill-gotten goods but will rather suffer the distress of poverty.

By the passion of Jesus Christ, who redeemed your soul with his precious blood, I exhort and admonish you not to destroy your soul for the sake of fleeting possessions but

to make full restitution to all those who have suffered loss at your hands or because of you. Restore whatever you have wrongly acquired both to relieve those who now suffer sorrow and as an example for others, if you want to gain the friendship of God.

God is my witness that I do not write you this on my own, for I do not know you, but because something happened to a person that compelled me to write out of holy compassion for your soul. For that person, not asleep but awake in prayer, heard the voice of an angel saying: "Björn, Björn, how overbold you are toward God and toward justice! Your willpower has so overcome the conscience within you that your conscience is completely silent, while your will speaks and acts. That is why you shall soon come to judgment in the divine court. Your will shall then be silent, and your conscience shall speak and condemn you in accordance with right justice."

The Son's words to the bride about how we ought to beware of temptations from the devil, and his description of the devil as an enemy of the state, and of God as a mother hen, his power and wisdom as wings, his mercy as feathers, and the people as chickens.

Chapter 47

The Son speaks: "If the enemy is battering at the city gates, you should not be like goats that run toward the wall or like rams that rear themselves up on their hind legs and butt against each other with their horns. Instead you should be like chickens that see a bird of prey in the sky aiming to harm them and take refuge beneath the wings of their mother and hide there. They are happy even if they only get hold of a single one of the mother's feathers and take cover there.

Who is your enemy if not the devil, who looks maliciously upon every good deed and is wont to batter and agitate the human mind with temptations? Sometimes he batters it with anger and slander, sometimes with impatience and criticism toward God's decisions whenever things do not turn out as one wishes. Very often he batters and upsets you with innumerable thoughts in order to draw you away from God's service and cast a shadow over your good works before God.

Therefore, no matter what temptations you have, you should not abandon your position nor be like the goats that run up toward the wall, that is, to be hard of heart, or to criticize other people's actions in your hearts, since a person who is bad today is often good tomorrow. Rather, you should lower your horns, stand still, and listen, that is, humble yourselves and be fearful, patiently entreating God so that bad beginnings may be changed into a happy ending. Nor should you be like the rams brandishing their horns, that is, paying back insult with insult and adding taunt to taunt.

Rather you should stand steadily on your feet and remain silent, that is, check your passions, so that in your speech and responses you may show forethought and patient forcefulness, because the righteous man overcomes himself and restrains himself even from licit remarks in order to avoid loquacity and offensiveness. When a person is agitated in mind and lets go of everything he feels inside, he seems somehow to have vindicated himself and revealed the instability of his mind. This is the reason why he will be left without a reward, because he was unwilling to be patient for a time. Had he been patient, he would both have won over his offending brother and fitted himself for a greater reward.

What do the hen's wings represent if not divine power and wisdom? You see, I am like a hen that powerfully protects from the snares of the devil those chickens that run to me when I call, that is, those who desire the shade of my wings, and I summon them to salvation through my wise inspirations. What does the feather represent if not my mercy? One who obtains my mercy can feel as secure as a chicken sheltered beneath its mother's wings. So, be like the chickens running toward my will. In all temptations and adversities say both out loud and in your deeds: May God's will be done! For, I protect those who trust in me with my power; I refresh them with my mercy; I hold them with my patience; I visit them with my solace; I enlighten them with my wisdom; I reward them a hundredfold with my love.”

The Son's words to the bride about a king and how he should work to increase God's honor and love for souls, and about his sentencing, if he fails to do so.

Chapter 48

The Son speaks: "If this man wishes to honor me, let him first work to reduce my dishonor and increase my honor. My dishonor consists in the contempt shown for the commandments that I have commanded and the words that I have personally spoken, which are completely disregarded by almost everyone. If he wishes to love me, then let him from now on show greater charity toward all souls for whom I opened up heaven with my heart's blood. If he longs to rest with God more than to enlarge his inheritance, then he will surely find greater desire as well as help from God in order to win back that place, Jerusalem, where my dead body lay.

Tell him, you who are hearing this: I, God, allowed him to be crowned king. This is why it is especially his duty to follow my will and to love and honor me above all things. If he fails to do so, his days will be cut short. Moreover, those people who are emotionally attached to him will be painfully separated from him, and his kingdom will be divided into several parts."

The bride's symbolic vision of the church, its explanation, which concerns the moderation and attitude that the pope ought to maintain regarding his own person and regarding the cardinals and other prelates of Holy Mother Church, and especially about the attitude of humility.

Chapter 49

It seemed to a certain person that she was in a large chancel, and a great, shining sun appeared. There were two pulpits, as it were, in the chancel, one to the right and the other to the left, with a long space intervening between them and the sun. Two rays of the sun fell upon the pulpits.

Then a voice was heard from the pulpit on the left side, saying: "Hail, eternal king, creator and redeemer, and just judge! Behold, your vicar, who is seated on your chair in

the world, has now brought his chair back to its ancient and earlier place, where sat the first pope, Peter, prince of the apostles.” A voice from the pulpit on the right replied, saying: ”How can he enter into the Holy Church when the barrels of the door hinges are full of rust and dirt? This is why the doors are inclining toward the ground, because there is no room in the barrels to receive the hinge-pins that should be supporting the doors. The pins have been completely bent outward and are not at all curved in such a way as to hold the doors in place. The floor is all dug up and has been converted into pits as deep as bottomless wells. The ceiling is smeared with pitch and burning with sulphurous flames, dripping down like dense rain. Thick, black fumes arising from the pits and the dripping of the ceiling have stained all the walls and made their color as ugly to look at as gory blood and pus. It is therefore not fitting for God's friend to have his dwelling in such a temple.”

The voice from the left replied, saying: ”Give a spiritual explanation of what you have described physically.” The other voice then said: ”The pope is symbolized and represented by the doors; the barrels of the door hinges signify humility. This should be empty of all pride so that nothing is to be seen there except what pertains to the humble office of pontiff, just as the barrel should be completely empty of any rust. However, the barrels, that is, the insignia of humility, are now so full of excess and wealth and resources - kept for no other purpose than pride - that nothing seems humble, since all his humility has been converted into worldly pomp. Therefore, it is not surprising that the pope, represented by the doors, is inclining toward worldliness, as symbolized by the rust and the dirt. Accordingly, let the pope begin with true humility in himself: first of all, in his trappings - his clothes, his gold, silver, and vessels of silver, his horses and other equipment - getting rid of everything but what is necessary, and donating the rest to the poor and, especially, to those whom he knows to be friends of God.

Let him then organize his entourage with moderation and keep only those servants needed to protect him. Although it is in God's hands to call him to judgment, still it is only right for him to have servants both in order to strengthen the cause of justice and so that he can humble those who rebel against God and against the holy customs of the church.

The hinge-pins attached to the doors represent the cardinals who have been bent

outward and stretched as far as possible toward all pride, greed, and physical pleasure. This is why the pope should take a hammer and tongs in hand and bend the hinges to his will by not letting them have more clothes, servants, and equipment than necessity and utility require. Let him bend them with the tongs, that is, with his soothing words and divine counsel and fatherly love. Then, if they refuse to obey, he should take the hammer and display severity toward them, doing with them whatever lies in his power and does not go against justice, until they are bent to his will.

The floor represents the bishops and the secular clergy, whose greed is bottomless. From their pride and luxurious way of living come the fumes that make all the angels in heaven and all God's friends on earth shun them.

The pope can improve the situation greatly by allowing them to have only what they need and nothing superfluous, and he should order each bishop to watch over the ways of his own clergy. Anyone who refuses to mend his ways and live continently should be stripped of his prebends, because God would rather not have a mass said in a given place than let a whorish hand touch the body of God.”

The bride's unfathomable vision of the judgment of a multitude of persons still in life, in which she heard: "If people would rectify their sins, I, too, will lighten their sentence."

Chapter 50

It seemed to me as though a king was seated on a judgment seat, and each living person stood before him. Each person had two beings standing next to him, one of whom appeared like an armed soldier, the other like a black Ethiopian. A pulpit stood before the judgment seat. On it lay a book, arranged in the same way as I saw earlier when I saw three kings standing before him. It seemed to me that the whole world was standing before the pulpit. Then I heard the judge saying to the armed soldier: "Call those whom you have served with love!"

Those who were named fell down immediately. Some of them lay there for a longer

while, others for a shorter, before their souls were separated from the body. I am unable to grasp everything I heard and saw then, for I heard the sentences of many people still living but who will soon be called. However, the following was said to me by the judge: "If people would rectify their sins, I, too, will lighten their sentence." Then I saw many people being sentenced, some to purgatory, others to everlasting woe.

The bride's admirable and terrible vision about a soul led before the judge, and about the arguments of God and the book's judgment against the soul and the soul's evidence against herself, and about the various astounding punishments inflicted on her in purgatory.

Chapter 51

It seemed that I saw a soul being led to the judge by the soldier and the Ethiopian whom I had seen earlier. It was said to me: "What you now see all took place in regard to that soul when she was released from the body." Once the soul had been escorted into the presence of the judge, she stood there alone, no longer in the hands of either of her escorts. She stood there naked and sorrowful, not knowing to what place she would come. It seemed to me then that every word in the book gave its own answer to each and every thing the soul was saying.

In the hearing of the judge and of the entire host, the armed soldier spoke first, saying: "It is not right to bring up as a reproach against this soul the sins for which she has made reparation in confession." I beheld all this but realized then quite well that the soldier who was speaking already had knowledge of everything in God but spoke so that I would understand. A reply then came from the book of justice: "Although this soul did perform penance, it was not accompanied by a contrition or true satisfaction proportionate to her great sins. She should therefore suffer now for those sins for which she did not make reparation when she was able."

When this was said, the soul began to weep so violently that it was as though she had broken down completely, and yet, though her tears could be seen, not a sound could

be heard. Then the King said to the soul: "Let your conscience now declare those sins that were not accompanied by a proportionate satisfaction." Then the soul raised her voice with such force that it was as though it could be heard throughout the whole world. She said: "Woe is me that I did not act according to God's commands, which I heard and knew!" Then she added in self-accusation: "I did not fear God's judgment." The book replied to her: "You must therefore now fear the devil." Right away the soul began to fear and tremble, as if she were melting away completely, and she said: "I had almost no love for God: That is why I did so little good." An immediate reply was made to her from the book: "That is why it is just for you to approach closer to the devil than to God, because the devil lured and enticed you to himself with his temptations."

The soul replied: "I understand now that everything I did was done on the promptings of the devil." A reply was made from the book: "Justice dictates that it is the devil's right to repay your accomplishments with pain and punishment." The soul said: "From head to heel there was nothing I did not dress with pride. Some of my vain and proud manners I invented myself, others I just followed according to the custom of my native land. I washed my hands and face not only in order to be clean but also to be called beautiful by men." A reply was made from the book: "Justice says that it is the devil's right to repay you for what you have earned, since you dressed and adorned yourself as he inspired and told you to do."

The soul said again: "My mouth was often open for bawdy talk, because I wanted to please others, and my heart longed for all those things provided it did not result in worldly disgrace or disapproval." A reply was made from the book: "That is why your tongue must be drawn out and stretched and your teeth bent in. And all the things you most detest will be set before you, and all the things you like will be taken away from you." The soul said: "I enjoyed it immensely when many people took after my example and noticed what I did and copied my manners." A reply was made from the book: "Hence, it is just that everyone caught in the sin for which you are about to be punished should also suffer the same punishment and be brought to you. Then your pain will be increased each time someone comes who copied your fashions."

After these words, it seemed to me as though a chain was wound about her head like a crown and then tightened so hard that the front and back of her head were joined

together. Her eyes fell out of their sockets and dangled by their roots at her cheeks. Her hair looked like it had been scorched by flames, and her brains were shattered and flowed out through her nostrils and ears.

Her tongue was stretched out and her teeth pressed in. Her arms were twisted like ropes and their bones broke. Her hands, with their skin peeled off, were fastened to her throat. Her breast and belly were bound so hard with her back that her ribs were broken and her heart spilled out together with all her entrails; her thighs dangled at her flanks, and their broken bones were being pulled out just like a thin thread is used to thread a needle.

After this sight, the Ethiopian replied: "O Judge, the soul's sins have now been punished according to justice. Now join the two of us, this soul and me, so that we may never be separated!" But the armed soldier replied: "Hear, Judge, you who know all things! It concerns you now to hear the last thought and feeling that this soul had at the end of her life. At the very last moment she had the following thought: 'O, if God would only give me enough life, I would gladly make reparation for my sins and serve him all the rest of my lifetime and never more offend him.' O Judge, such were her last thoughts and wishes. Remember, too, Lord, that this person did not live long enough to acquire a fully understanding conscience. Therefore, Lord, think of her youth and treat her mercifully!"

A reply was then made from the book of justice: "Last thoughts such as these do not deserve hell." Then the judge said: "Because of my passion, let heaven be opened up for this soul once she has undergone purgation for her sins for as much time as she is bound to suffer, unless she receives assistance from the good works of others still alive."

EXPLANATION

This woman made a vow of virginity in the presence of a priest, and then married later on. She died giving birth.

The bride's terrible vision of a man and woman, and an angel's spiritual explanation to

the bride concerning the amazing vision and containing many amazing points.

Chapter 52

There appeared to me a man whose eyes were dug out and hanging at his cheeks by their two muscles. He had the ears of a dog, the nostrils of a horse, the mouth of a ferocious wolf, hands like the feet of a big ox and feet like a vulture. I saw a woman standing at his side whose hair was like a bramble bush, whose eyes were at the back of her head, whose ears were cut off, whose nose was full of pus and gore, whose lips were like snake-fangs with a venomous barb on her tongue, whose hands were like the tail of a fox, whose feet like two scorpions.

I was awake and not sleeping while I saw all this, and I said: "O, what is this?" Immediately a sweet-sounding voice spoke to me so comfortingly that all my fear disappeared. It said: "You who are seeing this, what do you think it is?" I answered: "I do not know whether the beings I see are devils or beasts born with such a bestial nature or human beings formed that way by God." The voice then answered me: "They are not devils, since devils do not have bodies as you see these do, nor are they a kind of beast, for they are born from Adam's stock, although they were not created in such a form by God. Rather, they appear before God made ugly in their souls by the devil. It is this that you are seeing as if in bodily fashion, but I will reveal to you the spiritual meaning of it all.

You see the eyes of that man that look as though they were dug out and hanging by their two muscles. You should understand two things by the two muscles. The first is that he believed God to live eternally. The second is that he believed that his own soul would live on eternally for good or evil after the death of the body. You should understand two things by the two eyes. The first is that he should have considered how he could have avoided sin, and the second is how he could have carried out good deeds. These two eyes have been dug out in the sense that he did not do good deeds out of a desire for heavenly glory and did not flee sin out of the fear of the punishment of Gehenna. He has dog ears, because, as a dog is not as interested in his master's name or in any other dog's name so much as its own name, If he should hear it, so too this man did not care as much about

the honor of God's name as about the honor of his own name.

He has a horse's nostrils, too, for, just as when a horse has got rid of its dung, it likes to put its nose to it, so does this man. When he has committed a sin, which before God is as vile a thing as dung, it seems pleasant to him to think on its stench. He has a mouth like a ferocious wolf that, although it has filled its mouth and belly with the things it has already seen, still longs to gobble up any living creature its ears detect.

He also has hands like the feet of a strong ox. An angry ox destroys a weaker animal through the force of its wrath by trampling it down with its hooves indiscriminately, flesh and intestines and all, until the last bit of life is taken away. This man does likewise. When he is angry, he treats his enemy indiscriminately, without a thought about how the man's soul might end up in hell or how his body will suffer in death, provided that he can take the man's life away. He has feet like a vulture. When a vulture gets something it likes in its claws, it squeezes it so tightly that the strength in its feet fails due to the pain and it lets go of what it was holding without even knowing it. This man acts in the same way. He intends to keep his unjust possessions until death, but he will be forced to let go of them when his strength fails.

His wife's hair was like a bramble bush. The hair on the top of the head that adorns a person's face signifies a will that highly desires to please God the most high. That is what adorns a soul in God's sight. Because this woman's will was highly set on pleasing the world rather than God the most high, her hair looks like a bramble bush. Her eyes appear to be at the back of her head, because she turned her mind's eye away from what God's goodness had done for her in creating and redeeming her and in providing for her in her needs. Yet she gazes intently on that which is fleeting, though these things are departing from her day by day and will vanish entirely from her sight in the end. Her ears appear to be cut off in a spiritual sense, for she cares little about the doctrine of the Holy Gospel or about hearing sermons.

Her nose is full of gore, because, just as a sweet odor is pleasantly transmitted to the brain through the nose so as to comfort it, so she, too, in her passions, is delighted to put into effect whatever delights her corruptible body in order to comfort it. Her lips are like snake-fangs, and there is a venomous barb on her tongue. Even when a snake holds its

teeth together tightly so as to protect its barb from being accidentally broken, the filth of its mouth still flows out through the gaps between its teeth. In the same way, she shuts her lips to true confession so as not to break the pleasure of sin, which is like the venomous barb of her soul, but the filth of her sin can still be clearly seen in the sight of God and his saints.”

EXPLANATION

”I told you before about the judgment and rejection of a marriage that they had contracted against the statutes of the church. I shall now explain it to you more fully. You saw the woman's hands were like the tails of foxes and her feet like scorpions. This is because, just as she was undisciplined in her whole body and all her passions, so too by the lightness of her hands and her way of walking she excited her husband's physical delight and stung his soul worse than any scorpion.”

At that very moment an Ethiopian appeared with trident in hand and three sharp claws on his feet. He shouted and said: ”Judge, it is my hour now. I have waited and been silent. Now is the time for action!” Immediately, I beheld a naked man and woman before the judge as he sat there together with his innumerable host.

The judge said to them: ”Though I know all things, tell us what you have done!” The man answered: ”We heard and knew about the ecclesial bond, and we paid no attention but disdained it.” The judge answered: ”Because you refused to follow the Lord, justice says you must experience the malice of the executioner.” Right then the Ethiopian thrust his claws into their hearts and pressed them together so tightly that they looked like they were in a winepress. And the judge said: ”Look, daughter, this is what people deserve when they knowingly distance themselves from their creator for the sake of creation.”

The judge spoke again to the two of them: ”I gave you a sack to fill with the fruit of my delights. What, then, do you bring me?” The woman answered: ”O judge, we sought the delights of our belly and have nothing to bring but shame.” Then the judge said to the executioner: ”Let them have their just reward!” And he immediately thrust his second claw into both their bellies and wounded them so badly that all their intestines appeared to be pierced through and through. The judge said: ”Look, daughter, this is what people

deserve when they transgress the law and thirst after poison as though it were medicine.”

The judge spoke again to the two of them: “Where is my treasure that I provided for your use?” Both of them answered: “We trampled it underfoot, for we sought an earthly treasure and not an eternal one.” Then the judge said to the executioner: “Let them have what you must and can give to them!” He immediately thrust his third claw into their hearts and bellies and feet in such a way that everything seemed to be like one big ball. The Ethiopian said: “Lord, where shall I go with them?” The judge answered: “It is not for you to rise or rejoice.” At that the man and woman disappeared with a wail from the face of the judge. The judge spoke again: “Rejoice, daughter, because you have been kept apart from such creatures.”

The Virgin's words to the bride about how she is prepared to defend every widow and every virgin and every wife in whom she sees an upright intention and a love for her Son above all else.

Chapter 53

“Listen,” said God's Mother, “you who are praying to God with your whole heart that your sons may be pleasing to him. Such a prayer truly does please God. There is not a mother who loves my Son above all else and who makes that same prayer to God for her children whom I am not at once prepared to help attain the object of her petition. Nor is there a widow who steadfastly asks for God's help to remain in the state of widowhood until her death for the glory of God whom I am not at once prepared to carry out her will along with her. I myself was like a widow in that I had a son on earth who did not have a father in the flesh. Likewise, there is no virgin yearning to preserve her virginity for God until death whom I am not prepared to defend and comfort, for I myself truly am a virgin.

You should not be wondering: Why am I saying this? It is written, you know, that David desired Saul's daughter when she was a virgin. Then he had the wife of Uriah while her husband was still alive. David's concupiscence was sinful, but the spiritual

gratification of my Son, David's Lord, is free from all sin.

Accordingly, as these three states of life - virginity, widowhood, and matrimony - provided physical pleasure to David, so too it pleases my Son to keep them for his most chaste gratification in a spiritual sense. Thus, it is no wonder that I help to bring the spiritual gratification of these states of life to my Son to gratify him, for they do gratify him.”

The Mother's words to the bride about the happy spiritual birth of someone brought up in the worst kinds of sins and how it was obtained by the prayers and tears of God's servants.

Chapter 54

“See the son of tears who has recently been born of the world in a spiritual sense! He had been first physically born of his mother in the world. Just as when the woman who drew him forth from his mother's womb first drew out his head, then his hands, then his whole body until he fell onto the ground, I have done the same for him due to the tears and the prayers of my friends. I drew him forth from the world so that he is now spiritually like a newborn baby boy. Accordingly, he must be brought up both spiritually and bodily.

The man to whom I sent you must bring him up and protect him with his prayers and good deeds and counsels. The woman you were told about will pray for him and protect him spiritually and also attend to any bodily needs he may have, for he had fallen so deeply into mortal sins that all the devils in hell had been saying this about him: 'When he comes, let us open our mouths to crush him with our teeth and gobble him up. Let us reach out our hands to break and mangle him. Let our feet be ready to trample him down and kick him.'

This is why it was said to you that he had been born spiritually, because he has been freed from the power of the devils, as you could gather from the words you heard about

how he loves God in his heart and body above all things.”

The Mother's words to the daughter about how, due to the prayers of God's servants, she wants to love a certain boy and equip him with spiritual weapons.

Chapter 55

“Remember what is written about Moses: The king's daughter found him on the water and loved him as her own son. It is also written in the Scholastic History that the same Moses conquered his land by means of the birds that ate up the poisonous snakes. I am a king's daughter from the family of David, and I want to love this boy whom I found on a sea-swell of tears shed for the salvation of his soul. His soul was enclosed in the ark of his body that will be brought up by those I told you about until he reaches the age in which I want to equip him and send him to gain the land of the king of heaven. How this is to come about is unknown to you but known to me. I will prepare him in such a way that it will be said of him: 'He lived like a man and died like a champion. He came to his judgment like a good soldier.' ”

ADDITION

God's Son speaks: ”When a starving animal is driven away from its prey, it waits at a distance until it finds an opportunity to return to the prey. But, if it finds none, it goes back to its cave. I have dealt with the leader of this country in a similar way. I admonished him through my kindnesses, I admonished him with words and blows. Yet, the more meek and mild I have shown myself to him, the more thankless and negligent he has become. I shall therefore summon him now beneath the crown and to the footstool, since he refuses to stay crowned. Upon him and his yea-sayers I shall set a cruel asp born from a viper and from a sly fox in order to molest the nation and to pluck the feathers of the simpleminded. He will ascend the heights of nations and cast off the boastful and trample them down. However, I shall lead this boy, whom my friends will foster, along another road until he arrives at a place of greater glory.”

God's Son spoke again: "It will, moreover, be said of this boy that, because he lived like a man and fought like an outstanding soldier, he shall be crowned as a friend of God. O, daughter, what are women thinking when they glory in their sons' progress in pride?

That is not glory but shame, for they are imitating the king of pride. Real glory is when he is a soldier of glory who glories in giving honor to God with all his might and strives for higher things and is ready to endure whatever the Lord wants him to endure. Such a man is a soldier of God and will be crowned as such together with the soldiers of heaven."

The Mother's words to the daughter about a man not being saddened because of a correction.

Chapter 56

The Mother speaks: "Why is that man upset? A father sometimes deals his son light blows with a switch. He has no reason to be sad."

The Mother's words to the daughter about how Rome must first be cleansed of the tares with a sharp iron sickle, then with fire, then with a pair of oxen.

Chapter 57

The Mother speaks: "Rome is like the field in which the tares had sprung up. It must first be cleansed with a sharp iron sickle, then purged with fire, and afterward plowed by a pair of oxen. I shall deal with you like a person transferring plants to a different place. A punishment is being prepared for this city, as if the judge were to say: 'Strip all its hide off, remove all the blood from its flesh, cut up all its meat into bits, and crush its bones so that all the marrow is drained off.' "

Christ's figurative words to the bride, and their explanation in which Christ is described as a ruler on pilgrimage, his body as a treasure, the church as a house, priests as guardians. The true Lord has honored these priests with a sevenfold honor. Also about how God complains that wicked priests abuse him with a sevenfold abuse, and how they turn the seven vestments, which they should have, into seven vices.

Chapter 58

The Son speaks: "I am like a ruler who fought faithfully in the land of his pilgrimage, and returned with joy to the land of his birth. This ruler had a very precious treasure. At its sight, the bleary-eyed became clear-sighted, the sad were consoled, the sick regained their strength, the dead were raised. For the purpose of the safe and honest protection of this treasure, a splendid and magnificent house of suitable height was built and finished with seven steps leading up to it and the treasure. The ruler entrusted the treasure to his servants for them to watch over, manage, and protect faithfully and purely. This was in order that the ruler's love for his servants might be shown and that the servants' faithfulness toward the ruler might be seen.

As time went on, the treasure began to be despised and its house rarely visited, while the guardians grew lukewarm, and the love of the ruler was neglected. Then the ruler consulted his intimate advisers concerning what was to be done about such ingratitude, and one of them said in answer: 'It is written that the neglectful judges and guardians of the people were ordered to be hanged in the sun. However, mercy and judgment are your nature; you are lenient toward all, for all things are yours and you are merciful toward all.'

I am the ruler in the parable. I appeared like a pilgrim on earth by virtue of my humanity, although I was mighty in heaven and on earth by virtue of my divinity. I fought so hard on earth that all the muscles of my hands and feet were ruptured out of zeal for the salvation of souls. As I was about to leave the world and ascend into heaven, I left it a most worthy memorial, my most holy body, in order that, in the same way that the Old Law could glory in the ark, the manna, and the tablets of the covenant, and in other ceremonies, so the new man could rejoice in the New Law - not, as before, in a

shadow but in the truth, indeed, in my crucified body that had been foreshadowed in the law. In order that my body might be given honor and glory, I established the house of the Holy Church, where it was to be kept and preserved, as well as priests to be its special guardians, who in a certain way are above the angels by reason of their ministry. The one whom angels fear to touch due to a reverent fear, priests handle with their hands and mouth.

I honored the priests with a sevenfold honor, as it were, on seven steps. On the first step, they should be my standard-bearers and special friends by reason of the purity of their mind and body, for purity is the first position near to God, whom nothing foul can touch nor adorn. It was not strange that marital relation was permitted to the priests of the law during the time in which they were not offering sacrifice, for they were carrying the shell, not the nut itself. Now, however, with the coming of the truth and the disappearance of the figure, one must strive all the more fully for purity by as much as the nut is sweeter than the shell. As a sign of this kind of continence, first the hair is tonsured, so that desire for pleasure does not rule over spirit or flesh.

On the second step, the clerics are ordained in order that they may become angelic men in all humility, for heaven is attained and the devil's pride is overcome through humility of mind and body. As a sign of such a step, the clerics are authorized to cast out demons, for the humble man is raised up to heaven from where the lofty devil fell through his pride.

On the third step the clerics are ordained for the purpose of being disciples of God through the constant reading of Holy Scripture. For this reason, a book is placed in their hands by the bishops, just as a sword is given to a knight, so that they understand what they must do and strive through prayer and meditation to placate God's anger for the sake of the people of God.

On the fourth step the clerics are ordained as guardians of God's temple and watchmen of souls. For this reason, the bishops give them keys in order that they may be deeply concerned for the salvation of their brethren and encourage them by word and deed and incite the weak to greater perfection.

On the fifth step, they are ordained as stewards and caretakers of the altars and scorers of worldly things in order that they may serve at the altar, live by the altar, and occupy themselves with earthly matters only insofar as befits their position.

On the sixth step, they are ordained to be apostolic men who preach the gospel truth and make their conduct fit their preaching.

On the seventh step, they are ordained to be mediators between God and man through the sacrifice of my body. In some way, at this point, priests rank above the angels in dignity.

My grievance now, however, is that these steps have fallen apart. Pride is loved more than humility, impurity is practiced instead of purity, the divine lessons are not read but the book of the world, negligence is to be seen at the altars, God's wisdom is regarded as foolishness, the salvation of souls is not a concern. As if this were not enough, they even throw away my vestments and scorn my weapons. On the mountain, I showed Moses the vestments that the priests of the law were to use. It is not as though there were anything material in God's heavenly dwelling, but it is because spiritual things cannot be understood except by means of physical symbols. Thus, I revealed a spiritual truth by means of something physical in order that people might realize how much reverence and purity are needful for those who have the truth itself - my body - given that those who were wearing but a shadow and a figure had so much purity and reverence.

Why did I reveal such magnificence in material vestments to Moses? It was, of course, in order to use them to teach and symbolize the magnificence and beauty of the soul. As the vestments of the priests were seven in number, so too the soul that approaches the body of God should have seven virtues without which there is no salvation. The first vestment of the soul, then, is contrition and confession. These cover the head. The second is desire for God and desire for chastity. The third is work in honor of God as well as patience in adversity. The fourth is caring neither for human praise nor reproach but for the honor of God alone. The fifth is abstinence of the flesh along with true humility. The sixth is consideration of the favors of God as well as fear of his judgments. The seventh is love of God above all things and perseverance in good undertakings.

These vestments, however, have been changed and are now despised. People love to make excuses and smooth over their guilt instead of going to confession. They love constant lewdness instead of chastity. They love work for the benefit of the body instead of work for the salvation of the soul. They love worldly ambition and pride instead of the honor and love of God. They love all kinds of redundancy instead of praiseworthy thrift, presumption and criticizing God's judgments instead of the fear of God, and the clergy's thanklessness toward everyone instead of God's love toward all. Therefore, as I said through the prophet, I shall come in indignation, and tribulation shall give them understanding.”

Then the Mother of Mercy, being present, replied: ”Blessed are you, my son, for your justice. I am speaking to you who know all things for the sake of this bride. You want her to understand spiritual truths, but she is unable to grasp the spiritual meaning except by means of images. Before you received a human nature from me, you once spoke as God, saying that if ten righteous men could be found in the city, you would be willing to show mercy to the whole city for the sake of those ten. There still are countless priests who placate you with the offering of your body. Therefore, because of these priests, have mercy on those who have little good in them. This I beg, I who gave birth to you in your human nature. All your elect ask this together with me.”

The Son answered: ”Blessed are you and blessed is the word of your mouth! You see that I pardon in three ways because of the threefold good in the offering of my body. Three good things were revealed in me through the effrontery of Judas. In the same way three good things come to souls through the offering of this sacrifice. First, my patience is to be praised because, though I knew who my betrayer was, I did not reject his company. Second, my power was revealed when, in the presence of my betrayer, all those who were with him fell to the ground at a single word of mine. Third, the divine wisdom and love were manifested, since I transformed all the wickedness of Judas and the devil into salvation for souls.

Similarly, three good things come from the offering of the priests. First, my patience is praised by all the heavenly host because I remain the same in the hands of good as well as of bad priests, and because there is no partiality in me, and because this sacrament is

brought about not by human merits but by my words. Second, this offering benefits everybody, no matter which priest offers it. Third, it benefits those who offer it as well, however bad they may be. Just as the single phrase 'I am' made my enemies collapse physically on the ground, so too when my words 'This is my body' are spoken, the devils flee from tempting the souls of the ministers, and they would not dare to return to them with such audacity, if the desire to sin was not there.

So my mercy shows pardon to them all and endures them all. However, my justice calls for retribution, for I cry out each day and you see well enough how many answer me. Nevertheless, I will still send out the words of my mouth. Those who listen will complete the days of their lives in that joy that can neither be expressed nor imagined because of its sweetness. To those, however, who do not listen, there will come, as it is written, seven plagues in the soul and seven plagues in the body. They will find this out, if they think and read about what has been done. Otherwise, they will quake and quail when they do experience it.”

Christ's words to the bride about how three duties belong to the priest: first, to consecrate the body of Christ; second, to have purity of body and spirit; third, to care for his congregation. Also about how he should have a book and oil; and about how a priest is an angel of the Lord, because his office is greater than that of an angel.

Chapter 59

The Son speaks: "Three duties belong to a priest: first, to consecrate the body of God; second, to have purity of body and spirit; third, to care for his congregation. But, you may ask: 'What good does it do to have a church if he does not have a congregation?' I answer you: A priest who has the intention of doing good to everyone and of preaching for the love of God has as large a congregation as if he had the whole world, since, if he could speak to the whole world, he would spare no efforts. His good intention is thus reckoned to him as deeds. In fact, on account of the ingratitude of the listeners, God often spares his chosen ones the effort of preaching, but they are not robbed of their reward due to their good disposition.

The priest should also have a book and oil. The book is for the instruction of those who are imperfect, the holy oil is for the anointing of the sick. Just as a book contains spiritual and physical learning, so too the priest should have knowledge about disciplining his body so that it is not ruined through lack of temperance, which would give scandal to the parishioners. He should know how to flee from greed, which debases the beauty of the church, and how to avoid worldly ways, which dishonor the dignity of the clergy. Spiritual knowledge involves instructing the ignorant, correcting the dissolute, urging on the proficient. The oil symbolizes the sweetness of prayer and good example. As oil has a richer taste than bread, so loving prayer and the example of a good life are more effective in attracting people and have a richer taste in order to placate God.

I tell you truly, my daughter, it is a great thing to be called a priest. An angel of the Lord is also a mediator, but the priest's office is greater, for he touches the unfathomable God, and in his hands the lowest things are joined to the things of heaven.”

The bride's words to God about a pleasing way of praying in God's sight.

Chapter 60

“Blessed be you, my Creator and Redeemer. Do not be angry if I speak to you as a wounded patient to the doctor, as a troubled soul to the comforter, as a poor person to a rich and generous one. You see, the wounded patient says: 'O, doctor, please do not shrink from my pain, for you are my brother!' The troubled soul says: 'O, greatest of comforters, please do not despise me because I am fraught with anxiety, but grant rest to my heart and ease my mind!' The poor person says: 'O, you who are rich and lack nothing, look at me, for I am perilously hungry. See my nakedness, and give me clothing to keep me warm!'

In the same way I say now: O Lord, almighty and most high, I look upon the wounds of my sins that have wounded me from infancy and I sigh, because my time has been spent uselessly. My strength is not up to the task, for it has been wasted in vanities. And

so, as you are the source of all goodness and mercy, I beseech you: Have mercy on me; touch my heart with your loving hand, for you are the best of doctors; comfort my soul, for you are the good comforter!”

About how the devil appeared to the bride during the elevation of the body of Christ, speaking to her and trying to prove by argument that what was being elevated was not the body of Christ. An angel of the Lord appeared to her right away to comfort her and tell her not to trust the devil. Also, about how Christ appears and forces the devil to tell her the truth, and about how the body of Christ is received by the wicked as well as the good, and concerning the proper remedy in temptations regarding the body of Christ.

Chapter 61

A monstrous creature appeared to the bride at the elevation of the body of Christ and said: ”Do you really believe, silly woman, that this wafer of bread is God? Even if he had been the highest of mountains, he would have been consumed long ago. None of the wise Jews to whom God has given wisdom believes this, nor can anyone believe that God would allow himself to be touched and loved by a most impure priest with the heart of a dog. If you would ascertain the truth of what I say, well, this priest is mine and whenever I want - and he is at the point of it now - I will snatch him away to myself.”

Right then, a good angel appeared and said: ”O, daughter, answer not a fool according to his folly! It is the father of lies who has appeared to you. But get ready, for our bridegroom is now near.” Jesus the Bridegroom came and said to the devil: ”Why are you troubling my daughter and bride? I call her daughter, because I created her, and I call her bride, because I redeemed her and have joined her to myself through my love.” The devil answered: ”I am speaking to her so that she will grow cold in your service, because I have been given permission.”

The Lord said: ”She experienced that last night when you pressed down on her eyes and the rest of her body and would have done worse, if you had been allowed. Instead, each time she resists your intrusions, her rewards will be doubled. However, devil, as you

were saying that I would have been consumed long ago, answer me while she is listening with her physical sense of hearing. Scripture says that, when the people were perishing, a bronze serpent was raised up and everyone who had been bitten was cured upon looking at it. Tell me whether this curative force came from the power of the bronze or the kind of snake or the virtue of Moses or was it a divine and hidden force?" The devil answered: "The curative force came from nothing other than God's own power and from the faith of a believing and obedient people who believed that God, having made all things out of nothing, was also able to do all sorts of things that had never been done before."

God said again: "Tell me, devil, whether the staff was made into a serpent because Moses accomplished it or was it because God commanded it? Was it because Moses was holy or was it because God's word said so?" The devil said to him: "What was Moses but a human being weak in himself whom God had made righteous? At his word, because God commanded and allowed it, the staff became a serpent, inasmuch as God truly commanded it and Moses was his compliant servant. Prior to God's command and word, the staff remained a staff. When the true God ordered it, the staff truly became a serpent, so much so that even Moses was frightened."

Then the Lord said to the bride who was watching all this: "This is what is now taking place on the altar. Prior to the sacramental words, the bread on the altar is bread. When the words 'This is my body' are spoken, the bread becomes the body of Christ that people receive, both the good and the wicked, one person as much as one thousand, according to the same truth but not with the same effect, for the good receive it unto life, while the wicked receive it unto judgment. What the devil said about God being defiled by the impurity of the offering minister is most truly false. It is as though a servant that is a leper were to deliver keys to his master, or if a sick person were to offer medicinal mixtures made from potent herbs, their condition would present no obstacle to the recipient of the service, inasmuch as the objects have the same power in themselves, no matter who brings them. Accordingly, God is not made bad because of the badness of a bad minister nor better because of a good minister, for God is always unchangeable and always the same. The devil spoke truly about this man being about to die soon, though he knew this by means of his natural cunning and through external causes, but he will not be able to snatch him away without my permission.

This priest does belong to him, however, unless he reforms himself. There are three reasons for this. The devil said as much when he said that he had stinking limbs and the heart of a dog. He really does stink and is sick with fever, for he has outer warmth but inner coldness, unbearable thirst, slackness of limb, a loathing for bread and a repugnance of every sweetness. He is indeed warm toward the world and cold toward God. He thirsts for carnal pleasure but has a repugnance to the beauty of virtue. He has no taste for God's commands but is full of fervor for everything carnal. It is therefore not strange that my body holds no other taste for him than that of bread baked in an oven, because he does not meditate on or have any taste for spiritual work, but only for that of the flesh.

Once the Agnus Dei has been said, and my body has been received into his body, the Father's power leaves him and the Son's sweet presence disappears. Once he has taken off the sacred vestments, he no longer has the favor of the Holy Spirit, who is the bond of unity. Only the form and memory of bread remain for him. However, you should not think that he or any other person is without God, however wicked he or she may be. God leaves him in the sense of not giving him greater consolation, but he remains with him by showing him tolerance and defending him against the devil.

Concerning what the devil said about how none of the wise Jews are willing to believe in this, my answer is: The disposition of these Jews is as though they had lost their right eyes. They limp along on both their spiritual feet and are therefore void of wisdom and will remain so till the end. Thus, it is not strange that the devil blinds and hardens their hearts and induces them to shamelessness and to actions that go against faith. Therefore, whenever any such thought regarding the body of Christ occurs to your mind, have recourse to your spiritual friends and stand firm in the faith, because you may be completely certain that the body that I assumed from the flesh of the Virgin, which was crucified and now reigns in heaven, this very same body is on the altar, and that both the good and the wicked receive it.

Just as I showed myself in a different shape to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, and though I was true God and true man when I came to the disciples through locked doors, so too I show myself beneath a different shape by means of priests so that faith may have its reward and human ingratitude may be revealed. That is no wonder: I am

still the same now as when I revealed the power of my divinity by means of fearful signs and portents, and yet the people said at the time, "Let us make gods who can precede us." I also revealed my humanity to the Jews, and they crucified it. I am the same each day on the altar, and they say: 'We are disgusted and solely tried by this food.

What greater ingratitude can there be than to try to comprehend God with one's reason and dare to judge the secret counsels and mysteries in God's own power and possession? Hence, by means of an invisible effect and a visible form, I wish to reveal to the unlearned and humble what the visible form of bread is without the substance of bread, what substance is in its form, what division in form is without substance, and why I endure such indignities and outrages upon my body. It is in order that the humble may be exalted and the proud be put to shame."

In the bride's presence, the Lord chides a priest who is burying a person who had died in patient suffering. About how Christ will come to wicked priests with seven spiritual plagues and seven bodily ones, and about how that soul obtained heavenly glory for the sake of her patient suffering and other merits.

Chapter 62

When a certain priest was burying a person who had been sick in bed for three and a half years, the bride heard the Spirit saying: "My friend, what are you doing? Why do you presume to touch the dead with your bloodied hands? Why do you make loud appeals to the Almighty for this man's sake with a froglike voice? How do you presume to appease the Judge for his sake when your own morals and manners are more like a jester's than those of a devout priest? It is the power of my words and not your doing that will profit the dead man. It is his faith and long-suffering that will bring him to his reward."

The Spirit then said to the bride: "This man's hands are bloodied in the sense that all his deeds are of a sensual nature. His hands are not worthy to touch the dead man in the sense that he is of no help to him by reason of his own worth but only through the nobleness of the sacrament. Good priests benefit souls especially in two ways: first,

through the power of the Lord's body and, second, through the love that burns in them. His voice is like that of frogs in the sense that it is full of dirty deeds and sensual pleasure. His moral behavior is like that of a jester. What else does a jester do but conform himself to worldly morality? What other tune does he sing but 'Let us eat and drink and enjoy life's pleasures'? That is how this man acts. He conforms himself to everyone else in his dress and behavior in order to please them. He incites them all to excess by his own example and extravagance, saying: 'Let us eat and drink, for the joy of the Lord is our strength. It is enough for us to reach the gates of glory. Even if I am not allowed to enter, it is enough for me to sit outside the gates. I have no wish to be perfect.'

This manner of voice and living is indeed serious. No one shall reach the gates of glory but the perfect or those who have been perfectly purified. No one shall possess my glory but those who perfectly desire it and perfectly struggle to attain it while they can. Yet I, the Lord of the universe, enter into this priest, though without being either enclosed or defiled. I enter as a bridegroom, I leave as the future judge, scorned by the receiver. I will, therefore, as I have said, come to priests, bringing seven plagues. They shall be deprived of everything they held dear. They shall be cast out of God's sight and sentenced in his wrath.

They shall be handed over to demons to suffer without rest, scorned by all, lacking all good things and abounding in every evil. They will likewise be scourged by seven bodily ills, as Israel was. Hence, you should not wonder when I am tolerant with the wicked or when any irreverence is shown to my sacrament. I endure it until the end in order to reveal my patience as well as human ingratitude. Nor should you worry when offenses are committed against my body, such as when you heard about its being spat out. The sensible species show their deficiency as is proper to them, and yet, being transparent, they reveal human ingratitude and show people to be culpable and unworthy to receive holy communion.”

The Spirit spoke again to the soul of the dead man: "O, soul, rejoice and exult, because your faith has separated you from the devil. Your simplicity has shortened for you the way through purgatory. Your patience has brought you to the gates of glory where my mercy will lead you in and crown you.”

How the devil appeared to the bride with the intention of deceiving her through specious arguments in regard to the sacrament of the body of Christ, and about how Christ came to her assistance and forced the devil to tell her the truth, and about the assurance and beneficial instruction Christ gives to the bride concerning his glorious body in the sacrament.

Chapter 63

A demon with an enormous belly appeared to the bride and said: "Woman, what do you believe? What great things are you thinking about? I, too, know many things and want to prove what I say with clear reasoning, but I would advise you to stop thinking about unbelievable things and to trust your senses. Do you not see with your eyes and hear with the ears of your body the sound of the breaking of the material bread of the host? You have seen it being spat out, touched, shamefully thrown on the ground, and suffering many other indignities that I would never allow to be done to me. Even if it is possible for God to be in the mouth of the righteous, how can he stoop to come to the unrighteous whose greed is without limit or measure?"

She turned to Christ who had appeared in human form immediately after the temptations. She said: "O Lord Jesus Christ, I thank you for all things and especially for these three. First, that you clothe my soul with the inspiration of penance and contrition by which every sin is washed away, no matter how serious. Second, that you feed my soul with the infusion of your charity and the memory of your passion by which the soul is refreshed as though with the best of foods. Third, that you console all those who invoke you in the midst of hardship. Therefore, Lord, have mercy on me and strengthen my faith, for, although I deserve to be handed over to the deceits of the devil, still I believe that he can do nothing without your permission and that your permission is never given without consolation."

Then Christ said to the devil: "Why are you speaking to my new bride?" The devil answered: "Because she is tied to me, and I still hope to ensnare her in my snares. She is tied to me when, by consenting to me, she has sought to please and has pleased me more

than you, her Creator. I have watched her ways, and they have not yet escaped my memory.” The Lord answered: ”Are you a negotiator, then, and a spy of every highway? The devil answered: ”Yes, I am a spy but in darkness. You made me dark.” The Lord asked: ”When were you able to see and how did you become dark?”

The demon said, ”I could see when you created me most beautiful, but, because I rashly thrust myself upon your splendor, it blinded me like the basilisk. I could see you when I desired your beauty. I could see you and knew you in my conscience when you rejected me. I also recognized you in your assumed flesh, and I did what you give me permission to do. I recognized you when you robbed me of your captives. Every day I recognize the power by which you mock and shame me.”

The Lord said: ”If you know and understand the truth about me, why do you lie to my chosen ones, when you realize the truth about me? Did I not say that he who eats my flesh shall have eternal life? And you say that it is a lie and that no one eats my flesh. Hence, my people are more idolatrous than those who worship stones and trees. Although I know all things, yet answer me while this woman here is listening, for she is unable to understand spiritual truths except by means of images. Was my body that Thomas touched after my resurrection a spiritual or corporeal body? If it was corporeal, how did it pass through the locked doors? But, if it was spiritual, how was it visible to corporeal eyes?”

The devil answered: ”It is hard to speak when the speaker is held in suspicion by everyone and he is unwillingly compelled to speak the truth.

However, seeing that I am compelled, I state that you were both corporeal and spiritual after rising from the dead. It is because of the eternal power of your divinity and because of a special privilege of your glorified flesh that you can enter anywhere and be present everywhere.” The Lord said further: ”Tell me, when Moses' staff was turned into a serpent, was it only the image of a serpent or was it completely a serpent both inside and outside? And tell me again, the leftover bread in those baskets, was it really and wholly bread or just the image of bread?” The devil answered: ”The entire staff became a serpent, what was in the baskets was entirely bread, and it was entirely done by your power and might.”

The Lord said: "Is it more difficult or more miraculous for me to perform a similar miracle now than it was then, if I please? Or, if my glorified flesh could pass through the locked doors then, why can it not be in the hands of the priests now? Does it, perhaps, entail an effort for my divinity to unite that which is least with that which is heavenly, the earthly with the most sublime? Certainly not. But, father of lies, just as you excel in wickedness, so too my love is and always shall be upon all creatures. Even if one person should seem to burn the sacrament with fire, or another to trample it underfoot, I alone know the faith of all and arrange everything in due measure and patience. I create something out of nothing and a visible thing out of an invisible one. I can reveal something through a visible sign and shape that, however, truly is one thing in what is signified, yet is seen as something else."

The devil answered: "I experience the truth of this everyday when people who are my friends depart from me to become your friends. But what more shall I say? The slave left to himself shows well enough by his will what he would carry out in act if allowed." Then the Son of God spoke once more: "My daughter, believe that I am Christ, the restorer of life and not the betrayer, the true one, the very truth itself and not a liar, the eternal power without which nothing ever was or shall be. If you believe that I am in the hands of the priest, even if the priest doubts it, then I am truly in his hands due to the faith of the believers and those present, as well as due to the words that I myself established and uttered. Everyone who receives me receives both my divine and human natures as well as the form of bread.

What is God if not life and sweetness, illuminating light, delightful goodness, judicious justice, saving mercy? What is my humanity if not an active body, the conjunction of God and man, the head of all Christians?

Therefore, those who believe in God and receive his body receive the divine nature as well, for they receive life. They also receive the human nature by which God and man are joined. Again, they receive the form of bread, because the One who is hidden as to his own form is received beneath a different form as a test of faith. Likewise, wicked persons also receive the same divinity but as a stern judge rather than an affectionate friend. They receive his human nature as well, though less easily appeased. They also receive the form of bread, for they receive the truth hidden beneath the visible form, but it is not sweet to them.

Once they put me in their mouths and chew, the sacrament is fulfilled, but I depart from them with my divinity and humanity, and only the form of bread remains for them. It is not that I am not truly present in the wicked as well as in the good due to the institution of the sacrament, but that the effect is not the same for the good as for the wicked. Life itself, God, is offered to man in this sacrifice. So, life enters into the wicked but does not remain with them, because they do not give up their wickedness. Thus, only the form of bread remains there for their senses to perceive. Yet, this is not because the bread's form behind the bread's substance has any effect upon them, but because they think no more of what they have received than what they see and perceive of the form of bread and wine. It is as if a mighty lord were to enter someone's house and his appearance were to be noticed but the presence of his goodness ignored.”

The Mother's words to the daughter comparing her Son to a poor peasant, and about how troubles and persecutions occur to good and bad alike, though they lead the good by patience toward purification and reward.

Chapter 64

The Mother speaks: ”My Son is like a poor peasant who has neither ox nor donkey but instead carries the wood himself from the forest as well as the other tools needed to complete his work. Among his tools, he carries birch-rods. He needs these for two reasons: in order to flog disobedient children and to create warmth for cold people. My Son, the Lord and Creator of the universe, made himself most poor in order to so enrich everyone not with fleeting but with eternal riches. Carrying on his back the heavy weight of the bitter cross, he cleansed and obliterated everyone's sins with his blood. Among his various works, he selected tools of virtue, that is, virtuous persons through whom the hearts of many have been inflamed with the love of God through the operation of the Spirit of God, thus making the path of truth known.

He also selected birch-rods, which stand for the lovers of this world, through whom the children and friends of God are flogged for their own improvement and purification

and for their greater precaution and reward. The rods also warm the cold children, and even God grows warm by their fire. How does this happen? Well, when the worldly cause trouble for God's friends as well as for those who almost only love God out of fear, these turn in their troubles to God with greater fervor, considering the emptiness of the world. Then God has compassion on their troubles and gives them encouragement and love.

But what will become of the rods once the children have been flogged? They will surely be cast into the burning fire. God certainly does not scorn his own people when he delivers them into the hands of the impious. Rather, he is like a father who raises his children and makes use in this way of the wickedness of the impious as a means to their reward.”

The Mother's admonishment to her daughter with a simile to show how God's friends should not weary of nor leave off their work of preaching; also, about the great reward for such preachers.

Chapter 65

The Mother speaks: ”You ought to be like an empty vessel ready to be filled, neither so wide that it cannot hold what is poured into it, nor so deep that it lacks a bottom. This vessel is your body, which is empty when it is a stranger to desire. It has the proper width when the flesh is prudently disciplined so that the soul is able to understand spiritual things and the body is strong enough to work. The vessel is bottomless when the flesh is not restrained by any form of abstinence and the body is not denied whatever the mind desires.

Now listen to what I have to say: My servant uttered an unfeathered word when he said: 'What is it to me to be speaking about things that do not have to do with my state in life?' Words like that are not fitting for a servant of God. Anyone who hears and knows the truth and is silent about it is liable to punishment, if not to being completely rejected.

A certain ruler had a strong castle in which there were four good things: undecaying

food that chased away all hunger, healthy water that quenched every thirst, a sweet-smelling fragrance that drove away all poisonous vapors, indispensable weapons to weaken every foe. While the ruler was attending to other matters, the castle was at last besieged. When the ruler found out, he said to his herald: 'Go and proclaim the following with a loud voice to my soldiers: I, your ruler, shall free my castle. Anyone who follows me with a good will shall be with me in my glory and receive similar honor. If anyone falls in battle, I will raise him up to a life without need or anxiety. I shall give him lasting honor and unfailing plenty.' The servant received his orders and made the proclamation, but he was not careful enough in doing so and the proclamation did not reach the ears of the most valiant soldier. So this soldier kept away from the battle. What will the ruler do to this soldier who would gladly have fought but who did not hear the words of the herald? Indeed, he will be rewarded for the sake of his good will, but the negligent herald will not be exempt from punishment.

This castle is the Holy Church founded through the blood of my Son. In the church is his body that chases away all hunger. In it is the water of gospel wisdom, the fragrance of saintly example, and the weapons of his passion. This castle is now beset by enemies, for many are to be found in the Holy Church who preach my Son with their voices but do not agree with him in their conduct. What they speak with their voices, they contradict in their intentions, for they do not care about their heavenly homeland but only want to gain their own pleasure. Accordingly, in order that the enemies of God may decrease in number, the friends of God should be unflagging in their efforts, for their reward will not be a temporal one but the kind knowing no end."

The Mother's words to the daughter about how the prudent possession of temporal goods does no harm, provided that the desire to possess them is not disordered.

Chapter 66

The Mother speaks: "What harm does it do if someone's clothes get poked by a needle or a bit of iron so long as the skin is not injured? In the same way, a prudent possession of temporal goods does no harm, provided that the desire to possess them is

not disordered. Therefore, examine your heart to ensure that your intention is good, because the words of God must be spread to others through you.

As the sluice gate of a water-mill blocks the water and then lets it flow whenever necessary, so too you must carefully examine the various thoughts and temptations occurring to you in order to get rid of vain and worldly ideas, while keeping continuously in mind divine ones. It is written, you know, that the lower waters flowed downward but the upper waters stood like a wall.

The lower waters stand for carnal thoughts and useless desires. These should just flow off without attracting any attention. The upper waters stand for the inspirations of God and the words of the saints. These should remain in your heart like steadfast walls that no temptations can batter away from your heart.”

Christ's words to the bride disclosing his magnificence, and about how all things proceed according to his designs, with the exception of sinners' wretched souls. Figurative examples are given concerning all this. Also, about how the will must be guarded in one's actions.

Chapter 67

The Son speaks to the bride: ”I am one God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. All things were foreseen and established by my divine providence from the beginning and before the ages. All things, bodily as well as spiritual, have a certain plan and order, and they exist and move along according as my foreknowledge has ordained and foreknown. Three examples will help you to understand this. First, you can understand it from living things as well as from the fact that the woman and not the man gives birth.

Second, it can be seen from the fact that sweet trees bear sweet fruit, while bitter trees bear bitter fruit. Third, it can be seen from the stars, that is, that the sun and moon and all the heavenly bodies complete their course as predetermined in my divinity.

Rational souls are also foreknown in my divinity. I know beforehand what they will become, but my foreknowledge is in no way an obstacle or hindrance to them, for I have given them free voluntary motion, that is, free will and the power to choose whatever they like.

Consequently, as the woman and not the man gives birth, so too the good soul, God's wife, should give birth with God's help, for the soul was created in order to advance in virtue and grow fruitful through the seed of the virtues, so that she may be clasped in the arms of divine love. The soul that falls away from her original excellence and from her Creator acts contrary to God's plans and is therefore unworthy of God's sweetness.

Second, God's unchanging plan appears in trees, because sweet trees bear sweet fruit and bitter trees the opposite. A date has both a sweet pulp and a hard stone. Similarly, it has been foreseen from all eternity that wherever the Holy Spirit dwells, there all worldly delight turns vile, and all worldly honor becomes burdensome. In such a heart, however, there is so much strength and hardness from the Holy Spirit that it is not cast down by any adversity nor overly elated by any success. It has been similarly foreseen from all eternity that wherever the devil's briar is, the fruit will be red on the outside but all unclean and full of prickles on the inside. Thus, while there is momentary and apparent sweetness in the devil's delight, it is full of thorns and tribulations, because the more someone gets entangled in the world, the more heavily that person is weighed down by the burden of the account to be rendered. And so, just as every tree produces its fruit according to the kind of roots and trunk it has, so too every person is judged according to the intention behind his or her deeds.

In the third place, all the elements keep to their own order and motion, as foreseen from eternity, and move according to the will of their Maker. Likewise, every rational creature should move and prepare itself according to the order established by the Creator. When a rational creature does the opposite, it is obvious that it is abusing its freedom of choice. So, while irrational creatures keep to their limits, rational human beings debase their original excellence and render their sentence heavier by not making use of their reason.

Thus, the human will must be guarded. I do no more injury to the devil than to my

angels. As God requires that chaste, indescribable sweetness from his bride, so the devil looks for thorns and prickles from his bride. Yet, the devil can in no way prevail, unless the power of the will has been corrupted.”

The Mother's words to her daughter about a fox, and about how the devil is like a fox, and about how the devil, like a clever fox, deceives people with many and varied temptations, and tries all he can to deceive all those whom he sees making progress in virtue.

Chapter 68

The Mother speaks: ”The small animal called a fox is very diligent and clever in getting everything it needs. Sometimes it pretends to be asleep or even dead so that the birds lose their caution and perch right on top of it, and the fox can then easily catch and devour the birds so uncautious as to perch there. It watches how the birds fly, and snatches and devours any it sees resting from their fatigue on the ground or under a tree. However, the birds that fly with both their wings confuse and frustrate him in his efforts.

This fox represents the devil. He is always following God's friends and especially those who lack his malicious bile and wicked venom. He pretends to be asleep and dead in the sense that he sometimes leaves a person free from more serious temptations so as to deceive and ensnare him unawares more easily in small ones. Sometimes he even makes vice seem like virtue and virtue like vice, in order that a person gets caught and falls into a hole and comes to ruin, unless prudence comes to his aid. An example will help you to understand this.

Sometimes mercy can be a vice, namely, when it is practiced merely to please people. Rigorous justice can be injustice, when it is exercised because of greed or impatience. Humility can be pride, when one makes a display of it in order to attract attention. Patience seems to be a virtue but is not in a situation where one would seek revenge if one could, but must endure an offense simply because there is no opportunity for revenge. Sometimes the devil also submits people to trials and tribulations in order to

break them through excessive sadness. Sometimes, too, the devil fills people's hearts with anxiety and worry so as to make them become lukewarm in God's service or, when they are careless in small respects, to make them fall in greater ones.

It was in this way that the person of whom I am speaking was tricked by the fox. When he reached old age and had everything he wanted, and declared himself to be happy and to wish to go on living, he was then snatched away without the sacraments and without atoning for his life and deeds. Like an ant, he used to gather his stores night and day, though not in the storehouse of the Lord. But, when he had reached the entrance of the anthill where he was bringing his grain, he died and left his work for others. He who does not fruitfully gather in the time of harvest will not have the enjoyment of the corn.

Happy are those birds of the Lord that do not sleep beneath the trees of worldly delights but in the trees of heavenly desires. If ever a temptation of that wicked fox, the devil, lays hold of them, they quickly fly away on the wings of humble confession and the hope of heavenly assistance.”

EXPLANATION

Christ, the Son of God, speaks: ”This provost is material for the episcopate. Whoever wants to climb the tree of sweet fruit should be free from every burden, girded and ready for gathering, having a clean vessel in which to put the fruit. Let this man seek eagerly now to decorate his body with virtues. He should supply it with the necessities but not the superfluities of life. He should flee the occasions of incontinence and greed and show himself to be a clean mirror and an example for imperfect men. Otherwise a horrible fall will come upon him, a sudden end by the stroke of my hand.”

All this came to pass.

Christ's words to the bride comparing the good conduct and good deeds of the clergy to clear water and their bad conduct and bad deeds to filthy, brutish water.

Chapter 69

The Son speaks: "You can tell that water from a spring is not good, depending on three things. First, if the water does not have the proper color; second, if it is muddy; third, if it is always stagnant and not in motion, letting in dirt but not getting rid of it.

By these waters, I have in mind the conduct and hearts of the clergy. In the goodness of their conduct, they should be like springwater that is sweet to drink, impervious to all the dirt of vice. Therefore, a priest's proper color is true humility. The more he sees himself as obliged to work for God, the more he will humble himself in thought and deed. The devil's color is found wherever there is pride. Pride is like a leprous hand scooping up water from a spring and making the water itself seem repulsive to those watching. In the same way, a priest's pride shows his works to be defiled.

The water is muddy if a priest is greedy and not content with the necessities of life. When he is anxious he is useless to himself and harmful to others through the example of his greed. Third, the water is unclean when it lets in but does not rid itself of any dirt. This arises both from its outlet being closed and because it has no motion. A priest is thus unclean when he loves carnal pleasures in his heart and body and does not get rid of the unclean things that occur to him. Blemishes anywhere on the body are ugly but especially so on the face. In the same way, impurity should be hateful to everyone but especially to those who are called to higher things. Accordingly, those priests should be chosen for my work who are not full of verbose knowledge but of humility and purity, who behave well in themselves and teach others by word and example. Even a leprous hand is useful for my work, provided the mind is good and the spiritual hand is not lacking."

The Mother's words to her daughter narrating in order the passion of her blessed Son, and describing her Son's beauty and form.

Chapter 70

The Mother speaks: "When my Son's passion was near at hand, tears filled his eyes and sweat covered his body from fear of suffering. Next, he was taken from my sight, and I did not see him again until he was led out to be scourged. He was then dragged along the ground and thrown down so cruelly and violently that it knocked his head about and broke his teeth. He was struck on his neck and cheek so forcefully that the sound of the blows reached my ears. At the command of the executioner, he undressed himself and freely hugged the pillar. He was bound with a rope and then scourged with barbed whips. The barbs caught in his skin and were then pulled backward, not just tearing but plowing into him so as to wound his whole body.

At the first blow, it was as though my heart had been pierced and I had lost the use of my senses. Then, coming out of it, I see his whole wounded body - for his body was naked during the scourging. Then one of his enemies said to the executioners: 'Do you intend to kill this man without a sentence and cause his death yourselves?' He cut the ropes as he said this. Once released from the pillar, my Son turned first to get his clothes, yet he was not given the time to put them on but was led away while still putting his arms into his sleeves. The footprints he left at the pillar were so full of blood that I could easily make them out and see which way they led by the mark of his blood. And he wiped his bloody face with his tunic.

After the sentence he was led out carrying the cross, but, along the way, another man took his turn carrying it. Once he arrived at the place for crucifixion, a hammer and four sharp nails were ready for him there. He took off his clothes when ordered but covered his private parts with a small cloth. He proceeded to tie it on as though it gave him some consolation to do so. The cross was planted firmly, and the crossbeam was so placed that the juncture was at the center of the shoulder blades. The cross did not have any kind of headrest. The sign with his sentence on it was attached to each arm of the cross sticking out above the head.

On being ordered, he lay down with his back to the cross and, when he was asked to do so, first stretched out his right hand. Then, since his left hand could not reach the other corner of the cross, it had to be stretched out at full length. His feet were similarly stretched out to reach the slots for the nails and placed crosswise, and, as if they had been loosened from the shinbones, were fastened to the wood of the cross by two nails

driven through solid bone, as had been done with his hands. At the first hammer stroke, I was thrown into a stupor of sorrow, and when I awoke I saw my Son already fastened to the cross. I heard men saying to one another: 'What has this man committed - theft, robbery, or fraud?' Others answered that he was a fraud. Then the crown of thorns was pushed down on his head so hard that it came down to the middle of his forehead. Streams of blood poured down from where the thorns sat and filled his face and hair and eyes and beard so that almost nothing at all but blood could be seen. He could not even see me standing there by the cross without blinking to get rid of the blood.

After he had entrusted me to his disciple, he lifted up his head, raised his weeping eyes to heaven, and cried out with a voice from deep within his chest, saying: 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?' Never was I able to forget that cry, not until I came to heaven, the cry that he uttered, moved more by my suffering than by his own. Now the color of death appeared in those parts of his body that were visible beneath the blood. His cheeks cleaved to his teeth. You could count his thin, naked ribs. His stomach, emptied now of all its juices, was sucked in toward his back, and even his nostrils looked thin now. When his heart was near to breaking, his whole body shook and his beard fell toward his chest. Right then, I collapsed lifeless to the ground. His mouth remained open, as he had already breathed his last. His tongue and teeth and the blood in his mouth were visible to onlookers. His half-closed eyes had rolled backward. His now dead body sagged downward, with his knees bent to either side, and his feet bending on the nails like hinges.

Meanwhile other people standing nearby were saying almost insultingly, 'O, Mary, your son is dead.' Others, more noble-minded, were saying: 'Lady, your son's suffering is now ended unto his eternal glory.' A little later, after his side had been opened, the lance was pulled out with blood that was brown in color showing on its tip, which meant that the lance had pierced his heart. That penetrating lance was also felt going through my own heart, and it is a wonder that my heart did not burst. Though the others were going away, I could not go away. I felt almost comforted to be able to touch his body when it was taken down from the cross, and take it in my arms, and explore his wounds and wipe away the blood. I closed his mouth with my fingers and shut his eyes as well. I could not bend his rigid arms all the way back to repose on his chest but only across his stomach. His knees could not be straightened out but pointed outward in the same position in

which they had stiffened on the cross.”

The Mother speaks again: ”Though you cannot see my Son as he exists in heaven, hear at least how he was in body on earth. He was so fair of face that no one, not even someone very sad at heart, could see him face-to-face without being cheered at his sight. The righteous were cheered with spiritual comfort, but even the wicked found relief from the sorrow of the world for as long as they looked on him. For that reason, people who were sad used to say: 'Let us go and see Mary's son and at least find some relief as long as we are there.'

In his twentieth year of age, he was perfect in size and manly strength, tall for the men of medium height in those days, not fleshy but well built as to muscles and bones. His hair, eyelashes, and beard were golden brown. His beard was a palm-width in length. His forehead was neither sunken but straight. His nose was evenly built, neither too little nor too large.

His eyes were so limpid that even his enemies loved to gaze on him. His lips were not too thick and were bright red. His jaw did not jut out and was not too long but attractive and of a fine length. His cheeks were nicely rounded. He was fair-skinned with traces of red, and he had straight posture. There was not a blemish on his whole body, as his scourgers can testify who saw him bound to the pillar completely naked. There were never any vermin or knots or dirt in his hair.”

Christ puts loving questions to the bride, and she gives humble answers to him, and about how Christ submitted three praiseworthy states to the choice of the bride: the state of virginity, the married state, and the widowed state.

Chapter 71

The Son of God speaks to his bride: ”Answer for me the four questions I ask. If someone gives his friend a fruitful vine but keeps it close to his own house so that he might have the pleasure of seeing and smelling it, what should the giver say if the new owner of the vine were to ask if he could transplant it to another place where it could bear

more plentiful fruit?" She answers: "If the friend gave him it out of love and was sensible and desired the good for his friend, then he would certainly allow him to do whatever he wanted with the vine, saying: 'My friend, though it makes me happy to have the vine close by, still it does not yield me much fruit, and so I am happy if you can transfer it, if you like, to a more fertile spot.' "

The Lord asked a second time: "If parents were to give their maiden daughter to a young man, and she consented to the youth, but if the boy, when asked by the parents whether he wanted to have her or not, does not give an answer, is the girl betrothed then or not?" She answered: "It seems to me that, since the boy did not express his own wishes, the girl is not betrothed."

The Lord spoke a third time: "A noble youth in the company of three maidens proposed to them that whichever of them could express herself in a way that excited his love the most would obtain that which the youth loved the most. The first girl answered: 'I love this young man so much that I would rather die than disgrace myself with another man.' The second girl said: 'And I would rather suffer any kind of pain than utter a single word against his wishes.' The third answered: 'I would prefer to suffer any kind of bitter pain or condemnation rather than see his least little scorn or condemnation.' " Then the Lord said: "Tell me, which of these three maidens loved the youth most and should receive his preferential love?" She answered: "It seems to me that they all loved him equally, since they were all of one accord in his respect, and all of them equally deserve to have his love."

The Lord spoke a fourth time: "A man once consulted his friend and said: 'I have very fertile wheat. If it is sown in the ground, it yields a great crop. However, I am very hungry, so what do you think is more advisable: to eat it or to sow it in the ground?' His friend answers: 'Your hunger can be stilled at another time. Now it is more useful for you to sow it in the ground.' " Then the Lord added: "My daughter, do you not think the same - should not the person experiencing hunger endure it and plant the grain so that it will be good for many people?"

The Lord said again: "These four examples apply to you. Your daughter is like a vine that you have vowed and given to me. Now, however, since I know a more suitable place

for her, I want to transplant her where I please, and you should not be upset by this, since you gave your consent to the transplantation.”

The Lord said again: ”You gave me your daughter, but I did not show you which would be more acceptable to me, her virginity or her matrimony, or whether your sacrifice pleased me or not. Therefore, the things that were done in uncertainty can be changed and corrected now that they are known with certainty.” The Lord said again: ”Virginity is good and most excellent, for it resembles the angelic state, provided it is maintained with wisdom and virtue.

But if the one is missing from the other, that is, if there is virginity of the flesh but not of the mind, then that virginity has been deformed. A devout and humble housewife is more acceptable to me than a proud and immodest virgin. A God-fearing housewife, who is in control of herself and lives according to the rule of her state, can win equal merit as a humble and modest virgin. Although it is a great thing to stand the test of fire without burning, it is an equally great thing to remain outside the fire of the religious state but to be willing to be in the fire and to burn with greater ardor outside the fire than one does who is in the fire.

I offer you the example of three women - Susanna, Judith, and Thecla the virgin. The first was married, the second a widow, the third a virgin. They had different ways of life and made different choices, but they gained a similar reward by their meritorious deeds. When Susanna was falsely molested by the priests, she preferred, out of love for God, death to disgracing her state in life. Because she feared me as being everywhere present, she deserved to be saved and to be glorified for the sake of her salvation. When Judith saw the dishonor done to me and her people being lost, she was so troubled that she not only exposed herself to blame and condemnation for the sake of her love for God, but was also prepared to suffer punishment for my sake. Finally, Thecla, who was a virgin, preferred to suffer bitter torments than to utter a single word against me. These three women, although their actions were not one and the same, nevertheless were equal in merit. Therefore, whether virgin or widow, everyone is equally capable of pleasing me, provided that all their desire is directed toward me and that their life is virtuous.”

The Lord said again: ”It is equally acceptable to me whether your daughter remains

a virgin or marries, provided that it is done according to my will. What would it profit her if she perhaps were cloistered in body but remained outside the walls in her mind? Or, which would be more glorious: to live for herself or for the benefit of others? I know and foresee all things, and I do nothing without a reason. Therefore, she shall not arrive at her destination by the first fruit, for that would be out of fear, nor the second fruit, for that would be out of lukewarmness.

She will, however, arrive in the middle state, for that has just the right warmth of love and fruit of virtue. However, the man who is to receive her should possess three things - housing, clothing, and food enough to receive her.”

EXPLANATION

The Son speaks: ”You are wondering why this virgin did not come to be married in the way you hoped. I answer by way of a parable. A certain nobleman arranged to give his daughter in marriage to a poor man. This man, who was to have been betrothed to the maiden, broke the laws of the city and was dishonorably expelled by the citizens and did not get the maiden whom he desired. I have acted in the same manner with the ruler of this country. I promised to do great things for him, but instead he joined my enemies and therefore did not obtain the things I promised him.

But you might ask: Could I not foresee the future? Of course, I foresaw it, in the same way as can be read in the case of Moses and his people. I have revealed and do reveal many things so that people can prepare themselves for good things and know what to do and wait patiently. Know, however, that one woe has passed and another shall come upon the ungrateful people of this kingdom in order that my blessing may afterward come upon the humble persons who entreat my mercy. Know, too, that it would be better for this virgin to follow the advice of the wise and of me.”

This virgin is believed to have been Lady Cecilia, St. Bridget's daughter. Concerning her, see St. Bridget's biography.

The words of Christ concerning the sisters of the risen Lazarus, and about how (as I believe) the sisters stand for the bride and her daughter, Lazarus for the soul, the Jews

for envious persons, and about how God has shown the latter greater mercy than he did for the sisters of Lazarus, and about how people who talk much but do little become indignant against those who do good deeds.

Chapter 72

The Son speaks: "There were two sisters, Martha and Mary, whose brother I raised from the dead. After his resurrection, he served me more than before. His sisters, too, though they had been my servants and zealous in attending to me before their brother's resurrection, showed themselves much more solicitous and devoted afterward. I have treated you in a similar way spiritually. Thus, I raised your brother, that is, your soul that - fetid after being dead for four days - had separated itself from me by breaking my commandments, by base desire and delight in the sweetness of the world and of sins.

There were, however, four reasons that moved me to raise Lazarus. The first was that he had been my friend while he lived. The second was the love of his sisters. The third was that Mary's humility had earned such a reward when she washed my feet. She deserved to be gladdened and honored to the extent to which she had lowered herself for my sake in the sight of the guests. The fourth reason was to manifest the glory of my human nature. These four reasons do not, however, apply to you, since you love the world more than they did. Therefore, my mercy toward you is greater than my mercy toward those sisters. It is clearly all the greater inasmuch as spiritual death is more dangerous than bodily death, and the resurrection of the soul is more glorious than bodily resurrection.

Hence, since my mercy excels your deeds, welcome me, as those sisters did, into the home of your minds with most fervent charity, loving nothing as me, having total trust in me, each day humbling yourselves along with Mary by weeping for your sins, unashamed to live humble among the proud, chaste among the unchaste, showing to others outwardly how much you love me inwardly. Furthermore, like those sisters, you ought to be of one heart and one mind, strong in scorning the world and quick in praising God. If you do so, then I will raise your brother - your soul - for you and protect it from being killed by the Jews.

What would it have profited Lazarus to rise from a present death, unless, by living more virtuously in the present life, he might rise up more glorious to a second and lasting life? Who are the Jews who sought to kill Lazarus if not those who become indignant because you lead better lives than theirs, who have learned to speak loftily but to do little, who, seeking the approval of others, scorn the deeds of their predecessors with all the greater scorn the less they themselves deign to understand the higher truths?

There are many such people. They know how to discourse on the virtues but not how to observe them by leading virtuous lives. Their souls are therefore in danger, because their words are many but their deeds are not to be seen. Did my preachers act in this manner? By no means! They certainly did not admonish sinners with lofty words but with few and charitable words, and they were ready to give their own souls for the souls of sinners. Through their charity, others obtained charity, for the teacher's zeal forms the mind of the listener more than mere words do. Many preachers nowadays say abstruse things about me, but no fruit comes of it, because wood is not set on fire by merely blowing on it but only with the aid of sparks of fire.

I shall guard and protect you from these Jews so that you will not leave me because of what they do or say. Yet, I shall not protect you in such a way that you escape every suffering but that you may not succumb due to lack of patient endurance. Stick to your resolution, and I shall set your will on fire with my charity.”

The Virgin's words to the bride concerning how she should not be upset about the knight who was declared to be dead and shown to her as though dead.

Chapter 73

A certain knight who was alive was declared to be dead. In a spiritual vision he was also shown to the bride to be as though he were dead and begging for help. Because this lady was upset by his death, the Mother of mercy said to her: ”Daughter, you will find out in time whether or not the knight is dead, but we still want to strive so that he may live a

better life.”

Christ's words to his bride; John the Baptist's words of praise to Christ, and the devout prayers he pours forth in Christ's presence on behalf of Christians and especially for a certain knight. Through John's prayers, the knight, with his own hands and with the helping hands of the glorious Virgin and of Peter and Paul, is armed and decorated with spiritual weapons, that is, with the virtues. Also, what each of these bodily weapons signifies, and about praying well.

Chapter 74

The Son of God was speaking to his bride, saying: "You set it down today that it is better to forestall than to be forestalled. Indeed, I forestalled you with my sweet grace so that the devil would not gain control of your soul."

John the Baptist suddenly appeared and said: "Blessed are you, God! You preexist all things. There has never been another god together with you or besides you nor will there ever be any after you, for you are and were one God forever. You are the truth promised by the prophets. While yet unborn I rejoiced in you. I recognized you more fully when I pointed you out. You are our joy and our glory, our longing and our delight. The sight of you fills us with an indescribable pleasure, which none knows but the one who has tasted of it. You are our only love. It is no wonder that we love you, for you are love itself, and you love not only those who love you but, being the creator of all, you are even charitable to those who scorn to know you. Now then, my Lord, because we are rich through you and in you, we ask you to give of our spiritual riches to those who lack riches so that more people may partake of our good fortune, just as we rejoice not in our own merits but in you."

Christ answers: "You are indeed an uppermost limb alongside and next to the head. Yet the neck is closer and more excellent. As I am the head of all, so my Mother is like the neck, and then come the angels. You and my apostles are like the joints of the backbone, for you not only love me, but you also honor me by helping those who love me. What I

said therefore remains firm: The works that I do, you shall also do, and your will is my will. As the head of the body does not move without its limbs, so too in your spiritual connection and union with me it is not one thing to wish and another to be able to do, but rather you have every ability to do what each one of you wishes. Therefore, your request shall be fulfilled.”

After these words were spoken, John brought a certain knight who was almost half-dead into their midst and said: ”Here, Lord, here is a man who has consecrated his knighthood to you. He is trying to struggle but is not strong enough, for he is unarmed and weak. I am bound to help him for a twofold reason, both because of his parents' merits and because of the love he feels toward my honor. Therefore, for your own glory, give him a knight's attire to keep the shame of his nakedness from being seen.”

The Lord answered: ”Give him what you like and fit him out as you please!” Then John said: ”Come, my son, and receive from me the first garment of your knighthood. Once you have it, you will more easily be able to receive and bear the rest of your knightly gear. It is fitting for a knight to have a soft and smooth tunic close to his skin. The bodily tunic is soft and smooth, and likewise your spiritual tunic must be to keep God dear to your soul and delightful to your affections.

Delight in God comes from two things: the consideration of his kindnesses, and the remembrance of the sins you have committed. I had both of them as a boy. You see, I considered what a grace God had prepared for me while I was not yet born, and what a blessing he had given me after my birth. I sighed to consider how I might worthily repay my God. I considered, too, the instability of the world, and so I ran off to the desert where my Lord Jesus became so sweet for me that the thought of all the world's pleasures wearied me and the mere desire for them became a burden. Come, then, and put on this tunic, for the rest will be given to you in due time.”

Then Blessed Peter the Apostle appeared and said: ”John gave you a tunic, but I, who fell low but got up like a man, shall procure for you a coat of mail, that is, divine charity. Just as chain mail consists of many iron rings, so too charity protects a man against enemy missiles and makes him more even-tempered in enduring the evils that threaten, more agile in honoring God and more fervent in divine works, invincible in

adversity, calm in hope, steadfast in the tasks he undertakes. This chain mail should shine like gold and be as strong as steel and iron, for everyone who has charity should be as malleable as gold in the endurance of adversity as well as shining in wisdom and discernment so as not to exchange heresy for sound faith nor doubt for certain truth.

The mail must be as strong as iron. Just as iron subdues all, so too a man of charity must be eager to humble all those who stand in the way of faith and good morals without yielding because of abusive language. He must not bend due to friendships nor grow lukewarm for the sake of his own material comforts. He must not hide for the sake of bodily ease, nor be afraid of dying, for no one can take someone's life away without God's permission. Now, though chain mail consists of many rings, nevertheless the chain mail of charity is woven of two principal rings. The first ring of charity is the knowledge of God and the frequent consideration of divine kindnesses and precepts.

This makes a man recognize how he should behave toward God, toward his neighbor, and toward the world. The second ring is the curbing of one's selfish will for God's sake. Everyone with a perfect and whole love of God keeps nothing of his own will for himself if it goes against God. Here, my son, God gives you this coat of mail, which I have won for you as was anticipated by God's grace.”

Blessed Paul then appeared and said: ”O, my son, Peter, the chief pastor of the sheep, gave you a coat of mail. Of love for God, I shall give you that cuirass that is love for your neighbor, a willingness to die freely for your neighbor's salvation with the help of God's grace. Just as many plates are combined in a cuirass and bound together with nails, so too there are many virtues that come together in the love for one's neighbor. Everyone who loves his neighbor is bound to feel sorrow, first of all, because not all of those redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ repay God with love in return. He should feel sorrow, in the second place, because the Holy Church, God's bride, is not in the most commendable condition. Third, because there are very few who remember God's sufferings with anguish and love. Fourth, he should be on his guard so that his neighbor may not be corrupted by any bad example of his own. Fifth, he should give his possessions to his neighbor cheerfully and pray to God for him that he may advance and become perfect in every goodness.

The nails that hold the plates together are godly words. When a charitable man sees his neighbor in trouble, he should comfort him with words of charity; he should defend him when unjustly attacked; he should visit the sick, ransom hostages, and not be ashamed of the poor. He should ever love the truth, put nothing ahead of the love of God, and never swerve from the way of justice. I myself was outfitted with this cuirass, for I was weak with the weak, unashamed to speak the truth in the sight of kings and princes, and ready to die for the salvation of my neighbor.”

Then the Mother of God appeared and said to the knight: ”My son, what do you still need?” And he said: ”I have no helmet for my head.” The Mother of mercy then said to the guardian angel of his soul: ”How did your guardianship benefit his soul and what do you have to present to our Lord?” The angel answered: ”I do have something to present, but it is not much. Sometimes he gave alms and sometimes said prayers. Sometimes, too, he denied his own will for God's sake, sincerely asking God to make the world become distasteful to him and God dear to him above all things.”

The Mother answered: ”It is good that you have something to bring. We will then do what a skillful goldsmith does when he is about to make some grand object out of gold. If he needs gold and does not have it, he turns for help to friends who have it. His friends who have gold help him to complete his work. If a person is making an object of clay, who will give him any gold? It is not fitting to mix gold with clay. Therefore, all the saints, rich in gold, will together with me earn a helmet for you to have. This helmet is the intention of pleasing God alone. As a helmet protects the head from arrows and blows, so too a good intention directed toward God alone protects the soul so that the temptations of the devil do not prevail against it, and it introduces God into the soul.

The good knight George had this intention, as did Maurice and many others, including the thief who hung on the cross. Without it, no one can lay a good foundation or come to his reward. The helmet should have two openings in front of the eyes to allow one to see in advance anything approaching. These openings are discernment concerning things to be done and caution concerning things to be omitted, for, without discernment and forethought, many things that seem good at the start turn out to be bad in the end.”

The Mother asked the knight again: ”What do you still need, my son?” And he

answered: "My hands are naked and have no armor." The Mother said: "I will help you so that your hands will not be naked. Just as you have two bodily hands, you likewise have two spiritual ones. The right hand with which the sword is held symbolizes the work of justice. There should be five virtues like five fingers there. The first finger means that every just person must first be just to himself. This is done by guarding against anything in one's speech, action, or example that might offend one's neighbor so that one does not undo through one's own disorderly behavior what one teaches to others or justly reprehends in them. The second finger means not to carry out justice or the deeds of justice for the sake of human favor or worldly greed but for the love of God alone. The third means not to show unjust fear of anyone nor to dissemble anything out of friendship nor to swerve away from justice for anyone's sake, rich or poor, friend or foe.

The fourth means to be ready and willing to die for the sake of justice. The fifth means not only to do justice but also to love justice wisely. The result of this is that the sentence shows both mercy and justice, and the person who commits a lesser sin is corrected in one way, while the person who commits a greater is corrected in another way, and the person who sins from ignorance in one way, while the person who sins by design or malice in another way. Whoever has these five fingers should be careful not to sharpen his sword through impatience nor dull it through worldly pleasure nor drop it through imprudence or darken it through frivolity.

The left hand symbolizes godly prayer. This, too, has five fingers. The first is a firm belief in the articles of faith concerning the divine and human natures, putting it all into practice and believing all that the Holy Church, God's bride, professes. The second is the refusal to sin deliberately against God along with the desire to make reparation for all the sins you have committed through contrition and atonement. The third is to entreat God to turn the love of the flesh into a spiritual love. The fourth is living for nothing else in the world but to give glory to God and to reduce the amount of sin. The fifth is never to rely on your own strength in any way but ever to fear God and to await death at any hour. There, my son, these are the two hands you should have. With the right hand you must brandish the sword of justice against the transgressors of justice. With the left hand of prayer you must plead for God's help so that you never trust to your own righteousness nor become insolent toward God."

Blessed Mary appeared again and said to the knight: "What do you still need, my son?" He answered: "Leg armor." And she said: "Listen to me, O knight who once belonged to the world but now is mine. God created everything in heaven and on earth, but worthiest and most beautiful among the lower creatures is the soul, similar to good will in her conceptions. Just as many branches shoot forth from a tree, so too every virtuous perfection shoots forth from the soul through spiritual exercise and activity. Therefore, in order to obtain spiritual leg armor, you must, by the grace of God, begin with good will.

A twofold consideration must support your will, like two legs standing on golden bases. The perfect soul's first leg is the following consideration: that you would refuse to sin even if no punishment were to follow. The second leg consists in doing good works with great patience and love of God, even in the face of your own damnation. The knees of the soul are the cheerfulness and fortitude of a good intention. As the knees curve and bend with the use of the legs, so too the soul's intention should bend and stop in obedience to reason according to the will of God.

It is written that spirit and flesh are opposed to each other. Thus, Paul also says: 'I do not do the good I want.' It is as if he said: 'I want to do good according to the soul but I am unable because of the weakness of the flesh. Yet, what happens when I am sometimes able to do them though not cheerfully?' Shall the Apostle be deprived of his wages because he had the will but not the ability, or because he did good things but not cheerfully? Certainly not!

Rather, his reward will be increased twofold: first because, with respect to the outer man, the action was difficult for him due to the flesh's resistance to the good; second because, with respect to the inner man, he did not always receive spiritual consolation. Accordingly, many secular people work in the world but receive no reward for it, because they act out of carnal motives. If their work was a command from God, they would not be as eager to do it. These two legs of the soul, then, the refusal to sin against God and the intention of doing good works, even should damnation follow, must be equipped with a double armor, namely, the discerning use of temporal goods and the discerning desire to seek heavenly ones. The discerning use of temporal goods means possessing them for the purpose of a moderate subsistence and not in excess. The discerning desire for heavenly

goods means the intention of earning heaven through good works and exertion. The human creature has turned away from God through ingratitude and sloth and must therefore return to God by work and humility. So, my son, since you do not have these, let us turn to the holy martyrs and confessors who abounded in such riches and ask them to help you.”

Then the saints appeared and said: ”O, Blessed Lady, you bore the Lord of life and you are the Lady of all creation. What is there that you cannot do? You wish, and it is done. Your will is always our will. You are truly the Mother of love, for you attend to everyone with love.” The Mother appeared again and said to the knight: ”Son, we still lack the shield. A shield needs two things: on the one hand, strength, and, on the other, the emblem of the lord under whom one is serving as a soldier. The spiritual shield signifies the consideration of God's bitter passion. This should be on your left arm next to your heart so that as often as carnal pleasure entices your mind, you may recollect the bruises of Jesus Christ. Whenever the world's disdain and opposition sting and sadden your mind, you should recall the poverty and ignominy of Christ. Whenever honors or a long life in the flesh entice you, you should call to mind Christ's bitter suffering and death.

Such a shield should possess both the strength of perseverance in goodness and the breadth of love. The emblem on the shield should be of two colors, because nothing is seen more clearly at a distance than something composed of two bright colors. The colors decorating the shield of the consideration of the divine passion are, on the one hand, self-control over disorderly emotions and, on the other hand, purity and restraint with regard to the promptings of the flesh.

Indeed, heaven is lit up by these two colors, and the angels see them and exult with joy, saying: 'Behold the sign of purity and the token of our fellowship! We must help this knight.' The demons see the knight decorated with these tokens on his shield and exclaim: 'What shall we do, fellows? This knight is fearful to encounter and gloriously armed. At his sides are the weapons of virtue, behind him stands an army of angels, at his left he has a most watchful guardian, God himself, and all around him there are plenty of eyes attentive to our wickedness. We can do battle with him only to our shame, because we can in no way prevail.' How happy is that knight whom the angels honor and in fear of

whom the demons tremble! But, my son, since you have not yet acquired this shield, let us ask the holy angels who shine in spiritual purity to help you.”

The Mother speaks again: ”My son, we still lack a sword. A sword needs two qualities: first, it should have sharp edges and, second, it must be thoroughly sharpened. The spiritual sword is trust in God in order to fight for justice. This trust should have two edges: upright justice in prosperity, as it were, on the right edge, and thanksgiving in adversity, as it were, on the left edge. Good Job had such a sword. When he was prosperous, he offered sacrifice for his children and was like a father to the poor, and his door stood open for the wayfarer. He did not walk in the way of vanity nor covet the goods of others but feared God as the One who sits on the waves of the sea. Then again, he gave thanks in adversity. When he lost his children, when he was upbraided by his wife and afflicted with horrible boils, he bore it all with patience, saying: 'The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Lord.' This sword should be kept thoroughly sharpened by crushing the assailants of justice as did Moses and David, by showing zeal for the law like Phinehas, by speaking firmly like Elias and John. O, how many people nowadays have a very dull sword! Even if they speak in word, they lift not a finger and pay no heed to God's glory in their quest for human favor. And so, because you have no such sword, let us ask the patriarchs and prophets who had such great trust in God, and a sword shall be given to us.”

The Mother appeared again and said to the knight: ”My son, you are still in need of something to cover your weapons and protect them from rust and damage from rain. This covering is charity, the readiness to die for God, and even - if it were possible - to be separated from God for the sake of the salvation of one's brethren. This kind of charity covers all sins, preserves the virtues, placates God's wrath, makes all things possible, frightens demons away, and is the joy of angels. This covering should be white on the inside and gleam like gold on the outside, for wherever the zeal of divine love is found neither the one kind of purity nor the other is neglected. The apostles were full of this charity. We must ask them to help you.”

The Mother appeared again and said: ”My son, you still have need of a horse and saddle. The spiritual signification of the horse is baptism. Just as a horse has its four legs and carries a man on the journey he must accomplish, so too baptism, as signified by the

horse, carries a man in the sight of God and has four spiritual effects. The first effect is that the baptized are liberated from the devil and bound to the commandments and service of God. The second effect is that they are cleansed from original sin. The third is that they are made God's children and coheirs. The fourth is that heaven is opened to them.

Yet how many there are today who, having reached the age of reason, pull the reins on the horse of baptism and ride it off on a false path! The baptismal path is true and rightly followed when people are instructed and upheld in good moral habits before reaching the age of reason and when, upon reaching the age of reason and carefully considering what was promised at the baptismal font, they keep their faith and love of God intact. However, they ride away from the right path and rein the horse in when they prefer the world and the flesh to God.

The saddle of the horse or of baptism is the effect of the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ, which gave baptism its efficacy. What is water if not an element? As soon as God's blood was poured out, God's word and the power of God's outpoured blood entered into the element. Thus, by the word of God, the water of baptism became the means of reconciliation between humankind and God, the gate of mercy, the expulsion of demons, the way to heaven, and the forgiveness of sins. So those who would boast of the power of baptism should first consider how the effect of baptism was instituted through bitter pain. When their mind swells up with pride against God, let them consider how bitter their redemption was, how many times they have broken their baptismal vows, and what they deserve for their relapses into sin.

In order to sit firmly in the saddle of the baptismal effect, two stirrups are needed, that is, two considerations in prayer. First one should pray in such a way: 'Lord God almighty, blessed are you who have created and redeemed me. Although I am worthy of damnation, you showed tolerance for my sins and brought me back to repentance. Lord, in the presence of your majesty, I admit that I have uselessly and culpably wasted all that you have given me for my salvation. I have wasted the time given for penance on vanities, lent my body to excesses, and used up the grace of baptism through pride. I loved it all more than you, my creator and redeemer, my nourisher and protector. And so, I beg for your mercy, for I am wretched in myself. Because I did not acknowledge your kind

patience toward me or fear your terrible equity, I gave no thought as to how I should requite you for your innumerable good gifts. Rather, day by day I sought to provoke you with my wickedness. Therefore, I have only one thing to say to you: Have mercy on me, God, according to your great mercy!

The second prayer is like this: 'Lord God almighty, I know that everything I have comes from you and that I am nothing without you and can do nothing without you other than what I myself have accomplished, which is nothing but sin. Humbly, therefore, I implore your pity. Do not deal with me according to my sins but according to your great mercy. Send your Holy Spirit to enlighten my heart and confirm me in the way of your commandments so that I may be able to persevere in that which I have come to know through your inspiration and never be separated from you by any temptations.' Therefore, my son, since you lack this, let us ask those who fixed God's passion in their hearts with greater sorrow to share their charity with you."

When this was said, a horse suddenly appeared equipped with gilt ornaments. And the Mother said: "The horse's ornaments symbolize the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given in baptism. No matter whether it is administered by a good or a bad minister, baptism takes away the ancestral offense, increases grace, pardons every sin, gives the Holy Spirit as a pledge, angels as guardians, and heaven as an inheritance. See, my son, these are the trappings of a spiritual knight. A knight who wears them will receive the ineffable wages with which he can purchase perpetual joy, most peaceful honor, eternal plenty and everlasting life."

The knight was Sir Karl, St. Bridget's son.

The bride's words of prayer and praise to Christ and the Virgin. The Virgin's consoling reply to the daughter, showing her that God in his righteous decision often lets his power become more manifest through the lies of the devil. And about how tribulations lead to spiritual benefits.

“Blessed are you, my God, my Creator and Redeemer. You are the ransom through which we were freed from captivity, through which we are led toward salvation and share in the Unity and Trinity. Therefore, even if I blush over my own ugliness, yet I rejoice because you, having died once to save us, nevermore shall die. You are truly he who existed before the ages, he who has power over life and death. You alone are God, almighty and awesome. May you be blessed forever!

But what shall I say of you, O blessed Mary, the salvation of the entire world? You are like someone who has a friend saddened over something he has lost and who puts that lost possession suddenly before his eyes, thus relieving his sorrow, increasing his joy and enkindling his whole spirit with gladness. You, Mother most sweet, showed the world its God, whom men had lost. You gave birth to him who was born before time and at whose birth heaven and earth rejoiced. Therefore, sweet Mother, I ask you to help me so that my enemy may not rejoice over me nor prevail against me with his machinations.”

The Mother answered: “I shall help you. But why are you upset because one thing was shown to you spiritually and another was heard physically - I mean because that knight, who was physically alive, was shown to you as spiritually dead and in need of spiritual help? Hear now something that is certain. Every truth comes from God and every falsehood from the devil, who is the father of falsehood. Yet, although truth is from God, nevertheless, through the malice and falsehood of the devil, which God sometimes permits according to his secret decision, God's power is made more manifest, as I will show you by way of a comparison.

Once there was a maiden who tenderly loved her bridegroom, and he loved her similarly. God was glorified through their love, and the parents of both were happy. Their enemy saw it and thought to himself as follows: 'I know that bride and bridegroom come together in three ways - through letters, through mutual conversation, and through their bodily union. Accordingly, I will fill all the roads with stakes, brambles, and hooks in order to block the access of messengers and letter carriers. In order to obstruct their conversation, I will raise a din and clatter to distract them in conversing. In order to prevent them coming together naked in bed, I will appoint guards to watch every nook and cranny so that they will have no opportunity to come together.'

The bridegroom, more astute than his enemy, realized these things and said to his servants: 'My enemy is setting traps for me in such and such places. Be on the lookout in those places, and if you discover it, let him go on working until he has laid his snares, and then swoop down on him but without killing him. Instead, shout and mock at him so that your fellow servants see the enemy's wiles and become more careful in guarding and watching.' Something similar occurs in spiritual matters. The letters by which the bridegroom and bride, that is, God and the good soul, come together are simply the prayers and aspirations of good people. Just as physical letters are an indication of the feelings and intentions of the sender, so too the prayers of good people enter into the heart of God and join the soul to God in a single bond of love. The devil, however, sometimes prevents human hearts from asking for that which is conducive to the salvation of the soul or contrary to carnal pleasure. Moreover, he prevents those who pray for other sinners from being heard, since, being sinners, they do not seek any improvement for their own souls or ask for something of everlasting worth.

The mutual conversations through which bridegroom and bride become one heart and one soul stand for nothing other than penance and contrition. Sometimes the devil raises such a din between them that they cannot hear each other. This din stands for nothing other than the devil's base suggestion to the heart desirous of performing fruitful penance. He says this through his promptings: 'O, my dainty soul, is it not hard to undertake unfamiliar and unaccustomed practices? Do you think everyone can become perfect? It is enough for you to be one of the many. Why are you attempting to do greater things? Why are you doing what no one else does? You will not be able to persevere. Everyone will laugh you to scorn, if you lower yourself and become excessively submissive.'

Deluded by such suggestions, the soul thinks to herself: 'It is a heavy thing to give up customary habits. I will just make my confession about past sins. It is enough for me to follow the path of the majority. I am not capable of becoming perfect. Surely God is merciful. He would not have redeemed us if he wanted us to perish.' By means of this kind of din the devil prevents God from hearing the soul. It is not that God does not hear everything but that he is not pleased in hearing such talk, when the soul consents more to temptation than to her own reason.

The naked union of God and the soul stands for nothing other than the heavenly longing and the pure charity with which the soul ought to burn in every hour. This charity gets impeded in four ways. First, the devil urges the soul to do something against God that, though not counting as something serious, still delights her mind. Delight of this kind, since she makes light of it and does not bother about it, is hateful to God. Second, the devil inspires the soul to do certain good deeds in order to please others and sometimes, out of fear or for the sake of worldly honor, to omit certain good deeds that she could do. Third, the devil induces forgetfulness and listlessness in the soul with regard to the good deeds she ought to carry out, and her mind gets absorbed by this and grows weary of doing good. Fourth, the devil makes the soul grow anxious about worldly cares or needless sorrows and joys or extravagant fears.

Such things, then, obstruct the letters, that is, the prayers of the just, as well as the mutual conversation of bridegroom and bride. However, though the devil is astute, God is all the more wiser and stronger in shattering the snares of his enemy so that the letters that have been sent can reach the bridegroom.

The snares are shattered when God inspires good thoughts, and when the heart desires to have the intention of fleeing base acts and of doing deeds that are pleasing to God. The enemy's din gets dispelled when the soul is discreetly penitent and has the intention of not repeating confessed sins.

Know that the devil not only raises a din and clatter for people hostile to God but even for God's friends. You may understand this better by way of a comparison. A maiden was once speaking with a man when a curtain appeared between them. The man saw it indeed, but not the maiden. At the end of their conversation, the maiden lifted up her eyes and saw the curtain. Frightened, she said to herself: 'God help me so that I may not be deceived by the snares of the enemy!' When the bridegroom saw the maiden's sadness, he removed the curtain and showed her the truth of the whole matter. Similarly, perfect persons may receive divine inspirations, but then the devil raises a din whenever they get puffed up with sudden pride or become downcast with excessive fear or tolerate the sins of others with inordinate condescension or grow weak through excessive joy or sadness.

Something similar has happened to you. The devil induced some men to write to

you that he who was alive was dead, and you were therefore overcome with great sorrow. But God revealed to you his spiritual death, and so, for your consolation, God proved true in a spiritual sense that which was false in a physical sense as stated by those who wrote to you. You see, it is true what they say about tribulations leading to spiritual benefits. If you had not been saddened due to the lie that you had heard, such great power and spiritual beauty would not have been shown to you. For that reason, and so that you might understand God's hidden dispensation, a kind of curtain was lowered between your soul and God as he spoke, for that man's soul appeared in the shape of one in need of help, and God made this observation at the end of each locution: 'You will know in due time whether he is dead or alive.' As soon as you were shown the spiritual beauty and adornment with which a soul must be equipped in order to enter heaven, the curtain was removed, and you were shown the truth, namely, that the man was physically alive but spiritually dead, and that whoever enters the homeland of heaven must be armed in such virtues.

However, the devil's intention was to tempt you with lies and upset you in order to distract you from the love of God through sorrow over the loss of someone so dear. But as soon as you said 'God help me if this is an illusion!' then the veil was removed and both the physical and spiritual truth were revealed to you. The devil is thus permitted to afflict even the righteous in order that their reward may be increased.”

The Virgin's words to the daughter showing her who God's friends are. Also about how few of them are found in modern times, no matter whether one adduces the state of the laity or of the clergy. And about why God who is rich loves poverty, and why he chose the poor and not the rich, and for what purpose riches were conceded to the church.

Chapter 76

The Mother is speaking to the bride of Christ: "Why are you troubled, my daughter?" She replies: "Because I am afraid of being sent to hardened sinners." And the Mother said: "How do you know whether they are hard-hearted or friends of God?" She said: "I do not know how to discern it. Certainly, I do not dare to judge anyone, for two

men were shown to me. The first was very humble and holy in human eyes, whereas the other was prodigal and ambitious. However their intentions and will did not correspond to their deeds. They were terribly frightening to my mind.”

The Mother answered: ”It is permissible to the mind to make judgments based on clearly visible signs of badness in order to be able to show compassion or to make corrections. However, it is not safe for the mind to make judgments in doubtful and uncertain cases. This is why I want to indicate to you who God's friends are. Know that God's friends are those who receive God's gifts with pious fear, who are always thanking him for them and do not crave unnecessary possessions but content themselves with what they have been given.

But where are such as these to be found? Let us inquire first among the common people. Who among them says, 'I have enough, I crave nothing more'? Let us inquire among the knights and other lords. Which of them thinks as follows: 'I inherited the goods that I have, and I require only a reasonable means of support from them as is appropriate before God and men. I shall share the rest with God and the poor. But if I should discover that my hereditary goods were ill-gotten, then I shall either restore them or submit to the decision of God's chosen spiritual servants.' Such thoughts, my daughter, are rare here on earth.

Let us also inquire among kings and generals. Who among them is in a commendable state? That man is a king who is like Job in character, like David in humility, like Phinehas in zeal for the law, like Moses in meekness and patience. That man is a general who leads the king's army and forms them for battle; who, like Joshua, has trust in God and pious fear; who, like Joab, seeks the advantage of his lord rather than his own advantage; who, like Judas Maccabees, shows zeal for the law and wants the best for his neighbor. Such a general is like a unicorn with a sharp horn on its forehead and a precious jewel beneath the horn. What does the general's horn represent if not his manly heart with which he should fight vigorously and smite the enemies of the faith? The jewel beneath his horn is the general's divine charity that remains firmly in his heart and renders him agile and invincible in every undertaking. Nowadays, however, generals are more like rampant bucks than unicorns, for they do battle everywhere for the sake of the flesh, not for the sake of their souls or for God.

Let us inquire, then, among kings. Which of them does not burden his subjects in his pride. Which of them maintains his state according to the revenues of the crown? Who restores the property that the crown retains unjustly? Who is there that takes the time to carry out justice for God's sake? My daughter, would that such kings might appear in the world to give glory to God!

Let us inquire, moreover, among the clergy who are obliged to love chastity, poverty, and piety. To be sure, they, too, have gone astray. What are priests if not God's poor almsmen? Living on the divine offering, they should be all the humbler and more fervent toward God to the extent in which they have removed themselves from worldly cares. The church rose up from hardship and poverty in the beginning so that God might be their inheritance, and so that they might not glory in the world nor in the flesh but in God.

But, my daughter, could not God have chosen kings and rulers as apostles, and then the church would have been enriched through their earthly inheritance? He could have done so, of course, but God who is rich came into the world as a poor man in order to show that earthly possessions are fleeting, and so that men and women might learn from the Lord's example and not be ashamed of poverty but rather hasten on toward the true riches of heaven. Thus, he founded the beautiful organization of the church upon a poor fisherman and put him in his place to live in the world on divine providence and not on an inheritance.

Thus the church began with three goods: first, with zealous faith; second, with poverty; third, with the power of virtues and miracles. These three things were found in the blessed apostle Peter. He had zealous faith, when he outspokenly proclaimed his God and did not hesitate to die for him. He had poverty, too, when he went around begging and feeding himself through manual labor. Yet he showed himself to be rich in spiritual goods, which is more important, when, for example, he gave the lame man the ability to walk (which no prince could do), though he had no silver or gold to give him.

But could not Peter, who had raised dead persons to life, have obtained gold if he had wanted it? Certainly he could have, but he had unburdened himself from the burden

of wealth in order to enter into heaven unencumbered, and in order that the master of the sheep might give them an example of humility, showing that humility and poverty (whether spiritual or physical) make up the way into heaven. Third, he had the power of miracles, for, apart from his greater miracles, the sick were cured by his very shadow. Because Peter possessed in himself the perfection of virtues - to oneself with necessities - his tongue became the key to heaven and his name is blessed in heaven and on earth.

However, those who invoked their own names on earth and loved dung, that is, earthly things, are forgotten on earth and receive a terrifying description in the book of justice.

Yet God wished to show that the poverty of both Peter and the other saints was not coerced but voluntary. Accordingly, he inspired many souls to give generously to them. However, the saints themselves found their glory more in poverty than in the thorns of wealth. Hence, the greater the poverty they lived in, the more abundantly their devotion increased. Is that strange?

How could those who had made God their portion and their joy be without him? Or how could those who sought worldly delights find any delight in God? He was, rather, a poor pilgrim in their eyes. In the course of time, however, in order that God's friends might be more fervent and ready to preach the word of God, and in order that people might know that it is not riches that are bad but only their abuse, temporal goods were granted to the church under the papacies of Silvester and others. These were for a long time used by the holy men only for their own necessities as well as for those of God's friends and for the sustenance of the poor.

Know, therefore, that God's friends are those who are content with God's dispensation. Even if they are not known to you, my Son has a keen perception of them. Gold is indeed often found in hard metal, and one can get a spark of fire out of flint. Go on, then, without worrying. Clamoring comes before doing. Not even when my Son was in the flesh did he convert all of Judea at once, nor did the apostles convert the Gentiles once and for all. No, longer time is needed for carrying out the work of God."

The bride's words to Christ declaring the great mercy that he had shown her. Christ's

words to the bride confirming his same sweet mercy toward her. And about how he chose her as a vessel to be filled with wine in order to give God's servants through her wine to drink. Also, the bride's thankful and humble answer to Christ.

Chapter 77

“Honor to God almighty for all his creation! Praise to him for all his virtue! May glorious service be rendered him for all his charity! I, unworthy person, who have sinned so much against you, my God, from my youth, I thank you, my most sweet God, and especially because there is none so criminal that you deny him mercy, provided he asks you for mercy with love and true humility and a purpose of amendment.

O God most loving and sweetest of all! What you have done for me is wonderful for all those who hear of it. Whenever you please, you put my body to sleep - yet not with a bodily sleep but with a spiritual rest. Then you rouse my soul to life as though from sleep so that I hear and feel in a spiritual way. O, Lord, how sweet are the words of your mouth! It truly seems to me, as often as I hear the words of your Spirit, that my soul within me swallows them with an indescribably sweet sensation like that from the sweetest food that seems to drop into my heart with great joy and indescribable consolation. It seems wonderful to me that while I listen to your words, I am made both fully satisfied and yet still hungry. I feel satisfied because nothing else pleases me but your words. Yet I feel hungry because my appetite for them keeps increasing. So, blessed are you, my God, Jesus Christ! Give me your help, Lord, so that I may be able all the days of my life to do the things pleasing to you!”

Christ answered, saying: “I have neither beginning nor end. All things were created by my power and arranged by my wisdom. Everything is governed by my decision, and nothing is impossible for me, and all my works have been established with love. For this reason, that heart is exceedingly hard that does not want to love or fear me, although I am the nourisher and judge of all. Yet people do the will of the devil, my own executioner and the betrayer of humankind. He has given them such pestilent poison to drink in this world that a soul, once tasting it with pleasure, cannot live but falls down dead to hell and yet will live forever in misery. This is the poison of sin that, though it tastes sweet to

many, yet in the end it will turn out to be horribly bitter. This venom is most assuredly drunk with pleasure all the time from the devil's hand. Who ever heard of such a strange thing? People are offered life, and yet they choose and voluntarily embrace death.

However, I, the most powerful being of all, have compassion on their great misery and anguish. I acted like a rich and loving king who sent expensive wine to his intimate servants, saying: 'Give this wine to many others besides yourselves to drink, for it is very healthful. It grants health to the sick, comfort to the downhearted, and a brave heart to those who are healthy.

Nor is the wine sent without a flask. This is indeed what I have done in this kingdom. To my servants I sent my words, which can be compared to the best of wine, and they shall give them to others, because my words are healthful.

By the flask I mean you, who are hearing my words. You have done both things, for you have heard and delivered my words. You are my flask. I shall fill you whenever I like and drain you whenever I please. Thus, my Spirit will show you where you should go and what you should say. May you fear no one but me. You must gladly go anywhere I wish and boldly say whatever I command you, for nothing can withstand me. I will be there with you."

Then the bride said: "I heard this voice, and I answered with tears: O, my Lord God, I who am like the least little midge in the face of your majesty, I ask your permission to reply to you." The voice answered, saying: "I knew your reply before you yourself thought of it. But I give you my permission to speak." The bride then said: "I answered: King of all glory, infuser of all wisdom, worker of all virtue, indeed virtue itself, why for such a mission do you wish to select me, who have wasted my body in sin, who am no wiser than a donkey and incapable of virtuous action? Please do not be angry with me, sweet Lord Jesus Christ, because I put such a question to you. One should never be surprised about anything from you, for you are able to do whatever you want, but I am surprised concerning myself, for I have offended you in many ways and made but little reparation."

The voice answered, saying: "I will answer you with a comparison. If various coins were offered to a rich and powerful king, and the king was then to have them melted

down and recast into whatever shape he wanted, such as crowns or rings from the coins of gold, plates and drinking glasses from the coins of silver, pots and pans from the coins of copper, which the king could then use for his own comfort and adornment, why should you be surprised if he had done so? Therefore you should not be any more surprised if I take the hearts of my friends, which they have freely offered to me, and make what I want out of them. Though some of them have more sense and others less, still, when they offer me their hearts, I use some of them for one thing, others for another, but all of them for my glory and honor, for the righteous heart is a coin that pleases me greatly.

Thus do I arrange the things that are mine in whatever way I like. And, since you are mine, you should not be surprised at the things I want to do with you. Rather, be steadfast and firm in perseverance and willing to do whatever I command. I am powerful enough to provide you everywhere with all the things you need.”

The bride's divinely revealed words or, rather, words from the sweet mouth of the glorious Virgin, promulgated clearly, directly, and in an unveiled manner, instructing and comforting the bride, and about how these words must be transmitted to the pope, the vicar of the Lord, and how they warn of the downfall of the church.

Chapter 78

Honorable Father, I, a widow, declare that many, very amazing revelations were made to a certain woman while she resided in her homeland. After having been submitted to the diligent examination of bishops and learned religious and secular priests, these revelations were shown to have come from the holy and miraculous enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and from no other source. Even the king and queen of the realm acknowledged this on the basis of credible proof. Moreover, the same woman journeyed abroad to the city of Rome, where, when praying one day in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, she was caught up in a spiritual vision, while her body seemed to fall into a torpor, though not the torpor of sleep.

At that moment the most venerable Virgin appeared to her. The aforementioned

woman was troubled with perplexity at the vision. Recognizing her own frailty, she feared some deception by the devil, and she inwardly besought God's mercy not to let her fall into diabolical temptations. However, the Virgin who appeared to her said: "Do not be afraid of the things you are about to see and hear, thinking they come from the evil spirit. Just as light and heat accompany the approach of the sun but do not follow after a dark shadow, in the same way two things accompany the coming of the Holy Spirit into the heart: ardent love for God and a perfect illumination of the Catholic faith. You are experiencing both these things now: You feel that you love nothing but God and that not a single point is lacking to you of the wholeness of the Catholic faith. These two things do not follow upon the evil spirit, whom we can liken to a dark shadow."

Then the Virgin went on and said to the woman: "You must send a message from me to a certain prelate." The woman answered her with great sadness: "My reverend Virgin, he will not believe me but will, I think, regard my words with scorn rather than as divine truth." The Virgin answered her, saying: "Although I know the disposition of his heart well enough and how he will delay in answering, as well as how he will end his life, you should still send him the following message.

I would have him know that the foundation of the Holy Church is so heavily deteriorated on its right side that its vaulted roof has many cracks at the top, and that this causes the stones to fall so dangerously that many of those who pass beneath it lose their lives. Several of the columns that should be standing erect are almost level with the ground, and even the floor is so full of holes that blind people entering there take dangerous falls. Sometimes it even happens that, along with the blind, people with good eyesight have bad falls because of the dangerous holes in the floor. Because of all this, the church of God is tottering dangerously. The result of this will shortly be seen. I assure you that she will suffer a downfall if she does not receive the help of repairs.

And her downfall will be so great that it will be heard throughout all of Christendom. All this is to be taken in a spiritual sense.

I am the Virgin into whose womb the Son of God condescended to enter, without the least contagious trace of carnal pleasure. The Son of God was born from my closed womb, giving me solace but no pain at all. I stood next to the cross when he victoriously overcame hell through his patient suffering and opened up heaven with the blood of his

heart. I was also on the mountain when God's Son, who is also my Son, ascended into heaven. I have the clearest knowledge of the whole of the Catholic faith, which he preached and taught to everyone desirous of entering heaven. Now I stand over the world in continuous prayer, like a rainbow above the clouds that appears to bend toward the earth and touch it with both its ends.

I see myself as a rainbow bending down toward both the good and the wicked inhabitants of the earth by means of my continual prayers. I bend down toward good people in order that they may be steadfast in the commandments of the Holy Church, and I bend down toward bad people in order that they may not add to their wickedness and grow worse. I would have the man to whom I send this message know that foul and horrible clouds are rising up in one direction against the shining rainbow. By these clouds I mean those who lead a life of carnal debauchery, those who are as insatiable as the ocean chasm in their greed for money. They arrogantly and irrationally spend their means as wastefully as a torrential stream pours out its water. Many of the overseers of the church are guilty of these three things, and their abominable and befouled sins rise up to heaven in the sight of God, as much opposed to my prayers as foul clouds are opposed to the bright rainbow. These men, who should be placating God's wrath along with me, are instead provoking it against themselves. Such men should not be promoted but rejected in God's church.

As the Queen of Heaven, I will come to the aid of anyone who, knowing his own insufficiency, is willing to take on the task of making the church's foundation stable and its floor level, and who desires to restore the blessed vineyard that God founded with his blood. Together with the angels, I shall root up loose roots and throw each and every fruitless tree into the fire to burn, and I shall plant fruitful shoots in their stead. By this vineyard I mean the Holy Church of God in which the two virtues of humility and divine charity must be restored.”

The glorious Virgin, who appeared to the woman, commanded that all this be sent to you, Reverend Father. I, who have sent this letter to you, swear by Jesus, true and almighty God, and by his most worthy Mother Mary, that I have not sent this letter for the sake of any worldly honor or favor, so help me body and soul! I have sent it because that same woman, to whom many other words have been spoken in spiritual revelation,

was commanded to make all this known to your Excellency.

The noteworthy preface to the useful instruction about the conduct of life that Christ prescribed to the bride for a priest attached to her, containing many excellent points.

Chapter 79

Praise and glory to almighty God for all his works! Everlasting honor to him who has begun to work his grace in you. When the earth is covered with snow and frost, we surely see that the seeds sown in it cannot germinate in any but those very few places warmed by the rays of the sun where plants and flowers spring up through the sun's doing. The nature and inherent virtue of the seeds can be discerned from these.

In a similar way, the whole world seems to me to be covered now with the hard frost of pride and greed and lust, so much so that, alas, there are very few people in whose hearts the perfect love of God can dwell, to judge from their words and deeds. One can thus be sure that just as God's friends rejoiced when they saw Lazarus raised from the dead for the glory of God, so too now God's friends rejoice whenever they see someone rise from the three aforementioned vices, which truly constitute an eternal death.

One should also note that, just as Lazarus incurred a twofold enmity after his resurrection (for he had both physical enemies, that is, people who were God's enemies and who hated Lazarus in a physical manner, and spiritual enemies, that is, the devils, who never want to be God's friends, and these hated him in a spiritual manner), so too all those who now rise up from mortal sins, wishing to keep chaste and to flee pride and greed, also incur a double enmity.

God's human enemies want to inflict a twofold physical harm on them. The devils, too, try to injure and hurt them in a twofold way spiritually. First of all worldly people reproach them with their words. Second, if they can, they also cause them trouble with their deeds, trying to make them like themselves in their action and conduct and to draw them away from their good undertakings. However, this man of God, newly converted to

the spiritual life, can easily overcome these ill-willed people, if he remains patient in the face of the words directed against him, and if he then carries out his good deeds of a spiritual and divine character even more frequently and fervently in their sight.

The devils rely on two other methods of foiling him. Their great desire, first of all, is to make God's new servant fall back into sin. If they are unable to do this, then they apply themselves to the task of getting him to carry out his good works in an unreasonable and imprudent manner, such as imprudent fasting or keeping vigil beyond due measure. Their intention is to wear out his energy and thus make him weaker in God's service. The best remedy for the first danger is the frequent and wholesome confession of his sins and the true, inner contrition of his heart over his failings. The best remedy for the second danger is a humility of the kind that makes him rather obey some experienced spiritual director than make his own personal decisions about what to do and what penances to carry out. This medicine is indeed so beneficial and excellent that, even if the giver of advice is less worthy than the receiver, one can have the very sure hope of the cooperation of divine wisdom, that is, God himself, to help that giver of advice to give the advice most useful to the receiver, provided both of them have the perfect desire of acting for the honor and glory of God.

Now then, my beloved friend, since both of us have gotten ourselves up from our sins, let us ask God to deign to grant his help to both of us - to me in speaking, to you in obeying. We must beseech God for his help all the more because you, who are rich, wise, and noble, have condescended to ask the advice of me, who am unworthy, ignorant, and not very intelligent. I truly hope that God shall want to have regard for your humility and make what I write to you in his honor beneficial to you both in body and in soul.

Wise and profitable teaching to a certain priest concerning how he should conduct his life both spiritually and bodily, given by the bride of Christ, inspired in her by God.

Chapter 80

I advise you first to stay in your lodgings close to your church of the Holy Virgin

Mary. You should have only one servant with you. After you have subtracted the necessary expenses from your income, you should return whatever is left over to your creditors and repay your debts in full. It is not right or reasonable to give a lot of money to the poor or to wealthy friends and relatives until all your debts have been resolved. Once you have completely resolved your debts, then - after subtracting the expenses for you and your servant - distribute everything that is left over to the poor and needy.

You should have good and serviceable clerical attire, taking good care of it so no vanity or ostentation can be noted in the quality of the cloth or the style of your clothes beyond honest necessity and physical usefulness. Be content with only two sets of clothes - one for feast days and one for ordinary days - and no more than two sets of shoes and stockings. Convert any superfluous clothes that you have to other uses or use them to payoff your debts. This year, give up linen garments altogether both at nighttime and during the day.

This year, consider your church, St. Mary's, as a cloistered church for the following three reasons. First because, if perhaps you ever remained there before for any proud motive, so in the future you should reside there out of divine obedience in honor of the most humble Virgin Mary. And if perhaps the canons and those holding benefices at this church ever led you with shameful words away from the service of God and toward evil desire, you should now try with God's help and by using divine and spiritual words to lead people away from evil desire and toward the delightful love for God. If perhaps you ever before set a bad example to anyone who saw you behaving yourself in an unpermissible fashion, you should now take care to present a profitable and virtuous example to their souls through your good deeds and upright behavior.

Next, my dear friend, you must plan your daytime and nighttime wisely and efficiently for the glory of God. I have indeed noticed that your church bells ring accurately at the appointed hours. As soon as you hear them at night, then, I advise you to get up immediately from your place and recall the five wounds of Jesus Christ and the sorrows of his most worthy Mother with five genuflections and five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys. Afterward you should begin the matins of the Blessed Virgin and say other prayers that you like until the canons gather in the choir for chant. It is better that you come to the church among the first rather than the last. You should sing the matins of the

season devoutly, standing properly until the end and sitting whenever it is correct to do so, but not speaking at all unless you are asked something, and then only answering with a few quiet words and no sign of anger or impatience if you can avoid it. You would conduct yourself with proper order if you were in the presence of some temporal or earthly lord. Likewise, with all the more propriety and modesty and humble reverence, both inward and outward, you should stand in the presence and service of the eternal King of heaven who is always and everywhere present and sees everything.

If you happen to be compelled by some necessity to speak about important matters touching you or someone else during these half-hours, go out of the choir and give your opinion in few words without raising your voice while outside it and then return to your place there without delay. If possible, arrange to have the matter dealt with at another place and time in order not to diminish or impede the divine worship and the glory given to God. Take care not to wander about the church as though you are taking a walk, promenading hither and thither, while the hours are being sung. Such behavior belongs to an unstable and wandering mind and a lukewarm spirit with little love and devotion.

In the intervening time, that is, between the singing of the hours, devote yourself to prayer or read something devout or useful for your mind or beneficial for others, making constantly sure, from the hour in which you get up out of your bed for matins until high mass has been finished, that you do not become voluntarily involved in anything but chant, reading, prayer, or study, unless it happens that you must discuss or deal with certain matters in your chapter concerning the affairs of the church, either with improvements or organization. Once high mass has been celebrated, it is quite suitable to speak and converse about the needs and comfort of the body or good and virtuous recreations.

When you go to table, you should say grace. Whether you are someone else's guest or have guests yourself, speak first of God or his most worthy Mother or some saint during the meal for the edification and benefit of your table companions as well as those serving the food - at least a word or two or even ask the others something relating to God or his Mother or God's saints. Do likewise even when you are alone at table and your servant is attending you, and let some such reading be made of the kind customary among brothers dining together in a monastery. Once you are done eating and have given

thanks to God and to your benefactors, speak a short while with whatever upright individuals you please. about any matters or business concerning yourself. Afterward, go directly to your chamber, genuflect five times and say five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys in remembrance of the wounds of our Lord Jesus Christ and the sorrows of his Mother. Use half of the time remaining until vespers for studying or reading and some form of rest, unless you are hindered by your friends due to matters concerning them. Use the other half of the same time period to take a walk for the proper relaxation of your body, so that you become stronger for the glory of God.

When it rings for vespers, enter directly into the choir of the church to chant the office in the manner described above. Once the complines have been said, pray the vigils each day for the dead along with the three readings before supper. After supper, carry out the same practices as mentioned above after lunch. After you have said grace, take a walk and spend the time having a profitable and pleasant conversation until you feel like going to bed. Even then, before going to sleep, place yourself in front of your bed and there pray devoutly five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys in remembrance of the passion of Jesus Christ. After that, get into your bed and give your body enough sleep and rest that you are not overcome by sleepiness during times of vigil due to too little sleep and rest. Every Friday pray the seven psalms and the litany with devotion, and on that day give five silver coins to five poor and needy persons in veneration of the five wounds of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, my dear brother and friend, I advise you to keep abstinence in the following way this year in penance for your sins. Every day throughout Lent and likewise during Advent, your fast should consist of only one meal of fish. On the eves of the feast days of Holy Mary, eat a meal of bread and water; on the eves of the feast days of the apostles, a meal of fish. Each Wednesday, let it be one meal of cheese, eggs, and fish. Each Friday, let it be a meal only of bread and wine - and if you prefer to have water rather than wine, I will not dissuade you - and each Saturday, eat fish and oil for your one midday meal. On Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, eat two meals of meat, provided the church has not prescribed fasting.

Please observe, dear brother, that I have decided to give you this advice and write all this to you for three reasons. First of all, in order that the envy and cunning of the devil may not induce you to wear yourself out so quickly that your strength and wits soon

begin to weaken and make your whole life become of less service to God than it should be. Second, if worldly people notice any failure of wit or strength in you due to overwork, or if they see you growing weary in the work you have undertaken, then they may take fright and shrink from subjecting themselves to God's work. Third, because I trust that your work will be more pleasing to God the more you submit yourself humbly to the advice of another than govern yourself according to your own personal judgment.

The Virgin's reply, I believe, to the bride concerning three men for whom the bride was interceding before God. Tears that are meritorious and tears that are not. About how love for God grows through meditation on the humility of Christ. And how fear (not filial or initial fear) may be good.

Chapter 81

“That man is like a sack of grain from which one grain is removed but ten are added. The man you are praying for is just like that. He gives up one sin out of fear but adds ten for the sake of worldly esteem. Concerning the second man for whom you are making petitions, I answer you that it is not customary to add expensive seasoning to putrid meat. You may be praying for him to be given bodily tribulation for the good of his soul, but his own will is contrary to your petition. He longs for worldly honors, you see, and desires great wealth rather than spiritual poverty, and sensual pleasure is sweet to him. This is why his soul is putrid and fetid in my sight. Therefore he has no right to the expensive seasoning that consists in the tribulations of justice.

Furthermore, concerning the third man in whose eyes you see tears, my answer to you is that you see his body but I behold his heart. Sometimes you see a dark cloud climbing up from the earth and hanging in the sky beneath the sun, bringing on the triple precipitation of rain, snow, and hail. Then the cloud vanishes, for it has arisen out of the impurity of the earth. Every man fed on sin and sensual pleasure up to his old age resembles such a Cloud. When old age comes, then he begins to fear death and to think about his danger, yet sin still delights his mind.

Thus, as a cloud climbs up in the sky from the impurity of earth, so the conscience of such a man climbs up out of the impurity of the body (the impurity, that is, of sin) to self-examination and gives off three kinds of tears in his own regard. The first tears may be compared to water. They are for the things the man loved carnally, for example, when he loses his friends or temporal goods or his own health. Because he feels bitter about God's plans and the things he allows to happen, he sheds many unwise tears. The second kind of tears can be compared to snow.

When a man begins to think about the imminent danger to his body and the pain of death and the misery of hell, then he starts to weep - not from love but from fear. And so, just as snow quickly melts away, such tears, too, melt away quickly. The third kind of tears can be likened to hail. When a man considers how sweet sensual pleasure has been and still is to him, and that he will lose it, and also what great consolation there is in heaven, then he starts to weep over the price of damnation and of his own loss. He does not bother to weep over the dishonor done to God whenever God loses a soul redeemed by his blood, nor does he care whether he will see God after death or not. He only wants to obtain some dwelling in heaven or on earth where he will not feel any pain but can have his pleasure forever. Such tears are quite properly compared to hail, for the heart of such a man is exceedingly hard and has no warmth of love for God. Tears such as these do not bring a soul to heaven.

However, I will show you now the tears that do bring a soul to heaven. They may be compared to dew. Vapor sometimes arises from the sweetness of the earth and ascends in the sky, climbing up just beneath the sun. It turns into moisture through the heat of the sun and descends again to earth, rendering all the things that grow upon the earth fruitful. You call this dew, and it can be seen on the petals of roses, which, exposed to heat, first give off moisture from themselves and then the moisture drips down. This happens, too, in the case of a spiritual man. Each person who meditates on that blessed earth, that is, on the body of Christ, and on those words that Christ himself uttered, and on the great grace he conferred on the world and the bitter pain he bore, moved by the fire of his love for our souls, then that person's love for God rises up with great sweetness to his brain, which can be likened to the heavenly sky. His heart, which can be compared to the sun, becomes filled with divine warmth, and his eyes with tears, weeping for his offenses against such an infinitely good and kind God, preferring to suffer any kind of

pain for the glory of God rather than to have any kind of delight but to be without God.

Such tears may well be compared to the falling dew, for they provide the strength to carry out good deeds and lead to fruit in the sight of God. Just as growing flowers attract the falling dew, and the flower is embraced in dew, so too the tears shed out of the love for God enclose God in the soul and God attracts the soul to himself. However, it is good to be fearful for two reasons. First of all, because such good deeds can be performed out of fear in such a way that they later introduce a spark of grace into the heart and thus obtain charity. You might understand this by way of a similitude. It is as when a goldsmith places pure gold on the scales, and the collier comes and says: 'Sir, I have the coal you need for your work. Pay me the price it is worth.' The goldsmith answers: 'The value of coal is set at a fixed price.' So the goldsmith pays the price in gold and uses the coal he needs for his work, while the collier takes the gold as his means to live on.

So it also is in spiritual matters. Deeds done without charity are like coals, and charity is like gold. People who perform good deeds out of fear but with a desire of earning the salvation of their souls through them, even though they do not desire God in heaven but only fear being lodged in hell, still have deeds that are good, albeit cold and like coal in God's sight. God, however, can be compared to the goldsmith. He knows how to reward good deeds with spiritual justice and with what kind of justice the charity of God may be earned. He arranges it so in his providence that, because of good deeds done out of fear, people can be granted the charity that they may use for the salvation of their souls. Accordingly, as the charitable goldsmith makes use of coal in his work, so God makes use of cold deeds for his glory.

The second reason why it is good to be fearful is that people will be freed from punishment in hell for all the sins they have omitted out of fear. However, inasmuch as they lack charity, they do not possess the righteousness needed to ascend to heaven. A person whose will is such that, if he only could, he would want to live forever in the world, does not possess love for God at all. God's deeds are as if it were dark to him. He therefore sins mortally and will be sentenced to hell. Nevertheless, he is not bound to burn in torment but will sit in the shadows, since he omitted sin out of fear. He will not, however, know the joy of heaven because he did not desire it while he lived. For that reason, he will sit like a blind and deaf man and like a man without hands or feet,

because his soul understands the evil of hell, yet very little of the joy that is in heaven.”

EXPLANATION

This revelation concerns three knights. The first was from Skåne. The following revelation was made concerning him: Lady Bridget saw a soul dressed as it were in twice-dyed scarlet cloth but splattered with a few black spots. As soon as she saw the soul, it vanished from her sight. Again after three days she saw the same soul entirely red and shining with gems like glittering gold. While she was wondering at this, the Spirit of God said: "This soul was held back by worldly cares but possessed true faith. He came for the indulgences obtainable at Rome with the intention of gaining divine charity and favor and with the desire of not sinning knowingly anymore.

Your vision of the soul dressed in twice-dyed scarlet cloth means that before the death of his body he did gain divine favor but only imperfectly. That his soul was splattered with black spots means that he felt the pull of physical affection for his parents and the desire to see his homeland. However, he entrusted his entire will to me. His soul therefore deserved to be cleansed and prepared for more sublime things. The gems glittering against the red color signifies that the soul was approaching its desired reward because of its goodwill as well as because of the effect of the indulgences.

See and consider then, my daughter, what good the indulgences of this city do for those people who come here with a holy intention for the sake of those very indulgences. Even if a million years were granted to someone - as indeed they are granted because of the faith and devotion of those who come here - still it would not be enough to earn them divine charity without God's grace. This charity, however, is truly given and earned due to the indulgences that my saints merited with their blood.”

In regard to the second knight in the same revelation, who was from Halland, God's Son says: "What did that pompous windbag tell you? Was it not that many people have doubts about the truth of the relic of my face cloth? Reply firmly to him with the four things I tell you now. The first is that many people lay up treasure but do not know for whom. The second is that every person entrusted with the Lord's talent who does not spend it cheerfully will incur a judgment. The third is that a person who loves land and

flesh more than God will not join the company of those who hunger and thirst for justice. The fourth is that every person who does not hearken to others will himself cry out and not be heard. Concerning the relic of my face cloth, have him know that just as the sweat of my blood flowed from my body when my suffering was imminent and I prayed to the Father, so too sweat flowed from my face onto the cloth because of the quality of the woman who prayed to me and for the solace of future generations.”

The third knight in the same revelation was from Sweden. The following revelation concerns him: ”It is written that an unbelieving husband is saved by a believing wife. The wife of this man ran and snatched her husband from the jaws of the devil with her own two hands. She snatched him from the devil with one of her hands, that is, with her tears and prayers and works of mercy. She snatched him with her other hand, that is, with her warnings and example and instruction with the result that he already draws near to the way of salvation. Accordingly, he should consider three things written in the common law. There are three sections in it. One is entitled 'on owning,' another is called 'on selling,' the third is 'on buying.'

In the first section on owning, it says that nothing is justly owned unless it is justly acquired. Any acquisition made by means of devious tricks or occasions of malice or at too low a price is not pleasing to God. The second section is called 'on selling.' Sometimes a thing is sold due to poverty or fear, sometimes due to violence or unfair settlements. A person must examine his conscience to see if there is compassion and mercy in his heart. The third section is called 'on buying.' Anyone who wants to buy something should look into the matter to see if the item to be sold has been justly acquired. It is not legally acceptable when something has been acquired by means of unjust exaction. So let this man examine these three matters in his mind.

May he understand that he will render an account to me for everything and especially for the possessions left to him by his parents, if perhaps he has used them more for the world's sake than for God's and beyond their proper use. Have him understand that he will render to me an account of his knighthood - his intention in receiving it, the way he lived it, and the way he has fulfilled the vow that he vowed to me.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that a devout soul like a bride should have a lovely mouth, clean ears, modest eyes, and a steadfast heart. He gives a very beautiful spiritual explanation of all the body parts mentioned.

Chapter 82

The Son speaks: "Like a bride, you should have a lovely mouth, clean ears, modest eyes, and a steadfast heart. A soul, too, should have the same qualities. Her mouth is her clean mind where nothing but what pleases me may enter. May her mouth, that is, her mind be lovely with the odor of good thoughts from the attentive recollection of my passion. May her mind also be like a mouth that is red with the fervor of divine charity so as to put what it understands into effect. As sure as no one longs to kiss a colorless mouth, neither does a soul please me at all unless she performs good deeds of her own good will alone. Like a mouth, her mind should have two lips, that is, these two affections: a longing for heavenly things, and scorn for all earthly things. Her lower palate should be the fear of death that separates the soul from the body and fear of the state in which she will then find herself. Her upper palate should be a fear of the terrible judgment.

The soul's tongue should keep itself between these two palates. What is the soul's tongue if not the frequent consideration of my mercy? Therefore, when you meditate on my mercy and how I created and redeemed you, how patient I am with you, consider also what a strict judge I am and how I do not leave anything unpunished, and consider, too, how uncertain the hour of death is. The soul's eyes should be as innocent as those of a dove that sees a hawk close by the waters. In other words, may your thoughts be ever on my love and my sufferings, and on the deeds and words of my chosen ones. With their help you will understand how the devil is capable of deceiving you, and so you never can be sure of yourself. Your ears should be clean so that you do not wish to hear vulgar and ludicrous things. Your heart should be steadfast so that you do not fear death by keeping the faith nor blush at the world's reproaches nor worry about the loss of your body for the sake of me, your God."

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that she should love him as a good servant loves his master, as a good son loves his father, and as a faithful wife loves her husband from whom she ought never to be separated. He gives a spiritual and profitable explanation of all this.

Chapter 83

The Son speaks: "I love you as a good master loves his servant, as a father his son, as a husband his wife. The master says to his servant: 'I shall give you clothing, proper food, and a moderate amount of work. The father says to his son: 'All I have is yours. The husband says to his wife: 'Your rest is my rest, your comfort is my comfort.'

How will these three respond to so much love? The servant, if he is good, will certainly say to his master: 'My condition is that of a servant, so I would rather serve you than anyone else.' The son will say to his father: 'I get every good thing from you, so I do not want to be separated from you.' The wife will say to her husband: 'I am supported by your work; I have the warmth of your breast and the sweetness of your words, so I would rather die than be separated from you.'

I, God, am the husband. The soul is indeed my bride, and she should be comforted in my rest and refreshed with the food of my divinity. For her part, she ought to bear every torment rather than be separated from me, for she can receive neither comfort nor honor apart from me. Two things pertain to matrimony: first, the means a married couple needs for their support; second, a son to receive their inheritance - they may also have a servant to attend to them - for it is written that Abraham was troubled about not having a son.

The soul has her means of support when she is full of virtue. She also has a son when she possesses wise discretion in order to be able to discern between virtues and vices, and when her discernment is according to God. She also has a servant, that is, her physical emotions. This servant does not live according to the concupiscence of the flesh but for the benefit of the body and the perfection of the soul.

I love you, thus, as a husband loves his wife, for your rest is my rest. It belongs to you, therefore, to bear freely any hardship rather than provoke me to anger. I love you, too, as a father loves his son, for I have given you discretion and free will. I love you, moreover, as a master loves his servant, and I have commanded you to maintain a moderate amount of necessary goods and a reasonable workload. But that servant, the body, is so foolish that he would rather serve the devil than me, and the devil never gives him rest from the cares of the world.”

Christ speaks to the bride and describes three men who fell because of women. The first is compared to a crowned donkey. The second had the heart of a hare, and the third is compared to a basilisk. Woman must therefore always be subject to man.

Chapter 84

The Son speaks: ”Three men are said to have fallen because of women. The first was a king whose lover struck him on the face when he did not smile at her. This is because he was a fool and could not restrain her nor cared about his own honor. He was like a donkey wearing a crown - a donkey because of his foolishness, a crown because of his rank. The second was Samson who, though the strongest of men, was beaten by a woman. He had the heart of a hare, since he was unable to master a single woman. The third was Solomon who was like a basilisk that kills by a glance but is killed by a mirror. Thus, the wisdom of Solomon exceeded all the rest, yet a woman's looks slew him. Woman must therefore be subject to man.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that two pages of a book are opened before him. Mercy is written three times on one page, justice on the other. He warns her to be converted to mercy while she still has time so that she will not afterward be punished by justice.

Chapter 85

The Son speaks to the bride: "I am the creator of the universe. Two pages, as it were, lie open before me. Mercy is written on the one, justice on the other. Mercy is, accordingly, pronounced to anyone who repents of his sins and resolves to sin no more, for my Spirit shall inspire him to perform good works. Whoever freely desires to be separated from the vanities of this world is made more fervent by my Spirit. The person who is even ready to die for me will be so inflamed by my Spirit that he will be wholly in me and I in him.

Justice is written on the other page. This says: 'The Father will not defend nor will the Son reconcile nor will the Spirit inflame anyone who does not rectify himself while there is time but who knowingly turns away from God.' Therefore, while there still is time, meditate carefully on the page of Mercy, for all who are saved will be cleansed either by water or by fire, that is, either by a small amount of penance in the present time or by the fire of purgatory in the future, until they are purged.

Know that I showed these two pages of the book of Mercy and Justice to a man whom you know. However, he scorns the page of my mercy and thinks that the left side is the right side. Like a heron over sparrows, he seeks to rise above everyone else. So he should fear for himself because, if he does not watch out, he will die in his scorn and be taken away from this world along with the drinkers and scoffers."

So it also turned out afterward. He got up contented from the dinner table but was killed at night by his enemies.

The Mother of God says that she is like a flower from which bees gather sweet honey. The bees are the servants and chosen ones of God who continually gather the nectar of grace from her and who have spiritual wings and spiritual feet and a spiritual sting.

Chapter 86

The Mother speaks: "I am the Queen and Mother of mercy. My Son, the creator of the universe, feels such sweet affection toward me that he has given me a spiritual

understanding of all creatures. I am thus very like a flower from which bees gather sweet nectar in the greatest abundance. No matter how much they gather from it, there still remains nectar on it. So too I am able to gain grace for everyone and yet always abound in grace.

My chosen ones are indeed like bees, for they love me with all devotion and care for my honor. Like bees they have two feet, for they have a continual desire to increase my honor and also labor assiduously for it, working all they can. They have two wings as well, in that they consider themselves unworthy to praise me and also are obedient in all that refers to my honor. They even have a sting and die if they lose it.

Yes, the friends of God's have the tribulations of the world that, for the safeguarding of the virtues, will not be taken away from them until the end of their lives. Yet I, who abound in consolation, shall console them.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that she should keep her body beautiful and unblemished. He compares all the parts of the body in a spiritual sense to the perfect love of God and of neighbor, especially of the friends of God. He adds that she should do in a spiritual way what the phoenix does in a physical way, that is, to collect wood and burn herself up.

Chapter 87

The Son speaks to the bride: "I told you earlier that you should have limpid eyes in order to see the evil you have done and the good you have neglected to do. Let your mouth, that is, your mind, be clean of all evil. Its lips are the two desires you should have: the desire to give everything up for my sake and the will to remain with me. These lips should be red in color, for red is the most becoming of colors and can be seen from farthest away. Color signifies beauty, and all beauty is found in the virtues, because it is more acceptable to God when someone offers that which he or she loves the most and that which is more spiritually edifying for others. Therefore, whether in affections or with deeds, a person should give to God that which he or she holds dearest. It can be read that

God rejoiced when his work was completed. God rejoices, too, whenever a person offers his or her whole self up to him with the intention of living according to God's will whether in suffering or in joy.

Your arms should be flexible and agile with respect to God's honor. The left arm represents the contemplation of my favors and the good I have done for you by creating and redeeming you, as well as of your own ingratitude toward me. The right arm is a love so fervent for me that you would rather suffer torment than lose me or provoke me to anger. Willingly I take my rest between these two arms, and your heart shall be my heart, for I am like a fire of divine love, and I want to be loved fervently there in your arms. The ribs that protect your heart are your parents - not your natural parents but my chosen ones whom you should love like me and more than you love your own parents. They are truly your parents, for they have caused you to be born again to life eternal.

The skin of the soul should be so beautiful as not to have any blemish. The skin here stands for your every neighbor whom, if you love him as yourself, my love and the love of my saints is kept inviolate. However, if you hate him, then your heart gets injured and your ribs are stripped away, that is, the love of my saints will become smaller in you. Your skin should be without a blemish, for you ought not to hate your neighbor but to love everyone according to God's will, for then my whole heart will be with your heart.

I was saying to you earlier that I want to be loved fervently, for I am like a fire of divine love. There are three marvelous things about my fire. First, it burns but is never enkindled; second, it is never extinguished; third, it burns but is never consumed. In this way, my love for humankind existed from the beginning in my divine nature. When I assumed my human nature, it burned even more. It burns so intensely that it is never extinguished but renders the soul fervent, not consuming her but strengthening her ever more. You may gather this from the example of the phoenix. In old age she gathers wood on a high mountain. Then, once the wood is set aflame from the heat of the sun, she throws herself into the fire and, having thus died, comes back to life through that very fire. So too the soul, set aflame by the fire of divine charity, emerges from it like the phoenix better and stronger than ever.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that all creation is according to his will except for human beings. He also says that there are three kinds of men in this world. They can be compared to three boats traveling on the sea, the first of which runs into danger and perishes, the second of which is carried by the waves, the third of which is steered well.

Chapter 88

The Son speaks: "I am the creator of all spirits good and bad. I am also their ruler and helmsman. Moreover, I am the creator of all animals and of each thing that exists and has life as well as of all each thing that exists but does not have life. Thus, whatever there is in heaven, on earth, or in the sea, each and every one of them is according to my will except for humankind alone. Know, therefore, that some men are like a boat that has lost both rudder and mast and gets tossed here and there on the swell of the sea until it runs into the cliffs of the island of death. There are on this boat those who, in despair, give their minds over to sensual pleasure.

Others are like a boat that still has its mast and rudder and an anchor with two cables. However, the main anchor is broken, and the rudder is on the verge of shattering whenever the force of the waves forces itself between the boat and the rudder. Care must therefore be taken because, while the rudder and boat are still connected, they have, as it were, mutual warmth among themselves thanks to that connection.

The third boat has all its riggings and equipment and is set to sail whenever the time comes. The first anchor, the main anchor that I mentioned earlier, is religious discipline that is lowered and lightened with the patience and fervor of divine love. This anchor has been shattered, inasmuch as what the fathers laid down has now been cast underfoot, and everyone regards whatever he finds useful as a part of the religious profession. They are thus carried about like a boat upon the waves. The second anchor, which, as I said, is still in one piece, is the intention of serving God. This is tied by two cables, namely by faith and hope, for they believe me to be God and place their hope in my will to save them. I am their rudder, and so long as I am in the boat, the swell of the waves does not enter it, and there exists a kind of warmth between them and me.

I remain connected to their boat when they love nothing as much as me. I am attached to them by the three nails of godly fear, humility, and the contemplation of my works. But if they love anything more than me, then the water of disintegration enters, then the three nails of fear, humility, and divine contemplation disintegrate, the anchor of good will is shattered, and the cables of faith and hope are broken. The people in this boat are in a state of great insecurity and are thus headed for dangerous places.

My friends are found on the third boat because, as I said, it is set for sailing.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her about the way a spiritual knight should behave in battle, namely, to trust in God and not in one's own strength. He gives two short prayers for the knight to say daily. He also says that the knight should be armed with the spiritual weapons described here.

Chapter 89

The Son speaks: "Whoever desires to be a fighter has to be noble in spirit and get up again if he falls, trusting not in his own power but in my mercy. A person who does not trust in my goodness has the following thoughts: 'If I make any attempts at restraining the flesh by fasting or struggling in vigil, I will not be able either to persevere or to keep myself from vices, for God does not help me' - that person deserves to fall.

Hence, a person who wants to be a spiritual fighter trusts in me and is confident that he will be able to achieve it with the aid of my grace. So he should have the intention of doing good and avoiding evil and of getting up again whenever he falls. He should say this prayer: 'Lord God Almighty, you who guide all souls toward the good, I am a sinner who has strayed far away from you through my own wrongdoing. I thank you for leading me back to the right path, and I ask you, gracious Jesus, who hung on the cross in blood and sorrow, to have mercy on me. I entreat you by your five wounds and by the pain that passed from your shattered veins to your heart. Deign to keep me safe today, lest I fall into sin. Give me the power to withstand the spears of the enemy and to get up again manfully, should I chance to fall into sin.'

In addition, in order that the fighter may be able to persevere in the good, let him pray in this way: 'O, Lord God, for whom nothing is impossible and who can do all things, give me the strength to carry out good works and to be able to persevere in the good.'

After this, he should take his sword in hand, that is, he should make a good confession, which must be polished and gleaming. It must be polished by a careful examination of conscience regarding how and how much and where he has failed and why. It should also be gleaming in the sense that he must not be ashamed of anything nor hide anything nor describe a sin in a way other than he has committed it. This sword should have two sharp edges, namely, the intention of no longer sinning and the intention of making up for the sins he has committed. The point of the sword should be contrition. This slays the devil whenever a man who earlier delighted in sin feels contrition and sorrow for having provoked me, his God, to anger. The sword should have the hilt of the consideration of God's great mercy. His mercy is so great that no one is such a sinner that he cannot obtain forgiveness, provided he asks for it with a will to improve.

The sword of confession, then, must be held with this idea that God has mercy on all. However, in order that his hand may not be cut by the edges, a piece of iron is placed in between the edge and the hilt. A pommel prevents the sword from falling from his hand. Similarly, a person who holds the sword of confession and hopes in God's mercy for the remittance and cleansing of sin must beware not to let it fall by presuming on God's forgiveness. To prevent this there is the bolt of godly fear that makes him afraid that God will take away his grace and display anger because of his presumption. In order that his operative hand may not be cut or impaired, a piece of iron is placed between the hand and the edge. This is the consideration of God's fairness, for, though my justice is so great that I leave nothing unexamined or unpunished, yet I am also so merciful and fair that I demand nothing beyond what nature can bear. Moreover, I forgive great punishment for the sake of a good intention and great sin in return for a little reparation.

The knight's coat of mail represents abstinence. Just as a coat of mail consists of many small rings of chain, so too abstinence consists of many virtues, for example, abstinence from immoral sights or things affecting the other senses, from gluttony and

lust and superfluity, and from many other things that St. Benedict laid down as forbidden. One cannot put this coat of mail on alone without another's help. Therefore, my Mother, the Virgin Mary, should be invoked and venerated, for every good example and type of virtue are to be found in her. If she is steadfastly invoked, she will indicate to your spirit all the perfect types of abstinence.

The helmet stands for perfect hope. It has two openings, as it were, through which the knight can see. The first opening is the consideration of what things must be done, and the second that of what things must be avoided. Everyone who hopes in God should always consider what must be done or avoided in accordance with God's will. The shield stands for patience with the help of which one can cheerfully endure anything that happens.”

Christ speaks and says that his friends are like his own arm, for, like a good doctor, he cuts away any decayed flesh or noxious elements from them and adds healthy flesh to them by transforming them into himself.

Chapter 90

The Son speaks: "My friends are like my arm. An arm has these five things: skin, flesh, blood, bones, and marrow. I am like a wise doctor who first cuts away all the useless matter, then joins flesh to flesh and bone to bone and afterward applies healing medicine.

This is how I have treated my friends. First, I removed from them all worldly passions and illicit carnal desires. Then I joined my marrow to their marrow. What is my marrow if not the power of my divinity? As a man without marrow is dead, so too that person dies who has no communion with my divinity. I have joined my divinity to their infirmity when they taste my wisdom and it bears fruit in them, when their soul understands what to do and what to avoid.

The bones stand for my strength. I have joined it to their strength when I make

them strong in order to do good. The blood signifies my will. I have joined it to their will when their will accords with what I will, and when they neither seek nor desire anything but me alone. Flesh signifies my long-suffering patience. I have joined it to their patience when they are as patient as I was when I had not a sound spot from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head. The skin signifies love. I have joined it to myself when they love nothing as much as me, and when they wish to die for my sake freely and with my help.”

Christ admonishes the bride to humble herself in four ways, namely, before those who wield power in the world and before sinners as well as before the spiritual friends of God and before those who are poor in the world.

Chapter 91

The Son speaks to the bride: ”You should humble yourself in four ways; first of all, before those who wield power in the world. One should defer to authority both because it is right for men to obey other men, inasmuch as humankind scorned to obey God, and because people cannot get on without someone to direct them.

Second, humble yourself before those who live in spiritual poverty, that is, before sinners, by praying for them and giving thanks to God because, fortunately, you neither have been nor are one of them. Third, humble yourself before those who live in spiritual wealth, that is, before the friends of God, by regarding yourself as unworthy to serve them or to be in their company. Fourth, humble yourself before those who are poor in the world, by helping and clothing them and by washing their feet.”

Christ admonishes the bride to make progress and to persevere in the virtues by imitating the life of the saints and in this way to become his arm. He shows how the saints become transformed into the arm of Christ.

Chapter 92

The Son speaks: "I told you earlier that my friends are my arm. This is true, for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and my Mother, with all the heavenly host, are in them. My divine nature is like the marrow without which no one can live. The bones are my human nature, which was strong in suffering. The Holy Spirit is like the blood, for he fills and gladdens the universe. My Mother is like the flesh in which were found my divine and human natures and the Holy Spirit. The skin is the whole heavenly host.

Just as the skin covers the flesh, so did my Mother excel all the saints in virtue. Though the angels are pure, she is purer still. Though the prophets were filled with God's Spirit, though the martyrs suffered greatly, yet my Spirit was fuller and more fervent in my Mother, and she was greater than any martyr. The confessors certainly practiced complete abstinence, but my Mother had still more perfect abstinence, for in her was found my divinity along with my humanity.

Thus, when my friends have me, there is found in them my divine nature that vivifies the soul. My human nature is found in them and makes them strong unto death. The blood of my Spirit is found in them and renders their will quick to perform every good action. Their flesh is filled with my own flesh and blood when they refuse to sin and keep themselves chaste with the help of my grace. My skin is joined to their skin when they imitate the life and conduct of my saints.

In this way, my saints are aptly called my arm. You should become one of their members through the intention of progressing in virtue and by imitating them as far as you are able. Just as I unite them to myself through the union of my body, so too you should be united to them and to me through my same body."

Christ speaks to the bride and gives her three precepts, namely, to desire nothing but food and clothing, not to long to have spiritual benefits except according to God's will, and not to be sad about anything but her sins and those of others. He also tells her that those who refuse to convert and purge their sins through austere penance in this life will be severely punished at the divine judgment.

Chapter 93

The Son speaks: "I give you three precepts: first, to desire nothing beyond food and clothing; second, not to long for spiritual things except according to my will; third, not to be sad about anything but your own sins and those of others. If you do feel sorrow, consider then my strict judgment, which you can fear and ponder from the case of a certain man who has already received his sentence. He entered the monastery with three intentions in mind. He did not want to have to work, and he did not want to have to worry about food. In the third place, he thought to himself as follows: 'If a temptation of the flesh should seize me, I shall be able to evade it by some means without intercourse.' On account of all this, he was afflicted in three ways. Since he did not want to work, he was forced to work by threats and blows. In return for his second intention, he suffered nakedness and lack of food. Third, he was despised by everyone to such an extent that he was unable to experience any pleasure in his sensuality.

When the time for his profession came, he thought to himself as follows: 'Since I cannot live in the world without working, it is better for me to live in the monastery and work for God.' Because of his cooperative will, my mercy and justice came to him in order to cleanse him and bring him to my eternal glory. Once he had made his profession, he was struck down with a grave illness and suffered so much that his eyes went out due to the pain, his ears could hear nothing, and he was destitute in his every limb, all because he had not wanted to work. He suffered greater nakedness than he had in his worldly state. When he had delicious food, he could not eat it. When his natural appetites pined for it, he did not have it. He was so physically wasted before he died that he was like a cumbersome log.

When he died, he came like a thief to his trial, because he had wanted to live in the religious state according to his own preferences and not for the improvement of his life. Yet it was not fitting for him to be sentenced like a thief, since, though he was childish and foolish in his reason and conscience, still he had faith and hope in me, his God, and therefore he was sentenced in accord with mercy. Because his sin could not be fully purged by means of his physical punishment, his soul is now being so severely punished in purgatory that it is as though his skin had been peeled off and his bones placed in an

oil-press so as better to squeeze the marrow out of them.

How those people will suffer who have spent their entire lives in sin and who never did or willed anything to the contrary! Woe to them, for they say to me: 'Why did God die or what use was there in his death?' This is how they repay me for redeeming them and saving them and giving them health and all that they need. I shall therefore seek judgment from them because they have broken the faith that they pledged to me in baptism, and because they do wrong every day and scorn my commandments. I shall not let their least little dereliction of religious duty go unpunished."

EXPLANATION

This brother had a secret sin and never wished to confess it. On the command of Christ, Lady Bridget went to him and said: "Do more diligent penance, for there is something hidden in your heart, and as long as you keep it shut up, you will not be able to die." He answered her that there was nothing that he had not made known in confession. But she said: "Examine your intention upon entering the monastery and with what intention you have lived up to now, and you shall find the truth in your heart."

Then he broke into tears and said: "Blessed be God who has sent you to me! Now that you have spoken of my secret, I am willing to tell the truth to those listening. I do have something hidden in my heart that I never dared nor could bring out. As often as I have repented in confession of my other sins, my tongue was always tied about this one. An exceedingly great shame took hold of me, and I could not confess the secret remorse of my heart. Each time I made confession of my heart, I invented for myself a new conclusion to my wording. I used to say: 'Father, I confess my guilt to you concerning all the sins I have mentioned and even any others that I have not mentioned.' I thought that in this way all my hidden sins would be pardoned. But now, my Lady, if it please God, I will gladly tell the whole world about all I have concealed in my heart for so long a time."

A confessor was called, and he made a complete and tearful declaration of his sins. He died that very night.

Christ teaches the bride beautiful prayers to say when getting dressed and when going

to table and when going to bed. He admonishes her to be humble in the way she dresses, and virtuous and self-controlled in the use of her body.

Chapter 94

The Son of God speaks to the bride and says: "Exterior beauty symbolizes the interior beauty a person ought to have. So when you are putting on your veil to tie up your hair, you should say: 'Lord God, I give you thanks because you supported me when I sinned. Because of my incontinent life, I am unworthy to behold you, and so I cover my hair with a veil.' " The Lord added: "Incontinence is so abhorrent to me that even a virgin who has the intention of indulging in lustful pleasure is not a pure virgin in my sight, unless she rectifies her intention through penance.

When you cover your forehead with the veil, you should say: 'Lord God, you have made all creatures well and created man in your image excelling all others, have mercy on me! Because I have not used the beauty of my face unto your glory, I cover my forehead with a veil.' When you put on your shoes, say: 'Blessed are you, my God, who commands me to wear shoes so that I may be strong and not lukewarm in your service. Strengthen me, then, so that I may be able to walk in the way of your commandments.' You should show humility in all the other clothes you wear and be virtuous and self-controlled in the use of your whole body.

When you come to table, say: 'Lord God, if you would, for you are able to do so, I should ask you to allow us to subsist without food. Now, however, because you have commanded us to take food in a reasonable way, I ask you, grant me temperance at meals so that, by your grace, I may be able to eat as my nature needs and not as my bodily appetite craves.'

When you go to bed, say: 'Blessed are you, my God, who arranges the changes of time for our relaxation and for the comfort of soul and body! I ask you to give my body rest this night and to keep me safe from the power and deception of the enemy.'

Christ tells the bride what kind of weapons belong to the wicked. He explains to her that if they boast of their sin with the intention of persevering in it, they shall be laid waste by the terrible sword of God's severe justice.

Chapter 95

The Son speaks: "I stand here like a king challenged to battle. The devil stands against me with his army. In truth, my intention and steadfast purpose is such that heaven and earth and all that are in them could collapse before I deviated in even the slightest way from justice. The devil's intention is such that he would rather there be as many hells as atoms in the sun before humbling himself. Some of the enemy are already drawing close to judgment, and there is no more of a distance between us than a couple of feet. Their banner is raised, the shield is on the arm, the hand rests on the sword but the sword has not yet been drawn. My patience is so great that I shall not strike them unless they strike first.

The enemy's banner shows three things: gluttony, greed, and lust. Their helmet is their hardness of heart, for they pay no attention to the pains of hell nor to how abhorrent sin is to me. The openings of the helmet are carnal lust and the desire to please the world. Through such they run all about and see things that should not be seen. Their shield is the perfidy with which they excuse their sins and ascribe them to the weakness of the flesh. Thus, they think they can ask pardon for their sins for nothing. Their sword is the intention of persevering in sin. It is not yet drawn, because their wickedness is as yet unfulfilled.

The sword is drawn each time they desire to sin as long as they can live. They strike each time they boast of sin and wish to remain in the state of sin. When their wickedness is thus fulfilled, then a voice in my army shall cry out and say: 'Strike now!' Then the sword of my severity shall lay them to waste, and each one shall suffer according as he is armed. Their souls shall be snatched away by demons who are like birds of prey and are not seeking any temporal advantage but only souls whom they can endlessly mangle to pieces."

The Bridegroom explains to the bride the meaning of the distance of two feet and the drawing of the sword spoken of in the above chapter.

Chapter 96

The Son speaks: "I told you earlier that there is no more distance between me and my enemies than a couple of feet. Indeed they are now advancing a foot closer to the judgment. One of these feet symbolizes the reward for the good works they have done for me. Accordingly, from now on their ignominy will grow, their pleasure will turn bitter, their joy will be taken away, their trouble and sorrow will increase. The second foot is their wickedness, which is as yet unfulfilled. Just as people say that a thing is so filled it will burst, so too when their soul and body are separated, they will be condemned by the judge.

Their sword is their intention of sinning. It has been drawn out halfway because, when a man is on the wane and misfortunes occur, the wicked suffer more anguish but still remain eager to sin. Fame and fortune do not allow them to ponder over sin much. As it is, they wish to live longer so as to achieve their lustful pleasure, and they are already adding to their sinning with even greater license. Woe to them, for, unless they rectify themselves, their perdition is already at hand!"

Christ speaks to the bride about a certain prelate. He tells her that a devout soul that loses the heat of devotion and of holy meditation due to her own pride and ambition and worldly entanglements can recuperate divine warmth and light and experience divine sweetness by humbling herself perfectly before God.

Chapter 97

The Son speaks through the bride to a certain prelate and tells him: "You are like an immobile mill wheel. When it stands fixed and does not move, then the grain does not get

ground in the mill. This wheel signifies your will. It should be mobile not with respect to your own will and desire but to mine, and you ought to surrender yourself completely into my hands. However, this wheel is very immobile toward my will, since the water of earthly consideration is troubling your mind too much. The contemplation of my works and my passion is almost dead in your heart, for which reason you have no feeling or taste for the food of the soul.

So break through the obstacle that obstructs the passage of the water! Let the water flow so that it makes the wheel turn and become mobile again so that the grain can be easily ground. The obstacle holding back the water is mental pride and ambition. These obstruct the grace of the Holy Spirit and impede all the good fruit that the soul should be producing. Receive into your mind the true humility through which the sweetness of my Spirit will flow into your soul and earthly considerations will be washed away. Humility will make your will perfectly mobile with respect to my will, and then you will begin to regard your works as seeds of grain and count my works as great.

What is true humility? Certainly not caring about human popularity or disfavor. Rather, it is to tread my forgotten and neglected path, not seeking after superfluous possessions but contenting yourself with simpler things. If you love this path, then you will obtain a liking for the spiritual life. Then my passion and the path of my saints will seem sweet to your mind, and you will understand how much you owe to the souls whom you have undertaken to guide.

Now that you have ascended to the top of the wheel on the two feet of power and distinction, you have become covetous because of your power and proud because of your distinction. So come down now by humbling yourself in your mind and by asking the humble to pray for you. I shall surely send upon you the rapid stream of my justice and exact the last farthing from you along with an account of your affections, thoughts, words, and deeds. I shall also exact an account of the souls whom I have entrusted to your care, those whom I myself redeemed with my blood.”

Christ speaks to the bride and says that sinners and the lukewarm will be shot by four arrows, that is, by the four rebukes contained herein, to make them repent and let

themselves be humbly led back to the reformation of their lives.

Chapter 98

The Son speaks: "I shall give my friends four arrows. By the first shall be shot the man who is blind in one eye; by the second the man who is lame in one foot; by the third the man who is deaf in one ear; by the fourth the man who lies stretched out on the ground.

The man blind in one eye symbolizes the people who see the commandments of God and the deeds of the saints but pay them no attention. They do see, however, the pleasures of the world and covet them. Such people should be shot by saying thus: 'You are like Lucifer who beheld the utmost beauty of God but who, because he unjustly desired what he should not have desired, descended into hell. You, too, shall descend there, unless you come to your senses, inasmuch as you understand the precepts of God as well as the transient nature of everything in the world. The best advice for you, then, is to hold on to what is certain and let go of what is transient, so that you do not descend into hell.'

The man lame in one foot symbolizes those who repent and are sorry for the sins they have committed, but who strive to acquire earthly comforts and worldly rewards. Such people should be shot in this way: 'You strive for the comfort of a body that worms will shortly be consuming. Strive instead for the profit of your soul that will live forever.'

The man deaf in one ear symbolizes those who desire to hear my words and those of my saints but also keep their other ear open for coarse and worldly speech. Tell them thus: 'You are like Judas who listened to God's words with one ear but they went out the other. What he heard did not do him any good. Close your ears to empty words so that you may come to hear the angels' song.'

The man stretched out on the ground symbolizes those who are entangled in earthly matters yet think on and wish to know the way by which they can reform themselves. Tell them thus: 'The time is short. It is but a moment. Yet the punishment of hell is eternal

and the glory of the saints everlasting. In order, then, to attain true life, do not worry about taking up a heavy and difficult load, for God is as just as he is kind.'

If the arrow comes out bloodied from the heart of anyone shot in this way, that is, if he feels compunction and resolves to reform his life, then I will pour into him the oil of my grace by which his whole body will regain its strength."

Christ speaks to the bride and laments over his Jewish crucifiers. He also laments over the Christians who scorn him along with his charity and justice by presumptuously and knowingly sinning against his commandments and by spurning the church's sentences of excommunication under the pretext of God's mercy. For this he threatens them with the fury and wrath of his justice.

Chapter 99

The Mother says: "At the time of my Son's suffering, when his betrayer Judas approached, he bent down - for Judas was small of size - and gave him a kiss and said: 'Friend, for what have you come?' And some of those there seized him immediately, while others pulled him by the hair or defiled him with their spittle."

Then the Son spoke, saying: "I am regarded as a worm, lying as though dead in the winter. Passersby spit on it and trample it down. This day the Jews treated me like a worm, for they held me to be the lowest and most unworthy of creatures. Even so do Christians scorn me, for they regard as meaningless everything I have done and endured for them out of love. They trample me down each time they fear and venerate man more than me, their God, each time they count my judgment for naught and fix the time and measure for my mercy according to their own conceptions.

They strike me in the teeth whenever, having heard of my commandments and suffering, they say: 'Let us do whatever delights us in the present, and we shall obtain heaven nonetheless. If God had wanted us to perish or to punish us eternally, he would not have created us or redeemed us at such a bitter cost.' That is why they shall

experience my justice. While not the least little good will go unrewarded, neither will the least little evil remain unpunished. They treat me with scorn, as though crushing me underfoot, whenever they disregard the church's sentence of excommunication. As the excommunicated are shunned by others, so too such as these will be separated from me, inasmuch as excommunication, when it is known but scorned, causes more grievous injury than a physical sword.

Since, then, I appear as a worm to them, I will now come to life again through my terrible judgment. My coming will be so terrible that those who see it will say to the mountains: 'Fall upon us, cover us from the wrathful face of God!' ”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that she is like a pipe of the Holy Spirit through which he makes lovely music in the world for his own glory and for the benefit of people. For this reason, he wants to coat her with the silver of virtuous conduct and wisdom on the outside and with the gold of humility and purity of heart on the inside.

Chapter 100

The Son says to the bride: ”You should be like a pipe on which the piper makes lovely music. The owner of the pipe coats it with silver on the outside so that it will look more costly, but with durable gold on the inside. You, too, should be coated with the silver of virtuous conduct and human wisdom in order to understand what you owe to God and to your neighbor as well as what is expedient for the eternal salvation of body and soul. You should be coated on the inside with the gold of humility so that you long to please no one but me and are not afraid of being displeasing to other people for my sake.

The piper does three more things for his pipe. First he wraps it in silk so that it does not get dirty. Second, he makes a case to keep it in. Third, he makes a lock for the case so that it will not be stolen by a thief. You, too, should be wrapped in purity so that you no longer wish to be stained by lust or desire.

Instead, struggle cheerfully to remain by yourself, because dealings with evil men

corrupt virtuous conduct. The lock represents the diligent custody of all your senses and inner faculties so that you guard against the devil's deception in all your actions. The key, however, is the Holy Spirit. He opens your heart, exactly as I please, for my glory and the benefit of men.”

The Mother of God says that her Son's heart is most sweet, most clean, and most pleasant, so abounding in love that even if a sinner were standing at the very door of perdition and cried out to him with a purpose of amendment, he would be immediately freed. One reaches the heart of God through the humility of true contrition and through the devout and frequent contemplation of his passion.

Chapter 101

The Mother of God speaks: ”My Son's heart is as sweet as the sweetest honey and as clean as the purest spring, for whatever belongs to virtue and goodness flows from it as from a spring. His heart is also most pleasant. What is more pleasant to a sensible person than the contemplation of God's love in his creation and redemption, in his life of work and his teaching, in his grace and long-suffering? His love is indeed not fluid like water, but widespread and durable, for it stays with a person until the very end, so much so that if a sinner were standing at the very gates of perdition, even then he would be rescued if he cried out with a purpose of amendment.

There are two ways to reach the heart of God. The first is the humility of true contrition. This leads a person to God's heart and to a spiritual dialogue. The second way is the contemplation of my Son's passion. This removes the hardness of the human heart and makes a person run toward God's heart with joy.”

The bride is shown the judgment of the soul of a monk before Christ the judge. The Blessed Virgin intercedes for him and the devil accuses him savagely of grave sins.

Chapter 102

The Mother of God speaks to the Son, saying: "My plea is great. Though you know all things, I am presenting it for the sake of her who is present here." The Son answers: "All judgment is given to me, and it is necessary to me to render particular judgments. Nine good characteristics belong to a righteous judge. First, to listen attentively; second, to distinguish the charges; third, the intention to render a just judgment; fourth, to inquire into the causes of the litigation; fifth, to inquire into how long the quarrel has lasted, for greater damage accrues with the delay of justice; sixth, to inquire into the qualities of the witnesses, if they are trustworthy, if they agree in their assertions, if one of the litigants has more witnesses than the other; seventh, not to be either rash or timid in judging nor to fear power or injury or loss of honor on behalf of the truth; eighth, to show no interest in anyone's entreaties or bribes; ninth, to be fair in judgment, judging a poor man the same as a rich, a brother or son the same as a stranger, not acting contrary to the truth on account of any worldly benefit. Accordingly, dear Mother, say what you will!"

His Mother answered: "Two contend with each other, and two spirits are in them, a good spirit in one, an evil spirit in the other. They are contending over your blood's acquisition, one in order to kill, the other in order to give life. Obedience and love are found in the one, hate and pride in the other. Accordingly, render your verdict!" The Son answered: "How many witnesses are with your friend and how many with the other?" The Mother answered: "My friend has few witnesses, while the other has many witnesses who know the truth, yet scorn to listen." The Son answered: "I shall render a just verdict." The Mother said: "My friend makes no plea. However, I, his Lady, do make a plea, in order that evil may not prevail." The Son answered: "I shall do as you want. As you know, however, the physical verdict must precede the spiritual one, and no one should be convicted, unless the sin has been carried out."

The Mother: "My Son, though we know everything, I am asking on behalf of her who is present, what is the physical verdict and what is the spiritual verdict in this case?" The Son: "The physical verdict is that his soul must quickly depart from his body, and his hand will be his death. The spiritual verdict is that his soul must hang on the gallows of

hell, which is not made of ropes but of the hottest flames, for he is an unworthy sheep that has fallen far away from his flock.”

Then one of the Augustinian monks addressed the judge and said: “Lord, this man has nothing to do with you. You called him to a life of retirement, and he forgot it. His vow of obedience has been broken. His name has been removed. His deeds are none.” The judge answered: “His soul is not present in the courtroom to be able to respond.” The devil said to him: “I will make a response. You called him indeed away from the storms of the world to a life of retirement, but I called from the highest peak to the deepest hole. He obeyed me promptly. His name is glorious to me.”

The Judge: “Explain your knowledge of him.” The devil said: “So I shall, though unwillingly. You called him from the stormy cares of the world to the quiet haven of the spiritual life, but he thought nothing of this, for he strove even more eagerly after worldly concerns. The highest peak is honest contrition and confession. A person possessing it converses with you, the almighty, and touches your majesty. I threw him headlong from that highest peak at the moment when he resolved to keep sinning until the end, at the moment when he thought nothing of sinning, but found your justice meaningless.

The deepest hole is gluttony and greed, for, like a very deep hole, it cannot be filled. His greed was that insatiable! He bore the name of monk, and the name of monk implies self-restraint and abstinence even from licit wants. Yet this name was erased in him, and now he is called Saul. As Saul departed from the way of obedience, so has he as well. His vow of obedience has been broken. As two ends of a broken piece of timber cannot be fitted together when the wood has rotted, neither this man's desire for heaven nor his love of God, which are like the two ends or points of union of obedience, could fit together in his obedience, for he only obeyed for the sake of worldly advantage and his own self-will. His deeds were also like my own deeds. Though I do not say mass or chant or do the other things he does, still when he does all of that in accord with my will, then he is doing my deeds, and his deeds can be said to be mine. When he celebrates masses, he approaches you with presumption, and that presumption fills him all the more with my wickedness. He chants for the sake of human praise. When I turn my back on him, he turns his back on me. Whenever I wish, he turns his belly toward my belly, that is, he carries out his sensual desires just as I wish. Everything he does, he does because of the

present life and because of his own self-will. Hence, his deeds are my deeds.”

EXPLANATION

The same soul then appeared blind and trembling. An Ethiopian followed him in until he reached the judge who seemed to be seated on a great throne with a multitude standing by. The Ethiopian said: "O Judge, give me your verdict on this soul. Now his soul is present in person and his physical verdict has already preceded." The Ethiopian said: "You said that his hand was to be his death. This has already been accomplished." The Judge: "That can be understood in two ways. Either a wicked action became the occasion of his death or his physical hand cut short the life of his body." The Ethiopian answered: "True indeed. His shameful way of life killed his soul, and impatience opened the wound in his body by which he died." The Judge told him: "Your earlier accusation of this soul alleged that he followed your wishes in every way, that you had tried to throw him down from the highest height, and that he turned his belly toward you. Let us hear, then, what the soul herself has to say!"

Then the Judge turned to the soul and said: "Soul, you had the rational faculty of discerning between good and evil. Why did you trample your priestly honor underfoot?" The soul answered: "I did have the rational faculty, but I preferred to follow my own will by not believing that something so great could lie hidden beneath such modest appearances." The Judge then said: "You knew that the monastic way of perfection meant humility and obedience. Why did you enter it as a wolf in the likeness of a sheep?" The soul said: "So that I could flee the world's reproach and lead a quieter life." The Judge replied a third time: "Brother - but no brother of mine - if you saw the example of your holy brothers and heard the words of the saints, why did you not follow them?" The soul answered: "All those good things that I heard and saw were loathsome and onerous to me, for I had decided in my heart rather to follow my own will and my own ways than the ways of the saints."

The Judge spoke for the fourth time: "Did you not frequently fast and pray and go to confession?" The soul: "I did frequently fast and pray, but I did it in the manner of a man who admits some lesser things in order to please but hides greater ones in order not to displease." The Judge: "Had you not read that each man must render an account even of

a farthing, that is, even of the least little things?" Then, as though wailing loudly, the soul said: "Indeed, Lord, I had read it and I knew it in my conscience, but I thought that your mercy was so great that you would not punish someone for eternity. Accordingly, I did have the desire to repent in old age, but pain and death came upon me so suddenly that, when I wanted to go to confession, I had lost my memory, and my tongue was tied as if with a chain."

Then the devil cried out: "Judge, this is incredible! I see that this soul is condemning herself. So let her confess her wickedness now to no avail. Yet I dare not lay my hand upon her without your sentence." The Judge answered: "It is over and done." At that the Ethiopian and the soul disappeared, as though they were tied together. They went down with a great clap of thunder.

Then the Judge said: "All this took place in an instant, but, for the sake of your understanding, it appeared to take place in time so that you may see and know and fear God's justice."

While at prayer, the bride of Christ saw in a vision how Blessed Denis prayed to the Virgin Mary for the kingdom of France.

Chapter 103

While I was at prayer, I saw how Blessed Denis addressed the Virgin Mary, saying: "You are the Queen of Mercy. All mercy is given to you. You became Mother of God for the sake of our salvation, we who are wretched sinners. Therefore, have mercy on the kingdom of France, your France and mine. It is yours, because its inhabitants honor you in their measure. It is mine, because I am their patron saint and they trust in me. You see how many souls are in danger in every hour, how men's bodies are being struck down like beasts and, what is worse, how many souls are falling like snowflakes down to hell. Comfort them, then, and pray for them, for you are the Lady and Helper of all" The Mother of God answered: "Appear before my Son, and let us hear - for the sake of this woman - what he will say in answer."

Together with Blessed Denis and other saints, the Mother of God entreats her Son on behalf of France and because of the war between the two kings, who are compared to two ferocious beasts.

Chapter 104

The Mother speaks to her Son, saying: "Blessed are you, my Son. It is written that I was called blessed because I bore you in my womb. You responded that a person is blessed who hears your words and keeps them. Son, I am she who kept your words in my heart and memory. Therefore, I recall to you the word you spoke in answer to Peter's question about forgiving a sinner up to seven times. You said that a sinner is to be forgiven up to seventy times seven times, meaning by this that you are ready to show mercy as often as a person humbles himself with a desire to improve." The Son answered: "I bear you witness that my words were as deeply rooted in you as the seed planted in fertile earth that gives fruit a hundredfold. Even so, do your virtuous deeds bear joyful fruit. So ask what you will!"

His Mother answered: "Together with Denis and the other saints of yours whose bodies lie in the earth of the kingdom of France, though their souls are in heaven, I ask you: Have mercy on this kingdom! I speak figuratively for the sake of this woman who is present in spirit. I see, as it were, two most ferocious beasts, each of its own kind. The one beast is excessively greedy and will gobble up whatever it can get. The more it eats, the hungrier it gets, and its craving is never sated. The other beast strives to rise up above all the others. These beasts have three ugly traits. First, a horrible roar; second, they are full of perilous fire; third, each of them desires to gobble up the other's heart. One of them, with its teeth on the other's back, is trying to find an entrance to its heart by biting it to death. The other has its mouth against the other's breast and wants to get at its heart from there. The horrible roar of these beasts can be heard far away, and all the other beasts that come with mouths wide open will start burning with the fire from these two beasts and fall to their deaths. The beasts that come with their mouths shut will be stripped of their hides and go away naked.

These two beasts stand for the kingdoms of France and England. The one king is never sated, for he wages war out of greed. The other king is striving to rise above others. Hence, both are full of the fire of anger and greed. The roar of the beasts says this: 'Accept gold and worldly riches, and do not spare the blood of Christians!' Each beast desires the death of the other, and each is therefore seeking some place where it can injure the other. One of them is trying to injure it on the back, for he wants his unjust claim to be called just and the just claim of the other to be declared unjust. The second one is trying to injure the other's heart at its breast, because he knows he has a just cause and is therefore inflicting a lot of damage without caring about others' loss and misery and without showing any divine charity in his justice. He seeks an entrance through the breast, inasmuch as he has a more just claim to the kingdom, but he has pride and anger along with the justice of his claim. The other has a less just claim and is therefore burning with greed.

The other beasts that come with mouths wide open are those that come to them due to their own greed. Men who are kings in name but are really traitors fill their open mouths. They cast abundant money and gifts into their mouths and make them burn for warfare so that they fall to their deaths. Their property remains behind, but their bodies are received into the earth, and the devil's maggots chew away at their souls. Thus, these two kings are betraying many of the souls redeemed by my Son with his blood. The beasts that are stripped of their hides are those simple folk who are content with their possessions. They go to war in the intention and belief that justice is on their side and that they are waging a just war. They are stripped of their hides, that is, their bodies, through death, but their souls are received into heaven. Therefore, my Son, have mercy!"

The Son answered: "Since you see all things in me, explain while this woman present is listening what just reason there is for these kings to be heard." The Mother answered: "I hear three voices. The first is that of these kings. One of them is thinking to himself thus: 'If I can get what is my own, I would not care about having what belongs to others, yet I am afraid of losing it all.' Because of this fear, namely, his fear of the world's reproach, he turns to me in prayer and says: 'Mary, pray for me!' The other king is thinking thus: 'Would that I were as I was before! I am weary.' So he, too, turns to me. The second voice is that of the common folk who pray to me every day for peace. The third voice is that of your elect who cry out and say: 'We do not weep over the bodies of

the dead, nor the losses, nor the poverty, but over the fall of souls who are in constant danger. Therefore, our Lady, entreat your Son so that the souls may be saved!' For these reasons, my Son, have mercy on them!"

The Son answered: "It is written that to him who knocks it shall be opened, and to him who calls it shall be answered, and to him who asks it shall be given. However, just as everyone who knocks is outside the door, so too these kings are outside the door, since they do not have me within them. All the same, for your sake, it will be opened to them who pray."

Christ speaks to the bride about how peace should be established between the kings of France and England. If the kings do not heed it, they shall be punished severely.

Chapter 105

The Son speaks: "I am the king to fear and to glorify. I shall send my words to them for the sake of my Mother's prayers. I am true peace. Wherever there is peace, there am I assuredly. If these two kings of France and England wish to have peace, I shall give lasting peace to them. However, true peace cannot be had without loving truth and justice. Hence, given that one of the kings does have a just claim, I would have peace brought about by means of a marriage. In this way the kingdom can attain a legitimate successor. Second, I want them to be of one heart and one mind in spreading the holy Christian faith wherever this can be done to my glory. Third, they must remove their intolerable taxes and fraudulent schemes and love the souls of their subjects.

If the presently reigning king refuses to obey, let him know that he most assuredly will not prosper in his endeavors but will end his life in sorrow and lose his kingdom in the midst of heavy trials. His son and family will be left in such anger, reproach and shame as to astonish everyone. If the king with the just claim is willing to obey, then I shall help him and fight on his side. If he will not obey, then neither will he achieve his desires but will be deprived of his attainments, and his sorry end will overshadow his happy beginning. However, when the people of the French realm adopt true humility,

then the kingdom will attain a legitimate successor and a noble peace.”

Christ tells the bride not to be afraid to break her fast out of obedience to her spiritual father, because it is not a sin. He also admonishes her to stand firm, to resist temptations continuously, and to have the firm intention of persevering in the good example set by the Virgin Mary, David, and Abraham.

Chapter 106

The Son speaks: "Why are you afraid? Even if you ate four times a day, it would not be counted as a sin for you, provided you did it with the permission of the person whom you are bound to obey. So stand firm. You should be like a soldier who, though injured with various wounds in battle, inflicts worse wounds on his enemies and is all the more eager to fight the more he is chased by his enemies. You, too, should strike back at your enemy and stand firm. You should also have the rational intention of persevering in the good.

You strike back at the devil each time you do not give in to temptation and resist it manfully, for example, by opposing humility to pride, restraint to gluttony. You stand firm when you do not murmur against God in the midst of temptation but, rather, when you are grateful to God, cheerfully putting up with everything and blaming it all on your sins. Your intention is rational when you do not desire a reward unless it is in agreement with my will, when you surrender your whole self into my hands.

Lucifer did not have the first virtue, that of striking back at the enemy, because he immediately gave in to his own thoughts. This is why he fell irrepressibly. As he had no instigator of his wickedness, so too he shall have no redresser. Judas did not have the second virtue, that of firmness. Instead, he despaired and hanged himself. Pilate did not have the third virtue, that of a good intention, since he was more eager to please the Jews and win his own honor than to set me free.

However, my Mother did have the first virtue, that of striking back at the enemy,

since for every temptation she had, she hit back and opposed to it the contrary virtue. David had the second virtue, for he was patient in adversity and did not despair when he fell. Abraham had the third virtue, a perfect intention, for, having left his fatherland, he was even ready to sacrifice his only son. You, too, should imitate these three as far as you are able!”

Christ encourages the bride, that is, the soul, always and lovingly to maintain pure contrition, godly love, and unwavering obedience. He condemns those who despise obedience, abstinence, and noble patience. He also warns a spiritual man not to allow his conscience to become gradually coarse and blind under a pretense of light.

Chapter 107

An angel of wondrous splendor appeared. Other angels were seen speaking with him and saying: "Friend, why are you offering an empty nutshell to our God?" The angel answered: "Though you already know everything, I will explain it for the sake of the woman who is here present. I never grow sad in the presence of our God when I am carrying out his will for the good of souls, for I am never away from his presence. Even if I am not offering him a sweet-tasting nut, I am offering something delectable, a key made of purest gold, a golden vase, and a crown of jewels.

The key symbolizes pure contrition for sins. This opens God's heart and lets a sinner enter. The vase symbolizes godly delight and love. God takes his sweet rest there with the soul. The crown symbolizes cheerful, unwavering obedience. These are the three things that my God seeks for in a holy soul.

Although this particular soul entrusted to my care has scorned these three things, still I am giving to God the things this soul has offered to him, and God's glory will be no less. The key of contrition is so onerous to this man that he does not even want to think about it. The vase of godly love is so bitter to him that he can in no way bear its smell. How can spiritual delight be sweet where the lust of the flesh has taken root? Two contraries do not combine well in the same vase. Even the crown of obedience is too

heavy for him to bear, since his self-will is so pleasing to him that it seems to him more pleasant to follow his own will than God's will.

The angel then turned to God and said: "Behold, Lord, the vase and key and crown of which this soul made herself unworthy. Look, when you crack the shell, it is full of dirt inside, when it should be full of the sweetest honey. Instead, a snake is lying there in the midst of the shell. The shell symbolizes the heart. When death cracks it, it is full of longings for the world, and these are like dirt. The snake is the soul. The soul should be brighter than sunlight, hotter than flame, but she has turned into a serpent full of venom, poisonous to no one but herself, unto her own perdition."

The Lord spoke then to the bride and said: "I will tell you what condition that man is in by means of a comparison. It is as though one man were standing and another came up and approached him. When they turn their faces toward each other, the man who was walking says: 'Sir, it seems there is a distance separating us. Show me the way by which I should go, for I see that you are mighty without comparison, delightful beyond conception, and as good as one from whom all goodness comes and without whom no one is good.' The other answered: 'Friend, I shall show you a triple path that, nevertheless, leads in one direction. When you follow it, it is rocky at the beginning but smooth at the end, dark at the head of the journey but bright as you go on, harsh for a time but delightful in the end.' The other answered: 'Just show me the way and I will gladly follow it. I see that there is danger in delay and harm in mistaking the way but a great benefit if I follow it. So fulfill my desire and show me the true path.'

I am the creator of the universe, who remains unchangeable and forever steadfast. That person was approaching me when he was in love with me and sought after nothing as he sought after me. I turned my face toward him when I placed divine consolation in his soul, and the joy of the world and every lust of the flesh became hateful to him. I showed him a triple way, not by speaking to him with a physical voice but by inspiring his soul in a hidden way, as I am now inspiring your soul in an open way.

First, I showed him that he should be obedient to me, his God, and to his superiors. However, he answered me, thinking to himself in his mind: 'I won't. My superior is difficult and uncharitable, and so I just can't obey him with a cheerful mind.' I showed

him also a second way, that of fleeing the lust of the flesh and following my divine will, fleeing drunkenness and following abstinence. These ways lead to true obedience. Yet he answered me: 'Never! I am weak by nature. So I shall eat and sleep enough. I shall converse for the sake of good cheer and laugh for the sake of worldly comfort.' I showed him also a third way, that of being nobly patient for my sake, for this way leads to abstinence and encourages holy obedience. But he answered me: 'I won't do it. If I put up with those insults to me, I will look foolish. If I dress more poorly than the others, I will be ashamed in front of everyone. If my body is ugly in any way, I must make up for it by catering to others.' ”

”In this way,” said the Lord, ”his conscience and I contended together, until finally he drew away from me and turned his back instead of his face toward me. In what sense did he turn it? By wanting to obey only in the way he liked, and by wanting to be patient only provided that it did not lessen his friendship with the world in any way. Now the devil is struggling to make him completely blind and mute. He is trying to tie his hands and bind his feet and lead him off to the darkness of hell. He makes him blind when the man thinks as follows: 'God redeemed me through his passion. He will not let me be lost, for he is merciful. God does not scrutinize sin so exactly, given that people are offending him all the time.' This proves that his faith is unstable. Have him search my gospel, then, to see what account I shall demand of words and how much greater an account of deeds. Have him also search there to find out that the rich man was not buried in hell because of theft but because of his misuse of the wealth granted to him. Again, the devil makes him mute when the man hears the example and words of my friends and then says: 'Nobody can live like that nowadays.' This proves that he has very little hope. I am, of course, the one who has given my friends the ability to live thus decently and chastely. I can also give him a like capacity, if he would only place his hope in me.

The devil ties his hands whenever the man loves something more than me, when he gets more eagerly concerned about the world than about my glory. Let him therefore be cautious in order not to get tripped up by the devil while he seems so intent on the world, for the devil lays out his snares when one is least on one's guard. The devil binds his feet when the man pays no attention to his thoughts and affections, when he does not consider the form of his temptations, when he is so intent on gratifying his neighbor and his own flesh that he pays no attention to saving his soul. Have him, therefore, ponder

what I said in the gospel about how a man who puts his hand to the plow should not look back, and how he who has entered upon a more profitable way of life should not turn back.

The devil also enchains his heart, each time the man inclines his will to evil in such a way that he thinks about worldly honors and longs both to have them and to persevere in such a disposition. The devil leads him toward darkness each time the man has such thoughts as these: 'Whether I attain to glory or to punishment is of little concern to me.'

Woe to him who falls into such a darkness!

However, I would run to meet him as a father if he would but turn toward me. In what sense? By having the intention of doing as much as he can. As it is not licit for the son of a man to take a woman to wife against her will, so it is not licit for the Son of the Virgin. The human will is like a tool by which divine love is introduced into the soul. Just as a miller who wants to split stones first looks for cracks into which he first inserts his finer tools and then heavier ones until the stone is broken, so too I first look for goodwill and then pour my grace into it, and then, as the person's activity increases and his will makes progress, a larger amount of my grace is also added, until the stone-like heart is converted and grows into a heart of flesh, and the heart of flesh becomes a spiritual heart."

EXPLANATION

This was a prior in the region of Sicily close to the volcanic mountain. The following revelation also concerned him.

ADDITION

The Son of God speaks: "This brother is wondering why my apostles, Peter and Paul, lay neglected for so long a time in the catacombs. I answer you: The Golden scripture says that Israel was in the desert for a long time because the wickedness of the Gentiles whose lands they were to possess had not yet been completed. This was also the case with my apostles. The time of grace had not yet come in which the bodies of my apostles were to be exalted, since first there had to be a time of trial and afterward of

coronation, and also because those persons were not yet born who were to have the honor of exalting the apostles.

Now you might ask whether their bodies had any honor during the time in which they lay in the grave. My answer is that my angels took care of and gave honor to those blessed bodies. The area of the catacombs was like a place where roses and plants are to be sown and that is carefully cultivated beforehand. The catacombs, which angels and men would rejoice over, were likewise prepared and honored long beforehand. I assure you that there are many places in the world where the bodies of the saints rest, but none are like this place. If all the saints whose bodies repose here were counted, it would scarcely be believed. Just as an enfeebled man is restored by the good smell and taste of food, so too the people who come to this place with an upright mind are spiritually revived and receive true pardon for their sins, each according to his or her faith and way of life.”

This same brother was very much moved to compunction by the words of Lady Bridget. He heard a voice on three separate nights saying to him: "Hurry, hurry! Come, come!" On the fourth day, he fell sick and died in Rome after having received the sacraments.

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her that three saints were most especially pleasing to him. These were the Virgin Mary, Blessed John the Baptist, and Mary Magdalene.

Chapter 108

The Son speaks: "There were three saints who were most especially pleasing to me. These were Mary, my Mother, John the Baptist, and Mary Magdalene. My Mother, both at and before her birth, was so beautiful that there was no stain in her. The devils realized it and experienced such distress then that - figuratively speaking - it was as though their voices resounded from hell saying: 'A virgin has come forth so virtuously and miraculously that she excels everyone on earth and in heaven and reaches all the way to God's throne. Even if we attack her with all our snares, she destroys them all - they are

broken like flax and fall apart like old ropes. If we come against her with all our evil and impurity, she cuts it all down, like grass cut down by a sickle. If we plant sensuality and worldly desires in her, they are extinguished like a spark by a torrent of water.'

When John the Baptist was born, it caused such displeasure in the devils that it was as though a voice resounded from hell saying: 'A miraculous child has been born. What shall we do? If we attack him with pride, he scorns to listen to us and much less wants to obey our suggestion. If we offer him riches, he turns his back on us and refuses to look, and if we offer him sensual pleasure, he is like a dead man and cannot feel it.'

When Mary Magdalene was converted, the devils said: 'How shall we get her back? We have lost a fat prize. She bathed herself so with the water of her tears that we do not dare to look upon her. She has covered herself so with good works that no sinful stain can come near her. She is so fervent and zealous in the service of God and in holiness that we do not dare to approach her.'

These three saints regarded the soul as ruler and the body as slave. The soul in each of them had three characteristics: First, it loved nothing but me; second, it would not act against my will; third, they each refused to neglect anything having to do with me. Although they had a soul such as this, still they did not despise the body or give it poison instead of food or thorns instead of clothing, nor did they lie down to rest on anthills. No, they had moderate nourishment for my glory and for the benefit of the soul, clothes for covering the body but not for proud display, and sleep for rest and a bed for comfort.

Nevertheless, if they knew it would have pleased me, and if I had given them my grace, they would have been happy to accept the bitterest substances for food and thorns for clothes, and they would have lain down on anthills. Considering, however, that I am just and merciful in all ways, they were just toward their bodies by restraining its illicit impulses, but they were also merciful in indulging the body so that it would not collapse or be destroyed due to harsh and severe labor.

You might ask: Since the holy hermits and fathers of old receive enough grace to enable them to eat but once a week, and others, too, have enjoyed the food and ministrations of angels, why did I not grant these three such a grace? I answer: Those

holy fathers were granted such fasting for three reasons. The first was in order to exhibit my grace and power so that people might know that, if I should please, I can sustain the body without food just as I sustain the soul without corporal food. The second reason was in order to set an example to teach people that bodily toil and hardship lead the soul to heaven. The third reason was the avoidance of sin, since unrestrained sensual desires lead to punishment. In order, then, that people might learn temperance and moderation in living, I myself, God and man - though I could have lived in the world without food - made use of food and other necessities for the body, so that humankind might be thankful to me, their God, and possess moderate comfort in the world and perfect liberty with the saints in heaven.”

The Mother says that spiritual persons, once they have been converted through penance and charity and contrition and patience, ought to buy back all the time they have lost earlier so that they do not offer empty nutshells to God.

Chapter 109

The Mother speaks: ”Sometimes when nuts are offered to a lord, some of them are found to be empty, and these have to be filled so as to become acceptable to him. It is similar in spiritual works. Many people perform many good works, and their sin is diminished because of them so that they do not end up in hell. However, there may have been many empty moments before those good works and in between them, and it is necessary to fill them, if there is still time to work. Otherwise, contrition and charity supply every lack.

Thus, Mary Magdalene offered nuts - good works, that is - to God. There were some empty ones among them, because she had had a lot of time for sinning. However, she supplied all that was lacking with the help of time, patience, and effort. Likewise, John the Baptist offered filled nuts, as it were, to God, for he had served God from youth and offered him all his time. The apostles offered, so to speak, half-filled nuts to God, since a lot of their time before their conversion was spent imperfectly. I, God's Mother, offered him nuts that were filled and sweeter than honey, for I was full of grace and was

maintained in grace from my youth up. I tell you, therefore, that, though people's sins may be pardoned, they should redeem the earlier empty times of their lives through their patience and works of charity while they still have time.”

Christ instructs the bride about the difference between the good spirit and the devil's deception, and about how one must respond to each of them.

Chapter 110

The Son speaks: ”How can one recognize my spirit, since there are two spirits, one good and one bad? I shall tell you: My spirit is hot and has two effects. First, he makes one desire nothing but God; second, he grants utmost humility and contempt for the world. The bad spirit is both cold and hot: cold in that he makes bitter everything having to do with God; hot in that he inclines people to the lust of the flesh and worldly pride and rouses their desire for their own praise. He comes like a smooth-talking friend, but is really like a dog that bites. He comes like a soothing charmer, but is really the worst of ensnarers.

When he comes, tell him: 'I do not want you, for your ends are evil.' When, however, the good spirit comes, tell him: 'Come like fire, Lord, and set my heart aflame! Though I am unworthy to receive you, yet for my part I need you.

You will not be better because of me, nor do you need what I have, but I will become better through you and, without you, I am nothing.' ”

Christ speaks to the bride about three kinds of law, namely, ecclesial law, imperial law, and common law. He admonishes her to live according to a fourth kind of law, namely, the divine, spiritual law, that is, to live in humility, in unwavering, perfect, and catholic faith and in divine charity, putting God ahead of everything. In this way, spiritual honors and riches in heaven are acquired in the glory of eternity.

Chapter 111

The Son speaks to the bride and says: "There are three laws. The first is ecclesial law. The second is imperial law. The third is common law. All these kinds of law are written on dead animal skins. However, there is also a spiritual law, which is not written on skins but in the book of life. This law is never lost or destroyed by old age. It is not wearisome to keep nor is it a difficult possession to have. Every good law should be ordered toward the salvation of the soul, the fulfillment of God's commandments, the avoidance of evil, and the obtainment of those goods that ought to be desired with prudence. There is a phrase in the law written on skins that says 'in order to obtain this or that.' Thus, in order to obtain something, one of four conditions is necessary: It is either a gift made to someone out of trusted love and intimacy, or because of inheritance, or because of partitioning, or as compensation for humble acts of service.

It is similar with the spiritual law. The spiritual law is to know and love God and delight in him. In this law are found the spiritual honors and riches that consist in exchanging all creatures for the Creator, surrendering one's own will to God, loving virtues and giving up the world for heaven. These riches are obtained in four ways. First, through charity: Just as a worldly ruler gives someone gifts out of charity, even without antecedent merit, so too I created and redeemed and daily maintain and honor humankind despite human ingratitude. Moreover, all those who wholeheartedly love me and desire nothing but me will have on earth the virtue that is written in the heart by God's finger and in heaven have the honor that is written in the book of life, which is life eternal.

Second, spiritual honor is obtained through inheritance. Through my taking on a human nature and through my passion, I purchased heaven for humankind and opened it up to them with hereditary right. Man sold his divine inheritance to the devil, exchanging eternal joy for a puny fruit, the tree of life for forbidden food, truth for falsehood. Likewise, in obedience to the Father, I tore up the letter of disobedience. I made up for the sweetness of fruit by the bitter suffering of my heart. I earned the tree of life for humankind by my death. I brought humanity back and established all truth through faith in my own humanity. Therefore, whoever believes in the words of my truth and imitates

me will obtain by inheritance both spiritual riches and my grace.

Third, spiritual honor is obtained through partition. This occurs when a person partitions or separates himself from every delight in carnal pleasures, changing carnal lust into abstinence, wealth into poverty, reputation into lowly submission, earthly relatives for the company of God's friends, the vision of the world for the vision of God. Fourth, spiritual honor is obtained by means of humble acts of service. This happens when a person struggles patiently in God's service like a valiant soldier in battle, serving him in humility and faith like a servant, dispensing the goods entrusted to him with mercy and justice like a good steward, on the lookout for temptations like a good scout. Such a person is worthy of the honors and spiritual riches that are written not on animal skins but in the animate soul. The system of the threefold written law is useful indeed for the carrying out of justice, but the spiritual law is agreeable when it comes to earning a reward.

Hence, my daughter, seek to obtain spiritual honor through charity by loving nothing as much as me. Seek it through inheritance by firmly believing what the church teaches. Seek it through acts of humility by doing everything for my glory. You have been called in my law. Therefore, you are bound to keep my law. My law means living in accordance with my will. As a good priest lives in accordance with ecclesial law, so you, too, should live in accordance with the law of my humility by taking after my friends. Every temporal law tends in part to the honor of the world and in part to its contempt. My law, however, alone tends to heaven, for no one before or after me has as fully understood how glorious is the delight of the heavenly kingdom as have I and anyone to whom I wish to reveal it.”

Christ speaks to the bride and tells her to beware especially of the vice of pride, not to be puffed up over her physical beauty or her possessions or her family. The proud man is compared to a butterfly with broad wings and a tiny body.

The Son speaks to the bride: "Do not be disturbed by their pride, for it will quickly pass away. Among the species of flies there is one called the butterfly. It has broad wings and a tiny body. It also has many colors. First, it can fly high because of its lightness and thinness, but as it rises in the air, it quickly descends and lands on whatever is closest, whether rocks or wood, because it has so little strength in its body.

This species of fly symbolizes proud people. They have broad wings and a tiny body, for their mind is swollen with pride like a skin inflated with air. They think they have what they have because they deserve it. They put themselves ahead of others and consider themselves to be worthier than others. They would spread their own name throughout the whole world, if they could. Yet they descend and fall, because they do not recognize that their life is brief and momentary. Second, proud persons have many colors like a butterfly, for they are proud of their physical beauty, their possessions, and their family, and change their status with every contrivance of their pride. Yet when they die, they are but dust. Third, when the proud reach the highest point in their pride, they descend rapidly and fall dangerously to their deaths.

Therefore, beware of pride, for it turns God's face away from you, and my grace cannot enter into anyone whom pride possesses."

Christ admonishes the bride to live humbly and not to care about fame or a great name, for he did not choose great scholars to preach the gospel but humble fishermen.

Chapter 113

The Son speaks: "Let whoever so wish read the scriptures, and they shall find that I made a prophet out of a shepherd and filled youths and simple people with the spirit of prophecy. It is true that not everyone has yet received my saving words, yet, in order to make my love known, my words have reached most people. Likewise, I did not choose scholars to preach the gospel but fishermen. In this way, they could not boast of their own wisdom. Thus, everyone would know that, just as God is wondrous and inconceivable, so too his works are inscrutable, and that he works the greatest miracles with the least of means. That person takes up a heavy load who runs after the world in

order to get glory for himself and carry out his own desires.

I will give you the example of a certain man. He sought after the world with all his desire, acquired a great name for himself in the world and placed a heavy load of sins on his back. Now, therefore, he has obtained a great name in hell, a most heavy load instead of a reward, and a more prominent position of punishment. Some descended to that place before him, some along with him, still others after him. The ones that descended before him are those who, with their help and advice, encouraged him in spreading his wickedness. The retribution for his deeds descended along with him. Those that will descend after him are those who imitate his example.

The first cry out to him as though from a battle scene. They say: 'Since you listened to our advice, we burn more hotly because of your presence. May you therefore be accursed and worthy of being hung where the rope does not break and the fire remains forever. In return for your pride and ambition may you feel the worst sort of shame.' His deeds cry out and say: 'O, wretch, the earth was incapable of feeding you with her fruit, because you wanted it all. Gold and silver could not fill your desire, and you have therefore been left empty of everything. For that reason, living crows will tear your soul to pieces - it shall be mangled but never diminish, decompose yet still live.'

Those that descend after him cry out: 'Alas, that you were ever born! Your sensual desire shall become for you such a hatred of God that you will not want to speak a single word with which God might be soothed. In God's love there is every comfort and noble delight and indescribable joy - none of which we deserve due to imitating you - so may you have the sadness and discord of the company of devils, deformity instead of honor, fire in return for your lust, cold in return for your love, unrest in return for your comfort-seeking. Instead of the great name that you bore so unworthily, may you have revilement. Instead of a glorious throne, may you get the most despicable place!'

The story shows what rewards they deserve who get involved in such things against God's ordinance."

ADDITION

A certain knight was always eager to contrive new fashions, and he led many people

to perdition by his words and examples. He felt ill will toward Lady Bridget and, because he did not dare himself to speak against her, he incited another person to say insulting words to her while pretending to be drunk. While she was at the dinner table and leading men were listening, this man said: "Lady, you dream too much. You spend too much time in vigils. It would be better for you to drink more and to sleep more. Has God abandoned those in the religious life and converses now with the proud and worldly? It is vain to trust in your words."

While he was saying such things, those present wished to punish him, but Bridget did not permit them, saying: "Let him speak, for God has sent him. All my life, I have sought my own praise and blasphemed God, why should I not hear what is only right? He is just telling me the truth."

When that knight heard about this, he repented and was reconciled with the lady. He came to Rome and went to his rest there in a praiseworthy death.

Christ warns the bride to beware of dealing with worldly people. That is called the devil's roast. The Virgin Mary teaches her to have an upright intention in all her virtuous actions in order to give more glory to God, for many people serve God in their activity, but their wrongful intention casts shadows on all the good they do.

Chapter 114

The Son speaks: "Watch out for the devil's roast, the one he cooks on the fires of lust and desire. When fat is put on a fire, something necessarily starts dripping from it. Sins proceed in this way from worldly dealings and worldly company. Though you do not know what is in a person's conscience, external signs bring out what is hidden in the mind."

The Mother speaks: "Your every action should be rational and your intention upright. This means that you should do whatever you do with the intention of giving glory to God and preferring spiritual gains to bodily enjoyment. Many people, indeed, serve God in their activity, but their wrongful intention casts shadows on all the good

they do. A comparison will help you to understand this. Take the animal called a bear. When it is starving and catches sight of its desired prey, it brings one foot down on its prey and looks for somewhere to plant its other foot firmly so the prey cannot get or be taken away, until the bear has eaten it up and turned it to its desire. The bear keeps continual watch on its prey and does not look around for gold or fragrant herbs or trees, but only looks for some hidden and secure footing or something to grasp so that it can safely and securely hold on to the prey it has caught.

Many people serve me with prayers and fasting out of a kind of fear, for they have in mind the terrible punishment and also my great mercy. They seek me through certain exterior actions, but they go against the commandments of my Son in their intention. Like the bear, these people set their whole intention on the lust of the flesh and worldly desire, but, because they are afraid of losing their life as well as of future suffering, they serve me with the intention of not losing grace or incurring punishment. This is quite clear, for they never contemplate my Son's passion, which is like the most precious gold, or imitate the lives of the saints, who are like precious gems, nor pay any regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are like fragrant herbs. They do not give up their own will and perform the will of my Son, but they only want something on which to lean in order to sin more securely and gain success in the world.

Their reward will be slight, for their actions proceed from their cold hearts. Just as the bear, once it has consumed its prey, does not care anymore about a secure footing, so when the final hour comes for them, and their sensual lusts are over and done with, their secure footing in me will be of little value to them, because they did not give up their own will to carry out my will, nor did they seek me out of love but out of fear. However, if their intention is perfectly corrected, their deeds will soon be revived and, if any deed is lacking, their good intention will be counted as a deed.”

ADDITION

This was a provost who lived according to his pleasure. When he came to Rome, he reformed his life in a very praiseworthy manner. When he had visited Monte Gargano and the shrine of St. Nicholas and had returned to Lady Bridget, whose advice he followed completely, he said that he wondered why the great and famous city of Siponte,

where the bodies of so many saints rested, had been destroyed.

On the following day, the Son of God appeared and said to the lady: "Your friend is wondering about the city that is destroyed. Truly, daughter, the sins of the inhabitants merited this. Even other cities have merited similar things, but a friend of mine lived there. He had perfect love for me and rebuked and protested against their morals continuously. When he saw their obstinacy, he tearfully begged me to let the place become desolate rather than let so many souls be in daily peril. I saw his tears, and since no one tried to placate me fully, I allowed those things to happen that we are now speaking about."

She said to him: "O Lord, it is sad that the relics and bodies of many good persons lie there as though they were unclean and unprotected." Christ answered: "Just as I have the souls of my chosen ones within me, so too I take care of the relics of my friends - who are my treasure - until they receive the twofold reward promised to them."

The lady spoke again. "My dear Lord, I do believe that many graces and indulgences were granted in Siponte by the popes. Now that the walls have been destroyed, have the graces also been abolished?" Christ answered: "What place is holier than Jerusalem where I, God himself, left my footprints? What place is now held in greater contempt than Jerusalem, inhabited and oppressed by infidels? Yet whoever goes to Jerusalem will meet with the same graces and indulgences as before. It is likewise with Siponte: Whoever goes there out of love and with a perfect intention will share in the same grace and blessing that the city had in the time of its glory, because of the faith of the pilgrims and their labor of love."

Christ speaks to the bride about how to free a certain person possessed by the devil. He tells her that the soul has inner, spiritual limbs just as the body has outer, bodily limbs. The Lord gives a beautiful explanation of all this.

The Son speaks: "You are like a wheel that follows after that which goes before it. You should thus follow after my will. I told you earlier about a certain person whose soul was possessed by the devil. Now I will tell you in what part of the body he is trapped. I am like a man who says to his guard: 'There are three places of custody in your house. In the first are those who deserve to be deprived of life. In the second are those who are to lose one of their limbs. In the third are those who are to be whipped and to lose their skin.' The guard says to him: 'Lord, if some are to lose their life, others to be mutilated and others to be whipped, why put off their judgment? If they are sentenced quickly, they will forget their pain.'

The Lord answered: 'I do not what I do without a cause. Those who are to be deprived of life must wait for a time in order that good people might see their misery and become better, and bad people might feel fear and become more careful in the future. It is necessary that those who are to be mutilated should first experience anxiety so as to retract in their hearts the evils they have done and feel sorrow for the crimes they have committed. Those who are to be whipped should also be tested by sorrow so that those who had forgotten themselves in their delight may get to know themselves in their sorrow and become that much more careful not to commit such crimes the more difficult it is for them to gain their liberty.'

I am the Lord who has the devil as a guard, as it were, in order to punish the wicked according to their individual deserts. Power has been given to him over this soul, but I will now explain to you in what part of the body. For just as the body is arranged in its outer limbs, so too the body ought to be arranged spiritually. As the body has marrow, bones, and flesh, and blood in the flesh and flesh in the blood, so too the soul ought to have the three faculties of memory, conscience, and intellect. There are some people who understand lofty scriptural matters but have no reason. They are lacking a limb. There are others who have a rational awareness but no intelligence. Still others have intellect but no memory. These are gravely sick. Those who are healthy in their souls have healthy reason, memory, and intellect.

The body has three repositories. The first is the heart. A slender membrane covers the heart as a protection against anything impure touching it. Even if only very small stains should touch the heart, a person would die right away. The second repository is the

stomach. The third is the bowels by means of which harmful substances are purged away. The soul should also have three repositories in a spiritual sense. The first is a godly desire. This is like the heart. It means that the soul desires nothing more fervently than me, her God. Otherwise, if any base affection, however small, should enter there, then the soul gets stained right away. The second repository is the stomach, that is, the wise disposition of time and work. As all food is dissolved and digested in the stomach, so all time and every thought and deed should be disposed according to God's plan in an orderly, useful, and prudent way. The third repository is the bowels, that is, godly contrition, by means of which impure things are purged and the food of divine wisdom tastes better.

The body has three limbs with which it advances: the head, the hands, and the feet. The head denotes divine love. As all five senses are in the head, so in divine love there is a sweet taste for the soul of whatever is said or heard or seen of God, and whatever is commanded is carried out with constancy. Just as a man without a head is dead, so too, without love, the soul, whose life is God, is dead to God. The hands symbolize faith. As there are several fingers on a hand, so there are many articles of faith, though there is only one faith. Through faith every divine intention is fulfilled, and faith should be operative in every good action. As outward work is done with the hands, so too the Holy Spirit operates inwardly through faith. Faith upholds all the virtues, for where there is no faith, love and good works are abolished.

Hope is the soul's feet. Through hope the soul comes to God. Just as the body advances on its feet, so too the soul draws close to God on the footsteps of divine desire and hope. The skin that covers the whole body symbolizes divine consolation that comforts the sensitive soul. Although the devil is sometimes allowed to disturb the memory, and sometimes the hands and feet, still God always defends the soul like a fighter and comforts her like a kind father and heals her like a doctor so she does not die.

The soul of this man of whom I spoke to you was caught when she deserved to lose her hands due to her wavering faith, inasmuch as she did not have the right faith. However, it is now time to show mercy for a twofold reason: first, because of my charity; second, because of the prayers of my chosen ones. Hence, let my friend read the above-mentioned words about him. He should do three things. First, he should restore ill-

gotten goods; second, he should procure absolution from the Roman Curia for his disobedience; third, he should not receive my body in the sacrament of communion before receiving absolution.”

Christ's lament to the bride about the Gentiles and the Jews, but especially about bad Christians because they do not receive the holy sacraments with devotion and purity as they ought, and because they are not mindful of creation and redemption and divine consolation.

Chapter 116

The Son speaks: "I will give you a figurative description of three men.

The first of them might say: 'I do not believe in you either as God or as man.' Such a one is a pagan Gentile. The second, who is a Jew, believes in me as God but not as man. The third, who is a Christian, believes in me as God and man but does not trust my words.

I am the one over whom the voice of the Father was heard to say: 'This is my Son.' In my divine nature I lament that men do not want to listen to me. I cried out and said: 'I am the beginning: If you believe in me, you will have eternal life,' but they scorned me. They witnessed my divine power when I raised the dead and did much else, but they gave it no consideration.

On behalf of my human nature, too, I lament that nobody cares about the things that I established in the Holy Church. I placed, as it were, seven vessels in the church by means of which everyone was to be purified. I established baptism for the purgation of original sin; chrism as a sign of divine reconciliation; holy unction for strength in the face of death; penance for the remission of all sins; the holy words with which the sacred offerings are consecrated and established; the priesthood in appreciation, recognition, and remembrance of divine charity; matrimony as the union of hearts. These ought to be received with humility, kept in purity, celebrated without avarice. Nowadays, however, they are received with pride, kept in impure vessels, celebrated with avarice.

Moreover, my lament is that I was born and I died for the salvation of humankind in order that, even if people refused to love me because I created them, at least they would love me because I had redeemed them. Nowadays, however, they cast me out of their hearts as though I were a leper, and they shun me as though I were an unclean rag. In my divinity, I lament again that they refuse the consolation of my divinity and give its charity no consideration.”

God himself runs out to meet those who truly desire him; he comforts them like a loving father and makes difficult things easy for them.

Chapter 117

While someone was praying the Our Father, the bride heard the Spirit say: ”Friend, I tell you on behalf of my divine nature that you shall have your inheritance with your Father, and, second, on behalf of my human nature, that you will be my temple. Third, on behalf of the Spirit, I tell you that you will not have temptations beyond what you can bear. The Father shall defend you, my human nature shall assist you, the Spirit shall set you aflame.

As when a mother hears the voice of her son and she joyfully runs out to meet him, and as when a father sees his son struggling with his work and he runs out to meet him halfway and shares the load with him, so too I run out to meet my friends and make every difficult thing both easy for them and a joy to carry. As when a person sees something delightful and cannot rest until he gets close to it, so I draw close to those who desire me.”

ADDITION

This monk saw in the hands of the priest at the time of the elevation of the body of Christ our Lord Jesus Christ in the form of a child saying to him: ”I am the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin.”

He even foresaw the manner and time of his death within a year, about which one can read in several chapters in the legend on St. Bridget. The monk's name was Gerekinus.

Christ speaks to the bride and says that the Father, by fulfilling their good intention to do good, draws to himself those whom he sees gladly changing their bad will to a good will through a desire to make amends for past offenses.

Chapter 118

The Son speaks: "Whoever wishes to join with me should convert his will to me and repent his past offenses, and he is then drawn to perfection by my Father. The Father draws those people who freely change their bad will into good will and desire to make amends for past offenses.

How does the Father draw them? He does so by fulfilling their good intention to do good. If their desire were not good, the Father would not have anything to draw. Some people find me so cold that my ways do not please them at all. Yet others find me so hot that they seem to be on fire whenever they have to perform any good deeds. Others, however, find me so agreeable that they want nothing but me. To these I shall give a happiness that will never end."

The Mother describes seven good things in Christ and their seven opposites that people give him in return.

Chapter 119

The Mother speaks: "My Son has seven goods. He is most powerful, like an all-consuming fire. Second, he is most wise, and his wisdom can no more be comprehended than one can drain the ocean. Third, he is most strong, like an immovable mountain.

Fourth, he has the greatest virtue, like the apiarian herb. Fifth, he is most beautiful, like the shining sun. Sixth, he is most just, like a king who pardons no one in contradiction to justice. Seventh, he is most loving, like a lord who gives himself up for the life of his servant.

Contrary to these seven, he endured their seven opposites. Contrary to his power, he became like a worm. Contrary to his wisdom, he was counted as the most foolish. Contrary to his strength, he was bound as a child in swaddling clothes. Contrary to his beauty, he was like a leper, and contrary to his virtue, he stood naked and bound. Contrary to his justice, he was regarded as a liar. Contrary to his loving-kindness, he was put to death.”

Christ tells the bride that there are two kinds of pleasure, spiritual and carnal; spiritual pleasure is when the soul delights in the kindnesses of God.

Chapter 120

The Son speaks: "It is as though there were a membrane between me and that man. Because of it, my sweetness gives him no pleasure, for something else pleases him instead of me." The bride heard this and said to the Lord: "Can he never then feel any kind of pleasure?" The Lord answered: "There are two kinds of pleasure, spiritual and carnal. Carnal or natural pleasure is when refreshment is taken as required by necessity. In that case a person should think as follows to himself: 'O Lord, you who have commanded us to take refreshment only when necessary, praise be to you! Grant me the grace not to let sin enter secretly as I take my refreshment.' If pleasure in temporal goods arises, a person should think as follows: 'Lord, all earthly things are but earth and fleeting. Grant, therefore, that I may make such use of them as to be able to render an account to you for all of them.'

Spiritual pleasure is when the soul delights in the kindnesses of God, and makes use of temporal things and busies herself about them only unwillingly and by necessity. The membrane is broken when God becomes pleasant to the soul and when she keeps the fear

of God continuously in mind.”

It is not the cowl that makes the monk but the virtue of obedience and the observance of the rule. True contrition of heart along with a purpose of amendment snatches the soul from the hands of the devil, even if perfect contrition is lacking.

Chapter 121

The devil appeared and said: "Look, that monk has flown away and only his shape remains." And the Lord said to him: "Explain what you mean." The devil answered: "That I shall, though unwillingly. The true monk is his own keeper. His cowl is obedience and the observance of his vows. As the body is covered by clothing, so the soul is covered by virtues. Therefore, the outer habit has no value unless the inner one is maintained, for it is virtue, not vestment, that makes the monk. This monk flew off when he thought as follows: 'I know my sin and I shall make amends and never sin again with the grace of God.' With this intention he flew away from me and is now yours." The Lord said to him: "How is it that his shape remains?" The devil said: "When he does not recall his past sins nor repents as perfectly of them as he should."

EXPLANATION

This brother saw in the hands of the priest at the time of the elevation of the body of Christ our Lord Jesus Christ in the form of a child saying to him: "I am the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin." He even foresaw the manner and time of his death within a year, about which one can read in several chapters in the legend on the sainted lady. The monk's name was Gerekinus. He lived a most pure life. When he was about to die, he saw writing in gold containing three golden letters: "P," "O," and "T." As he was describing it to the other monks, he said: "Come, Peter, make haste Olof and Thord." Once he had called for them, he went to his rest. The three monks died within a week following him.

Chapter 55 in Extravagantes (Book 9) is also about the same brother: "A monk of holy life, etc."

About how the life of a certain dissolute and lukewarm man resembles a narrow and dangerous bridge, and about how, if he does not soon turn himself around by leaping onto the ship of life, penance, and virtue, he will be cast headlong by his enemy, the devil, down into the deep abyss.

Chapter 122

“That man is my mortal enemy, for he mocks me with derision. He satisfies his every wish and desire as best he can. He is like someone lying on a narrow bridge with a great abyss to his left. Anyone falling into it cannot climb out of it again. To his right there is a ship. If he leaps onto it and makes some effort to escape, he still has some hope of survival. This bridge stands for his lamentable, brief life. He does not stand on it like a contender or even like a pilgrim, making daily progress and advancing on his way. Instead, he lies there lazily, longing to drink the waters of sensuality. Two fates await him if he gets up off the bridge. Either he will fall into the abyss, that is, into deepest hell, if he turns to his left, that is, to deeds of carnality. Or, if he leaps onto the ship, he will escape with an effort in the sense that, if he accepts the discipline and ordinances of the Holy Church, it will take him some effort but he will save himself by doing so. So, may he turn himself around quickly, before the enemy casts him headlong off the bridge, for then, indeed, he will cry out without being heard and will be punished in eternity.”

ADDITION

When this man saw that the king was unmoved and did not attend to him in his customary manner, he felt ill will toward Lady Bridget. When she was passing through a narrow street, he poured water on her from a window above. However, she said to the bystanders, “May the Lord forgive him and not requite him for it in the next life.” Christ appeared then to the lady at mass, saying: “The man who poured water on you from the window out of ill will thirsts for blood. He has shed blood. He longs for the earth and not for me. He speaks out boldly against me. He worships his own flesh instead of me, his God. He has shut me out of himself and out of his heart. Let him beware lest he die in his blood.”

The man lived for a short time after this, and then died with blood flowing out of his nose, just as she had foretold.

Christ defends his bride, Bridget, that is, a soul converted from worldliness to the spiritual life, whom her father and mother, sister and brother tried to dissuade from his love and from chastity in marriage.

Chapter 123

The Son speaks to the bride: "I am like a bridegroom who has betrothed himself to a bride whom her father and mother, sister and brother want to have back. Her father says: 'Give me back my daughter, for she was born from my blood.' Her mother says: 'Give me back my daughter, for she was fed with my milk.' Her sister says: 'Give me back my sister, for she was brought up with me.' Her brother says: 'Give me back my sister, for she falls under my authority.' The bridegroom answered them: 'Father, she may have been born from your blood, but now she must be filled with my blood. Mother, you may have fed her with your milk, but I will now feed her with my delight. Sister, she may have been brought up according to your fashions, but she shall now live in my fashion. Brother, she may have been under your authority so far, but now she is under my authority.'

This is what has happened to you. If your father, that is, if the lust of the flesh demands you back, it pertains to me to fill you with my love. If your mother, that is, if worldly cares demand you back, it pertains to me to feed you with the milk of my consolation. If your sister, that is, if the fashions of worldly society demand you back, you must rather live in my fashion. If your brother, that is, if self-will demands you back, you are obliged to carry out my will."

About how Blessed Agnes places on the bride of Christ a crown with seven precious stones, namely, the gems of patience in suffering.

Chapter 124

Agnes speaks to the bride of Christ and says: "Come, daughter, and put on a crown made from seven precious gems. The crown stands for nothing other than the proof of patience, welded together out of hardship and adorned with garlands by God.

The first gem of your crown is jasper. It was put there by the man who jeeringly said that he did not know what spirit made you speak, and that it would be better for you to spin and sew after the fashion of women and not to discuss scripture. Just as jasper sharpens one's vision and brings joy to the mind, so too, out of hardship, God brings joy to the mind, enlightens the intellect in spiritual matters, and mortifies the soul from disorderly impulses.

The second gem is a sapphire. This was put there by the man who flattered you to your face but vilified you behind your back. Just as sapphire is of a celestial color and preserves the health of parts of the body, so human malice puts the righteous to the test in order to make them celestial, and it preserves the parts of the soul so that they do not become puffed up with pride.

The third gem is an emerald. This was put there by the man who asserted that you said things that you had neither thought of nor spoken. Just as the emerald is fragile in itself yet has such a beautiful green color, so too a lie is soon annihilated but makes the soul beautiful in a reward for her patience.

The fourth gem is a pearl. This was put there by the man who disparaged a friend of God's in your presence. His disparagement upset you more than it would have done if it had been about yourself. Just as the pearl is white and beautiful and eases the suffering of the heart, so too the sorrow of love introduces God into the soul, and tames the passions of anger and impatience.

The fifth gem is topaz. This was put there by the man that spoke harshly to you but to whom you, on the contrary, made a gentle answer. Just as topaz is of the color of gold and preserves chastity and beauty, so nothing is more beautiful and acceptable to God

than to love the one who hurts you and to pray for those who persecute you.

The sixth gem is a diamond. This was put there by the man who hurt you physically but whom you endured patiently and whom you did not wish to disgrace. Just as a diamond cannot be broken by smashing but only with the blood of goats, so too it pleases God when a person overlooks and, for God's sake, does not bother about physical hurts but is ever thinking of what God has done for the sake of humankind.

The seventh gem is a carbuncle. This was put there by the man who brought the false message to you that your son Karl was dead, and you bore it patiently, entrusting yourself to God. Just as a carbuncle shines in a house and looks very beautiful on a ring, so too one who is patient at the loss of something dear attracts God's love and shines in the sight of the saints and is as pleasing as a precious gem.

Therefore, my daughter, be steadfast, for still more gems are needed to add to your crown. Consider that Abraham and Job became better and more renowned through their trials, and John became holier by bearing witness to the truth.”

God's Mother speaks to her daughter, the bride of Christ, and offers a lovely allegory of seven animals denoting four kinds of immoral men and three kinds of virtuous men.

Chapter 125

The Mother speaks: ”There are seven animals. The first has enormous horns and is quite conceited about them. It wages war against other animals but dies quickly, because the enormous size of its horns does not allow it to run with any speed but gets it entangled in briars and branches. The second animal is small with only one horn that has a precious gem beneath it. This animal cannot be caught except by a maiden. When it sees a maiden, it runs to her lap and is thus killed by her. The third animal has no joints, so it rests leaning heavily against a tree. An attentive hunter cuts the tree midway, so when the animal tries to rest in its accustomed way, the tree falls down and the animal is taken.

The fourth animal seems gentle and does not attack anyone with its feet or horns. However, anyone who smells its breath becomes a leper, because this animal is by nature completely leprous inside. The fifth animal is always fearful and foresees and suspects any traps. The sixth animal fears nothing but itself. If it sees its own shadow, it runs away from it as from death. It always wants to live and dwell in darkness and in hiding. The seventh animal does not fear anything, not even death, for it does not sense death ahead of time. This animal has four remarkable features. First, it experiences an incredible inner solace. Second, it does not worry about food, for it eats the basest things on earth. Third, it never stands still but is always running. Fourth, it rests even while walking and makes its advance in a measured way.

The first animal resembles a man who is conceited about his own dignity. Because he is slow and heavy in running toward good deeds, he gets easily caught when he is not careful. The second animal that is proud of the precious gem beneath its horn symbolizes the man who is confident in and presumptuous of the precious gem of chastity, who disdains to be moved by any warnings and regards himself as better than others. He has to be carefully on guard in order not to be caught by pride, which has the face of a maiden but a most powerful sting. The third animal, without any joints, resembles the man who lacks the joints of spiritual feelings and so gets captured by the things that please him precisely when he is expecting to take his rest in safety. The fourth animal, which is completely leprous inside, symbolizes the man who is completely leprous with pride. Anyone who joins with him in agreement becomes defiled.

The three other animals will be revealed in their time. The first animal is like a piously doubting Thomas and like a polished and square-set stone. The second is like gold in the fire and like a golden pipe kept in the finest casing. The third is like a painting that is susceptible of even nobler colors. If those immoral men denoted by the four animals above convert to me, I shall run out to meet them on the way and ease their burden. If not, I shall send them an animal swifter than a tiger to consume them. As it is written, their days shall be few, their children fatherless, and their wives widows, and their honors shall be turned into reproach and shame.”

EXPLANATION

The first animal, that is, the first bishop proud of his noble birth, was converted by the words of the Holy Spirit. He came to Rome and accompanied Lady Bridget to Naples. While they were in Benevento, he was suffering seriously from a kidney stone. The Holy Spirit spoke to him through the lady as he lay sick: "The king of Israel was commanded to put a poultice on his wound. Let this man do likewise: May he receive into his heart perfect love for God, which is the best medicine, and he shall immediately feel healthy." When he heard this, he made a vow and regained both his mental and physical strength. One can also read about this bishop in Book 3, Chapter 12.

The second animal, that is, the second bishop, was a man of great purity, about whom see Book 3, Chapter 13.

The third animal, that is, the third bishop, who was compared to an elephant, made a change for the better. Christ speaks again: "What did that elephant advise? Was it not to celebrate a marriage illegally so as not to waste expenses already made, saying that a dispensation could easily be acquired from the pope? Listen now to what I say. Anyone who knowingly and deliberately sins against God, unless he shows very great contrition, will meet with God's judgment and unhappiness in the world. A person who places another's sinful burden on his own back sins more seriously, for he has neither the fear of God nor seeks the salvation of the soul. What great presumption! What a lack of charity to have the keys of justice in one's hand and to make an attempt against the keys and justice for the sake of some small corruptible gain! May he therefore hasten to appease God and bring that couple to fruitful penance and fitting absolution! Otherwise his days will be shortened, and he shall come to my judgment, and the fall of his church will be so great that it will be rebuilt with difficulty, and his clergy will suffer, and their wishes will come to naught and they themselves will be held in contempt. You, however, my daughter, shall write to the couple whom you know, and say that, unless they make amends and do something to deserve absolution, they will not bear long-lived fruit, and their children will not live many years, and that the goods they have collected will go to strangers."

Again about the same bishop: "This bishop came to me as humble as the son who had spent his inheritance and eaten husks and returned humbly to his father. Truly,

daughter, those worldly concerns are like husks once the innermost grain, that is, God, has been expelled from the heart, when one desires meaningless and fruitless activity and prefers the world to God. However, because this bishop is already starting to get to know me and himself, I will be like a loving father to him and forget the past. I shall run out to meet midway and give him a ring for his finger and shoes for his feet and a fatted calf to eat. From this day on, my love will be more fervent in his actions, divine patience and wisdom will more perfectly be seen in him to attract his fellow men, and he will more frequently and attentively receive and honor my body. My dearest Mother, the patron of his church, has gained this gift for him.” One can read about the same man at the beginning of Chapter 130, Book 4.

The fourth animal, that is, the bishop who continued in his leprosy was summoned hence suddenly and without the sacraments. About this man, see Book 6, Chapter 97.

The fifth animal was like a square-set stone, a man temperate and prudent in every way. About him, see Book 3, Chapter 33.

The sixth animal, that is, the sixth bishop was a God-fearing and self-examining man who governed his church wisely and obtained exemptions for it from many duties. When he died, Christ said: ”The Golden scripture says that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. That is true, but I say that the fear of God is also the goal of perfection. This bishop had it, and came to the way of salvation by a salutary shortcut.”

The seventh animal, that is, the seventh bishop was a man of great abstinence. He had zeal for God and did not keep silent about the truth, neither because of fear nor affection nor injury. He surrendered his spirit while at prayer. There are several revelations about this bishop in the Life of St. Bridget. He was the Reverend Lord Hemming, Bishop of Åbo and friend to the Blessed Virgin, as is clear from Extravagantes (Book 9), Chapter 104.

A revelation about the bishop who was the successor to the second animal.

The Son of God speaks: ”Write to the bishop and tell him that rapacious birds have entered the land in order to build their nests in it. This bishop should, therefore, work together with his friends to cut their claws, so that they do not gain possession of the

summits of the land nor spread out their wings among the people. Otherwise, they will use their beaks and claws to root up the fruitful areas and fly above the peaks and mountains and reduce the land to desolation and ruin.”

The Virgin Mary spoke with the bride of her Son about a certain bishop for whom the bride was praying devoutly. Here she gives noteworthy instructions and offers a virtuous model according to which true bishops should live and govern themselves and their subjects spiritually and devoutly.

Chapter 126

The Mother of mercy was speaking with the bride of Christ: "What are we to do with this blind bishop? He has three characteristics. He works to please men more than God. He loves not the treasure guarded by angels but that which thieves can steal. He also loves himself more than his neighbor and more than his God." Right then the bride saw six pans of a balance, three of which were very heavy, pressed down by the weight. The other three pans were so light that they were raised up all the way to the top, because nothing was to be seen in them but a weight as light as a feather.

The Mother said: "Look at this bishop. Though he does have the three aforementioned vices, still he is ever fearful. Because of his fear, which is conducive to charity, it was given to you to see his condition. Those three heavy scale-pans symbolize his deeds against God that weigh down his soul. They appear as three to you, because he is sinking like a scale toward the world in his feelings, words, and actions. The three other lightly loaded scale-pans are rising up to God. However, his worldly affairs outweigh his spiritual ones, since he has a greater and more zealous interest in them, so much so that the devil is already pulling him by the feet, and his snare lies ready."

The bride answered: "O good Mother, put something on the scales!" The Mother said to her: "Agnes and I have been waiting to see if the bishop might perhaps recollect our love, but he does not pay much attention to our solicitude for him. However, we will do with him as would three friends sitting on the wayside who know the way and would

point it out to their friend. The first would say: 'My friend, the way you have taken is neither straight nor safe. If you continue along that path, robbers will harm you and, just when you think you are safe, you will die.' The second would say: 'The way you have taken seems to be pleasant, but what good will that do you if there is mental anguish in the end?' The third would say: 'My friend, I see your infirmity. Do not be displeased, if I offer you some advice, and do not be ungrateful if I do you a special favor.' Agnes and I want to act in this way with this bishop. If he will listen to the first friend, the second will show him the way, and the third will lead him to the region of light."

The bride was then shown the instructions that would be divinely sent to the aforementioned bishop, as follows. The Mother speaks: "Say thus to the bishop: Though God can do all things, personal cooperation is needed in order to avoid sin and obtain divine charity. Three things lead to the avoidance of sin and three things work together for the obtainment of charity. The three things by which sin is avoided are these: faithfully repenting everything that nags one's conscience, not wanting to commit them again voluntarily, and steadfastly making amends for the offenses committed and confessed following the advice of those who live in contempt of the world.

The three things that work together for obtaining charity are these: first, asking for God's help to get rid of base pleasure and to be given the will to do what God wants. Divine charity is not obtained unless it is desired, and the desire will not be rational unless it is founded on God's charity. Thus, a person has three things before charity enters, while three other things enter after the infusion of divine charity. Before the infusion of God's charity, a man worries about the coming of death, about the loss of honor and friends, about worldly setbacks and physical illness. Once charity has been obtained, the soul experiences joy in the hardships she suffers in the world, while the mind is uneasy about worldly possessions and finds joy in giving honor to God and in suffering for the sake of God's honor. The second thing that leads to charity is giving alms from one's superfluous means. When a bishop has the housewares and clothes appropriate for the needs of a humble prelate and not for ostentation and superfluity, then he should be content with them and distribute alms from what is left over. When the poor household servants of prelates become rich and live luxuriously on the temporal goods and possessions of other souls, then other, truly poor people will cry out profusely for vengeance upon them. The third thing that leads to charity is charitable work. For

whoever would not pray even a single Our Father to obtain charity might thus please God, and divine charity would soon come to him.”

Again the Mother said to Christ her Son: ”Blessed are you, Jesus Christ, best of champions, swiftest in running your course and strongest in waging battle. It is written that David was a great and powerful champion, but he was nothing like you. David threw a stone at his enemy running up at a distance. You approached your enemy on foot and broke his back. David took his enemy's sword and cut off his head while he lay prostrate on the ground. You took away your enemy's sword while he was standing. Your patience overcame him while he was alive; you crushed the might of the mighty with your humility. You are, therefore, the warrior of warriors. No one was ever or ever will be like you. From a mighty father, a stalwart son has arisen who has freed his father and brothers. Hence, most loving champion, I ask that you may deign to grant to this bishop the knowledge of how to fight and the strength to run the course of warriors so that he may take his seat with the true champions who have given their lives for your life and offered their blood for your blood.”

The Son answered: ”A charitable prayer is not to be neglected. Scripture says that no one comes to me unless the Father draws him. If he who draws something is strong but the thing drawn too heavy, his effort is soon wasted and comes to naught. Besides, if the object drawn is tied up, then it can neither help itself nor the person drawing it, should that person fall. If the object drawn is unclean, then it is loathsome to draw it. For this reason, it is necessary that the thing that must be drawn and wants to be drawn should first be cleansed and properly prepared, so that it becomes easy and pleasing to draw along by hand. Due to my Mother's prayers, however, whenever this bishop starts looking for the way, the right way will be pointed out to him.”

Then the Mother spoke some additional words to the bride: ”Hear, daughter, you to whom it has been given to hear spiritual truths. I told you earlier that if the bishop looks for the way, it will be pointed out to him. I shall now explain the way to him. If this bishop proposes to walk along the path spoken of in the gospel, and to be one of the few, he should first have three things before starting out on it. He should first put off the burden that besets him and weighs him down - I mean his worldly desires and money bags - by not loving worldly superfluity and pride but by getting from it only the needs

consistent with the decent and humble sustenance of a bishop and by putting everything else to use for the glory of God. This is what that good man Matthew did. He left behind the heavy burden of the world, which he had not understood to be burdensome until he had found a light and pleasant burden.

In the second place, the bishop should be girded for the journey, to use the words of scripture. When Tobias was sent by his father to get the money, he found the angel standing there girded. What does the angel symbolize if not the priest and bishop of the Lord? He must be pure in body and affections, for, next to a prophet, a priest is the angel of the Lord of hosts, for God, whom the angels see and adore, has received him and consecrated him. The angel appeared to Tobias girded for the journey because every priest and bishop should be girded with the belt of divine justice, ready to give his life for his sheep, ready to speak the truth in his words, ready to point out the way of justice in himself, ready to suffer for the sake of justice and truth, not neglecting it due to threats and taunts, neither keeping silent out of false friendship nor practicing dissimulation on the advice of others. To each bishop thus girded with righteousness and trusting not in himself but in God, Tobias, that is, the righteous man, shall come, and righteous men shall follow after him, for good example and good deeds are worth more than naked words.

In the third place, he should eat bread and water, just as we read about Elijah, who found bread and water at his head and was urged by the angel to eat, for a long journey awaited him. What is the bread eaten by Elijah from which he derived such strength, if not the material and spiritual goods given to him? For material bread was given to him as a lesson to others, so that people might understand it to be God's wish that they have a moderate amount of necessities for strengthening of the body. Moreover, spiritual strength and inspiration was given to the prophet by which he was able to labor on for forty days so that people might know that man does not live by bread alone but by God's every word. For, if God had not given such consolation to the prophet, he would certainly have given up out of weakness, for man is weak in himself but strong in God. Everyone who stands firm and strong is strong and brave by reason of God. Therefore, because this bishop is weak, we lay down that he should take the morsel of bread, that is, to love God above all things, with order, and purely, truly, perfectly. With order, so as to love the world without any superfluity. Purely, so as not to love any sin in himself or his neighbor

or desire to imitate any base habits.

Truly, so as to allow no sin due to trusting to his own good works but so as to govern himself wisely in order not to succumb by being overzealous or to tend perhaps toward sin due to cowardice or the imitation of base men or nonchalance about guilt. Perfectly, so that nothing tastes as sweet to him as God. We bid him also to take some water along with the bread of charity. What is this water if not to think continually on the bitterness of Christ's passion? Who is able to meditate worthily enough on the agony of Christ's human nature, the agony that he was undergoing at the moment when he prayed for the chalice of his passion to be taken from him and when drops of his blood came from his body? That sweat was bloody indeed, because the blood of God's human nature was consumed with the natural fear he was suffering in order to show that he was true man, not a phantasm nor immune to suffering. So, have the bishop drink this water by considering how God stood before Herod and Pilate, what pain and scorn he experienced on the cross and how a lance opened his side from which flew blood and water.

Once the bishop has these three things, then it is useful for him to know how to order his time from the beginning of the day until night. When the bishop first awakens after nighttime, he should immediately give thanks for God's love in creation, for his sufferings in the redemption, for the patience with which he has for so long endured his own sins and habits. Then, when he has got out of bed and put on his clothes, he should say this: 'Ashes must with ashes be, dust with dust. Yet, since I hold the office of bishop in others' sight by the providence of God, I am clothing an ass, you, my body, ashes and dust, not for the sake of ostentation but as a covering, so that you do not appear naked. Nor do I care whether your clothing be better or worse, but only that the bishop's habit be acknowledged out of reverence for God, and that through this habit others may recognize the bishop's authority for the correction and instruction of the weak.

And so, kind God, I beg you to give me steadfastness of mind so that I do not take pride in my precious ashes nor foolishly glory in my colors. Grant me strength so that, just as a bishop's garb is more respectable than that of others due to his divine authority, the garb of my soul may be more virtuous before you, lest I be thrust down all the deeper for having held authority in an unwise manner or lest I be ignominiously stripped for having foolishly worn my venerable garb to my own damnation.' After that he should

read or sing the hours, if he can. The higher the rank to which a person rises, the more he is obliged to give glory to God. However, a pure and humble heart pleases God as much in silence as in singing. After Mass has been said, or beforehand, he should fulfill his episcopal duties, whether of a material or spiritual nature, and show mercy in all his works, considering the glory of God, so that he may not be thought by the weak to care more about temporal than spiritual goods.

When he comes to the dinner table, this should be his prayer: 'O Lord Jesus Christ, you will that this corruptible body should be sustained with material food, I ask you to help me to give my body what it needs in such a way that it does not grow sluggish from too much food nor weak from too much frugality. Inspire in me a suitable moderation so that when this man of earth lives on the things of the earth, the Lord of the earth may not be provoked to anger by his creature of earth.' While at table, he may enjoy moderate comfort with his fellow diners, but in such a way as to avoid detraction and frivolity. Above all, he must avoid saying anything that might confirm others in their vices or be an occasion of sin.

A person who is to be a light for others must consider what is fitting and proper before God, how to edify them, and what is profitable for their salvation. If bread and wine are missing from the material table, everything loses its taste. It is likewise at the spiritual table: Everything will be tasteless for the soul if the wine of spiritual joy and the bread of God's doctrine are missing. Thus, the bishop should say something to the glory of God while at table in order to strengthen his fellow diners spiritually, or else he should see to it that something edifying is read, so that at one and the same bodily meal both the body may be refreshed and the soul may be instructed.

When the meal is ended and grace has been said, the bishop should make any expedient announcements or fulfill his episcopal agenda, or catch some sleep if he needs it for his health, or else peruse books of spiritual guidance. After dinner, though, he may entertain himself with the companions of his household in a respectable way, and comfort them, for if the bow is too tightly drawn, it is soon broken. In this way, moderate enjoyment for the sake of the weakness of the flesh is pleasing to God. However, the wise bishop should behave toward his companions as a mother nursing her child does, for she anoints her nipples with ashes or some other bitter substance until the child becomes

used to more solid foods. He should make sure that he observes moderation in his enjoyments as well as gentleness in his restraint so as to attract his companions to God through God-fearing and humble speech. Hence, he should teach them to revere and love God, becoming in this way both their father through the divine authority in him and their mother and nurse through the well-meaning formation he gives them. If he knows that anyone in his household is in the state of mortal sin and has not repented despite both lenient and strong admonishments, then he should separate himself from him and disown him. Otherwise, if he retains him out of convenience and worldly partiality, he will not be immune from the other's sin.

When he goes to bed, he should turn his heart to God and think over what his thoughts and affections have been that day, along with his deeds and decisions, and implore God's help and mercy with a firm purpose of improving when he can. When he gets into bed, he should pray as follows: 'Lord God, Creator of my body, look on me in your mercy. Grant me your help, so that I do not grow lazy in your service by oversleeping nor weak in your service due to lack of sleep. Give me that measure of sleep that you have prescribed for the temporal relief of the body. May the enemy not harm my body nor be allowed in your hidden judgment to get mastery of my soul.'

When he gets up out of bed, he should wash away in confession any illicit things that might have happened during the night, so that the sleep of the following night might not begin with the sins of the previous. As is written: 'Do not let the sun go down on your anger' - nor on your thoughts and illusions, for sometimes a minor, venial sin can turn into a mortal one through negligence and contempt. I advise him, too, every Friday to do penance for his sins by making a humble confession to a priest with the purpose of amendment. Otherwise, his confession is worthless."

Again, the Mother of God added: "If the bishop sets out on this holy path, I warn him of three difficulties. The first is that it is a narrow path; the second, that it is thorny and sharp; the third, that it is uneven and rocky. I will give him three remedies for this. The first is for him to put on clothes. The second is to keep his ten fingers in front of his eyes and look through them as through bars so that the thorns do not easily or suddenly scratch his uncovered eyes. The third is that he should step cautiously and test each and every step he takes to see if his foot gets a firm hold, and he should not hastily set down

both feet at the same time unless he has first assured himself of the path, whether it is slippery or level.

This narrow path symbolizes nothing other than the malice of wicked people and the hardships of the world that hinder and disturb the righteous on the path of righteousness. Against these things, the bishop should clothe himself in the garment of steadfast patience, for it is glorious to suffer insults on behalf of justice and truth. The ten fingers held before the eyes symbolize nothing other than the ten commandments. The righteous should reflect on them everyday so as to hold God's love in view whenever the thorns of insult make themselves felt. Whenever one feels the thorns of malice, one should react with love of neighbor. Whenever one feels drawn to worldly and carnal love, one should look to the scriptural injunction, 'You shall not covet,' and put a brake on concupiscence and live moderation.

Where charity is divine, patience is there in hardships, and joy in sickness, and sorrow over superfluity, fear of honor, humility in power, and the desire of withdrawing from the world. That the bishop should test each step to see if he has a firm foothold means that he should everywhere have an attitude of intelligent fear. A righteous person should have two feet. One foot is a longing for eternity. The other is a distaste for worldliness. His longing for eternity should be circumspect, in the sense that he must not long for eternal things for his own honor more than for God. His distaste for the world should be cautious, in the sense that it must not be the irrational result of impatience with life and his adverse fortune nor because of weariness in divine work. Caution is thus needed so that this distaste should only be the result of his longing for a better life and his abhorrence of sin.

Once the bishop has both these feet, fearful even that those faults he has corrected have not been fully corrected, and if he proceeds along this narrow and thorny path, then I would warn him about three enemies along the way. You see, the first enemy tries to whistle in his ears, while the second stands in front of him in order to scratch out his eyes, and the third enemy is at his feet, shouting loudly and holding a noose in order to ensnare the bishop's feet when he jumps up at his enemy's shout.

The first are those people or those diabolic impulses that make such suggestions to

the bishop as these: 'Why are you making your way with such humility on so narrow a path? Why do you take so much work on yourself? Can it be that you want to be holier than other people so that you achieve what no one else has? Go off instead to the verdant path where many others are walking, so that you do not make a miserable failure of yourself. What does it matter to you whether people behave well or badly? What good does it do you to offend those people who could honor and appreciate you, if they do not offend you or yours? What concern is it of yours if they are offending God? It is better to exchange gifts! Make use of your position and of human friendships so as to win praise and to obtain heaven alike.' You see, this kind of enemy is whistling and has whistled in the ears of many persons. This is why many lamps that should be shining in the darkness have themselves become darkness, and much fine gold has been turned into mud.

The second enemy that tries to scratch out his eyes is worldly beauty and possessions, human privileges and favors. When such things are offered and desired, the eyes of the soul and of reason are blinded, because it seems more pleasant to stand around with Samson at the millstone of worldly care than to stay with the bridal church and be disposed for pastoral care. Moreover, even love for God, if there was any, grows lukewarm then, and sin is committed with confidence, and the committed offense is taken lightly because of this confidence in one's power. Therefore, when the bishop has what he needs for his household, the size of which is determined so as to maintain his honor and authority, he should be content. This agrees with the scriptural passage: 'Let your manners be without covetousness, contented with moderate possessions,' for no wholehearted soldier of God gets involved in worldly affairs, except only reluctantly and for the glory of God.

The third enemy carries a noose and shouts loudly as follows: 'Why do you humble yourself so much, you who could be honored above many people? Make an effort to go up to a higher position. Then you will have plenty and can give more away. Become a priest so that you may take your place among those of the first rank. Become a bishop and then an archbishop or even higher, so that you may obtain more relaxation, better service, and greater privilege. Then you will be able to help others and be more respected by others and receive many people's encouragement.' When the heart is deceived by such suggestions, a foot is soon incautiously extended toward avarice, and one looks for a way to rise to a higher position. Then the heart becomes so entangled in the noose of worldly

care that it can scarcely rise up. Nor is this surprising, since scripture says that whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. And what is that noble task? It is to work for souls and for the glory of God, to work for an eternal reward and not a perishable one.

Now, instead, many desire the honors but not the work, and yet these are not an honor but an affliction. Where the burden of divine work is not found, there follows no honor for the soul in God's sight. This is why the bishop should not seek a higher rank other than the one he holds, for there is a noose lying hidden on the ground that is a trap for one who walks along the path. It is therefore beneficial to remain in his position, until either it pleases God to provide otherwise or an ecclesiastical superior decides something else for the glory of God. This has been said as advice and as a loving warning.

We will now explain what the bishop should do for God. He must hold his miter tightly in his arms. He must not sell it for money nor give it up to others for the sake of friendship nor lose it through negligence and lukewarmness. The bishop's crown or miter signifies nothing other than the bishop's power to ordain priests, to correct those who go astray, and to instruct the ignorant by his word and example. To hold his miter tightly in his arms means that the bishop should reflect carefully on how and why he received his episcopal power, how he wields it, and what its reward will be.

If the bishop would examine how he received his power, he should first examine whether he desired the episcopate for his own sake or for God's. If it was for his own sake, then he has reason to fear; if it was for God's sake, then his desire was meritorious and spiritual. If the bishop would consider for what purpose he has received his rank and power, let me tell him. It was in order that he might become a consoler and liberator of souls by reason of his merit. He lives on almsgiving so that he might nourish the poor and be like a father for the rich, to assist God in spiritual errands and be zealous on behalf of God. If he wants to know the reward for his office, Paul says it well: He who has carried out his ministry well will be esteemed worthy of twofold honor. It is twofold in the sense of being both corporal and spiritual. Everyone who wears the episcopal garb but does not follow the episcopal way of life, who seeks the honor but neglects the work, will merit a double disgrace.

That the bishop's power is not to be sold means that the bishop should not knowingly commit simony nor tolerate it in others if he finds out about it, nor ordain or promote anyone for the sake of money and human favor, nor advance anyone whom he knows to be unworthy and of bad character because the worldly minded petition him to do so. That he should not give up his power to others on account of human friendship means that the bishop should not disguise the sins of the negligent out of false compassion, nor keep quiet out of friendship, nor, for any worldly reason, take on his own back the sins of others when he can, as he ought, correct them.

The bishop is God's sentinel. The blood of the dead is the sentinel's responsibility, if the sentinel saw the danger and did not cry out or if he fell asleep or did not care. That the bishop should not lose his crown or miter through negligence means that the bishop should not delegate to others what he should and can do himself. Nor should he, for the sake of his own lukewarm ease, transfer to others what he himself is better able to carry out. Nor should the bishop be ignorant of the life and conduct of those to whom he delegates his tasks. Instead, he should inquire both privately and openly about their conduct and their manner of observing justice, for the bishop's duty is not to rest but to work with solicitude.

In addition to taking good care of his miter as I have described, the bishop also ought to carry a bouquet of flowers under his arms in order to attract sheep far and near. A good shepherd entices his sheep to follow him by means of flowers and hay. This bouquet of flowers signifies the godly preaching that pertains to a bishop. His two arms are two kinds of works, namely, good works in public for the sake of alluring others and good works in secret out of fear of God and as an example to one's neighbors. If his preaching is joined to these two good works, the bouquet of flowers will be most beautiful, and the nearby sheep in his diocese will gladly run after him. Likewise, the faraway sheep, hearing of his reputation, will want to get to know him, both because of his words and because of the charitable works that accompany them. These are the sweetest flowers for attracting sheep: doing deeds of virtue and teaching others, not with learned rhetoric but in few words full of charity. It is not right for a preacher of God to be mute nor for the sentinel of God's house to be blind.

The bishop still lacks one thing. When the bishop reaches the gate, he must present

a gift to the high king. We advise him to present to the king a vessel that is dear to him, an empty and ornate vessel. The empty vessel to be presented is his own heart. May he offer it to God all adorned with virtue yet empty of self-will and carnal love. When this bishop reaches the gate, the shining host of heaven will come out to meet him. The true God and man will receive him, and the angels will then say: 'Lord God, this bishop was clean in body, pure in his priesthood, apostolic in his preaching, a bishop vigilant in his duties, manly in his conduct, humble in his office. Behold him whom we have longed to meet for his purity's sake, and so we present him to you, for he longed for you for the sake of your charity!'

Then all the saints in heaven will say: 'Lord our God! We have our joy in you. Yet, our joy is heightened by this bishop. He carried flowers on his lips and used them to call out to many sheep. He carried flowers in his hands to give refreshment to the sheep that came to him. He sent flowers to those that lived afar and so roused sheep who were sleeping. Thus, because the flowers of his words increased our chorus, we rejoice over him. Rejoice with us, Lord God, over this man and his honor, for he longed for you above all things.'

Then the Lord, the giver of glory, shall say to him: 'Friend, you came to present to me the vessel of your heart emptied of yourself, and you longed to be filled with me. Therefore, come, I will fill you with myself. Be in me and I shall be in you. Your glory and happiness will have no end.' ”

The Virgin Mary tells the bride while she is praying for a hermit, a friend of hers, who had died, that, before his body is buried beneath the earth, his soul will be brought into heaven.

Chapter 127

While the bride was praying for an old priest, a friend of hers, who had been a most excellent and virtuous hermit but who had already departed from this life and lay now in an open coffin in the church before being buried, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and

said: "Listen, my daughter, and know that the soul of this hermit and friend of yours would have entered into heaven as soon as his soul had left the body, if he had possessed a perfect desire at his death of coming into the presence and sight of God. As it is, he will now be held in the purgatory of longing, where there is no pain other than the sole longing of coming to God. Know, too, that, before his body enters the earth, his soul will be brought into glory."

EXPLANATION

"Tell that aged monk: For a long time you remained in the desert and bore fruit that pleased me, turning wild beasts into sheep and lions into lambs. Remain now steadfast in the city whose streets are strewn with the blood of saints, for you shall be heard at the court of judgment and behold your retribution."

Immediately after hearing this, he fell sick and went to his rest in peace not long after.

This Benedictine monk had asked Lady Bridget to inquire of God how he could be certain about which habit to wear, since he was much troubled concerning the many abuses of the religious habit in the order of St. Benedict. So, when the lady was caught up in the Spirit, the Son of God said to her: "I told you earlier (in Book 3 Chapters 20 and 22) that my servant Benedict regarded his body as a sack.

He had five garments. The first was a rough shirt with which he tamed the flesh and its disorderly impulses in order that they might not run riot and exceed their bounds. The second garment was a simple cowl, neither elaborate nor full of folds, which was to cover, adorn, and warm the flesh, so as not to scare anyone seeing him. The third was a scapular by which he would be found more prompt and ready for manual labor. The fourth garment was protective covering for the feet so that he might be more agile and humble in walking the path of God. The fifth was the belt of humility, girded with which he would cut down on superfluous items and carry out more expeditiously the customary work enjoined upon him.

Nowadays, however, his monks want luxurious clothes and abhor asperity. They want garments that please others and that excite carnal thoughts. Instead of a cowl, they

put on a cape that has so many folds and is so wide and long that they seem more like conceited show-offs than humble religious. Instead of a scapular, they have a small cloth in the back and front, and they cover their heads with a hood after worldly fashion in order to be like people in the world. And yet they are neither like people in the world nor do they work together with God's humble servants. They cover their feet and put on a belt as though they were ready for a wedding, not for running in the stadium of toil.

A monk who wants to be saved must, therefore, observe that my Benedict's rule allows him to have a moderate amount of necessities, useful, not superfluous items, honest and suitable possessions, all of it in humility and not in pride. What does the cowl symbolize if not being more humble than others? What does the cowl's poor hood symbolize if not the rejection of worldly ways? Why are the monks adopting a fashionable hood, unless because they are ashamed of humble ways and so that they can be like people living in the world? What decoration or usefulness is there in a hood with a tail if not mere ostentation and fastidiousness that go against the beautiful rule of their religious order? What more does a plaited cape do than a cowl, except to make a wandering friar seem grander and more stylish to others? However, if a humble and plain cape were worn for some needful and adequate reason, it would not be improper, though a humble cowl would be more suitable so that the religious order in which a monk has made his profession could be recognized from his habit. However, if the monk has a headache or suffers from the cold, he does not sin if he wears a suitable and humble covering beneath the hood of his cowl - not on the outside, for that would be proof of frivolity and vanity.”

The lady answered: ”My Lord, do not be angry with me if I ask something. Do the monks sin when they wear such a habit by permission of their superiors or because of a custom established by their predecessors?” God said to her: ”An exemption is valid if it proceeds from an upright intention. Some grant exemptions out of zeal for justice, others out of false compassion and unwise permissiveness, and others, again, out of their own moral frivolity and obsequiousness. Others feign justice, being empty of divine charity. However, an exemption is pleasing to me if it is not opposed to humility, and the permission is valid only when it prudently allows for necessities but condemns superfluties even in small things.”

The lady asked again: "Lord, my God, what if some of them do not know what is better or more suitable according to the rule? Do they sin as well?" Christ answered: "How can a professed member of a religious order not know the rule that is read and heard every day? It is laid down in the rule that a monk should be humble and obedient and wear a habit made from rough rather than softer materials, an exemplary kind of habit and not a pompous one. Who is so obtuse of conscience that he does not understand that he has taken vows of humility and total poverty? The true Benedictine is one who obeys the rule rather than his flesh, who does not want to please anyone but God in his habit or customs, who daily longs to die and prepares himself for his exit from this world, and who is concerned about the account he must render concerning the rule of Benedict."

The Virgin Mother's answer to the question of her Son's bride who was praying for a certain monk in a position of doubt as to whether it would be more acceptable to God for him to enjoy the sweetness of mental consolation by never leaving his place of hermitage, or to come down from time to time in order to instruct the souls of his neighbors.

Chapter 128

The Mother speaks: "Speak to that priest and hermit who is my friend, the one who, against his own desires and the peace of his own soul, moved by faith and devotion to his neighbor, leaving his solitary cell and quiet contemplation behind, from time to time comes down from his place of hermitage in order to be with people and give them spiritual counsels, whose example and saving counsel bring about the conversion of many souls and the advancement in virtue of the already converted. He requested your advice with humility, humble about doubts caused by the cunning and fraudulent tricks of the devil. He asked you to pray for him in regard to the matter of whether it would please God more for him to enjoy the sweetness of his contemplation alone or whether such charitable work on behalf of his neighbors would be more acceptable to God.

Tell him, then, from me that it is altogether more pleasing to God, as has been said,

that he should sometimes come down from his place of hermitage and go to carry out such works of charity among his neighbors, sharing with them the virtues and graces that he receives from God, in order that by this work they might be converted and attach themselves with greater fervor to God and become sharers in his glory, than that he should enjoy spiritual consolation alone in his solitary cell in the hermitage.

Tell him, too, that he will earn a greater reward in heaven for such charitable work, provided that he always carries it out in accordance with the advice and permission of a senior spiritual father. Tell him, again, that I want him to receive as spiritual children to be directed under his guidance all those hermits, including nuns and female recluses, who were once the spiritual children of my other friend, the hermit who has died. He should direct them all with loving guidance in a spiritual and virtuous manner, just as that man guided and directed them when he was alive, for it pleases God to have it so.

If they accept him as their father and obey him humbly according to the spiritual life of a hermit, he will be a father for them and I will be for them a Mother. If, however, anyone of them does not want to accept or obey him as a spiritual father, then it will be better for one not practicing obedience to leave them immediately than to remain any longer with them. My friend, then, may go to them and return to his cell as often as it seems good to him, but always with the advice and permission of his senior.”

Two years after the bride had the vision about the beast and the fish contained in Book 4 Chapter 2 above, Christ appeared to her and gave a most clear and notable explanation of the very obscure vision: The beast and fish stand for sinners and heathen; those that catch it, for righteous and virtuous people.

Chapter 129

The Son speaks to the bride: ”I told you earlier that I desire the heart of the animal and the blood of the fish. The heart of this animal stands for nothing other than the beloved and immortal souls of Christians, which appeal to me more than anything else that seems desirable in the world. The blood of the fish is nothing other than perfect love

for God. The heart should be presented to me with the pure hands, and the blood in an ornate glass vessel, for purity is pleasing to God and to angels. Purity is most fitting for every spiritual work, like a jewel on a ring. The love for God should be presented in an ornamented vessel, because the heathen soul should shine like a glass vessel and burn with an ardent love for God, a love that unites faithful and infidel as in a single body with its head, that is, with God.

The heart of a Christian hardened in sin is like an animal without the hardness of obedience that runs about in vices and lives by its pleasures. Those who want to present me with the heart of such a one should make a hole in their hands with a sharp bore, for then neither swords nor arrows will prevail against them. The hands of the righteous are nothing other than their actions, both physical and spiritual. The physical hand, that is, working and sustaining the body, is necessary indeed. The spiritual hand is fasting and praying and the like. In order, therefore, for human activity to be sober and wise, one must bore through it with the fear of God.

A person must recall at all times that God is always present. He should also be afraid of losing the grace given to him, for no one can accomplish anything without God's help, yet one can do all things with God's love. Just as a drill prepares the holes in which something is to be placed, so too fear of God solidifies all one's actions and both prepares the way for divine love and attracts God's help. One must therefore be fearful and prudent in all one's actions, for, although both spiritual and physical work are necessary, yet without fear and prudence, work is not useful. Imprudence and presumption ruin and confuse everything and take away the goodness of perseverance. Accordingly, a person who wants to overcome the hardness of the animal should be unbending in acts of prudence and constant in godly fear and in the hope of divine aid, making as great an effort as possible. God will then offer his assistance and break through that hardened heart.

My friend should also use strong pitch to fortify his own eyes with the eyelids of a whale so as not to be killed at the sight of the basilisk. What are the eyes of the righteous man if not a twofold consideration he should make each day, namely, the consideration of God's blessings and self-examination? In thinking of God's mercy and blessings, he should examine his own usefulness and his ingratitude toward God's blessings. When he

feels at heart that he deserves to be condemned, he should fortify his eyes with the consideration symbolized by the eyelid of the whale, that is, with hope and faith in God's goodness, so as not to grow soft in considering God's mercy nor despair in considering his judgment. In the same way as the eyelids of a whale are neither soft like flesh nor hard like bone, so too a person must be balanced between God's mercy and his judgment, steadfastly hoping for mercy and prudently fearing his judgment. He should rejoice in God's mercy and advance from virtue to virtue because of God's justice. Hence, those people who stay between mercy and justice each day, in hope and in fear, have no reason to fear the eyes of the animal.

What do the eyes of the animal symbolize if not worldly wisdom and temporal prosperity? Worldly wisdom, which is here compared to the animal's first eye, is like the sight of the basilisk: It hopes for what it sees and is promptly rewarded, for it desires things that will perish. Divine wisdom, on the other hand, hopes for that which is unseen; it pays no attention to worldly prosperity but loves humility and patience; it seeks only an eternal reward. The animal's second eye is worldly prosperity that is sought after by bad people who forget the things of heaven while they pursue it, becoming thus hardened against God.

Everyone desirous of his neighbor's salvation should with prudence connect his eyes to the eyes of the animal, that is, of his neighbor, by proposing to him God's blessed mercy and his judgment, withstanding worldly words with the words of God's wisdom, displaying a life of persevering continence to incontinent people, eschewing the riches and honors of the present life for the sake of divine charity, preaching firmly and putting the preaching into practice, for a spiritual life gives proof of one's words, and holy example accomplishes more than can wordy eloquence without efficacious deeds.

Those who keep God's blessings and judgment always in mind are those who have God's words continually on their lips and put them into practice and place their hope firmly in God's goodness, who are not harmed by the sting of the swords of their enemies, that is, by the treacherous devices of worldly people, but, rather, make progress and for charity's sake convert the erring to God's true charity. Those, however, that grow proud of the grace given them and seek profit from their eloquence are dead, though they live.

A plate of steel should be tied to one's heart in the sense that one should always keep God's love in sight through thinking about how God humbled himself by becoming man, how he endured hunger and thirst and toil during his preaching, how he hung upon the cross and rose again after his death and ascended into heaven. This steel plate of love gets length and width when the mind is ready to endure freely any sufferings that come, when one does not grumble about God's decisions nor become upset about hardships but, instead, puts one's whole mind and body into God's mind and plan. O, daughter, I was like the strongest steel when I was stretched out upon the cross, praying for my enemies, practically oblivious of my own suffering and wounds.

You have to close your nostrils and run toward the beast with your mouth shut because, just as breath enters and exits through the nostrils, so too life and death enter into the soul through a person's desires. Therefore, you must guard yourself against desire as against death, so that they do not enter into your soul or, having entered, remain there. Anyone who proposes to take on arduous tasks ought to examine his temptations and be on guard against any lack of divine zeal due to inordinate desires. Accordingly, you must run toward the sinner with all your desire, with divine zeal and complete patience, both in season and out of season, so that the sinner may be converted. Where the righteous man makes no progress through speech or admonishments, there he must exercise zeal and persevere in earnest prayer.

The animal should be grasped on top with both your hands. Now, it has two ears: one ear to hear the pleasant things it likes; another, which it blocks up, so as not to hear anything profitable to its soul. It is useful for the friend of God to have two spiritual hands, just as before he had physical hands. However, he should have holes in them. One hand is the divine wisdom with which he shows to the sinner that all the things of this world are fleeting and slippery, that one who delights in them is deceived and unsafe, for they were all given for one's needs and not for excess. The other hand is good example and good action, for the good person ought to do as he teaches in order to strengthen his listeners by his example. Many teach but without setting an example. They are the ones who, in the coldness of their minds, build up a stone structure without using cement so that it quickly falls apart when the storm dashes upon it.

The animal's hide is like flint and must be assailed with hammer and fire. The hide

denotes the show and simulation of justice. Wicked people, who do not want to be good, do desire to seem to be what they are not. Because they want to be called praiseworthy but not to live in a praiseworthy way, they make an outward show of holiness and feign justice, although they never give justice a thought. This is how they become so proud and hard as flint in their appearance of simulated holiness that they are not softened by rebukes or clear reasoning.

Accordingly, God's servant must use the hammer of harsh rebuke and the fire of divine prayer on such as these in order to convince the wicked with the word of truth and gradually soften them up from their hardness and warm them through their prayers and enkindle them with respect to knowledge of God and of themselves, just as Stephen did. He did not speak pleasing words but true ones, not soft words but hard ones. Moreover, he prayed to God for them, and this is why he achieved what he did, and many persons improved because of him. Thus, whoever perforates the work of his hands with the fear of God and protects the eyes of contemplation with temperance and covers his heart with a plate of steel, closing his nostrils, and in this way presents the animal's heart to me, then I, God, shall give to him a most delightful treasure. The eye does not grow weary of its delight, nor does the ear tire of its pleasure, nor can one get enough of tasting its enjoyment, nor is any pain ever felt at its touch. No, rather, the soul enjoys happiness and everlasting plenty.

The fish symbolizes the heathen whose scales are very powerful, being hardened by sin and malice. Just as closely packed scales are a defense and prevent the wind from getting in, so too the heathen, glorying in their sins and living on false hopes, protect themselves with defenses against my friends. They prefer their own cults, multiply terrors, threaten punishments. So, anyone who wants to present me with the fish's blood should cast the net of preaching over it, not the kind consisting in the rotten strings of elaborately eloquent philosophers and orators, but in simplicity of speech and in humble deeds. The simple preaching of God's word is as sonorous as bronze in God's sight and powerfully attracts sinners to God. My church began and developed not through eloquent teachers but through humble and ordinary people.

The preacher should be careful not to enter the water above his knees or to step anywhere where the sand is not solid, so that he does not lose his footing if the waves rise

above his knees. What is the present life if not, as it were, water in constant and unstable motion? In such water, one must not bend down on the knee of spiritual fortitude except only when necessary. One should set the foot of human affection on solid sand, that is, on the solidity of divine charity and the contemplation of the life to come. Those people who stretch out the feet of their affections and use their fortitude for temporal ends are not steadfast in winning souls but sink beneath the waves of temporal cares.

The righteous man should also pluck out his eye and turn it toward the fish, for the eye is twofold, human and spiritual. The human eye instills fear when it sees the power and cruelty of tyrants but when the spirit, considering its own weakness, is afraid to speak out. This eye of fear should be put out and plucked away from the soul through the contemplation of divine goodness, by considering and firmly believing that every person, who puts his or her trust in God and seeks to win over a sinner for the sake of God, shall have God himself as a protector. The sinner, or any convert to God, should be examined with the spiritual eye of insight with careful attention as to how he might be tempted and how he stands up in tribulations, so that he does not become overwhelmed by the exertion of adopting unaccustomed exercises, and so that tribulation does not make him regret having adopted a more austere way of life.

The righteous person, whoever he or she may be, should also consider the material sustenance of the infidels converted to the faith so that they do not have to beg or be oppressed in slavery or be deprived of their corresponding rights. He should also take diligent care that such a convert should be continually instructed in the holy Catholic faith and in holy examples of virtue. It is indeed pleasing to me that pagan converts should see habits of holiness and hear words of charity. Many Christians come to the pagans undisciplined and in a state of moral disorder, boasting that they kill the pagans' bodies and gain their temporal possessions. This pleases me about as much as those who sacrificed to the molten calf in the desert. Therefore, anyone who desires to please me by going to the pagans, let him first pluck out his eye of avarice and worldly fear. But he should keep his eye of compassion open along with his understanding so as to win their souls, desiring nothing but to die for God's sake and to live for God.

The righteous man should, moreover, have a shield of steel, that is, true patience and perseverance, in order not to be separated from God's love by either words or deeds

nor, worn out due to various mishaps, complain in any way about God's decisions. As a shield both protects and takes the striking blows, so too true patience is a defense in temptations. It also makes hardship easier and outfits people for every good deed. The shield of patience should not be formed out of fragile materials but out of the strongest bronze. True patience must obviously be formed and tested by contemplating my own patience. I was like the strongest steel when I preferred to suffer death rather than to lose souls and preferred to hear insults rather than to come down from the cross. Hence, anyone who desires patience must imitate my constancy. For, if I, who was innocent suffered, what wonder is it that a person who deserves his sentence should suffer?

A person thus fortified with patience should spread out his net over the fish and hold it for ten hours above the waters. Then he shall get the blood of the fish. These ten hours represent nothing other than ten counsels that should be given to the convert. The first is to believe in the ten commandments that I gave to the people of Israel. The second is to receive and venerate the sacraments of my church. The third is to feel sorrow for past sins and to have the perfect intention of no longer committing them. The fourth is to obey my friends as often as they tell the convert to do something that goes against his own will.

The fifth is to despise all his base habits that go against God and good morals. The sixth is to have the desire of bringing as many people as possible to God. The seventh is to display true humility in his actions, avoiding giving bad example. The eighth is to have patience in adversity and not to complain about God's decisions. The ninth is not to listen to or keep company with those who set themselves against the holy Christian faith. The tenth is to ask God for the strength to persevere in love and to make a personal effort to do so. Anyone converted from evil ways who observes and keeps these ten counsels will die away from love of the world and become alive to the love of God.

When the fish, that is, the sinner rescued from the waters of lustful pleasure, resolves to keep these ten counsels, he should be opened at his backbone where the blood is most plentiful. What does the backbone symbolize if not upright actions and a good intention? His will should incline to God's pleasure. Oftentimes, indeed, an action seems good in the sight of men but the agent's intention and will are not good. Thus, the just man, who seeks to convert a sinner, should examine the other's intention in undertaking

a good work as well as the intention with which he aims to persevere in it. If he should discover some carnal affection in a spiritual work, whether toward relatives or with a regard to acquiring temporal gains, then he should hasten to cut it out of his heart. Just as bad blood brings on disease, obstructs movement, tightens the access to the heart, and impairs one's appetite for food, so too a bad will and a corrupt intention destroy love for God, provoke spiritual torpor, close the heart toward God, and make every spiritual good abhorrent to him.

However, the blood that I desire is fresh blood that gives life to the limbs. This means: a good intention and love directed toward God. This prepares the way for the faith, equips the senses for understanding and the limbs for action, and attracts the help of God. This intention is preceded and infused by my grace. It is increased through prayers and through own goodness. It is perfected through good actions and through delight in me.

That is how the blood of the fish should be presented to me. Anyone who presents it to me in this way shall have the best of rewards. A river of every delight will flow into his mouth, perpetual splendor will light up his soul, and his salvation will be renewed without end.”

ADDITION

Note that Christ begins to speak of the fish and the animal in Book 4 Chapter 2 of the Revelations and explains what they mean in this chapter 129.

ADDITION

The following revelation was made in Amalfi where St. Matthew lies buried. “Blessed are you, holy apostle Matthew! You were the best of money-changers. That is to say, you exchanged something earthly and found something eternal. You scorned yourself and obtained God. You put away false prudence, despised physical rest, and took up hard labor. This is why you are now deservedly glorified in God's sight.”

St. Matthew answered: ”Blessed be God who inspired this greeting in you! Indeed,

so please God, I want to show you what kind of man I was when I wrote the Gospel and what state of reward I find myself in now. I did indeed hold a public office, which I could not carry out without a public income. However, my intention at the time was such that I did not want to defraud anyone. Rather, I longed to find a way to separate myself from that office and devote myself wholeheartedly to God alone. At the preaching of my lover, Jesus Christ, his calling to me burned like fire in my heart. His words were so sweet to me that I could no more think of wealth and honor than of chaff. No, indeed, I wanted to weep and to rejoice, because my God wished to call so insignificant and so great a sinner to his grace. As I clung to my Lord, I began to fix his words in my heart ever more ardently and meditate on them, savoring them night and day like the most delicious food.

When my Lord's passion was accomplished, I wrote the Gospel according to what I had seen and heard and experienced - not for my own fame but for the glory of my Redeemer and for the good of souls. While I was writing it, such a fire of divine flame continued burning in me that, even had I wanted to keep silent, I would have been completely unable because of its intensity. Now, however, many are trying to subvert and maliciously interpret what I wrote out of love and humility. They boast about having lofty, celestial knowledge whenever they encounter discrepancies. They prefer to argue about the Gospel rather than live according to its meaning.

The humble and lowly shall therefore enter into heaven, while the proud and clever remain outside. Why do the proud and presumptuous think that the God of such great wisdom was unable so to arrange his words that people would not be scandalized at them? Yet it is only just that scandals come, and that those who feel an aversion for heavenly things should become attached to earthly things. However, with regard to my reward, rest assured that what scripture says is true: The heart cannot conceive it nor the tongue describe it.”

Many years after the bride had the vision about the seven animals in this same book (Chapter 125), Christ explained certain things that were missing in the explanation of that vision, as follows.

Chapter 130

The Son speaks: "I told you earlier about seven animals, one of which was like an elephant that leaned against a tree without noticing the tree's fragility nor the brevity of time, which is why it fell down along with the tree precisely when it thought it could remain standing. The walls of his church were to be so ruined by heat and water that there would be no one to rebuild them, because they had been built out of wicked people. The ground was to be torn asunder, and those that dwell there would seek death, but it would evade them, and the ungodly would rule over the righteous. All this has come to pass.

Know, too, that the second animal, which was proud of the jewel of its chastity, has now assumed the horns of a lamb. I shall therefore teach him how he must leap over the walls and continue in his honorable state. The humility of this animal pleases me, and therefore I say to him that his church has already risen to its highest position and has long been in a state of pride. Accordingly, this man should strive to make the clergy live more continent lives, reduce their lack of moderation in drink, put off greed, and put on humility and fear. Otherwise, they will be felled by hardships, and their fall will be so heavy and so great that people in other countries will hear of it."

After the death of the bishop mentioned and the creation of his successor, the Lord spoke to me, saying: "Know that this bishop (the successor of the aforesaid bishop) who has now risen to episcopal rank was one of the five servants whom the king would not heed, unless they acquired clearer eyesight. This bishop has now ascended, but let him make a good examination, and he shall see how he has ascended with respect to my judgment. I warn him of the fate of Joab. Joab felt envy toward his betters and relied on his own counsels. He had great audacity and, hence, was presumptuous beyond his capacity. He preferred his own chosen one to the one God had chosen. One piece of advice, however, is useful to a bishop. He should put a check on his own prudence and always pay attention not to what is possible but to what is honorable."

When he was in doubt as to whether or not it would be good for him to go to Rome for the remission of his sins, he sought my advice. When I was praying, the Mother of

God answered in this way: "If this bishop feels in his soul that he needs the help of the saints, let him come to Rome for the indulgences, for there will come a time when it will be good for him. Let him also attend to cutting back the claws of the rapacious birds that have already entered so that they do not settle down on the highest cliffs, because they will hurt the common folk more than, and he himself will not be immune from hardship.

Know, furthermore, that the animal that, as I told you, feels fear at seeing its own shadow and benefits itself by running, is the one who has zeal for souls and does not become dejected at heart by derogatory words spoken to him, nor elated over words of assent and adulation. He is prepared to leave the world by dying and is also prepared to go on living for the sake of my glory, if it should so please me. Therefore, I shall run out to meet him halfway, like a father with his son, and I shall take him out of custody, like a merciful judge, so that he does not have to see the evils to come. However, the one who continued in his leprosy will die along with those who have their bellies full. He will be buried and sentenced along with the lepers, and he will not be seated among those who will judge the world."

This is the end of the fourth book according to Alfonso.

A revelation given on Monte Gargano concerning the excellence of the angels.

Chapter 131

Lady Bridget saw a multitude of angels singing praises on Monte Gargano and saying: "Blessed are you, our God, who are and shall be and ever were without beginning or end! You created us spirits to minister to you and to comfort and protect humankind, We are sent to them for their benefit and yet are never deprived of the sweet consolation of the beatific vision. Because we were as though unknown to humankind, you wished on this spot to reveal this your blessing and the dignity given to us, in order that people might learn both to love you and to desire our help. This place, which long was held in honor by many, is now neglected, The inhabitants of the land turn more to unclean spirits than to us, inasmuch as they follow their suggestions more eagerly."

The lady answered: "My Lord, my Creator and Redeemer, help them to cease from sinning and to desire you with all their heart!" God said to her: "They have grown accustomed to filth, and will not learn except by force. Would that they would get to know themselves through discipline and recover their senses again!"

Christ speaks about the five good gifts given to priests and their five opposites that bad priests do.

Chapter 132

"I am like a man about to depart from this world who entrusts his greatest possessions to his dearest friends. When I was about to depart from this world, I accordingly entrusted the thing dearest to me, my own body, to priests whom I chose to be above all the angels and above all other men. I gave to them these five good gifts: first, my faith; second, the two keys to hell and heaven; third, the ability to make an angel out of an enemy; fourth, the ability to consecrate my body, which none of the angels can do; fifth, the gift of handling my most pure body with their own hands. Now, however, they treat me just as the Jews did who denied that I had raised Lazarus and performed other miracles, who instead spread the rumor that I wanted to be made king, that I had prohibited paying the tribute tax, and that I would rebuild the temple in three days.

In similar fashion, priests do not speak of my miracles or teach my doctrine but teach rather the love of the world. They preach their own pleasure and think nothing of what I did for them. Second, they have lost the key with which they were to open heaven for the wretched. They love, however, the key that opens hell and keep it wrapped away in fine clean linen. Third, they make a wicked man out of a righteous one, a devil out of the simple-hearted, a wounded man out of a healthy one - anyone who turns to them with three wounds receives a fourth from them. If someone comes to them with four wounds, then he leaves them with five. Once a sinner has seen the immoral example of priests, he grows confident in sinning and begins to boast of the sin that he earlier considered shameful. This is why their condemnation will be greater than that of others, because

they go astray in their conduct and hurt others by their example.

Fourth, they sell me, though they should be sanctifying me with their lips. They are worse than Judas. At least Judas recognized his sin and experienced remorse, however unprofitably. These, however, call themselves just and make a show of it. Judas returned the price for his services to the buyers. These, instead, keep it for their own use. Judas sold me prior to the world's redemption. These sell me after I have already redeemed the world. They feel no compassion about the blood I lost, which cries out for vengeance more than the blood of Abel. Judas sold me for money alone. These, however, sell me for any kind of merchandise, since they do not approach me unless they hope to gain something for themselves. Fifth, they treat me like the Jews. What did the Jews do? They put me on the wood of the cross, but these put me in an oil-press and press down hard upon it.

You might ask: How does this happen, given that my divine nature is impassible as well as my human nature? I will tell you. My divine and human natures are impassible, nor can sorrow or adversity affect God. However, the intention of these priests to remain in sin is so adverse and bitter to me that it is as if I were placed in an oil-press, if that were possible. These priests have two sins, namely, lust and greed, and they press me between the two.

They may, perhaps, do penance for these sins, but, then, after having carried out their priestly office, they have the firm intention to sin again, and so it is as though they press down hard upon me in an oil-press. Of course, they provide for women of ill repute and put them in a safe place so they can fulfill their lust and cast me out. They fawn on them and delight in them, but have no desire to see me who am the cause of their existence.

See, my friends, what sort of priests they are! See, my angels, the ones whom you serve! If I lay before you as I lie on the altar before them, none of you would dare to touch me. You would be afraid to do so. These men, however, betray me like thieves and traitors. Like whores they touch me. They are filthier than tar, yet they do not feel ashamed to approach me, who am the God and Lord of glory. Accordingly, as it was said to Israel, 'seven plagues shall come upon you.' Those seven plagues shall surely come

upon the priests!”

Christ compares himself to Moses leading Israel through the Red Sea where the waters stood like walls to right and left, and about how Israel, that is, bad priests, neglect Christ and select the golden calf, that is, the world, and about how Christ honored priests by means of seven orders, from which they have turned away in seven ways.

Chapter 133

The Mother spoke: "The enemies of my Son were so eager for his blood that they even inflicted wounds on him when he was dead. Get yourself ready, for my Son is coming with his great host to speak to you!" Then he himself came and said: "Earlier, I likened myself to Moses when he was leading the people, when the water stood like a wall to right and left. I am indeed like Moses, figuratively speaking. I led the Christian people, that is, I opened heaven up for them and showed them the way to walk, freeing them from their oppressor, the devil, as though from pharaoh.

They walked, as it were, between the two walls of the sea to right and left. One of these walls no longer was not meant to proceed; the other of them was not meant to recede; yet both were to stand firmly. These two walls were the two covenants. The first was the old law, the one not meant to proceed. The second was the new law, the one that was not to recede. Between these two, firmly standing walls, I went to the cross as though through the Red Sea, for my whole body was made red with my blood, and red was the once white wood, red the lance. I redeemed my captive people in order to win their love.

Now, however, Israel, that is, the priests, neglect me, and they select another god to love. In their passion for the world, as I said before, they love the golden calf. It becomes desirable to them because of their lust and burns in them because of their passions, standing strong on its feet with its head and throat of gluttony. Besides that, they treat me like an idol and lock me in so that I cannot go. They offer incense to me, yet do not please me by it, because they are not doing it for my sake but for themselves. They bend their knee of voluntary obedience to me only as it suits their desires, in order that I may

buy them some temporal gain. They call out to me, but my ears do not hear them, because it is not from devotion, and they do not really mean it.

Hear me, my heavenly host and all my angels! I chose priests in preference to all the angels and other righteous people. To them alone I gave the power of handling my body. If I had liked, I could have chosen an angel for such an office. Instead, I had so much love for my priests that I granted them this great honor, and I appointed them to stand before me in as it were in seven ranks. They should be as patient as sheep, as steadfast as a solidly based wall, as courageous as soldiers, as wise as serpents, as modest as a virgin, as pure as an angel, as burning with longing as a bride for the marriage bed of her groom.

Now, however, they have turned from me in the worst way. They are as wild as predatory wolves that yield to none in their hunger and covetousness, that give honor to none, that have no shame. Second, they are as unsteady as a stone in a weak wall. They lack confidence in their base, that is, in God, in his ability to give them what they need and in his desire to sustain them. Third, like thieves walking in the dark, they find themselves in the darkness of vice. They do not have the daring of soldiers to fight for the glory of God or to undertake a manly task. Fourth, they stand about like asses with their heads to the ground, so stupid and foolish, always thinking about earthly and present conditions and never about what is to come. Fifth, they are as immodest as whores and approach me dressed like whores, keeping their bodies for lustful indulgence. Sixth, they are hideously stained with tar; everyone who comes close to them gets dirty. Seventh, they are as disgusting as vomit. It would be milder and better for me to approach vomit than to spend my pleasure with them. They are so disgusting that the whole heavenly host is disgusted with them. What would be more repulsive than a naked man bringing his mouth down to his lower limbs and eating his own excrement and drinking his own urine? That is how repulsive they are in my sight.

When they clothe themselves in priestly vestments, which can be compared to the clothing of the soul, for those vestments denote how the soul should be, then they clothe themselves as genuine traitors. When a man who has given his pledge to the enemy of his lord has to fight together with his lord against that enemy, he blunts his weapons so as not to injure him. In the same way, when these men clothe themselves in priestly vestments, which are the clothing of the soul, figuratively speaking, with which they

should protect themselves against the devil, they keep everything blunted so as not to injure the devil and so that he need not fear them.

One might ask: How does that happen? Well, when they clothe themselves with the weapons of continence, they blunt them through lust and thus do not vex the devil. When they clothe themselves with the weapons of charity, the weapons do no harm, because they have been blunted through malice. The weapons, that is, the vestments, in which they clothe themselves, are not for their Lord's protection but are only for show, just like traitors who act in one way but put on a different appearance.

O my friends, thus do these accursed, dissembling priests approach me like traitors. Yet I come to them all the same, I who am your God and the God of every creature in heaven and on earth, and I lie there before them on the altar, true God and true man. As soon as they have pronounced those words 'This is my body,' I come to them like a bridegroom to share the delight of my divine nature with them, but I encounter the devil in them. So when they put me to their mouths, I take my divine and human natures and go away, and the devil, who had fled in terror at the presence of the Lord, returns then with pleasure.

Hear again, my friends, what dignity I conferred upon priests, beyond that of the angels and other men. I gave them five privileges. First, the power of binding and loosing in heaven and on earth. Second, I gave them the ability to turn my worst enemy into a friend, a devil into an angel of mine. Third, I gave them the power of preaching my words. Fourth, the power of consecrating and offering my body, something that none of the angels can do. Fifth, the privilege of handling my body, something that none of you would dare to do, if I were lying before you.

I make five accusations against them now. First, that they open hell and close heaven to those trying to enter. Second, that they make an enemy out of a friend and deal two wounds to the person coming to them with only one, who sees the shameful life of priests and thinks to himself: 'If he can do it, even more so can I.' Third, they make nothing of my words and assert their own lies while denying my truth. Fourth, they sell me with their lips, though they should be sanctifying me. Fifth, they crucify my body more painfully than the Jews did.

My friends, see how those whom I have chosen and loved so much repay me. I joined them to myself with my own body, and they dissolve the bond between us. This is why they shall be sentenced as traitors and not as priests, unless they reform themselves.”

Christ says that he has given more honor to priests than to all the angels and other men, but that they provoke him more than all the others. Their damnation is illustrated in the soul of one priest eternally damned.

Chapter 134

Mary said: "Remember my Son's passion! He is coming now." And there appeared St. John the Baptist who said to the Blessed Virgin Mary: "God's anger at the world has not been so great for a thousand years." When the Son came, he said to the bride: "To me it is but an hour from the beginning, and how much time is that to you? All this time is to me but as a single hour. Regarding priests, I told you before that I chose them from among all angels and men, yet now they are more vexing to me than any others." Then there appeared demons carrying a soul in their hands. They said to the Judge: "Behold the warrior!" The Judge answered: "Though corporal beings cannot hear things of the spirit nor can the corporal eye see spiritual beings, yet for the sake of this woman standing here, the eyes of whose understanding I am opening, tell us, by what right do you own this soul?"

They answered: "We possess him by nine rights or, rather, transgressions. First, he was beneath us in three ways, equal to us in three ways, above us in three ways. Our first right to him lies in the fact that he was good on the outside but bad within. The second is that he was at times full of covetousness and gluttony but at other times fasted only for the good of the body or because of illness. Third, at times he was severe in word and deed, but at other times his wicked severity was suppressed for the sake of some advantage to himself. We do not have these defects, for we are on the outside just what we are within, and we are always wickedly severe and always equally covetous of evil.

He was our peer in three ways, inasmuch as we fell through the three sins of pride, covetousness, and envy, and he has these three himself. He was above and surpassed us in wickedness in three ways, as being a priest who handled your body. The first was that he did not guard his mouth with which he was to proclaim your words. Instead, like a barking dog, he barked out your words. When he proclaimed your words, we felt the same kind of fear as someone hearing some terrible sound, and we fled from him in terror at once. However, he stayed on without any fear or shame. Second, he did not guard his hands with which he handled your most pure body, but stained them in every kind of pleasure. Whenever he handled your body, which was the same body as that in the Virgin's womb and on the cross, after the words of consecration had been spoken, then we felt the same kind of fear as a man whose whole body is convulsed with fear, though our motive was not divine charity but fear at your power and your great might. He, however, stood there unafraid and did not care. When he put you to his mouth, which was like a filthy dirty vessel, we were like men who had lost all their might, like one lacking all strength, dead from fear even though we are immortal. Yet he felt no fear and did not tremble to touch you. However, since it was not fitting that the Lord of majesty should enter into so shameful a vessel, you would take your divine and human natures and leave him, and he would remain alone, and we, who fled in fear each and every time, would return to him in a fury.

In all these ways he excelled us in evil, and this is why we rightfully own him. Therefore, since you are the just Judge, render judgment for us concerning him." The Judge answered: "I hear your demands, but you, wretched soul, while this woman is present, tell us what intention you had at the end of your life, while you still had the use of reason and bodily strength."

The soul answered: "My intention was to sin unceasingly and never desist. However, because I knew that I would not live forever, I decided to sin up until the very last moment and that was my intention when I was separated from my body." Then the Judge said: "Your conscience is your judge. Therefore, say in conscience what sentence you deserve!" The soul answered: "My sentence is the most bitter, wretched suffering to endure without end and with no mercy." Then the devils went off with the soul after hearing his sentence.

Then the Lord said to the bride: "My bride, see how priests treat me! I chose them from among all the angels and other men, and honored them above them all. However, they provoke me more than all the Jews and Gentiles and more than all the demons."

Christ shows how much kindness he has shown to priests. Yet they, as ungrateful as an adulterous bride, scorn Christ and love three other lovers, namely, the world, the flesh, and the devil. He demonstrates this with the example of a priest who had recently died and was eternally damned.

Chapter 135

"I am like a bridegroom who leads his bride lovingly into his home. Thus did I join priests to myself with my own body, so that they might be in me and I in them. However, they respond to me like an adulteress to her bridegroom: 'Your words displease me. Your wealth is meaningless. Your desire is like poison. There are three others I prefer to love and follow.' Her gentle husband answered: 'My bride, listen to me, wait a little longer, for your words should be my words, your will my will, your wealth my wealth, your desire my desire!' However, she was not at all willing to listen but went off to those other three. When she had gone far enough off so that the bridegroom could no longer be seen, the first of them, that is, the world, said: 'Here the road divides and I can no longer accompany her, so I want to have all her wealth.' The second, that is, the body, said: 'I am mortal and will become food for worms. She, however, is immortal, so I will leave her here.' The third, that is, the devil, said: 'I am immortal and endure forever. Because she did not want to stay with her man, she will follow me forever.'

This is how these accursed priests treat me. They should be my limbs and be as outstanding among others as a finger on the hand, but they are worse than the devil. So, they will sink down lower in hell than all the devils, unless they reform themselves. I call to them like a bridegroom. I do all I can for them, but the more I call, the farther off they go. My words displease them; my wealth is a burden; they detest my sweet words like poison. I run after them, warning them like a kind father. I show them the forbearance of

a gentle lord. I coax them with gifts like a good bridegroom. However, the more I call, the more they turn away from me. They love their three friends more than me, the world and the body, and the third, the devil, who will take them in and never let them go. Woe to them, that they ever became priests and the limbs of my body!

That priest who died recently possessed three qualities. First, he had pride, for he dressed like a bishop. Second, he was celebrated for his wisdom. Third, he inclined his will to whatever he wanted and to whatever was pleasing to his body. He practiced fasting for the sake of bodily health, and did whatever pleased his body, not what was according to my will. But what good has it done him now? As a reward for his pride, he stands before me like a man broken in two, stinking, covered with wounds and broken skin. Because of his celebrity, he stands forgotten before me, and he will be forgotten by men. As a reward for his self-will, worms will take over his body, and demons will torture his soul without end.

Look at what the wretches love and how they act! Where are his friends, where are his possessions, his honor and glory? In return for them all, he will now have everlasting shame. They purchase something small, worldly honor, and they lose something great, eternal joy. Alas for such as these, woe to them that they were ever born! They sink deeper into hell than anyone else.”

The pious handmaid of Christ, Lady Bridget of blessed memory, received the following revelations in a divinely inspired vision while she was at prayer. They are addressed to the Roman pontiffs Clement VI, Innocent VI, Urban V, and Gregory XI. They deal with the return of the Apostolic See and the Roman Curia to Rome and the reformation of the church by command of almighty God. Two years before the Jubilee Year, Christ gives the bride the words contained here and orders her to send them to Pope Clement in order that he should establish peace between the kings of France and England and come to Italy and proclaim the Jubilee Year. The Reverend Lord Hemming, bishop of Åbo, and Brother Peter, prior of the Cistercian monastery of Alvastra in the kingdom of Sweden.

Chapter 136

The Son of God speaks to the bride, saying: "Write these words from me to Pope Clement: I exalted you and let you ascend through all the ranks of honor. Rise up and establish peace between the kings of France and England, who are like dangerous beasts, betrayers of souls. Then come to Italy and preach the word there and proclaim a year of salvation and divine love! Look on the streets paved with the blood of my saints, and I shall give you an everlasting reward. Think of times past when you had the audacity to provoke my anger, and I kept silent, when you did what you wanted and what you should not have done, and I was patient, as though I did not hear.

Indeed, my time approaches, and I shall require an account of you for the negligence and audacity of your time. In the same way as I let you ascend through the ranks, you will descend through other ranks that you will truly experience in soul and body, unless you obey my words. Your grandiloquent tongue will be silent. The name by which you are called on earth will be held in oblivion and reproach before me and my saints. I shall also require an account of you as to how unworthily you rose through the ranks, though it was with my permission, which I, God, know better than your negligent conscience can recall.

I shall seek an account from you with regard to your lukewarmness in reestablishing peace between the kings and your preferential treatment of one of the two parties. Moreover, it shall not be forgotten how greed and ambition flourished and increased in the church during your time, or that you could have reformed and set many things right but that you, lover of the flesh, were unwilling. Get up, therefore, before your fast approaching final hour arrives, and extinguish the negligence of your past by being zealous in your nearly final hour! If you are in doubt about to which spirit these words belong, that kingdom and that person are well known in which amazement and wonders have been wrought.

The justice and mercy of which I speak are drawing near everywhere on earth. Your own conscience tells you that my exhortation is rational and my proposal charitable. Had you not been saved by my patience, you should have descended lower than all your

predecessors. Examine, then, the book of your conscience and see if I am telling the truth!”

Christ's words to the bride making mention of Pope Innocent the sixth who was pope after Clement.

The Son speaks to the bride and says: ”This Pope Innocent is of better metal than his predecessor and is a fit canvas to receive the finest colors. However, the wickedness of humankind demands that he should soon be taken from their midst. His good intention will be taken into account for his greater reward and glorification. Nevertheless, if he listens to my words given to you and written down in books, he will become better, and those who bring those words to him will receive a more lofty reward.”

A revelation touching on Pope Urban, received by the bride of Christ in Rome and concerning the confirmation of the Rule of the Holy Savior and the indulgences of St. Peter in Chains granted by Christ to the cloister of the Blessed Virgin in Vadstena.

Chapter 137

The Son of God speaks to the bride: ”A person who has a ball of yarn containing fine gold inside does not stop unwinding it until he finds the gold. Once it is found, the owner uses it for his own comfort and honor. This Pope Urban is gold that is malleable for good ends but is surrounded by worldly cares. Go, therefore, and tell him this from me: Your time is short. Rise up and consider how the souls entrusted to you can obtain salvation. I gave you as coming from my very own lips the rule of an order that should be founded and begun in Vadstena, Sweden.

Now I want you not only to confirm it by your authority but also to give it the strength of your blessing, for you are my vicar on earth. I dictated it and endowed it with a spiritual endowment by granting it the indulgences attracted to the Roman church of St. Peter in Chains. Approve, therefore, in the sight of men that which has been sanctioned in the sight of my heavenly host. If you seek a sign that it is I who am saying this, I have already showed you that, when you first heard my words, your soul was

spiritually comforted at the coming of my messenger. If you seek a further sign, none shall be given you but that of the prophet Jonah.

You, my bride, to whom I showed this grace, if you cannot get the letter and favor of the pope and his seal upon the concession of the indulgences without payment in advance, my blessing is enough for you. I shall approve and confirm my words and all the saints shall be your witnesses, and let my Mother be your seal, my Father your guarantor, and the Holy Spirit the comforter of those who come to your cloister.”

This is a revelation that the bride of Christ received in Rome concerning the same Pope Urban before his return to Avignon in the year of the Lord 1370. She presented it to him herself in Montefiascone.

Chapter 138

While the aforesaid person was at prayer during a night vigil, it appeared to her as if a voice came to her out of a ring of splendor like the sun. The voice spoke the following words to her. ”I am the Mother of God, because thus it was pleasing to him. I am also the Mother of all those who live in heavenly joy. Even though infant babies get what they need as they wish, still their joy grows with an increase of happiness when they see their mother's gentle face. So it pleases God to give all those in the heavenly court the joy and exultation of the purity of my virginity and the beauty of my virtues, even though they possess every good thing through the divine power in an incomprehensible way. I am also the Mother of all those in purgatory, for all the pains they must suffer for the purification of their sins are in some way mitigated because of my prayers at any time. Thus it pleases God to decrease some of the punishments due them according to the strictness of divine justice.

I am also the Mother of all the justice that is in the world - the justice my Son loved with a most perfect love. As a motherly hand is always ready to ward off dangers in defense of her child's heart should someone try to injure it, so too I am constantly ready to defend just people in the world and free them from every spiritual danger. I am also

like a mother to all sinners who want to reform and have the intention of not sinning anymore against God. I am willing to take such a sinner into my protection, just like a loving mother who sees her naked son encountering enemies armed with sharp swords. Does she not then bravely step in the way of danger to free her son from the hands of his enemies and snatch him away and hold him joyfully in her arms? This is what I do and what I shall do for all sinners who pray for my Son's mercy with true contrition and love for God.

Listen and pay close attention to what I want to tell you concerning two sons of mine whose names I will mention to you. The first one I mean is my Son Jesus Christ, who was born from my virginal flesh in order to manifest his love and redeem souls. Accordingly, he did not spare his body toil and bloodshed or disdain to hear insults and endure the pain of his death. He is God himself, almighty in eternal happiness. The second whom I count as my son is he who occupies the papal See, God's see in the world, provided he obeys God's precepts and loves him with perfect charity.

Now I want to say something about this pope named Urban. Thanks to my prayers, he received the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that he should go back to Rome and Italy for no other purpose than to carry out mercy and justice, strengthen the catholic faith, reestablish the peace and, in this way, renew the Holy Church. As a mother carries her child to the place she likes before uncovering her breasts for him, so I led Pope Urban by my prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit from Avignon to Rome without any physical danger whatever. What did he do to me? He turns his back on me rather than face me, and he intends to go away from me. An evil spirit has brought him to this by deceiving him. He is weary of his divine work and wants his own physical comfort. Moreover, the devil is attracting him with worldly pleasure, for he longs too much for his native country after worldly fashion. Likewise, he is led on by the advice of carnal-minded friends who think more of his likes and pleasure than he does of God's likes and glory and the good and salvation of his soul.

If it does happen that he returns to the country where he was elected pope, within a short time he shall be struck with a blow that will knock his teeth out. His sight will become cloudy and darkened, and he will tremble in every limb of his body. The fire of the Holy Spirit will gradually cool in him and depart, and the prayers of all the friends of

God, who had decided to pray for him with tearful sighs, will grow sluggish, and their hearts will grow cold to his love. He will render an account concerning two things before God: first, what he did while occupying the papal See; second, what he omitted among the things he could have done for the glory of God by means of his great authority.”

The following is the first revelation sent to Pope Gregory XI through his Lordship Latinus Orsini.

Chapter 139

A person, who was watching in vigil, not sleeping but persevering in prayer, was carried off in spirit. At that moment, all the strength of her body seemed to fail, but her heart was inflamed and felt the exultation of burning love. Her soul was consoled, while her spirit was comforted with divine strength, and her whole conscience was filled with spiritual understanding.

The following vision occurred to this person. She heard a sweet-sounding voice speaking to her as follows: ”I am she who gave birth to God's Son, true God, Jesus Christ. I told you some things previously that were to be announced to Pope Urban. Now I am giving you a message to send to Pope Gregory. However, in order that it may be better understood, I will tell you it by means of a parable. If a loving mother saw her own beloved son lying naked and cold on the ground, having no strength to raise himself up, but, from a longing for her motherly attention and milk, wailing and weeping with mournful sounds, she would then quickly run to her son with tender love and compassion and lift him up off the ground with her kind, motherly hands, caressing him gently and warming him soothingly with the motherly warmth of her bosom, and she would feed him sweetly with the milk of her breasts.

This is how I, the Mother of mercy, will treat Pope Gregory, if he would only return to Rome and Italy with a mind to stay there and with the good shepherd's intention of bewailing with sighful tears the eternal loss and damnation of the souls of the sheep entrusted to him, and if he would decide to renew the state of the church with humility

and due pastoral charity.

Then, indeed, like a loving mother, I will lift him up off the ground as a cold and naked son, that is, I will take him and his whole heart away from all the earthly desire and worldly love that go against God's will, and I shall warm him sweetly with motherly warmth, that is, with the love in my bosom. I will fill him with my milk, that is, with my prayer, which is like milk. O, how countless are those who are sustained and sweetly sated with the milk of my prayer! I will sate him with the milk of the prayers I pray for him to my Lord and God, who is my Son, so that he may deign to share and unite his Holy Spirit with the inner blood of the heart of Pope Gregory. He will then be sated with a true and perfect satiety to such an extent that he will no longer want to live for anything else in this world than to add to God's glory with all his might.

See, I have now shown him the motherly love with which I will treat him, if he obeys, because it is God's will, and transfers his see to Rome with humility. Now again, in order that he may not later use ignorance as an excuse, I caution him with a mother's love and tell him what will follow if he is not obedient to what has been said. Without a doubt, he will feel the rod of justice, that is, the anger of my Son. His life will be cut short, and he will be called to God's judgment. No might of worldly lords will then help him, nor will the wisdom and knowledge of medical doctors avail him, nor will the fresh air of his native country do him any good for the prolongation of his life.”

This means that if he comes to Rome and does not carry out the aforesaid things, his life will be cut short, and medical doctors will not do him any good nor will he return to Avignon where the air of his native country might be of benefit to him. Rather, he will die.

Note the following four instructions to the pope: that he should come to Rome with humility, that he should have a mind to stay, that he should bewail the perdition of souls, that he should try to renew the church, etc. If he does not do all these things, his life will be cut short, as stated above after the words "Now again." Thus, it is not enough for the pope merely to come to Rome, but he must carry out all four of the instructions above. Here follows the second vision brought by his Lordship De Nola to

the same Pope Gregory XI.

Chapter 140

Praise and service to God for all his love, honor to the most holy and dear Virgin Mary, his Mother, for the compassion she shows to all those whom her Son has redeemed with his precious blood! Holy Father, it happened to a person well known to you that, while she continued in a vigil of prayer, she felt her heart to be all aflame through the fire of divine charity and the visitation of the Holy Spirit.

This person heard a voice saying to her: "Hear, you who see spiritual visions, and speak what you are now taught, and write the words you now hear to the Roman pontiff Gregory. I who now speak to you am the one whom it pleased God to choose as his Mother, and so he took his human body from my flesh. My Son did a great work of mercy for Pope Gregory when he had me explain to you his most holy will, which I intimated more fully to him when it was transmitted to him in the earlier revelation. This work was done more because of the prayers and tears of God's friends than of any earlier merit on his part.

The devil, his enemy, and I fought a great battle over him. I admonished the same Pope Gregory in the other letter to hasten with humility and divine charity to Rome or Italy and there establish his See and altogether to remain there until his death. However, the devil and the pope's other advisors counseled him to delay and to stay on in the regions where he is as yet, being motivated by earthly affections and the mundane delight and solace of his natural relatives and friends. So the devil now has a greater right and opportunity to tempt him, since he chose to obey the advice of the devil and his worldly friends rather than God's and my own will.

It is true that the pope wants to be ascertained of God's will still further. Therefore, it is right that his desire be fulfilled. He shall know it with certainty to be God's will that he himself should come without any delay to Italy or Rome, and that he should make his way and altogether hasten to come with such speed that he arrives personally in the city or in the province of Italy by next March or as soon as possible, by April at the latest, that

is, if he still wants me for his mother. If he disobeys this, let him truly know that he shall never again enjoy any such consolation - any other visitation or revelation from me - in this world but shall, after his death, make an answer before the court of divine justice as to why he refused to obey God's commands. If he does obey, however, then I will fulfill what I promised in the revelation that was originally delivered to him.

I also inform the pope that there will never be a peace in France so stable and serene that its inhabitants can enjoy complete security and concord until the people of that kingdom placate God my Son by means of great works of piety and humility, having hitherto provoked him to anger and indignation at their many immoral deeds and offenses. Accordingly, he must understand that the journey of those squires from the iniquitous societies of iniquitous men, which they intend to make to the Holy Sepulcher of my Son, is no more pleasing to my Son, the true God, than the gold that the people of Israel cast into the fire out of which the devil welded the molten calf, and this is because of their pride and greed. If they intend to go to the famous Sepulcher, it is more for the sake of pride and greed for money than for the love and honor of God." At these words, the vision faded.

God's Mother later gave me the following additional message: "Tell my bishop, the hermit, to close and seal the letter. He should then make another copy of it later on another piece of paper and show this unsealed copy to the abbot, the papal nuncio, and to Count de Nola, so that they may read it and know its contents. Once they have read it, he should give them the closed and sealed letter to send to Pope Gregory without delay. However, he should not give the unsealed letter to them. Instead, I want him to tear it up and shred it to pieces before their eyes. Just as the one letter will be torn into many small pieces, so too, if the pope does not come to Italy at the appointed time and year, the lands of the church, which now obey him in united obedience and submission, will be divided in many parts at the hands of tyrants.

Know most assuredly that, by the increase of this very pope's trials, he will not only hear but also see with his own eyes that what I say is true. Not even with all the authority of his hand will he be able to return those lands of the church to their earlier state of obedience and peace. What I am telling you now is not to be said or written to that abbot, for the seed lies hidden in the earth until it brings forth grain."

A revelation for the same pope given to the bride in Naples when she had returned from Jerusalem. She did not send this revelation to the pope, because no divine command was given to her.

Chapter 141

Christ appeared to Lady Bridget while she was praying for Pope Gregory XI. He said to her: "Listen carefully, my daughter, to what I tell you. Understand that this Pope Gregory is like a paralytic who cannot use his hands for working or his feet for walking. The disease of paralysis is produced by corrupt blood and humor and by cold. In the same way, an immoderate love of his own blood and the coldness of his tepid mind toward me keep this pope encumbered, as it were. Understand, however, that, by the help of the Virgin Mary, my Mother, he is already beginning to move his hands and feet, that is, to act after my will and for my honor by coming to Rome. Be thus assured that he will come to Rome and initiate the way to future good there but will not finish it."

Lady Bridget then answered: "The Lord, my God, the queen of Naples and many others tell me that it is impossible for him to come to Rome, because the king of France and the cardinals and others are putting as many obstacles as they can in his way. I have heard that many people have arisen there saying that they have God's Spirit and receive divine revelations and visions that they use as a pretext to dissuade him from coming. Therefore I am very much afraid that his coming will be prevented."

God answered: "You have heard it read about how Jeremiah lived in Israel in those days and had God's Spirit for prophecy, and how there were many at the time who had the spirit of dreams and lies. The wicked king put his trust in them, which is why both the king himself and his people fell into captivity. If the king had put his trust in Jeremiah alone, my anger would have been withdrawn from him. So it is now as well. Sages arise or dreamers or friends not of the spirit but of the flesh, and they use their persuasion on Pope Gregory and dissuade him from the opposite course of action. Nevertheless, I, the Lord, shall still prevail over them and bring the pope to Rome against their

encouragement. However, whether you will see him come or not, that is not permitted for you to know.”

A revelation for the same Pope Gregory given to the bride in Naples and delivered to him by a hermit who had renounced the episcopacy.

Chapter 142

Holy Father, that person whom Your Holiness knows well was praying in vigil when she fell into a spiritual rapture and fell into contemplation. She saw in spirit the likeness of a throne on which was seated the likeness of a man of inestimable beauty, a lord of unfathomable might. A great multitude of saints and a countless host of angels stood around the throne. A bishop dressed in pontifical regalia stood at some distance before the throne.

The lord who was seated on the throne spoke to me and said: ”All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me by my Father. Although I seem to be speaking to you with one mouth, I do not speak alone, for the Father and the Holy Spirit speak with me. We three persons are one in the substance of the divinity.”

Then he addressed the bishop and said: ”Listen, Pope Gregory, to the eleven points I say to you, and attend carefully to what I tell you! Why do you hate me so? For what reason is your audacity and presumption so great against me? Your worldly court is plundering my heavenly court. In your pride you are robbing me of my sheep. You unjustly extort and filch the ecclesiastical property that belongs to me as well as the possessions of the subjects of my church, and you give them to your temporal friends. You snatch and unjustly receive goods from my poor and distribute them dishonorably to your rich. Accordingly, your audacity and presumption are exceedingly great, for you enter into my court so rashly and show no consideration for what is mine.

What have I done to you, Gregory? I patiently allowed you to rise to the pontificate. I explained my will to you beforehand by means of letters transmitted to you by divine

revelation from Rome. I admonished you through them for the sake of your soul's salvation, and I warned you in them about your great losses. How have you repaid me for all these benefits? What are you doing about the fact that great pride rules in your court, and insatiable greed and detestable luxury and even the evil ruin of horrible simony?

Furthermore, you are stealing and plundering countless souls away from me. You cast into the fire of Gehenna nearly all those who come to your court, simply because you do not take diligent care of the things pertaining to my court, though you are the prelate and shepherd of my sheep. It is therefore your fault, because you do not prudently consider what must be done or corrected for their spiritual salvation.

Though I could justly condemn you for all the aforesaid, yet I am again admonishing you out of mercy for the salvation of your soul to come to your see in Rome as soon as you can. I leave the time up to you. Know that the more you delay, the greater will be the decrease in your spiritual and moral development. The sooner you come to Rome, the sooner you will experience an increase of virtue and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the more you will be inflamed with the divine fire of my love. Come, then, and do not delay! Come not with your customary pride and worldly pomp, but with all humility and ardent love!

As soon as you have thus come, uproot, pluck out and destroy all the vices of your court! Separate yourself from the counsel of carnal-minded and worldly friends and follow humbly the spiritual counsel of my friends. Approach, then, and be not afraid. Get up like a man and clothe yourself confidently in strength!

Start to reform the church that I purchased with my own blood in order that it may be reformed and led back spiritually to its pristine state of holiness, for nowadays more veneration is shown to a brothel than to my Holy Church.

If you do not obey this my will, then you can be quite sure that you are going to be condemned by me before all my heavenly court with the same kind of sentence and spiritual justice with which one condemns and punishes a worldly prelate that is to be stripped of his rank. He is publicly divested of his sacred, pontifical garb, defeated, and accursed. He is filled with ignominy and shame. This is what I will do to you. I shall send

you away from the glory of heaven. Everything that now gives you peace and honor will then be turned into a curse and your eternal shame. Every demon in hell will snatch a piece of your soul, immortal and indestructible as it is, and you will be filled with an everlasting curse instead of a blessing. For as long as I still tolerate your disobedience, you will still prosper.

However, Gregory, my son, I admonish you again to convert to me with humility. Heed my counsel. I am your Father and Creator. If you obey me in what I told you, I will welcome you mercifully like a loving father. Bravely approach the way of justice and you shall prosper. Do not despise the one who loves you. If you obey, I will show you mercy and bless and dress you and adorn you with the precious pontifical regalia of a true pope. I shall clothe you with myself in such a way that you will be in me and I in you, and you shall be glorified in eternity.”

After this had been seen and heard, the vision faded.

The fourth revelation sent by Blessed Bridget to the pope in the month of July in the year of our Lord 1373. She wrote this to a certain hermit who had once been bishop and who was then with the pope in Avignon.

Chapter 143

Our Lord Jesus Christ told me, Reverend Bishop, to write you the following words for you to show to the pope. ”The Pope seeks a sign. Tell him that the pharisees sought a sign and that I answered them that just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and nights, so I, the Virgin's Son, was dead in the earth for three days and nights. After the promised sign, I, God's Son, suffered, died, and was buried and rose again and ascended into my glory. Thus, Pope Gregory has received the sign of my exhortation to save souls. Let him do with deeds what belongs to my honor. Let him struggle to save souls and return my church to its pristine state and to a better condition. Then he will experience the sign and reward of eternal consolation. He will also have a second sign. If he does not obey my words and come to Italy, he will lose not only temporal goods but also spiritual ones, and he will feel troubled at heart so long as he lives. Though his heart

may sometimes seem to have some relief, the remorse of his conscience and his inner troubles will stay with him. The third sign is that I, God, speak miraculously to a woman. What is the purpose of this? What is the benefit of it, if not the salvation and good of souls and the reformation of the wicked and the improvement of the good?

Concerning the dispute between the pope and Barnabò, I answer that it is loathsome to me beyond measure, for numberless souls are in peril because of it. It is therefore my will that they should reach an agreement. Even if the pope were to be expelled from his papacy, it would be better for him to humble himself and come to an agreement, should the occasion present itself, than to allow so many souls to perish in eternal damnation. Concerning the betterment of the kingdom of France, it will not be made known until the pope himself arrives in Italy.

It is as though there were a gibbet from which hung a rope that a numberless crowd was pulling to one side while only one man was pulling it to the other. So it obviously is with the damnation of souls. A great many are working on it. This pope should gaze on me alone, though everyone else is dissuading him from coming to Rome and resisting it as much as they can. He should trust in me alone, and I will help him, and none of them will prevail over him. As chicks in a nest raise themselves up and clamor and rejoice when their mother comes, so I shall joyfully run out to meet him and raise him up and honor him in both soul and body.”

The Lord spoke again: ”Because the pope is in doubt as to whether he should come to Rome for sake of the reestablishment of the peace and of my church, I will that he should come next autumn. Let him know that he can do nothing more pleasing to me than to come to Italy.”

The vision received by the bride of Christ concerning the judgment of the soul of a deceased pope.

The bride saw a person dressed in a pontifical scapular standing in a house spattered with mud from the streets. The roof the house was almost pressing down on the person's skull. Black Ethiopians with hooks and other instruments of torture were surrounding the house but were unable to touch the said person, though they filled him with the greatest of terror.

Then I heard a voice saying to me: "This is the soul of that pope whom you knew. This house is his spiritual reward. He dealt in worldly affairs, and his reward, therefore, is not yet a shining one, not until he has been cleansed in purgatory and made brighter with spiritual prayers and God's love. The roof is pressing down upon him. This is a mystical sign, for the roof symbolizes love for God. The wider and higher it is in respect to spiritual things and divine fervor, the greater love one has. Because the love of this soul was ardent for certain worldly affairs and preferred to follow her self-will, the roof, which is bright and high in the case of God's elect, is too low for her, until it is enlarged by the blood of God's Son and the intervention of the heavenly court. The soul is dressed in a scapular. This is a sign that he was eager to follow the religious life and his vocation, but his efforts were not great enough to be an example for advanced souls or a model for the perfect.

Now, however, you are permitted to know three of the works that he did in his life on account of which he is now being punished. The first was that he was disobedient toward God and his own conscience, for which his conscience felt contrition and remorse. The second is that he gave dispensations in some cases for the sake of carnal affection due to following his own self-will. The third is that he ignored some things that he might have corrected in order not to offend those he loved. Know, however, that this soul is not in the company of those that descend into hell, nor with those that come to the more painful trials of purgatory. Instead, he finds himself with those who day by day hasten nearer to the grace and vision of the majesty of almighty God."

Book 5 "The Book of Questions"

Prologue

Book Five of the Heavenly Revelations of Christ to blessed Bridget of the kingdom of Sweden is rightly entitled the Book of Questions because it proceeds by way of questions to which Christ the Lord gives wonderful answers. It was revealed to the lady in a singular manner, as she and her confessors have often testified explicitly. Once it happened that she was going by horse one day to her castle in Vadstena along with several of her household who were also on horseback. While she was riding, she began to lift up her mind to God in prayer. Immediately, she fell into a spiritual rapture and continued on as though somehow outside herself and separated from her bodily senses, suspended in an ecstasy of mental contemplation.

She saw in spirit a ladder fixed firmly in the earth, the top of which was touching heaven. At its top in heaven she saw the Lord Jesus Christ sitting on a wonderful throne like a Judge in the act of judgment. At his feet stood the Virgin Mary, and surrounding the throne was a countless host of angels and a vast multitude of saints. Lady Bridget saw a certain monk midway up the ladder, a man whom she recognized and who was still alive, a learned scholar in the science of theology but full of guile and devilish wickedness. With his most impatient and agitated bearing he seemed more like a devil than a humble monk. For the lady could see all the inner thoughts and feelings of the monk's heart and how he disclosed them to Christ the Judge seated on the throne through his uncontrolled and agitated way of questioning, as follows below.

Lady Bridget then saw and heard in spirit how Christ the Judge, with a meek and gentle bearing, responded to those questions briefly one by one with utmost wisdom, and how the Virgin Mary, our Lady, spoke a few words now and then to Lady Bridget, as this book will explain below in greater detail.

In that one moment Lady Bridget received this whole book in her mind in one and the same revelation. As she was now approaching the castle, her servants took hold of the

horse's bridle and then began to shake her gently and to waken her, as it were, from her rapture. When she came to herself again, she felt terribly sad over the loss of such divine sweetness.

The Book of Questions remained thus effectively fixed in her heart and memory, as though it had all been carved on a marble tablet. She wrote it down in her own language straightaway, and then her confessor translated it into the literary language, just as he had been accustomed to translating the other books of revelations.

Interrogation 1

I saw a throne in heaven on which sat the Lord Jesus Christ as Judge. At his feet sat the Virgin Mary. Surrounding the throne was a host of angels and a countless multitude of saints. A certain monk, a great scholar of theology, stood high up on a rung of a ladder that was fixed in the earth and whose top reached up to heaven. With an impatient and agitated bearing, as though full of wickedness and guile, he put questions to the Judge:

First question. "O Judge, I ask you: You gave me a mouth. May I not say what I please?"

Second question. "You gave me eyes. May I not look at what I like with them?"

Third question. "You gave me ears. Why should I not listen to what I please with them?"

Fourth question. "You gave me hands. Why should I not do what I want with them?"

Fifth question. "You gave me feet. Why should I not walk where I wish with them?"

Christ's answer to the first question. Seated on the throne, the Judge, whose bearing was meek and gentle, answered him, saying: "Friend, I gave you a mouth in order rationally to speak words beneficial to your soul and body as well as words for my glory."

Answer to the second question. "Second, I gave you eyes that you might see the evils you must flee and the healthful things you must preserve."

Answer to the third question. "Third, I gave you ears that you might hear that which pertains to truth and goodness."

Answer to the fourth question. "Fourth, I gave you hands that you might use them to do that which is necessary for the body but not harmful for the soul."

Answer to the fifth question. "Fifth, I gave you feet that you might leave behind the love of the world and go toward your soul's rest and love and toward me, your Creator and Redeemer."

Interrogation 2

First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before, saying: "O Christ the Judge, you bore the most painful suffering by your own free will. Why then should I not possess honor and be proud in the world?"

Second question. "You gave me temporal goods. Why then should I not own what I want?"

Third question. "Why did you give me the limbs of my body, if I may not move and exercise them at will?"

Fourth question. "Why did you give law and justice if not for seeking revenge?"

Fifth question. "You let us have quiet and rest, but why did you arrange for us to experience weariness and tribulation?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, human pride is so long

endured as to exalt humility and show forth my goodness. And since pride was not created by me but invented by the devil, it must be shunned, because it leads to hell. But humility must be kept, because it leads to heaven. I, God, taught this by my word and example.”

Answer to the second question. ”I have given and conceded temporal goods to people in order that they might make rational use of them and exchange created goods for something uncreated, that is, for me, their Lord and Creator, by praising and honoring me for my good creation and by not living in accordance with the desires of the flesh.”

Answer to the third question. ”A person is given the limbs of the body in order that the soul might see in them a certain likeness of the virtues and so that they might be the soul's instruments for duty and virtue.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”Justice and law were indeed established by me so that they might be fulfilled with supernatural charity and compassion and so that godly unity and harmony might be cemented among humans.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”I gave people bodily rest and quiet in order to strengthen the weakness of the flesh and to endow the soul with fortitude and virtue. But because the flesh sometimes grows thoughtlessly insolent, one must cheerfully endure tribulations and all other such corrective measures.”

Interrogation 3

First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: ”O Judge, I ask you: Why did you give us the bodily senses, if we are not to move and live according to carnal feelings?”

Second question. ”And why did you give us the means of carnal sustenance, such as food and other delectable things, if we are not to live in order to sate the carnal appetite?”

Third question. "Why did you give us free will, if we are not to follow our own wishes?"

Fourth question. "Why did you give men and women the seed of intercourse and a sexual nature, if the seed is not to be spilled according to the carnal appetite?"

Fifth question. "Why did you give us a heart and a will, if not to choose that which tastes sweetest and to love the more enjoyable delights?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, I gave humans sense and understanding in order that they might meditate on and imitate the ways of life and shun the ways of death."

Answer to the second question. "I gave food and other carnal necessities for the moderate sustenance of the body and so that people might exercise the virtues of the soul with greater strength without growing weak from excessive consumption."

Answer to the third question. "I gave humans free will so that they might give up their own will for me, their God, and thus obtain a greater reward."

Answer to the fourth question. "I gave them the seed of intercourse so that it might germinate at the right place and in the right way and bear fruit for a just and rational cause."

Answer to the fifth question. "I gave humans a heart so that they might keep within it me, their God, who am everywhere and incomprehensible, and so that the thought of me should be their delight."

The first revelation in the Book of Questions made to Lady Bridget by the Virgin Mary, in which the Virgin Mary informs her of five virtues that she ought to have within herself and of five others without.

Revelation 1

The Mother speaks: "Daughter, you should have five attributes within you and five without. First without: a mouth pure from backbiting, ears closed to vain speech, chaste eyes, hands busy with good works, and the avoidance of dealings with the world. Within you should have these five: loving God fervently, desiring him wisely, distributing temporal goods reasonably with a just and upright intention, fleeing from the world humbly, and awaiting my promises steadfastly and patiently."

Interrogation 4

First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: "O Judge, why should I seek the wisdom of God when I have the wisdom of the world?"

Second question. "Why should I mourn and weep when I have worldly joy and honor in plenty?"

Third question. "Tell me: why or in what way should I rejoice in the affliction of the flesh?"

Fourth question. "Why should I be afraid, when I have the strength of my own power?"

Fifth question. "Why should I obey others, if I have control over my own will?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, whoever is wise concerning the world is blind concerning me, his God. Therefore, in order to obtain my divine wisdom, one must seek it diligently and humbly."

Answer to the second question. "Whoever has worldly honors and joy is troubled by various cares and gets entangled in bitter situations that lead to hell. In order not to be

turned aside from heaven's way, one must be piously solicitous and pray and weep.”

Answer to the third question. ”It is also very profitable to rejoice in the affliction and infirmity of the body, because my mercy comes to those who are afflicted in body, and by my mercy they approach eternal life more easily.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”Furthermore, whosoever is strong is strong because of me, and I am stronger than he. Therefore one must be ever fearful lest strength be taken away.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”Whosoever holds his free choice in his hands should be fearful and should realize in truth that nothing so easily leads to eternal punishment as self-will without a leader. Accordingly, anyone who relinquishes his or her own will to me, his God, in obedience to me, shall have heaven without punishment.”

Interrogation 5

First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: ”O Judge, why did you create worms that are harmful and useless?”

Second question. ”Why did you create wild beasts that are also harmful to humankind?”

Third question. ”Why do you let sickness and pain into bodies?”

Fourth question. ”Why do you endure the wickedness of wicked judges who scourge and harass their underlings like purchased slaves?”

Fifth question. ”Why is the human body afflicted even at the point of death?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: ”Friend, as God and Judge I have created heaven and earth and all that are in them, and yet nothing without cause nor

without some likeness to spiritual things. Just as the souls of holy people resemble the holy angels who live and are happy, so too the souls of the unrighteous become like the demons who are eternally dying. Therefore, since you asked why I created worms, I answer you that I created them in order to show forth the manifold power of my wisdom and goodness. For, although they can be harmful, nevertheless they do no harm without my permission and only when sin demands it, so that man, who scorns to submit to his superior, may bemoan his capacity to be afflicted by lesser creatures, and also in order that he may know himself to be nothing without me - whom even the irrational creatures serve and they all stand at my beck and call.”

Answer to the second question. ”As to why I created wild beasts, I answer: All things that I have created are not only good but very good and have been created either for the use or trial of humankind or for the use of other creatures and in order that humans might so much the more humbly serve their God inasmuch as they are more blessed than all the rest. However, beasts do harm in the temporal world for a twofold reason. First, so that the wicked may be corrected and beware, and so that wicked people might come to understand through their torments that they must obey me, their superior. Second, they also do harm to good people with a view to their advancement in virtue and for their purification. And because the human race rebelled against me, their God, through sin, all those creatures that had been subject to humans have consequently rebelled against them.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why sickness comes upon the body, I answer that this happens both as a strong warning and because of the vice of incontinence and excess, in order that people may learn spiritual moderation and patience by restraining the flesh.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why wicked judges are tolerated, this is for the purification of others and also because of my patience, in order that, just as gold is purified by fire, so too, by the evil of scoundrels, souls may be purified and instructed and held back from doing what they should not do. Furthermore, I patiently tolerate the wicked so as to separate the devil's chaff from the wheat of the good, and in order to fulfill their wishes according to my hidden, divine justice.”

Answer to the fifth question. "As to why the body suffers pain in death, it is just that a person should be punished by means of that in which she or he has sinned. If she sins through inordinate lust, it is right for her to be punished with proportionate bitterness and pain. For that reason, death begins for some people on earth and will last without end in hell, while death ends for others in purgatory and everlasting joy commences."

The second revelation in the Book of Questions, in which the Virgin Mary speaks to blessed Bridget and tells her that a person who wishes to taste divine sweetness must first endure bitterness.

Revelation 2

The Mother speaks: "Which of the saints had the sweetness of the Spirit without first experiencing bitterness? Therefore, a person who longs for sweetness should not run away from things that are bitter."

Interrogation 6

First question. Again he appeared on his ladder as before, saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why does one infant emerge alive from the mother's womb and obtain baptism, while another, having received a soul, dies in the mother's belly?"

Second question. "Why do many setbacks occur to a righteous person, while an unrighteous gets everything he or she wishes?"

Third question. "Why do disease, hunger, and other bodily afflictions occur?"

Fourth question. "Why does death come so unexpectedly that it can very rarely be foreseen?"

Fifth question. "Why do you allow men full of deliberate wrath and envy to go to war in a spirit of vengeance?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, your inquiries are not made out of love but are made through my permission. So I answer you through the likeness of words. You ask why one infant dies in the mother's belly while another emerges alive. There is a reason. All the strength of the child's body comes, of course, from the seed of its father and mother; however, if it is conceived without due strength, because of some weakness of its father or mother, it dies quickly. As a result of the negligence or carelessness of the parents as well as of my divine justice, many times it happens that what was joined together comes apart quickly.

Yet a soul is not brought to the harshest punishment for this reason, however little time it had for giving life to the body, but, rather, it comes to the mercy that is known to me. Just as the sun shining into a house is not seen as it is in its beauty - only those who look into the sky see its rays - so too the souls of such children, though they do not see my face for lack of baptism, are nevertheless closer to my mercy than to punishment, but not in the same way as my elect."

Answer to the second question. "As to why do setbacks occur to the righteous, I answer: My righteousness is such that each righteous person obtains what he or she desires. However, that person is not righteous who does not desire to suffer setbacks for the sake of obedience and for the perfection of righteousness, and who does not do good deeds for his or her neighbor in godly love. My friends, reflecting on the things that I, their God and Redeemer, have done and promised to them, and observing what evil there is in the world willingly pray for worldly setbacks rather than for success as an act of prudence and for the sake of my honor and their own salvation and as a precaution against sin. So I let trouble befall them. Although some people endure it less patiently than others, still I do not let it happen without a reason, and I stand by them in their trouble.

It is like a son who is chastised by a loving mother in boyhood and little knows how to thank her, since he does not understand the reason for the reproof. However, when he reaches the age of discretion he thanks his mother because, due to her disciplining him, he was led away from evil ways and grew accustomed to good manners and discipline.

I treat my chosen ones similarly. They commit their will to me and love me above all things. Then they experience troubles for a time and, although they may not fully understand my blessings at present, I am doing what is best for them in the future. On the contrary, because they do not care about righteousness and are not afraid to inflict injury on others, and because they pray for transient things and love earthly delights, the impious prosper for a time and are free from distress due to my justice so that they may not commit further sin should setbacks befall them. However, not all bad people get the things they desire, and this is in order that they may realize that it is in my power to give good things to whomever I want, even to the ungrateful, though they do not deserve it.”

Answer to third question. ”As to why disease and hunger come, I answer: It is written in the law that one who commits theft should repay more than he has taken. Since ungrateful people receive my gifts and misuse them and do not pay me my due honor, I therefore exact more bodily affliction in the present in order that their souls may be spared in the future. At times I also spare the body but punish people in and by means of that which they love, so that the person who would not acknowledge me when glad may receive knowledge indeed and understanding when afflicted.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why death comes so unexpectedly, I answer: If someone were to know the time of his or her death, he or she would serve me out of fear and would succumb out of sorrow. Accordingly, in order that people may serve me out of love and always be anxious about themselves but sure of me, the hour of their departure is uncertain, and rightly so. When humankind forsook that which was certain and true, it was needful and right for them to be afflicted by uncertainty.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to why I permit men to go to war full of wrath, I answer: Anyone who is wholly bent on harming his neighbor is like the devil and is a limb and instrument of the devil. I would do the devil wrong if I took his servant from him unjustly. Therefore, even as I make use of my instrument for whatever I please, so too it is right that the devil should act through the person who wants to be his limb rather than mine and should do what is in his right, either for the purgation of others or for the perfection of his own wickedness - yet only insofar as I permit it and as sin requires.”

Interrogation 7

First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why are the words ugly and beautiful used in the world?"

Second question. "Why must I hate the beauty of the world, seeing that I am beautiful and of noble ancestry?"

Third question. "Why should I not exalt myself over others, seeing that I am rich?"

Fourth question. "Why should I not put myself ahead of others, seeing that I am more honorable than others?"

Fifth question. "Why should I not seek my own praise, seeing that I am good and praiseworthy?"

Sixth question. "If I do other people favors, why should I not demand remuneration?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, ugly and beautiful in the world are like bitter and sweet. Ugliness of the world, which is adversity and contempt of the world, is like a kind of bitterness conducive to the health of the righteous. Beautiful to the world is its prosperity, which is like a kind of ingratiating sweetness, false and seductive. Whoever, therefore, flees the beauty of the world and spits out its sweetness will not come to the ugliness of hell or taste its bitterness but will instead ascend to my joy. Thus, in order to escape the ugliness of hell and attain the sweetness of heaven, it is necessary to pursue the ugliness of the world rather than its beauty. Although I made all things well, and all created things are very good, great caution should be used toward the things that could present an occasion of damage to the soul for those who make irrational use of my gifts."

Answer to the second question. "As to why you must not boast about your ancestry,

I answer: From your father you received the ugliest filth and rot; in the womb of your mother you were as though dead and all unclean. It was not in your power to be born of noble or ignoble parents. Rather, my tenderness and goodness brought you forth into this light. So, you, who call yourself noble, humble yourself under me, your God, who let you be born of noble parents. Live in harmony with your neighbor, who is made of the same stuff as you, though by my providence you are of noble birth, as the world sees it, while he is of humble birth. In fact, O nobleman, you should be more fearful than the man of low birth, for the nobler and wealthier you are, the stricter will be the account demanded of you and the greater the judgment, inasmuch as you have received more.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why you must not take pride in riches, I answer: The riches of the world only belong to you insofar as you need them for food and clothing. The world was made for this: that man, having sustenance for his body, might through work and humility return to me, his God, whom he scorned in his disobedience and neglected in his pride. However, if you claim that the temporal goods belong to you, I assure you that you are in effect forcibly usurping for yourself all that you possess beyond your needs. All temporal goods ought to belong to the community and be equally accessible to the needy out of charity.

You usurp for your own superfluous possession things that should be given to others out of compassion. However, many people do own much more than others but in a rational way, and they distribute it in discreet fashion. Therefore, in order not to be accused more severely at the judgment because you received more than others, it is advisable for you not to put yourself ahead of others by acting haughtily and hoarding possessions. As pleasant as it is in the world to have more temporal goods than others and to have them in abundance, it will likewise be terrible and painful beyond measure at the judgment not to have administered in reasonable fashion even licitly held goods.”

Answer to the fourth and fifth questions. ”As to why self-praise should not be sought, I answer: No one is good in himself, except for me alone, God, and anyone who is good is good through me alone. Therefore, if you who are nothing seek praise for yourself and not for me from whom comes every perfect gift, then your praise is false and you do me, your Creator, an injustice. As all the good things that you have come from me, so all praise should be given to me. And just as I, your God, bestow on you all worldly goods -

strength, health, knowledge, and discernment for considering what is to your advantage, and time and life - so too I alone should be glorified in everything, that is, if you make good and rational use of the things given you. However, if you make bad use of them, then the fault is yours and the ingratitude is yours.”

Answer to the sixth question. ”As to why temporal remuneration should not be sought for good works in the present, I answer you: Whenever someone does good to others with the intention of caring not for a human reward but only for such a reward as I, God, may wish to grant, then he or she will gain much in exchange for little, something eternal for something temporal. But a person who seeks earthly in exchange for temporal goods will get what he or she desires and will lose the everlasting good. Therefore, in order to obtain an eternal good for a fleeting one, it is more advantageous not to seek a human reward but one that comes from me.”

Interrogation 8

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before, saying: ”O Judge, I ask you: Why do you permit gods to be placed in temples and receive honor as yourself, even though your kingdom is nobler beyond all else?”

Second question. ”Why do you not let people see your glory in this life, so that they may desire it more fervently?”

Third question. ”Since your saints and angels are nobler and holier above all other creatures, why are they not seen by people in this life?”

Fourth question. ”Since the punishments of hell are horrible beyond compare, why do you not let people see them in this life so that they may flee from them?”

Fifth question. ”Since the devils are ugly and misshapen beyond compare, why are they not visible to humans, for then nobody would follow them or give them their consent?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "My friend, I am God, the creator of all, who does no more injustice to the wicked than to the good, because I am justice itself. It is in accord with my justice that entry into heaven must be gained through steadfast faith, rational hope, and fervent love. A person ponders more frequently and adores more lovingly that which the heart loves more and loves with greater fervor. So it is with the gods that are placed in temples - though they are not gods nor creators, since there is but one sole creator, I myself, God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But the owners of temples and people in general love the gods more than they love me, seeking to achieve worldly success rather than to live with me.

If I were to destroy the things that people love more than me, and make the people adore me against their will, then I would certainly do them an injustice by taking away their free will and desire from them. Since they have no faith in me, and there is in their hearts something more delightful than me, I reasonably permit them to produce externally what they love and long for in their minds. Because they love creation more than me, the Creator, whom they can know by probable signs and deeds, if only they would make use of their reason, and because they are blind, accursed is their creation and accursed are their idols. They themselves shall stand in shame and be sentenced for their folly, because they refuse to understand how sweet I am, their God, who created and redeemed humankind out of fervent love."

Answer to the second question. "As to why my glory is not seen, I answer: My glory is ineffable and cannot be compared to anything in sweetness and goodness. If my glory were to be seen as it is, the corruptible human body would grow weak and fail as did the senses of those who saw my glory on the mount. Besides, because of the soul's joy, the body would leave off working and be incapable of physical activity. Since there is no entry into heaven without the labor of love, and in order that faith might have its reward and the body be able to work, my glory is therefore hidden for a time, so that through desire and faith it may be seen more fully with greater happiness forever."

Answer to the third question. "As to why the saints are not seen as they are, I answer: If my saints were openly visible and seen to speak, then honor would be given to them as to myself, and faith would have not merit. Besides, weak flesh would not be

capable of seeing them, and it does not accord with my justice that such great weakness should behold so splendid a sight. Consequently, my saints are neither heard nor seen as they are, in order that I should receive all the honor and so that people may know that no one is to be loved more than me. If my saints do at times appear, however, it is not in that form of glory in which they truly live, but rather in that form in which they can be seen without any confusion of the physical intelligence, with their full power remaining hidden.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why the punishments of hell are not seen, I answer: If the punishments of hell were visibly to be seen such as they are, people would be completely frozen with fear and would seek heaven out of fear rather than love. Since nobody should desire the joy of heaven out of fear of punishment but out of divine love, the punishments therefore remain hidden for now. Of course, just as good and holy people may not experience exactly that kind of indescribable joy prior to the separation of body and soul, nor can the wicked experience their punishments. But once the soul is separated from the body, then they discover those experiences they were unwilling to probe with their intelligence while they were still able.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to why devils make no visible appearance, I answer: If their horrible ugliness were seen such as it is, the soul of the person seeing it would lose her wits at the very sight, and her whole body would quake and quail like someone trembling with fear, and her whole heart would fail and die of fright, and her feet would not be able to sustain the weight of her limbs. In order that the soul should remain steady in her senses and her heart watchful in my love and her body capable of laboring in my service, the ugliness of devils is therefore hidden - also in order to check their evil purposes.”

The third revelation in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and teaches her through a parable about a true doctor who is a healer and a false doctor who is a killer, and about a man who only has an opinion. He tells her that a man who takes in sinners and gives them help or an opportunity for sinning, should they die in their sin, then God will exact the death of their souls at his hand. However, if he takes them in and they cease from sinning and are instructed by him in the virtues and improved by

his teaching, both they and he will receive a great reward from God.

Revelation 3

The Son of God speaks: "If there is a sick man in the house and an experienced doctor visits him, the doctor soon determines the nature of the sickness from the external symptoms. However, if he recognizes the patient's sickness but gives him medicine that results in death, then he is denounced as a murderer and not a true doctor. A person who knows how to cure but practices medicine for the sake of worldly remuneration will get no wages from me. But if he practices medicine for love of me and for my honor, then I am bound to give him his wages. If a person is not an expert in medicine but is confident that, in his opinion, this or that would be good for the patient, and gives him it with a kindly intention, he should not be denounced as a murderer if the patient dies, but only as a foolish and presumptuous man. If the patient improves from the fool's medicine, then he should not get the wages of an expert but only of an opiner, since he gave the medicine according to his opinion, rather than knowledge.

Now I will tell you what these things mean. Those people you know are spiritually sick and inclined to pride and cupidity by following their own will. Therefore, if their friend, whom I compare to a doctor, gives them help and advice by which they grow in pride and ambition and die spiritually, I shall surely exact their death at his hand. Although they die from their own iniquity, yet he is the agent and cause of their death, and he will most assuredly not be immune from punishment. If, led by a natural love, he supports them and helps them to advance in the world for the sake of his own convenience and worldly honor, let him not expect any wages from me!

On the other hand, if he considers their situation like a good doctor and says to himself: "These people are sick and need medicine. Therefore, although my medicine seems bitter to them, yet it is healthy and I will still give it to them so that they will not die a harsher death. Accordingly, while restraining them, I shall also give them food, so that they do not faint from hunger; I shall give them clothing, so that they can make a suitable appearance according to their state; I shall hold them to my treatment, so that they do not grow haughty; I shall also provide for their other needs, so that they do not

become proud and perish in their presumption or have occasion to do harm to others.' Such a doctor as this will receive a great reward from me, for this kind of corrective treatment pleases me.

But if their friend thinks to himself in this way: 'I shall give them what is necessary, although I do not know whether it is beneficial for them or not. Nonetheless I do not think I am displeasing God or harming their health. Then if they die, or rather transgress, from what he gives them, their friend will not be declared a murderer. However, due to his good will and kindly affection, though their friend will not get a full recompense, insofar as he shows love for their souls, the sick will find relief and make progress toward health, which they would have obtained only with difficulty without the aid of his charity. However, one piece of advice is necessary here.

According to a popular proverb, a dangerous animal is not dangerous when caged in. If it is in a cage and has its needs met, then it grows just as strong and fat as an animal that roams free. Now, because these people are of the kind whose heart and blood seek lofty things, and because the more their will grows thirstier, the more it drinks, their friend should not give them any occasion for transgression, since they desire to inflame their appetites but are not strong enough to extinguish them."

Interrogation 9

First question. After this was said, the monk appeared on his rung as before saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why do you seem unfair in your gifts and graces in that you gave preference to Mary your Mother before every creature and exalted her above the angels?"

Second question. "Why did you give to the angels a spirit without a body and the state of heavenly joy, while to humankind you gave a spirit in an earthly vessel, a tearful birth, a toilsome life and a painful death?"

Third question. "Why did you give humankind a rational intellect and sense, but did not give reason to the animals?"

Fourth question. "Why did you give life to animals and not to other insensate creatures?"

Fifth question. "Why is there not light at night as during day?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, in my deity are contained all future things and everything that will be done as well as everything that has been done, all of them being foreseen and foreknown from the start. Just as the fall of humankind was something foreknown and permitted by God's justice but not accomplished through God nor something that had to happen due to God's foreknowledge, so too it was foreknown from eternity that the liberation of humankind would be accomplished through God's mercy.

You ask why I preferred my mother Mary above all others and loved her above every creature. This is because a special mark of virtue was found in her. As when several logs are piled up and a fire is kindled, that log which is most capable and fit for burning is more quickly set aflame and starts burning. It was the same with Mary. When the fire of divine love, which in itself is immutable and eternal, began to kindle and be seen, and the deity wished to become incarnate, there was no creature more capable and fitter to receive this fire of love than the Virgin Mary, for no creature burned with such divine charity as she. And although her love has been shown and revealed in the last age, yet it was foreseen before the beginning of the world. Thus it was predetermined in the deity from all eternity that just as no one was found like her in charity, so too no one would be equal to her in grace and blessing."

Answer to the second question. "As to why I gave the angel a spirit without a body, I answer: I created spirits in the beginning, before times and ages, so that they might rejoice in my goodness and glory according to my will and of their own free choice. Some of them became proud and turned good into evil for themselves, making disordered use of their free will. They fell accordingly, because there was nothing evil in nature or creation except the disorder of self-will. Other spirits chose to remain in humility under me their God; accordingly, they earned a state of everlasting stability, for it is right and just that I, God, who am uncreated spirit and creator and Lord of all things, should have

spirits serving me that are more subtle and swift than other creatures.

Since it was surely not suitable for me to have my heavenly host diminished, in order to take the place of the fallen angels, I created human beings who, by their free choice and good will, could win that same rank which the angels had abandoned. And so, if they had a soul without a body, they would not be able to win so great a good or to struggle for it. The attainment of eternal glory is the reason why the soul is joined to the body. Hardships also accrue to them so that they might make trial of their power of choice as well as of their weaknesses so as not to grow proud. Likewise, divine justice has also granted them a tearful entry and departure as well as a toilsome life, so that they might desire the glory for which they were created and make amends for their voluntary disobedience.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why animals do not have a rational intellect as humans do, I answer you: All things, whatsoever have been created, are for the use of humankind, either for their needs and upkeep or for their formation and correction or for their comfort and humiliation. If brute beasts had a human intellect, they would surely cause trouble to men, and would be of harm rather than of benefit. Therefore, in order that all things might be subject to humankind, for whose sake all things were made, and in order that all things might fear them but that they might fear none but me, their God, for this reason a rational intellect was not given to animals.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why insensate things do not have life, I answer: Everything that lives will die, and every living thing is in motion unless impeded by some obstacle. If insensate things had life, they would move themselves more against humankind than for it. Therefore, in order that all things should be a comfort to humankind, the higher beings or angels were given to be their guardians with whom they share reason and immortality of soul. Lower beings, both sensate and insensate creatures, were given to them for their use and upkeep as well as for their education and exercise.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to why it is not always daylight, I answer with a comparison. There are wheels under every cart or wagon so that the load can be more easily moved forward, and the back wheels follow the front wheels. It is similar in

spiritual matters. The world is a great load, burdening humankind with trouble and strife. This is no wonder, for when humans disdained the place of rest, so it was only right that they should experience the place of toil. In order that they might more easily bear the burden of this world, an alternation and change of times, that is, day and night, summer and winter, was given for their rest and exercise. When contraries meet, such as strong and weak, it is reasonable to condescend to the weak part so that it can stand with the help of the strong; otherwise the weak would be destroyed.

So it is also with humankind. Although by virtue of their immortal souls, they could continue in contemplation and labor, they would nevertheless falter by virtue of their weak body. Light was made so that humans, who partake of both higher and lower natures, might be able to maintain themselves, laboring by day and recalling the sweetness of the eternal light that they had lost. Night was made for the sake of bodily rest, so that they might have the desire of reaching the place where there is neither night nor labor but perpetual day and everlasting glory.”

The fourth revelation in the Book of Questions, in which Christ beautifully praises every limb of the Virgin Mary his Mother, giving them a spiritual and allegorical meaning by comparing them to virtues; he also declares the Virgin to be most worthy of a queenly crown.

Revelation 4

The Son speaks: "I am crowned king in my divinity without beginning and without end. A crown has neither beginning nor end; thus it is a symbol of my power, which had no beginning and will have no end. I had another crown, too, in my keeping: I myself, God, am that crown. It was prepared for the person who had the greatest love for me. And you, my most sweet Mother, won this crown and drew it to yourself through righteousness and love. The angels and other saints bear witness that your love for me was more ardent and your chastity more pure than that of any other, and that it was more pleasing to me than all else.

Your head was like gleaming gold and your hair like sunbeams, because your most pure virginity, which is like the head of all your virtues, as well as your control over every illicit desire pleased me and shone in my sight with all humility. You are rightly called the crowned queen over all creation - "queen" for the sake of your purity, "crowned" for your excellent worth. Your brow was incomparably white, a symbol of the delicacy of your conscience, in which lies the fullness of human knowledge, and where the sweetness of divine wisdom shines on all. Your eyes were so bright and clear in my Father's sight that he could see himself in them, for in your spiritual eyes and in your soul's intellect the Father saw your entire will, namely, that you desired nothing but him and wished for nothing except as according to his will.

Your ears were as pure and open as the most beautiful windows when Gabriel laid my will before you and when I, God, became flesh in you. Your cheeks were of the fairest hue, white and red, for the fame of your praiseworthy deeds and the beauty of your character, which burned within you each day, were pleasing to me. Truly, God my Father rejoiced in the beauty of your character and never took his eyes away from you. By your love, all have obtained love. Your mouth was like a lamp, inwardly burning and outwardly shedding light, for the words and affections of your soul were inwardly on fire with divine understanding and shone outwardly in the graceful carriage of your body and the lovely harmony of your virtues. Truly, most dear Mother, the word of your mouth somehow drew my divinity to you, and the fervor of your divine sweetness never separated me from you, since your words were sweeter than honey and honeycomb.

Your neck is nobly erect and beautifully held high, because the righteousness of your whole soul is directed to me and sways with my will, since it was never inclined to any sin of pride. Just as the neck inclines with the head, so too your every intention and act bends to my will. Your breast was so full of every virtuous charm that there is no good in me that is not in you as well, for you drew every good thing to yourself by the sweetness of your character, at the moment when it both pleased my divinity to enter into you and my humanity to live with you and drink the milk from your nipples. Your arms were beautiful through true obedience and endurance of toil. Your bodily hands touched my humanity, and I rested in your arms with my divinity.

Your womb was as pure as ivory and was like a space made out of gems of virtue, for

your constancy of conscience and faith never grew lukewarm and could not be damaged by tribulation. The walls of your womb, that is, of your faith, were like gleaming gold, and on them the strength of your virtues was recorded, your prudence and justice and temperance along with perfect perseverance, for all your virtues were perfected with divine charity. Your feet were washed full clean as though with fragrant herbs, for the hope and the affections of your soul were directed toward me, your God, and were fragrant as an example for others to imitate. Your womb was a spiritual and physical space so desirable to me and your soul was so pleasing to me that I did not disdain to come down to you from the highest heaven and to dwell in you. No, rather, I was most pleased and delighted. Therefore, dear Mother, the crown that was held in my keeping, that crown that is I, myself, God, who was to become incarnate, should be placed on no one but you, for you are truly Mother and Virgin.”

Interrogation 10

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before saying: ”O Judge, I ask you: Given that you are most powerful and beautiful and virtuous, why did you cover your divinity, which is incomparably brighter than the sun, with such a sack - I mean your human nature?”

Second question. ”How does your divinity encompass all things in itself yet is encompassed by none, and contains all things yet is contained by none?”

Third question. ”Why did you wish to lie in the Virgin's womb so long and did not emerge as soon as you were conceived?”

Fourth question. ”Given that you can do all things and are present everywhere, why did you not immediately appear with the stature that you had when you were thirty years old?”

Fifth question. ”Given that you were not born of Abraham's seed through a father, why did you wish to be circumcised?”

Sixth question. "Given that you were conceived and born without sin, why did you wish to be baptized?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered him: "Friend, I will answer you with a comparison. There is a variety of grapes whose wine is so strong that it comes out of the grapes without the contact of man. The owner waits for it to ripen and then just puts a glass under it. The wine does not wait for the glass but the glass for the wine. If several glasses are placed under it, the wine runs into the glass that is nearest. This grapevine represents my divinity, which is so full of the wine of godly love that all the choirs of angels are filled up with it and all things, no matter what, partake of it. But the human race became unworthy of it through disobedience.

When God my Father wanted to manifest his love at a point in time foreseen from eternity, he sent his wine, that is, he sent me, his Son, into the nearest glass awaiting the coming of the wine, namely, into the womb of the Virgin, whose love for me was more fervent than that of any other creature. This Virgin loved me and longed for me so much that there was no hour in which she did not seek me, yearning to become my handmaid. This is why she obtained the choicest wine, and this has three qualities. First it has strength, because I emerged without the contact of a man; second, a most beautiful color, for I came down in beauty from heaven on high ready to do battle; third, an excellent taste, intoxicating with the highest of blessings.

This wine, then, which I myself am, was poured inside the Virgin, so that I, the invisible God, might become visible in order to liberate the lost human race. I could well have assumed another form, but it would not have been God's justice, if form had not been given for form, nature for nature, a mode of satisfaction adapted to the mode of the offense. Which of the wise could have believed or thought that I, God almighty, would want to lower myself to such an extent I should wear the sack of human nature, but for that unfathomable love of mine because of which I wished to live visibly among men?

And because I saw the Virgin burning with such fervent love, my divine severity was overcome, and my love was shown in order to reconcile humankind with myself. Why are you surprised? I, God, who am love itself, and who hate none of the things I have made,

arranged to give humankind not only the best of gifts, but even my very self as a ransom and reward so that all proud sinners and all the devils might be confounded.”

Answer to the second question. ”As to how my divinity can encompass all things in itself, I answer: I, God, am spirit. I speak, and it is done. I command, and all obey me. I am truly he who gives being and life to all, who, before making the sky and the mountains and the earth, exist in myself, who am above and beyond all things, who am within all things, and all things are in me, and without me there is nothing. And since my Spirit blows where and when it will, and can do all things, and knows all things, and is swifter and more agile than all other spirits, possessing every power and seeing beforehand all things present, past, and future, accordingly, my Spirit, that is my divinity, is rightly incomprehensible, yet comprehends all things.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why I lay so long in the womb of the Virgin, I answer: I am the founder of all nature and have arranged for each and every nature a due measure and time and order of birth. If I, the founder of nature, had emerged from the womb as soon as I had been conceived, then I would have acted against the natural arrangement, and my taking on a human nature would have then been fantastic and unreal. Therefore, I wished to remain in the womb as long as other children, so that I, too, might fulfill my own wise arrangements of the natural order in my own case.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why I did not immediately assume the same stature at birth as I had in my thirtieth year, I answer: If I had done this, everyone would have been full of wonder and fear, following me more out of fear and because of the miracles they had seen rather than from love. And how then would the sayings of the prophets have been fulfilled? They foretold that I would be placed in a manger among animals, and adored by kings, and presented in the temple, and pursued by enemies. Therefore, in order to show that my human nature was real and that the prophecies were fulfilled in me, my limbs grew over intervals of time, although I was as full of wisdom at the start of my birth as at the end.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to the question of why I was circumcised, I answer: Although I did not descend from Abraham through my father, yet I did so through my mother, although without sin. Therefore, because I established the law in my divine

nature, I also wanted to endure it in my human nature, so that my enemies might not slander me by saying that I commanded what I myself was unwilling to fulfill.”

Answer to the sixth question. ”As to why I wanted to be baptized, I answer: Anyone who wants to found or start a new way, must lead the way for others. The ancient people were given a way of the flesh, circumcision, as a sign of obedience and future purgation. Among the faithful observers of the law, this brought about a certain effect of future grace and a promise before the coming of the promised truth, that is, before I, the Son of God, came.

With the coming of the truth, however, since the law was but a shadow, it had been eternally determined that the ancient way should fade and lose its effect. In order that the truth might appear, the shadow recede, and the way to heaven be more easily seen, I, God and man, born without sin, wished to be baptized as an example of humility for others and so that I might open up heaven for believers. As a sign of this, heaven was opened when I myself was baptized, and the voice of the Father was heard, and the Holy Spirit appeared in the likeness of a dove, and I, the Son of God, was revealed in my true humanity, so that all the faithful might know and believe that the Father opens heaven for the baptized faithful.

The Holy Spirit is present with the baptizing minister and my human nature is virtually present in the material element, but the action and the will are one and belong to the Father and to myself and to the Holy Spirit together. On the coming of the truth, that is, when I, who am Truth, came into the world, the shadow immediately disappeared, the shell of the law was broken, and the kernel appeared; circumcision ceased, and I myself established baptism by means of which heaven is opened to young and old and the children of wrath become children of grace and eternal life.”

The fifth revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and instructs her not to be anxious about the care of earthly riches and teaches her to be patient in times of trouble and to have perfect self-denial and humility.

Revelation 5

The Son of God speaks to the bride saying: "Be sure to be on your guard!" And she answers: "Why?" The Lord says to her: "Because the world is sending to you four servants who want to deceive you. The first is anxiety about riches. Tell him when he comes: 'Riches are transitory, and the more they abound, the greater the account must be given concerning them. Therefore I do not care about them, since they do not follow their owner but abandon him.'

The second servant is the loss of riches and the forfeiture of privileges conceded. Answer this servant thus: 'He who gave riches has also taken them away. He knows what is best for me. May his will be done!'

The third servant is the tribulation of this world. Tell him this: 'Blessed be you, my God, who allow me to suffer tribulation. By tribulations I know that I am yours, for you permit tribulations in the present in order that you may spare me them in the future. Grant me, then, the patience and strength to endure.'

The fourth servant is contempt and reproach. Answer them in this way: 'God alone is good and all honor is due to him. Why should there be any honor for me who have committed all kinds of bad and vile deeds? Instead I am worthy of all kinds of reproach, since my whole life has been a blasphemy to God. Or in what way is honor worth more to me than reproach? It only stirs up pride and lessens humility, and God is forgotten. Therefore may all praise and honor be given to God.'

So stand firm against the servants of the world, and love me your God with all your heart."

Interrogation 11

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Since you are God and man, why did you not reveal your divine as well as your

human nature, and then everyone would have believed in you?”

Second question. ”Why did you not let all your words be heard in an instant, and then it would not have been necessary for them to be preached over intervals of time?”

Third question. ”Why did you not perform all your works in a single hour?”

Fourth question. ”Why did your body grow over intervals of time and not in an instant?”

Fifth question. ”As your death was approaching, why did you not reveal yourself in your divine power, and why did you not show your severity to your enemies, when you said: 'All is accomplished'?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: ”O friend, I respond to you and yet not to you. I respond to you in order that the evil of your thoughts may be made known to others. Yet I do not respond to you, because these things are not revealed for your benefit but for the profit and warning of present and future generations. Since you do not intend to change your obstinate attitude, you will not pass from your death into my life, because, while still alive, you hate true life. Others, however, who have heard about your life, or rather your death, will pass over and fly on to my life. Indeed, it is written that, for saints, all things work together unto the good; and God permits nothing to happen without cause. So I answer you, but not as those do who speak in a human manner, because we are discussing spiritual things, but in such a way that your thoughts and feelings may be communicated to others by way of similes.

You ask, then, why I did not show my divine nature openly as I did with my human. The reason is that my divine nature is spiritual but my human nature is bodily. Yet the divine and human natures are and were inseparable ever since they were first joined together. My divinity is uncreated, and all things that exist are made in it and through it, and every perfection and beauty is found in it. If such beauty and perfection were visibly revealed to eyes of clay, who would be able to bear the sight? Who could look upon the physical sun in all its brightness? Who would not be terrified by the sight of lightning and the sound of thunder? How much greater the terror would be if the Lord of lightning and

the Creator of all things were seen in his splendor!

My divinity was not openly revealed for two reasons. The first reason is the weakness of the human body, whose substance is earthly. If any human body were to see the divinity, it would melt like wax before fire, and the soul would rejoice with such exultation that the body would be reduced, as it were, to ashes. The second reason is the immutability of divine goodness. If I were to show bodily eyes my divinity, which is incomparably more radiant than fire and sun, I would then be contradicting myself. For I have said: 'No one shall see me and live.' Not even the prophets themselves saw me as I am in my divine nature. Those who did hear the voice of my divinity and saw the burning mountain were terrified and said: 'Let Moses speak to us, and we shall listen to him.' This is why I, merciful God, in order to be understandable to humankind, revealed myself to them in a human form similar to theirs, which they could see and touch and in which the divine nature is concealed, so that people might not be terrified by a form unlike their own. Insofar as I am God, I am not bodily and cannot be portrayed in a bodily manner, but people can endure to see and hear me in my human nature."

Answer to the second question. "As to why I did not utter all my words in a single hour, I answer you: Just as it is materially impossible for the body to take in as much food in one hour as it could manage in a large number of years, so too it goes against the divine disposition for my words, which are the food of the soul, to be spoken all in a single hour. As the food of the body is taken in a small amount at a time so that it can be chewed and then ingested, so too my words had to be uttered not in one hour but over intervals of time in proportion to the understanding of those who were to profit from them, so that the hungry might have something to fill them and then be stirred to higher things."

Answer to the third question. "As to why I did not perform all my works in an instant, I answer: Some of those who saw me in the flesh came to belief in me, others did not. It was accordingly necessary for those who did believe to be taught by words over intervals of time and to be stirred at times by example and strengthened by works. For those who did not believe, however, it was right and just that their wicked disposition be disclosed and tolerated, as far as my divine justice could permit it. If I had performed all my works in an instant, everyone would have followed me from fear rather than from

love, and, in that case, how would the mystery of human redemption have been fulfilled?

Just as in the beginnings of the world's creation all things were accomplished at different times and in different ways - although all the things to be made were immutably present together in my divine foreknowledge - so too in my human nature everything was accomplished rationally and distinctly for the salvation and edification of all."

Answer to the fourth question. "As to why my body grew over a number of years and not instantaneously, I answer: The Holy Spirit, who is eternally in the Father and in me, the Son, revealed to the prophets what I would do and suffer when I came in the flesh. Accordingly, it pleased God that I should take such a body in which I could labor from morning to evening and from year to year until the last moment of death. Therefore, in order not to make the words of the prophets seem meaningless, I, the Son of God, took a body like Adam's but without sin so that I would be like those whom I was to redeem. In this way, man, who had turned away from me, might by means of love be led back and, having died, might be raised up, and having been sold might be redeemed."

Answer to the fifth question. "As to why I did not reveal my divine power and my true divine nature to everyone, when I said on the cross: 'It is accomplished,' I answer: It was necessary that everything that had been written about me should be fulfilled. Accordingly, I fulfilled them all down to the last detail. Since many things had also been predicted about my resurrection and ascension, it was necessary that they, too, should be brought about.

If my divine power had been revealed at my death, who would have dared to take me down from the cross and bury me? And it would have been a small thing for me then to come down from the cross and lay low my crucifiers - but how then would the prophecy have been fulfilled or where then would my virtue of patience have been? And if I had come down from the cross, would everyone have believed then? Would they not have said that I had done it all by evil art?

Given that they had been indignant when I raised the dead and cured the sick, they would have said much more had I come down from the cross! Therefore, in order to set the captive free, I, who was free, made myself captive; and in order to save the guilty, I,

who was guiltless, stood steadfast on the cross. By my steadfastness I steadied the unsteady and strengthened the strengthless.”

The sixth revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and instructs her, saying that in the spiritual life peace of mind and eternal glory are won through vigorous struggle and perseverance and humble acquiescence in the advice of an elder and by bravely resisting temptations. He offers the example of Jacob who became a servant in order to win Rachel. He says that some people experience the greatest temptations at the beginning of a conversion to the spiritual life, others in the middle or toward the end. It is therefore necessary to have a holy fear and humble perseverance in the virtues and in the struggle until the very end.

Revelation 6

The Son speaks: "It is written that Jacob became a servant for the sake of Rachel, and the days seemed short to him due to his great love, for the greatness of his love made his work easier. True, when Jacob thought he had obtained his desire, he was defrauded. Yet he went on working, because love does not make excuses for itself until it has got its wish. It is the same way in spiritual matters. Many people struggle on bravely in prayer and deeds of piety in order to gain heaven. However, just when they think they have reached the peace of contemplation, then they get entangled in temptations, and their troubles multiply, and they find themselves to be quite imperfect precisely on those points where they had thought themselves to be almost perfect. But this is nothing strange, because temptations exist that put people to the test in order to cleanse and perfect them.

Temptations accrue for some of them at the start of their conversion to the spiritual life, and such people are rendered completely sound and stable in the end. Others are more gravely tempted in the middle or toward the end, and such people should carefully examine themselves and never be presumptuous but struggle all the more vigorously. It is as Laban said: 'It is the custom to wed the older sister first,' which is to say: 'Toil and struggle first and then you will have the rest you desire.'

Therefore, my daughter, do not be surprised if temptations accrue in your old age. While you still live, you can be tempted, because the devil never sleeps and because temptation is an opportunity for perfection and keeps you from presumption. Look, I show you the example of two men. One was tempted at the beginning of his conversion but he persevered and went ahead and attained what he sought. The other experienced grave temptations in his old age that he scarcely had known in his youth. He became so entangled in these that he almost forgot everything he had known before. However, he persevered in his resolution and kept on struggling, despite feeling cold and lukewarm. Because of that, he gained his desire and peace of mind, realizing that God's judgments are hidden and just, and that, if it had not been for those temptations, he would hardly have gained eternal salvation."

Interrogation 12

First question. Again the monk appeared standing on his rung as before and saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why did you prefer to be born of a virgin rather than of another woman who was not a virgin?"

Second question. "Why did you not show with a visible sign that she was a mother and a pure virgin?"

Third question. "Why did you hide your birth so that it was known only to a very few?"

Fourth question. "Why did you flee to Egypt because of Herod and why did you permit the innocent boys to be killed?"

Fifth question. "Why do you permit yourself to be blasphemed and falsehood to prevail over truth?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "O friend, I preferred to be born

of a virgin rather than of a woman who was not a virgin, because that which is purest befits me who am God most pure. While it remained in the order of its creation, human nature had no deformity. But once the commandment was transgressed, there immediately arose a sense of shame, just as happens to people who sin against their temporal lord, who are even ashamed of the very limbs with which they have sinned. Along with shame over the transgression, there also sprang up a disordered impulse, especially in the reproductive organs. Yet, in order that this impulse might not be unproductive, it was by God's goodness turned to good, and the act of carnal union was established by divine commandment in order that nature might bear its fruits.

However, since it brings greater glory to act above and beyond the commandment, adding whatever good one is led by love to make, it pleased God to choose for his work the institution tending to greater purity and love, and that is virginity. For it is more virtuous and generous to be in the fire of tribulation and not to burn than to be without fire and still want to be crowned.

Now, since virginity is like the fairest path to heaven while marriage is more like a road, it befitted me, God most pure, to rest in a virgin most pure. Just as the first man was created from the virgin earth, not yet polluted by blood, and because Adam and Eve committed their sin while they were still in a sound state of nature, so too I, God, wished to be received in the purest vessel so as to transform everything by my goodness.”

Answer to the second question. ”As to why I did not show by open signs that my mother was mother and virgin, I answer: I intimated all the mysteries of my incarnation to the prophets, so that these mysteries might the more firmly be believed the longer ago they had been foretold. To prove that my mother was truly a virgin before and after childbirth, Joseph's testimony was sufficient, inasmuch as he was the guardian and witness of her virginity.

Even if her chasteness had been shown by a more evident miracle, unbelievers would not out of wickedness have yielded in their blasphemy. Such people do not believe that a virgin could conceive by divine power, because they do not realize that it is easier for me, God, to do this than for the sun to penetrate glass. And, of course, divine justice kept the mystery of God's incarnation hidden from the devil and from men to be revealed

in the time of grace. Now, in fact, I affirm that my mother is truly mother and virgin. Just as wonderful as the divine power was in forming Adam and Eve, and just as their dwelling together was delightful and virtuous, so too there was wonderful goodness in the coming of my divinity to the virgin, for my incomprehensible divinity descended into a closed vessel without its violation. And there was a delightful cohabitation with me there, inasmuch as I, God, who am everywhere in my divinity, was there enclosed in humanity.

Wonderful, too, was the power shown there, for I, unembodied God, left the womb embodied, yet her virginity remained intact. Therefore, since humankind is difficult about believing, while my mother is a friend to all humility, it pleased me accordingly to conceal her beauty and perfection for a time in order that my mother might deserve to be more perfectly rewarded and so that I, God, might be glorified all the more at that time when I should wish to fulfill my promises to reward the good and to punish the wicked.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why I did not disclose my birth to people in general, I answer: Although the devil lost the dignity of his first state, still he did not lose his cunning, which belongs to him for the trial of the good and for his own shame. In order that my human form might grow and reach its determined age, it was necessary to hide the mystery of my religion from the devil, because I wanted to enter hidden into combat with the devil, and because I resolved to be despised in order to overthrow human pride.

Indeed, the very teachers of the law, which they read about in their books, despised me because I came as a humble man, and, because they were proud, they did not want to hear about true justice, which comes from the faith of my redemption. They shall therefore be confounded when the 'son of perdition' comes in his pride. If I had come in the greatest power and glory, would the proud then have been humbled? Will the proud now enter heaven? Certainly not! I came as a humble man in order that the people might learn humility. And I hid myself from the proud, because they wished to understand neither my justice nor their very selves.”

Answer to the fourth question. ”As to why I fled to Egypt, I answer: Before the commandment was transgressed, there was just one road to heaven, broad and bright. It was broad in the abundance of virtues and bright in divine wisdom and in the obedience

of a good will. Once that will was changed, two roads came into being. One led to heaven, the other led away from it. Obedience led to heaven, disobedience led astray. And as the choice between good and evil lay in the human will, that is, to obey or not to obey, people sinned whenever they willed something other than what I wanted them to will.

In order to save humankind, it was just and right that someone should come who was able to redeem them, someone who also was perfectly obedient and innocent, someone towards whom those who wished could show love and those who wished could show malice. However, it was not right for an angel to be sent to redeem humankind, because I, God, do not give my glory to others. Nor could any human person be found to appease me for his or her own sake, let alone for others. So I, God, the only Just One, came to make all just. My flight to Egypt revealed the frailty of my human nature and fulfilled a prophecy. I also set an example for those to come, because persecution should at times be avoided for God's greater glory in the future. My escape from my pursuers shows that my divine plan surpassed human plans, for it is not easy to fight against God. Furthermore, the slaying of the infants was a sign of my future passion, and a mystery of vocation and divine charity.

Although the infants themselves did not bear witness to me with their voice and mouth, yet they bore it by their death, as befitted my own infancy. Indeed it had been foreseen that the praise of God would be fulfilled even by the blood of innocents. And although the malice of the unjust fell upon them, yet my divine permission, which is always just and kind, did not expose them to it with injustice but so as to disclose human malice and the incomprehensible purpose and kindness of God. Thus, where unjust malice erupted against the boys, there merit and grace justly abounded, and where there was no verbal testimony or proper age, there bloodshed brought them the highest good.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to why I permit myself to be blasphemed, I answer: It is written that when King David was avoiding his son's persecution, a certain man cursed him along the way. When his servants wanted to kill the man, David forbade them for two reasons: first, because he had a hope of returning; second, because he was mindful of his own weakness and sin and of the ignorance of him who had cursed him as well as of the patience and goodness of God. I am David, figuratively speaking.

People persecute me with their wicked deeds, like a slave who chases his master, and they throw me out of my own kingdom, that is, out of the soul that I created and that is my kingdom. Then they find fault with me, like a criminal finds fault with his sentence, and they even blaspheme against me, because I am patient. Because I am mild, I suffer their foolishness. Because I am the Judge, I wait for them to convert until the very last moment. Finally, since people in general believe more in falsehood than in truth, and love the world more than me, their God, it is no wonder if the wicked are tolerated in their wickedness, for they wish neither to seek the truth nor to recover from their wickedness.”

The seventh revelation in the Book of Questions, in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and praises frequent confession, in order that people may not lose the grace of God that they have.

Revelation 7

The Son of God speaks: ”When there is fire in a house, a venthole is needed to let out the smoke and allow the inhabitant to enjoy the heat. Likewise, for anyone who desires to keep my spirit and my grace, habitual confession is useful in order to let out the smoke of sin. Although my divine spirit is in itself unchangeable, nevertheless it quickly withdraws from the heart that is not protected by the humility of confession.”

The eighth revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride and says that the prayer of people who take their pleasure in carnal and earthly delights, neglecting heavenly desires, charity, and the memory of his passion and of eternal judgment, is like the sound of colliding stones, and they will be thrust away with loathing from God's sight like an abortion or an unclean menstrual cloth.

Revelation 8

“That man was singing: 'Deliver me, O Lord, from the unrighteous man!' His voice is in my ears like the sound of two stones struck together. His heart calls to me as if with three voices. The first says: 'I want to have my will in my own control, to sleep and to rise and to talk of pleasant things. I shall give to nature what it craves. I want money in my purse, soft clothes on my back. When I get these and similar things, I count them a greater happiness than all other gifts and the spiritual virtues of the soul.'

His second voice says: 'Death is not too hard, and the judgment is not so severe as is written; harsh threats are made as a warning, but mild punishments are given out of mercy. Therefore, so long as I can have my will in the present, let my soul make its passage as best it can in the future.'

The third voice says: 'God would not have redeemed us, if he had not wanted to give us heavenly things, nor would he have suffered, if he had not wanted to bring us back to our fatherland. Indeed, why did he suffer? Or who compelled him to suffer? Of course, I do not understand heavenly things except by hearsay, and I do not know for sure whether I should trust the Scriptures. If I could only have my will, I would have it instead of the heavenly kingdom.' You can see what that man's will is like and why his voice is like the sound of stones in my ears.

But, o friend, I answer your first voice: Your way does not tend toward heaven, nor is the passion of my love to your taste. Therefore hell lies open for you, and, because you love the low things of the earth, you will go to the regions below. I answer your second voice: Son, death will be hard for you, judgment unbearable, and flight impossible, unless you mend your ways. I tell your third voice: Brother, I did all my works out of love in order that you might become like me and so that, after having been turned away from me, you might return to me. But now my works are dead in you, my words are burdensome, and my way is neglected. What awaits you, therefore, is the torment and company of demons, because you turn your back on me, you trample underfoot the signs of my humility, and you do not consider how I stood on the cross in your sight and for your sake.

I stood there in three ways for your sake. First as a man, whose eye a dagger would penetrate; second, as a man whose heart would be pierced by a sword; third, as a man

whose every limb would shake with the pain of pressing affliction. My passion indeed was more bitter to me than a puncture in the eye; yet I suffered it out of love. My mother's sorrow moved my heart more than my own, yet I bore it. All my inner and outer parts, too, shook for a long time from pressing pain and suffering, yet I did not give up nor retreat. Thus I stood in your sight, but you forget and neglect and scorn it all. You will therefore be thrust away like an abortion and a menstrual cloth.”

Interrogation 13

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before saying: ”O Judge, I ask you: Why is your grace withdrawn quickly from some people while others are tolerated in their wickedness for a long time?”

Second question. ”Why is grace given to some people in youth, while others are deprived of it in old age?”

Third question. ”Why do some people suffer excessive hardship, while others live more or less free from hardship?”

Fourth question. ”Why is intelligence and an extremely quick mind given to some people, while others are like mindless asses?”

Fifth question. ”Why are some people exceedingly hardened, while others enjoy wonderful consolation?”

Sixth question. ”Why is more worldly success given to the wicked than to the good?”

Seventh question. ”Why does one person receive his or her calling at the beginning, while another toward the end?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: ”Friend, all my works are from the start in my foreknowledge, and everything that has been made was created for the

comfort and solace of humankind. However, since people in general prefer their own will to my will, the good things gratuitously given them are therefore justly taken away from them, so that they may know that everything concerning God is rational and just. And because many people are ungrateful for my grace and grow less devout the more gifts are given to them, the gifts are therefore soon taken away from them so as to reveal my divine purpose more quickly and so that people may not abuse my grace and receive a harsher sentence.

The reason why some people are tolerated in their wickedness for a long time is that many of them do have something tolerable to show in the midst of their evildoings. They act either as a benefit or a warning to others. Saul, for example, when he was reproached by Samuel seemed only to have sinned slightly in human eyes while David seemed to have sinned more. Yet, in that test, Saul turned disobediently from me, his God, and consulted the sorceress, whereas David grew more faithful in temptation, patiently enduring what happened and thinking it to have befallen him in return for his sins. Both Saul's ingratitude and my divine patience were revealed in my patient forbearance with him. Both my foreknowledge and David's future humility and contrition were revealed through my election of him."

Answer to the second question. "As to why grace is taken away from some people in old age, I answer: Grace is given to all in order that the giver of grace might be loved by all. Because many people are ungrateful for my divine grace toward life's end, just as Solomon was, it is right that the gifts that have not been carefully maintained before the end should be taken away at the end. The gift of my divine grace is taken away sometimes due to the recipient's negligence, because he does not consider the greatness of the gift nor what he should give in return, and sometimes as a warning to others, so that everyone in a state of grace may be ever on guard and fearful about the fall of others. Even the wise have fallen through negligence, and even those who seemed to be my friends have been brought low because of their ingratitude."

Answer to the third question. "As to why greater hardships are given to some, I answer: I am the maker of all things. Thus, no hardship comes without my permission, as it is written: 'I am God creating woe,' that is, permitting hardship. Hardship does not befall the heathen without me and without a reasonable cause. Indeed, my prophets

made many predictions about the adversities of the heathen in order that those who had neglected and abused reason might be taught by suffering, and in order that I, God, who permitted it all, should be known and glorified by every nation. Therefore, if I, God, do not spare pagans from suffering, even less will I spare those who have tasted the sweetness of my divine grace more plentifully.

There is indeed less hardship for some and more for others in order to turn people away from sin and so that those who suffer hardships in the present might be comforted in the future. All those who are judged and who judge themselves in this age will not come into future judgment. As it is written: 'They shall pass from death into life.' There are also some that are protected from suffering, but this happens so that they do not incur a harsher judgment by grumbling at their sufferings. Many there are who do not deserve to suffer in this world.

There are also some people in this life who are afflicted neither in body nor in spirit. They pass their lives as carefree as though God did not exist, or as though God is sparing them for the sake of their righteous works. Such people should be filled with dread for fear that I, God, who spare them in the present, come suddenly and condemn them more harshly as being without contrition.

There are also those who enjoy health of body but are troubled in their soul about the contempt of God, while others enjoy neither health of body nor inner consolation of soul and yet persevere as far as they are able in my service and honor. There are others, too, who are always sick, from their mother's womb up until their death. I, the God of all of these, regulate their sufferings so that nothing happens without cause or reward, for many people, who were asleep before their trials, have their eyes opened by suffering."

Answer to the fourth question. "As to why some people are more intelligent, I answer: With regard to eternal salvation, abundant wisdom does not benefit the soul, unless she also shines with goodness of life. It is in fact more useful to have less knowledge but a better way of life. Accordingly, reason is measured out to all persons in such a way that they can gain heaven, if they lead godly lives. Yet the reasoning faculty differs in many people according to their natural and spiritual dispositions.

Just as one person succeeds through virtue and Godsent zeal in perfecting the virtues, another can likewise fall into vanities through bad will and nature's bad disposition as well as an immoral upbringing. One's nature is often damaged when one sins and struggles against nature. Therefore, it is not without cause that some people have a greater reasoning faculty but to no use, as in the case of those who have knowledge but not a corresponding way of life. Other people have less knowledge but make better use of it. In some people, moreover, there is harmony between their knowledge and way of living, while still others display neither reasoning nor a decent way of life. This variation derives at times from my ordinary divine permission (either for people's benefit or humiliation and edification), but at times it is the result of ingratitude and temptation or of a natural defect or of secret sin. Sometimes, too, it occurs in order to avoid the occasion of a greater sin or because of limited natural capacity.

Whoever, then, has the grace of greater understanding should beware of the danger of a harsher judgment if he or she is negligent. Whoever lacks understanding and intellectual brilliance should take advantage of the little he has and do what he can - for he has been saved from many occasions of sin. In youth even Peter the Apostle was forgetful, and John unlearned. Yet they grasped true wisdom in old age, for they sought the source of wisdom. Solomon was quick to learn when young, and Aristotle had a subtle mind. However, they did not grasp the origin of wisdom, for they neither glorified the giver of wisdom, as they should have, nor put into practice what they knew and taught, nor studied in order to improve themselves but to improve others.

Balaam, too, had knowledge but did not practice it, which was why the she-ass rebuked him for foolishness. And young Daniel was the judge of his elders. Since, therefore, it is not scholarship that is pleasing to me but a good way of life, it is necessary to correct those who abuse their reasoning faculty, for I, the God and Lord of all, give knowledge to humankind, and I correct both wise and unwise."

Answer to the fifth question. "As to why some people are hardened, I answer: Pharaoh's hardness of heart was his own fault, not mine, because he did not want to conform himself to my divine will. Hardness of heart is nothing other than the withdrawal of my divine grace, which is withdrawn when people do not give me, their God, their free possession, namely, their will.

You can understand this by means of a parable. There was a man who owned two fields, one of which lay fallow, while the other bore fruit at certain times. A friend of his said to him: 'I wonder why, although you are wise and rich, you do not take more care to cultivate your fields or why you do not give them to others to cultivate.' The man answered: 'One of the fields, no matter how much care I take, does not produce anything but the most useless plants that are seized by noxious animals that ruin the place.' If I fertilize it with manure, it only insults me by growing wild because, though it does produce a small amount of grain, even more weeds spring up, which I refuse to gather in, since I only want pure grain. The better plan, then, is to leave a field like that uncultivated, since then the animals do not occupy the place or hide in the grass, and, if any bitter herbs do sprout, they are useful for the sheep, because, after tasting them, the sheep learn not to be fastidious about sweeter fodder.

The other field is managed according to the nature of the seasons. Some parts of it are stony and need fertilizer; other parts are wet and need warmth, while still others are dry and need watering. Thus I organize my work according to the different conditions of the field.' I, God, am like this man. The first field represents the free activity of the will given to man, which he uses more against me than for me. Even if man does do some things that please me, yet he provokes me in more ways, since man's will and my will are not in harmony. Pharaoh also acted in this way when, although he knew my power by means of sure signs, nevertheless he set his mind against me and continued on in his wickedness. Therefore, he experienced my justice, because it is only just that a person who does not make good use of small things should not be allowed to rejoice proudly in greater ones.

The second field represents the obedience of a good mind and the denial of self-will. If such a mind is dry in devotion, it should wait for the rain of my divine grace. If it is stony through impatience and hardheartedness, it should bear chastening and correction with equanimity. If it is wet through carnal lust, it should embrace abstinence and be like an animal alert to its owner's will. I, God, can proudly rejoice in a mind like that. The human will acting in opposition to me causes people to be hardhearted. I desire the salvation of everyone, but this cannot come about without the personal cooperation of each and every person in conforming his or her will to mine.

Furthermore, as to why grace and progress are not granted equally to all - that belongs to my hidden judgment. I know and measure out what is beneficial and appropriate to each one, and I hold people back in their designs so that they do not fall more deeply. Many people have received the talent of grace and are capable of working but refuse to do so. Others keep themselves from sin out of fear of punishment, or because they do not have the possibility of sinning, or because sin does not attract them. Thus, some are not given greater gifts, because I alone understand the human mind and know how to distribute my gifts.”

Answer to the sixth question. ”As to why the wicked sometimes have greater worldly success than the good, I answer: This is an indication of my great patience and love and a testing of the righteous. If I were to give temporal goods to my friends alone, then the wicked would despair and the good would grow proud. Instead, temporal goods are granted to all, so that I, God, the giver and Creator of all things, may be loved by all and so that good people who become proud may be taught righteousness by means of the wicked. It is also in order that everyone may realize that temporal things are not to be loved or preferred to me, God, but are only to be possessed for the sake of sustenance, and in order that they may be all the more zealous in my service the less they rely on temporal possessions.”

Answer to the seventh question. ”As to why one person is called at the beginning and another toward the end, I answer: I am like a mother who, seeing the hope of life in her children, gives stronger medicine to some and lighter medicine to others. And to those for whom there is no hope, she also shows compassion and does as much as she can. But if the children just get worse from her medicine, why should she take further pains? This is the way I treat my human children. The person who is foreseen to be more fervent in resolution of will and more steadfast in humility and perseverance receives grace in the beginning, and it continues to the end. A person who struggles against vice and yearns to be better deserves to be called toward the end of life. An ungrateful person, however, does not deserve to be admitted to his mother's breast.”

The ninth revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride,

blessed Bridget, and shows her how she has already been rescued and delivered from the house of the world and of vices, and that she has already been brought to live in the mansion of the Holy Spirit. And he warns her to conform herself to that same Spirit by ever persevering in purity, humility, and devotion.

Revelation 9

The Son speaks to the bride: "You are a woman who was raised in a poor home and entered the company of the great. In a poor home there are three things: stained walls, harmful smoke, and soot everywhere. But you have been brought to a home where there is beauty without stain, heat without smoke, charm that is everywhere and never fails to please. The poor home represents the world. Its walls are pride, forgetfulness of God, abundance of sin, lack of forethought for the future.

These walls leave a stain, because they ruin good works and hide God's face from humankind. The smoke represents the love of this world. It harms the eyes, because it darkens the understanding of the soul and makes her anxious about trifling vanities. The soot represents lustful pleasure, because, though it may provide temporary enjoyment, it never satisfies or fills anyone up with the everlasting good. You have been taken away from these things and brought to the mansion of the Holy Spirit, who is in me and I in him, and who also encloses you within himself. It is he who is purest and fairest and most stable, for he upholds all things. Conform yourself, therefore, to the inhabitant of the house by remaining pure, humble, and devout."

Interrogation 14

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before, saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why do animals suffer disease, though they will not obtain eternal life nor have the use of reason?"

Second question. "Why is everything born in pain, though sin is not involved in

every birth?”

Third question. ”Why does an infant carry the sin of its father, though it does not know how to sin?”

Fourth question. ”Why do unforeseen events happen so often?”

Fifth question. ”Why does a bad person die in a good death like the righteous while a righteous person sometimes dies a bad death like the unrighteous?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: ”Friend, your questioning does not come from love; however I answer you for the love of others. You ask why animals suffer infirmities. This is because there exists a disorder in them as in the rest of creation. I am the maker of every nature and have given to each its own temperament and order in which each one moves and lives. However, after man, for whose sake all things were made, set himself against his lover, that is, against me his God, then disorder entered all the rest of creation, and all the things that should have been afraid of man began to set themselves against him and oppose him. Because of this defective disorder many troubles and difficulties befall humankind as well as animals.

Besides, sometimes animals also suffer because of their own natural immoderation or as a curb to their ferocity, or as a cleansing of nature itself, or sometimes because of human sins in order that human beings, who have a greater use of reason, might consider how much punishment they deserve, when the creatures they love are plagued and taken away. But if human sins did not demand it, animals, which are under human charge, would not suffer in so singular a manner.

But not even they suffer without great justice. Their suffering occurs either to put a quicker end to their lives and lessen their wretched toils that consume their strength or on account of a change in seasons or out of human carelessness during the process of work. People should therefore fear me, their God, above all things, and treat my creatures and animals more mildly, having mercy on them for the sake of me, their Creator. I, God, accordingly decreed the Sabbath rest, because I care for all my creation.”

Answer to the second question. "As to why everything is born in pain, I answer: When humankind rejected the fairest pleasure, they immediately incurred a life of toil. And because the disorder began in and through humankind, my justice causes there to be some bitterness even for other creatures, which exist for the sake of humans, so as to temper their pleasure and foster their means of nourishment. For this reason, people are born with pain and make toilsome progress in order to render them eager to hurry to their true rest. They die naked and poor in order to make them restrain their disorderly behavior and fear the coming examination.

Likewise animals, too, give birth in pain in order for bitterness to temper their excesses, and so that they may be participants in human toil and sorrow. For this reason, insofar as humankind is so much nobler than are animals, people should love me, the Lord God, their Creator, all that much more fervently."

Answer to the third question. "As to why a child carries the sins of his father, I answer: Can anything clean come from that which is unclean? When he lost the beauty of innocence due to disobedience, the first man was thrown out of the paradise of joy and was enveloped in unclean things. There is no one to be found who can regain this innocence by himself. For this reason, I, merciful God, appeared in the flesh and instituted baptism, by means of which a child is freed from perverse uncleanness and sin. Because of this, a son shall not carry the weight of his father's sin, but each shall die in his own sin.

However it often happens that children imitate the sins of their parents. Sometimes, too, the fathers' sins are punished in their children, not because their fathers' sins go unpunished in the fathers themselves, although the punishment for sins may be put off for a time. Rather, each shall die in and be punished for his own sin. As it is written, the sins of fathers are also sometimes visited upon the fourth generation, because it is my divine justice that, when sons do not try to placate my wrath either for themselves or for their fathers, they should be punished along with their fathers whom they followed against me."

Answer to the fourth question. "As to why unforeseen events often happen, I answer: It is written that a man shall be punished by the very things in which he has

sinned. Who can fathom God's purpose? Given that many people seek me not in accordance with knowledge but for the sake of the world, some of them having more fear than is right, others taking too much for granted, still others being proud in their own counsel, I, God, working for the salvation of all, sometimes bring about that which people fear most. At times that which is loved more than is right is taken away, while at other times things that are sought and desired overanxiously are delayed, so that people may fear, love, and acknowledge me as their God always and above all things.”

Answer to the fifth question. ”As to why a bad person dies a good death like the righteous, I answer: The wicked sometimes have some good to them and perform some works of justice, and for these they must be rewarded in the present life. Likewise, the righteous do bad things at times, and for these they must receive punishment in the present or they must expect it. As everything in the present life is uncertain, and all things are left to the future, and as there is only one entrance for everyone, so there must also be only one exit for everyone, though it is not the manner of their exit but that of their life that makes people blessed.

When wicked people make the same kind of exit as the righteous, it is because of my divine justice, because they themselves desired that exit. Sometimes the devil, foreseeing the exit of his friends, announces to them beforehand the time of their death with a view to their vainglory and presumption and deception (as one finds in the so-called apocryphal books) so that they may receive the fame of righteousness after death.

On the other hand, a sorrowful death sometimes occurs to the righteous with a view to their greater reward in order that those who were always concerned about virtue in their lifetime might be free to fly to heaven through an ignominious death, inasmuch as no offscourings to cleanse can be found in them.

It is written that the lion killed the disobedient prophet but guarded the corpse without eating it. That the lion kills the body - what else does it imply if not my divine permission that allows the disobedience of the prophet to be punished? The fact that the lion did not eat the body was a proof of the good works of the prophet, so that, purged in the present, he would be found righteous in the life to come. Let everyone therefore be wary of analyzing my decisions. For, even as I am incomprehensible in virtue and power,

so too I am terrible in my judgments and counsels. And, indeed, some people, wishing to comprehend me in their wisdom, have been cut off from their hope.”

The tenth revelation in the Book of Questions, in which Christ speaks to the bride and warns her not to be disturbed if the divine words he has given her in revelations sometimes seem obscure or doubtful or uncertain. This is due to certain reasons explained here or because of God's hidden justice. He advises her, however, always to await the results and promises of his words with patience and fear and perseverance in humility, in order not to lose the promised grace because of ingratitude. He also says that many things have been expressed in a corporeal fashion that will not be effected corporally but spiritually.

Revelation 10

The Son speaks to the bride: "Do not be disturbed if I express one thing more obscurely, and another more plainly; or if I now call someone my servant or son and friend and then he turns out to be the opposite. My words can be interpreted in diverse ways: just as I told you of one man, that his hand would be his death, or of another, that he would no longer approach my table. These things are said either because I am going to tell you why I said it or because you will see how the truth turns out in actual fact, as is clear from the two cases just mentioned. Sometimes I also say things in an obscure way, so that you may feel both fear and joy - fear in case they should turn out differently because of my divine patience (for I know how hearts change) but also joy because my will is always fulfilled.

So too, in the Old Law, I said many things that should be understood spiritually rather than corporally, for example, concerning the temple and David and Jerusalem - in order that carnal men might learn to desire spiritual things. In order to test the constancy of faith and conscientiousness of my friends, I said and promised many things that could - according to the different effects of my Spirit - be understood in different ways by good and bad.

This was also done so that individuals in different states of life might have occasion to be trained and tested and formed by me. It is due to my justice that some things have been said in an obscure way, in order that my plan might remain hidden and so that each person might patiently await my grace and avoid becoming lukewarm while waiting - which might have happened if my plan had always been indicated with a definite date. I have also promised many things that have been taken back because of human ingratitude. Many things, too, have been expressed corporeally but effected spiritually, for example, concerning Jerusalem and Zion. For, as it is written, the Jews are the blind and deaf People of the Lord.”

Interrogation 15

First question. Again the monk appeared on his rung as before, saying: ”O Judge, I ask you: Why are many things created that seem to be of no use?”

Second question. ”Why are souls not commonly seen either remaining in the body or going out of it?”

Third question. ”Why are the prayers of your friends not always heard?”

Fourth question. ”Why are many people who want to do evil not allowed to do it?”

Fifth question. ”Why does evil happen to some people who do not deserve it?”

Sixth question. ”Why do those who have God's Spirit sin?”

Seventh question. ”Why does the devil stay close to some people and is continuously with them but never with others?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: ”Friend, just as my works are many, so they are also wonderful and unfathomable. Yet none of them, many though they are, is without a purpose. Truly, humankind is like a child brought up in a dark prison. If

he were told of the existence of light and stars, he would not believe it, because he has never seen it. Likewise, after the human race had abandoned the true light, it did not delight in anything but darkness, as the saying goes: 'a person who grows accustomed to evil learns to like it.' Therefore, while human intellect may be darkened, yet there is no shadow or change in me. I arranged and continue to arrange all things in so orderly, wise, and honest a fashion that nothing has been made without cause or use - not the highest mountain nor the desert or the lakes, nor even beasts or poisonous reptiles.

Just as I provide for humanity, so I provide for the needs of other creatures. I am like a man who reserves some places for strolling, others for the storage of utensils and tools, others for keeping both tame and wild animals, others for fortifications and secret councils, others adapted for the proper use of land, still others for the correction of humankind. Thus I, God, have arranged all things in a rational way, some for human use and enjoyment, others for the various haunts of wild beasts and birds, some to discipline and curb human greed, others for the meeting of the elements, some for the admiration of my works, others for the punishment of sinners and the meeting of higher and lower beings, and still others for a cause known and reserved to me alone.

Look, a small, puny bee knows how to draw on many sources for the making of honey; so too other tiny or large creatures surpass human beings in cleverness both in recognizing herbs and in considering their own advantage; and there are many things that are useful for them but harmful for humans. What wonder is it then that man's wits are slow to discern and understand my wonders, when he is surpassed even by the least of creatures? Look, what is nastier than a frog or snake, or what is more contemptible than a burr or a stinging nettle or the like? And yet those things are very good for those who can understand my works. And so whatever exists has some usefulness in it, and every thing that has motion understands how its nature can survive and grow strong.

Therefore, given the wonder of my works and how all things praise me, human beings, who are so much more beautiful and so much more highly placed than other creatures, should accordingly realize that they are that much more obliged to honor me. If the onrush of the waters were not repressed by the mountain boundaries, where would people dwell in safety? And if animals had no place of refuge, how would they escape insatiable human greed? And if people got all their wishes, would they then yearn for

heaven? If animals did not toil or live in fear, they would grow weak and perish. Thus, most of my work is hidden, so that people will recognize and honor me, God, wonderful and unfathomable, out of wonderment at my wisdom in creating so many creatures.”

Answer to the second question. ”As to why one cannot see souls, I answer: The soul is far better by nature than the body, because it is of my divine power and is immortal, having fellowship with the angels and being more excellent than all the planets and nobler than the whole world. And because the soul is of a most noble and fiery nature, giving life and warmth to the body, and because it is spiritual, it can in no way be seen by bodies except through bodily images.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why my friends who ask me for something in prayer are not always heard by me, I answer: I am like a mother who sees her son asking for something against his health and puts off granting his request, checking his tears with a display of indignation. This indignation is not anger but great mercy. In the same way I, God, do not always hear my friends, because I see what is needful to their health better than they do themselves.

Did not Paul and others pray efficaciously and yet were not heard? But why? It is because my friends have defects in the midst of an abundance of virtues and aspects that need to be cleansed, and, therefore, their prayers are not heard. This is in order that they might grow all the more humble and zealous toward me the more lovingly they are kept unharmed and are defended by me in temptations of sin. It is therefore a great sign of love that my friends are not always heard in their prayers, since it is for the sake of their greater reward and as a test of their perseverance.

Just as the devil tries, if he can, to spoil the life of the righteous through sin or an ignominious death, in order to weaken the perseverance of the faithful, so too it is not without cause that I permit the righteous to be tested, in order that their steadfastness may become known to others and so that they may receive a more sublime crown. And just as the devil is not ashamed to tempt his own people, when he sees that they are very quick to sin, so too, for a time, I do not spare my chosen people when I see that they are ready for every good action.”

Answer to the fourth question. "As to why some who wish to do evil are not allowed, I answer: If a father has two sons, one obedient and the other disobedient, he opposes his disobedient son as much as he can so that his son does not sin in his wickedness. He tests the obedient son, however, and encourages him on to greater things in such a way as to encourage even the disobedient son by the example of the other son's readiness. And so I often do not allow the wicked to sin, because, in between their wicked acts, they do some good, and either benefit themselves or others. Justice accordingly demands that they should not be immediately handed over to the devil nor always be allowed to carry out their wishes."

Answer to the fifth question. "As to why bad things happen to people who do not deserve them, I answer: I alone, God, know all who are good and what each one deserves. Many things seem indeed to be beautiful but are not. Moreover, gold is tested by fire. Consequently, the righteous sometimes experience difficulties so that they may give good example to others and earn their crown. Job was tested in this way, for he was good before his afflictions, but during and after his afflictions he was recognized as even more so. Yet, as to why I afflicted him, who can examine it? Who can know it but I myself, who blessed him early on and kept him from sin and sustained him in his trials? Just as I blessed him beforehand with my grace without any merits of his own, so too I tested him with justice and mercy, for no one is made just in my sight except by my grace."

Answer to the sixth question. "As to why those who have my Spirit sin, I answer: The Spirit of my divinity is not tied down but blows where it will and withdraws when it will. It does not dwell in a vessel that is subject to sin but only in one that has love. I, God, am love and where I am, there is freedom. Accordingly, those who receive my spirit can still sin, if they want, for every human being has free will. And when people set their will against me, my Spirit, which is in them, withdraws from them, or otherwise they are rebuked in order that they may correct their will.

Balaam wished to curse my people but I did not let him. Although he was a bad and greedy prophet, yet sometimes he said something good, not of himself but through my Spirit. Often the gift of my Spirit is given to both the good and the wicked. Otherwise, those great and eloquent teachers would not have been able to dispute of such high things if they had not had my Spirit; and they would not have raved on so foolishly, if

they had not turned their senses against me and fell into pride, wanting to know more than they should.”

Answer to the seventh question. ”As to why the devil stays closer and is always with some people, I answer: The devil is like an executioner and a tester of the righteous. By my permission he torments some people's souls, darkens the conscience of others, and torments even the bodies of others. He torments the souls of those who, sinning against reason, subject themselves to every kind of impurity and infidelity. He disturbs the consciences and bodies of those who are tormented and cleansed for certain sins in this world. These torments also occur to children of either sex, both to pagans and Christians, either due to the carelessness of the parents or to a defect of nature or to instill fear and humility in certain people or because of certain sins. But my justice mercifully disposes that such as these who do not have occasion to sin either are not harshly punished or receive a more sublime crown.

Many such things also occur to brute beasts either for the punishment of others or for a sooner end to their lives or because of some imbalance in their nature. Therefore it is by my permission that the devil sticks closer to some people and is nearer to them, either for their greater humility and as a warning, or because of their greater crown and their solicitude in seeking me, or in order to purge sins in the present life, or because some people deserve a punishment that begins in the present and lasts forever.”

The eleventh revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and tells her why and when he began to give her and pour into her the words of the divine revelations in spiritual vision. And he tells her that these words of the revelations, which are contained in these books, have principally these four virtues: they are spiritually satisfying to anyone thirsting for true love, they warm the cold, they cheer the troubled, and they heal sick souls.

Revelation 11

The Son of God speaks: ”A wholesome drink can be made with natural means, such

as cold iron and hard stone, a dry tree and a bitter herb. But how? Well, if steel were to fall heavily upon a sulfurous mountain, then fire would come out of the steel and ignite the mountain. Its heat would cause an olive tree planted nearby, which is dry on the outside but is full of oil inside, to begin to flow so abundantly that even bitter herbs planted at the foot of the olive tree would grow sweet, and then a wholesome drink could be made from them.

This is a spiritual allegory of what I have done for you. Your heart was as cold as steel toward my love, and yet a small spark of love for me was stirred up in it when you began to think of me as worthy of all love and honor. But that heart of yours then fell upon a sulfurous mountain, when the glory and delight of the world turned against you and when your husband, whom you loved above all others in the flesh, was taken away from you in death.

In truth, lusty pleasure and worldly delight are well compared to a sulfurous mountain, since they have within themselves the swelling of the spirit and the stench of concupiscence and the fire of punishment. And when your soul was gravely pierced with disturbance at the death of your husband, then the spark of my love, which lay as though hidden and enclosed, began to go forth, for, having considered the vanity of the world, you surrendered your whole will to me and desired me above all things. Because of that spark of love, you developed a taste for the dry olive tree, that is, for the words of the Gospels and the discourse of those learned men of mine, and abstinence so pleased you that everything that previously seemed bitter began to become sweet for you.

And when the olive tree began to flow and the words of my revelations came down upon you in Spirit, somebody standing on the mountain cried out, saying: 'By this drink thirst is slaked, the cold are warmed, the troubled are cheered, the infirm recover.' I myself, God, am the one who cries out. My words, which you hear from me frequently in spiritual vision, are like a good drink satisfying to those who thirst for true love; second, they warm the cold; third, they cheer the troubled; fourth, they heal those who are weak in soul."

Interrogation 16

First question. Again the monk appeared as before standing on his rung and saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why does the gospel say that the goats are placed on your left, the sheep on your right? Do you really delight in such things?"

Second question. "Since you are the Son of God, equal to the Father, why is it written that neither you nor the angels knows the hour of judgment?"

Third question. "If your Holy Spirit has spoken through the evangelists, why is there so much variance in the Gospels?"

Fourth question. "Since your incarnation was so important for the salvation of the human race, why did you delay so long in becoming incarnate?"

Fifth question. "Since the human soul is so much better than the world, why do you not send your friends and preachers always and everywhere?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "Friend, you do not ask in order to know but so as to let your wickedness be known. There is surely nothing of flesh or represented by flesh in my divinity, for my divinity is Spirit. Nor can the good and the wicked live together in me, no more than light can coexist with darkness. There is neither right and left in my divinity, as the physical image portrays it, nor are those on my right happier than those on the left, but this is all said figuratively.

By 'right hand' is understood the sublimity of my divine glory, by 'left hand' the lack and privation of all good. Furthermore, sheep or goats are not to be found in that wondrous glory of mine, where nothing is found that is bodily and soiled or changeable. Rather, human characters are often described by means of comparisons and by symbols of animals; for example, innocence is signified by sheep, impurity by goats. In other words, the incontinent man is signified as placed on the left, where there is a lack of all good. You should understand that I, God, sometimes make use of human words and similes so that the little child may have something to suck on, and so that the perfect may

become more perfect. It is also to fulfill the Scripture that says that the Virgin's Son has been placed as a sign of contradiction so that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed.”

Answer to the second question. ”As to why I, the Son of God, said that I do not know the hour of judgment, I answer: It is written that Jesus progressed in age and wisdom. Anything that progresses and regresses is changeable; but the deity is unchangeable. Thus I, the Son of God, coeternal with the Father, progressed in the sense that I did so in my human nature. What I did not know was what my humanity did not know, but, according to my divine nature, I both knew and know all things. For the Father does nothing unless I, the Son, also do it. Can the Father know anything unknown to me, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Of course not. But the Father alone, with whom I, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one substance, one deity, and one will, knows the hour of the judgment, and not the angels nor any other creature.”

Answer to the third question. ”As to why, if the Holy Spirit has spoken through them, there is so much variance among the evangelists, I answer: It is written that the Holy Spirit is various in his operations in that he distributes his gifts to his chosen people in varied ways. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is like a man with a balance in his hand, measuring and balancing the scales until the balance reaches equilibrium and comes to rest. A balance is handled in different ways by a person who is used to it and by one who is unused to it, by one who is strong and by one who is weak.

So the Holy Spirit now rises like a balance in human hearts, and then sinks again. He rises when he uplifts the mind through keenness of understanding and through the soul's devotion and through the inflaming of spiritual desire. He sinks when he allows the mind to fall into difficulties and to be anxious about trifling vanities and upset by tribulation. Therefore, just as the balance cannot reach equilibrium unless the weights are adjusted, and it is controlled by a guiding hand, so too measure and a good life, a simple intention, and discretion in works and virtues are necessary for the operation of the Holy Spirit.

When I, the Son of God, visible in the flesh, preached different things in different places, I had different kinds of followers and listeners. Some followed me out of love,

others in order to have an occasion for fault finding or out of curiosity. Some of my followers had a keener intellect, others a simpler. Accordingly, I spoke simply to instruct the simple. I also spoke deeply to awaken the wonder of the wise. Sometimes I spoke darkly in parables, which gave some people an occasion for commenting. At other times I repeated things said earlier and sometimes added to or simplified them. So it is no wonder that those who arranged the gospel narrative recorded different but still true things, for some of them wrote it down word for word, others captured the sense but not the exact words. Some wrote things they had heard but not seen; others placed earlier events later; others wrote more about my divinity; yet all of them as the Spirit gave them to speak.

However, I want you to know that only those evangelists are to be accepted whom the church accepts. Many people attempted to write who had zeal but not in accordance with my knowledge. Recall what I said in today's reading: 'Destroy this temple and I shall rebuild it.' Those who testified to what they heard were truthful regarding the words they heard, but they were false witnesses because they did not consider the sense of my words, for I spoke concerning my body. Likewise when I said: 'Unless you eat my flesh, you shall not have life.' Many hearers went away, because they did not consider the conclusion that I added: 'My words are spirit and life, that is, they have a spiritual meaning and force. It is not remarkable that they went astray, inasmuch as they did not follow me out of love. Thus the Holy Spirit rises in human hearts like a balance, at one time speaking corporeally, at another spiritually. And he sinks when the human heart is hardened against God or falls into heresies or worldliness and is darkened.'

At that moment the Judge said to the monk who sat questioning him on the rung of the ladder: "Friend, you have posed subtle questions to me several times already. Now, for the sake of my bride who is standing here, I ask you: Why does your soul, which can understand and distinguish between good and bad, love perishable things rather than heavenly ones and does not live in accord with its understanding?" The monk replied: "Because I act against reason and allow my bodily senses to prevail over reason." And Christ said: "Then your conscience shall be your judge."

Then Christ said to the bride: "See, daughter, how great the effects in the man are not only of the malice of the devil but also of a deformed conscience! And this comes

about because he does not struggle against temptation as he ought. But the master known to you did not act in this way. Indeed the Spirit sank in him, tempting him to such an extent that it seemed as if all the heresies stood before him and said with one mouth: 'We are the truth: But he did not trust his thoughts and did not think beyond himself. For that reason he was rescued and became knowledgeable all the way from 'In the beginning' to the 'alpha and omega: just as it was promised to him.'

Answer to the fourth question. "As to why I delayed so long in becoming incarnate, I answer: My incarnation was indeed necessary, for through it the curse was lifted and all things were reconciled in heaven and on earth. Yet it was necessary for people to be instructed first by natural law, and then by written law. Through natural law it became clear what human love was and how much it was worth. Through the written law humankind understood its weakness and wretchedness and began to seek medicine.

It was right for the doctor to come just when the sickness was raging, so that where disease abounded, the medicine might even more abound. There were also many righteous people under the dispensations of natural law and of written law, and many who had the Holy Spirit and made many predictions and instructed others in all virtue, and awaited me, the Savior. These approached my mercy, not everlasting punishment."

Answer to the fifth question. "As to why, given that the human soul is better than the world, preachers are not sent always and everywhere, I answer: The soul is indeed worthier and nobler than all the world, and more lasting than all things. The soul is more worthy, because she is a spiritual creature like the angels and made for eternal joy. She is more noble because she was made in the image of my divinity, both immortal and eternal. Because humankind is worthier and nobler than all creatures, the human race should live more nobly as having been endowed with reason beyond all the rest. If they abuse their reason and my divine gifts, what wonder is it if, at the time of judgment, I punish that which had been overlooked in the time of mercy?

So preachers are not sent always and everywhere, because I, God, foreseeing the hardness of many hearts, spare my chosen ones the trouble, so that they need not work in vain. And because many, deliberately sinning with full knowledge, decide to persevere in sin rather than to be converted, they are not worthy to hear the messengers of salvation.

But now, my friend, I shall end my response to your thoughts here and you shall end your life. Now you shall see what good your wordy eloquence and human favor can do for you. O how happy you would have been if you had attended to your profession and vow!”

Then the Spirit said to the bride: ”Daughter, this man, whom you saw asking so many questions - and such questions - still lives in the flesh but will not remain alive for one day more. The thoughts and affections of his heart were revealed to you in likenesses, not for his greater disgrace, but for the salvation of other souls. And now his hope and life shall be ended together with his thoughts and affections.”

The twelfth revelation in the Book of Questions in which Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, and tells her that she should not be troubled by the fact that he does not immediately do justice in the case of a man who is a great sinner. For he defers the sentence of justice in order that the justice to be done in this case might be manifested to others. He also says that his divine words in this book of the Heavenly Revelations must first grow to full ripeness and bear fruit and, afterward, produce their effect and force in the world. These words are like oil in a lamp, that is, in a virtuous soul, in which the soul is steeped and made to burn and shine with a wonderful splendor with the coming of the Holy Spirit. He also adds that the words of the revelations shall first rise up and bear fruit elsewhere than in the kingdom of Sweden, which is where they began to be divinely revealed to the same bride.

Revelation 12

The Son of God speaks: ”Why are you troubled because I put up with that man so patiently? Do you not know that it is a grave thing to burn eternally? I put up with him therefore to the very last moment so that through him my justice might be manifested to others. Wherever dye-plants are sown, if they are cut down before their time, they cannot be used for dyeing as well as when they are cut at the proper time. My words, which are to be manifested with justice and mercy, should in the same way grow and bear fruit until they are fully ripe, and then they will suit the object to which they are applied better and

will color my virtue suitably.

But why are you troubled because that man does not put trust in my words without having the evidence of clearer signs? Did you give birth to him or do you know his inner life as I do? This man is indeed like a lamp that burns and shines. As soon as tallow is added to it, the wick joins and sticks to it. He is thus a lamp of virtues, a lamp fit to receive my divine grace. As soon as my words are poured into him, they liquefy fully and penetrate into his inmost heart. Is it any wonder that the tallow liquefies when there is a fire burning in the lamp that liquefies it and keeps the lamp burning?

This is truly the fire of my Spirit, which is within you and speaks to you, and this same Spirit is also within him and speaks to him, although in a more hidden and, for him, more useful way. This fire kindles the lamp of his heart to labor in my honor. It also kindles his soul so as to receive the suet of my grace and my words that sweetly sustain and more fully fatten the soul when it comes to deeds.

Therefore, do not fear but persevere steadfast in faith! If these words came from your own spirit or the spirit of this world, then you would be right to tremble. But because they are from my Spirit, the same as the holy prophets had, you should not fear but rejoice, unless you are more afraid of a vain worldly reputation than you are of the postponement of my divine words.

Listen further to what I say. This kingdom is mingled with great and long unpunished sin. This is why my words cannot yet shoot up and bear fruit here, as I will explain to you by means of a comparison. If the kernel of a nut were planted in the earth and a heavy object were placed on top that prevented it from shooting up, then the nut, being of a good and fresh nature and unable to shoot up because of the weight on top that presses down on it, searches about in the earth for a less heavily weighed-down place where it can shoot up.

There it takes deep and stable root so as not only to produce the fairest fruit but also to break through every impediment with the strength of the trunk that grows up, spreading itself over everything that was weighing it down. This kernel symbolizes my words that cannot yet shoot up properly in this kingdom on account of the pressure of

sin. They shall shoot up and bear fruit first elsewhere, until the hardness of the earth in this kingdom is broken up and mercy uncovered.”

The thirteenth revelation in the Book of Questions in which God the Father speaks to blessed Bridget and instructs her deeply concerning the power of the five sacred places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and about the grace received by pilgrims visiting those places with devout humility and true love. He says that in these places there was a vessel that was closed and not closed, a lion born that was seen and was not seen, a lamb shorn and not shorn, a snake placed that lay and did not lay, and where there was also an eagle that flew and did not fly. He explains all these images. There follows an explanation and clarification of the meaning of the imagery.

Revelation 13

God the Father speaks: ”There was a lord whose servant said to him: 'See, your fallow-land has been plowed and the roots have been pulled out. When will the wheat be sown?' The lord answers him: 'Although the roots look like they have been pulled out, there still remain some old stubble and stumps that will be loosened in the spring by rain and wind. Therefore wait patiently until sowing time comes!' The servant answers: 'What shall I do then between spring and harvest?' The lord says: 'I know five places. All those who go to them receive fivefold fruit, if they come pure and empty of pride and burning with love.

In the first place there was a vessel closed and not closed, a vessel small and not small, a vessel bright and not bright, a vessel empty and not empty, a vessel clean and not clean. In the second place a lion was born that was seen and not seen, heard and not heard, touched and not touched, acknowledged and unknown, held and not held. In the third place there was a lamb that was shorn and not shorn, a lamb wounded and not wounded, a lamb crying and not crying, a lamb suffering and not suffering, a lamb dying and not dying.

In the fourth place a snake was placed that lay and did not lay, moved and did not

move, heard and did not hear, saw and did not see, sensed and did not sense. In the fifth place there was an eagle that flew and did not fly, came to a place from which it had never departed, rested and did not rest, was renewed and was not renewed, rejoiced and did not rejoice, was honored and was not honored.”

Explanation and clarification of the above images. The Father speaks: ”That vessel about which I told you was Mary, daughter of Joachim, mother of Christ's humanity. She was a vessel closed and not closed: closed to the devil but not to God. Just as a stream desiring but unable to enter a vessel that stands in its way seeks other entries and outlets, so the devil, like a stream of vices, desired with all his stratagems to get near the heart of Mary. But he was never able to incline her spirit to the least little sin, for she was closed for his temptation, since the stream of my Spirit had flowed into her heart and filled her with a special grace.

Second, Mary, the mother of my Son, was a vessel small and not small: small and modest in the humility of her lowliness, but great and not small in my divine love. Third, Mary was a vessel empty and not empty: empty of every lust and sin, not empty but full of heavenly sweetness and every goodness. Fourth, Mary was a vessel bright and not bright: bright, since every soul is created beautiful by me, but the soul of Mary grew to such a perfection of light that my Son settled down in her soul, in the beauty of which heaven and earth rejoiced. But this vessel was not bright among men in that she scorned the honors and riches of the world.

Fifth, Mary was a vessel clean and not clean: truly clean because she is all beautiful, and there was not so much uncleanness in her as to fit on the point of a needle. But the vessel was not clean in the sense that she came from the race of Adam and was born of sinners, though she herself was conceived without sin in order that my Son might be born of her without sin. So whoever comes to that place where Mary was born and reared will not only be cleansed but will become a vessel for my honor.

The second place is Bethlehem where my Son was born like a lion. He was seen and held in his human nature, but was invisible and unknown in his divine nature.

The third place is Calvary where my Son was wounded and died like an innocent lamb according to his human nature, but remained impassible and immortal according to

his divine nature.

The fourth place was the garden where my Son's grave was, and where his human nature was placed like a contemptible snake and lay there, though he was everywhere according to his divine nature.

The fifth place was the Mount of Olives from which my Son flew in his human nature like an eagle to heaven where he ever was according to his divine nature. He was renewed and rested according to his human nature although he was always at rest and always the same according to his divine nature.

Therefore, whoever comes clean and with a good and perfect intention to these places will see and taste the sweetness and goodness of me, God.

And when you come to these places I will show you more.”

Book 6

We don't have all chapters in Book 6 yet.

Our Lord tells Saint Bride by example that nothing pleases God so much as that he be loved above all things.

Chapter 50

The Mother of God speaks to the spouse of Christ, Saint Bride, and says: "Nothing pleases God so much as that man love him above all things. See, I shall tell you by the example of a heathen woman who knew nothing of the Christian faith; but she thought thus to herself: 'I know', she says, 'of what matter I am, and how I came to be in my mother's womb. I believe also that it is impossible for me to have a body, joints, bowels, and senses, unless someone had given these to me. And therefore there is some creator and maker who made me so fair a person of mankind, and would not make me as foul as worms and serpents.

Therefore it seems to me that though I had many husbands, if they all called me, I should rather go at one call from my maker than at the calling of them all. I have also many sons and daughters, yet if I see them with food in their hands and I know that my maker was hungry, truly I would take away the food from my children's hands and gladly give it to my maker. I have also many possessions which I dispose of at my own will. Yet if I knew the will of my maker, I would most desire to leave my own will and dispose of them according to his praise'.

But see, daughter, what God did with this heathen woman. Truly, he sent his friend to her, who informed her in the holy faith. And God himself visited her heart, and you may well understand by the woman's words, for when that man of God preached to her that there was one God without beginning and end who is the Creator of all things, she answered: 'It is well to be believed, that he who made me and all things has no maker

above him. And it is likely true that his life is everlasting who could give me life'.

When this woman heard that the same Creator took mankind of a Virgin and preached with his own mouth, she answered: 'It is well to believe all virtuous works are of God. But, Friend of God, tell me what are the words that come from my Creator? For I will leave my own will and obey his according to all his words'.

Then, the Friend of God preaching to her of his Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection, she answered with weeping eyes and said: 'Blessed is that God who so patiently showed his charity on earth that he had for us in heaven. Therefore if I have loved him first, for he made me, now I am much more bound to love him, for he showed me the right way and bought me with his holy blood. I am also bound to serve him with all my might and all my limbs, for he bought me with all his limbs. And furthermore, I am bound to put away from me all my own will and desire that I previously had for my goods, possessions, children, family relations and friends, and only to desire my Creator in his bliss and in that life that never ends' ”.

Then said the Mother of God: ”See, daughter, this woman obtained a many fold reward for her love, and so is each day reward given to each one after that time that God had lived in this world”.

This is a revelation sent to the holy spouse of Christ, Saint Bridget, in which our Lady Saint Mary reproached the pride of women in their stance, bearing, speech, dress, and other behavior, with the example of three wretched women: of which one was in Hell, another in Purgatory, and the third, alive.

Chapter 52

The holy spouse of Christ, Saint Bridget, spoke to our Lord Jesus Christ words of love and praise for the great grace that he shaped with her, and said: ”Praise to you, almighty God, for all the things that have been made, and praise for all your virtues. Service be rendered to you by all creatures for your great love and charity. I, therefore,

always unworthy and sinful from my childhood, thank you, my God, that you do not deny grace to any sinner who asks for it. But you spare and have mercy for all. O my sweetest God, it is truly marvelous that you work with me; for when it pleases you, you bring my body into a spiritual sleep, and then you excite and raise up my soul to see and hear and feel spiritual things.

O my most sweet God, how sweet have been your words to my soul, which swallows them as the most sweet food. And then enter with joy into my heart, for when I hear your words, I am both full and hungry; full, because nothing delights me except your words; hungry, because the more I hear them the more fervently I want them. Therefore, blissful God, give me help always to do your will”.

Our Lord Jesus Christ answered and said: ”I am without beginning and without end. And all things which are made by my power; all things are disposed by my wisdom and all things are governed by my judgement and will; and all my works are ordered by charity. Therefore for me there is nothing that is impossible. But that heart is over-hard which neither loves me nor fears me, since I am ruler of all things and Judge. And yet man fulfills the will rather of the devil, who is my tormentor and a deceiver, who gives out venom largely through the world, for which souls may not live, but they are drowned down into the death of Hell. This venomous sin, which, though it is bitter to the soul, yet to many tastes sweet, and each day it is drawn out of the devil's hand upon many people.

But who ever heard any such things, that life is offered to all, and they choose death rather than life. Nevertheless I, God of all, am patient and have compassion on their wretchedness. For I do as a king who sends wine to his servants and says: 'Pour it forth to many, for it is wholesome. It gives health to the sick, mirth to them who are depressed, and a courageous heart to those who are whole.' But yet the wine is not sent but by an appropriate vessel. So I have sent my words, which are like wine, to my servants by you, who are my vessel, which I will fill and draw out after my own will. My Holy Spirit shall teach you where you will go and what you shall say. Therefore speak joyfully and without fear the things that I order; for there is no one who shall prevail against me”.

Then answered the spouse, Saint Bridget: ”O king of all glory and bliss, giver of all

wisdom and granter of all virtues, why do you choose me for such work, who has wasted my body in sins? I am like a donkey, unlearned and unwise and defective in virtues; and I have trespassed in all things and amended nothing”.

Our Lord Jesus Christ answered: ”If money or other metal were presented to a lord, who should marvel, though he made of it for himself crowns or rings or coins to his own profit. So it is no marvel though I receive the hearts of my friends presented to me and do my will in them. And just as much as one has less understanding and another more, so do I use the conscience of each as is expedient to my praise. For the heart of a rightful man is my money; therefore be firm and ready to do my will”.

Then spoke the Mother of God to Saint Bridget, saying: ”What do the proud women say in your kingdom?” Saint Bridget answered: ”O Lady, I am one of them, and therefore I am ashamed to speak in your presence”. ”Though I know it better than you, yet I would hear it from you”.

Saint Bridget answered: ”When”, she said, ”true humility was preached to us, we said that our ancestors willed to us and gave us in heritage great possessions and a good education as to behavior and class. Why therefore should I not follow them? My mother sat with the first and the highest and was clad and arrayed nobly, having many servants and educating them with praise. Why should I not also pass on such things to my daughter, who has learned to bear herself nobly and to live with bodily joy and to die with great praise from the world?”

The Mother of God answered: ”Each woman who has these words and follows them in deed goes by the true way to Hell. And therefore such an answer is very difficult. What does it profit to have such words, when the Creator of all things suffered his body to live and dwell on earth in all humility from the time of his birth until his death, and never wore upon himself the clothing of pride. Truly, such women do not consider his face, how he stood living and dead upon the cross, bloody and pale from pain; nor those who reckon nothing of the criticism which he heard, nor of his despicable death which he chose; neither have they in mind the place where he gave up the spirit, for where thieves and robbers had received many wounds, there was my Son wounded.

And I, who before all creatures, am most dear to him, and in me is all humility, was present there. And therefore they who did such proud and pompous things, and given other occasion to follow them, are like a sprinkler, which, when it is filled with a burning liquid, burns and befouls all of them whom it sprinkles. Right so do the proud give examples of pride and very grievously they burn souls by evil examples.

And therefore I will now do like a good mother, who, fearing for her children, makes them see the rod, which the servants also see. But the children, seeing the rod, fear to offend their mother, thanking her for threatening them but not beating them. The servants fear to be beaten if they trespass. And so from dreading the mother the children do more good deeds than they did before, and the servants do less evil.

So truly, because I am the mother of mercy, therefore I will show you the reward of sin, that the friends of God may be more fervent in the charity of God. And sinners, knowing their peril, flee from sin, at least, from fear. And in this way I have mercy on both good and evil; on the good people, that they may obtain and get more crowns and rewards in heaven, on the wicked, that they suffer less pain. And there is none who is so great a sinner, but I am ready to help him; and my Son to give him grace, if he ask mercy with charity”.

After this, there appeared three women: that is to say, the mother, and the daughter, and the niece, that is, that daughter's daughter. But the mother and the granddaughter appeared dead, and the daughter appeared to be alive. The said dead mother seemed to come creeping out of a foul and dark clay ditch; her heart was drawn out of her body, her lips cut off, and her chin trembled; her teeth, shining, white and long, ground and chattered together; her nostrils were all gnawn; her eyes were put out, hanging down on her cheeks between sinews; her forehead was hollow; and instead of her forehead there was a great and dark depth.

In her head the head pan failed and had fallen away, and the brain boiled up as if it had been lead, and flowed out like black pitch. Her neck turned about like wood that is turned in the instrument of a joiner, against which was set a blade of the sharpest iron, cutting and shaving away without any comfort. Her breast was open and full of worms long and short; and each of them wallowed hither and thither upon each other. Her arms

were like the hafts or handles of a grinding stone. Her hands were like keys full of knots and long. The chines or vertebrae of her back were all dissolved, each from the other; and one going up, another going down, they never ceased moving. A long and large serpent came forth from the nether part of her stomach to the other parts; and joining the head and tail together as a round bow, went round about her bowels continually, like a wheel. Her hips and her legs seemed like two rough staves of thorns full of most sharp prickles. Her feet were like toads.

Then this dead mother spoke to her daughter who was alive saying: "Hear you, altogether my tom and venomous daughter. Woe is me that I was ever your mother. I am she who set you in the nest of pride, in which you, made hot, grew until you came of age. And then it was pleasing to you that you had spent your time in that nest. Therefore I say to you that as often as you turn your eyes to look at, or see pride, which I taught you, so often cast you boiling venom in my eyes with insufferable burning heat. As often as you speak words of pride which you learned from me, so often swallow I most bitter drink. As often as your ears are filled with the wind of pride which the waves of arrogance and pride excite and stir up in you, that is to say, to hear praise of your own body and to desire praise from the world, which you learned from me, so often comes to my ears a fearful and dreadful sound, with blowing and burning wind.

Woe, therefore, to me, who am poor and wretched; poor because I have nor feel anything of good, and wretched because I have abundance and plenty of evil. But you, daughter, are like the tail of a cow which, going in foul clay, as often as she moves her tail, as often does she befoul and sprinkles those near her. So you, daughter, are like a cow; for you have no goodly wisdom, and you go after the works and impulses of your body.

Therefore as often as you follow the works of my custom, that is to say, those sins which I taught you, so often is my pain renewed, and the more grievously it burns upon me. Therefore, my daughter, why are you proud of your generation and parentage? For it would be honor and respect to you that the uncleanness of my bowels was your pillow, my shameful member was your birthing, and the uncleanness of my blood was your clothing when you were born? Therefore, now, my womb, in which you lay, is altogether eaten by worms.

But why, daughter, do I complain to you, when I ought more to complain about myself? Because there are three things which torment me most grievously in my heart. The first is that I, made by God for heavenly joy, misused my conscience and have disposed myself to the sorrows of Hell. The second is that while God made me fair as an angel, I deformed and misshaped myself so that I am more like the devil than an angel of God. The third is that in the time given to me, I made a very evil change. For I received a little thing, short and transitory, that is to say, delight in sin, for which now I feel endless evil, that is, the pain of Hell”.

Then said this dead mother to the spouse of Christ, Saint Bridget: ”You”, she said, ”who see me, see me not but by bodily likeness. For if you should see me in that form in which I am, you would die from fear; and all my members are devils. And therefore the Scripture is true which says that as rightful men are members of God, so sinners are members of the devil. Right so I now experience the devil's arms fastened into my soul; for the will of my heart has disposed me to so much filth, deformity and misshapeness.

But hear now more. It seems to you that my feet are toads. That is because I stood firmly in sin; therefore now fiends stand firmly in me. And always biting and gnawing at me, they are never full. My legs and my thighs are as staves full of prickly thorns, for I had a will after fleshly delight and my own lust.

That each chine of my back is loose, and each of them moves against the other; that is therefore because the joy of my lust sometimes went too much upward for worldly solace and comfort, and sometimes too much downward because of too much depression, gouching, and wrath because of the adversity and disease of the world. And there as the back is moved and stirred after the motions of the head, so ought I to have been stable and moveable according to God's will, who is the head of all good. But because I did not do so, therefore I justly suffer these pains which you now see.

That a serpent creeps forth from the lower parts of my stomach to the higher parts, and standing like a bow turned about as a wheel, is because my lust and delight were inordinate; and my will would have had all the world's goods in its possession; and in many ways to have spent them, and indiscreetly. Therefore the serpent now searches about in my entrails without comfort, gnawing and biting without mercy.

That my breast is open and altogether gnawn with worms, shows the true justice of God, for I loved foul and rotten things more than God; and the love of my heart was all given to transitory and passing things of the flesh and of the world. And therefore as from small worms are brought longer worms, right so is my soul; for the foul stinking things which I loved are filled with devils. My arms seem as if they are beams; that is because I had my desire like two arms; that is to say, because I desired a long life, that I might have lived longer in sin.

I would also and desired that the Judgement of God had been easier than the Scripture said. Nevertheless, my conscience told me very well that my time was short and the Judgement of God insufferable. But again my desire and delight that I had in sinning stirred me to think that my life should be long and the Judgement of God bearable. And of such suggestions my conscience was subverted and turned upside down, and my will and reason followed lust and delectation. And therefore the devil is now lodged in my soul against my will, and my conscience understands and feels that the Judgement of God is right.

My hands are like long keys. And that is because the precepts and commandments were not pleasing to me; and therefore my hands are now to me a great burden, and lack any use. My neck is turned like wood which is placed against a sharp blade; that is because the words of God were not sweet to me to swallow and taste them in the charity and love of my heart; but they were too bitter, for they argued and criticized the delight and will of my heart; and therefore now a sharp blade stands at my throat.

My lips are cut off, for they were ready with vain, joking, and dishonest words of pride; but they failed and found it irksome to speak the words of God. My chin appears to be trembling, and my teeth grind and beat together; that is because I was wilfull in giving food to my body, so that I might seem fair and desirable, whole and strong to all the delights and pleasures of the body. And therefore now my chin trembles and quakes without comfort, and my teeth beat together; for all that they wasted was but unprofitable work as far as being fruit for the soul.

My nose is cut off; because amongst you it is done to them who trespass in such a

case to their greater shaming, right so is the mark of my shame set upon me for ever. That my eyes hang down by sinews upon my cheeks is correct for, just as the eyes joyed in the fairness of my cheeks for ostentation and showing-off from pride, so now from much weeping they are put out and hang down to my cheeks with shame and confusion. And right so is my forehead hollow, and instead of it there is a great darkness. For about my forehead was set the veil and array of pride; and I would appear glorious, and be seen of fairness, and seem fair. And therefore is my forehead now dark and foul, deformed and misshapen. That my brain boils up and flows out like lead and pitch, is well deserved. For as lead is soft and may be bent according to the will of him who uses it, so was my conscience, which lay in my brain, bowed to the will of my heart, although I understood well the things that I should have done.

And the Passion also of the Son of God was in no way fastened in my heart, but it flowed out like a thing that I knew well and took no heed of. And furthermore, of that holy blood which flowed out of the members of the Son of God, I took no more heed than of pitch, and fled, as if they were pitch, from the words of charity and of the love of God, lest they should convert me or trouble me from the delights of the body. Nevertheless, sometimes I heard the words of God to the shame of man; but as quickly as they entered, so quickly went they out of my heart again. And therefore now my brain flows out like burning pitch, with extremely hot boiling. My ears are stopped with hard stones, for words of pride entered in them joyfully, and softly and sweetly they went down into the heart, for the charity of God was closed out of my heart. And because I did all that I could for pride and for the world, therefore now joyful words have been shut out from my ears.

But you may ask if I did any meritorious or good deeds. And I answer you I did as does a money changer, who clips and cuts the money; and then reassigns or takes it again to the lord to whom it belongs. So I fasted and made alms and such other good works; but I did them for fear of Hell, and to escape the adversities and disease of the body. But because the charity and the love of God was cut off from my deeds, therefore such deeds were not valuable to me for obtaining Heaven, although they were not without reward. You might also ask how I am within in my will, when so much foulness and distortion is without. I answer: My will is as the will of a manslayer or of him who would gladly slay his own mother. So I covet and desire the worst evil to God, my Creator, who has been to me the best and most sweet”.

Then the dead granddaughter, that is, the daughter's daughter of the same dead Beldame, spoke to her own mother who was still alive, saying: "Hear, you scorpion, my mother, woe is me, because you have evilly deceived me. For you showed me your merry face, but you pricked me very grievously in my heart. Three counsels you gave me of your mouth, three things I learned of your works. And three ways you showed me in your process and going out. The first counsel was to love bodily in order to get carnal love and fleshly friendship. The second was to spend temporal goods over abundantly for praise from the world. The third was to have rest for the delectation and delight of the body.

These counsels were very harmful to me and a great hindrance. For I loved carnally, therefore I now have shame and spiritual envy. And because I spent temporal goods wastefully, therefore was I deprived of grace and the gifts of God in my life, and after my death I have obtained great confusion and shame. For I delighted in the quest and rest of the flesh in my life, therefore in the hour of my death began the unrest of my soul without comfort.

Three things also I learned of your works. The first was to do some good deeds, and nevertheless use them and not to leave that sin which delighted me: as a man should do who mixed honey with venom, and offered it to a Judge; and he, moved by that to anger, dropped it on him who offered it. So am I now expert in many fold anguish and tribulation.

The second is that I learned from you a marvelous manner of clothing myself; that was to conceal my eyes with a kerchief, to have sandals on my feet, gloves on my hands and the neck all naked in front. This kerchief concealing my eyes means the fairness of my body, which so obscured my spiritual eyes that I took no heed nor saw not the fairness of my soul. The sandals, which protect the feet underneath and not above, mean the holy faith of the Church, which I held faithfully, but there followed no fruitful works. For as sandals furthered my feet, right so my conscience, standing in the faith, promoted my soul. But because good works did not follow, therefore my soul was naked.

The gloves on the hands mean a vain hope I had; for I extended my works which are meant by the hands, into so great and large mercy of God, which is signified in the gloves,

that, when I groped for the justice of God, I felt it not nor took any heed of it. Therefore I was overbold in sinning. But when death came, then the kerchief fell down from my eyes upon the earth, that is to say, upon my body. And then the soul saw and knew itself as naked, for few of my deeds were good, and my sins were many. And for shame I might not stand in the palace of the eternal king of bliss, because I was shamefully clothed. But then devils drove me into hard punishment, where I was scorned with shame and confusion.

The third thing, mother, that I learned of was to clothe the servant in the lord's clothes, and to set him in the lord's seat, and to praise him as a lord, and to minister to the lord the reliefs of the servant and all things that were despicable. This lord is charity and the love of God. The servant is a will to sin. Truly in my heart where ought to have reigned godly charity was set the servant, that is, delight and lust of sin, whom I clothed then when I turned my will to all temporal things that are made. And the reliefs and parings and the most abject things I gave to God, not out of charity, but out of fear. So therefore was my heart glad of fulfilling and delight of my own will, for the charity and love of God was excluded from me, and the good Lord cast out and the evil servant closed within. See, mother, these three things I learned from your doings.

Three ways you showed me also in your going out. The first was bright. But when I entered in it, I was blinded by its brightness. The second was compendious and slippery as ice, in which, when I went one step forward, I slid again backward a whole step. The third was very long, in which, when I went forth, there came after me a sudden rushing flood and bore me over a hill into a deep ditch.

In the first way is noted the going forth of my pride, which was too much; for the ostentation and showing which proceeded from my pride shone so much in my eyes that I did not think about the consequences of it, and therefore I was blind.

In the second way is noted that disobedience in this life is not long; for after death a man is compelled to obey. Nevertheless, to me it was long, for when I went one step forward in meekness of confession, I slid backward a step. Because I would that the sin confessed have been forgiven, but after making confession, I would not flee from the sin. And therefore I did not stand firmly in the step of obedience, but I slid again into sin, as

does he who slides upon ice; because my will was cold and would not get up and flee from the things which delighted me. So therefore when I went a step forward, confessing my sins, I slid a step backward; because I would fall again to those sins and delectations that delighted me, of which I had made confession.

The third way was that I hoped for a thing which was impossible; that is to do more sin and not have lengthy pain; also to live longer, and the hour of death not be near. And when I went forth by this way, there came after me a hasty rushing flood; that is to say, death, which from one year to another caught me and turned my feet upside down with pain of illness.

What were these feet, but when sickness comes about, I might take little heed of the profit of the body and less to the health of the soul? Therefore I fell into a deep ditch, when my heart that was high in pride and hard in sin burst, and the soul fell down low into the ditch of pain for sin. And therefore this way was long; for after the life of the body was ended, soon there began a great pain. Woe, therefore, to me, my mother; for all those things that I learned from you with joy, now I wail about them with weeping and sorrow”.

Then spoke this same dead daughter to the spouse of Christ, Saint Bridget, who saw all these things, saying: ”Hear, you who see me. To you it seems that my head and my face as like thunder, thundering and lightning within and without; and my neck and my breast as it were put into a hard press, with long sharp pricks; my arms and my feet are as it were long serpents; and my womb is smitten with hard hammers; my thighs and my legs are as it were flowing water out of the gutters of a roof, and my feet are frozen together.

But yet there is one pain within that is more bitter to me than all these. Right as if there were any person of whom all the breaths of his living spirits were stopped and all the veins, filled with wind, pressed up to the heart, which for violence and strength of those winds should begin to burst; so am I disposed within very wretchedly for the wind of my pride, which was to me much cherished. Nevertheless, yet I am in the way of mercy, for in my most grievous sickness I was confessed in the best manner I could, for fear of pain. But when death came near, than came to my mind the consideration and

vision of the Passion of my God, how that was much more grievous and more bitter than all that I was worthy to suffer for my sins and demerits. And with such consideration, I became tearful and wept and wailed that the charity and the love of God was so much to me and mine so little to him.

Then I beheld him with the eyes of my conscience and said: 'O Lord, I believe you, my God. O you Son of the Virgin, have mercy upon me for your bitter Passion; for now from henceforth would I amend my life, if I had time, very willingly'. And in that point of time was there lit and kindled in my heart a spark of charity, by which the Passion of Christ seemed more bitter to me than my own death. And so then burst my heart, and my soul come into the hands and power of devils to be presented to the Judgement of God.

Therefore it came into the hands of devils, because it was not worthy that the angels of fairness should come near the soul of so much foulness. But in the Judgement of God, when the devils cried and asked that my soul should be judged and damned to Hell, the Judge answered: 'I see', he said, 'a spark of charity in the heart which ought not to be quenched, but it must be in my sight. Therefore I judge the soul to Purgatory, until the time that it be so worthily purged and made clean that it deserve and have forgiveness'.

But now you might ask if I shall have part of all the goods and good deeds that were done for me. I answer you with a parable. Just as if you saw two balances hanging, and in that one were naturally bearing downward and in the other were some light thing going upward, the greater things and fair that were put in the empty balance, so much the rather should they lift up the other balance that is heavy and of great weight. It is so with me; for the deeper that I was in sin, the more grievously am I gone down into pain. And therefore what ever is done to the praise of God for me, it lifts me up from pain; and specially that prayer and good that is done by rightful men and the friends of God, and benefits that are done by well-gotten goods and deeds of charity. Such things, truly, they were that make me each day become closer to God".

After this spoke the holy Mother of God to the spouse of Christ, Saint Bridget, and said: "You marvel how I, who am Queen of Heaven, and you who live in the world, and that soul which is in Purgatory, and that other which is in Hell, speak together. This I shall tell you. I, truly, never go from Heaven, for I shall never be departed from the sight

of God. Nor that soul which is in Hell shall not be separated from pain. Nor that soul which is in Purgatory, neither, until it is purged clean. Nor shall you come to us before the departure of your bodily life.

But your soul with your understanding, by virtue of the spirit of God, is lifted up to hear the words of God in Heaven: and you are allowed to know some pains in Hell and in Purgatory, for warning and amendment of evil livers and to the comfort and profit of them who are good. Nevertheless, know that your body and your soul are joined together on earth, but the Holy Spirit who is in Heaven gives you understanding to understand his will”.

EXPLANATION

After this, the third woman who was alive left all the world and entered into the religious life, and lived all her life after in great perfection and holiness.

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches Saint Bride how active life and contemplative ought to be kept through the example of Mary and Martha; and first, of contemplative life.

Chapter 65

The Son of God says: ”Bride, there are two lives which are compared to Mary and Martha; which lives, if a man or a woman would follow he must first make clean confession of all his sins, being himself truly sorry for them, having the desire never to sin again. The first life, as the Lord bears witness, Mary chose; and it leads to the contemplation of heavenly things; and this is the best part and day's journey to everlasting health. Therefore every man and woman who desires to take and hold to the life of Mary, it is enough for him to have two things that are necessary to the body; that is, clothing without vanity or showing of pride, and food and drink in scarceness and not in superfluity.

He must also have charity without any evil delight, and reasonable fasting after the

rules of holy Church. And in his fasting he must take heed that he not become ill from unreasonable abstinence, unless by such sickness his prayers or preaching or other good deeds thereby are lessened, by which he might profit both his neighbour and himself. He must also carefully examine himself, that by his fasting he is neither made dull nor hasty to the rigor of justice or slow to the works of pity, to punish those who are rebellious, and to make unfaithful men subject to the yoke of faith, It is necessary to have bodily strength as well as spiritual. Therefore anyone who is sick or feeble, who would rather fast to my praise than eat, he shall have as great reward for his good will as does he who fasts reasonably for charity. And in the same way he who eats out of holy obedience, willing rather to fast than to eat, shall have the same reward as he who fasts.

Second, Mary ought not to delight in the praise of the world nor of its prosperity; nor ought he to sorrow at its adversity, except in that he ought to delight when wicked men are made devout and that lovers of the world are made lovers of God, and when good men profit in goodness and, by labouring in the service of God, are made more devout. Of this also ought he who is Mary to sorrow; that sinners fall into worse sin, and that God is not loved by his creature, and that God's commandments are despised and not kept.

Third, Mary ought not to be idle any more than is Martha; but after he takes his necessary sleep, he ought to rise, and with inward attentiveness of heart thank God who of his charity and love made everything from nothing; and of that same charity, taking the body of man, he made all things again; showing by his Passion and death his love for man, more than you who might not be. Mary must also thank God for all those who are saved; and for all who are in Purgatory, and for them who are in the world, praying God humbly that he suffered them not to be tempted beyond their strength.

Mary must also be discreet in prayer, and orderly in the praising of God, for if he has the necessities of life without business, he ought to make longer prayers. And if he grows bored with praying, and temptations grow upon him, then he may labour with his hands at some honest and profitable work, either to his own profit if he have need, or else to the profit of others. And if he is weary and bored both in prayer and in labour, then he may have some honest occupation, or hear words of others' edification with all seriousness, and without dissolution and vanity, until the body and soul be made more

able and quick to the service of God.

If he who is Mary be such that he has not bodily sustenance but of his own labour, then he must make his prayer shorter for such needful work; and that same labour shall be profiting and increasing of prayer. If Mary can not work, or may not, then be not too ashamed or despairing about begging, but rather joyful; for then he follows me, the Son of God; for I made myself poor that man should become rich. And if he who is Mary be subject to obedience, he should live in obedience to his prelate, and the crown of reward shall be double the more than he was at his own liberty.

Fourth, Mary ought not to be covetous, no more than was Martha. But he ought to be truly generous; for Martha gives temporal goods for God, so ought Mary to give spiritual goods. And therefore, if Mary has loved God entirely in his heart, he should be careful of that word that many have in their mouths, saying: 'It is nothing to me, if I may help my own soul, What do I care about the works of my neighbours?' Or this: 'I am good: why should I care about how other men live?'

O daughter, they who say and think such words, if they see their friend troubled or dishonestly treated, they should risk their deaths to deliver their friend from tribulation. So must Mary do; he ought to sorrow that his God is offended, and that his brother, or his neighbour, is hurt; or if any fall into sin, Mary ought to labour as much as he may that he be delivered - nevertheless, with discretion. And if for that Mary is persecuted, he must seek another more secure place. For I myself who am God have said so: 'Si vos persecuti fuerint in una civitate fugite in aliam'; that is, if they persecute you in one city, flee to another. And so did Paul, for it became necessary at one time; and therefore he was let down over the wall in a basket.

Therefore, that Mary be generous and merciful, five things are necessary to her: first, a house in which guests can sleep; second, clothes to cloth the naked; third, food to feed the hungry; fourth, fire to make the cold hot and warm; fifth, medicine for the sick.

The house of Mary is his heart, whose wicked guests are all the things that come to him and trouble his heart, such as anger, despair, sloth, greed, pride, and many others, which enter in by the five senses. Therefore all these vices, when they come, ought to lie

as guests who sleep at rest. For as an innkeeper receives guests both good and bad with patience, so ought Mary to suffer all things for God by the virtue of patience, and not consent to sin nor delight in it, but remove it from his heart as much as he may little by little with the help of God's grace; and if he may not remove them and put them away, let him endure them patiently against his will, as guests knowing certainly that they will reap him more rewards, and in no ways to damnation.

Second, Mary ought to have clothes to clothe his guests, that is, humility, inward and outward, and compassion of heart for the disease of one's fellow Christian. And if Mary is despised by men, then he should think how I, God, was despised, taunted and suffered it patiently: how I was judged and spoke not; how I was scourged and crowned with thorns, and did not complain. Mary must also take heed that he show no tokens of wrath or impatience to them who taunt him or despise him; but he ought to bless them who persecute him, so that they who see it may bless God, whom Mary follows; and God himself shall return blessings for curses.

Mary also must beware that he neither backbite nor criticize those who burden him or trouble him. For it is damnable to backbite and to hear a backbiter and to criticize his neighbour impatiently; and therefore, that Mary may have the gift of meekness perfectly, he must study to admonish and to warn them of the perils for backbiting others, exhorting them with charity by speech and example to true humility. Also the cloth of Mary ought to be compassion; for if he sees his fellow Christian sin, he ought to have compassion on him, and to pray to God to have mercy on him. And if he sees his neighbour suffer wrong or harm or be taunted, he ought to be sorry for that, and to help him with his prayers and other help and actions. Yes, against the great men of the world; for true compassion seeks not what he wants for himself, but for his fellow Christian.

But if Mary is such who is not heard amongst princes and great men and at leaving his cell gains nothing, then he should pray to God carefully for those who are in pain; and God, beholder of the heart, shall for the charity of him who prays turn the hearts of men to peace which are diseased. And either he shall be delivered of his tribulation, or else God shall give him patience, so that his reward in heaven shall be doubled. Therefore such a cloth of humility or of compassion ought to be in Mary's heart. For there is nothing which draws God so into a soul as humility and compassion for his fellow

Christian.

Third, Mary must have food and drink for guests. For grievous guests are lodged in Mary's heart, when the heart is ravished out of itself and desires to see delectable things in this world and to have temporal possessions; when his ear desires to hear his own praises; when the flesh seeks to delight in fleshly things; when the spirit pretends to be frail and excuses sin; when there is tardiness to do good and forgetfulness of things that are to come; when good deeds are considered to be many and the evil thought to be few and forgotten.

Against such guests Mary has need of counsel, that he dissemble not nor fall asleep. Therefore Mary, heartened with faith, must rise firmly and answer thus to these guests: 'I will not have any temporal things, except those which are necessary to sustain the body. I will not spend the best hour or time, except to praise God. Nor will I take heed of fair or foul, nor what is profitable or unprofitable to the flesh, nor what is savory or unsavory to the taste, except only the pleasure of God and profitable to the soul; for I do not wish to live hour by hour, except to praise God'. Such a will is food to guests who may come, and such an answer quenches inordinate delights.

Fourth, Mary must have a fire to make her guests warm, and to give them light. This fire is the heat of the Holy Spirit; for it is impossible for any man to forsake his own will or the carnal affection of his friends or the love of riches, but by the working inspiration and heat of the Holy Spirit. Neither may Mary himself, be he never so perfect, begin nor continue any good life without sweetness and information of the same Holy Spirit. Therefore, that Mary illumines and lights the guests that come first, he must think thus: 'God made me for that skill that I should praise him, love him and dread him above all things; and he was born of a Virgin to teach the way to heaven, which I should follow with humility. And after, with his death, he opened heaven, that by desiring and advancing I should haste there'.

Mary must also examine all his works and thoughts and desires, and how he has offended God, and how patiently God suffered man, and how in many ways God calls man to him. For such thoughts and others like them are the guests of Mary, which are all in darkness; but if they are lightened with the fire of the Holy Spirit, which fire comes to

the heart when Mary thinks it is reasonable to serve God, and when he would rather suffer all pain than wittingly provoke God to anger, by whose goodness his soul is made and bought again with his blessed blood. The heart also is lit by this good fire, when reason thinks and discerns by what intent each guest, that is, each thought, comes, when the heart examines if the thought goes to everlasting joy or to transitory joy; if it leave no thought undiscussed, none unpunished, none without dread.

Therefore, that this fire may be got, and kept when it is obtained, it is necessary for Mary to gather together dry wood, by which this fire is fed; that is, that he be concerned about the stirrings of the flesh, that the flesh begin not to be wanton; and that he put to all diligence, that the works of pity and devout prayer be enlarged and increased, in which the Holy Spirit delights. But above all it is to know and see that where fire is kindled in a close vessel and has no ash, the fire is soon quenched and the container becomes cold. And so is it with Mary; for if Mary desires to live only to praise God, then it is necessary for him that his mouth be opened and the fame of his charity to go out. Then is the mouth opened, when by speaking in fervent charity he gets spiritual sons for God.

But Mary must be very careful that he open the mouth of his preaching when they who are good may be made more fervent, and they who are wicked may be amended, where righteousness may be increased and evil habits removed. For my Apostle Paul would sometimes have spoken; but he was forbidden by my Spirit, and therefore at the right time he was still, and at the convenient time he spoke; and sometimes he used soft words, and sometimes sharp; and all his words and deeds were to the praise of God and to strengthen faith.

But if Mary may not preach, and has the desire and the knowledge how to preach, he must do so as a fox that goes about seeking many places with his feet; and when he finds the best and most suitable places, there he makes a den to rest in. So Mary must with words, examples, and prayers try the hearts of many; and when he finds hearts more able to receive the word of God, there must he stay and rest, admonishing and stirring whom he may. Mary must also work that a fitting show be given to his flame of fire: for the greater the flame is, the more people are illumined and enflamed by it. The flame has then a fitting show, where Mary neither dreads criticism nor shame, nor seeks his own praise, when he dreads neither contrarious things, nor delights in wealth and prosperity.

And then it is more acceptable to God that Mary do his good deeds in the open rather than in private, to that extent that they who see them may praise and worship God.

Also, Mary ought to give out two flames, one in private, another openly: that is, to have double humility; the first in the heart, inwardly, the other outwardly. The first is that Mary thinks himself unworthy and unprofitable in all goodness, and that he prefers not nor exalts himself in his own conceit above any person; and that he does not desire to be seen and praised, but that he flees from all pride and haughtiness, desiring God above all things and following his words. If Mary send out such a flame in his deeds, then shall his heart be lit with charity, and all contrary things that come to him shall be overcome and easily endured.

The second flame must be in the open; for if true humility is in the heart, it ought to appear in clothing and to be heard in the mouth and to be fulfilled in deeds. True humility is in the clothing when Mary chooses cloth of less price, from which he may gain warmth and profit, rather than cloth of more value, of which he might be proud and show off. For cloth which is cheap and is called by men vile and abject is truly fair to God because it provokes humility. But that cloth which is bought with great price and is called fair is foul to God; for it takes away the fairness of angels, which is humility. Nevertheless, if Mary is compelled by any reasonable cause to have better clothing than he would want, be not troubled therefore; for by that shall his reward be greater.

Also Mary ought to be meek in mouth, speaking humble words; fleeing from vain words and such as cause laughter; being careful of much speech; not using subtle nor pretty words; nor professing his own will or words before the comprehension and feeling of those who are better. And if Mary is praised for any good deed, he should not be exalted thereby with pride, but should answer thus: 'Laus sit deo qui dedit omnia', that is, praising God who gave all goodness. For what am I but dust before the face of the wind; or what good comes of me, earth without water? And if he is criticized, he should not be downcast but answer thus: 'It is appropriate; for I have so often offended in the sight of God and not done penance for which I should earn greater torment. Therefore pray for me that by enduring temporal reprimands, I may escape everlasting ones'.

If Mary is provoked by wrath to any misjudgment of his fellow Christian, he must be

prudently careful of any indiscreet answer; for pride is often associated with wrath, and therefore it is wholesome advice that when wrath and pride come about, that he hold his lips tightly together until he can ask for help from God for endurance and patience; and until he may be advised what and how to answer; or until he may overcome himself. For then wrath is quenched in the heart and men may answer wisely to those who are unwise.

You know also that the devil is greatly envious of Mary; and therefore if he may not stop him by breaking God's commandments, then he stirs him to be easily moved with great wrath, or else to the dissoluteness of vain mirth, or else to dissolute and playful words. Therefore Mary must ask for help from God that all his words and deeds may be governed by God and addressed to God. Also Mary must have meekness in his actions, that he does the right not because of earthly praise; that he attempt nothing new, that he be not ashamed of being humble; that he flee singularity in his works, that he respect all; and that in all things he consider himself unworthy.

Also Mary ought rather to sit with the poor than with the rich; rather he should obey than be obeyed; rather to be silent than to speak; rather to be alone solitary than be constantly amongst the great of the world and among his worldly friends. Mary must hate his own will and think always on his death. Mary ought not to be idle, nor complain, nor be forgetful of the justice of God and of his own affections. Mary must be fervent in confession, careful concerning temptations, desiring to live for the right and for nothing else but the praise of God and that the health of souls be increased and enlarged.

Therefore, if Mary, who is thus disposed as I have now said, be chosen by Martha, and obeying, for the love of God takes the rule of many souls, there shall be given to him a double crown of reward, as I show you in a parable. There was a certain lord of great power who had a ship filled with precious merchandise, and said to his servants: 'Go to such a harbour, and you shall gain much for me, and glorious fruit. If the wind rises against you, work hard and do not become weary; for your reward shall be great'. Then the servants sailed away.

And the wind became strong, and tempests arose, and the ship was grievously battered. Because of this the ship's captain was exhausted and all despaired of their lives. And then they agreed to come to any harbour that the wind could blow them to, and not

to the haven that the lord had assigned to them. When one of the servants who was more loyal than the others heard this, he wailed and out of fervent love and zeal that he had for his lord, he violently seized hold of the steering board of the ship and with great strength he brought the ship to the harbour the lord desired. Therefore this man who thus manfully brought the ship to the harbour is to be rewarded with more singular rewards than any other.

It is the same with a good priest who for love of God and salvation of souls takes charge of the steering, not paying heed to fame, for he shall be doubly rewarded: first, because he shall be partner of all the good deeds of those whom he has brought to the haven; second, because his joy and bliss shall be increased without end. And so shall it be against those who desire fame and responsibility; for they shall be partner to all the pains and sins of those that they have chosen to govern. Second, for their confusion shall be without end.

For the priests who desire fame are more like whores than priests. For they deceive souls with their evil words and examples; and they are unworthy to be called either Mary or Martha, unless they make amends with penance.

Fifth, Mary ought to give his guests medicine; that is, delight and comfort them with God's words. For to all things that ever happen to him, whether they be joyful or burdensome, he ought to say: 'I will this; whatever God wills, I will do; and to his will I am readily obedient; though I should go to Hell'. For such a will is medicine against evil things that occur to the heart, and this will is delight in tribulation and a good restraint in prosperity. But because Mary has many enemies he must therefore make his confession frequently. For as long as he remains in a state of sin and could have confessed and is negligent and takes no heed, then is he rather to be called an apostate before God than Mary".

Of the deeds of the active life which are understood by Martha.

"You must know also that though the part of Mary is best, yet the part of Martha is not evil, but praiseworthy and very pleasing to God. Therefore I shall tell you how Martha ought to be governed. For he ought to have five good things as well as Mary. First, the right faith regarding God's Church. Second, to know the commandments of the Godhead

and the counsels of the truth of the Gospel; and these he ought perfectly to keep in thought and deed. Third, he ought to keep his tongue from evil words that are against God and his neighbour, and his hand from all dishonest and unlawful actions, and his heart from too much greed and pleasure. He ought also to be content with the goods God has given him, and not to desire superfluous things.

Fourth, he ought to fulfill the deeds of mercy reasonably and modestly, that in doing those deeds he offends in no way. Fifth, he ought to love God above all things and more than himself. So did Martha, for he gave joyfully of himself, following my words and deeds; and after she gave all her goods for my love. And therefore she loathed temporal things, and sought heavenly things, and suffered heavenly things patiently, and took heed and care of others as of herself. And therefore she thought always on my charity and Passion; and she was glad in tribulation and loved all as a mother.

The same Martha also followed me every day, desiring nothing but to hear words of life. She had compassion on those who were grieving; she comforted the sick; she neither cursed nor said evil to any. But she did not imitate the pushiness of her neighbour and prayed for all. Therefore every man who desires charity actively ought to follow Martha in loving his neighbour, to bring him to heaven, but not in favoring and nourishing his vices and sins. He ought also to flee his own vanity, pride and doubleness. Also he ought not to use wrath or envy.

But mark well that Martha, praying for her brother Lazarus when he was dead, came first to me. But her brother was not yet raised until Mary came after, when she was called. And then for both sisters their brother was raised from the dead to life. So in spiritual life he who perfectly desires to be Mary must first be Martha, labouring physically to my praise. And he ought first to learn how to withstand the desires of the flesh and the temptation of the fiend and afterwards he may with deliberation ascend up the height of Mary. For he who is unproved and tempted, and he who has not overcome the lusts of his flesh, how may he continually heed and choose heavenly things?

Who is the dead brother of Mary and Martha, but an unperfect work? For often a good work is done with an indiscreet intent and with an ill advised heart, and therefore it is done dully and slowly. But for the working of good deeds to be acceptable to me, it

must be raised and quickened by Martha and Mary; that is, when the neighbour is clearly loved for God and to God, and God alone is desired above all things. And then every good work of man is pleasing to God. Therefore I said in the Gospel that Mary chose the better part; for then the part of Martha is also good, when he grieves for the sins of his fellow Christians; and then is the part of Martha better, when he labours that men may continue in the good life wisely and honestly, and that only for the love of God.

But the part of Mary is best when he beholds only heavenly things and the profit of souls. And the Lord enters into the house of Martha and Mary when the heart is fulfilled with good affections; and at peace away from the noise of worldly things; and thinking of God as always present; and not only contemplating and meditating on his love, but labouring in that day and night”.

How our Lady and Saint Peter kept a woman from falling into sin, by whose counsel she changed her life, and of special grace she fell ill, and so was purged and went to Heaven.

Chapter 93

The spouse of Christ, Saint Bride, saw spiritually a woman sitting in a rope whose one end a fair man held up, and a virgin of great beauty held up the other end.

Then our Lady appeared and said: ”This lady whom you know is wound up in much business of the flesh and the world, and it is miraculous that she has balanced herself so well that she has not fallen. For she has often desired to sin, but never had the place nor the time to do so. And that caused the prayer of the Apostle Peter to be made by my Son, whom this woman loved. Sometimes she had time and space, but not the will; and that was made by the love of me who am the Mother of God.

And therefore now because her time draws near, Saint Peter counseled her to take upon her some harshness in clothing and wearing, putting away soft garments. For he was the chief Apostle; and yet he endured nakedness, prison and hunger, although he

was mighty in heaven and on earth. I also, Mother of God, who never passed an hour on earth without tribulation and discomfort of heart, counsel her that she not be ashamed to be meek and to obey the friends of God”.

After this soon Saint Peter the Apostle appeared and said to Saint Bride: ”You, now, spouse of our lord God, go and ask of this woman whom I have loved and preserved, if she will wholly be my daughter”.

When Saint Bride had asked, and she consenting, said, ”I will, with all my heart”, Saint Peter answered: ”I shall arrange for her as for my daughter, Peronell, and take her into my charge”. Then, as soon as this lady heard this, she changed her life. And not long after, she fell ill, which continued for the rest of her life, until she was purged and with very great devotion gave up her spirit. For, when she came to the end of her life, she saw Saint Peter arrayed like a bishop, and Saint Peter Martyr in the habit of the Friars Preachers, for he was of that Order, both of whom she had loved entirely during her life.

And then she said openly: ”Who are these lords?” When the ladies and women who stood about her asked her what she saw, she answered: ”I see”, she said, ”marvelous things. For I see my lords, Peter the Apostle dressed pontifically and Peter the Martyr in the habit of the Preachers, whom I have always loved and always hoped for their help”. And then, crying: ”Blessed be God. See: I come”, she passed to our Lord.

Book 7

A revelation which Lady Bridget had in Rome after the year of jubilee and in which the Virgin Mary foretells to her that she will go to Jerusalem and Bethlehem when it pleases God; and Mary promises her that she will then show her the manner in which she gave birth to her blessed Son.

Chapter 1

When Lady Bridget, the bride of Christ, was in Rome and was once absorbed in prayer, she began to think about the Virgin Birth and about the very great goodness of God who willed to choose such a very pure mother for himself. And her heart then became so greatly inflamed with love for the Virgin that she said within herself: "O my Lady, Queen of Heaven, my heart so rejoices over the fact that the most high God forechose you as his mother and deigned to confer upon you so great a dignity that I would rather choose for myself eternal excruciation in hell than that you should lack one smallest point of this surpassing glory or of your heavenly dignity."

And so, inebriated with the sweetness of love, she was above herself, alienated from her senses and suspended in an ecstasy of mental contemplation. The Virgin appeared then to her and said to her, "Be attentive, O daughter: I am the Queen of Heaven. Because you love me with a love so immense, I therefore announce to you that you will go on a pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem at the time when it pleases my Son. From there you will go to Bethlehem; and there I shall show you, at the very spot, the whole manner in which I gave birth to that same Son of mine, Jesus Christ; for so it has pleased him."

In Rome Lady Bridget had this revelation which speaks about the glorious sword of sorrow that pierced the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary and which the just man Simeon foretold to her in the temple.

Chapter 2

While Lady Bridget, the bride of Christ, was in Rome, in the church called Saint Mary Major, on the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, she was caught up into a spiritual vision, and saw that in heaven, as it were, all things were being prepared for a great feast. And then she saw, as it were, a temple of wondrous beauty; and there too was that venerable and just old man, Simeon, ready to receive the Child Jesus in his arms with supreme longing and gladness. She also saw the Blessed Virgin most honorably enter, carrying her young Son to offer him in the temple according to the law of the Lord.

And then she saw a countless multitude of angels and of the various ranks of the saintly men of God and of his saintly virgins and ladies, all going before the Blessed Virgin-Mother of God and surrounding her with all joy and devotion. Before her an angel carried a long, very broad, and bloody sword which signified those very great sorrows which Mary suffered at the death of her most loving Son and which were prefigured by that sword which the just man Simeon prophesied would pierce her soul. And while all the heavenly court exulted, this was said to the bride: "See with what great honor and glory the Queen of Heaven is, on this feast, recompensed for the sword of sorrows which she endured at the passion of her beloved Son." And then this vision disappeared.

A revelation which blessed Francis showed to Lady Bridget wherein he invited her to his chamber to eat and to drink and explained to her spiritually that his chamber was obedience and that his food was to convert souls to God and that his drink was to see his converts loving God with all their strength and fervently absorbed in prayer and in the other virtues.

Chapter 3

On the feast of Saint Francis in his church in Trastevere in Rome, Saint Francis appeared to the same bride of Christ and said to her, "Come into my chamber to eat and

to drink with me.” When she heard this, she at once prepared for a journey in order to visit him in Assisi. After she had stayed there five days, she decided to return to Rome and entered the church to recommend herself and her loved ones to Saint Francis. He then appeared to her and said: ”Welcome! For I invited you into my chamber to eat and to drink with me. Know now that this building is not the chamber that I mentioned to you. No, my chamber is true obedience, to which I always so held that I never endured to be without an instructor. For I continually had with me a priest whose every instruction I humbly obeyed, and this was my chamber. Therefore do likewise, for this is pleasing to God.

My food, however, whereby I was refreshed with delight, was the fact that I most willingly drew my neighbors away from the vanities of worldly life to serve God with the whole of their hearts; and I then swallowed that joy as if it were the sweetest morsels. My drink, however, was that joy I had while I saw some whom I had converted loving God, devoting themselves with all their strength to prayer and contemplation, teaching others to live good lives, and imitating true poverty. Behold, daughter: that drink so gladdened my soul that, for me, all things in the world lost their taste. Enter, therefore, into this chamber of mine; and eat this, my food; and drink this drink with me. Drink it so that you may be refreshed with God eternally.”

Lady Bridget had this revelation in the city of Ortona, in the kingdom of Naples. Christ speaks to her and assures her that there are relics of the body of Saint Thomas the Apostle on the altar there and that he takes a most sweet delight in these relics and in those of his other saints, counting such relics as his precious treasure on earth and promising great merit and reward to those who honor them with due devotion.

Chapter 4

To a person who was wide awake and at prayer, it seemed as if her heart were on fire with divine charity and entirely full of spiritual joy so that her body itself seemed to fail in its strength. She then heard a voice that said to her: ”I am the Creator and Redeemer of all. Know therefore that such a joy, as you now feel in your soul, is a

treasure of mine. For it is written that 'the Spirit breathes where he will, and you hear his voice, but you know not whence he comes or whither he goes.'

This treasure I bestow on my friends in many ways and by many means and through many gifts. However, I wish to tell you about another treasure, which is not yet in heaven but is with you on earth. This treasure is the relics and bodies of my friends. For, in truth, whether they are fresh or moldering, whether they have turned into dust and ashes or not, the bodies of my saints are most certainly my treasure.

But, you may ask, since Scripture says, 'Where your treasure is, there your heart is,' how then is my heart with that treasure, namely, with the relics of the saints? I answer you: my heart's supreme delight is to bestow - according to their will, their faith, and the toils of their journey - everlasting rewards on all those who visit the places and honor the relics of my saints, namely, of those who had been glorified by miracles and canonized by the supreme pontiffs. Thus my heart is with my treasure. Therefore, I want you to know for certain that in this place is my most choice treasure, namely, the relics of my apostle Thomas, which are not found elsewhere in such quantity as they are on this altar, where they are unspoiled and undivided.

For when that city where my apostle's body was first buried was destroyed, then with my permission this treasure was translated by certain of my friends to this city and was placed on this altar. But now it lies here as if concealed, for before the apostle's body came here, the princes of this land were of the disposition described in the Scriptures: 'They have mouths and will not speak. They have eyes and will not see. They have ears and will not hear. They have hands and will not touch. They have feet and will not walk,' etc. How could such people then, with such an attitude toward me, their God, be able to pay due honor to such a treasure?

Therefore, anyone who loves me and my friends above all, and who would rather die than offend me in the least and who also has the will and the authority to honor me and to instruct others, such a one, whoever it be, will exalt and honor my treasure, namely, the relics of this my apostle whom I chose and forechose. Therefore, it should be said and preached for very certain that, just as the bodies of the apostles Peter and Paul are in Rome, the relics of Saint Thomas, my apostle, are in Ortona."

The bride, however, answered and said: "O Lord, did not the princes of this kingdom have churches built; and did they not practice great almsgiving?" The Lord said to her: "They have done many things and have offered me much money to appease me. Yet the alms of many of them were to me less pleasing and acceptable because of the marriages that they had contracted contrary to the statutes of the holy fathers. And even though those marriages that the supreme pontiffs permitted were ratified and to be upheld, nevertheless the will of those people was corrupt and was striving against the statutes of the Church. Therefore, at my divine judgment, this must be examined and judged."

ADDITION

When the lady had gone to Ortona, it happened that she and her companions had to spend a whole night under God's open sky, in the cold and in a heavy rain. Then toward dawn, Christ said to her: "For three reasons, tribulation comes to human beings: either for greater humility - as when King David was troubled; or for greater fear and caution - as when Sarah, Abraham's wife, was taken away by the King; or for a human being's greater consolation and honor. And so it has happened to you. For I gave those who met you the impulse to proceed no farther that day. But you would not believe them, and so you suffered as you have. Therefore go now into the city, and my servant Thomas will give you what you desire."

Item concerning the same thing. Christ appeared in Ortona and said: "I told you earlier that Saint Thomas, my apostle, was my treasure. This is certainly true. For Thomas himself is truly a light of the world. But human beings love darkness more than light."

Then Saint Thomas also appeared and said: "I will give to you a treasure that you have long since desired." And in the same moment, a tiny splinter of a bone of blessed Thomas came forth from the very case of Saint Thomas's relics without anyone's touch. The lady received it with joy and reverently saved it.

Lady Bridget had this revelation in Naples at the request of Lord Elzear, son of the countess of Ariano and, at that time, a young scholar of good disposition. He had then asked Lady Bridget to pray to God for him. While she was at prayer, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and gave to her this revelation, by means of which she informs him about the measures to be maintained in his life and very beautifully says that reason must be the doorkeeper and guardian of the soul, to expel all temptations and resist them manfully lest they enter one's inner house.

Chapter 5

To almighty God, from whom all good things proceed, be praise and honor, especially for these things that he has done for you in the time of your youth! Of his grace one must ask that the love you have for him may increase in you daily even until death.

A mighty and magnificent king constructed a house, in which he placed his beloved daughter, assigning her to the custody of a man and saying this: "My daughter has mortal enemies and therefore you must guard her with all care. There are four things that you must beware with diligent premeditation and constant concern: first, that no one undermine the foundation of the house; second, that no one climb over the top of the outer walls; third, that no one breach the walls of the house; fourth, that no enemy enter through the gates."

My Lord, this parable that I write for you out of divine charity - God, the searcher of all hearts being my witness - must be understood spiritually. Therefore, by the house I mean your body, which the King of heaven formed out of the earth. By the king's daughter I mean your soul, created by the power of the Most High and placed in your heart. By the guardian I mean human reason, which will guard your soul according to the will of the eternal King. By the foundation I mean a good, firm, and stable will. For on it must be built all good works, by which the soul is best defended.

Therefore, since your will is such that you wish to live for nothing else but to follow God's will, showing him by word and deed all the honor you can, and also serving him with your body and your goods and all your strength, as long as you live, in order that you

may be able to commend your soul, preserved from all impurity of the flesh, to its Creator, then, oh how vigilantly must you guard this foundation, i.e., your will, by means of the guardian, i.e., your reason, so that no one may be able to undermine it with his siege-engines to the soul's harm.

By those who strive to undermine this type of foundation I mean those who speak to you thus and say: "My Lord, be a layman and take to yourself a charming, noble, and wealthy wife so that you may rejoice in your offspring and heirs and no be weighed down by the tribulation of the flesh." And others perhaps reply in this manner: "If you want to become a cleric, then also learn the liberal arts, to the end that you may be called 'master' while procuring for yourself, by prayers or gifts, as much as you can of the goods and revenues of the Church.

Then you will have worldly honor for your knowledge; and by your worldly friends and your many servants, you will be glorified for the abundance of your riches." Behold: if perhaps anyone should offer you such persuasion, immediately make the guardian, i.e., reason, answer him and say that you would be willing to endure all the tribulation of the flesh rather than lose your chastity. Answer also that you want to acquire knowledge and the arts for the honor of God and the defense of the Catholic faith, for the strengthening of good people and for the correction of the erring and of all who need your advice and teaching; and say that you do not wish to desire anything in this life beyond sustenance for your body and for the household truly necessary to you and not overly enlarged for the sake of vainglory.

Say also that, if perchance divine providence were to confer on you some added dignity, you desire to order all things wisely for the benefit of your neighbor and for the honor of God. And so indeed the guardian, i.e., reason, will be able to expel those who are exerting themselves to undermine the foundation, i.e., your good will. Reason must also constantly and diligently beware lest anyone climb over the top of the walls. By this top of the walls I mean charity, which is more sublime than all the virtues. Know therefore most certainly that the devil desires nothing more than to leap over that wall. And so he incessantly tries as much as he can that mundane charity and carnal love may surpass divine charity.

Wherefore, my Lord, as often as worldly love attempts to advance itself in your heart in preference to divine charity, immediately send the guardian, i.e., reason, out to meet it with the commandments of God and saying that you would rather endure death in soul and body than live to such an end that you would, by word or deed, provoke a God so kind, and, indeed, that you would not in any way spare your own life, your goods or possessions, or the favorable opinions of your relatives and friends provided that you might be able to please God alone in every respect and honor him in all things, and that you choose to submit voluntarily to all tribulations rather than cause any harm, scandal, or trouble to any of your neighbors - whether higher or lower than yourself - and that, in accord with the precept of the Lord, you wish instead to love all your neighbors thoroughly and in a brotherly way.

And if you do this, my Lord, you are proved to love God more than yourself, and your neighbor as yourself. Then, therefore, the guardian, i.e., reason, can rest securely because no rival of your soul is able to climb over the top of the walls.

By the house walls, in truth, I mean four delights of the heavenly court, which a human being ought to long for interiorly with attentive meditation. The first is a fervent longing in the heart to see God himself in his eternal glory and those unfailing riches that are never taken away from one who has acquired them. The second is an incessant wish to hear those sweet-sounding voices of the angels in which, without tiring and without end, they praise God and unceasingly adore him.

The third is a whole-hearted and fervently longing desire eternally to praise God even as the very angels do. The fourth is longing to possess the everlasting consolations of the angels and of the holy souls in heaven. Hence it is to be noted that, just as one who is inside a house is always surrounded by walls wherever one turns, so it is with everyone who, day and night, with supreme longing, desires those four things - namely, to see God in his glory, to hear the angels praising God, to praise God together with them, and to possess their consolations. Truly, wherever such a one turns or whatever work he is intent upon, he is then always preserved unharmed inside firm walls so that, as a result, by dwelling among the very angels in this life, he may be said to enjoy the company of God.

Oh how much, my Lord, your enemy longs to dig through walls of this sort and to take such inner delights away from the heart and to introduce and entangle into your desire others contrary to them, which could gravely harm your soul. On which account, the guardian, i.e., reason, must have diligent precaution about the two ways by which the enemy usually comes. The first way is the hearing; the second, sight. He comes indeed through the hearing when he introduces into the heart the delights of secular songs and of various sweet-sounding instruments, of useless tales and of narrations of the praises of one's own person. The more these things raise one up through pride in oneself, the more distantly one is separated from the humble Christ.

Therefore the guardian, i.e., reason, must resist such delight and say this: "Just as the devil has hatred for all the humility that the Holy Spirit breathes into the hearts of human beings, so I, by the working of God's help, will have hatred for all the pomp and worldly pride that the evil spirit, with his pestilent inflammation, pours into hearts; and it shall be to me as hateful as the stench of rotten corpses, which immediately suffocates those who catch it in their nostrils." Through sight also the enemy is accustomed to come, as if by a second way, to dig through the aforementioned house walls; and he brings with him many tools: namely, all sorts of metals wrought into various objects and forms, precious stones, prestigious clothing, lordly palaces, castles, estates, ponds, forests, vineyards, and all other sorts of costly and lucrative things.

For if all these things are fervently desired, they are a proven means of dissipating the aforementioned house walls, i.e., the heavenly delights. Therefore the guardian, i.e., reason, must run out quickly, before such things come into the heart's delight and love, and must say: "If I shall have in my power any of the possessions of this sort, I will lay it away in that chest where thieves or moth are not feared; and with divine grace helping me, I will not offend my God through coveting others' possessions; nor, through ambition for the things of others, will I separate myself in any way from the company of those who serve Christ."

By the gates of the said house I mean, in fact, all the body's needs, which indeed the body cannot decline: namely, eating, drinking, sleep, wakefulness, and even occasional distresses and joys. Therefore the guardian, i.e., reason, must stand by these gates, i.e., the body's needs, with concern and, with divine fear, must resist enemies wisely and

persistently lest they enter toward the soul.

Therefore, just as in taking food and drink one must beware lest the enemy enter through overindulgence, which makes the soul slothful in serving God, so too one must beware lest the foe gain entrance through excessive abstinence, which makes the body weak in doing all things. Let the guardian, i.e., reason, also take note lest, either when you are alone with your household or when guests arrive, for the sake of worldly honor and the favorable opinion of human beings, there be an uninterrupted succession of too many courses; but, out of divine charity, treat each one well while excluding a multiplicity of foods and also extravagant delicacies.

Next, the guardian, i.e., reason, must with vigilance and attention consider the fact that, just as food and drink must be moderated, so too must sleep be moderated with fear in such a way that the body may be nimble and in better order for accomplishing all the honor of God so that every waking moment may be usefully spent on the divine offices and on honest labors, with all the heaviness of sleep far removed.

Moreover, at the approach of any distress or rancor, the guardian, i.e., reason, accompanied by his companion, namely, fear of God, must swiftly run forth lest, through anger or impatience, it happen that you forfeit divine grace and gravely provoke God against yourself. What is more, when some consolation or joy fills your heart, let the guardian, i.e., reason, imprint the heart more deeply with the fear of God which, with the help of the grace of Jesus Christ, will moderate that consolation or joy in a way that will be of more use to you.

ADDITION

When Lady Bridget was in Naples, there were revealed to her the innermost secrets of the heart of Elzear - later, a cardinal - and certain wonderful things that were going to happen to him. When he heard these things, he was stunned; and he changed for the better.

In the year of our Lord, 1371, in the month of May, on the day of blessed Urban, pope

and martyr, when Lady Bridget had been living in Rome for many years, after she had returned from pilgrimages in the kingdom of Naples, while she was at prayer on the day and in the month given above, Christ appeared to her and said that she should prepare herself to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to visit the Holy Sepulchre.

Chapter 6

While Lady Bridget was living continuously in Rome, she was one day at prayer and her mind was lifted up. Christ then appeared to her and spoke to her, saying this: "Prepare yourselves now to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to visit my sepulchre and the other holy places that are to be found there. You will leave Rome when I tell you."

In Rome before Lady Bridget went overseas a certain devout Friar Minor consulted the said lady concerning some doubts in his conscience. As this lady prayed, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and gave her complete answers to those doubts and, moreover, said that no matter how sinful the pope or the priests might be - provided that they are not heretics - the pope has the keys of the Church and the true power of binding and loosing and that at the altar the priests fully confect and handle the Blessed Sacrament of the Body of Christ even though they are unworthy of heavenly glory.

Chapter 7

Honor and thanks be given to almighty God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, his most worthy Mother! It seemed to me, unworthy person that I am, that while I was absorbed in prayer, the Mother of God spoke to me, a sinner, these following words: "Say to my friend the friar, who through you sent his supplication to me, that it is the true faith and the perfect truth that if a person, at the devil's instigation, had committed every sin against God and then, with true contrition and the purpose of amendment, truly repented these sins and humbly, with burning love, asked God for mercy, there is no doubt that the kind and merciful God himself would immediately be as ready to receive that person back into his grace with great joy and happiness as would be a loving father

who saw returning to him his only, dearly beloved son, now freed from a great scandal and a most shameful death.

Yes, much more willingly than any fleshly father, the loving God himself forgives his servants all their sins if they assiduously repent and humbly ask him for mercy and they fear to go on committing sins, and, with all the longing of their hearts, desire God's friendship above all things.

Therefore say to that same friar, on my behalf, that because of his good will and my prayer, God in his goodness has already forgiven him all the sins that he ever committed in all the days of his life. Tell him also that because of my prayer the love that he has for God will always increase in him right up to his death and will in no way diminish.

Likewise, say to him that it pleases God my Son that he stay in Rome, preaching, giving good advice to those who ask, hearing confessions, and imposing salutary penances, unless his superior should send him sometimes out of the city for some lawful necessity. For their transgressions, the same friar should charitably reprove his other brothers with good words, with salutary teachings, and, when he might be able to correct them, even with just rebukes, to the end that they may keep the rule and humbly amend their lives.

Furthermore, I now make known to him that his Masses and his reading and his prayers are acceptable and pleasing to God. And therefore tell him that, just as he guards himself against any excess in food and drink and sleep, so he must diligently guard himself against too much abstinence, in order that he may not suffer any faintness in performing divine labors and services. Also, he is not to have an overabundance of clothing but only necessary things, according to the Rule of Saint Francis, so that pride and cupidity may not ensue; for the less costly and valuable his clothes have been, the more lavish shall be his reward. And let him humbly obey all of his superior's instructions that are not contrary to God and that the friar's own ability permits him to perform.

Tell him also, on my behalf, what he will answer to those who say that the pope is not the true pope and that it is not the true Body of Jesus Christ my Son that the priests

confect on the altar. He should answer those heretics in this way: 'You have turned the backs of your heads to God, and thus you do not see him. Turn therefore to him your faces, and then you will be able to see him.'

For it is the true and Catholic faith that a pope who is without heresy is - no matter how stained he be with other sins - never so wicked as a result of these sins and his other bad deeds that there would not always be in him full authority and complete power to bind and loose souls. He possesses this authority through blessed Peter and has acquired it from God. For before Pope John, there were many supreme pontiffs who are now in hell. Nevertheless, the just and reasonable judgments that they made in the world are standing and approved in God's sight.

For a similar reason, I also say that all those priests who are not heretical - although otherwise full of many other sins - are true priests and truly confect the Body of Christ my Son and that truly they touch God in their hands on the altar and administer the other sacraments even though, because of their sins and evil deeds, they are unworthy of heavenly glory in God's sight."

After the abovesaid friar had received from Lady Bridget the last revelation above, he asked her to pray to God concerning the matter of Christ's private property, and also concerning the authority of the supreme pontiff and of the celebrating priests. As the lady was praying, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and answered all these points as follows.

Chapter 8

"Say to my friend the friar that it is not licit for you to know whether the soul of Pope John XXII is in hell or in heaven. Nor indeed is it licit for you to know anything about the sins that the same pope took with him when, after his death, he came before God's judgment. But tell the same friar that those decretals that the same Pope John made or established concerning Christ's private property contain no error in the Catholic faith nor any heresy.

I, indeed, who gave birth to the true God himself, bear witness to the fact that the same Jesus Christ, my Son, had one personal possession and that he alone possessed it. This was that tunic that I made with my own hands. And the prophet witnesses to this fact, saying in the person of my Son: 'Over my garment, they cast lots.' Behold and be attentive to the fact that he did not say 'our garment' but 'my garment.'

Know too that, as often as I dressed him in that tunic for the use of his most holy body, my eyes then filled at once with tears and my whole heart was wrung with trouble and grief and was afflicted with intense bitterness. For I well knew the manner in which that tunic would in future be separated from my Son, namely, at the time of his passion when, naked and innocent, he would be crucified by the Jews. And this tunic was that garment over which his crucifiers cast lots. No one had that same tunic while he lived, but only he alone.

Know too that all those who say that the pope is not the true pope and that the priests are not true priests or rightly ordained and that what is consecrated by the priests in the celebration of Masses is not the true Body of my blessed Son, yes, all those who assert such errors are puffed up with the spirit of the devil in hell.

For truly these same heretics have committed such serious acts of malice and frightful sins against God that, because of their very great demerits, they are damnably filled with diabolic wickedness, and, through their heresy, they are cut off and cast out from the number of the whole flock of Christianity in the just judgment of the divine majesty, just as Judas was shut out and cut off from the sacred number of the apostles because of his wicked demerits: for he betrayed Christ my Son. Know that, even so, all those who want to amend their lives will obtain mercy from God.”

How Christ, speaking to Lady Bridget during prayer, instructs her to go now to Jerusalem and promises to her bodily strength and the necessary expenses.

Chapter 9

The Son of God speaks to blessed Bridget his bride and says: "Go now and depart from Rome for Jerusalem. Why do you plead your age? I am the Creator of nature; I can weaken or strengthen nature as it pleases me. I will be with you. I will direct your way. I will guide you and lead you back to Rome; and I will procure for you everything necessary, more adequately than you have ever had before."

The Virgin Mary, speaking to Lady Bridget, says that in no way is it God's will that clerics should have wives or be contaminated by carnal vice - prohibiting any pope from allowing this marriage of clerics to take place or be established in God's Church.

Chapter 10

Rejoice eternally, O blessed Body of God, in perpetual honor and in perennial victory and in your everlasting omnipotence together with your Father and the Holy Spirit and also with your blessed and most worthy Mother and with all your glorious heavenly court. To you be praise indeed, O eternal God, and endless thanksgiving for the fact that you deigned to become a human being and that for us in the world you willed to consecrate your venerable Body out of material bread and lovingly bestowed it on us as food for the salvation of our souls!

It happened that a person who was absorbed in prayer heard then a voice saying to her: "O you to whom it has been given to hear and see spiritually, hear now the things that I want to reveal to you: namely, concerning that archbishop who said that if he were pope, he would give leave for all clerics and priests to contract marriages in the flesh. He thought and believed that this would be more acceptable to God than that clerics should live dissolutely, as they now do. For he believed that through such marriage the greater carnal sins might be avoided; and even though he did not rightly understand God's will in this matter, nonetheless that same archbishop was still a friend of God.

But now I shall tell you God's will in this matter; for I gave birth to God himself. You will make these things known to my bishop and say to him that circumcision was given to

Abraham long before the law was given to Moses and that, in that time of Abraham, all human beings whatsoever were guided according to their own intellect and according to the choice of their own will and that, nevertheless, many of them were then friends of God. But after the law was given to Moses, it then pleased God more that human beings should live under the law and according to the law rather than follow their own human understanding and choice. It was the same with my Son's blessed Body.

For after he instituted in the world this new sacrament of the eucharist and ascended into heaven, the ancient law was then still kept: namely, that Christian priests lived in carnal matrimony. And, nonetheless, many of them were still friends of God because they believed with simple purity that this was pleasing to God: namely, that Christian priests should have wives and live in wedlock just as, in the ancient times of the Jews, this had pleased him in the case of Jewish priests. And so, this was the observance of Christian priests for many years.

But that observance and ancient custom seemed very abominable and hateful to all the heavenly court and to me, who gave birth to his body: namely, because it was being thus observed by Christian priests who, with their hands, touch and handle this new and immaculate Sacrament of the most holy Body of my Son. For the Jews had, in the ancient law of the Old Testament, a shadow, i.e., a figure, of this Sacrament; but Christians now have the truth itself - namely, him who is true God an man - in that blessed and consecrated bread.

After those earlier Christian priests had observed these practices for a time, God himself, through the infusion of his Holy Spirit, put into the heart of the pope then guiding the Church another law more acceptable and pleasing to him in this matter: namely, by pouring this infusion into the heart of the pope so that he established a statute in the universal Church that Christian priests, who have so holy and so worthy an office, namely, of consecrating this precious Sacrament, should by no means live in the easily contaminated, carnal delight of marriage.

And therefore, through God's preordinance and his judgment, it has been justly ordained that priests who do not live in chastity and continence of the flesh are cursed and excommunicated before God and deserve to be deprived of their priestly office. But

still, if they truthfully amend their lives with the true purpose of not sinning further, they will obtain mercy from God.

Know this too: that if some pope concedes to priests a license to contract carnal marriage, God will condemn him to a sentence as great, in a spiritual way, as that which the law justly inflicts in a corporeal way on a man who has transgressed so gravely that he must have his eyes gouged out, his tongue and lips, nose and ears cut off, his hands and feet amputated, all his body's blood spilled out to grow completely cold, and finally, his whole bloodless corpse cast out to be devoured by dogs and other wild beasts. Similar things would truly happen in a spiritual way to that pope who were to go against the aforementioned preordinance and will of God and concede to priests such a license to contract marriage.

For that same pope would be totally deprived by God of his spiritual sight and hearing, and of his spiritual words and deeds. All his spiritual wisdom would grow completely cold; and finally, after his death, his soul would be cast out to be tortured eternally in hell so that there it might become the food of demons everlastingly and without end. Yes, even if Saint Gregory the Pope had made this statute, in the aforesaid sentence he would never have obtained mercy from God if he had not humbly revoked his statute before his death.”

This is the beginning of a revelation that Lady Bridget had in Naples for the lady queen of the same city. But other things contained therein are not set down here because they are secrets that pertain to the status and person of the said lady queen.

Chapter 11

“I am God, the Creator of all. I gave to angels and to humans free decision so that those who willed to do my will might remain with me forever and so that those who thought things contrary to me might be separated from me. And so, certain of the angels became demons because they did not will to love me or to obey me. Then when man had been created and the devil saw my love for man, the devil not only became my enemy but

also promoted war against me by inciting Adam to violate my commandments. The devil prevailed on that occasion by my permission and as a result of my justice; and ever since that time, the devil and I are in discord and strife because I want man to live according to my will while the devil exerts himself to make man follow his own desires.

Therefore at that moment when I opened heaven with my heart's blood, the devil was deprived of that justice which he seemed to have; and those souls that were worthy were saved and freed. Then indeed the law was established that it should be in man's decision to follow me, his God, in order to obtain the everlasting crown. But if he follows the devil's desires, he will have everlasting punishment. Thus the devil and I do struggle, in that we both desire souls as bridegrooms desire their brides. For I desire souls in order to give them eternal joy and honor; but the devil desires to give them eternal horror and sorrow. Hear what the queen had done to me. I allowed the raising of her to a kingship, etc.”

ADDITION

Christ speaks: "Write to her that she should make a clean confession of all that she had done from her youth and that she should have a firm purpose of amendment according to the advice of her confessor. Second, she should diligently recall the manner and the quality of her life during her marriage and during her rule; for she is going to render an account of everything to me. Third, she must have the intention of paying her debts and of restoring that which she knows was wrongly acquired. For the soul is in peril as long as such things are kept; and it does no good to give lavish gifts if debts go unpaid. Fourth, she is not to burden the community with her new inventions, but instead should lighten the burdens which have grown customary. For God will hear the sigh and the crying of those in misery.

Fifth, she must have councilors who are just and not covetous; and she must entrust her judgments to such men as love truth and do not fawn upon factions or seek to grow rich but know how to be content with what is necessary. Sixth, every day, at fixed times, she should remember God's wounds and his passion, for by this means the love of God is renewed in the heart. Seventh, at fixed times she should collect the poor, wash their feet, and refresh them. She should love all her subjects with sincere charity, bringing all those

at strife to accord and consoling those who are unjustly offended. Eighth, she should grant her gifts with discretion and according to her means, not oppressing some while making others rich, but wisely relieving some without burdening anyone.

Ninth, she is not to be more attentive to the money of criminals than to justice; but setting aside all greed, she is to weigh the quality of the crimes and show more compassion where she sees greater humility. Tenth, during her lifetime, she is to apply all her diligence to ensure that her kingdom can be in a calm state after her death, for I predict to her that henceforth she will not have offspring from her womb. Eleventh, she should be content with the colors and beauty by which God has adorned her face; for extraneous color is very displeasing to God. Twelfth, she is to acquire greater humility and contrition for her sins because, in my eyes, she is a predator of many souls, a prodigal squanderer of my goods, and a rod of tribulation to my friends. Thirteenth, she must have continual fear in her heart because in all the time she has had, she has led the life of a lascivious woman rather than that of a queen.

Fourteenth, let her put aside worldly customs and those women who flatter her. The short time that she has left, she should spend in honoring me, for up to now she has treated me as if I were a human being without recollection of her sins. Let her now fear and live in such a way that she may not feel my judgment. Otherwise, if she does not listen to me, I will judge her not as a queen but as an ungrateful apostate; and I will scourge her from head to heel; and she will be a disgrace before me and my angels and my saints.”

Item, a revelation. Christ speaks: ”Write those things with fewer and gentler words, just as the Holy Spirit will inflame you, and send them through my bishop to the queen.”

Item, concerning a certain queen. A lady was seen standing in a shift spattered with sperm and mud. And a voice was heard: ”This woman is a monkey that sniffs at its own stinking posterior. She has poison in her heart and she is harmful to herself and she hastens into snares that throw her down.” And again she was seen wearing a crown of twigs spattered with human excrement and with mud from the streets and sitting naked on a tottering beam. At once there appeared a most beautiful virgin who said: ”This is that insolent and audacious woman who is reputed by mankind to be a lady of the world,

but in God's eyes, she has been cast off, as you see." And the virgin added: "O woman, think of your entrance and be attentive to your end; and open the eyes of your heart and see that your councilors are those who hate your soul!"

Item, concerning a certain queen. A woman was seen sitting on a golden seat; and two Ethiopians stood before her - one, as it were, on the right and the other on the left. The one standing on the right called out and said: "O lionlike woman, I bring blood. Take and pour out! For it is a mark of the lioness to thirst after blood." The one on the left said: "O woman, I bring to you fire in a vessel. Take - for you are of a fiery nature - and pour out into the waters in order that your memory may last in the waters as well as on the land."

Then a virgin of wondrous beauty appeared, and the Ethiopians fled from her sight. She said: "This woman is in a perilous state. If she prospers in accordance with her will, the result will be tribulation for many. But if she suffers tribulation, the result will be more useful to her for obtaining eternal life. She herself does not wish to give up her own will or to suffer tribulation in compliance with God. Therefore, if she is left to her own will, she will not be the cause of consolation for herself or for others."

Item, a revelation. The Son appeared and said: "This woman had done some things that did please me. Therefore, because of the prayers of my friends, I am willing to point out to her how she may escape the scorn of mankind and the squandering of her own soul if, indeed, she obeys well; if not, she would not escape the justice of the Judge; for she did not will to hear the Father's voice."

Concerning Lord Gomez. The Mother of God speaks: "Advise him to do justice wherever he can. If he knows that he has goods that were wrongly acquired, he must not delay in making restitution. He must also be careful not to impose unusual burdens on his subjects, and he must be content with the things that he has because they are sufficient for him if he manages them discreetly and with moderation. Women other than his own wife, he must avoid like poison; and he must not lead out the army against anyone nor take part in the action himself unless he fully knows that justice is on his side and that the war is just. He must also be zealous in making frequent use of confession and in receiving the Body of Christ more frequently and in occupying himself, at fixed

times in the day, with the remembrance of Christ's passion and his wounds.”

Concerning Anthony of Carleto. Christ speaks: ”Tell the queen to let him stay in his position. If he rises up to greater things, it will be at the cost of his soul; and neither he himself nor his friends will have any joy out of his promotion.” And so it all turned out.

This revelation was given by God to Lady Bridget in Naples at the request of Lord Bernard, the Neapolitan archbishop. He asked her to pray to God concerning some doubts he had in his conscience. When she was at prayer, Christ appeared to her, answered all the archbishop's doubts, and gave him instruction and the measures he should maintain in governing his own house and in governing his subjects in his diocese.

Chapter 12

Christ speaks to his bride and says: ”Tell him that if he wishes to be called a bishop in the justice of the divine judgment, he must not imitate me manners and customs of many who are now rulers of the Church. I took on a human body from a virgin in order that by words and deeds I might fulfill the law which, from eternity, had been ordained in the Godhead. I opened the gate of heaven with my heart's blood, and I so illumined the way by my words and deeds that all might use my example in order to merit eternal life. But truly, the words that I said and the deeds that I did in the world are now almost completely forgotten and neglected. For this, no one is as much a cause as the prelates of the churches. They are full of pride, greed, and the rottenness of bodily pleasure.

All of these things are contrary to my commandments and to Holy Church's honorable statutes, which my friends established out of great devotion after my ascension and after I had accomplished my will in the world. For those wicked prelates of the churches, who are filled with the malignity of an evil spirit, have left to mankind examples that are exceedingly harmful to souls; and therefore it is necessary for me to exact full justice from them by doing judgment on them, abolishing them from the book of life in heaven and placing them beside my enemy Lucifer in hell, in hellish sees that

shall be the seat of their perpetual excruciation. Nevertheless, you ought to know that if anyone is willing to amend himself before death by loving me with all his heart and if he abstains from sins, then I will be prompt in showing my mercy.

Tell him also, as if on your own part, these words that follow: 'My Lord, it sometimes happens that, from a black furnace, there goes forth a beautiful flame that is useful and quite necessary for fashioning works of beauty. But that does not mean that the furnace must then be praised for its black color. The praise and honor and thanks are owed to the artist and master of those works.

It is a similar situation with me, unworthy woman that I am, if you find something useful in my advice; for then you ought continually to show infinite thanks and willing service, not to me, but to God himself, who made and makes all things and who has a perfect will to do good. My Lord, I begin by first speaking to you of those things that touch the salvation of many souls. I advise you that, if you would have God's friendship, neither you, nor any other bishop acting on your behalf, should be willing to promote anyone to sacred orders unless he has first been diligently examined by good clerics and has been found to be so suitable in his life and character that, by the testimony of wise and truthful men, he is declared worthy to receive such an office.

With diligent attention, see to it that all the bishops under you and all the suffragans of your archbishopric do the same. For no one could believe how great God's indignation is against those bishops who do not take care to know and diligently to examine the quality of those whom they promote to orders of such dignity in their bishoprics. Whether they do this at the supplication of others or out of negligence and laziness or because of fear, they shall indeed render a most strict account of this at God's judgment.

I also advise you to inquire about the number and the identities of those holders of benefices in your diocese who have the care of souls. Summon them to your presence at least once a year to discuss then with them their own welfare and that of the souls of those under them. And if, by chance, they could not all come together on the same day, then definite dates are to be set on which they may come to you individually during the year so that none of them may be able to excuse himself in any way from consulting you

for a whole year.

And you are to preach to them about the kind of life to be led by those who have an office of such great dignity. Know too that priests who have concubines and celebrate Mass are as acceptable and pleasing to God as were the inhabitants of Sodom whom God submersed in hell.

And even though the Mass, in itself, always is the same and has the same power and efficacy, nevertheless, the kiss of peace that such fornicating priests give in the Mass is as pleasing to God as the kiss by which Judas handed over the Savior of all. Therefore constantly try as much as possible, with words and deeds, by enticing or rebuking or threatening, to work together with them so that they may endeavor to lead a chaste life, especially since they must touch so very holy a Sacrament and, with their hands, administer it to other faithful Christians.

Furthermore, for their salvation you should advise all the clergy, both the higher ranks made up of prelates or canons and also the minor clerics - all, that is, who are subject to your rule and have ecclesiastical incomes - that they should correct their lives in every respect. And let no one believe that, for the sake of avoiding sodomy, fornication is at all permissible for clerics; nor, for that reason, is it to be endured that they should defile themselves with women. For every Christian who has the use of intellect and who does not care about eternal life while he is living, will undoubtedly endure after death the most severe punishments of hell for eternity.

I also advise you that your household should not be too large out of pride, but that it should be well proportioned to the needs of your office as a ruler and to the requirements of your status. Those clerics, therefore, who are called your companions, you should keep with you wherever you may be, for the good of your reputation rather than for vainglory or for pomp; and they are to be few in number rather than many. But of those clerics whom you maintain for no other reason than to sing the divine office or to pursue studies or to teach others or to do writing, you may have as many as you please. And nevertheless it is to your advantage to take diligent care, as best you can, for their correction and for the salvation of their souls.

Be attentive to the rest of your servants so that each has his own task; and if some of them are superfluous, do not keep them out of vainglory lest your heart be elated at having a larger household than your peers. It is also expedient that you always have in mind those truly necessary members of your household whom you keep with you; painstakingly scrutinize their lives like a true householder, correcting their actions, lives, and characters and, with good formation, encouraging and admonishing them in a fatherly way so that they learn to flee from sins and vices and to love God above all things. It is indeed more acceptable to God and more useful to yourself that you keep with you no member of the household who is unwilling to comply with sound advice and humbly amend his transgressions.

Of your clothing, I advise you never to have in your possession more than three pairs at one time; everything beyond this, you should immediately give to God himself. Of bed covers, towels, and tablecloths, keep for yourself only what is necessary and useful to you; and give the rest to God. Of silver vessels, reserve for yourself just enough for your own person and for the guests who eat at your own table; donate the superfluous pieces to God with a cheerful mind. For the rest of your household and the guests who sit at other tables certainly can, without any embarrassment, eat and drink using vessels of tin, clay, wood, or glass. For that custom which now prevails in the houses of bishops and lords of having an overly excessive abundance of gold and silver is quite harmful to souls and very repulsive to God himself, who, for our sake, subjected himself to all poverty.

Beware, also, of having too many courses and extravagant delicacies. Nor should you have overly large and expensive horses, but rather those that are moderate in size and price. For such large horses are needed by those who expose themselves to the dangers of war for the defense of justice and the protection of life and not for pride. Indeed, I tell you that as often as prelates, out of pride and vainglory, mount big horses, the devil mounts the prelates' necks. For I know a person who, when the prelates and cardinals proudly lifted their feet to ride on the backs of their big horses, saw demons as Ethiopians who then lifted their feet and mounted the necks of the prelates and sat there laughing.

As often as the prelates pompously spurred their horses, the Ethiopians lifted their heads in their glee and kicked their heels into the breasts of those horsemen. Again, I

advise you to have your vicars promise under oath that, while carrying out your business, they will not presume to do anything contrary to justice. And if they later do the opposite, you are to have them rebuked in accordance with justice. If you do as I have said, you can be confident that your conscience is quite sound.

And now I give advice for the consolation of the souls of your departed, about whom you asked me whether or not they were in purgatory and what almsdeeds ought to be done for them, etc. I answer and say that every day for one year you are to have two Masses celebrated for them and every day you are to feed two paupers, and every week take care to distribute one florin in coins to the poor.

Say also to the parish priests that they are to correct their parishioners and to rebuke them for their open sins in cases that pertain to them in order that they may be able to live better lives. Those parishioners who are unwilling to be rebuked should then be rebuked by you. If, however, you know that some are openly sinning against God and justice, and if they are such great tyrants that you cannot pass judgment on them, then tell them in sweet and gentle words to correct themselves.

If they do not wish to obey, you may leave them to God's judgment; and God will see that your intention is good. One must not throw the meek lamb into a wolf's ferocious teeth because this will make the wolf more ravenous. Nevertheless, it is fitting for you to forewarn them charitably about the peril of their souls, as a father does with his children when they oppose him. Nor are you bound to forego rebukes out of fear for your body unless, by chance, some danger to souls could come from them.' ”

This revelation, made to Lady Bridget, began in Naples immediately after the death of her son Lord Charles, a knight. The vision continued, with certain breaks, during her Jerusalem voyage until she arrived at Jerusalem; and there it ended in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre of the Lord. It contains in itself allegations made by the Virgin Mary and by an angel on behalf of the said knight's soul at the divine judgment in the presence of Christ the Judge and allegations made on the devil's part against that very soul and Christ the Judge's verdict for its liberation.

Chapter 13

The Virgin Mary speaks to Lady Bridget and says: "I want to tell you what I did for the soul of your son Charles when it was being separated from his body. I acted like a woman standing by another woman who is giving birth, in order that she might help the infant, lest it die in the flow of blood or suffocate in that narrow place through which an infant exits and so that, by her watchful care, the infant's enemies, who are in the same house, might not be able to kill it. I acted in the same way.

Indeed I stood near your same son Charles, shortly before he sent forth his spirit, in order that he might not have such thoughts of carnal love in his memory that, for the sake of this love, he would think or say anything against God or will to omit anything pleasing to God or will to perform, to his soul's harm, those things that could be in any way contrary to the divine will.

I also helped him in that narrow space, i.e., at his soul's exit from his body, so that in dying he would not endure pain so hard as to cause him to become at all inconstant through despair, and so that in dying he might not forget God. I also guarded his soul from its deadly enemies, i.e., the demons, so that none of them could touch it. As soon as it had left his body, I took custody of it and defended it. This action quickly routed and dispersed that whole throng of demons who, in their malice, yearned to swallow it and torture it for eternity. But as to how, after the death of Charles, judgment was passed on his soul, this will be shown to you completely when it pleases me."

SECOND REVELATION ON THE SAME MATTER

After an interval of some days, the same Virgin Mary herself again appeared to the same Lady Bridget, who was wide awake and at prayer and said: "Through God's goodness, it is now permitted for you to see and hear how judgment was passed on the aforesaid soul when it had left the body. That which then happened in one moment before God's incomprehensible majesty will be shown to you in painstaking detail at intervals by means of corporeal likenesses so that your understanding may be able to grasp it."

In the same hour, therefore, Lady Bridget saw herself caught up to a certain large and beautiful palace where, upon the tribunal, the Lord Jesus Christ sat as if crowned as an emperor in the company of an infinite host of attendant angels and saints. She saw standing near him his most worthy Mother, who listened carefully to the judgment. Also in the presence of the Judge, a soul was seen standing in great fear and panic, naked as a newborn infant, and, as it were, entirely blind so that it could see nothing; but in its consciousness, it understood what was being said and done in the palace. An angel stood on the Judge's right side near the soul and a devil on his left. But neither of them touched the soul or handled it.

Then, at last, the devil cried out and said: "Hearken, O most almighty Judge! I complain in your sight about a woman who is both my Lady and your Mother and whom you love so much that you have given to her power over heaven and earth and over all of us demons of hell. She has indeed done me an injustice regarding that soul which now stands here. According to justice, as soon as this soul had left the body, I ought to have taken it to myself and presented it in my company before your court of judgment. And behold, O just Judge: that woman, your Mother, seized this soul with her own hands, almost before it exited from the man's mouth; and in her powerful ward she has brought it to your judgment."

Then Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, answered thus: "Hearken, you devil, to my reply! When you were created, you understood the justice that was in God from eternity and without beginning. You also had free choice to do what most pleased you. And even though you have chosen to hate God rather than love him, nevertheless you still understand quite well what, according to justice, ought to be done. I tell you, therefore, that it was my business, rather than yours, to present that soul before God, the true judge.

For while this soul was in the body it had a great love for me, and in its heart frequently pondered the fact that God had deigned to make me his mother and that he willed to exalt me on high above all created things. As a result he began to love God with such great charity that in his heart he used to say this: 'I so rejoice because God holds the Virgin Mary his Mother most dear above all things, that there is in the world no creature

and no bodily delight that I would take in exchange for that joy. No, I would prefer that joy to all earthly delights.

And if it were possible that God could remove her, in the smallest point, from that dignity in which she stands, I would rather choose for myself, in exchange, eternal torture in the depth of hell. Therefore, to God himself be endless thanksgiving and everlasting glory for that blessed grace and that glory immeasurable that he has given to his most worthy Mother!' Therefore, O devil, see now with what sort of will he passed away. Which now seems to you more just: that his soul come to God's judgment defended by me or that it come into your hands to be tortured without pity?"

The devil answered: "I have no right to expect that this soul, which loves you more than itself, would come into my hands before judgment be passed. But even though, at the bidding of justice, you did him this favor before the judgment, nevertheless, after the judgment his works will condemn him to be punished at my hands. Now, O Queen, I ask you why you drove all of us demons from the presence of his body at his soul's exit so that none of us could cause any horror there or strike any fear into him."

The Virgin Mary answered: "I did this in return for the ardent charity that he had toward my body and in return for the joy that he had from the fact that I am the Mother of God. Therefore I obtained from my Son the favor that, wherever he was and even where he now is, no evil spirit might approach his body."

After this, the devil speaks to the Judge and says: "I know that you are justice and power itself. You do not judge less justly for the devil than for an angel. Therefore adjudge that soul to me! Using the wisdom that I had when you created me, I had written all his sins. Indeed, I had kept watch over all his sins with that malice of mine that I had when I fell from heaven. For when that soul first came to the age of reason and really understood that what it was doing was sinful, its own will then drew it to live in worldly pride and carnal pleasure, rather than resist such things."

The angel answered: "When his mother first understood that his will was wavering toward sin, she immediately rushed to his aid with works of mercy and daily prayers that God might deign to have mercy on him lest he withdraw himself from him. Because of

those works of his mother, he finally obtained a godly fear so that, as often as he fell into sin, he immediately hurried to make his confession.”

The devil answered, ”I must tell his sins.” And at the very moment he intended to begin, he immediately started to exclaim and lament and carefully search himself, including his head and all the limbs that he seemed to have; and he was seen to tremble all over; and with great confusion he cried out: ”Woe to me in my misery! How have I wasted my long labor? Not only is the text blotted out and ruined, but even the material on which everything was written has burnt up completely. Moreover, the material indicates the times that he sinned. And I do not recall the times any more than the sins written down in connection with them.” The angel answered: ”This was done by his mother's tears and long labors and many prayers. God sympathized with her sighs and gave to her son this grace: namely, that for every sin he committed, he obtained contrition, making a humble confession out of love for God. Therefore those sins have been blotted out and are unheeded by your memory.”

The devil answered, asserting that he still had a sack full of those writings according to which the abovesaid knight had purposed to make amends for his sins but did not take care [to do so and asserting that the writings gave grounds on which] to torture him until, through punishment, satisfaction had been made. And indeed that same knight had not yet taken care to amend those sins during his lifetime. The angel answered: ”Open the sack and seek a judgment on those sins for which you must chastise him.” At those words, the devil cried out like a madman, saying: ”I have been plundered in my power. Not only my sack has been taken, but also the sins that filled it! The sack in which I put all the reasons that I had to punish him was his laziness; for, because of his laziness, he omitted many good things.”

The angel answered: ”His mother's tears have plundered you and have burst the sack and have destroyed the writing. So greatly did her tears please God!” The devil answered: ”I still have here a few things to bring forth: namely, his venial sins.”

The angel answered: ”He had the intention to make a pilgrimage from his fatherland, leaving his goods and his friends and visiting, by many labors, the holy places. He complemented these things, furthermore, by so preparing himself that he was

worthy to gain an indulgence from Holy Church. Moreover, he desired, by making amends for his sins, to appease God his Creator. As a result, all those charges, which you just said that you had written down, have been pardoned.”

The devil answered: ”Nevertheless, I still must punish him for all those venial sins that he committed; and therefore, through indulgences, they have not been deleted at all. For there are thousands upon thousands of them, and they have all been written on my tongue.” The angel answered: ”Extend your tongue and show the writing.” The devil answered with loud howling and clamor like a maniac; and he said: ”Woe is me. I have not one word to say; for my tongue has been cut off at the root together with its strength!”

The angel answered: ”His mother did this with her continual prayers and her labor; for she loved his soul with her whole heart. Therefore, for the sake of her love, it pleased God to pardon all the venial sins that he committed from his infancy right up to his death; and therefore your tongue is said to have lost its strength.”

The devil answered: ”I still have one thing carefully stored in my heart, and no one can abolish it. This thing is the fact that he acquired some things unjustly and never attended to their restoration.” The angel answered: ”His mother made satisfaction for such things with her alms, her prayers, and her works of mercy so that the rigor of justice inclined toward the mildness of mercy; and God gave him the perfect intention of making full satisfaction - according to his opportunities and without sparing any of his own goods - to all those from whom he had taken anything unjustly. God accepted that intention in place of its effect because he was not well enough to live any longer. Therefore, his heirs must make satisfaction for such things to the extent that they can.”

The devil answered: ”If I therefore do not have the power to punish him for sins, I must nevertheless chastise him because he did not practice good deeds and virtues according to his ability while he had his full senses and a healthy body. For virtues and good deeds are those treasures that he ought to bring with him to such a kingdom, namely, to the glorious kingdom of God. Permit me therefore, by means of punishment, to supply what he lacks in virtuous deeds.”

The angel answered: "It is written that, to one who asks, it shall be given and, to one who knocks with perseverance, it shall be opened. Listen then, you devil! By her charitable prayers and pious works his mother has perseveringly knocked at the gate of mercy on his behalf; and, for more than thirty years, she has shed many thousands of tears that God might deign to pour the Holy into his heart so that this same son of hers might willingly offer his goods, his body, and his soul to God's service. And God did so, for that knight became so fervent that it pleased him to live for nothing other than to follow God's will. And behold: God, who had been petitioned for so long a time, did pour his blessed Spirit into his heart.

And the Virgin Mother of God has given to him, out of her own virtue whatever he lacks in those spiritual weapons and garments that are proper for knights who must, in the kingdom of heaven, enter the presence of the highest Emperor. Those saints too, who now have a place in the heavenly kingdom and whom this knight loved during his life in the world, added to his consolation out of their merits. For he himself truly did assemble a treasure as those pilgrims do who daily exchange perishable goods for eternal riches.

And because he did so, he will therefore obtain everlasting joy and honor, especially for his burning desire to make a pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem, and for the fact that he fervently longed to risk his life willingly in warfare so that if he had been a match for so great a work, the Holy Land might be restored to the dominion of Christians to the end that the glorious sepulchre of God might be held in due reverence. Therefore you, O devil, have no right to supply those things that he did not personally accomplish."

The devil answered: "Still, he lacks a crown. For if I could devise anything to spoil its perfection, I would willingly do so." The angel answered: "It is entirely certain that all who will themselves from hell by truly repenting their sins, by voluntarily conforming themselves to the divine will, and by loving God himself with all their heart, will obtain his grace. And it pleases God himself to give them a crown out of the triumphal crown of his blessed human body if they have been purged according to strict justice. Therefore, it is not at all suitable for you, O devil, to devise anything related to his crown."

When the devil heard this, he cried out impatiently, roaring, and said: "Woe is me. For all my memory has been taken from me! I do not now recall in what respect that

knight followed my will; and - what is more amazing - I have even forgotten what name he was called by while he lived.”

The angel answered: ”Know that now, in heaven, he is called 'Son of Tears.' ” The devil cried out loudly and answered: ”Oh, what a cursed sow his mother, that she-pig, is, who had a belly so expansive that so much water poured into her that her belly's every space was filled with liquid for tears! Cursed be she by me and by all my company!”

The angel answered: ”Your curse is God's honor and the blessing of all his friends.” Then, however, Christ the Judge spoke, saying this: ”Depart, O devil, my enemy!” Then he said to the knight: ”Come, O my chosen one!” And so, at once, the devil fled.

When the bride saw these things, she said: ”O Power eternal and incomprehensible, you yourself, God and Lord, Jesus Christ! You pour into hearts all good thoughts and prayers and tears. You conceal your gracious gifts; and for them you confer eternal rewards in glory. Therefore, to you be honor and service and thanks for all that you have created! O my sweetest God, you are most dear to me and truly to me dearer than my body and soul!”

The angel also then spoke to that same bride of Christ and said: ”You ought to know that this vision has been shown to you by God not only for your own consolation but also in order that God's friends may be able to understand how much he deigns to do in answer to the prayers, tears, and labors of his friends who charitably pray and labor for others with perseverance and good will. You also ought to know that this knight, your son, would not have had such a grace if he had not, since infancy, had the will to love God and his friends and to amend his life willingly after every fall into sin.”

Lady Bridget had this revelation in the holy city of Jerusalem, the first time that she was in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In it, Christ declares the pardon and grace that good pilgrims have in the said church when they come there with a right intention and a holy purpose.

Chapter 14

The Son spoke to the bride: "When you people entered my temple, which was dedicated with my blood, you were as cleansed of all your sins as if you had at that moment been lifted from the font of baptism. And because of your labors and devotion, some souls of your relatives that were in purgatory have this day been liberated and have entered into heaven in my glory. For all who come to this place with a perfect will to amend their lives in accord with their better conscience, and who are not willing to fall back into their former sins, will have all their former sins completely forgiven; and they will have an increase of grace to make progress."

This vision Lady Bridget saw in Jerusalem in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the chapel of Mount Calvary, on the Friday after the octave of the Ascension of the Lord, when, caught up in spirit, she saw the whole passion of the Lord in painstaking detail, as it is here contained at greater length.

Chapter 15

While I was at Mount Calvary, most mournfully weeping, I saw that my Lord, who was naked and scourged, had been led by the Jews to his crucifixion. He was being guarded by them diligently. I then saw too that a certain hole had been cut into the mount and that the crucifiers were round about and ready to work their cruelty. The Lord, however, turned toward me and said to me: "Be attentive; for in this hole in the rock the foot of the cross was fixed at the time of my passion." And at once I saw how the Jews were there fixing and fastening his cross firmly in the hole in the rock of the mount with bits of wood strongly hammered in on every side in order that the cross might stand more solidly and not fall.

Then, when the cross had been so solidly fastened there, at once wooden planks were fitted around the trunk of the cross to form steps up to the place where his feet were to be crucified, in order that both he and his crucifiers might be able to ascend by those

plank steps and stand atop the planks in a way more convenient for crucifying him. After this, they then ascended by those steps, leading him with the greatest of mockery and scolding. He ascended gladly, like a meek lamb led to the slaughter. When he was finally on top of those planks, he at once, willingly and without coercion, extended his arm and opened his right hand and placed it on the cross. Those savage torturers monstrously crucified it, piercing it with a nail through that part where the bone was more solid.

And then, with a rope, they pulled violently on his left hand and fastened it to the cross in the same manner. Finally, they extended his body on the cross beyond all measure; and placing one of his shins on top of the other, they fastened to the cross his feet, thus joined, with two nails. And they violently extended those glorious limbs so far on the cross that nearly all of his veins and sinews were bursting.

Then the crown of thorns, which they had removed from his head when he was being crucified, they now put back, fitting it onto his most holy head. It pricked his awesome head with such force that then and there his eyes were filled with flowing blood and his ears were obstructed. And his face and beard were covered as if they had been dipped in that rose-red blood. And at once those crucifiers and soldiers quickly removed all the planks that abutted the cross, and then the cross remained alone and lofty, and my Lord was crucified upon it.

And as I, filled with sorrow, gazed at their cruelty, I then saw his most mournful Mother lying on the earth, as if trembling and halfdead. She was being consoled by John and by those others, her sisters, who were then standing not far from the cross on its right side. Then the new sorrow of the compassion of that most holy Mother so transfixed me that I felt, as it were, that a sharp sword of unbearable bitterness was piercing my heart. Then at last his sorrowful Mother arose; and, as it were, in a state of physical exhaustion, she looked at her Son. Thus, supported by her sisters, she stood there all dazed and in suspense, as though dead yet living, transfixed by the sword of sorrow. When her Son saw her and his other friends weeping, with a tearful voice he commended her to John. It was quite discernible in his bearing and voice that out of compassion for his Mother, his own heart was being penetrated by a most sharp arrow of sorrow beyond all measure.

Then too, his fine and lovely eyes appeared half dead; his mouth was open and bloody; his face was pale and sunken, all livid and stained with blood; and his whole body was as if black and blue and pale and very weak from the constant downward flow of blood. Indeed, his skin and the virginal flesh of his most holy body were so delicate and tender that, after the infliction of a slight blow, a black and blue mark appeared on the surface. At times, however, he tried to make stretching motions on the cross because of the exceeding bitterness of the intense and most acute pain that he felt. For at times the pain from his pierced limbs and veins ascended to his heart and battered him cruelly with an intense martyrdom; and thus his death was prolonged and delayed amidst grave torment and great bitterness.

Then, therefore, in distress from the exceeding anguish of his pain and already near to death, he cried to the Father in a loud and tearful voice, saying: "O Father, why have you forsaken me?" He then had pale lips, a bloody tongue, and a sunken abdomen that adhered to his back as if he had no viscera within. A second time also, he cried out again in the greatest of pain and anxiety: "O Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Then his head, raising itself a little, immediately bowed; and thus he sent forth his spirit. When his Mother then saw these things, she trembled at that immense bitterness and would have fallen onto the earth if she had not been supported by the other women. Then, in that hour, his hands retracted slightly from the place of the nail holes because of the exceeding weight of his body; and thus his body was as if supported by the nails with which his feet had been crucified. Moreover, his fingers and hands and arms were now more extended than before; his shoulder blades, in fact, and his back were as if pressed tightly to the cross.

Then at last the Jews standing around cried out in mockery against his Mother, saying many things. For some said: "Mary, now your Son is dead"; but others said other mocking words. And while the crowds were thus standing about, one man came running with the greatest of fury and fixed a lance in his right side with such violence and force that the lance would have passed almost through the other side of the body. Thus, when the lance was extracted from the body, at once a stream, as it were, of blood spurted out of that wound in abundance; in fact, the iron blade of the lance and a part of the shaft came out of the body red and stained with the blood. Seeing these things, his Mother so violently trembled with bitter sighing that it was quite discernible in her face and bearing

that her soul was then being penetrated by the sharp sword of sorrow.

When all these things had been accomplished and when the large crowds were receding, certain of the Lord's friends took him down. Then, with pity, his Mother received him into her most holy arms; and sitting, she laid him on her knee, all torn as he was and wounded and black and blue. With tears, she and John and those others, the weeping women, washed him. And then, with her linen cloth, his most mournful Mother wiped his whole body and its wounds. And she closed his eyes and kissed them; and she wrapped him in a clean cloth of fine linen. And thus they escorted him with lamentation and very great sorrow and placed him in the sepulchre.

Christ complains to the bride about all the earth's princes and prelates because they will not keep in their memory and recall in their heart these his sorrows and his passion and because they will not consider those sacred places of the Holy Land; and he threatens them if they do not amend themselves.

Chapter 16

After this, in that same hour, Christ spoke to his same bride, Lady Bridget, saying: "To these things that you have now seen and to the other things that I endured, the world's princes are not attentive; nor do they consider the places in which I was born and I suffered. For they are like a man who has a place designated for wild and untamed beasts and where he sets loose his hunting dogs and takes delight in gazing at the dogs and the wild things as they run.

It is a similar case with the princes of the earth and the prelates of the churches and all states of the world. They gaze at earthly delights with greater eagerness and pleasure than at my death and my passion and my wounds. Therefore, I shall now send them my words through you; and, if they do not change their hearts and turn them toward me, they will be condemned along with those who divided my clothing and, over my garment, cast lots."

ADDITION

Here follows a revelation made to blessed Bridget in Famagusta. The Son speaks: "This city is Gomorrah, burning with the fire of lust and of superfluity and of ambition. Therefore its structures shall fall, and it shall be desolated and diminished, and its inhabitants shall depart, and they shall groan in sorrow and tribulation, and they shall die out, and their shame shall be mentioned in many lands because I am angered at them."

Concerning the duke, who was privy to his brother's death. Christ speaks: "This man boldly expands his pride. He boasts of his incontinence and is not attentive to the things that he has done to his neighbor. Therefore, if he does not humble himself, I will act in accord with the common proverb: 'No lighter wails he who afterward weeps than he who wailed afore.' For he shall have a death no lighter than his brother's - no, a death more bitter - unless he quickly amends himself."

Concerning the duke's confessor. Christ speaks: "What did that friar say to you? Did he not say that the duke is good and cannot live in a better way? Did he not excuse the duke's incontinence? Such men are not confessors but deceivers. They go about like simple sheep, but they are more truly foxes and flatterers. Such are those friends who see and propose 'assumptions and dejections' to human beings for the sake of some temporal trifle. Therefore if that friar had sat in his convent, he would have obtained less punishment and a greater crown. Now, however, he will not escape the hand of one who rebukes and afflicts."

Certain people advised the lady to change clothes and blacken faces because of the Saracens. Christ speaks: "What advice are they giving you? Is it not to disguise your clothes and blacken your faces? Would I, God, who instruct you, truly be like someone who does not know the future or like someone powerless who fears all things? Not in the least! But I am wisdom itself and power itself, and I foreknow all and can do all. Therefore retain your accustomed manner of clothing and faces, and entrust your wills to me. For I, who saved Sarah from the hands of her captors, will also save all of you on land and sea and will provide for you in a way that is to your advantage."

Concerning a bishop. The Mother speaks: "My friend ought to love you as a mother, as a lady, as a daughter, and as a sister. As a mother, because of your age and because of the advice that he must seek. Second, as a lady, because of the grace given to you by God, who through you has shown the secrets of his wisdom. Third, as a daughter, by teaching and by consoling and by providing you with more useful things. Fourth, as a sister, by reproving - when this would be opportune - and by admonishing and by inciting to more perfect things through words and examples. Also, tell him that he ought to be like one who carries the best of flowers.

These flowers are my words, which are sweeter than honey to those who savor them, sharper and more penetrating than arrows, and more effective in remuneration. It is therefore the duty of the bearer to protect the flowers from the wind, the rain, and the heat: namely, from the wind of worldly talk; from the rain of carnal delights; from the heat of worldly favor. For one who glories in such things causes the flowers to become worthless and shows himself unsuitable to carry them."

Concerning the queen of Cyprus. The Son speaks: "Advise the queen not to return to her native land for this is not to her advantage. But let her stay in the place in which she has been set, serving God with all her heart. Second, she is not to marry, taking a second husband, for it is more acceptable to God to weep for the things that have been done and, by penance, to make up for time that has been uselessly spent. Third, she should guide the people of her kingdom toward mutual concord and charity; and she should labor that justice and good morals be laudably maintained and that the community not be weighed down with unusual burdens. Fourth, for God's sake, she should forget the evils that were committed against her husband and not burn for revenge.

For I am the Judge, and I shall judge for her. Fifth, she should nurture her son with divine charity and appoint as his councilors men who are just and not covetous, and as members of his household, men who are modest, composed, and wise, from whom he may learn to fear God, to rule justly, to sympathize with the unfortunate, to flee from flatterers and sycophants like poison, and to seek the advice of just men, even if they are poor, lowly, or despised. Sixth, she is to put down the shameful custom of women involving tight clothing, display of the breasts, unguents, and many other vanities; for these are things entirely hateful to God.

Seventh, she should have a confessor who, having left the world, loves souls more than gifts and who neither glosses over sins nor fears to reprove them. And, in those things that pertain to the salvation of the soul, she is to obey him just as she obeys God. Eighth, she should seek out and be attentive to the lives of holy queens and saintly women; and she is to labor for the increase of God's honor. Ninth, she should be reasonable in her gifts, avoiding both debts and the praises of men, for it is more acceptable to God to give little or even nothing than to contract debts and to defraud one's neighbor."

On the crowning of the new king. The Son speaks: "It is a great burden to be a king, but also a great honor and a very great enjoyment. It is fitting, therefore, that a king be mature, experienced, prudent, just, and a hard worker who loves his neighbors' welfare more than his own will. Therefore, in ancient times, kingdoms were well ruled when such a man was elected as king - one who had the will and the knowledge and the ability to rule with justice. Now kingdoms are not kingdoms but scenes of childishness, folly, and brigandage. For just as the brigand searches for ways and times to lay his ambush in order to acquire lucre without being marked, so kings now search for inventions by which to elevate their offspring, fill their purses with money, and discreetly burden their subjects. And they all the more gladly do justice in order to obtain temporal good, but they do not love justice in order to obtain everlasting reward.

Therefore, a wise man wisely said: 'Woe to that kingdom whose king is a child who lives daintily and has dainty flatterers but feels no anguish at all about the advancement of the community.' But because this boy will not bear his father's iniquity, therefore, if he wishes to make progress and to fulfill the dignity of his kingly name, let him obey my words that I have already spoken concerning Cyprus.

And let him not imitate the behavior of his predecessors, but let him lay aside childish levity and lead a kingly life, having assistants of the sort who fear and who do not love his gifts more than his soul and his honor, who hate flatteries, and who are not afraid to speak the truth and to follow it and to assert it. Otherwise, the boy will have no joy in his people, and his people no joy in the one elected."

When Lady Bridget was in Jerusalem, she was doubtful as to whether it were better for her to lodge in the monastery of the Friars Minor on Mount Zion or in the pilgrims' hostel in Jerusalem; and then the Virgin Mary appeared to her at prayer and told her that she should lodge in the hostel as a good example to others.

Chapter 17

The Mother of God speaks: "In that place on Mount Zion there are two kinds of human beings. Some love God with all their heart. Others want to have God, but the world is sweeter to them than God is. And therefore, so that the good may not be scandalized and so that you may not give an occasion to the lukewarm or an example to the future, it is therefore better to reside in the place appointed for pilgrims. For my Son will provide for you in all things as it pleases him."

In the kingdom of Cyprus, Lady Bridget was asked by Lady Eleanor, the queen of the said kingdom, to pray to God for her son the king and for that kingdom. Lady Bridget then crossed over to Jerusalem; and there one day, while she was at prayer, Christ appeared to her and spoke to her these counsels, which she was to write to the said king and to his paternal uncle, the prince of Antioch. And he instructed her to write those things to them as if from herself and not from the part of Christ.

Chapter 18

The bride writes to the king of Cyprus and to the prince of Antioch: "The first counsel is that each of you, in the presence of his confessor, is to make a clean and complete confession of all the things that he has done against the will of God; and thus you are to receive the blessed Body of our Lord Jesus Christ with fear and love of God. The second counsel is that both of you are to be united in true love so that you may be one heart toward God and his honor, ruling the kingdom for the honor of God and the good of your subjects.

The third counsel is that both of you are to be united in true charity with your subjects and that, solely out of reverence for the passion and death of Jesus Christ, you are to forgive and spare all who, by advice, deed, or approbation, cooperated in the death of your father King Peter. Include them in your charity with all your heart in order that God may deign to include you in his mercy and also that he may will to strengthen you to rule the kingdom for his honor.

The fourth counsel is that, since divine providence has appointed you the governors of the kingdom, you should use all possible diligence in speaking to all the prelates, both of the churches and of the religious orders, effectively but charitably advising them that they and their subjects should all correct themselves in all those matters in which they have in any way deviated spiritually or temporally from the holy state of their predecessors, the holy fathers of earlier times, and that they should quickly return to living purely in the pristine state of their predecessors, so that their state may be totally reformed in order that they and their subjects, having thus truly amended their lives, may obtain God's friendship and be made worthy to pray that God may mercifully deign to renew in holiness of virtues the state of the universal Church.

The fifth counsel is that, for the sake of that great charity with which God has loved your souls, you should will to love the souls of your subjects, advising your military people that all who have in any way offended God should quickly and humbly correct themselves, and that all who are under obedience to the Roman Church and who have reached the age of reason should humbly exercise the practice of confession; that they should reconcile themselves to those neighbors they have offended and establish a concord with them; and that, having amended their lives, they should receive the awesome Body of Christ.

Thereafter, moreover, they are to lead a Catholic life: namely, living faithfully in marriage or in widowhood or even in the state of praiseworthy virginity; observing all that Holy Church teaches; leading, with loving heart, the members of their household and their domestics and their subjects and all others possible, by their good example and by word and deed, to do the same; and strengthening those in such states by their good admonitions. And know for very certain that all who are not willing to obey in these

matters will suffer the cost in body and soul.

The sixth counsel is that you should tell all prelates that they must effectively and frequently admonish all their clerics, namely, the rectors of churches, that each of them is to inquire diligently in his parish as to whether there be any of his parishioners who persist in living wickedly in public sins, causing offense to God and contempt for Holy Mother Church.

Any such people whom they find living impudently in their public sins, they are to forewarn with effective admonishments concerning the peril of their souls; and they are to teach them such measures and spiritual remedies by means of which they can and must humbly amend their lives. If, however, some of those who live in public sins will not humbly obey, then the same rectors must not delay in reporting to their superiors and the bishops in order that the prelates may juridically correct the forwardness of such obstinate persons by means of an ecclesiastical censure.

If, in fact, because of the sinners' stubbornness and pride or because of their temporal power, the aforesaid bishops and prelates are unable to correct or punish them, then you, my lords, are advised to be, with your powerful hands, co-workers with the lord prelates so that by your help the said sinners may be brought to correct themselves and that having amended their lives they may attain God's mercy."

A revelation made to Lady Bridget in the holy city of Jerusalem concerning the kingdom of Cyprus and its reformation, which she her self transmitted to the lord king and to the prince of Antioch that they might publish it to the whole kingdom. And because the aforesaid prince did not put complete faith in that revelation, therefore the said lady, on her return trip from Jerusalem, published it in the city of Famagusta on the eighth day of October, in the presence of the said lord king and the queen and the said prince and all the royal council.

It happened to a person who was wide awake and absorbed in prayer that while she was suspended in an ecstasy of contemplation, she saw herself caught up in spirit to a palace that was of incomprehensible size and indescribable beauty. And it seemed to her that Jesus Christ was sitting among his saints on the imperial seat of majesty. He opened his blessed mouth and uttered these words that are noted down below:

"I truly am supreme charity itself; for all things that I have done from eternity, I have done out of charity; and, in the same way, all things that I do and shall do in the future proceed entirely from my charity. For charity is as incomprehensible and intense in me now as it was at the time of my passion when, through my death and out of exceeding charity, I freed from hell all the elect who were worthy of this redemption and liberation. For if it were still possible that I might die as many times as there are souls in hell so that for each of them I might again endure such a death as I then endured for all, my body would still be ready to undergo all these things with a glad will and most perfect charity. But, in fact, it is now impossible that my body could once more die or suffer any pain or tribulation. And it is also just as impossible that any soul that after my death has been or will be condemned to hell would ever again be freed from there, or would enjoy the heavenly gladness that my saints and chosen ones enjoy at the glorious sight of my body.

No, the damned will feel the pains of hell in an everlasting death because they did not will to enjoy the benefit of my death and passion and did not will to follow my will while they lived in the world. However, because no one is judge over the offenses done to me except myself, and, for this reason, my charity that I have ever shown to human beings makes its complaint in the presence of my justice, it therefore pertains to justice to render judgment on this in accord with my will.

Now I make my complaint about the inhabitants of the kingdom of Cyprus as if about one human being. But I do not complain about my friends who dwell there and who love me with all their heart and follow my will in all things; but I speak in complaint, as if to one person, to all those who scorn me and always resist my will and so very greatly oppose me. And therefore I now begin to speak to them all as if to one.

O people of Cyprus, my adversary, listen and be diligently attentive to what I say to

you! I have loved you as a father loves his only son, whom he has willed to exalt to all honor. I conferred on you a land in which you could have in abundance all things necessary for the sustenance of your body. I sent to you the warmth and light of the Holy Spirit that you might understand the right Christian faith to which you faithfully bound yourself, humbly subjugating yourself to the sacred statutes and to the obedience of Holy Church.

Indeed, I placed you in a place that would be quite fitting for a faithful servant, namely, among my enemies, so that in return for your earthly labors and for the physical struggle of battles you would obtain in my heavenly kingdom an even more precious crown. I also carried you for a long time in my heart, i.e., in the charity of my Godhead, and kept you as the apple of my eye in all your adversities and tribulations. And as long as you observed my precepts and faithfully kept obedience and the statutes of Holy Church, then, of a certainty, did an almost infinite number of souls come from the kingdom of Cyprus to my heavenly kingdom to enjoy eternal glory with me for ever.

But because you now do your own will and all those things that delight your heart, without fearing me who am your Judge and without loving me who am your Creator and who also redeemed you through my very hard death; and because you spat me out of your mouth like some foul and unsavory thing; and, indeed, because you have enclosed the devil together with your soul in the chamber of your heart; and because you have driven me thence as if I were a thief and a robber; and because you were no more ashamed to sin in my sight than irrational animals are in their mating, it is therefore a fitting justice and a just judgment that you should be driven out from all my friends in heaven and be placed forever in hell amidst my enemies.

And know this without a doubt: that my Father - who is in me, and I am in him, and the Holy Spirit is in us both - is himself my witness that nothing but truth has ever gone forth from my mouth. Wherefore know for a truth that if anyone has been so disposed as you now are and if he will not amend his life, his soul will go the same way along which went Lucifer because of his pride, and Judas, who sold me because of his greed, and Zimri, whom Phinehas killed because of his lust. For Zimri sinned with a woman against my precept; and therefore, after his death, his soul was condemned to hell.

Wherefore, O people of Cyprus, I now announce to you that if you will not correct yourself and amend your life, then I shall so destroy your generation and progeny in the kingdom of Cyprus that I shall spare neither the poor person nor the rich. Indeed, I shall so destroy this same generation of yours that in a short time, your memory will thus slip away from the hearts of human beings as if you had never been born in this world. Afterward, however, it is my pleasure to, plant new plants in this kingdom of Cyprus that will carry out my precepts and will love me with all their heart.

But, nevertheless, know for a certainty that if anyone of you wills to correct himself, amend his life, and humbly turn back to me, then like a loving shepherd, I shall joyfully run out to meet him, lifting him onto my shoulders and personally carrying him back to my sheep. For by my shoulders I mean that if anyone amends his life, he will share in the benefit of my passion and death, which I endured in my body and shoulders; and he will receive with me eternal consolation in the kingdom of heaven.

You should also know for very certain that you, my enemies who dwell in this said kingdom, were not worthy that such a vision or divine revelation of mine should be sent to you. But some friends of mine who live in the same kingdom and faithfully serve me and love me with their whole heart have, by their labors and tearful prayers, inclined me to make you understand, by means of this my revelation, the grave peril of your souls. For, to some of my said friends there, it has been divinely shown by me how many countless souls from this said kingdom of Cyprus are being excluded from heavenly glory and are being eternally doomed to the death of Gehenna.

However, the above words I speak to those Latin Christians subject to the obedience of the Roman Church, and who, at baptism, vowed to me right Roman Catholic faith, and who, through works contrary to me, have totally withdrawn from me. Greeks, however, who know that all Christians must hold only one Catholic Christian faith and be under only one Church, namely, the Roman, and have, as spiritual pastor over them, only my sole vicar general in the world, namely, the supreme Roman pontiff, and who, nevertheless, will not spiritually subject and humbly subjugate themselves to that same Roman Church and to my vicar because of their stubborn pride or because of greed or because of the wantonness of the flesh or because of some other thing that pertains to the world, are unworthy to obtain pardon and mercy from me after death.

But the other Greeks, who would desirously wish to know the Roman Catholic faith, but cannot, and who nevertheless, if they knew it and had the ability, would willingly and devoutly receive it and would humbly subjugate themselves to the Roman Church and who, nonetheless, following their conscience in their state and faith in which they are, do abstain from sin and live piously - to such as these, after their death, I must show my mercy in the matter of punishment when they are called to my judgment.

Let the Greeks also know that their empire and kingdoms or domains will never stand secure and tranquil in peace, but that they themselves will always be subject to their enemies from whom they will always sustain the gravest of losses and daily miseries until, with true humility and charity, they devoutly subject themselves to the Church and faith of Rome, totally conforming themselves to the sacred constitutions and rites of that same Church.”

When, however, these things had thus been seen and heard in spirit as reported above, the said vision disappeared; and the said person remained at prayer, suspended in no little fear and wonder.

In the kingdom of Cyprus, a certain Friar Minor asked the said lady to advise him as to what he ought to do about some doubts in his conscience, especially concerning the observance of the Rule of his order. When indeed the lady was praying for the abovesaid friar one day in the holy city of Jerusalem, Christ appeared to her and spoke to her, saying many things about the Order of Friars Minor. And at the end he threatens all property-owning religious with everlasting death.

Chapter 20

Infinite thanksgiving and humble service, praise, and honor be to God in his power and everlasting majesty - to him who is one God in three persons! It pleased his immense goodness that his most worthy humanity should speak to a person at prayer, saying this:

”Hear, O you to whom it has been given to hear and see spiritual things; and

diligently hold in your memory these my words. There was a man named Francis. When he turned away from worldly pride and covetousness and from the flawed delight of the flesh and turned toward a spiritual life of penance and perfection, he then obtained true contrition for all his sins and a perfect intention of amendment, saying: 'There is nothing in this world that I am not willing to give up gladly for the sake of the love and honor of my Lord Jesus Christ. There is also nothing so hard in this life that I am not willing to endure it with gladness because of his love, doing all that I can for the sake of his honor, according to my strength in body and soul. And I want to lead and strengthen all others that I can to love God above all with the whole of their heart.'

The Rule of this Francis, which he himself began, was not dictated and composed by his human understanding and prudence, but by me in accord with my will. For every word that is written in it was breathed into him by my Spirit; and afterwards, he brought that Rule forth and held it out to others. So too, all other Rules that my friends began and themselves personally kept and observed and effectively taught and held out to others were not dictated and composed by their own understanding and human wisdom, but by the breathing of that same Holy Spirit. For a number of years, the brothers of this Francis - who are called Friars Minor - held and kept that Rule of his well and very spiritually and devoutly, in whole accordance with my will.

As a result, the devil, the ancient fiend, felt great envy and unrest because he had not the strength to conquer the said friars by his temptations and deceits. Therefore, the devil sought diligently that he might find a man whose human will he could mix together with his own malign spirit. At last he found a cleric who inwardly thought thus: 'I would like to be in a state where I could have worldly honor and my bodily pleasure and where I could amass so much money that I would lack nothing at all that pertains to my needs and pleasures. Therefore, I wish to enter the Order of Francis; and I will pretend to be very humble and obedient.' And so, with that intention and will, the aforementioned cleric entered the said order; and at once the devil entered into his heart. And thus the said cleric became a friar in the said order.

Inwardly, however, the devil considered in this manner: 'Just as Francis with his humble obedience wishes to draw many from the world to receive great rewards in heaven, so this my friar - who will be named 'Adversary' because he will be the adversary

of the Rule of Francis - will draw many in the Order of Francis from humility to pride, from rational poverty to covetousness, from true obedience to the doing of one's own will and to the pursuit of bodily pleasure.'

And when the aforesaid Brother Adversary entered the Order of Francis, at once, at the devil's instigation, he began to think inwardly thus: 'I will show myself so humble and obedient that all will reckon me a saint. When the others are fasting and keeping silence, then I, with special companions, shall do the contrary: namely, by eating and drinking and talking so secretly that none of the others will know or understand this. Also, according to the said Rule, I cannot lawfully touch money or possess gold or silver; therefore I will have some special friend to keep my money and gold secretly with him on my behalf so that I may use that money as I will.

I also want to learn the liberal arts and science, so that from them I may be able to have some honor and dignity in the order, having horses and silver vessels and handsome clothes and costly ornaments. And if anyone reproves me for these things, I shall answer that I do it for the honor of my order, if besides, I could work further and do so much that I would be made a bishop, then I would truly be happy and blessed in such a life as I then could lead, for then I would enjoy my personal freedom and I would have all my bodily pleasure.'

Now hear what the devil had done in the aforesaid Order of Francis. For it is truly so that in the world the friars who, either in action or in will and desire, hold the aforesaid Rule that the devil taught to Brother Adversary, are more numerous than those who keep the Rule that I myself taught to Brother Francis. You should nevertheless know that however much those friars - namely, those of Francis and those of Brother Adversary - are mixed together as long as they live in the world, I will nevertheless separate them after death, for I am their Judge. And I shall judge that those friars of the Rule of Francis are to remain with me, together with Francis, in everlasting joy. But those who belong to Brother Adversary's Rule will be doomed to eternal punishments in the depth of hell if before death they would not will to correct themselves and humbly amend their lives.

Nor is this to be wondered at, for those who ought to give examples of humility and sanctity to worldly human beings actually furnish them with vile and ribald examples

through their pride and covetousness. And therefore both the said friars themselves and all other religious who are prohibited by rule from having private property and yet have some property against their Rule, and who wish to appease me by conferring upon me a part of it, should know for very certain that their gifts are abominable to me and hateful and unworthy of any good gift in return. For it is more agreeable and pleasing to me that they diligently observe the blessed poverty that they professed according to their Rules, than that they might present to me all the gold and silver and even all the metals that there are in the world.

You, O woman who hear my words, should also know that it would not have been permitted for you to know this aforespoken vision if it had not been for a good servant of mine who sincerely petitioned me with all his heart on behalf of that Friar Minor, and who, out of divine charity, desired to give to that same friar some advice useful to his soul.”

When, however, these things had been seen and heard, this vision disappeared.

A vision that Lady Bridget had in Bethlehem, where the Virgin Mary showed to her the whole manner of her childbearing and how she gave birth to her glorious Son just as the Virgin herself had promised the same Lady Bridget in Rome fifteen years before she went to Bethlehem as can be seen in the first chapter of this book.

Chapter 21

When I was at the manger of the Lord in Bethlehem, I saw a Virgin, pregnant and most very beautiful, clothed in a white mantle and a finely woven tunic through which from without I could clearly discern her virginal flesh. Her womb was full and much swollen, for she was now ready to give birth. With her there was a very dignified old man; and with them they had both an ox and an ass. When they had entered the cave, and after the ox and the ass had been tied to the manger, the old man went outside and brought to the Virgin a lighted candle and fixed it in the wall and went outside in order not to be personally present at the birth.

And so the Virgin then took the shoes from her feet, put off the white mantle that covered her, removed the veil from her head, and laid these things beside her, remaining in only her tunic, with her most beautiful hair - as if of gold - spread out upon her shoulder blades. She then drew out two small cloths of linen and two of wool, very clean and finely woven, which she carried with her to wrap the infant that was to be born, and two other small linens to cover and bind his head; and she laid these cloths beside her that she might use them in due time.

And when all these things had thus been prepared, then the Virgin knelt with great reverence, putting herself at prayer; and she kept her back toward the manger and her face lifted to heaven toward the east. And so, with raised hands and with her eyes intent on heaven, she was as if suspended in an ecstasy of contemplation, inebriated with divine sweetness. And while she was thus in prayer, I saw the One lying in her womb then move; and then and there, in a moment and the twinkling of an eye, she gave birth to a Son, from whom there went out such great and ineffable light and splendor that the sun could not be compared to it. Nor did that candle that the old man had put in place give light at all because that divine splendor totally annihilated the material splendor of the candle.

And so sudden and momentary was that manner of giving birth that I was unable to notice or discern how or in what member she was giving birth. But yet, at once, I saw that glorious infant lying on the earth, naked and glowing in the greatest of neatness. His flesh was most clean of all filth and uncleanness. I saw also the afterbirth, lying wrapped very neatly beside him. And then I heard the wonderfully sweet and most dulcet songs of the angels. And the Virgin's womb, which before the birth had been very swollen, at once retracted; and her body then looked wonderfully beautiful and delicate.

When therefore the Virgin felt that she had now given birth, at once, having bowed her head and joined her hands, with great dignity and reverence she adored the boy and said to him: "Welcome, my God, my Lord, and my Son!" And then the boy, crying and, as it were, trembling from the cold and the hardness of the pavement where he lay, rolled a little and extended his limbs, seeking to find refreshment and his Mother's favor. Then his Mother took him in her hands and pressed him to her breast, and with cheek and breast she warmed him with great joy and tender maternal compassion.

Then, sitting on the earth, she put her Son in her lap and deftly caught his umbilical cord with her fingers. At once it was cut off, and from it no liquid or blood went out. And at once she began to wrap him carefully, first in the linen cloths and then in the woolen, binding his little body, legs, and arms with a ribbon that had been sewn into four parts of the outer wollen cloth. And afterward she wrapped and tied on the boy's head those two small linen cloths that she had prepared for this purpose.

When these things therefore were accomplished, the old man entered; and prostrating on the earth, he adored him on bended knee and wept for joy. Not even at the birth was that Virgin changed in color or by infirmity. Nor was there in her any such failure of bodily strength as usually happens in other women giving birth, except that her swollen womb retracted to the prior state in which it had been before she conceived the boy. Then, however, she arose, holding the boy in her arms; and together both of them, namely, she and Joseph, put him in the manger, and on bended knee they continued to adore him with gladness and immense joy.

A revelation in Bethlehem at the manger of the Lord, on the same matter as above.

Chapter 22

Afterwards again in the same place, the Virgin Mary appeared to me and said: "My daughter, it is a long time ago that I promised you in Rome that I would show to you here in Bethlehem the manner of my childbearing. And even though I showed to you in Naples something about this - namely, what state I was in when I gave birth to my Son - nevertheless, know for very certain that I was in such a state and gave birth in such a manner as you have now seen: on bended knee, praying alone in the stable. For I gave birth to him with such great exultation and joy of soul that I felt no discomfort when he went out of my body, and no pain. But at once I wrapped him in the small clean cloths that I had prepared long before.

When Joseph saw these things, he marveled with great gladness and the joy from the fact that I had thus, without help, given birth. But because the great multitude of

people in Bethlehem were busy about the census, they were therefore so attentive to it that the wonders of God could not be published among them. And therefore know for a truth that however much human beings, following their human perception, try to assert that my Son was born in the common manner, it is nevertheless more true and beyond any doubt that he was born just as I elsewhere told you and just as you now have seen.”

It was at the manger of the Lord that this revelation was made to the same lady in Bethlehem: how the shepherds came to the manger to adore the newborn Christ.

Chapter 23

I saw also in the same place, while the Virgin Mary and Joseph were adoring the boy in the manger, that shepherds and guardians of the flock then came to see and adore the infant. When they had seen it, they first wished to inquire whether it were male or female because the angels announced to them that the Savior of the world had been born and had not said "savioress." Therefore the Virgin Mother then showed to them the infant's natural parts and male sex; and at once they adored him with great reverence and joy; and afterward they returned praising and glorifying God for all these things that they had heard and seen.

This revelation she had in Bethlehem, in the chapel where Christ was born. In it, Mary tells her how the three magi kings adored Christ, her Son.

Chapter 24

The same Mother of the Lord also said to me: "My daughter, know that when the three magi kings came into the stable to adore my Son, I had foreknown their coming well in advance. And when they entered and adored him, then my Son exulted, and for joy he had then a more cheerful face. I too rejoiced exceedingly; and I was gladdened by the wonderful joy of exultation in my mind, while being attentive to their words and

actions, keeping those things and reflecting on them in my heart.”

The Mother of God, speaking to Lady Bridget, tells her some things about her own humility and that of her Son; and she says that just as she and her Son were humble while they were in the world, so too are they humble now although they are in heaven.

Chapter 25

The Mother speaks: ”There is the same humility in my Son now in the power of his Godhead as there was then, when he was laid in the manger. Although he knew all things in accordance with his Godhead, nevertheless, while lying between two animals, he spoke nothing at all, in accordance with his humanity. So too now, sitting at the right hand of the Father, he hears all who speak to him with love; and he answers through infusions of the Holy Spirit. To some he speaks with words and thoughts, to others as if from mouth to mouth, just as it pleases him.

Similarly, I, who am his Mother, am, in my body which has been raised on high above all things created, now as humble as I then was when I was betrothed to Joseph. Moreover, you ought to know for very certain that before Joseph betrothed me, he understood, in the Holy Spirit, that I had vowed my virginity to God and that I was immaculate in thought, word, and deed. He betrothed me with the intention that he might serve me, treating me as his lady, not as his wife.

I too in the Holy Spirit knew for very certain that my virginity would remain forever unharmed even though, as a result of God's hidden plan, I was being betrothed to a husband. But after I gave my consent to the messenger of God, Joseph, seeing my womb swell by virtue of the Holy Spirit, feared very greatly. Not suspecting me of anything sinister, but mindful of the sayings of the prophets who had foretold that the Son of God would be born of a virgin, he reckoned himself unworthy to serve such a mother until the angel instructed him in his sleep not to be afraid but to serve me with charity.

But of our riches, Joseph and I reserved nothing for ourselves except the necessities

of life, for the honor of God. The rest we let go, for the love of God. When my Son's hour of birth was at hand - an hour that I very well knew beforehand - I came, in accord with God's foreknowledge, to Bethlehem, bringing with me, for my Son, clean clothing and cloths that no one had ever used before. In them I wrapped, for the first time, him who was born from me in all purity.

And even though from eternity it was foreseen that I would sit in honor on a most sublime seat above all creatures and above all human beings, yet nonetheless, in my humility, I did not disdain to prepare and serve the things that were necessary for Joseph and myself. Similarly also, my Son was subject to Joseph and to me. Therefore, just as I was humble in the world - known to God alone and to Joseph - so too am I humble now as I sit on a most sublime throne, ready to present to God the rational prayers of all. But some I answer by means of divine outpourings. To others, however, I speak more secretly as is well pleasing to God.”

When Lady Bridget now wished to return from Jerusalem to Rome, she went on the birthday of the Virgin Mary to visit her sepulchre and the other shrines that are there near the city of Jerusalem. As she prayed at the said sepulchre, that same Virgin appeared to her, assuring her about the time of her death and assumption and testifying that this was literally her sepulchre.

Chapter 26

When I was in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, praying at the sepulchre of the glorious Virgin, that same Virgin appeared to me, shining with exceeding splendor, and said: ”Be attentive, daughter! After my Son ascended to heaven, I lived in the world for fifteen years and as much time more as there is from the feast of the ascension of that same Son of mine until my death. And then I lay dead in this sepulchre for fifteen days.

Thereupon I was assumed into heaven with infinite honor and joy. However, my garments with which I was buried then remained in this sepulchre; and I was then clothed in such garments as those that clothe my Son and my Lord, Jesus Christ. Know

also that there is no human body in heaven except the glorious body of my Son and my own body. "Therefore go now, all of you, back to the lands of Christians; ever amend your lives for the better; and in future, live with the greatest of care and attention now that you have visited these holy places, where my Son and I lived in the body and died and were buried."

When Lady Bridget, in returning from Jerusalem, passed through the city of Naples, at the request of the lady queen and of the archbishop of the said city she prayed to God for that same city's inhabitants. And Christ, speaking to her, reproved the aforesaid inhabitants for their too many sins, showing to them the means by which sinners might reconcile themselves to him, promising them mercy if they would be reconciled and would amend their lives. He also threatens them with the severity of justice if they will not correct themselves but rather persevere in sin. Lady Bridget published this revelation herself in the presence of the said Lord Bernard the archbishop and three masters of theology and two doctors of canon and civil law and some knights and citizens of the said city.

Chapter 27

To a person who was wide awake at prayer and absorbed in contemplation - and while she was in a rapture of mental elevation - Jesus Christ appeared; and he said to her this: "Hear, O you to whom it has been given to hear and see spiritual things; and be diligently attentive; and in your mind beware in regard to those things that you now will hear and that in my behalf you will announce to the nations, lest you speak them to acquire for yourself honor or human praise. Nor indeed are you to be silent about these things from any fear of human reproach and contempt; for these things that you are now going to hear are being shown to you not only for your own sake, but also because of the prayers of my friends.

For some of my chosen friends in the Neapolitan citizenry have for many years asked me with their whole heart - in their prayers and in their labors on behalf of my enemies living in the same city - to show them some grace through which they could be

withdrawn and savingly recalled from their sins and abuses. Swayed by their prayers, I give to you now these words of mine; and therefore diligently hear the things that I speak.

I am the Creator of all and Lord over the devils as well as over the angels, and no one will escape my judgment. The devil, in fact, sinned in a threefold manner against me: namely, through pride; through envy; and through arrogance, i.e., through love of his own will. He was so proud indeed that he wished to be lord over me and that I should be subject to him. He also envied me so much that if it were possible, he would gladly have killed me in order to be lord himself and sit on my throne. Indeed, his own will was so dear to him that he cared nothing at all about my will so long as he could perform his own will. Because of this, he fell from heaven; and, no longer an angel, he became a devil in the depth of hell.

Afterward, however, I, seeing his malice and the great envy that he had toward humankind, showed my will and gave my commandments to human beings that by doing them they could please me and displease the devil. Finally, because of the charity that I have toward human beings, I came into the world and took flesh of a virgin. Indeed, I personally taught them the true way of salvation by work and by word; and to show them perfect charity and love, I opened heaven for them by my own blood.

But what are those human beings who are my enemies doing to me now? In truth, they have contempt for my precepts; they cast me out of their hearts like a loathsome poison; indeed, they spit me out of their mouths like something rotten; and they abhor the sight of me as if I were a leper with the worst of stench. But the devil and his works they embrace in their every affection and deed. For they bring him into their hearts, doing his will with delight and gladness and following his evil suggestions. Therefore, by my just judgment they shall have their reward in hell with the devil eternally without end.

For in place of the pride that they practice, they will have confusion and eternal shame to such a degree that angels and demons will say of them: 'They are filled with confusion to the very utmost!' And for their insatiable greed, each devil in hell will so fill them with his deadly venom that in their souls there will remain no place that is not filled

with diabolic venom. And for the lust with which they burn like senseless animals, they will never be admitted to the sight of my face but will be separated from me and deprived of their inordinate will.

Moreover, know that just as all mortal sins are very serious, so too a venial sin is made mortal if a human being delights in it with the intention of persevering. Wherefore, know that two sins, which I now name to you, are being practiced and that they draw after them other sins that all seem as if venial. But because the people delight in them with the intention of persevering, they are therefore made mortal, and the people in the city of Naples commit many other abominable sins that I do not wish to name to you.

The first of the two sins is that the faces of rational human creatures are being painted with the various colors with which insensible images and statues of idols are colored so that to others, these faces may seem more beautiful than I made them. The second sin is that the bodies of men and women are being deformed from their natural state by the unseemly forms of clothing that the people are using. And the people are doing this because of pride and so that in their bodies they may seem more beautiful and more lascivious than I, God, created them.

And indeed they do this so that those who thus see them may be more quickly provoked and inflamed toward carnal desire. Therefore, know for very certain that as often as they daub their faces with antimony and other extraneous coloring, some of the infusion of the Holy Spirit is diminished in them and the devil draws nearer to them. In fact, as often as they adorn themselves in disorderly and indecent clothing and so deform their bodies, the adornment of their souls is diminished and the devil's power is increased.

O my enemies, who do such things and with effrontery commit other sins contrary to my will, why have you neglected my passion; and why do you not attend in your hearts to how I stood naked at the pillar, bound and cruelly scourged with hard whips, and to how I stood naked on the cross and cried out, full of wounds and clothed in blood? And when you paint and anoint your faces, why do you not look at my face and see how it was full of blood? You are not even attentive to my eyes and how they grew dark and were covered with blood and tears, and how my eyelids turned blue.

Why too do you, not look at my mouth or gaze at my ears and my beard and see how they were aggrieved and were stained with blood? You do not look at the rest of my limbs, monstrously wounded by various punishments, and see how I hung black and blue on the cross and dead for your sake. And there, derided and rejected, I was despised by all in order that, by recalling these things and attentively remembering them, you might love me, your God, and thus escape the devil's snares, in which you have been horribly bound.

However, in your eyes and hearts, all these things have been forgotten and neglected. And so you behave like prostitutes, who love the pleasure and delight of the flesh, but not its offspring. For when they feel a living infant in their womb, at once they procure an abortion by means of herbs and other things so that without losing their fleshly pleasure and further wicked delight, they may thus be always absorbed in their lust and their foul carnal intercourse. This is how you behave. For I, God, your Creator and Redeemer, visit all with my grace, knocking, namely, at your hearts, because I love all.

But when you feel, in your hearts, any knock of an inpouring - namely of my Spirit - or any compunction; or when, through hearing my words, you conceive any good intention, at once you procure spiritually, as it were, an abortion, namely, by excusing your sins and by delighting in them and even by damnably willing to persevere in them. For that reason, you do the devil's will, enclosing him in your hearts and expelling me in this contemptible way. Therefore, you are without me, and I am not with you. And you are not in me but in the devil, for it is his will and his suggestions that you obey.

And so, because I have just spoken my judgment, I shall also now speak my mercy. My mercy, however, is this: namely, that none of my very enemies is so thorough or so great a sinner that my mercy would be denied him if he were to ask for it humbly and wholeheartedly. Wherefore, my enemies must do three things if they wish reconcile themselves to my grace and friendship. The first is that with all their heart they repent and have contrition because they have offended me, their Creator and Redeemer. The second thing is confession - clean, frequent, and humble - which they must make before their confessor.

And thus let them amend all their sins by doing penance and making satisfaction in accord with that same confessor's council and discretion. For then I shall draw close to them, and the devil will be kept far away from them. The third thing is that after they have thus performed these things with devotion and perfect charity, they are to go to communion and receive and consume my Body with the intention of never falling back into former sins but of persevering in good even to the end.

If anyone, therefore, amends his life in this manner, at once I will run out to meet him as a loving father runs to meet his wayward son; and I will receive him into my grace more gladly than he himself could have asked or thought. And then I will be in him, and he in me; and he shall live with me and rejoice forever. But upon him who perseveres in his sins and malice my justice shall indubitably come. For when the fisherman sees the fish in the water playing in their delight and merriment, even then he drops his hook into the sea and draws it out, catching the fish in turn and then putting them to death - not all at once, but a few at a time - until he has taken them all.

This is indeed what I shall do to my enemies who persevere in sin. For I shall bring them a few at a time to the consummation of the worldly life of this age in which they take temporal and carnal delight. And at an hour that they do not believe and are living in even greater delight, I shall then snatch them away from earthly life and put them to eternal death in a place where they will nevermore see my face because they loved to do and accomplish their inordinate and corrupted will rather than perform my will and my commandments." However, after these things had thus been seen and heard, this vision disappeared.

A revelation of the Virgin Mary which Lady Bridget had in the city of Naples. And she directs it to Lord Bernard, the Neapolitan archbishop. The revelation reproaches those who do not instruct their servants or infidel slaves, newly converted to the faith, in that same Catholic faith and Christian law. The Virgin Mary also reproves those masters who maltreat these said servants of theirs and exasperate them beyond measure. She also threatens with great punishment fortune-tellers and enchanters and diviners and also those who support them and put faith in them.

Chapter 28

The bride of Christ writes to Lord Bernard, archbishop of Naples, saying: "Reverend Father and Lord! When that person, whom you know well, was praying suspended in a rapture of contemplation, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and said to her this:

'I, who speak to you, am the Queen of heaven. I am, as it were, a gardener of this world. For when a gardener sees the rise of a strong wind harmful to the little plants and the trees of his garden, at once he runs to them quickly and binds them fast with sturdy stakes as well as he can. And thus he comes to their aid, in various ways according to his ability, lest they be broken by the rushing wind or wretchedly uprooted.

I, the Mother of mercy, do the same in the garden of this world. For when I see blowing on the hearts of human beings the dangerous winds of the devil's temptations and wicked suggestions, at once I have recourse to my Lord and my God, my Son Jesus Christ, helping them with my prayers and obtaining from him his outpouring of some holy infusions of the Holy Spirit into their hearts to prop them up and savingly confirm them that they may be kept spiritually uninjured by the diabolic wind of temptations lest the devil prevail against human beings, breaking their souls and plucking them up by the stem in accord with his wicked desire.

And thus when, with humility of heart and active compliance, human beings receive these said stakes of mine and my assistance, at once they are defended against the diabolic onslaught of temptations; and remaining firm in the state of grace, they bear for God and for me the fruit of sweetness in due season. But as for those who scorn the aforesaid spiritual stakes of my Son and me and are swayed by the wind of temptations through consent to the devil and through action, they are uprooted from the state of grace and, through illicit desires and deeds, are led by the devil even to the profound and eternal pains and darkness of hell.

Now, however, know that in the Neapolitan citizenry many different horrible and secret sins are being committed which I am not relating to you. But instead I am speaking to you now about two kinds of open sins that greatly displease my Son and me and all the heavenly court.

The first sin is the fact that in this said city many buy pagans and infidels to be their slaves and that some masters of those slaves do not bother to baptize them and do not want to convert them to the Christian faith. And even if some of them are baptized, their masters bother no more, after the slaves' baptism, to have them instructed and trained in the Christian faith or to train them in the reception of the Church's sacraments than they did before the slaves' baptism and conversion. And so it results that the said convert slaves, after accepting the faith, commit many sins and do not know how to return to the sacraments of penance and communion or how to be restored in the state of salvation and of reconciliation with God and of grace.

Moreover, some keep their female servants and slaves in extreme abjection and ignominy, as if they were dogs - selling them and, what is worse, frequently exposing them in a brothel to earn money that is a disgrace and an abomination. Others, in fact, keep them in their own houses as prostitutes both for themselves and for others; and this is extremely abominable and hateful to God and to me and also to the whole heavenly court.

Some other masters so grieve and exasperate these said servants of theirs with abusive words and blows that some of the said servants come to a state of despair and want to kill themselves. Indeed these sins and acts of negligence much displease God and all the heavenly court.

For God himself loves them because he created them; and to save all, he came into the world, taking flesh from me, and endured suffering and death on the cross. Know too that if anyone buys such pagans and infidels with the intention of making them Christians and wants to instruct and train them in the Christian faith and virtues and intends, during his life or at his death, to set these slaves at liberty so that the said slaves may not pass to his heirs, such a master of slaves merits much by this and is acceptable in the sight of God. But know for very certain that those who do the contrary will be heavily punished by God.

The second kind of sin is that many men and women, with various inordinate marks of respect, keep about them and consult wicked fortune-tellers and diviners and the most evil of enchantresses. For sometimes they ask them to perform witchcraft and

incantations in order that they may be able to conceive and beget children. Others require them to perform incantations and to make fetishes that will cause certain men and women, or even their temporal lords, to be enamored of them to the point of distraction and to love them with all their heart. Others, in fact, beg foreknowledge of the future from these same accursed witches.

Many others ask them to give them health in their infirmities through their art of enchantment and witchcraft. All indeed who keep these same warlock diviners or enchantresses in their households and at their own expense and all who seek from such people such wicked advice and diabolic remedies, and, indeed, all those same warlock diviners and enchantresses who promise the things mentioned above - all are cursed and hateful in the sight of God.

As long as they persevere in such a state and purpose, no infusion or grace of the Holy Spirit will ever descend or enter into their hearts. But nevertheless, if they repent and humbly amend their lives with the true purpose of not falling back again, they will obtain grace and mercy from my Son.' ”

However, when these things had thus been heard, this vision disappeared.

A certain bishop, who was the ruler of the March of Ancona on behalf of the holy Roman Church, asked Lady Bridget about the fact that he was pricked in conscience on the grounds that he was absent and too remote from his diocese because of his aforesaid office in the marquisate where he resided, and thus could not attend to the sheep entrusted to him in his diocese. And he wondered, therefore, whether it would be more pleasing to God that he reside in his office in the marquisate or that he return to rule the sheep entrusted to him in his diocese. And when at this request the abovesaid lady prayed for the aforementioned bishop, then Christ appeared to her and said to her the words that are contained below.

Chapter 29

Blessed be God forever for all his bounties! Amen. My Lord, most reverend Father,

first of all I humbly recommend myself to you. You have written to me with humility that I, a woman unknown to you, should humbly pray to God for you. To this I reply and tell you truthfully, according to my conscience, that I am inadequate for such a task: being a sinner, alas, and unworthy. You have also written to me that I should write to you some spiritual advice for the salvation of your soul. And therefore God, attending to your faith and humility, willed with devoted fatherly love to satisfy your desires and faith and was attentive, not to my sins, but to the heartfelt affection of his humble petitioner.

For when I, a sinner unworthy of doing so, was praying for you on the preceding day to my Lord Jesus Christ, he then appeared to me in spirit and spoke with me, using a similitude and saying this: "O you, to whom it has been given to hear spiritually and to see, be attentive now and know for very certain that all bishops and abbots and also all the other ecclesiastical prelates and benefice-holders who have the care of souls and who leave their churches and my sheep, which have been entrusted to them, and who receive and hold other offices and positions of rulership with the intention and purpose that in these offices they may be more honored by human beings and may be exalted and raised to a higher status in the world, then, even though in those offices these rulers neither steal nor plunder anything nor commit any other injustice, nevertheless, because they glory and delight in those offices and honors and, for this reason, leave my sheep and their churches, they are, in doing such things, to my eyes like pigs dressed in pontifical or sacerdotal ornaments.

This situation might be expressed by means of the following similitude: There was a great lord who had invited his friends to supper. And at the hour of the supper, those pigs - dressed as above - entered into the palace in the sight of that lord and in the sight of the banqueters who sat at the table. The lord, however, wished to give to them some of those precious foods on his table; but then the aforesaid pigs cried out with a loud sound, grunting their opposition with their pig voices and refusing to eat those precious foods, although they were avidly eager to eat, in their usual way, the cheap husks meant for pigs.

Then, however, when that lord saw and understood this, he loathed their vileness and filth; and at once he said to his servants with great wrath and indignation: 'Expel them from my palace and cast them forth to be refreshed and sordidly sated with the pigs' husks of which they are worthy! For they are neither willing nor worthy to eat of my

foods, which have been prepared for my friends.' ”

By these things, my most reverend Father and Lord, I then understood in spirit that this is what you must do: namely, that you must decide in your own conscience whether or not those sheep of Christ, namely, those entrusted to you in your bishopric, are being well and spiritually ruled in your absence. If in your absence they are being well ruled in accord with what is spiritually appropriate to their souls' advantage and benefit, and if furthermore you see that by ruling the March you can do God greater honor and be more useful to souls than in your own bishopric, then indeed I say that you can quite lawfully stay in your office as ruler of the March in accord with the will of God, provided that it is neither desire for honor nor empty glorying in that office that seduces you into staying there.

If, in fact, your conscience dictates to you the contrary, then I advise you to leave that office of the marquisate and go back to reside personally in your own church and in the bishopric entrusted to you: namely, in order to rule those sheep of yours, or rather, of Christ, specially entrusted to you and to feed them by word, example, and work, not negligently and faultily like a wicked hireling, but carefully and virtuously like a true and good shepherd.

Be forbearing with me, my Lord, in that I, although an ignorant woman and an unworthy sinner, write such things to you. I ask of him, our true and good Shepherd, who deigned to die for his sheep, that he may bestow on you the Holy Spirit's grace, by which you may worthily rule his sheep and always do his glorious and most holy will, even till death.

The Judge complains to the bride about the universal number of sinners of all states and conditions, narrating the good deeds that he did for them and their ingratitude. He also threatens them with the terrible sentence of his wrath. Nevertheless, he admonishes them to be converted to him; and he will receive them with mercy, like a father.

Chapter 30

I saw a grand palace like the serene sky. In it was the host of the heavenly army, innumerable as the atoms of the sun and having a gleam as of the sun's rays. But in the palace, on a wonderful throne there sat, as it were, the person of a human being, a Lord of incomprehensible beauty and immense power; his clothes were wonderful and of inexpressible brightness. And before him who sat on the throne there stood a Virgin who was more radiant than the sun.

All those of the heavenly host, who stood nearby, reverently honored her as the queen of heaven. But then he who sat on the throne opened his mouth and said: "Hearken, all you my enemies who live in the world; for to my friends who follow my will, I am not speaking. Hearken, all you clerics: archbishops and bishops and all of lower rank in the Church! Hearken, all you religious, of whatever order you are! Hearken, you kings and princes and judges of the earth and all you who serve!

Hearken, you women: princesses and all ladies and maidservants! All you inhabitants of the world, of whatever condition or rank you are, whether great or small, hearken to these words that I myself, who created you, now speak to you! I complain because you have withdrawn from me and have put faith in the devil, my enemy. You have abandoned my commandments and you follow the will of the devil and you obey his suggestions.

You do not attend to the fact that I, the unchanging and eternal God, your Creator, came down from heaven to a Virgin and took flesh from her and lived with you. Through my own self, I opened the way for you and showed the counsels by which you might go to heaven. I was stripped and scourged and crowned with thorns and so forcefully extended on the cross that, as it were, all the sinews and joints of my body were being undone. I heard all insults and endured a most contemptible death and most bitter heartache for the sake of your salvation.

To all these things, O my enemies, you are not attentive because you have been deceived. Therefore you bear the yoke and burden of the devil with false sweetness and

neither know nor feel them before the approach of sorrow over the interminable burden. Nor is this enough for you; for your pride is so great that if you could ascend above me, you would gladly do it. And the pleasure of the flesh is so important to you that you would more gladly forfeit me than give up your inordinate delight.

Moreover, your greed is as insatiable as a sack with a hole in it; for there is nothing that can satisfy your greed. Therefore, I swear by my Godhead that if you are to die in the state in which you now are, you shall never see my face; but for your pride you shall sink so deeply into hell that all the devils will be above you, afflicting you beyond all consolation. Indeed, for your lust you shall be filled with horrible diabolic venom; and for your greed you shall be filled with sorrow and anguish; and you shall be partakers of all the evil that there is in hell.

O my enemies - abominable and ungrateful and degenerate - I seem to you, as it were, a worm dead in winter. Therefore, you do whatever things you will, and you prosper. Therefore, I will arise in summer and then you shall be silent, and you shall not escape my hand. But nevertheless, O my enemies, because I have redeemed you with my blood and because I am in quest of naught but your souls, therefore return to me even now with humility and I will gladly receive you as my children. Shake off from you the devil's heavy yoke and recall my charity and you shall see in your conscience that I am sweet and meek.”

In Rome Christ speaks to his bride, blessed Bridget, foretelling to her the day and manner of her death and ordering what should be done with the books of revelations. He also says that when he so pleases, there will be many in the world who will receive them with devotion and who will obtain his grace. The Lord also makes arrangements concerning the body of his bride and where it ought to be buried.

Chapter 31

It happened five days before the day of the passing of Lady Bridget, the often-mentioned bride of Christ, that our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her in front of the altar

that stood in her chamber. He showed himself with a joyful face and said to her: "I have done to you what a bridegroom usually does, concealing himself from his bride so that he may be more ardently desired by her. Thus I have not visited you with consolations during this time; for it was the time of your testing.

Therefore, now that you have already been tested, go forward and prepare yourself; for now is the time for the fulfillment of that which I promised you: namely, that before my altar you shall be clothed and consecrated as a nun. And henceforth you shall be counted, not only as my bride, but also as a nun and a mother in Vadstena. Nevertheless, know that you will lay down your body here in Rome until it comes to the place prepared for it. For it pleases me to spare you from your labors and to accept your will in place of the completed action."

And having turned toward Rome, he said as if making a complaint: "O my Rome, O my Rome, the pope scorns you and does not attend to my words but accepts the doubtful in place of the certain. Therefore he shall hear my pipe no more; for he makes the time of my mercy dependent on his own choice."

Then he said to the bride: "As for you, however: tell the prior to hand over all these words of mine, in all the revelations, to the brothers and to my bishop, to whom I shall give the fervor of my Spirit and whom I shall fill with my grace. And know that when it so pleases me, those human beings will come who, with sweetness and joy, will receive those words of the heavenly revelations that up until now have been made to you; and all the things that have been said to you will be accomplished.

And although my grace has been withdrawn from many because of their ingratitude, nevertheless others will come who will arise in lieu of them and who will obtain my grace. But among the very last words of the revelations made to you, put that common and universal revelation that I gave to you in Naples. For my judgment shall be carried out on all the nations who do not humbly return to me, as it has there been shown to you."

However, after these and many other things not written here had been said, the bride of Christ made mention of and arrangements for some persons living with her and whom, before death, she said she had seen in God's presence.

After those things had been heard, the Lord added these words: "On the morning of the fifth day, after you have received the sacraments, call together one by one the persons who are present and living with you and whom I have just now named to you and tell them the things that they must do. And thus, amidst these words and their hands, you will come to your monastery, i.e., into my joy; and your body will be placed in Vadstena."

Then, as the fifth day approached, at the moment of dawn, Christ appeared to her again and consoled her. But when Mass had been said and after she had received the sacraments with very great devotion and reverence, in the hands of the aforesaid persons she sent forth her spirit.

Book 8

We don't have all chapters in Book 8 yet.

After our Lady had sent many revelations to a king, at last she sent him one and said that it should be the last letter that should be sent to him. But in this revelation following, our Lady spoke again to the same king and declared her first statement and informed Saint Bridget why the words of God are spoken so darkly that they may have diverse ways of being understood. Here is also shown the blessed Trinity under the likeness of a pulpit; and of three beams of three diverse colors; and of the judgement of three kings, of which one was alive, another was in Hell, and the third in Purgatory.

Chapter 48

The Mother of God speaks to the Bride and says: "Daughter, I told you before that that should be my last letter that should be sent to the king, my friend; that is to be understood of those things which touch his singular person and mine. For if a man heard a useful thing sung about his friend, and he sat and heard it in order to tell it to him, whether it were a song of mirth or a letter of wholesome criticism, both he who wrote it and he who sung it would be worthily rewarded. Right so the Justice of God, judging in justice and justifying in mercy, will sing of justice and mercy. And therefore whoever will hear, let him hear.

For it is no letter of criticism, but a song of justice and charity. Sometimes when a letter was sent to someone, it contained warnings and criticism; for it blamed unkindness of benefits and warned and stirred to conversion and the amending of manners. But now the justice of God sings a fair song, that belongs to those whoever hear it, believe it, and receive it indeed, that he shall find fruit of health and fruit of endless life.

But you might ask why the words of God are said so darkly that they may be diversely understood and sometimes they are otherwise understood of God and other

times of men. I answer: God is like to a man who makes burning wine. For this man has many pipes, some going up and some down, by which the wine runs now up and now down through the working of the heat of the fire until it is made perfectly. Right so does God in his words, for sometimes he goes up by justice, and sometimes he comes down by mercy; as it is shown in King Isaac, to whom, I say, the prophet said out of justice that he should die, and yet afterwards mercy gave him many years of life.

Sometimes also God comes down by simple showing of words bodily expressed, but he goes up again by spiritual understanding; as it was in David, to whom many things were said under the name of Solomon which were understood and fulfilled in the Son of God. Sometimes also God speaks of things to come as if they were things past, and touches both things present and things to come; for all things, both present, past, and to come, are in God as one point. And you ought not to marvel though God speaks in diverse ways, for it is done for five reasons.

First, that God should show his great mercy, that no man hearing the justice of God should despair of his mercy. For when a man changes the will of sin, then God changes the strictness of his sentence. The second cause is that they who give faith to the justice and to the promises of God should be crowned and rewarded the more largely for faith and constancy. The third cause is that if the counsel of God were known in a certain time, some should be greatly troubled by that, knowing of contrary cases, and others for weariness should cease in their fervor and desire.

And therefore when I write any words to anyone, it is not expressed to you in the conclusion whether the words shall be received and be believed with the effect of them or not. Nor is it declared to you whether he shall believe and fulfill the words in deed or not, for it is not lawful to you to know it. The fourth cause is that no one should presume bodily to discuss the words of God, because he makes him low who is high, and of one he makes a second. The fifth cause is that he who seeks occasion to depart from God may find it, and those who are foul will be more foul, and the good be made more knowledgeable”.

After this, the Son of God spoke to Saint Bridget and said: "If a man spoke by a pipe that had three holes and said to the hearer, you shall never hear my voice by this hole, he

would not be blamed though he spoke afterwards by the other two holes. So it is now in our speech; for though the Virgin my Mother said that should be the last letter to be sent to the king, that is to be understood of his person. But now I, God, who am in the Mother and the Mother in me, send my messenger to the king, as well as for them who are now at present alive as for them who are not yet born.

For justice and mercy are endless in God, for eternally this justice was in God, that while God was, before Lucifer, full of wisdom of goodness and of power, he would that many should be partners in his goodness. And therefore he made angels; of which some, beholding their fairness, desired to be above God: And therefore they fell and are made under the feet of God wicked fiends. And yet in them God in a manner has mercy; for when the fiend by the justice and permission of God fulfilled the evil that he wanted, he is as it were in a manner comforted by the prosperity of his malice.

Not that the pain of the fiend is lessened thereby; but as a sick man who has a most strong enemy is comforted by hearing of his death, though the pain of his sickness is not lessened by that hearing, so the fiend of envy, wherein he is hotly burning, rejoices and is glad when God does justice against men; for the thrust of his malice is in a manner refreshed and eased. But after the fall of the fiends, God, seeing the lack in his army, made man, that he should obey his precepts and bring forth fruit, until as many men and women were ascended into heaven as angels fell out of heaven.

Therefore man was made perfect; who, when he had taken the commandment of life, paid no heed to God nor to his power. But consenting to the suggestion of the fiend, he trespassed, saying, 'Let us eat of the Tree of Life, and we shall know all things, good and evil'. Thus Adam and Eve would not harm God, as would the fiend; neither would they be above God, but they would be as wise as God. And they fell, but not as did the fiend; for the fiend had envy of God, and his wretchedness shall never end. But man would other than God would that he should will, and therefore he deserved and suffered justice with mercy.

Then felt they justice when they had nakedness for clothing of glory, and hunger for plenty, stirring of the flesh for virginity, dread for security, and labour for rest. But soon they obtained mercy; that is to say, clothing against nakedness, food against hunger,

security through coming together for the increasing of mankind. Truly, Adam was of most honest life, in that he had no wife but Eve, nor other woman but her alone. Also, God has showed justice and mercy to the beasts, for God has made three worthy things: first, angels who have spirit but no body, second, man who has a soul and a body; third, beasts which have bodies but no souls as man has.

Therefore an angel, because he is spirit, cleaves continually to God and needs no man's help. But man, because he is flesh, may not cleave continually to God, until the mortal body be separated from the soul. And therefore, that man may live, God has made to his help unreasonable beasts to obey and serve him better. And upon these unreasonable beasts God has great mercy, for they have no shame of their members nor sorrow of death until it comes. And they are content with simple living.

Also after the Flood of Noah was passed, God did justice with mercy. For God might well have brought well the people of Israel into the Land of Promise in a short while. But it was right that the vessels that might hold the best drink should first be proved and purged and afterwards sanctified. To whom also God did great mercy, for by the prayers of one man, who was Moses, their sin was taken away and the grace of God given to them. In the same way, after my Incarnation, justice is never used without mercy nor mercy without justice”.

Then there followed a voice on high, saying; ”O Mother of mercy, Mother of the eternal king, purchase your mercy; for to you are come the prayers and tears of your servant, the king. We know very well that it is rightful that his sins are punished, but be merciful so that he maybe converted and do penance and reverence to God”.

Then answered our Lord Jesus Christ and said: ”There is fourfold justice in God. The first is that he who is made and is without end shall be worshipped above all things; for of him and in him all things live and have their being. The second justice is that to him who always was and is and was born in time, in time before prophesied, to do service to all; and for that he is loved in all cleanness. The third justice is that he who of himself may not suffer but of his manhood was made able to suffer; and in the mortality that he took upon himself has earned for man immortality, to be desired by man above all things that may be desired or are to be desired. The fourth justice is that they who are unstable should seek true stability, and they who are in darkness desire light, that is, the Holy

Spirit, asking his help with contrition and true meekness.

But of this king, the servant of my Mother, for whom mercy is now asked, justice says that his time is not sufficient to purge worthily, as justice demands, the sins that he has done against God's mercy, so that his body might not suffer the pain that he has deserved for his sins. Nevertheless the mercy of the Mother of God has deserved and obtained mercy for the same, her servant, that he shall hear what he has done and how he may make amends, if he will in time be concerned and converted”.

”Then after that”, said Saint Bride, ”I see in Heaven a house of marvelous fairness and greatness. And in that house was a pulpit and in the pulpit a Book. And I see two standing before the pulpit; that is to say, an angel and the fiend.

Of which the one, that is, the fiend, spoke and said: 'My name', he said, 'is Wailaway. For this angel and I follow one thing that is desirable to us; for we see the Lord's most mighty plans to build a great thing. And therefore we labour; the angel for the perfection of the thing, and I to the destruction of the same. But it happens that when that desirable thing comes sometimes into my hands, it is so fervent and hot that I may not hold it; and when it comes into the hands of the angel, it is so cold and slippery that soon it slides out of his hands'.

And when I, said Saint Bridget, behold carefully with all consideration of my mind the same pulpit, my understanding is not allowed to conceive it as it was, that my soul might not comprehend the fairness of it, nor my tongue express it. For the appearance of the pulpit was as if it had been the sunbeam, having a red color and a white color and a shining color of gold. The golden color was as the bright sun. The white color was as snow, most white. And the red color was as a rose. And each color was seen in the other. For when I beheld the gold color, I see within it the white and red color. And when I see the white color, I see in it the other two colors. And when I behold the red color, I see in it the white and golden color. So that each color was seen in the other, and yet each was distinct from the others and by itself; and no color was before the other, nor after the other, nor less than the other, nor more than the other; but over all and in all things they seemed even.

And when I looked upwards, I might not comprehend the length and the breadth of the pulpit; and looking downward, I might not see nor comprehend the greatness nor the deepness of it, for all was incomprehensible to the consideration. After this I see a Book in the same pulpit, shining like most bright gold, that had the shape of a book. Which Book, and the Scripture of it, was not written with ink, but each word in the book was alive and spoke itself, as if a man should say, do this or that, and soon it was done with speaking of the Word. No man read the Scripture of that Book, but whatever that Scripture contained, all was seen in the pulpit and in the three colors.

Before this pulpit I see a king who was alive in the world; and on the left side of the pulpit I see another king who was dead and in Hell; and on the right side I see the third king who was in Purgatory. The said king who was alive sat crowned as if it had been a vessel of glass closed about. Above that glass hung a horrible sword with three edges, continually drawing nearer to that glass as does a gnomon in a sun dial draw near to its mark. On the right side of the same king stood an angel who had a vessel of gold and his lap open. And on his left side stood a fiend who had a pair of tongs and a hammer. And both the angel and the fiend strove which of their hands should be nearer the vessel of glass when the three-edged sword should touch and break it.

'Then I heard the horrible voice of the fiend, saying: 'How long shall this be? For we both follow one prayer, and do not know who shall overcome'.

Then soon the Justice of God spoke to me and said: 'These things that are shown to you are not physical but spiritual. For neither angel nor fiend have bodies; but they are shown to you in such a manner, because you may not understand spiritual things but through a physical likeness. This living king appears to you as if in as it were a vessel of glass, for his life is but as it were frail glass and suddenly to be ended; the three-edged sword is death, for when it comes it does three things.

It enfeebles the body, it changes the conscience, and it departs it from all strength, separating as by a sword the soul from the body. That the angel and the fiend seem to strive about the glass means that either of them desires to have the king's soul, which shall be accorded to him to whose counsel he is most obedient. That the angel has a vessel and a lap means that just as a child rests in his mother's lap, so does the angel labour that the soul be presented to God as if it were in a vessel and rest in the lap of endless comfort.

That the fiend has tongs and a hammer means that the fiend draws the soul to him with the tongs of wicked delight and breaks it asunder with the hammer; that is, with the consent and commission of sin. That the vessel of glass is sometimes very hot and sometimes very cold and slippery means the inconstancy and instability of the king; for when he is tempted he thinks thus: 'Though I know well that I offend God, if I fulfill now the conceit of my heart, yet at this time I shall fulfill my conceit in deed'. And so knowingly he sins against his God, for as he sins so knowingly he comes into the hands of the fiend. Afterwards the king makes his confession contritely, and so he escapes the hands of the fiend and comes into the power of the good angel. And therefore, unless the king leave his inconstancy, he stands in great peril, for he has a feeble foundation'.

After this I saw on the left side of the pulpit the dead king who was damned to Hell clad in kingly array and sitting as if on a throne. But he was dead and pale and very fearful to look upon. Before his face was as if it were a wheel that had four lines to the outermost part; and this wheel turned about at the breathing and blowing of the king. And each of the four lines went upward and downward as the king would, for the moving of the wheel was in the king's power.

The three lines had writing but in the fourth line was written nothing. On the right side of this king I saw an angel as if like a most beautiful man, whose hands were empty; but he served the pulpit. On the left side of the king appeared a fiend whose head was like a dog's; his womb might not be filled, his navel was open and boiled out venom, colored with all manner of venomous colors. And on each foot he had three claws, great, strong and sharp.

Then there was one who shone more brightly than the sun, that for brightness was marvelous to see. And he said to me: 'This king whom you see is full of wretchedness, whose conscience is now shown to you as he was in his kingdom, and what state he was in when he died. What his conscience was or how he came to his kingdom you do not need to know. Nevertheless, know that his soul is not before your eyes, but his conscience. And for the soul and the fiend are not physical but spiritual, therefore the fiend's temptations and torments are shown you through physical aspects'.

Then soon that dead king began to speak, not of his mouth, but as if it had been from his brain, and said: 'O you, my counsellors, this is my will, that whatever is subject to the crown of my realm, I will hold it and keep it. I will also labour that the things that I have be increased and not lessened. But in what wise those things were obtained, that I hold, what is it to me to inquire? It is enough to me if I may defend and increase the things that I have'.

Then cried the fiend and said: 'See, it is throughout. What shall my hook do?' Justice answered out of the Book that was in the pulpit, saying to the fiend: 'Put your hook into the hole and draw it towards yourself'. And as soon as the Word of Justice was spoken, the hook was put in. But with it at the same moment a hammer of mercy came before the king with which the king could have smitten away the hook, if he would have inquired into the truth of all things and fruitfully have changed his will. Then spoke the same king again and said: 'O, my counselors and my men, you have me as your lord, and I have taken you as my counselors. Therefore I tell you that there is a man in my realm who is a traitor to my worship and of my life, who lies in wait to hinder my realm and to disturb the peace and the common people of the realm'. In this, said the king, 'there has been given proof from both learned and unlearned, both lords and common people, believing the words that I said to them, in so much that that man whom I defamed of treason took great harm and shame, and sentence of exile was passed against him.

Nevertheless, my conscience knows well what the truth was in all this deed, and I know well that I said many things against that man out of ambitiousness for the kingdom and for dread of losing it, and that my fame should be spread abroad, and that the realm should cleave more surely to me and to my successors. I thought also myself that though I knew the truth as to how the kingdom was obtained, and what wrong was done to him, yet if I receive him again into favor and tell the truth, then all reproach and harm shall fall upon myself. And therefore I firmly set my heart that I would rather die than tell the truth or revoke my wrong words and deeds'.

Then said the fiend: 'O Judge, see how the king gives me his tongue'.

'The Justice of God answered: 'Put down your snare'. And when the fiend had done so, soon there hung before the king's mouth a most sharp blade, with which he might if he would have cut away the snare and entirely broken it. Then spoke the same king and

said: 'O my counselors, I have counseled with clerks and learned men of the state of the realm, and they say to me that if I should resign the realm into other men's hands I should do harm to many, and be a traitor to their lives and goods and a breaker of the law of justice; and therefore that I might keep the kingdom and defend it from enemies, we must think of and imagine some new things, for the old rents of the exchequer are not sufficient to govern and to defend this realm.

And thus I thought of new impositions of taxes and of guileful exactions to be imposed upon the realm, both to the harm of them dwelling in it and of innocent people traveling through it and merchants. And in these devices I planned to continue until my death, although my conscience told me that they were against God, against all justice, and against common honesty'.

Then cried the fiend and said: 'O Judge, see how this king has bowed both his hands under my vessel of water. What shall I do?'

Justice answered out of the Book: 'Put your venom on it'. And soon as the venom of the fiend was put on his hands, there came before the king a vessel of ointment with which the king might well have halted that venom.

Then the fiend cried out loudly and said: 'I see a marvelous thing that passes my ability to understand. For my hook is put to the heart of the king, and then there is given a hammer to his bosom. My snare is put into his mouth, and there is offered to him a most sharp blade. My venom is poured on his hands, and there is given to him a vessel of ointment'.

Justice answered out of the Book of the pulpit and said: 'All things have their time; and Mercy and Justice shall meet together'.

After this the Mother of God spoke to me and said: 'Come, daughter, and hear and See what the good Spirit does, and what the evil; for every man has infusions and visitations some time of the good Spirit and sometimes of the evil. For there is not one but that he is visited by God as long as he lives'.

And soon there appeared again the same dead king, whose soul the Holy Spirit inspired while he lived, in this wise: 'O friend, you ought to serve God with all your strength, for he gave life, conscience and understanding, health and power; and yet he suffers you in your sins'. The king's conscience answered, speaking by a resemblance: 'It is true', he said, 'that I am required to serve God, by whose power I am made and bought, and through whose mercy I live and have my being'.

But here the wicked spirit stirred against the king and said: 'Brother, I give you good counsel. Do as he does who pares an apple, for the parings and the core he throws away, and the inside and the best he keeps to himself. So do you. God is meek and merciful and patient and needs nothing. Therefore give him of your goods such as you may easily part with, and other goods that are more profitable and desirable keep to yourself. Do also what you desire according to your flesh, for that may lightly be amended. And what you do not desire to do, though you are bound to do it, leave it; and instead with it give alms. For by this many may be helped'.

The king's conscience answered: 'This', he said, 'is a profitable counsel. For I may give some things that I have without any great harm to me, and yet God sets much store with that. And other things I shall keep to my own use and to obtain friendship with many others'.

After this the good angel who was given to guard the king spoke to him through inspiration, saying: 'O friend, think that you, a mortal, shall die. Think also that this life is short and that God is a rightful and patient Judge who examines all your thoughts, words and deeds from the beginning of your age of understanding unto the end, who also judges all your desires and intentions and leaves none undiscussed. Therefore, use your time and your strength reasonably and govern your members to the profit of your soul. Live soberly, not fulfilling the lust of your flesh in desires, for those who live according to the flesh and after their own will shall not come to the kingdom of God'.

But here again the fiend with his suggestions stirred the king and said: 'O brother, if you will give a reckoning to God of all your times and moments, when shall you then have pleasure? But hear my counsel. God is merciful and may easily be pleased, for he would not have redeemed you if he would have lost you. Therefore the Scripture of God says that all sins are forgiven by contrition. Do you therefore as did he who owed another

twenty pounds of gold. And when he lacked the amount of the payment, he went to his friend and asked his counsel.

And he advised him to take twenty pounds of copper and gild it with one pound of gold, and with that false money pay his creditor. And he did after the counsel given him and paid his creditor twenty pounds of copper gilded over; and nineteen pounds of pure gold he kept to himself. Do so likewise. Spend nineteen hours to your delight, lust and joy; and one hour is sufficient for you to be sorry and repent of your sins. Therefore do what delights you both before and after confession; for as copper that is gilded seems gold, so the works of sins that are meant by the copper, when they are gilded over with contrition, shall be removed, and all your works shall shine like gold'. Then the king's conscience answered: 'This counsel seems to me delightful and reasonable. For if I do this I shall have more time for my own delight'.

The good angel spoke again to the king through his inspiration, saying: 'O friend, think first with what skill God brought you out of the narrow womb of your mother. Second, think with what great patience God suffered you to live. Third, think with what great bitterness God has redeemed you from endless death'.

But again the fiend stirred the king, saying: 'O brother, if God has brought you out of the narrow womb of your mother into the breadth of the world, think also how he shall lead you again out of the world through bitter death. And if God lets you live long, think also that you have had in your life many diseases and sorrows against your will. If God has bought you with his harsh death, who compelled him? Did you pray to him?'

Then the king answered as if through speaking within his conscience: 'It is true', he said, 'what you say. For I grieve more that I shall die than that I was born from my mother's womb, It is also more grievous to me to bear the adversities of the world and the things that are contrary to my will than any other thing. For I would, if I could choose, rather live in the world without tribulation and to stay in comfort there, than to depart from the world. And I would rather desire to have endless life in the world with worldly happiness than that Christ had bought me with his blood. And I care not if I never get to Heaven, if I might have the world at my will on earth'.

Then I heard a Word from the pulpit, saying this: 'Now take away from the king the

vessel of ointment, because he has sinned against God the Father. For God the Father who is endless in the Son and in the Holy Spirit gave a true and right law by Moses. But this king has made an evil and a contrary law. Nevertheless, because this king has done some good deeds, although he did not do them with good intent, therefore he shall be allowed to have possession of the kingdom while he lives, and so be rewarded in this world'.

A second time the Word spoke out of the pulpit and said this: 'Take away the most sharp blade from this king's eyes. For he has sinned against the Son. For he said in his new law that judgement shall be done without mercy to them who do no mercy. But this king would not do mercy to him who was unrighteously vexed nor amend his error nor change his evil will. Nevertheless, for some good deeds that he has done, be it given to him as a reward that he have words of wisdom in his mouth and that he be held to be wise by many people'.

The third time the Word of Justice spoke from the pulpit and said: 'Let the hammer be taken away from the king, because he has sinned against the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit forgives sins to all those who repent, but this king intends to persevere in his sin to the end.

Nevertheless, because he has done some good deeds, therefore let that thing be given to him that he desires most to the delight of his body, that is, that woman whom he desires to be his wife, the delight of his eye, and that he have a fair and desirable end after that world'.

After this, when the end of his life drew near, the fiend cried and said: 'See, the vessel of ointment is borne away. Therefore shall I now make his hands heave, that he shall do no fruitful goods'. And as soon as the word of the fiend was said, the king was deprived of his strength and health. And then soon the fiend cried and said: 'See, the sharp blade is taken away; therefore I shall increase my snare upon him'.

And then the king was deprived of his speech. And in the moment of his privation, Justice spoke to the good angel who was given to the king to be his keeper, and said: 'Seek in the wheel and see what line of it goes up, and read the writing on it'.

The angel looked and the fourth line went up, in which that nothing was written, for all of it had been erased. Then said Justice: 'Because this soul has loved what is void, therefore he now goes to the delight of his reward'. And soon the soul of the king was separated from the body. And as soon as the soul was gone out, the fiend cried and said: 'Now I shall break and tear apart the heart of this king, because I possess his soul'.

And then I see how the king was all changed from the top of his head to the soul of the foot, and he seemed as horrible as a flayed beast. His eyes were removed and his flesh all clumped together. Then his voice was heard, saying: 'Woe to me, for I am made as blind as a whelp that is born blind, seeking the hind parts of the mother. For, through my unkindness, I cannot see the mother's teats. Woe to me, for I see in my blindness that I shall never see God, for my conscience understands now from where I fell, and what I ought to have done and did not do. Woe to me, for by the providence of God I was born into the world and born again by baptism. And yet I was negligent and forgot God.

And because I would not drink the milk of the sweetness of God, therefore am I now more like a blind dog than to a living and a seeing child. But now against my will, though I were a king, I am compelled to say the truth. For I was bound as if it had been with three ropes to serve God: that is to say, through baptism; through wedlock; and through the crown of the kingdom. But the first I despised when I turned my affection and will to the vanity of the world. Of the second I took no heed when I desired another man's wife. The third I despised when I was proud of earthly power and thought not of the power of heaven. Therefore, though I am now blind, I see in my conscience that for the contempt of my baptism I ought to be bound to the hatefulness of the fiend. And for the inordinate stirring of the flesh I ought to suffer the fiend's lust. And for my pride I ought to be bound to the fiend's feet'.

Then the fiend answered: 'O brother, now it is time that I speak and with my speaking I shall work. Therefore come to me, not with charity but with hate; for I was the fairest of the angels, and you were a mortal man. And God most mighty gave me free choice of will. But because I used it inordinately and would rather hate God and surpass him in praise than love him, therefore I fell as he who has his head downward and his feet upward. But you, as each other man, were made after my fall and given a special privilege above me, in as much as you were bought with the blood of the Son of God.

Therefore, because you have despised the charity of God, turn your head to my feet and I shall take your feet into my mouth; and so we can be joined together as they are where the one has a sword in the other's heart, and the other has a knife in his innards.

And because I had a head, that is to say, understanding, to worship God if I would, and you had feet, that is to say, strength to go to God and would not, therefore my fiery head shall consume your cold feet, and you shall be devoured without ceasing, but not consumed, for you shall be revived again to the same punishment. We shall also be joined together with three ropes, of which the first shall be in the middle, with which your navel and mine shall be bound together; so that when I breathe, you shall draw my venom into yourself, and when you breathe, I shall draw your entrails into myself. And worthily, for you love yourself more than your redeemer, as I loved myself more than my maker. Your head shall be bound to my feet with the second rope, and with the third rope my head shall be bound to your feet'.

After this, I see the same fiend having three sharp claws in each foot, saying to the king: 'Because you, brother, had eyes to see the way of life and conscience to discern between good and evil, therefore my two claws shall enter and claw your eyes; and the third claw shall enter your brain, with which you shall be so strangled that you shall be all under my feet. For you were made to have been my lord, and I the sole of your foot. You also had ears to hear the way of life, and a mouth to speak to the profit of your soul. But because you despised to hear and speak to the health of your soul, therefore two claws of my other foot shall enter into your ears, and the third into your mouth, where you shall be so tormented that all things shall be to you the most bitter that seemed to you before most sweet, when you offend God'.

When these things were said, soon the head and the feet and the navel of the king were joined in this manner with the head and feet and navel of the fiend, and so both bound together fell down into Hell. And then I heard a voice crying, saying: 'O, O what has the king got now of all his wealth? Certainly nothing but harm. And what has he now of all his power? Certainly, nothing but shame. And what has he now of his avarice, through which he desired so much from his kingdom? Truly, nothing but pain. Because he was anointed with holy and sacred oil and consecrated with holy words and crowned with a king's crown, that he should worship the words and deeds of God, and defend and

govern the people of God, knowing himself under the feet of God, and God his rewarder. But he despised being under the feet of God; therefore he is now under the feet of the fiend. And because he would not redeem his time with fruitful works when he could, therefore from henceforth he shall have no fruitful time'.

After this spoke Justice out of the Book that was in the pulpit, saying to me: 'All the things that are thus seriously shown are done against God in a moment. But because you are bodily, therefore it is necessary that spiritual things be shown to you through a bodily likeness. Because the king and the angel and the fiend seemed to speak together is nothing else but the inspirations of the good and evil spirits made by them to the soul of the king, or by his counselors or friends. That the fiend cried and said: 'It is truth', it is to mean that when the king said that he would hold and keep all that belonged to the crown, however it was obtained, and not to heed justice, then the king's conscience was bored through with the iron of the fiend, that is to say, with the hardness of sin, when he would not speak and discuss which were the things that belonged rightfully to the realm, and which not, and when he cared not to examine what right he had to the crown.

And then was the hook put to the king's soul, when the fiend's temptation prevailed so much in his soul that he would abide in his injustice until death. But because there came a hammer to the king's bosom after the hook, means the time of contrition given to the king; because if the king had had such a thought, saying, 'I have sinned; I will no longer knowingly own ill-gotten goods, but I will amend me from henceforth', then the hook of righteousness would be broken with the hammer of contrition, and the king would have come to the good life and the good way. That the fiend cried, 'See, the king gives me his tongue', and then the snare was put on it, which was when the king would not do grace to the man whom he had defrauded.

This is to understand, that whoever wittingly blames and defames his neighbour to increase his own fame, is governed with the spirit of the fiend, and snared with the snare of a thief. But because there came a sharp iron before the king after the snare means the time of changing and of correction of his will and work. Because when a man corrects his trespass with amendment and with good will, such a will is a most sharp blade, with which the snare of the fiend is cut asunder and remission of sins is obtained. Therefore if this king had changed his will and done grace to the man who had been wronged and

slandered, then the snare of the fiend would have been cut away. But because he formed his will for an evil purpose, therefore the justice of God was that he should be more hardened in sin.

And that when the king thought to put new exactions of taxes upon his realm, you saw the venom poured upon his hands, meaning that his works were governed by the spirit of the fiend and by evil suggestions. For as venom makes the body cold and sick, so was the king troubled and restless with wicked suggestions and thoughts, seeking means how he might obtain goods and possession of other men and gold from them who went by the way. For then wayfaring men slept and trusted that their gold would be in their purse, but when they awoke, they found that it was in the king's power.

But because the vessel of ointment came after the venom means the blood of Jesus Christ, by which the sick soul is raised to life. For if the king had weighed his works in consideration of the blood of Christ and prayed God to be his help and said: 'I Lord God, who has made and bought me; I know that by your permission I can come to the kingdom and crown, therefore beware the enemies who war against me, and pay you my debts; for the goods of the realm are not sufficient'. I truly should have made his works and his burden easier to bear. But because he desired other men's goods and would be seen as just when he knew very well that he was wrong, therefore the fiend governed his heart and stirred him against the ordinance of the Church, and to wage war and defraud innocents, until Justice out of the pulpit of God's majesty cried for judgement and justice.

The wheel which was moved at the king's breathing means his conscience, which was stirred in the manner of a wheel, now to mirth, now to sadness. The four lines that were in the wheel mean the fourfold will that each man ought to have; that is to say, a perfect will, a strong will, a right will and a reasonable will. The perfect will is to love God and have him above all things; and this will ought to be in the first line above. The second line is to desire and to do good to his neighbour and to himself for God. This will must be so strong that it be neither broken with hate nor with greed. The third will is to abstain from fleshly desires and to desire eternal things. And this will must be right that it not be done to the pleasure of man, but of God. The fourth will is not to will to have the world, but reasonably and only to your need.

Therefore when the wheel was turned, there appeared in the last line going upward that the king loved the delights of the world, and set at nought the love of God. In the second line was written that he loved the men of the world. In the third line was written the love that he had inordinately for worldly riches and possessions. In the fourth line was written nothing, but all was void in which ought to have been written the love of God. Above all things, therefore, the blankness of the fourth line means the absence of love and fear of God; for by fear God is drawn into the soul, and by love God is fastened in a good soul.

Because if a man had never loved God in all his lifetime, and at his last end might say or think in his heart, 'O God, I think with all my heart that I have sinned against you; give me your love and I shall repent me from this time', a man of such love may not nor shall go to Hell. But because the king loved him not whom he ought to have loved, therefore he has now the reward of his love'.

After this, I see the other king on the right side of Justice, who was in Purgatory, who was like a newborn child that might not move himself about, but only open his eyes. And I see that the fiend stood on the king's left side, whose head was like a pair of bellows with a long pipe, his arms were like two serpents, and his knees like a press, and his feet like a long hook. On the right side of the king stood a most fair angel, ready to help him.

And then I heard a voice saying: 'This king appears now such as his soul was disposed when it departed from the body'. And then the fiend cried to the Book in the pulpit, saying: 'Here is seen a marvelous thing. This angel and I have waited for the birth of this child, he with his cleanliness, and I with my filth. But now the child is born, not in the body, but from the body, uncleanness in him appears which the angel, loathing, might not touch the child. But I torment him, for he is fallen into my hands. But I do not know where to lead him; for my dark eyes do not see him, for the light of a clearness that comes out of his breast. The angel sees him and knows where to lead him, but he may not touch him. Therefore you, who are the rightful Judge, separate us from our strife'.

The Word answered out of the Book which was in the pulpit and said: 'Tell, you who speak, from what cause this soul comes into your hands'. The fiend answered: 'You are righteous, and you said that no one shall enter Heaven who does not first make

restitution of things which are unrightfully obtained. But this soul is all befouled with ill-gotten goods. Second, you said that treasures should not be hoarded which rust and moths destroy, but those which last without end. But in this soul that place was empty where heavenly treasure should have been gathered and that place was full where worms and frogs were nourished. Third, you say that a man's neighbour should be loved like God. But this soul loved his body more than God, and of the love of his neighbour he cared not at all; for he, while in the body, rejoiced when his neighbour's goods were taken away. He wounded the hearts of his subjects, not taking heed of the harm to others, as long as he himself had plenty, and he did whatever he desired, and commanded whatever he would, and took little heed of justice. These are the principal causes, after which follow others without number'.

Then answered the Word out of the Book of Justice, saying to the angel: 'O you angel, keeper of the soul, who are in light and see light, what right or power have you to help this soul?'

The angel answered: 'This soul', he said, 'had holy faith, and believed and hoped that all of which he had sinned should be done away by contrition and confession. And he feared you, his God, though less than he ought to have'.

Then Justice spoke again and said: 'O you, my angel, now it is granted to you to touch the soul and to you, you fiend, to see the light of the soul. Inquire therefore both what this soul loved when it lived in the body and had all his members intact'. The angel and the fiend both answered: 'He loved men and wealth'.

Then said Justice again out of the Book: 'What did he love when he was in agony with the pain of death?' Then both answered: 'He loved himself, for he was more agonized with the sickness of his body and of the tribulation of his heart, than he was of the Passion of his Redeemer'. Then spoke Justice again and said: 'Still seek and look for what he loved and thought in the last moment of his life, while he still had a whole conscience and understanding'.

Only the good angel answered: 'The soul thought thus. 'Woe', he said, 'to me, for I have been overbold against my Redeemer. Would God I now had time in which I might

thank God for his benefits. Because it grieves me more that I have sinned against God than the pain of my body; and though I should never attain heaven, yet would I serve my God'.

Justice answered out of the Book: 'For as much as you, fiend, may not see the soul for the brightness of his light, and you, my angel, may not touch the soul for his uncleanness, therefore this is the judgement; that you, fiend, purge it; and you, angel, comfort it until it be brought into the brightness of bliss. And to you, you soul, it is granted to look to the good angel and to have comfort from him; and you shall obtain the blood of Christ and the prayers of his Mother and of his Church'.

'Then said the fiend to the soul: 'Because you have come to my hands filled with food and ill-gotten goods, I shall now therefore empty you with my press'.

And then the fiend put the brains of the king between his knees, like a press, and strained it strongly in length and breadth, till all the marrow was as thin as the leaf of a tree. Second, the fiend said to the soul: 'Because the place is empty where virtues should be, I shall therefore fill it'. And then he put the pipe of his bellows in the king's mouth, and blew strongly, and filled him very full of horrible wind; so much so that all the king's being and sinews were wretchedly broken and burst asunder.

The third time, the fiend said again to the king's soul: 'Because you were cruel and without mercy towards your subjects, who ought to have been to you as if your sons, my arms therefore shall bitingly grip you together; that as much as you grieved your subjects, so shall my arms, as if serpents, rend you with the most grievous horror and sorrow'.

After these three pains, that is to say, of the press, of the bellows, and of the serpents, when the fiend would have accumulated these same pains again, beginning at the first, then I saw the angel of God put out his hands upon the fiend's hands, that he should not make the pains so great as they were the first time. And so each time, the angel of God eased the pains; and after each pain, the soul lifted up his eyes to the angel, saying nothing but showing in his bearing that he was comforted by him; and that he should quickly be saved.

Then said the Word out of the pulpit to me: 'All these things which are thus

seriously shown to you are done with God in a moment; but because you are bodily, they are shown to you in bodily likeness. But this king, though he were greedy to have the world's praise and to obtain goods that were not his, yet, because he fears God and left for that dread some things that were pleasurable to him, therefore that dread drew him to the love and charity of God. For you know well that many who are involved with many heavy sins become very contrite before their death, whose contrition may be so perfect that not only their sin is forgiven them, but also the pain of Purgatory, if they die in the same contrition.

But the king obtained no charity until the last moment of his life; for then his strength and his conscience were failing, yet he obtained of my grace godly inspiration, by which he sorrowed more of not worshipping God than of his own sorrow and harm. And this sorrow means that light by which the fiend was blinded and knew not where to lead the soul. Yet he said not that he was so blinded for lack of spiritual understanding, but because he marveled how that in that soul should be such clearness of light and so much uncleanness. The angel knew well enough whether to lead the soul, but he could not touch it until it was purged. As it is written, 'No man shall see the face of God but he be first made clean.'

Then the Word out of the pulpit spoke again to me and said: 'That you see the angel put out his hands upon the soul and of the fiend that he should not increase the pains means the power of the angel above the power of the fiend by which he restrains the fiend's malice. For the fiend should have no measure nor order in punishing unless he were restrained by the virtue of God. And therefore God does mercy in Hell; for though there be no redemption, remission nor comfort to them who are damned, yet inasmuch as they are not punished but after their deserts and after justice, therefore in that is shown God's great mercy. Otherwise the fiend should have no temperance nor measure in his malice. That the king was seen as a child just born means that those who will be born out of the vanity of the world to the life of heaven, must be innocent and by the grace of God grow in virtues to perfection.

That the king lifted up his eyes to the angel means that by the angel, his guardian, he had his comfort; and of hope he had joy, inasmuch as he hoped to come to endless life. And these are spiritual things understood by bodily likeness; for neither fiends nor angels

have such members nor such speaking together, for they are spirits. But by such likeness their goodness or wickedness are shown to bodily eyes'.

Also the Word spoke out of the pulpit, saying to me: 'The pulpit which you see means the Godhead's self; that is to say, Father and Son and Holy Spirit. That you might not understand the length, breadth, depth, and height of the pulpit means that in God is not found either beginning or end. For God is and was without beginning, and shall be without end. And that each color of the three said colors was seen in the others, and yet each color was discerned from the others, means that God the Father is endless in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, and the Son in the Father and in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit in them both, which are truly one in nature and distinct in property of persons.

That one of the colors seemed to be sanguine and red means the Son, who without hurt of his Godhead took man's nature into her person. The white color means the Holy Spirit, by whom is washing away of sins. The golden color means the Father, who is the beginning and the perfection of all things. Not that any perfection is more in the Father than in the Son, nor that the Father is before the Son; but that you understand that the Father is not the same in person, that is the Son. For the Father is other in person, and other is the Son in person, and other is the Holy Spirit in person; but one in nature. Therefore three colors are shown to you both separated and joined together; separated for distinction of persons, and joined together for union of nature.

And as in each color you see the other colors, and you might not see one without another, and there was nothing in the colors before nor after, more nor less, right so in the Trinity is nothing before nor after, more nor less, separated nor joined; but one will, one eternity, one power and one glory. And though the Son is of the Father, and the Holy Spirit of both, yet the Father was never without the Son and the Holy Spirit, nor the Son and the Holy Spirit without the Father'.

Also the Word spoke to me and said: 'The Book that you see in the pulpit means that in the Godhead is endless justice and wisdom, to which nothing may be added or lessened. And this is the Book of Life, that is not written as the scripture, that is and was not; but the scripture of this Book is forever. For in the Godhead is endless being and understanding of all things present, past and to come, without any variation or changing.

And nothing is invisible to it, for it sees all things.

That the Word spoke itself means that God is the endless Word, from whom are all words, and in whom things have life and being. And this same Word spoke then visibly when the Word was made man and was conversant among men. So, this goodly vision has the Mother of God made to be shown to you; and this is the mercy called to the kingdom of Sweden, that men dwelling there should hear the words that proceed out of the mouth of God. But because few receive and believe these heavenly words given you from God, that is not God's fault, but men's. For they will not leave the cold of their own souls. Nevertheless, the words of the Gospel were not fulfilled with the first kings of our time; but the times shall yet come when they shall be fulfilled' ”.

How the Father of Heaven showed to Saint Bridget a severe judgement upon a king who was unkind and disobedient to the counsels of God. And how they who are in Heaven, on earth, in Purgatory, and in Hell ask wrath upon kings and princes and how our Lady prayed for them.

Chapter 56

God the Father spoke to the spouse, Saint Bridget, and said: ”Listen to the things that I say, and speak of the things that I order you; not for your power, nor for your reproach. But singly and evenly hold in your heart the praiser and the reprover, so that you may never be moved to ire for reproof, nor raised to pride for praising. For he is worthy of praise who is and was endless in himself, who has made angels and men only to that end, that many should be partners in his glory. I am now he, and the same in power and in will that I was when the Son took man's nature; in which Son I am and was, and he in me, and the Holy Spirit in both.

And though it were secret to the world that he was the Son of God, yet it was known to some, though it were few. And know that the Justice of God which had no beginning nor end, no more than God himself, was first shown to angels as light before they see God; for they fell not from ignorance of the law of the Justice of God, but because they

would not hold it or keep it. For they understand that all who love God should see him and abide with him for ever, and they who hated God should be punished endlessly and never see him in his glory.

And yet in their ambition and desire for praise they chose rather to hate God and to have the place where they shall be punished, than to love him that they might rejoice endlessly. And of like justice is that of a man as of angels. For man ought first to love God and afterward see him, that he should more be seen in manhood; for he might not be seen in his Godhead. And free choice is given also to man as to angels, that they should desire heavenly things and despise earthly.

Therefore I, God, visit many in many ways, although my Godhead is not seen. And in many parts of the world I have shown to many persons how the sin of each land might have been amended, and how mercy might have been obtained, before ever I did justice and my righteousness in those places. But men take no heed of these things, nor consider them. This justice is also in God, that all who are upon earth first hope surely for those things that they do not see, and which they believe in relation to the Church of God and to the holy Gospel. And furthermore that they love God above all things, who has given them all things; and he has given himself to death for them, that all should endlessly rejoice with him. Therefore I, myself, God, speak to such as desire me, that it be known how sin ought to be amended, and how pain may be lessened and bliss increased”.

”After this I see”, said Saint Bridget, ”as if all the heavens had been one house, in which sat a Judge on a throne. And the house was full of servants and praisers of the Judge, each of them in his voice. And under this Heaven was seen a kingdom. And soon there was heard a voice that all might hear it, which said: 'Come, both angels and fiends, to the Judgement; that is to say, you angel who are guardian of the king, and you fiend who are governor of the king'.

And as soon as the word was spoken, an angel and a fiend stood before the Judge. The angel seemed like a man troubled, and the fiend like a joyous man.

Then said the Judge: 'O you angel, I put you as the king's guardian, when he made the covenant of peace with me and made confession of all his sins that he had done from

his childhood, that you should be nearer to him than the fiend. How is he now therefore so far from you?'

The angel answered, 'O Judge, I am burning in the fire of your charity, with which the king was warmed for a time. But when the king loathed and despised those things that your friends said to him, and it was tedious to him to do the things that you counseled to him, then the king went according as his own lust drew him, away from me, and nearer each hour to the enemy'.

The fiend answered, 'I am the self which is cold, and you are the self which is hot with godly fire. Therefore such as who comes closer to you is more fervent to good works, so likewise the king, drawing near to me, is made more cold towards your charity and hot towards my works'.

Then answered the Judge: 'The king was stirred to love God above all things, and his neighbour as himself. Why, therefore, have you taken from me the man whom I bought with my own blood, and made him to deny to his neighbour, not only his temporal goods but even his life?'

The fiend answered: 'O Judge, now it is for me to speak and the angel to keep silence. For when the king went from you and from your counsels and came to me, then I counseled him to love himself more than his neighbour; and that he should not care for the health of souls, if he had the power of the world; and that he should not take heed of those who were needy or defrauded, if his friends had plenty'.

Then said the Judge to the fiend: 'Who so will go from you, they may; for you may hold none with violence. Therefore I shall yet send some of my friends to the king, who will warn him of his peril'.

The fiend answered: 'Justice is that who ever will obey me, he ought to be governed by me; and therefore I shall send my counselors also to the king, and it shall be seen to whose counsel he would rather give audience'.

Then said the Judge: 'Go, for my justice is to judge to the tormenter what is his, as

well as to him who has action of what is due to him in his cause'.

After this, said Saint Bridget, when certain years were past, I see again the same Judge with his heavenly host, more moved than he was wont to be, and as though he were angry. And then he said to the angel and to the fiend: 'Tell', he said, 'which of you has overcome'.

The angel answered: 'When I came to the king with godly inspiration, and your friends with spiritual words, soon the messengers of the fiend whispered in his ears and said: 'Will you spare temporal goods or your praise or souls or bodies, that your friends whom you love more than yourself may have praise and prosperity?' To this stirring the king assented and to the stirring of the friends he, saying, answered: 'I am sufficient enough and wise enough from counsel without you. Go your way from me with shame'. And so the king turned his back to them, and his face to the enemy, and put from him friends with dishonest reproof and the scorn of the friends of the world.'

Then cried the fiend and said: 'Judge, see, now it is for me to govern the king and to give him counsel by my friends'. The Judge answered: 'Go, and as much as you are allowed, punish the king. Because he has provoked me to indignation against him'.

Two years after this, the Judge appeared again, and the angel and the fiend before him. Then said the fiend: 'O Judge, decide now whether I shall pronounce judgement. You are truly the essence of charity, and therefore it is not fitting to you to be in the heart of him where envy and anger are rooted. You are also true wisdom and therefore you ought not to be in the heart of him who desires to deny the life of his neighbours, their goods, and their praise. You are also the true truth, and therefore it is not proper to dwell with that man who has bound himself with oaths to do treason and deceit. Therefore because this king has spit you out from him as that thing is spit out that is abominable, therefore allow me to stir him and oppress him, that he be all out of his mind and actions. For my counsels he holds as wisdom, and your counsel he takes for scorn. And with such reward I desire to reward him, for he has done my will. Nevertheless I may not harm him without your permission'.

And when this was heard, the Judge seemed to have a marvelous changing; for then

he appeared as bright as the sun, and in the sun were seen three words: that is, Virtue, Truth and Justice. Virtue spoke and said: 'I have made all things without merit beforehand. And therefore I am worthy to be praised by my creature and not to be despised. I am also worthy of being praised by my friends for my charity. I ought also to be praised and feared by my enemies, for I support them patiently without their merits, where they have worthily deserved damnation. And therefore, you fiend, it is fitting to me to decide all after my justice and not after your malice'.

Then soon Truth spoke also and said: 'I in my Godhead took manhood of a Virgin, in which manhood I spoke and preached to people. I sent also the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and I spoke by their tongues. As I spoke each day by spiritual infusion to such as I chose, therefore my friends must know that I myself who am Truth have sent my words to a king, which he has despised. Therefore, you fiend, hear now; for I will speak that it be known whether the king has obeyed my counsel or my stirrings. For I will tell all the counsel I gave to the king, rehearsing now in a few words what I expressed earlier at greater length.

For the king was stirred and counseled to beware of all sins forbidden by holy Church and to have moderate fastings, so that he might hear and answer his subjects' complaints, and be ready to do right to rich and poor who asked it; so that for much abstinence the good of the community of the people of the realm and the governance of the common profit not be lessened, nor that he should not be the more slothful from overmuch excess to give audience to all. Also the king was counseled and stirred how he should serve God and pray, and which days and times he should leave other occupations and purposes for the common profit of his realm. Also the king was counseled which days he should treat all his counsels with men who loved Truth and with the friends of God; and that he should never knowingly pass over truth nor law; and that he should not put any unwanted grievance to the common people of his realm but for the defence of the same, and for war against the pagans.

Also the king was counseled to have a number of servants in his household, according to the faculty of livelihood and rents of the exchequer of his realm. And all that was left over, he should share with his knights and friends. Also the king was counseled wisely to admonish them who were insolent and lewd with charitable words, and

manfully to correct them; and that he love in goodly charity those who were prudent and sober; and that he should defend the people dwelling in his realm and give his gifts with discretion; and all those things that belong to the crown he should not diminish nor alienate; and he should judge rightfully both men of the land and strangers; that he should love the clergy, and charitably gather to him his chivalry, and nourish in peace the common people of his realm'.

When these things were heard, the fiend answered to the Judge and said: 'And I counseled the king to do some sins privately which he dared not do in the open. I counseled him also to say long and many prayers and psalms without attention and devotion of heart, so that he should prolong and occupy the time in vain, and not hear any who would complain, nor do any right to such as had suffered wrong. Also I stirred the king to leave and despise other good men of the realm; and to lift up and prefer one man above all others; and to love him with all his heart, more than himself; and to hate his own son; and to grieve the common people of the realm with his exactions; and to slay men and spoil churches.

I stirred the king also to simulate justice; and to permit each man to deny others, that he should alienate and give lands belonging to his crown to a great prince of another realm, my sworn brother; and this I counseled to that end that treason and war should come about; that good men and rightful should be cast down; wicked people should be drowned the deeper in Hell; and they who shall be purged in Purgatory should be the more grievously tormented; women should be defiled; ships in the sea should be robbed; sacraments of the Church should be despised; lecherous lives should the more boldly be continued; and all my will more freely fulfilled. And thus, Judge, by these sins, and many others, which I do and which are fulfilled by the king, it may be proved and known whether the king has obeyed your counsel or mine'.

At this spoke Justice, answering, and said: 'Because the king has hated Virtue and despised Truth, therefore it is now proper for you to increase some of your counsel given to the king. And I ought according to justice to lessen and withdraw from him some of my graces I gave to him'.

The fiend answered: 'O Judge, I shall multiply and increase my gifts to the king.

And first, I shall send him negligence, that he take no heed of the works of God in his heart, and that he think not on the works and examples of your friends'.

Justice answered: 'And I shall diminish for him the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and I shall withdraw from him the good thoughts and comfort that he had before'.

Then said the fiend: 'I shall send him boldness to think and to do deadly sins and venial without embarrassment or shame'.

Justice answered: 'I shall lessen his reason and discretion that he discern not nor discuss the rewards and judgements of deadly and venial sins'. The fiend said: 'I shall give him dread that he dare not speak nor do right against the enemies of God'.

Justice answered: 'I shall lessen his prudence and knowledge of things to be done so lewdly, that he shall seem more like a fool and clown in words and deeds than a wise man'. Then said the fiend: 'I shall bring him anguish and tribulations of heart, because he has not prosperity after his will'.

Justice answered: 'I shall lessen for him ghostly comforts, which he had sometimes in prayers and in his actions'.

The fiend said: 'I shall put to him evil to think subtle inventions, by which he may beguile and deceive those whom he wishes to destroy'.

Justice answered: 'I shall lessen his understanding so much that he shall take no heed of his own praise nor of his own profit'. The fiend said: 'I shall put to him such joy of heart that he shall not heed his own shame, nor of the harm and peril of his soul, while he may have temporal prosperity after his will'.

Justice answered: 'I shall lessen his thinking beforehand and that consideration that wise men have in their words and deeds'.

Then said the fiend: 'I shall give him a woman's boldness, and an unseemly fear, and such a bearing that he shall seem more like a ribald or a harlot than a crowned king'.

Justice answered: 'Of such a judgement is he worthy, that separates him from God. For he ought to be despised by his friends, and to be hated by the community of his

people, and to be cast down of God's enemies; for he has misused the gifts of God's charity, both spiritual and physical'.

Then spoke Truth again and said: 'These things that are shown to you are not for the merits of the king, whose soul is not yet judged; but it shall be judged in the last moment of his life'.

After these things were said, I saw that the three, that is to say, Virtue, Truth and Justice, were like the Judge who spoke before.

And then I heard the voice, as if of a beadle saying, 'O you, all heavens with all planets, be silent; and all you fiends who are in darkness, listen; and all you others that are in darkness, hear; for the sovereign emperor proposes to hear judgement upon the princes of the earth'.

And then the kings whom I saw were not bodily but spiritual. And my ghostly ears and eyes were opened to hear and to see. And then I saw Abraham come with all the saints who were born of his generation. Then came all Patriarchs and Prophets. And afterwards I saw the four Evangelists, whose shape was like to four beasts, as they are painted upon walls in the world, except that they appeared to be living and not dead. After this, I saw twelve seats, and in them the twelve Apostles, waiting for the coming of the power. Then came Adam and Eve with Martyrs and Confessors and all other saints that came from them. But the manhood of Christ was not yet seen, nor the body of his blessed Mother; but all waited for her arrival. The earth and the water seemed to be lifted up to Heaven, and all things that were in them humbled themselves, and with reverence bowed themselves to the power.

Then after this, I saw an altar that was in the seat of the majesty, and a chalice with wine and water and bread in the likeness of a host offered up upon the altar; and then I saw how in a church of the world a priest began mass, arrayed in a priest's vestments. And when he had done all that belonged to the Mass, and came to the words with which he should bless the host, I saw as if the sun and the moon and the stars with all the other planets, and all the heavens with their courses and moving spheres, sounded with the sweetest note and with sundry voices. And all the song and melody was heard, and seemed as if it had been innumerable manners of music, whose most sweet sound was

impossible to comprehend by man's wit or to be spoken about. They who were in the light beheld the priest and bowed themselves to the power with reverence and worship, and they who were in darkness shuddered and were afraid.

But when the words of God were said by the priest upon the host, it seemed to me that the same sacred host was in the seat of the majesty in three figures, staying nevertheless in the hand of the priest. And the same holy host was made a living Lamb, and in the Lamb appeared the face of a man. And a burning flame was seen within and without the Lamb and the face. And when I fastened my eyes intently to behold the face, I saw the same face in the Lamb. And the Virgin sat crowned by the Lamb, and all angels served them, who were of so great a multitude as the beams of the sun. And a marvelous shining proceeded from the Lamb.

There was also so great a multitude of holy souls, that my sight could not behold them in length, breadth, height and deepness. I see also some places being empty, that are yet to be fulfilled to the worship of God. Then I heard a voice out of the earth, of innumerable thousands, crying and saying: 'O Lord God, rightful Judge, give your judgement upon our kings and princes, and take heed to the shedding of our blood, and behold the sorrows and weeping of our wife and children. Behold our hunger and shame, our wounds and our imprisonments, the burning of our houses, and the violation of the chaste maidens and women. Behold the wrong done to churches and all the clergy. And see the false promises and deceits of kings and of princes, and the pillage that they wreak to them with violence and anger. For they heed not how many thousands die, so that they may spread abroad their pride'.

Then cried there out of Hell as it had been innumerable thousands, saying: 'O Judge, we know that you are maker of all things. Give judgement therefore upon the lords whom we served on earth. For they have drowned us in Hell deeper than we should have been, and though we will you harm, yet justice compels us to complain and say the truth. For our earthly lords loved us without charity; for they cared no more about our souls than about those of dogs. And it was alone to them whether we loved you, our Creator, or no, desiring ever to be beloved and served by us. Therefore they are unworthy of Heaven; for they care not for you. And they are worthy of Hell, unless your grace help them. For they have deserved us; and therefore we would suffer more grievous pains than

suffer that their pain should never have end'.

Afterward, they who were in Purgatory, speaking by likenesses, cried and said: 'O Judge, we are condemned to Purgatory for contrition and good will that we had at the end of our life. And therefore we complain upon the lords who yet live on the earth. For they ought to have governed us, and to have warned us with words and criticism, and to have taught us with wholesome counsels and examples. But they comforted us rather, and provoked us rather to evil deeds and sins. And therefore our pain is now the more grievous for them; and the time of pain is the larger; and our shame and tribulation is greater'.

Then spoke Abraham with all the Patriarchs, and said: 'O Lord, among all things desirable, we desire that your Son should be born of our lineage, which is now despised by the princes of the earth. Therefore we ask judgement upon them, for they take no heed of your mercy, nor do they dread your judgement'.

Then spoke the Prophets and said: 'We prophesied the coming of the Son of God; and we said that for the deliverance of the people it was necessary that he should be born of a Virgin and endure treason and be taken and be scourged and be crowned with thorns and at last die on the cross, that Heaven should be opened and sin taken away. Wherefore those things are now fulfilled of which we said; therefore we ask judgement upon the princes of the earth who despise your Son who of your charity died for them'.

Then spoke the Evangelists and said: 'We are witnesses that your Son has fulfilled in himself all things which were prophesied of him'.

Also the Apostles spoke and said: 'We are Judges, therefore it belongs to us to judge according to the truth. Wherefore he who despises the body of God and his precepts, we judge to perdition'.

After all this, the Virgin who sat by the Lamb said: 'O most sweet Lord, have mercy upon them'. To her the Judge answered: 'It is not right', he said, 'to deny you any thing. Therefore they who cease from sin and do worthy penance shall find mercy; and judgement shall be turned away from them'.

After this I saw that the face that was seen in the Lamb spoke to the king and said: 'I have done grace with you, for I have shown you my will: how you should bear and demean yourself in your governing, and how you should govern yourself honestly and worthily. I cherished you also with sweet words of charity like a mother, and I frightened you with warnings like a piteous father. But you, obeying the fiend, have cast me from yourself, as a mother casts away a stillborn child whom she does not touch nor put her teats to his mouth. And therefore all the good that is promised you shall be taken from you and given to one who shall come after you'.

After this the Virgin who sat with the Lamb spoke to me and said: 'I will tell you how understanding of spiritual visions is given to you; for the saints of God receive the Holy Spirit in different ways. For some of them know before the time when those things should happen which were shown to them, such as holy Prophets. Others knew before what end any battle should have, before they who should fight entered battle. Others knew in spirit what they should answer to persons who came to them when any thing was asked of them.

Others knew whether they were dead or alive who were far from them. But it is not lawful to you to know other things, but to hear and see ghostly things, and to write the things which you see, and to tell and say them to such people as you are ordered. And it is not lawful to you to know whether they be alive or dead, to whom you are asked to write; or whether they will obey or not the counsels of your writing given to you from God in spiritual visions from him. But though this king has despised my words; yet shall there come another who shall receive them with reverence and praise and use them to his health.' ”

Book 9

We don't have all chapters in Book 9 yet.

Christ, in giving these revelations, likens himself to a carpenter; and afterward he sent them to Lord Alphonsus, a bishop and at that time a hermit, to be elucidated, telling how the Holy Spirit sometimes leaves the elect to themselves.

Chapter 49

The Son of God spoke to the bride, saying: "I am like a carpenter who, cutting wood from the forest, carries it off into his house and of it fashions a beautiful image and adorns it with colors and lineaments. And his friends, seeing the image and that it could be adorned with colors still more beautiful, themselves applied their colors too, painting upon it. Thus I, God, have cut from the forest of my Godhead my words that I have put into your heart. My friends, in fact, have redacted them into books, in accord with the grace given to them, and have colored and adorned them.

Now, therefore, that they may be serviceable to more tongues, give over all the books of the revelations of these same words of mine to my bishop, the hermit, who is to write them together and to elucidate the obscure things and to hold to the Catholic sense of my Spirit.

Because my Spirit sometimes leaves my elect to themselves in order that they, in the manner of a pair of scales, may judge and examine my words in their heart, and, after much thought, may expound them more clearly and elicit the better things.

For just as your heart is not always capable and warm for uttering and writing those things that you sense, but now you turn and turn them again in your soul, now you write and rewrite them, until you come to the proper sense of my words, thus with the Evangelists and Doctors my Spirit ascended and descended because now they put some

things that had to be emended, now some things that had to be retracted, now they were judged and reprehended by others.

And nevertheless others afterward came, who more subtly examined and more lucidly explained their words. But nevertheless it was from my Spirit, through infusion, that all my Evangelists had the words that they spoke and wrote. Likewise say to the same hermit that he is to do and to fill the office of an evangelist.”

Book 10

We don't have Book 10 yet.

Book 11 "The Sermon of the Angel"

Chapter 1

Sunday - First Reading

When John in his Gospel speaks of the Word, that is he who is, and has ever been, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, In this one God, there are truly Three Persons; yet not three Gods, for in the Three Persons is only one divinity, the one, perfect Godhead, belonging equally to each; and in the Three Persons, only one will, one wisdom, one power, one beauty, one strength, one love, one joy.

The Word, then, being for ever one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is truly God. A familiar word like ONE can help us, perhaps, to understand - for each of the three letters is necessary to the whole, and we cannot take away one letter without destroying the meaning. So in God, there must ever be the Three Persons, equal in all things, with all things equally in each, for there can be no dividing of God. There was no dividing when the Word, the Son of God, took a human nature; he was not separated, by this, from the Father and the Holy Spirit. He took our human nature, yet remained ever the Word of God. His human nature was necessary for him, to achieve our salvation. It can help us to understand this if we consider how our thoughts and our words are not things we can see or touch, except in so far as writing gives them a more material existence.

The Word of God, the Son of God, could not have come as one of us, or lived with us, for our salvation, unless he had taken on our human nature. A written word can be seen and read, then understood, then spoken. The Son of God can be seen, in that flesh he took to himself, and so we can understand and have no doubt that he is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Truly then, there are Three Persons, undivided, unchanging and unchangeable, eternally in all things equal, Three, yet but one God. Since God is eternal and timeless, all things were eternally known to him, before their existence in time.

Then, when he willed them to be, they came to be with that exact perfection which

suited their purpose. The divine wisdom of God willed all things to be what they are for his own honour and glory. He had no need of them; it was not to make up for any deficiency in himself - something wanting to his goodness or joy - there can be no defect or deficiency in God. It was his love, and his love alone, which led him to create; that there might be beings, apart from himself, whose existence should be an existence of joy, deriving from his own being an joy. All things, then, foreseen by God, and present to him eternally, though as yet uncreated, had already that design and perfection which they would possess when his creating brought them to be.

One thing excelled all others, designed and perfected by God with a special joy. This was Mary, the Virgin who was a Mother, the Mother who was ever a Virgin.

It has been said that all created things are made up of four elements - fire, air, water and earth. If so, then in Mary's pure body, these elements were to have a special perfection: the air should be fittingly an image of the Holy Spirit; the earth should be rich and fruitful, for the growth of useful things, to supply every need; the water should be calm and unmenacing, unruffled by every wind; and the fire so strong and bright that all the earth should be warmed by it, and the heavens themselves.

Virgin Mary, we know that in you the design and perfection willed by God have come to be. As he foresaw you, so he has perfectly created you. And of all his creation, you most please him. The Father rejoiced that he would do so much through you: the Son rejoiced in your holiness and love: the Holy Spirit rejoiced in your lowliness and obedience. The Father's joy is that of the Son and the Holy Spirit: the Son's joy is that of the Father and Spirit: and the Holy Spirit's joy is that of the Father and the Son.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit rejoice in you, the one joy of Three who are One. Father, Son and Holy Spirit love you, Mary, the love of the Three Persons, One God.

Chapter 2

Sunday - Second Reading

Mary, we know that you were ever in the mind of God, before his creating brought

you to be - the most perfect of all his creatures. He knew you as Noe, before the flood, knew the Ark he was to build, and the way he was to build it. The design of the Ark had been made known to him, and he waited for the time when God would command him to set to work. The design and perfection, Mary, of your glorious body, the Ark of God, was known to God before all time. And he knew the time when he would bring it into being by his creating. As Noe rejoiced at the thought of the Ark he was to build, so God rejoiced, Mary, at the thought of you. Noe's Ark would withstand the storms; you, Mary, the Ark of God, would withstand, in the strength of your holiness, every attack of the hatred and sin of hell.

Noah's Ark was so built that no water could seep in - a ship whose timbers were carefully protected both inside and out. You, Mary, the Ark of God, would be so strong in God's grace, anointed and protected by his Holy Spirit, that no desire would ever enter your heart, either for your own glory or for the possession of earthly things. Such desires, we know, are as displeasing to God as the water which seeps into the keel of a ship, and collecting there becomes stank and offensive.

Noe was pleased at the size and capacity of his Ark. God rejoiced, Mary, in that holiness which would be yours, in your love which would embrace all creatures, and in your gentleness which would look with pity on sinners, and hate only what was hateful to him. But most of all, he rejoiced in that ever increasing grace which would fit you to bear in your womb that which heaven and earth could not contain, the Person of God the Son, to hold him and be truly his Mother.

Noe took pride, as every captain of a ship takes pride, in the cleanliness and tidiness and brightness of the Ark. God rejoiced, Mary, in your virginity, for in you there would be no sin, nor slightest stain of sin, to taint your perfection. Noe provided for himself and those with him, all that was needed to survive the days ahead. God chose you, Mary, for his Son, that your body should provide for him a perfect human body. Noe came from the Ark unchanged. But from you, Mary, the Ark of God, the Son of God came forth, clothed with that pure flesh and blood which he had taken from you.

When Noe left the Ark, its purpose was served - it was empty and useless. But when Christ came forth from your womb, you were filled with every gift of the Holy Spirit,

growing ever in holiness, not further now from Christ, but nearer to him, and dearer even than before, united to him on earth and in heaven for ever.

Chapter 3

Sunday - Third Reading

From the moment of God's promise, through the long years of waiting, Abraham loved the son who was to be his, the child who would be called Isaac. How much more did God love you, Virgin Mary, whom he had foreseen from eternity, and knew before your creating, for he knew also the joy your birth would be to him. Abraham did not know how his love for God would be tested and proved through his promised son.

But God knew with his divine knowledge how through you, Mary, his great love for man would be made known. Abraham knew that Isaac would be born of his union with Sarah, a child conceived unexpectedly in their old age. God knew that his Son would be conceived in you, Virgin Mary, without the intervention of man, and be born of you, true Mother yet ever a Virgin. Abraham knew that his son once conceived would grow without his help to become a person, independent of his father. God knew that the sacred body of his Son, formed in your womb, would in a special way, be for ever most intimately united with the Godhead. This must be so, since the Son is ever in the Father, the Father in the Son, equal yet one.

Abraham knew that he and his son must return to dust in the corruption of death. God would not allow your pure body, Mary, to see corruption, for it was the flesh and blood of your body which had been given to form the body of his Son. Abraham built a house for the son who was to be born to him. But God himself, the Blessed Trinity, is the dwelling in which you, Mary, will abide for ever. In a wonderful way, then, your dwelling, Mary, was in God, who surrounded you with his protecting love. Yet God dwelt ever in you, leading you to the highest holiness by his presence. For his promised son, Abraham prepared wheat, wine and oil, three kinds of essential nourishment.

For you, Virgin Mary, God himself was to be your eternal meal, Father, Son and

Holy Spirit, Three yet One. And through you he was to give himself to men as the food of life. So we may attribute this food of life in a way, to you, Mary, since it is by you that it has come to us. The three things which Abraham prepared can be thought of as a sign of the action of the Three Persons. Oil cannot burn without a wick. This can suggest to us That the love of God the Father could not be made known on earth without the humanity of the Son, that humanity which he took from you, his Virgin Mother.

Wheat was to be made into flour, and then bread, for our daily use. The Son of God, though he is truly the food of Angels, could not be our food without that flesh and blood which he took from your loving womb. Wine cannot refresh us unless it is in something we can drink from. The Holy Spirit could not be poured out upon us without the humanity of your Son. For the salvation which Christ's Passion and Death accomplished is the fount of all the delights and graces bestowed by God on Angels and on men.

Chapter 4

Monday - First Reading

It was love that led God to create. There could be nothing lacking in God, nothing wanting to his goodness or his joy.

It was out of love alone that he willed creation, that there might be beings, apart from himself, who would partake of his infinite goodness and joy. So the Angels came to be, created by God in countless numbers. To them he gave free will, freedom to act, in accordance with their nature, as they willed. As he himself is under no necessity but has created out of love alone, he will that the Angels, whom he designed for eternal happiness with him, should likewise be under no necessity.

He looked for love in response to his love, obedience to his offer of eternal joy.

Yet in the first moment of their creation, there were Angels who chose, freely and deliberately against their Creator, in spite of his infinite love, which called them to love in return. Justly they fell, fixed in their evil will, from an eternal joy into an eternal misery. But not all fell. To those Angels who chose love for love, there was given the

contemplation of God in all his glory, power and holiness. From this contemplation, they came to know the eternity of God, that he has no beginning and no end; they learnt what it meant to have him for their Creator; and they saw most clearly how everything they possessed had come to them from his love and his power.

They learnt too that his wisdom had given them a wisdom of their own, by which he allowed them to foresee the future. And it was a joy and consolation to them to know that God in his mercy and love wished to replace, in his own way, those Angels who had forfeited by pride and envy their place in heaven.

In their contemplation of God, the Angels saw with wonder a throne placed next to that of God himself. They knew that the one for whom this throne had been prepared had not yet been created. Yet already they loved this chosen one, and rejoiced as they waited. Their love for each other was born of their love for God. But between these two loves they saw one who was more lovable than themselves, one whom God loves with great joy more than all his creatures. Virgin Mary, you were the chosen one, destined for that throne near to the throne of God.

It was you whom the Angels loved, after God, from the first moment of their creation, seeing in the contemplation of God, how beautiful he had made themselves, but how much more beautiful he would make you. They saw that in you there would be a love and a joy far greater than their own. They saw too the crown that awaited you, a crown of glory and beauty surpassed only by the majesty of God. They knew how God their Creator was glorified by themselves and they rejoiced. They knew how much more he would be glorified by you, and they rejoiced still more.

Before ever you were created, Mary, God and Angels together rejoiced in you.

Chapter 5

Monday - Second Reading

God's creation of the world and all it contains took place in the instant of his will's expression; and with that design and perfection foreseen by him. Yet there remained still

uncreated another work of creation which would surpass what he had already done. You, Mary, are, as it were, another world, a world which God foresaw with greater joy, a world the Angels were more pleased to contemplate, a world of more benefit to those of good will that the whole earth and all it contains.

Mary, we may see in God's act of creation and in all created things an image of your creating. We read that it pleased God to separate the darkness from the light when he created the earth. How much more it pleased him to enlighten you from childhood. The darkness, the time of your infancy, was made light by your knowledge of God, your understanding of God, and the will to love for God which day by day led you on to a love surpassed only by the love of God.

The mental darkness of childhood, without knowledge of God, without reasoning power to guide, is for us a time of defencelessness and danger. But we know that for you, exempt from sin, it was a time of purest innocence. We read that it pleased God to make, together with the stars, two lights - the sun for daytime, the moon for the night. It pleased God still more, Mary, to set in you two heavenly lights, brighter and more beautiful than the sun or the moon: the first - perfect obedience, a radiant light for Angels and men to admire, guiding all who saw it to God himself, who is the light of eternal day; the second - a most complete and trusting faith, the light to men in the darkness of despair and unbelief when your Son chose suffering and death, a light to cast out all shadow of doubt and uncertainty when he rose from the dead. We read that it pleased God to create the stars. The thoughts of your heart, Mary, were more pleasing to him.

We read that it pleased God to create the birds, whose flight and song are a delight to men. All the words which you spoke, Mary, heard also in heaven to the joy of the Angels, were more pleasing still. We read that God created the earth itself, the dry land and the soul; and flowering and fruit-bearing trees of many kinds. Your life, Mary, your occupations and work, were more pleasing to him, for you would give nourishment, and life itself, to all, and your love would make each act of your life more beautiful to God and the Angels than the fairest of flowers are to men. God created the plants, flowers, trees, and fruits, minerals, metals, and precious stones - he has made the earth rich with these things.

Yet he saw in you, Mary, even before your creating, more qualities and virtues than in all earthly things. We read that God's creation was pleasing to him, and that he looked with joy on all he had done. It pleased him still more to create you, Mary, and he looked with greater joy on you, even before your creating, than on this earth and all earthly things. That world and everything in it, - all would be destroyed. Though created before you, Mary, it would not endure. But you, by God's eternal decree, were created to be for ever, and to be for ever united to him in deepest love, created in fullest grace, responding to his grace in all things, and so growing to the perfection of holiness.

Chapter 6

Monday - Third Reading

God is the Creator of all beings, and he is Being itself. Nothing can be or come to be without God. Therefore, this world and all things in it owe their existence to him alone. He is the Creator of all. And Creator, last of all, of Man. To mankind he gave, as he had given to the Angels, the gift of free will. He wished that be free choice man would cling to what was good, and so avoid a just punishment and earn a just reward. Among men, little regard is paid to work done unwillingly, under threat of punishment.

We honour work done willingly out of love, and it is such work that deserves reward. It pleased God rather to leave them free, making known what a reward obedience would win, and what punishment pride and disobedience would incur. God created man, forming him from the dust of the earth. He looked for man's love and obedient service, that so the the places of those Angels who had disobeyed in their pride, and fallen from joy into misery, might be filled once more. They should have received a crown of joy for their love and obedience. Instead, they lost their reward, hating not only the joy they had forfeited but also those virtues which would have assured it to them.

A king is given a crown of gold, calling all to honour him who wears it. But there is a heavenly crown for each virtue, calling even to men on earth to honour one who loves God, calling to Angels in heaven to rejoice, calling to God to reward. What of the crown of

God himself? In him all virtues reside, surpassing in every way every other possible good. In him all is virtue. Yet three special virtues stand out in what we know of God, three crowns of incomparable glory. First, that he created the Angels. (It was the envy of such glory that led some of them into their pride and fall.) Second, that he created Man. (The loss of God's glory was man's most grievous loss, when in his folly he let himself be led into sin.) Third, that he created you, Virgin Mary.

The fall of Angels and of man did not lessen the virtue of God, or take from his crown of glory. They were created for God's honour, and they refused it, it is true, just as they were created for their own desire, and yet forfeited it by sin. The wisdom of God turned their sin into an even greater glory for himself. For your creation, Mary, gave such glory to God, that what was refused him by Angels and men was made good a thousand times over. Virgin Mary, our Queen and our hope of salvation, you may truly be called the crown of God's honour. Through you he showed his divine virtue.

From you he won honour and glory greater than from all other creatures. The Angels knew, even before your creating, that by your holiness and humility you would overcome the pride of the Devil and his hatred for man. They had seen how man had fallen into misery, but in their contemplation of God, they still rejoiced, knowing well what great things God would do, Mary, through your lowliness, when his creating brought you to be.

Chapter 7

Tuesday - First Reading

We read in the Bible of Adam's original state of happiness. Then of his disobedience to God, which brought so much suffering and sorrow. We are not told that he continued in disobedience. From his conduct after Cain had killed Abel, his refraining from intercourse with Eve until he knew that this was no longer the will of God, we may judge that the love and service of God was his first thought. His sorrow was not so much the unhappiness he had brought on himself, but rather the offence he had committed against God.

Created by God, owing his existence and his happiness to God, he had turned against God, and so justly deserved God's anger. This was true sorrow, bringing with it repentance and humility. And with this true sorrow came also consolation from God. One thing, and one thing only, could have fully consoled him - the promise that God himself should come as man, of Adam's own race, and by love and humility redeem that race which his pride had deprived of life.

That God should be born as men are born was unthinkable. Adam and Eve owed their beginning in some way to a special creation by God. Even this would not be fitting for the coming of God to earth. It would seem that Adam understood from God's words something of what was to be. At least, we may picture him foreseeing the future, foreseeing a woman, like Eve in womanhood, but lovelier and holier than all of his race, a virgin and mother, bringing God himself to this world. We may think of him grieving at the words spoken to Eve by the Devil.

But rejoicing, his sorrow turned to joy, at the thought, Mary, of your words to the Angel. We may think of him grieving that Eve his wife, created by God from his body, had deceived him and drawn him on to eternal death. But rejoicing that you, Virgin Mary, would bear in all purity Christ, the Son of God, to restore man to life. Grieving that Eve's first act was of disobedience; rejoicing that you, Mary, would be a daughter of God, most dear to him in all things, ever obedient to his will.

Grieving that Eve had been tempted, in the sight of God and all the Angels, by the false promise of being made like to God; rejoicing that in the sight of God and the Angels, you, Mary, would acknowledge yourself the Handmaid of God. Grieving that Eve had offended God, and brought about the condemnation of man; rejoicing that your word to God should bring such joy to yourself and to all men. Grieving that Eve had closed to man the gate of heaven; rejoicing that your word had opened that gate again to yourself and to all who sought to enter. So we may think of Adam rejoicing with great joy at the thought, Mary, of your coming, as we know the Angels rejoiced, before the creation of the world, foreseeing your creation by God.

Chapter 8

Tuesday - Second Reading

Adam's punishment made him see the justice and mercy of God. Throughout his life he feared to offend God and was guided in all things by love for God. This way of life he handed on to those who came after him. With time they forgot God's justice and mercy. With time they forgot God himself, and that he was their Creator. They believed only what pleased them, immersing themselves in pleasure and sin.

So came the flood, when God destroyed all men on earth, saving only Noe and those with him in the Ark, through whom he willed to people the earth again. Once again men multiplied on the earth, and once again they fell, tempted away from God, turning to the worship of false gods and idols. God's mercy and fatherly love led him to intervene, and he chose one who was a faithful follower of his law, Abraham, to make a covenant with him and his descendants. He fulfilled his desire for a son, and Isaac was born. And he promised that from his descendants, Christ, his son, would come.

It is possible that Abraham, by God's permission, foresaw many things. We may think of him as having foreseen Mary, the Mother of Christ. We may think of him rejoicing in her, and loving her more than Isaac his son.

It was not greed or ambition that led Abraham to acquire lands and wealth. It was not for his own sake that he desired a son. He was like a gardener of some great lord's estate. He had planted a vine, and planned to make cuttings from that vine, and so in time make for his master a vineyard of great worth. Like a good gardener, he knew that each plant needed careful attention, and proper feeding, if it was to bear good fruit. One plant in particular he cherished, watching its growth with great delight. He knew that it would be the choicest of all the trees in his vineyard.

His master would love to rest in the shade beneath it, praising its beauty and the sweetness of its fruit. If Abraham was the gardener, then the vine which he first planted was Isaac; the cuttings of that vine his descendants; the feeding of each plant the goods of this world which Abraham acquired for the sake of Isaac and his race; the most cherished

tree, that tree of beauty and sweetness, was the Virgin Mary; and the Master for whom Abraham the gardener worked, the owner of the vineyard, was God himself, who waited till the vineyard (the race of Isaac) was established, and then, coming, saw with content, the perfect vine in the midst of his vineyard, the Virgin Mother of God. The beauty of this tree was the perfect and sinless life of Mary; the sweetness of the fruit, the acts of her life; the shade of that tree, her virginal womb, overshadowed by the Spirit of God.

If Abraham then foresaw what was to be, he rejoiced in his many descendants, but most of all in that one of his descendants who, as Virgin Mother, was to bear the Son of God. This faith and holy desire Abraham handed on to Isaac, his son: your oath, he had said to the servant sent for Isaac's wife, must be sworn on the One who is to come of my race. Isaac too handed on this same faith and desire, when he blessed his son Jacob.

And Jacob in blessing his twelve sons, handed on this same faith and desire in his turn to Judah. God so loved Mary, the Mother of his Son, even before the creation of the world, and before her creating, that he gave to those he had specially chosen as his friends some foreknowledge of her, for their consolation. First to the Angels, then to Adam, and then to the Patriarchs, the creation of Mary was a thing of wonder and joy.

Chapter 9

Tuesday - Third Reading

God is all love, and all loving; infinite in love, and infinite in loving. We may truly say - God is love. He makes known his love to those who love, and all things speak to them of the love of God. See how great was his love for his People, the People of Israel. He delivered them from the Egyptians, and led them out from captivity, into a fruitful land, that they might live there in peace and prosperity. It was this prosperity that was envied by the Devil, and in his hatred for all that was loved by God, he tempted God's People, and by his deceits, led them time and again into sin.

They had the Law of Moses; they were the People whom God had made his own, through his covenant with Abraham; yet they fell into idolatry and worshipped false gods.

God looked on them and found there among them some who still served him with true faith and love, following his law. To strengthen these followers of his, amid the dangers that surrounded them, to confirm them in their faith and love, he raised up among them the Prophets, men who came not only for the help of God's own, but also to rescue those who had made themselves enemies of God.

In time, like the mountain streams which join, and then join to other streams as they descend, increasing ever in volume and power, carrying all before them, down at last to meet other waters and in the lower lands form into the great rivers, the Holy Spirit filled the hearts of his Prophets, and first one, then another, then more raised their voices, to speak as he inspired them, till their sound filled the ears of many, to comfort and console, to call back and restore. The sweetest sound of their voices was that news of joy - that God himself would be born of a Virgin, to make amends for the evil which Satan, through Adam, had caused to man; that he would redeem man, and rescue him from his misery, restoring to him eternal life.

Joy too, that God the Father so willed this redemption of man that he would not spare even his only-begotten Son: that the Son so willed to obey the Father, that he would take to himself our human flesh: that the Holy Spirit, though inseparable from the Father, willed to be sent by the Son. The Prophets knew that the Son of God would come into this world, to be light in our darkness, brighter than the sun at dawn, to proclaim God's justice and love. But they knew he would not come unheralded. As the morning star heralds the sun, they foresaw that a star would rise in Israel, fairest of all the stars, in brightness and beauty surpassed only by the sun itself. This star with the Virgin Mary, who would be Mother of Christ, her love surpassed only by the love of God, her heart ever responding to the will of God.

This news was given by God to his Prophets, to console them in their labour of teaching, and encourage them in their trials.

For they grieved at the pride and sinfulness of the People, who neglected the Law of Moses, rejected God's love, and incurred his anger. But they rejoiced, Mary, in you, foreseeing that God, that giver of all law, would receive back to his grace those who had sinned, for the sake of your humility and holiness of life. They grieved to see the Temple empty and desolate, and the worship of God neglected.

They rejoiced, Mary, to foresee the creation of that holy temple, your pure body, where God himself would love to reside. They grieved at the destruction of the gates and the walls of the holy city, broken by armies, invaded by sin. They rejoiced, Mary, to foresee how you would stand firm, against all attack, a strong citadel where Christ would arm himself, the gate through which he would come forth to his conflict with the Devil and his own. To the Prophets, as to the Patriarchs, your coming, Mary, was a thing of wonder and joy.

Chapter 10

Wednesday - First Reading

Before God made known his law to Moses, man had to live without a rule of life. Those who loved God, did what they thought was God's will. Those who rejected his love, and did not fear to do so, acted as they chose. To dispel their ignorance, God in his goodness made known his law, teaching first the love of God, then love for others, then his will concerning marriage, its holiness and binding force, its purpose in his plan - the growth of his people. The union of man and woman in a holy marriage was most pleasing to God, for he willed to choose the child of such a union as the Mother of Christ. The eagle, flying above the earth, looks down at the trees, and choosing with its sharp eyes the tallest tree, one firmly rooted to withstand the storms, one that cannot be climbed, one that nothing can fall on, builds there its nest, God sees, with penetrating gaze, all things, both present and future.

He looked therefore among all men and women, from the beginning to the end of time, for a husband and wife fit for the bearing of the child of his choice. He found none so worthy as Joachim and Anne, who lived together in holiness and a love for each other born of their love for him. It was to them he entrusted the one who was to be Mother of his Son. She was to be, as it were, the eagle's nest, in which he could find protection and shelter. Joachim and Anne were the tall tree in which this nest would be built, firmly rooted in a union based on the love and honour of God; the branches of this tree their lifelong thought for the will of God, and their desire for a child, not for their own sake,

but to beget one who would grow to love God and serve him as they themselves did.

The tallness of this tree, beyond the reach of the winds, and higher than all around, was the height of holiness which Joachim and Anne had attained, beyond the attacks of Satan, untroubled, except by the thought that God's honour was many times assailed by the sins of many, with no thought of honour or worldly possessions, no pride or ambition to move them from their selfless love of God.

God knew that for the birth of the Mother of Christ, none holier could be found than Joachim and Anne. What a treasure you held, blessed Anne, while she who was to be Mother of God rested in your womb. How precious to God that seed of Mary's life in your womb, more precious than the offspring of all men on earth. Anne became God's treasure-house, keeping safe this most precious thing, this seed of so precious a life.

God saw it and watched over it, for as his Son was to say - where one's treasure is, there is one's heart. The Angels looked on this treasure with joy, knowing how precious it was to God their Creator. It was a holy and blessed day, to be honoured by all, the day when this precious seed was first sown. God himself and the Angels greeted that day with great rejoicing.

Chapter 11

Wednesday - Second Reading

That seed of life was ready, and at God's chosen moment, life began as he infused into it a living soul. We see the bees in summer, busy making flowers for honey; led by instinct to their sweetness, they seem often to wait for the buds to open. God foresaw, as he foresees all things, the birth of Mary, and he waited with joy as she lay hidden in her mother's womb, for he knew that none ever of those to be born would equal her in holiness. None would so make known to men his infinite love.

The infusing of Mary's soul in the womb of Blessed Anne was more beautiful than the dawn of the most beautiful day. As we so often long for the dawn, so Angels and men

longed for her birth. Where the nights are short in summer, so that there is little darkness, people do not notice the dawn; they wait for the sun itself, thinking of their crops and their fruits. Where the nights are quite long, even in summer, the dawn is watched for and welcomed, not only for the coming of the sun to the fields, but because men weary of the night and the darkness.

The Angels in heaven did not await the coming of Mary that they might see Christ, for they were ever in the light of his presence; they longed for her, so that the love of God might be made known in the world, so that men who loved God might be strengthened in their love, and then they, the Angels, could go out to gather them as an everlasting harvest for God. But men, living in this world of sorrow and hardship, desired the coming of Mary that they might see Christ their Saviour. They longed for her coming, that they might learn from her perfect life how man should live. The Virgin Mary is foretold as the branch which would grow from the root of the father of David, to bear a flower on which the Spirit of God would rest. In her mother's womb - how light Anne's burden! - Mary was the tender branch which would soon come forth. The flower that branch would bear was Christ.

He himself, from the moment of her assent to God's message, was a richer and infinitely sweeter nourishment than blessed Anne had given to her. Though Mary was to him the food of life, giving her own flesh and blood to be his, that he might appear in true humanity, he was to Mary her heavenly food, that she might bear him as her child, though he was truly the Son of God. They were Mother and Son, Son and Mother, yet this Son was truly the Son of God, the only-begotten Son of the Father, eternally with him, eternally united with him and the Holy Spirit, eternally the Person of the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit lives in glory, eternally One.

Chapter 12

Wednesday - Third Reading

In Father, Son and Holy Ghost, there is only the one Divinity. There is ever the one divine will. A fire with three flames is but the one fire. The three flames of love in God are

the one love of his will, burning to fulfil his one divine purpose. The love of the Father was seen most brightly by the Angels when they knew his will to give his Son for the redemption of man. The love of the Son proceeding from the Father was seen most brightly when the son willed to deprive himself of his glory and take the form of a slave.

The love of the Holy Spirit was seen most brightly in that readiness to make known in many ways the one will of the Three. All heaven was ablaze with these flames of God's love, to the delight of the Angels. Yet all heaven must wait; must wait for the coming of Mary. The redemption of man, willed and foreseen by God, could not take place without her. A flame of divine love was to be kindled in Mary which would rise up to God and return so filled with his love that no corner of this world would be left cold and in darkness.

When Mary was born, she was like a new lamp, all ready to be lit; to be lit by God with a light burning like the three-fold flame of his own love. The first flame of her lover was her choice, for God's glory, to be ever a virgin. So pleasing was this to the Father that he willed to entrust to her his beloved Son, that Son who is inseparable from the Divinity of himself and the Holy Spirit. The second flame of her love was her humility, so pleasing to the Son that he willed to take from her a true human body, and that humanity which was destined to be honoured in heaven above all things. The third flame of her love was her obedience, which brought to her from the Holy Spirit the fullness of grace.

It is true that these flames of Mary's love were not lit at the moment of her birth. She was still, as other children, only a little one, unaware of God's will. Yet God took more pleasure in her than in all other beings. She was like a sweet-sounding harp, not yet in tune; but he whose treasure she was knew how lovely the music he would make with her.

It may be believed that Christ's knowledge was not lacking in anything due when he was conceived in Mary's womb. We may believe too that Mary developed in understanding earlier than others. Since the coming of Mary was such joy to God and the Angels, men too must rejoice, and give glory and honour to God, who chose her from all his creation by eternal decree and willed that she should be born among sinners, to bring forth in sinlessness the Saviour of the world.

Chapter 13

Thursday - First Reading

Speaking of the beauty of Mary, we think of lovely things: her sacred body is like a vase of purest crystal; her soul like a lantern of clearest light; her mind like a fountain of water rising up into the air, then falling in cool streams to the deep valley. Passing from infancy to childhood, to the age when she was able to understand, she began to think of the existence of God, and how he made all things, and especially man, for his own eternal glory, and how his justice embraces all things.

Her thoughts reached out to God, as the waters of the fountain rise into the air; then, like those waters flowing down to the valley, her thoughts returned to herself and brought her a most profound humility. The Church sings of Christ leaving and returning to the Father, though he was ever with the Father and the Father ever with him. Mary's thoughts reached up to heaven in contemplation and grasped God by faith. Then in the love with which God possessed her, she turned her mind again to God and to herself, never losing her thought of God. Together with hope and trust, and with holy fear, the fire of this love inflamed her heart, as the flame is the brightness of the lantern.

She understood the perfect subjection of body to soul, and no discord ever troubled her, so that in body she was purer than purest crystal. How soon she learnt to appreciate God's love, and treasure it with all her being! Think of this love as a lily which God had planted, with a threefold root, bearing three flowers of great beauty. The three roots are three most powerful virtues, protecting her body. The three flowers, three adornments of her soul, which gave great joy to God and the Angels.

The first of the three virtues was her abstinence, her right use of God's gifts of food and drink - no over-indulgence to make her slow in the service of God, no unwise austerity to impair her health. The second was her wakefulness, so that she rested no longer than was necessary - not wasting God's time in laziness, but not fatiguing herself to the detriment of her work. The third was her command over her will, so that she was

not easily wearied in body, and never over-anxious or over-excited.

The first adornment of her soul was her love for the things of God rather than the things of earth, no matter how beautiful these might seem to be. The things men so often prize, possessions and wealth, were utterly distasteful to her. The second adornment was her appreciation of the infinite distance between worldly honours and spiritual glory. This world's praises were as abhorrent to her as the poisoning air of corruption. The third adornment was her love for all that God loves, her repugnance for all that was hateful and displeasing to him. She sought in all things the true sweetness of God, and no taste of bitterness was permitted to endure in her after her death.

With such beauty of soul, Mary surpassed all other created things. God willed that only through her should his promise be fulfilled. Her love left no blemish or defect, not even the smallest. In nothing could the enemy claim victory over her. If then she was so pleasing in the sight of God and the Angels, may we not think that she had also great earthly beauty? Those who saw her looked with delight, and knew that her loveliness was born of her love for God. They saw her, and loved to see her, and were led to a new love for God.

They watched her, and loved to be with her, and knew that no evil could touch them, nothing sinful attract them, in the presence of her beauty and holiness.

Chapter 14

Thursday - Second Reading

With our slow and clouded minds, it is hard for us to appreciate that moment when Mary first knew God and gave herself to him. His will became her one desire and her joy. She saw how she owed everything to his creating; but she knew that according to his plan, her will was free, to choose or refuse his will and his way. She saw the blessings which God had already bestowed, and for these alone she chose to love him in return, and to love him for ever.

Soon she was to understand how much more he would do, She learnt that he who created all would not rest content, but would himself come to his creation as redeemer of his creatures. And this out of love alone. She learnt that man's will, free to choose good or evil, could make satisfaction to God for sin, or incur his anger by sin. In that moment of understanding, she chose once for all her course through life.

The captain of a ship knows what dangers lie ahead, and he charts his voyage to avoid the storms. He watches the ship's course, and works out the distance sailed, and the distance still to sail before arriving in port. Every rope, every piece of equipment is in place and ready for use. The cargo he carries must reach port as quickly as possible. Every detail of the voyage must be worked out ahead. Mary was like the captain of a ship.

As soon as she had understood God's will, she set her course according to his commandments. She was watchful at all times that her attention should never be distracted from God. She took care, when those around her spoke of their ambitions, their successes or failures, not to let herself become less devout in her service of God. Anything contrary to God's law she knew at once as a danger to be avoided at all cost.

With this self-training and discipline, all that she did was good. All that she said, all that she listened to, all that she gave her attention to, was sensible and wise.

Her work was useful to herself and to others, and each journey she made had some good reason. The trials of life she accepted with patience and joy. Her one thought was God. Her one desire was to be for ever with him, to offer to him in return for all he had done for her all her love and her praise. So perfect a life won her from God, who is the giver of all good things, the highest holiness and glory. It is no wonder that God loved her more than all other creatures.

She alone of all men and women was ever sinless and immune from sin. How near she was to heaven at that moment when the Angel Gabriel greeted her - Hail, full of grace! How pure, how holy she was, at that moment when the Father entrusted to her his only Son, at her assenting - Be it done unto me, according to thy word! At that moment of time, Divinity was united with humanity, humanity with Divinity; the Son of God was made man; the Son of the Father became the Son of Mary.

Chapter 15

Thursday - Third Reading

This union between God and man, between Christ and the Virgin Mary, only God can comprehend. The Son of God, truly God, all present and present to all, whose eternal dwelling in heaven is the Blessed Trinity itself, made for himself on earth a dwelling-place in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit, who is ever in the Father and in the Son, rested in Mary, filling her, both body and soul, with his presence. The Son, who is ever with the Father and the Holy Spirit in heaven, acquired for himself as man a new dwelling on earth. The Father too, with the Holy Spirit, dwelt in a new way on earth, in the humanity of the Son, for the Father with the Holy Spirit must be ever in the Son. The Son alone took flesh.

He alone took our humanity. True God, he came as man to men, withholding from the eyes of men his Divinity seen ever by the Angels in heaven. All who hold the true faith must rejoice unceasingly at this union achieved through Mary. The Son of God took in her womb true flesh and blood, and true humanity, not losing his Divinity: in divinity was humanity, in humanity Divinity. Christ did not lose his Divinity, nor Mary her virginity.

It would be utterly wrong to think that God could not have done such a thing, for all things are possible to God. It would be equally wrong to think that he would not have done such a thing for his own, for this would deny the goodness of God. If we believe then that God could and would do such a thing, why do not all men love God with all their love?

Picture some king, honoured by all, with great power and possessions, and someone dear to him suffering great insult and injury; if the king took on himself the burden of his friend, if he gave all his wealth to save him from poverty, still more, if he offered his life for his friend, would not this be the greatest love he could show? But no love of men on earth could equal the love of God in heaven. No love could equal that love which led God to condescend to our need, and entrust himself to the womb of the Virgin Mary and take

there our humanity.

Mary is like that bush which Moses saw, burning yet never consumed by the fire. God himself was there, till Moses knew and obeyed his word. And to him he made known his name - I am who am, the name of the eternal. The Son of God dwelt in Mary, till the span of time between conception and birth was completed. At conception, he had taken, by his Divinity, full possession of Mary's pure body. At birth he came forth, with his Divinity united for ever to true humanity. But as the sweet perfume of the rose leaves the rose still as lovely, his coming forth was no lessening, but truly a glorification of the virginity of Mary.

To God, to the Angels, to Adam, to the Patriarchs and the Prophets, and to countless servants of God, this Burning Bush, which was Mary, brought joy beyond words - Mary, in the fire of her love, conceiving the Son of God - the Son of God in obedience to the Father, resting in her, to be born, true man, true God, of a Mother and Virgin, a Virgin-Mother. To ourselves also, and to all our race, this must bring great rejoicing and consolation. The Son of God, he who with the Father and the Spirit is the eternal God, has taken our humanity, through the love of the Virgin Mary.

Her love embraces all things that belong to God. We then may claim, and be sure of her intercession. We can say truly than man who deserved eternal death through sin can acquire eternal life only through her. From Mary, the Son of God came in perfect humanity, to fight as man with Satan who had subjugated man. To Mary, men must resort for strength against Satan's temptings. Mary is the gateway by which Christ entered into this world, to open to man the gate of heaven. Pray then, pray then to Mary, that at death she may come to us, to secure for us entry into the eternal kingdom of Christ, her Son.

Chapter 16

Friday - First Reading

We are told that Mary was afraid when the Angel appeared and spoke to her. It was

not fear of any bodily harm to herself, but dismay at the thought that this might be a trick of Satan, to lead her into sin. At the moment when her mind first knew God and his holy will, she had chosen for herself a life of love, and this brought with it a wise and holy fear of God.

It is our delight to call Mary a rose of great beauty. We know that the lovelier and healthier the rose, the stronger and sharper are the thorns which surround it. If Mary is a rose of beauty, she will not be untouched by the sharp thorns or trial and sorrow. Indeed, as the days of her life went by, her sorrows increased in bitterness and pressed more heavily upon her. Her first sorrow was that fear of God which her knowledge of his existence and his will had brought her. It was a sorrow to her that in all she did, she must keep in mind the thought and threat of sin. She directed each thought, word and work to God, but there was always the fear that some defect might creep in to lessen its value in his eyes. How foolish are those who deliberately and without fear throw themselves into all kinds of sin, bringing on themselves suffering and sorrow.

Mary was sinless, and immune from sin. Everything she did pleased God. In every way she was entirely pleasing to him. Yet she never allowed herself to be free from the fear of displeasing him. A greater sorrow still was in her heart, for she knew from the writings of the Prophets that God would come as man, and suffer as man. In her love for God, this caused her great grief, though she did not yet know that she was to be the Mother of God. When that moment arrived, the moment when she knew that the Son of God had become her Son, to take in her womb that human body which was to suffer as the Prophets had foretold - who could measure her joy?

Who could measure her sorrow? Like the rose, she had grown in beauty, but the thorns had grown too, stronger and sharper and more piercing. To Mary it was joy beyond words that her son should come in humility to lead man to heaven, saving him from the penalty which Adam's pride had incurred, the misery of hell. It was great sorrow that the sin of Adam by which man rebelled in both body and soul should require the redeeming death of her Son in such agony of body and soul.

It was great joy to her to conceive her Son in sinlessness and purity. It was great sorrow to her that this so loved son was born to suffer a shameful death, and that she

herself would be there to stand and see. Great joy to know that he would rise from death, and win in return for his Passion an everlasting honour and glory; great sorrow to know that this glory would not be won except by the agony and shame of the Cross. The perfect rose blooms in beauty on its stem, and our delight is not spoiled by the sharp thorns around it.

The sharp thorns of Mary's sorrow piercing her heart could not change her or weaken her will, and in her suffering she accepted whatever God's will should demand of her. We call her a Rose of Jericho, for men say that nowhere can so lovely a rose be found. In her holiness, Mary is more beautiful than all mankind, surpassed only by her Son. To God and the Angels in heaven, her patience and willing endurance brought joy. To all on earth, it must be a joy to meditate on her sufferings so willingly accepted, and on that consolation she had ever in her heart, that all was the will of God.

Chapter 17

Friday - Second Reading

The Prophets foretold many things about Christ. They spoke of the death of the Innocent One and the pains he would suffer to win for men on earth an eternal life with him in heaven. They foretold and set in writing that the Son of God, to save all men, would be bound, scourged, mocked, led out to be crucified, and reviled as he hung on the Cross. They knew that the immortal God would take man's mortal form. They knew that he willed to suffer as man for man.

If the Prophets foresaw these things, would not Mary foresee them, even more clearly? She was the Mother predestined for the Son of God. How could she not have foreseen his sufferings when he took flesh in her womb for this very purpose? The presence of the Holy Spirit would enlighten her, so that she knew better than the Prophets that things which they, through the Holy Spirit, foretold.

At the moment of Christ's birth, as she held him for the first time in her arms, Mary foresaw the fulfilment of prophecy. As she wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, she

foresaw the scourging of his flesh which would make him a leper in the eyes of men. The hands and feet of her Child brought the thought of the nails which would pierce them. The face of her Son, beautiful beyond the beauty of men, was the face men would spit on. His cheeks would feel the blows of their hatred. His ears would hear the curses of their defiance.

His eyes would be blinded by the blood from the wounds in his head. His mouth would taste the bitterness of gall. His arms would be bound, then stretched in agony on the Cross; and his heart, empty at last of blood, would shrink in death. No part of that sacred body would escape the bitterness of that most bitter death. And when all breathing ceased, there would still be the soldier's sharp spear to pierce his lifeless heart. Mary rejoiced as no mother ever rejoiced when her Son, the Son of God, was born, true God, true man, mortal in his humanity, immortal in his Divinity.

But Mary knew sorrow deeper than the sorrows of all mothers, foreseeing the Passion of her Son. Her joy was beyond words, but her joy brought with it a sorrow deeper than all the sorrows of this world.

A mother's joy is complete when her child is born and she sees it healthy and perfectly formed. Her pain and anxiety are over. Mary rejoiced at Christ's birth, but she knew that no moment of her life would be free of sorrow. The Prophets foretold, long before the coming of Christ, his sufferings and death. Simeon foretold, in the presence of Mary and her Child, the piercing of her heart by a sword of sorrow. We know that the mind is more sensitive to pain even than the body.

We know that the soul of Mary, even before the death of her Son, would feel that sword of sorrow more sharply than all women on earth would feel the suffering of childbearing. Each day brought nearer the sufferings of Christ. Each day brought nearer the piercing of Mary's heart. It was the compassion of Christ alone which enabled her, by his presence and his words, to bear day by day such piercing sorrow.

Chapter 18

Friday - Third Reading

You shall seek me and shall not find me'. These words of Christ were the sharp point of the sword of sorrow, entering Mary's heart. That sword pierced deeper at the betrayal of Judas, and at the arrest of Christ, when he willed to be taken by the enemies of justice and truth. Deeper still at each insult offered to Christ, with each suffering inflicted on him. The sorrow of her heart overflowed into all the members of her body. She saw how cruelly Christ was struck, and more cruelly beaten and scourged. She heard the sentence of death passed by the Jews. She heard the cries of the people - Crucify him, away with him.

She saw him led out, bound as a criminal, to a traitor's death. She saw him struggling to carry his Cross, dragged forward and whipped as he stumbled, led like some wild beast rather than a lamb to the slaughter. As Isaias had foretold, he went meekly to his death; like the lamb that is led to the slaughter house, like the sheep that is dumb before its shearers.

Christ was patient in his sufferings. Mary endured patiently the sorrow of his sufferings. She followed him, even to the place of death. She saw the wounds of his scourging, the crown of thorns, his cheeks disfigured with blows, his face covered with blood, and she wept in sorrow.

She saw him stretched on the Cross, and heard the blows of the hammer as the nails pierced his hands and feet. So great was her suffering and sorrow that her strength almost failed her as she stood by and watched. She saw the vinegar and gall offered for his lips to taste. and her own lips could not move in prayer. She heard his cry - My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?, and saw his head fall forward and his body become rigid as he breathed forth his spirit. She stood and saw how he died. Then truly was her heart quite pierced by the sword of sorrow. It was the strength God gave that alone saved her from dying in such sorrow. To see her Son, stripped and bleeding, dying, pierced by a lance, mocked by those who stood by, jeered at by soldiers, deserted by all but a few of his chosen ones, abandoned by so many whom he had won to justice and truth, to see this most bitter death - could there be sorrow so deep as her?

We read that once, when the Ark of God fell into the hands of enemies, the wife of one of God's priests died for sorrow. How much greater was the sorrow of Mary, for she

saw the body of her Son, which the Ark prefigured, nailed to the wood of the Cross. Her love for her Son was love for the Son of God, greater than the loves of all men. If the loss of the Ark could cause sorrow and death, the death of Christ would have brought Mary to death but for God's gift to support so grievous a sorrow. By his death, Christ opened the gateway to heaven, and won for his own their entry into joy. Mary looked up from the depths of her sorrow, as one coming back from the gates of death.

Her faith never faltered that Christ would rise again, and in this faith she could comfort many whose faith had failed. They took him down from the Cross, and wrapped him in fine linen with spices, and laid him in the tomb. Then all left. Few still had faith that he would rise. Little by little, the sorrows of Mary's heart lightened, and she felt the first sweetness of consolation. The sufferings of her Son were at an end. She knew that on the third day he would rise, would rise with his humanity united again to his Divinity, would rise to everlasting honour and glory, to suffer, to die no more.

Chapter 19

Saturday - First Reading

We read that the Queen of Sheba made the long journey from her own lands in the south to visit Solomon the King. Her journey was not wasted, for she found great delight in his words. No gifts were too precious for her to give, no praise too high, and she departed in admiration of such great wisdom. The Virgin Mary spent long hours in thought, considering the course of events in this world, and all the things that this world holds dear. Nothing delighted or attracted her, except the wisdom she had learned from God. This was her desire and her search, and she did not rest till she had found it in Christ.

In the Son of God she found wisdom infinitely greater than Solomon's. The Queen of Sheba was overcome with wonder as she contemplated the wisdom of Solomon. Mary was overcome with sorrow as she pondered the loving wisdom of Christ, who saw salvation in suffering, and willed to save man from subjection to Satan by his sufferings and cross. When at last the sufferings of Christ were over, Mary looked up from the

depths of her sorrow, ever offering herself and her will to God for his glory, gifts most precious to him. Gifts too of another kind, for many were led to the truth of God by her faith.

No words or works of men were so powerful to bring men to God. Many lost faith when they saw Christ die. She alone withstood the unbelief of men, seeing in Christ her Son the Son of God, over whose Godhead death could have no dominion.

When the third day came, it brought bewilderment and anxiety to the Disciples. The women going to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus sought him and could not find him. The Apostles were gathered together in their fear, guarding the doors. Then, surely, though we are not told of this in the Gospels, Mary spoke of the resurrection of her Son, that he had truly risen from death, that he was alive again in all his humanity, no more subject to death, risen to an eternal glory. We read that Mary Magdalen and the Apostles were first to see the risen Christ. But we may believe that Mary his Mother knew of his rising before all others, and that she was the first to see him.

It was Mary in her lowliness who first gave praise and adoration to the risen Christ. When Christ ascended to the glory of his kingdom, the Virgin Mary remained on earth. We cannot know what her presence meant to so many. Those who loved God were strengthened in their love; those who had turned from him were brought back to his love. The Apostles looked to her for guidance and counsel. The Martyrs found in her, courage to face suffering and death. The Confessors of the Faith were strengthened in their believing. Virgins were drawn to her purity. Widows were consoled by her sorrows. Husbands and wives found in her a pattern of perfection. All who heard and obeyed the word of God found in Mary great comfort and help.

Whenever the Apostles came to her, she was able to teach them about Christ, and help them to understand. The Martyrs rejoiced to suffer for Christ, for he had suffered for all. They remembered the long years of sorrow borne so patiently by Mary his Mother, and they bore their martyrdom even more readily. The Confessors, meditating on Mary, learnt many things about the truths of the Faith. From her example, they learnt too the wise use of earthly things, food, drink and sleep, work and rest.

And how to order their lives in all things to the honour and glory of God. Virgins learnt from Mary's example true chastity in virtue. They learnt too the wise use of their time, how to avoid vanity and foolish talk, and see all things in the light of true holiness. Widows learnt from her, consolation in sorrow, strength against temptation, and humble submission to God's will. With a mother's love, Mary could never have wished for the death of her Son, still less for the death of the Son of God. Yet she willed in all things the will of God. She chose for God's sake the humble acceptance of suffering and sorrow.

Husbands and wives learnt from Mary true love for each other, in body and in soul, and the union of their wills, as of their flesh, in all that the will of God demanded. They learnt how she had united herself for ever with God by faith, and never in any way shown resistance to his divine will.

Chapter 20

Saturday - Second Reading

We read in the Gospels these words of Christ - the measure you give shall be the measure you receive. No one on earth can know the glory of Mary, the Mother of God. She who on earth gave so much receives now in heaven a measure of glory beyond the whole of creation. When it pleased Christ to call her from this earth, there awaited her all whom her holiness had helped. God himself, whose love had been made known only through her, awaited her coming to adorn her with a glory surpassed only by his own. She was raised to the highest place in heaven, to be Queen, not only of his earthly creation, but Queen over the Angels for ever.

The Angels rejoiced in this Queen, made for ever obedient to her by their love for her. Those Angels too who had fallen from God were made subject to her; not temptation of theirs could withstand her; no one calling with love for her help would be left unprotected; the tempters would choose rather an increase of their misery than the opposing of her power. Of all creatures the most humble, Mary is now the most glorious, the most perfect in beauty, and nearest to God himself. As gold surpassed all other metals, Angels and men surpass all the creatures of God. Gold needs the fire and the

work of the goldsmith before it can be fashioned into a work of beauty.

Mary, more perfect than all Angels and men, was fashioned by her own will, in the fire of the Holy Spirit, into a thing of the highest beauty. A work of art wrought in gold needs the light to be seen; in the light of the sun, it will be seen in all its perfection. All that the Virgin Mary accomplished, and the beauty of her soul, could not be seen while she was living on earth. Lit by the light of God himself in heaven, she appeared in the fulness of beauty. All heaven gave praise to her, and to that beauty of soul with which her will had adorned her, a beauty beyond the beauty of all creation, near even to God's own perfection. Mary is enthroned for ever, on that throne placed near to the throne of God.

No one is nearer than she to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father is in the Son, the Son is in the Father, the Holy Spirit is in the Father and the Son. The Son, when he became man in the Virgin's womb, was not thereby divided from the Father and the Holy Spirit. He took our humanity, not losing his Divinity, as Mary acquired Motherhood without loss to her Virginitly. God gave to Mary, therefore, a place near to himself, so that she is ever with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and ever associated with this Blessed Trinity in all things.

Who could measure the joy in heaven when God raised Mary from this earth? Who will measure our joy when, seeing God face to face, we see too the glory of Mary? The Angels rejoicing in Mary glorify God. The death of Christ has filled again the places made vacant in heaven. The raising of Mary to heaven has increased even the blessedness of heaven. To Adam and Eve, to the Patriarchs and Prophets, to all who died before Christ and were released by his death, to all who have died since Christ's death and been taken to heaven, Mary's entry into heaven is an everlasting joy and delight.

They praise God for her glory, for the honour he has bestowed on her as the one who bore in holiness Christ, their Redeemer and Lord. We may picture the Apostles and many holy ones around Mary as her last hour approached. We know the reverence and honour they paid to her at the moment of her death. We believe that she died, as all others die. We believe that her Son, the Son of God, took her to himself, and raised her, body and soul, to live for ever in heaven.

Chapter 21

Saturday - Third Reading

The Son of God, the Son of Mary, Christ who is Truth itself, has said to us - return not evil for evil, but return good for evil. Will not he himself therefore, for he is God, return good for good, and give great reward even for little? He promises in the Gospel that for every good work he will repay a hundredfold. What then will be Mary's reward? Her life was a life of countless good works, a life entirely pleasing to God, a life ever free from defect and unmarred by sin. In all things she will chose, and every member of her body responded gladly to that command. The justice of God has willed that we must rise, body and soul, at the last day, to be repaid for our works.

Body and soul we shall stand before God, for in all things, body and soul act as one. Christ's sinless body rose from the dead, and is now and for ever united in glory with his Divinity. The sinless body of Mary, together with her soul, was taken up by God after her death into heaven, and she is honoured there, body and soul, for ever. No mind of ours can comprehend the perfection and glory which is Christ's as reward for his sufferings. No mind of ours can comprehend the glory which is Mary's, in body and soul, for her perfect obedience to God.

The holiness of Mary, those virtues adorning her soul, glorified God her Creator, and she is crowned now in heaven with his reward for those virtues.

The good works of Mary, accomplished by her perfect subjection of body to soul, proclaim for ever her praise. She has done all things as God willed, and omitted nothing that God desired, to win an eternal heavenly glory of both body and soul. No soul, except Christ's, was so filled with holiness and merit as the pure soul of Mary. No body, except the sacred body of her Son, was so worthy to be glorified for its purity and perfection as the pure body of Mary. The justice of God flashed forth when he drove Adam from the garden of Paradise for tasting the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge. The mercy of God entered sweetly into this world when the Virgin Mary was born, whom we may fittingly name the tree of life.

The justice of God drove out Adam and Eve into instant exile and misery, for their disobeying. The mercy of God gently invites and attracts to the glory of heaven, all who seek life in obeying. Mary, the tree of life, grew up in this world, to the joy of the Angels in heaven. They longed for the fruit of this tree, which was Christ, and they rejoiced, as they rejoiced in their own eternal happiness, that the great love of God would be made known among men, and their own heavenly ranks increased in number.

The Angel Gabriel rejoiced to be sent with God's message to Mary, and his greeting was spoken with great love for her. When Mary, in the perfection of her holiness and humility, assented, he rejoiced still more that the desire of all the Angels was soon to be fulfilled. We believe and we know, that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. We and all our race should ever think of her, and pray to her. In the trials and sorrows of our days, in the sinfulness of our hearts, in the bitterness of life, overshadowed by the certain approach of death. we should look to her, and draw near to her with true sorrow for sin.

We have called her the tree of life. To taste the fruit of the tree, we must first part its branches, and stretch out our hands through the leaves. The tree of life is Mary, the sweet fruit of this tree, Christ her Son. We reach through the branches to pluck the fruit when we greet Mary, as Gabriel did, with great love. She offers us her sweet fruit to taste when she sees our hearts no longer in sin, but willing in all things the will of God. Her intercession and prayer help us to receive the most holy Body of Christ, consecrated for us by the hands of men. This is the Food of true Life, the bread of Angels, and the nourishment of sinful men.

We, though we are sinful and sinning - we are the desire of Christ. His own blood has redeemed us, and he has destined us for heaven, to increase there the numbers of his loved ones. With wise thought, therefore, and with care, with all reverence and love, take him and eat. Let Christ fulfil in you this desire of his heart.

May the wondrous intercession of the Virgin whose name is Mary win for you this joy from her Son, Jesus Christ, who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, God for ever. Amen.

Book 12 "Four Prayers"

Proem

to the prayers written below, which were divinely revealed to the blessed Bridget of the kingdom of Sweden.

Since blessed Bridget always petitioned and asked God to pour into her some acceptable manner of praying, it happened one day, while she was praying, that in a wonderful manner she was lifted up in spirit by an elevation of mind. And then were poured into her from God certain most beautiful prayers concerning the life and passion and praise of Christ and concerning the life, compassion, and praise of the most Blessed Virgin Mary.

Afterward she so kept them in memory that every day she would read them devoutly. Wherefore the Blessed Virgin Mary, on a later occasion appearing to her at prayer, said: "I merited for you those prayers. Therefore, when you read them devoutly, you shall be visited with the consolation of my Son."

In this prayer revealed by God to blessed Bridget, the glorious Virgin Mary is devoutly and beautifully praised for her holy conception and infancy, for all her virtuous acts and labors, for the great sorrows of her whole life, for her most holy death and assumption, etc.

Prayer 1

Blessed and revered may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary, most holy Mother of God. You are, in truth, his best creation; and no one has ever loved him so intimately as you, O glorious Lady. Glory be to you, my Lady, O Virgin Mary, Mother of God. That same angel by whom Christ was announced to you announced you yourself to your own father and

mother; and of their honest wedlock you were conceived and begotten.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. In your most holy infancy, immediately after your weaning, you were borne by your parents to the temple of God and were, with other virgins, entrusted to the keeping of the devout high priest.

Praise be to you, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. When you reached that age at which you understood that God was your Creator, you forthwith began to love him intimately above all things. Then too you most discreetly ordered your time, both day and night, by means of various offices and exercises in honor of God. Your sleep, too, and the food for your glorious body were so temperately regulated by you that you were always fit for God's service.

Infinite glory be to you, my Lady, O Virgin Mary, who humbly vowed your virginity to God himself and therefore had no concern about who would betroth you, for you knew that he to whom you had first given your faith was more mighty and more good than all others combined.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. You were alone and ablaze with ardent love for God and - all your mind and all the strength of your powers being lifted up - you were, with ardor and diligence, contemplating the most high God to whom you had offered your virginity, when the angel was sent to you from God and, in greeting you, announced to you God's will. To him you replied most humbly, professing yourself God's handmaid; and then and there the Holy Spirit wonderfully filled you with all power and virtue. To you, God the Father sent his coeternal and coequal Son, who came into you then and, of your flesh and blood, took for himself a human body. Thus, at that blessed hour, the Son of God became, in you, your son, alive in his every limb and without loss of his divine majesty.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. Of your own blessed body, the body of Christ had now been created; and in your womb, you felt his body ever growing and moving even to the time of his glorious nativity. Before anyone else, you yourself touched him with your holy hands; you wrapped him in cloths; and, in accord with the prophet's oracle, you laid him in a manger. With exultant joy, in motherly fashion, you used the

most sacred milk of your breasts to nurture him.

Glory be to you, O my Lady, O Virgin Mary. While still dwelling in a contemptible house, i.e., the stable, you saw mighty kings coming to your Son from afar and humbly offering to him, with the greatest reverence, their royal guest-gifts. Afterward, with your own precious hands, you presented him in the temple; and, in your blessed heart, you diligently preserved all that you heard from him or saw during his infancy.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. With your most holy offspring, you fled into Egypt; and afterward, in joy, you bore him back to Nazareth. During his physical growth, you saw him, your Son, humble and obedient to yourself and to Joseph. Blessed may you be, O Lady Virgin Mary. You saw your Son preaching, doing miracles, and choosing the apostles, who, being enlightened by his examples, his miracles, and his teachings, became witnesses of truth that your Jesus is also truly the Son of God: publishing to all nations that it was he who, through himself, had fulfilled the writings of the prophets when on behalf of the human race he had patiently endured a most hard death.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary, who knew beforehand that your Son must be made captive. Later your blessed eyes with sorrow saw him bound and scourged and crowned with thorns and fixed naked to the cross with nails. You saw many despising him and calling him a traitor.

Honor be to you, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. In sorrow, you gazed at your Son as he spoke to you from the cross; and with your blessed ears, you dolefully heard him, in the agony of death, crying to the Father and commending his own soul into his hands.

Praise be to you, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. With bitter sorrow, you saw your Son hanging on the cross: from the top of his head to the soles of his feet, all black and blue and marked with the red of his own blood, and so cruelly dead. You also gazed at the bitter sight of the holes - in his feet, in his hands, and even in his glorious side. You gazed at his skin, all lacerated without any mercy.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. With tears in your eyes, you saw your

Son taken down, wrapped in cloths, buried in a monument, and there guarded by soldiers.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. To the grave intensification of your heart's deep sorrow, you parted from the sepulchre of your Son and, all full of grief, were brought by his friends to the house of John. But there, at once, you felt a relief of your great sorrow because you most surely foreknew that your Son would quickly rise.

Rejoice, my most worthy Lady, O Virgin Mary, for in the same instant that your Son arose from death he willed to make this same fact known to you, his most Blessed Mother. Then and there he appeared to you by himself, and later he showed to other persons that he was the one who had been raised from death after having endured death in his own living body.

Rejoice therefore, my most worthy Lady, O Virgin Mary. When death had been conquered and death's instigator had been overthrown, and heaven's entry had been opened wide through your Son, you saw him rising and triumphant with the crown of victory. And on the fortieth day after his resurrection, you saw him, in the sight of many, ascend with honor to his kingdom in heaven as himself a king accompanied by angels.

Exult, my most worthy Lady, O Virgin Mary. You merited to see how, after his ascension, your Son suddenly transmitted to his apostles and disciples the Holy Spirit with which he had previously filled you to the full. By increasing the fervor of their charity and the rightness of their Catholic belief, he wonderfully enlightened their hearts.

Rejoice still more, my Lady, O Virgin Mary; and at your joy, let all the world rejoice. For many years after his ascension your Son permitted you to remain in this world for the consolation of his friends and for the strengthening of the faith, for the relief of the poor and for the sound counseling of the apostles. Then, through your prudent words, your seemly behavior, and your virtuous deeds, your Son converted countless Jews and infidel pagans to the Catholic faith; and by wondrously illuminating them, he enlightened them to confess that you are a virgin-mother and that he, your Son, is God with a true human nature.

Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. In your ardent charity and maternal

love, you unceasingly desired at every moment to come to your so well-loved Son now sitting in heaven. While dwelling in this world and sighing after the things of heaven, you humbly conformed to the will of God; wherefore, by the dictates of divine justice, you ineffably increased your eternal glory. To you, O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, be eternal honor and glory. When it pleased God to rescue you from the exile of this world and to honor your soul in his kingdom forever, he then deigned to announce this to you through his angel; and he willed that your venerable body, when dead, be entombed by his apostles in a sepulchre with all reverence.

Be glad, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. For in that most light death of yours, your soul was embraced by the power of God; and he, as a watchful father, protected it from all adversity. Then it was that God the Father subjected to your power all things created. With honor, God the Son placed you, his most worthy Mother, beside himself on a most lofty seat. And the Holy Spirit, in bringing you to his glorious kingdom as a virgin betrothed to himself, did wonderfully exalt you.

Rejoice eternally, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. For some days after your death, your body lay entombed in its sepulchre until, with honor and through the power of God, it stood linked anew to your soul. Exult to the full, O Mother of God, O glorious Lady, O Virgin Mary. You merited to see your body revived after your death and assumed with your soul into heaven amidst honor from the angels. You acknowledged that your glorious Son was God with a human nature; and with exultant joy, you saw that he is the most just judge of all and the rewarder of good works.

Rejoice again, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. For your body's most holy flesh knows that it now exists in heaven as both virgin and mother. It sees itself in no way stained by any mortal or venial crime. No, it knows that it did all the works of virtue with such charity that God, in justice, had to revere it with highest honor. Your flesh then understood that the more ardently that anyone loves God in this world, the nearer to himself will God place that person in heaven. For it was manifestly clear to the whole court of heaven that no angel and no human loved God with such charity as you did; and therefore it was right and just that with honor God himself placed you, body and soul, on the highest seat of glory.

Blessed may you be, O my Lady, O Virgin Mary. Every faithful creature praises the Holy Trinity for you because you are the Trinity's most worthy creature. For wretched souls you obtain prompt pardon, and for all sinners you stand forth as a most faithful advocate and proxy. Praised therefore be God, the most high Emperor and Lord, who created you for such great honor that you yourself became both Empress and Lady everlastingly in the kingdom of heaven, forever to reign with him unto ages of ages. Amen.

This prayer was revealed by God to blessed Bridget. In it, by means of a painstakingly detailed narrative, Christ is beautifully and devoutly praised for his glorious incarnation; for all the actions, labors, and sorrows of his life and of his holy death; for his ascension into heaven; for the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples; etc.

Prayer 2

Blessed may you be, my Lord, my God, and my Love most beloved of my soul: O you who are one God in three Persons. Glory and praise be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. You were sent by the Father into the body of a virgin; and yet you ever remain with the Father in heaven, while the Father, in his divinity, inseparably remained with you in your human nature in this world.

Honor and glory be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. After having been conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, you physically grew in the Virgin's womb; and in it you humbly dwelt until the time of your birth. After your delightful nativity, you deigned to be touched by the most clean hands of your Mother, to be wrapped in cloths, and to be laid in a manger.

Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. You willed that your immaculate flesh be circumcised and that you be called Jesus. You willed to be offered by your Mother in the temple. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. You had yourself baptized in the Jordan by your servant John. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. With your blessed mouth, you preached to human beings the words of life; and in the sight, through

yourself, within your actual presence, you worked many miracles. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. By fulfilling the writings of the prophets, you manifested to the world in a rational way that you are the true God.

Blessing and glory be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. For forty days, you wonderfully fasted in the desert. You permitted yourself to be tempted by your enemy, the devil, whom - when it so pleased you - you drove from yourself with a single word. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. You foretold your death ahead of time. At the last supper, of material bread you wonderfully consecrated your precious Body and charitably bestowed it on your apostles in memory of your most worthy passion. By washing their feet with your own precious and holy hands, you humbly showed your very great humility.

Honor be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. In fear of suffering and death, you gave forth from your innocent body blood in place of sweat. Nonetheless, you accomplished for us the redemption that you had willed to perform; and thus you manifestly showed the charity that you had toward the human race.

Glory be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. Sold by your disciple and bought by the Jews, you were made a captive for our sake. Solely by your word, you cast your enemies to the earth; and then of your own will you gave yourself over as a captive to their unclean and grasping hands.

Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. You were led to Caiaphas, and you, who are the Judge of all, humbly permitted yourself to be given over to the judgment of Pilate. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. From Pilate the judge, you were sent to Herod; and you permitted yourself to be mocked and scorned by him; and you consented again to be remitted to that same Pilate as judge.

Glory be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ, for the derision that you endured while you stood invested with purple and crowned with the sharpest thorns. With great patience you endured the spitting on your glorious face, the veiling of your eyes, and, on your cheek and neck, the grave and cutting blows of the deadly hands of the wicked.

Praise be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. Like an innocent lamb, you most patiently permitted yourself to be tied to the column and monstrously scourged; to be led, all bloody, to Pilate's judgment and there be gazed at.

Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. Most patiently, in Pilate's presence, with your own blessed ears you willed to hear abuse and lies hurled at you and the voices of the people asking that the guilty robber be acquitted and that you, the innocent, be condemned.

Honor be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. With your glorious body covered in gore, the judgment on you was the death of the cross. The cross you bore in pain on your sacred shoulders; and, amidst frenzy, you were led to the place of your passion. Despoiled of your garments, thus you willed to be fixed to the wood of the cross.

Glory unmeasured be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. For us you humbly endured that the Jews stretched out your venerable hands and feet with rope, that they cruelly fixed them with iron nails to the wood of the cross, that they called you a traitor, that in manifold ways they derided you with unspeakable words while above you was inscribed that title of confusion.

Eternal praise and thanksgiving be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. With what great meekness you suffered for us such cruel sorrows! On the cross your blessed body was emptied of all its strength; your kindly eyes grew dark; as your blood decreased, a pallor covered all your comely face; your blessed tongue grew swollen, hot, and dry; your mouth dripped from the bitter drink; your hair and beard were filled with blood from the wounds of your most holy head; the bones of your hands, of your feet, and of all your precious body were dislocated from their sockets to your great and intense grief; the veins and nerves of all your blessed body were cruelly broken; you were so monstrously scourged and so injured with painful wounds that your most innocent flesh and skin were all intolerably lacerated. Thus afflicted and aggrieved, you, O my most sweet Lord, stood on the cross, and, with patience and humility, awaited in extreme pain the hour of your death.

Perpetual honor be to you, Lord Jesus Christ. Placed in this your anguish, with your

kind and charitable eyes you humbly looked upon your most worthy Mother, who never sinned nor ever gave to the slightest sin any consent. While consoling her who was your own, you committed her to the faithful keeping of your disciple.

Eternal blessing be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. In the agony of death, you gave to all sinners the hope of forgiveness when, to the robber who had turned to you, you mercifully promised the glory of paradise. Eternal praise be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ, for each and every hour that you endured such great bitterness and anguish on the cross for us sinners. For the most acute pains proceeding from your wounds direly penetrated your happy soul and cruelly passed through your most sacred heart until your heart cracked and you happily sent forth your spirit, and, with bowed head, humbly commended it into the hands of God your Father. Then, having died in the body, you remained there all cold.

Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. By your precious blood and by your most sacred death, you redeemed souls and mercifully led them back from exile to eternal life. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. You hung dead on the wood of the cross, and straightway you mightily liberated your friends from the prison of hell. Blessed may you be, my Lord Jesus Christ. For our salvation, you permitted your side and your heart to be perforated with a lance, and from that same side you sent forth, in a rich flow, water and your precious blood in order to redeem us. Before the judge's leave had been given, you willed that your most sacred body not be taken down from the cross.

Glory be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. You willed that your blessed body be taken down from the cross by your friends and that it be laid in the hands of your most unhappy Mother. You permitted that it be wrapped in cloths by her and be buried in a monument and that it be guarded there by soldiers.

Sempiternal honor be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ. On the third day, you rose from the dead, and you showed yourself alive to such others as it so pleased you. After forty days, while many watched, you ascended to the heavens; and there, in honor, you placed your friends whom you had delivered from Tartarus.

Jubilation and praise eternal be to you, Lord Jesus Christ. You sent the Holy Spirit

to the hearts of your disciples; and in their spirits, you immeasurably increased divine love.

Blessed may you be, and praiseworthy and glorious unto the ages, my Lord Jesus. You sit upon the throne in your kingdom of heaven, in the glory of your divinity, corporeally alive, with all your most holy limbs that you took from the flesh of the Virgin. Even thus shall you come on the day of judgment to judge the souls of all the living and the dead: you, who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit unto ages of ages. Amen.

In this prayer, revealed by God to blessed Bridget, praise is given in a beautiful way to all the members of the most holy body of our Lord Jesus Christ and to his body's most virtuous actions.

Prayer 3

My Lord Jesus Christ, although I know well that your blessed body is unceasingly praised and glorified by the harmonious jubilee of the citizens of heaven above, and yet, because I am bound by a debt to render to you infinite thanksgiving, therefore I, although a person unwise and unworthy, desire nevertheless with all my heart and with all my mouth to offer to all the members of your precious body such thanks as I can and praise and honor.

My Lord Jesus Christ, you are truly the High Priest and Pontiff who first and before all others wondrously consecrated of material bread your true and blessed Body that you might satisfy us with the bread of angels. Therefore, may your glorious priestly seat at the right hand of God your Father, in your divinity, be happy and blessed unto eternity. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, you truly are the head of all men and angels, the worthy King of kings and Lord of lords; and you do all your works out of true and ineffable charity. You humbly permitted your blessed head to be crowned with a crown of thorns. Blessed,

therefore, be your head and hair; and may they be gloriously adorned with an imperial diadem. May heaven and earth and sea and all things created be subject and obedient to your empire and your power unto eternity. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, your splendid forehead never turned away from right justice and truth. Blessed, therefore, be that same forehead of yours, and, with royal and triumphant glory, may it be perpetually praised by all creatures together. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, with your bright eyes of pity you look kindly upon all who with true charity ask of you grace and mercy. Blessed, therefore, be your eyes, your eyelids, and your glorious eyebrows; and may all your fair and lovely sight be unceasingly glorified by the whole heavenly army of citizens on high. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, with your kindly ears you gladly hear and hearken to all who humbly address you. Blessed, therefore, be those ears of yours; and may they be eternally filled with all honor. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, your most sweet and blessed nostrils did not shrink from the stench of the putrid cadaver of the dead Lazarus or even from the horrid smell that spiritually proceeded from the traitor Judas when he kissed you. Blessed, therefore, be your precious nostrils; and may all expend on them the odor of sweetness and praise forever. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, for our bodily and spiritual health and salvation and for our instruction in faith, you, with your own blessed mouth and lips, very often preached the words of life and of doctrine. Blessed, therefore, be your venerable mouth and your lips for every word that proceeded from them. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, with your most clean teeth, you most moderately chewed physical food for the sustenance of your blessed body. Blessed, therefore, and honored be your teeth by all your creatures. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, your tongue never moved to speak and never kept silence, except with justice and utility and to the extent that such action had been foreordained in

your divinity. Blessed, therefore, be that same tongue of yours. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, in accordance with your age, you fittingly wore a fine beard on your handsome face. May your venerable beard, therefore, be everlastingly revered and adored. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be your throat, your stomach, and your viscera; and may all your sacred inwards be perpetually honored for the fact that they decently nourished your precious body in due order and perfectly sustained your bodily life for the redemption of souls and to the joy of the angels. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, you are worthily called a leader by all because you bore on your holy shoulders and neck the burdensome bulk of the cross before you mightily shattered the gates of hell and led the souls of the elect back to heaven. Therefore, to your blessed neck and shoulders that so endured, be honor and glory eternally without end. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, your blessed, royal, and magnificent heart could never, by torments or terrors or blandishments, be swayed from the defense of your kingdom of truth and justice. You did not spare your most worthy blood in any way; but rather, with your magnificent heart, you faithfully strove for justice and the law and intrepidly preached to your friends and to your enemies the law's precepts and the counsels of perfection. By dying in battle to defend these things, you - and your holy followers with you - have obtained the victory. Therefore, it is right that your unconquered heart be ever magnified in heaven and on earth and be unceasingly praised with triumphal honor by all creatures and soldiers. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, the strenuous soldiers and faithful servants of this world gladly expose their own lives to death in war in order that their lords may enjoy safety of life; but you, O my good Lord, quickly hastened to the death of the cross in order that your servants might not miserably perish. Wherefore it is just that your glorious and intrepid breast be eternally adored by all your servants, whom you have thus delivered, and by all others and that it be humbly praised even by the angelic choirs. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, with your venerable hands and arms you surpassed the strength of Samson in a wonderful way as you patiently endured that they be fixed to the wood of the cross and thus, with violence, snatched your friends from hell. Therefore to these same limbs of yours, from all whom you have redeemed, may there be shown unceasing reverence, eternal praise, and everlasting glory. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, may your precious ribs and your back be blessed and honored unto eternity by all human beings who sweat over labors spiritual and earthly. For from your infancy even to your death, you labored unceasingly for our redemption; and with great pain and burdensomeness, you bore our sins on your back. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, supreme purity and true cleanness, may your most innocent loins be blessed and praised above all the angels' cleanness which is in heaven and above the purity of all who have preserved their chastity and virginity in the world; for the chastity and virginity of them all cannot be compared to your cleanness and your purity. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, may your knees, with their hams and your shins, be revered and humbly honored by all creatures in heaven and on earth above all who show reverence and honor by kneeling in the presence of their lords and masters; for you, the Lord of all, in all humility knelt before your own disciples. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, good Teacher, may your most blessed feet be blessed and perennially adored; for, in this world, to your great sorrow, you walked with unshod feet along the harsher way that you taught to others, and at the end, for our sake, you permitted them to be fixed with hard nails to the cross - you who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit through all ages of ages. Amen.

In this prayer, which was divinely revealed to blessed Bridget, most devout and beautiful praise is given to all the members of the glorious body of the Virgin Mary and to all her body's virtuous actions.

Prayer 4

O my Lady, my life, O Queen of heaven, O Mother of God, although I am certain that your glorious body is unceasingly praised in heaven with melodious jubilee by all the heavenly court, still I, although an unworthy person, desire with all my heart to render here on earth such praise and thanks as I can to all your precious limbs.

Therefore, O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, praised be your hair with all its strands, now decorated with a diadem of glory; for your hair is brighter than the radiance of the sun. Just as the hairs of the head cannot be computed, even so are your virtues innumerable.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, may your forehead and your most honest face be together praised above the whiteness of the moon, for none of the faithful in this dark world ever looked to you without feeling some spiritual consolation poured into himself at the sight of you. Blessed may you be, my Lady, O Virgin Mary. Your eyebrows and your eyelids exceed in the brightness of their splendor the rays of the sun. Blessed be your most chaste eyes, O my Lady, O Virgin Mary. They coveted none of the transitory things that they saw in this world. As often as you lifted up your eyes, their appearance excelled the splendor of the stars in the sight of the whole heavenly court.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, may both your most blessed cheeks be praised above the beauty of the dawn, which so beautifully rises with its colors white and red. Even thus, while you were in the world, did your lovely cheeks shine with bright splendor in the sight of God and the angels because you never displayed them for worldly pomp or vanity.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, revered and honored be your most honest ears above all the forces of the sea and above the motion of all the waters; for your ears ever manfully militated against all the unclean flux of worldly hearing. O Virgin Mary, my Mistress, may your most sweet nose glory! By the power of the Holy Spirit, it never drew or sent forth a breath without all your thought being ever in the presence of the most High. Although at times you slept, you never turned your will from him. Therefore, to that same nose of yours and to your most blessed nostrils be ever given an odor of sweetness,

praise, and honor above the mingled odor of all the spices and all the herbs that habitually send forth a delightful fragrance.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, praised be your tongue - so pleasing to God and to the angels - above all fruitful trees. Every word that your tongue uttered never harmed any person but always came forth to someone's advantage. Your tongue was very prudent, and all found it sweeter to hear than the sweetest fruit is sweet to taste. O my Queen and my Lady, O Virgin Mary, may your blessed mouth and your lips be praised above the loveliness of roses and all other flowers and especially for that your blessed and most humble word in which, with this same precious mouth of yours, you responded to God's angel when through you God willed to fulfill in the world his will, which he had foretold through the prophets. By virtue of that word, you diminished the power of the demons in hell and honorably restored the choirs of angels in heaven.

O Virgin Mary, my Lady and my consolation, may your neck, your shoulders, and your back be perpetually honored above the charm of all lilies, for you never bent these members of yours and never straightened them again, except for some useful purpose or for the honor of God. Just as the lily moves and bends at the blowing of the winds, so all your members moved at the infusion of the Holy Spirit. O my Lady, my strength and my sweetness, may your most holy arms, your hands, and your fingers be blessed and eternally honored above all precious gems, which are comparable to your virtuous works. Just as your virtuous works allured the Son of God to you, even so did your arms and hands sweetly bind him in a maternal embrace of love.

O my Lady and my enlightenment, blessed be your most sacred breasts above all the sweetest springs of healing waters. Just as their welling water supplies solace and refreshment for the thirsty, your sacred breasts, in giving milk to the Son of God, supplied us in our need with medicine and consolation.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, blessed be your most precious bosom above the purest gold. When you stood all sorrowful beneath the cross of your Son, then - at the sound of the hammers - you felt your glorious bosom most sharply constricted as if in a hard press. Although you heartily loved your Son, you nevertheless preferred him to endure that most bitter punishment in order that he might die for the redemption of souls, rather

than that he avoid this death to their loss. Thus too did you stand most firm in the virtue of constancy when in every adversity you totally conformed yourself to the divine will.

O my Lady, O joy of my heart, O Virgin Mary, may your most venerable heart be glorified and revered. It was so afire for the honor of God - more so than all other creatures of heaven and earth - that the flame of its charity ascended the heights of heaven to God the Father, and, because of this, God's Son descended from the Father into your glorious womb with the fervor of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the Son was not separated from the Father even though, in accordance with the Father's foreordainment, he was most honestly made human in your virginal womb.

O my Lady, most fertile and most virginal Virgin Mary, blessed be your most blessed womb above all fruitfully sprouting fields. Just as the seed that has fallen upon good ground brings forth for its owner fruit a hundredfold, even so your womb, a virgin-womb and yet most fertile, brought forth for God the Father blessed fruit, more than a thousandfold. Just as the lord of a field glories in its fertile abundance of fruit and just as the little birds and the animals feed in it with delight, even so did the blessed and fertile fruit of the little field of your womb cause high honor for God in heaven, rejoicing for the angels, and, for humans on earth, a lavish flow of sustenance and life.

O my Lady, Virgin most prudent, may your most sacred feet be eternally praised above all roots that unceasingly bear fruit. May your feet be thus blessed because they carried the glorious Son of God enclosed in your body as its sweetest fruit while your body itself was inviolate and your virginity remained uninjured forever. Oh with what honesty your most sacred feet went their way! Truly, at each of their prints, the King of heaven stood consoled and all the court of heaven rejoiced and was very glad.

O my Lady, O Virgin Mary, O Mother of all, may God the Father, together with the Son and the Holy Spirit, be eternally praised in his incomprehensible majesty for that most sacred cell of your whole body in which God's Son so sweetly rested - he whom the whole army of angels praises in heaven and whom the whole Church reverently adores on earth.

And you, my Lord, my King, and my God, to you be perpetual honor, perennial

praise, blessing, and glory, and infinite thanksgiving. For you created this Virgin so worthy and so honest; and you chose her for yourself as your Mother for the sake of all who in any way have been consoled in heaven and on earth and for the sake of those in purgatory who have had, through her, assistance and solace. You live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

The Life of Saint Bridget by Prior Peter and Master Peter

One should know that this most humble handmaid of God never presumed to call herself or to have herself called the bride of Christ, or his channel, because of vainglory or transitory honor or any temporal advantage, but at the instruction of Christ and of blessed Mary, his most worthy Mother, who both called her so. And it was not from presumption, but out of humble obedience to them, that she thus called herself in her writings.

Of what parents Christ's bride, Lady Bridget, was born.

As we read about blessed John the Baptist and about Saint Nicholas, the merits of parents many times cooperate to produce in their children an even greater grace, which perseveres to the end. So Lady Bridget of holy memory, the princess of Närke in the kingdom of Sweden, the bride of Christ, came forth from just and devout parents, who were noble according to the flesh because they were of the noble race of the kings of the Goths, but more noble according to God. For her father was a devout and just man and was called Lord Birger of Upper Sweden. Every Friday, he humbly confessed his sins; and he used to say this: "On Fridays, I want to prepare myself so well for God that on the other days I may be ready to bear whatever God may give."

He also visited, with great labor, the places of the saints - namely, of James and of others - imitating the footsteps of his predecessors. For his father had been a Jerusalem pilgrim and so had his grandfather and his great-grandfather and his great-great-grandfather. And it is unheard of that men so magnificent and of such great wealth and glory from the ends of the world - namely, from the kingdom of Sweden - should undertake such a laborious journey - namely, to see the places of Saint James and of Jerusalem, where Jesus Christ became incarnate and suffered.

Wherefore Christ later, among other words of the revelations, spoke to his aforesaid bride: "I tell you," he said, "but not for your praise, that your generation has come forth from a lineage of holy kings. And they themselves earned, by their merits, that my divine

grace be made manifest with you.” And similarly the mother of this same bride of Christ - her name was Lady Ingeborg - was very noble and very devout.

Her father, named Lord Benedict, a man sprung of kingly seed, founded and endowed many churches and monasteries. The wife of this Benedict hid her devotion of mind and walked ways in accord with her noble rank and the customs of the nobility. One time when she and her household were passing through a certain monastery of nuns, she was looked down upon by a certain nun. And indeed this nun began, with force, to disparage this same grandmother of the said Lady Bridget and to murmur with the other nuns. And when, on the following night, the said nun had fallen asleep, a person of wonderful beauty appeared to her and said with angry countenance: ”Why have you disparaged my handmaid by saying that she is haughty, which is not true? For from her offspring I shall cause a daughter to come forth, with whom I shall do my great deeds in the world; and I shall pour such great grace into her that all the nations will be astonished.”

However, when the time came that this bride of Christ, Lady Bridget, was still in her mother's womb, it happened that her mother suffered shipwreck in an inlet of the sea. And when many of either sex had already drowned, a duke of the kingdom, Lord Eric, the king of Sweden's brother, who was there at the time, saw her in peril, and, by every means in his power, brought her alive to the shore. Then that very night, a person in shining garments stood by that same mother of Lady Bridget and said: ”You have been saved for the sake of the good that you have in your womb. Therefore nourish it with the love of God because it is God who has given it to you.”

How the birth of Christ's bride appeared to a priest.

And so, with the coming of the time at which the girl Bridget was born, a certain parish priest of a nearby church - a man of proven life and advanced age - while awake and praying, saw in the night a shining cloud, and, in the cloud, a virgin sitting with a book in her hand. To the wondering priest the same virgin said: ”To Birger has been born a daughter whose wonderful voice will be heard throughout the world.”

How she was as if tongueless for three years.

And so, as the girl Bridget advanced in age, she was as if tongueless for three years and did not have the use of speech. Her parents were in much doubt about this, believing that she was mute; but at the end of the third year, she so fully obtained the use of speech that she did not speak in the babbling manner of infants, but, contrary to what is natural at such an age, she sounded the words perfectly.

How Bridget's mother dies.

In the meantime her mother, a woman virtuous in all things, was growing infirm. Several days in advance, she foreknew and foretold her own passing; and when she was just about to go forth from her body and saw her husband and the others sorrowing, she said: "Why do you sorrow? It is enough to have lived this long. We must rejoice because I am now called to a mightier Lord." And having called her children, she blessed them all and fell asleep in the Lord.

How, while still a girl, she saw wonderful things.

And so, when the girl Bridget, the bride of Christ, had now attained the seventh year of her age, she once saw, while wide awake, an altar just opposite her bed and a certain lady in shining garments sitting above the altar. The lady had a precious crown in her hand and said to her: "O Bridget, come!"

And hearing this, she arose from bed, running to the altar. The lady said to her: "Do you want to have this crown?" She nodded, and the said lady put the crown on her head so that Bridget then felt, as it were, the circle of the crown touching her head. But when she returned to bed, the vision disappeared; and yet she could never forget it.

How she saw Christ crucified.

Round about her tenth year, on a certain occasion she heard a sermon preached in church about the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. The following night she saw, in a dream, Christ as if he had been crucified in that same hour, and he said to her: "In such a way was I wounded." And she thought that this had happened at that hour and answered in her sleep: "O Lord, who has done this to you?"

Jesus Christ answered: "Those who scorn me and neglect my love: they have done this to me." Then she came to herself; and from that day, she felt such affection for the passion of Christ that she could rarely recall the memory of it without tears.

How an unknown girl was seen sitting beside her.

Moreover, on a day in her twelfth year, she was intent upon some handiwork involving silk and gold in the company of other girls of her own age; and she felt much anxiety of soul because she could not do her work as she wished. Then her maternal aunt - a very devout and praiseworthy lady into whose keeping Bridget had come after her mother's death - walked into the house and saw an unknown maiden sitting beside Bridget and doing that same piece of work with her. And since, at her entrance, that unknown girl had disappeared, the aunt then asked Bridget who the girl was that had been working with her.

Bridget answered that she had seen no one. Her aunt, however, inspected the work and found that it was so finely done that anyone looking at it would be given to understand that it was not the work of a girl of such a tender age but was something divine. Therefore this lady herself used to hold it in regard among her relics as something from God.

How the aunt found Bridget praying at night.

One night, the aforesaid aunt secretly entered the bedroom of the maidens and found Bridget kneeling naked before her bed and praying with tears. The aunt, suspicious

of maidenly levity, ordered someone to bring a switch. But when she had begun to extend the switch to strike Bridget, at once it broke into tiny pieces so that the said aunt, seeing this, wondered greatly and said: "What have you done, Bridget? Have the women taught you some fallacious prayers?" The maiden answered with tears: "No, my lady; but I arose from bed to praise him whose custom is ever to help me." And her aunt said: "Who is he?" To which the maiden said: "The Crucified One whom I saw." And because of this, from that day her aunt began to love and venerate her more fervently.

How she saw the devil.

Not long after, when Bridget was wide awake and playing with girls, she saw the devil, as it were, having a hundred hands and feet and most deformed in every way. Thoroughly terrified, she ran to her bed, where the devil appeared to her again and said to her: "I can do nothing unless the Crucified were to permit." Since the women had seen and were asking what it was that had befallen her and why she was so thoroughly terrified, she answered: "A certain heartache seized upon me." And those women asked nothing more of her. But after some years, her aunt came and heard from her the whole truth and instructed her to cover her visions in silence and to be of good hope and to love God intimately and to beware of all levity.

How she came to marriage and how she lived in her marriage.

In the meantime, Lady Bridget was betrothed to a rich young man, a noble and prudent knight who was called Lord Ulf of Ulvåsa, prince of Närke. Between them they had so very honorable a marriage that both spouses lived in virginity for one year, devoutly asking God that if they ought to come together he, the Creator of all, would from them create an offspring that would be at his service. She truly loved God and was most highly wary of herself so that no one might speak badly of her and that she might not give occasion for anyone to disparage her. Therefore she fled levities and places or persons for which she could be branded; and she had in her company honest handmaids and well-mannered companions. Indeed, together with the members of her household, she was intent upon work for divine worship or for the welfare of her neighbors.

How she prayed and how a prayer was poured into her.

In truth, the bride of Christ was so very fervent in prayer and tears that when her husband was away, she passed almost whole nights in vigil and did not spare her body many genuflexions and cruel disciplining. In fact, some time passed during which she constantly kept asking God in her prayers that some suitable manner of praying might be poured into her. One day, in a wonderful manner, she was elevated in mind; and then there was poured into her a most beautiful prayer concerning the passion of Christ and concerning the life and the praise of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. She kept this prayer in her memory so that afterward she might read it every day. And so one time when blessed Mary appeared to her afterward, she said: "I merited that prayer for you; therefore when you read it, you will be visited with the consolation of my Son."

About confession.

She continuously frequented confession; and for her confessor, she had a very expert and devout master of theology, called Master Matthias, who wrote an excellent gloss on the whole Bible and composed many volumes of books. And it was he who composed the prologue for the books of the Heavenly Revelations of the aforesaid Lady Bridget; and it was him that she obeyed in all her difficulties. wherefore, this same confessor used to say familiarly to his friends: "In Lady Bridget, it is a sign of some future grace that she so laments light matters as others lament things very serious and that she leaves nothing in her words or behavior unexamined."

About fasting.

When she could, she multiplied her great fasts and other acts of abstinence; and she very often abstained from delicacies in a hidden way so that it would not be noticed by her husband or by others.

About reading.

Indeed, when she was not occupied with manual labor, she was continually rereading the lives of the saints and the Bible, which she had caused to be written out for herself in her own language; and when she could hear the sermons of upright men, she did not spare herself the labor of going to hear those same sermons.

About almsdeeds.

Right up to her death, she did very large almsdeeds. In Sweden, she had a house set aside for the poor; and she served them in person when she could. She washed their feet and clothed them and visited them when they were infirm and handled their wounds and bodies with tender compassion and the greatest of maternal charity.

How blessed Mary helped her in childbirth.

Now at one time Lady Bridget was imperiled during childbirth, and her life was despaired of. That night, the women who were present to watch over her were awake; and as they looked, a person dressed in white silk was seen to enter and stand before the bed and handle each one of Lady Bridget's members as she lay there - to the fear of all the women who were present. When, however, that person had gone out, Lady Bridget gave birth so easily that it was a thing of wonder and not to be doubted that the Blessed Virgin, who gave birth without pain, was that person who mitigated the labors, the pains, and the peril of her handmaid, just as that same Virgin afterwards told her in a vision when she spoke this revelation:

A revelation.

"When you," she said, "had difficulty in childbirth, I, Mary, entered unto you. For that reason, you are an ingrate if you do not love me. Labor, therefore, that your children

may also be my children.”

How she virtuously educated and nurtured her children.

The bride of Christ, therefore, with great concern and diligence, virtuously educated and nurtured her sons and daughters, handing them over to teachers by whom they were instructed in discipline and good behavior. She wept daily over her children's sins, fearing that they would offend their God. And so one time when Saint John the Baptist appeared to her, he said: "Because you wept over the fact that your son offended me by not fasting on my vigil, and because you would prefer him to serve me rather than be a king, I shall therefore help him and shall arm him with my arms." Mention is made of this more clearly at the end of the fourth book of the Heavenly Revelations given to the aforesaid lady.

How she gained her husband for God and they both went to Saint James.

When, however, Lady Bridget had for a long time been making progress in the virtues, she also gained her husband for God. For even though he was a vigorous man and an important member of the king of Sweden's council, he occupied himself - at his wife's advice and admonishment - in learning to read the Hours of the most Blessed Virgin Mary and the books containing the laws and legal judgments; and he studied to fulfill what belongs to justice and the law. And so, both of them - namely, this husband and wife - being fervent in their love for God and that they might more freely disengage themselves from the vanities of the world, went forth from their fatherland and from their kindred after Abraham's example, and, with great labors and expenses, proceeded into Spain to Saint James in Compostella.

After they had made their pilgrimage to many places of the saints and while they were on the way back, her husband took sick in the city that is called Arras, near Flanders. As the sickness grew worse, the bride of Christ, being in a state of great anxiety of soul, merited to be consoled by Saint Denis, who appeared and spoke to her at prayer: "I," he said, "am Denis, who came from Rome to these parts of France to proclaim God's

word in my life. And so, because you love me with special devotion, I therefore proclaim to you that through you, God wills to be made known to the world and that you have been handed over to my guardianship and protection. Wherefore I shall help you always; and I give to you this sign: your husband will not die now of this sickness." And many other times, this same blessed Denis visited her in revelations and consoled her.

A vision of future things.

After some days, there in that same city of Arras, she again saw certain wonderful things in prophetic vision: namely, how she was going to travel to Rome and to the holy city of Jerusalem, and how she was going to depart from this world, and how a very handsome youth led her then in spirit through all the said places. All these things were thus fulfilled after much time.

How, with her husband convalescing, she returned to her fatherland.

However, after his long illness, her husband was convalescing; and they both returned to their fatherland. Between them, they maintained a mutual continence and decided to enter a monastery. And after all their affairs and goods had been set in order to this end, her husband - still having the same purpose - died in the year of our Lord, 1344.

How she was sent to a teacher and how, after her husband's death, she was visited by the Spirit.

After some days, when the bride of Christ was worried about the change in her status and its bearing on her service of God, and while she was praying about this in her chapel, then she was caught up in spirit; and while she was in ecstasy, she saw a bright cloud; and from the cloud, she heard a voice saying to her: "Woman, hear me." And thoroughly terrified, fearing that it was an illusion, she fled to her chamber; and at once she confessed and then received the Body of Christ.

When at last, after several days, she was at prayer in the same chapel, again that bright cloud appeared to her; and from the cloud, she heard again a voice uttering words like those before, namely: "Woman, hear me." And then that lady, again thoroughly terrified, fled to her chamber; and having confessed, she communicated as before, fearing that the voice was an illusion.

Finally, after several days, when she was praying again in the same place, she was indeed caught up in spirit and again saw the bright cloud, and, in it, the likeness of a human being, who said this: "Woman, hear me; I am your God, who wish to speak with you." Terrified, therefore, and thinking it was an illusion, she heard again: "Fear not," he said; "for I am the Creator of all, and not a deceiver. For I do not speak to you for your sake alone, but for the sake of the salvation of others.

Hear the things that I speak; and go to Master Matthias, your confessor, who has experience in discerning the two types of spirit. Say to him on my behalf what I now say to you: you shall be my bride and my channel, and you shall hear and see spiritual things, and my Spirit shall remain with you even to your death." After this, he added: "For three reasons, Lucifer fell," etc., as is more fully contained in the revelations of the Heavenly Book.

And this is the first revelation in the prologue, etc. Therefore in the year of our Lord 1345, the first divine revelations were made to Lady Bridget not in sleep but while she was awake and at prayer, with her body remaining alive in its vigor, but while she was caught up from her bodily senses in ecstasy and in visions, either spiritual or imaginary, with the coming of a vision or a supernatural and divine illumination of her intellect, for she saw and heard spiritual things and felt them in spirit. Indeed, in the manner mentioned, she saw and heard corporeal images and similitudes; in fact, in her heart she felt something, as it were, alive, which moved more actively and more fervently in response to greater inflammations and infusions, but less when the infusions were less. Many times, indeed, the movement in her heart was so vehement that motion could be seen and felt even on the outside.

How, even before her husband's passing, she saw certain things.

In the fourth year before her husband's passing, a saint of our land of Sweden, Botvid by name, appeared to her, as it were, in an ecstasy of mind, and said: "I have, with other saints, merited for you God's grace - namely, to hear and to see and to feel spiritual things - and the Spirit of God will inflame your soul."

In the third year before her husband's passing, the most Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to her and said: "I am the Queen of those in misery. I want to show you what my Son was like in his humanity and what he was like when he suffered on the cross. And this will be a sign to you, that you will come to the places in Jerusalem where I lived in the body and there, with your spiritual eyes, you will see my Son." After twenty-eight years, all of this was thus accomplished, as it is more clearly recorded in the book of revelations that she had in Jerusalem and in Bethlehem.

How, at the beginning of the revelations, she was instructed to stay in a certain monastery.

And so at the beginning of the revelations, she was at once instructed to obey that same Matthias, a master of theology, and to stay in a monastery of Cistercian monks, namely, Saint Mary's in Alvastra, which is in Sweden, in the diocese of Linköping. The Spirit said to her in a vision: "If it should please the mighty Lord to do a work that is singular, general works must not therefore be despised but must be loved all the more and with greater fervor. So I, the God of all, who am above all rules, permit you to reside at the present time near the monastery - not to abolish the Rule, nor to introduce a new custom, but rather to display my wonderful work in a holy place. For David, in a time of need, ate the hallowed loaves - an act that is nevertheless forbidden to some in a normal time."

There was a lay brother with the name Gerekin in this same monastery of the Cistercian order at Alvastra. For forty years he never went outside the monastery; but day and night, he was absorbed in prayers; and he had this grace: that, during prayer, he almost continually saw the nine choirs of angels; and at the elevation of the Body of Christ, he merited frequently to see Christ in the appearance of a child. When Lady

Bridget had come to the monastery and was residing there, this brother wondered in his heart and said:

"Why does that lady settle here in a monastery of monks, introducing a new custom against our Rule?" Then this same brother was caught up in an ecstasy of mind and clearly heard a voice saying to him: "Do not wonder. This woman is a friend of God; and she has come in order that at the foot of this mountain she may gather flowers from which all people, even overseas and beyond the world's ends, shall receive medicine."

Again, on a second occasion, this same brother saw her raised from the earth, and, as it were, lightning going forth from her mouth. And then he heard in spirit: "This is the woman who, coming from the ends of the earth, shall give countless nations wisdom to drink. And this will be a sign to you: that she, from the mouth of God, is going to tell you the end of your life. And you will exult at her words and at her coming; and your desire will be fulfilled more quickly lest you see the evils that God is going to bring down upon this house."

Lord Hemming, bishop of Åbo, performed her divine embassy in France and England and saw that the kings were less than willing to receive the words of God - namely, those revelations touching the kings and the war between the kingdoms of France and England. These revelations are contained in the fourth book of the Heavenly Revelations, nearly at the end of the chapter "Disturbed in heart," etc. As he slept, Lady Bridget appeared to him and said: "Why are you disturbed? You will return to your fatherland successfully, and you will bear the fruit of souls. But know that the plague upon those to whom you were sent shall not yet end, for their hearts are hardened against God, and they shall be troubled yet a while until they are humbled."

There was a nun named Katharine in the monastery of Mount Saint Mary, in the kingdom of Sweden. She received this grace: blessed Mary appeared to her, and, among other words, said: "I shall show to you that I am the Mother of God, and I shall present you to my Son." When this lady had seen Lady Bridget and they were talking together familiarly, she replied: "O you happy lady! For I am not speaking so that either you or I would be boasting, because I have heard for very certain a voice that said this: 'Know that Bridget shall yet be called happy because, if she is scorned on earth, she will be honored in heaven and those to be born will proclaim her name.' Therefore stand firm because

without doubt it will thus be accomplished, even as I have heard.”

When Master Matthias, her confessor - of whom mention was made above - was stricken with a certain temptation, it was said to Lady Bridget in spirit: ”He will be knowledgeable from 'In the beginning,' i.e., from the beginning of the Bible and of the book of Genesis, which thus commences: 'In the beginning, God created heaven and earth,' right through to 'Alpha and O,' i.e., right through to the Apocalypse, where 'Alpha and O' is thus written. And he will be liberated from his temptations, and I shall give to him the fervor of my Spirit.” And at once he felt himself liberated and given rest from his temptation. Also, on the same day that this Master Matthias died in his fatherland, Lady Bridget, who was staying in Rome, heard in spirit: ”Happy are you, Master Matthias, because of the crown that was fashioned for you in Sweden. Come now to wisdom that will never end!”

When, in old age, Brother Algot of the Order of Preachers, a master of theology and a most familiar friend of Lady Bridget, for three years experienced blindness and suffered violently from calculi, he asked the said Lady Bridget to offer prayer to God for him. When, in compliance with his request, she asked for him to be healed, this answer came to her in spirit: ”He is a gleaming star. It is not expedient that his soul be blackened by his body's health. Now he has competed and he has reached the finish. Nothing remains save that he be crowned. This will be a sign to him: now, from this hour, the pains of his flesh will be alleviated; now all of his soul will be inflamed with my charity.” And not many days afterward, he expired.

The aforementioned Lady Bridget also had, from God, these special graces of great virtue and wonder: the first is that when she was saying anything that would be an offense to God, at once she felt in her mouth a very great bitterness, as it were, of sulphur. And by this she knew at once that she had offended God; and, bringing that word back into her memory, at once and without delay she confessed it to her confessor with great sorrow and tears. Also, when anyone spoke to her any sly or vicious words that would offend God, at once she felt in her nostrils a horrible stench of sulphur, which she could hardly tolerate. And this was a sign that God had then been offended by the words of that person - a thing that we proved almost an infinite number of times.

Moreover, when any person asked her about some doubt in his conscience and sought from her advice and a special remedy that would be very good, she then used to answer him: "Pray to God about this. And we too shall think, and we shall do what we can for you - although I am an unworthy sinner." In fact, after three days or so and sometimes on the very same day, she would answer that same person - if the person were spiritual and honest - having first lifted her hands toward heaven and saying this: "I am a sinner unworthy to say such things; nevertheless, know that Jesus Christ appeared to me at prayer and told me what reply I might make to the fact that you asked such and such, etc."

And then she gave him the words that she had had from Christ or from the Blessed Virgin Mary as the response to this matter. Or else when she was well, she wrote down with her own hand and in her mother tongue the words divinely given to her; and she had them most faithfully translated into the Latin tongue by us, her confessors. And afterward, she listened to the translation together with her own writing that she herself had written, so that there might be not one word more added there or missing but only what she herself had divinely heard and seen in the vision.

If, in fact, she was ill, she called her confessor and her writer - a secretary specially assigned to this - and then, with great devotion and fear of God and sometimes with tears, she reported to him those words in her own vernacular and with a certain attentive elevation of mind, as if she were reading them in a book. And then the confessor said these words in the Latin tongue for the writer, and he wrote them down right there in her presence. And afterward, when the words had been written out, she wanted to listen to them; and she listened very diligently and attentively. And so she gave or sent this writing to those who were making the inquiry. This has often - yes, very often - been proven in experience by the lady queen and the archbishop of Naples; also by the queen and the king and the princes and many others from the kingdom of Cyprus and from the kingdom of Sicily; and by men, and by women too, from Italy, from Sweden, and even from Spain.

Moreover, it also happened very often that to the same Lady Bridget were revealed the most secret thoughts and doubts of those who came to her and even of certain other persons who were absent - things that they themselves had never at all made public by

word or by writing or by sign. Witnesses to this are: Lord Nicholas of Nola, rector of the Patrimony; Lord Gomez de Albornoz, rector of the duchy of Spoleto; the lord count of Fondi; and many others, both religious and secular, to whom she told or wrote the innermost things of their hearts.

One also had to wonder at another grace that the aforesaid lady had from her bridegroom, Jesus Christ. For very often it happened that with devotion and charity, various persons asked her to pray to God for certain souls of some of their departed. And if it seemed to her that they were in purgatory - a place where they would need intercessory prayers - they asked her to tell this to them, the living questioners, and to make known to them by what alms and sacrifices or by what intercessory prayers of the living the dead could be freed from those pains.

Indeed, she received in writing the names of the departed; and with utmost charity and compassion, she prayed to God for them. And then, in prayer, she obtained answers from God as to whether those souls were in purgatory - and even about the manner of that purgatory and of those pains where they were - or whether they were in hell or in heaven. She was also given to know, clearly and distinctly, the manners of intercessory prayer and of alms giving through which those souls could be freed.

Good proof of this was experienced by some of the aforesaid living persons who were named above and who devoutly asked her about such things, and, concerning this, had divine answers from her in writing. Indeed when she herself, or any of us in her house, was anxious or doubtful about anything, at once and without great delay, through the revelations divinely given to her, she humbly brought back from Christ, her glorious bridegroom, or from our Lady, the Virgin Mary, a most precious answer explaining that business.

What more is there? For the testimony to so many virtues, to such great holiness and excellence, to such flowing and abundant grace divinely shining in her is all disclosed in the books of the Heavenly Revelations, which were divinely given to her, and in the Book of Questions, which was also given to her divinely, through an infusion from the Holy Spirit, in a wonderful manner and, as it were, in a single hour, while she was riding her horse and journeying to her villa in Vadstena, as is more fully recorded at the

beginning of that same Book of Questions.

Testimony is also provided by visual experiences, for very often these things were seen by us ourselves and by many others in various parts of the world. For we have often seen that things that she had prophetically foretold many years ahead of time, afterwards actually came about in our experience. This is something that many others also saw and experienced. From them it may be clearly gathered (and it can be tested by the sayings of the saints) that she had from God the true spirit of prophecy and that intellectual vision had been divinely given to her.

The miracles too that since her death are happening through her merits and intercession bear now, and will in future bear, the clear witness of truth to the great graces that divinely sparkled in her. Indeed, after this lady had been called into the Spirit of God, she prophesied not only about the future - as did the prophets - but also about the present and the past; and she also clarified many things concerning certain doubtful matters in Sacred Scripture.

Moreover, like the apostles, she relinquished all that she owned; and, at God's instruction, she sent letters to the major personages of the whole of Christendom: namely, to the supreme pontiffs; to the emperors; to the kings and queens of France and of England, of Sicily and of Cyprus; to princes and princesses; to various prelates; to seculars and to religious; to kingdoms, and to lands and to cities. She also visited many lands personally, showing God's will to great and small alike for the good of their souls, redeemed by Christ's blood.

Like the holy evangelists, she wrote also about the birth of Christ and about his glorious life, and, in a similar way, about his death and about his resurrection and about his eternal glory, as is shown clearly enough in her revelations.

In truth, she was not without experience of martyrdom; for she mortified her body by living in toil and abstinence, by exposing herself to dangers on land and on sea, and by patiently enduring, for the sake of Christ's name, the reproaches and affronts of many, whether she was in grave physical infirmity or in health. From her innermost heart, she continually returned thanks to her bridegroom, Jesus Christ, for all adversities; and she

prayed suppliantly to God for those who offended her.

How a certain lady who had died appeared to her and foretold to her the future.

Now, during the first month that Lady Bridget came to the said monastery of Cistercian monks - namely, Saint Mary's of Alvastra - a certain lady, already dead and very well known to her, appeared to her at prayer and said: "To you shall be given understanding of spiritual things; in all things, therefore, humble yourself. And that you may know this with greater certainty, behold, I give to you a threefold sign.

The first is that I have been gravely purged for the stubbornness of my conscience. The second: that my husband, who is not my husband, now seeks something carnal - namely, carnal intercourse with another woman in opposition to God - and it will be, for him and his posterity, a cause of tribulation. The third is that you will cross the sea; and you will die in a glorious place, in Rome."

Moreover, the lady appeared to her a second time and said: "I want to inform you of my situation; for it thus pleases God that as we have loved each other while both living in the flesh, so we should now love each other in spirit. I - to speak using a similitude - have been put, as it were, in thick glass and can hear, but not yet reach, the things that I wish for. Thus, I can understand and desire and hope for those everlasting joys; but I have not yet attained to the full until the glass, by God's will, becomes more thin and sheer.

And this has been because two things weighed me down in the world: namely, a facility of anger; and the fact that I was not content with the things that I had, but wanted always to have more. Therefore induce those who were my friends to have chalices made for me, in which the sacrifice of my Lord Jesus Christ may be offered; and second, to have remembrance of me made during the year by those who are the friends of God. For by such means I shall, without a doubt, be more quickly freed from this punishment."

What sort of things happened during life to that aforesaid lady who was the sister of Lady Bridget's husband and who thus appeared to her.

That said lady who after death appeared to Lady Bridget was very famous for her fasts and prayers. And one time, when she was seriously ill, the devil appeared to her in a most hideous form, intending as if to snatch her as she lay there. In fact, violently terrified, she called out: "For eternity," she said, "I shall be damned!" As she many times repeated these words, her confessor spoke to her: "Why," he said, "do you speak these words, my Lady, when you have always loved God with all your heart?"

She, however, could make no answer save as before: "I shall be damned for eternity!" Finally, she fell silent in the hands of those who held her; in a wonderful way, her face began to change and to take on colors and to be, in color, now white and now a rosy red. While those present were wondering, she said in a loud voice: "Blessed are you, my God, who have created and have freed me. I confess you and I bless you."

But when she had regained her breath and was returning to herself, she called her confessor and other virtuous men and said to them: "I saw the devil in a most vile form. Taking fright at his appearance, I believed that I would be damned. And while I was in this terrible anxiety, I saw Christ, as it were, standing on the cross. As the devil fled away, Christ said: 'When a year has rolled by, you will see the same vision, but not the devil. And this will be a sign to you, when you see it, that at once your life will be at an end.' " And so it happened; for when the year had rolled by, on that very same date she saw Christ; and then her soul was loosed from the flesh after long purgation.

How this lady appeared a third time to Christ's bride, Lady Bridget.

This said lady also appeared a third time after her death to that same Lady Bridget and said: "What I longed for, I now have. My former torments have been consigned to oblivion, and my love is now perfect. But as for you: be obedient! For you are going to come into the society of the great."

How, after the death of her husband, Lady Bridget distributed her goods.

With her husband dead, at once Lady Bridget distributed all her goods among her

children and the poor. She changed her way of living and dressing; and she would have done even greater things but for the obstacle of the fact that she had been instructed in a revelation to make a pilgrimage to Rome. And when she was scorned by the nobles for the sudden change and the cheapness of her clothing, she answered: "It is neither for you that I start, nor for you that I stop. For I have determined in my heart to tolerate injurious words. Pray, therefore, for me that I may be able to persevere."

How she was divinely instructed to go to the king of Sweden.

And so, when she had been instructed in spirit to go to the king of Sweden, and when she pleaded the excuse that she did not know what to say to him, this answer was made to her by God: "When you arrive," he said, "open your mouth; and I will fill it." Therefore, when she arrived, divine words were at once poured into her - not only words that pertained to the king, but also many that were about the future.

How she was sent to a bishop and he acknowledged her coming.

This same Lady Bridget also came to a certain bishop of proven life and devotion and said to him some words divinely revealed to her. When he heard those words, he, in his own conscience, discovered - right down to the last point - what she herself had understood in spirit: namely, things that, except for God and himself, no human at all had ever known. For the said lord bishop had certain less rational desires, and, in some things, a zeal at variance with knowledge; and he practiced fasts that went beyond nature. Therefore, he more willingly accepted her charitable admonitions, corrected everything by the standard of charity, and spoke to her: "Last night," he said, "I definitely saw you entering toward me and removing from my heart very great burdens. Therefore, not only do I believe your words, but I also see in my soul that God is doing wonderful things with you."

How she prohibited the king from imposing unjust imposts and tributes.

When the king of Sweden was hard pressed to pay a certain sum of money and was arranging to put the burden on the community of the realm contrary to the statutes and his oaths, Lady Bridget replied to him: "My Lord, do not do this; for you will not be immune from the wrath of God. But take instead my two sons; and pawn them as hostages until you can pay; and do not offend your God." Then, on that very day, there came to her the following vision in which Christ spoke to Lady Bridget and said this: "Just as a kingdom has sometimes been saved because of the charity of one human being, so some kingdoms have been lost because of one person's new inventions and burdensome taxes.

I give you an example of this in the case of the following kingdom. For its king himself trusted in money - exacted by fraud or feigned justice from his people and from travelers - more than he trusted in me. Therefore, he lost his life and left his kingdom in trouble.

Others who succeeded him turned his crooked inventions into custom, and, as it were, into law. But if a king trusts in me, his God, and the community of the realm is petitioned for assistance with charity, then I am able to save and to restore to peace more quickly because of that charity. Therefore, if the king desires to prosper, let him keep his promise to me and keep truth with the community of his realm; and let him especially beware of introducing new inventions or tributes or technicalities. In his difficulties, let him follow the advice of those who fear God, and not the advice of the covetous; for it is better to suffer some adversity in this world than to sin knowingly against me and against his own soul."

How the devil wanted to deceive her.

One day, when Lady Bridget was going, at the Spirit's instruction, to visit a certain man obsessed by the devil, the horse on which she was accustomed to ride, and which had previously been very gentle, suddenly so reared up from the ground that the horseshoes on its hooves could all be seen. As a result of this rearing, that same lady suffered pain in her back for a long time, whereby she was given to understand that the devil begrudged this sinner's conversion. In fact that man being visited - a man noble, by

the world's standards, and great - was vexed by the devil; and especially in her presence, he was disturbed, as it were, more gravely than usual.

Then that same man spoke many horrible things against God and said to her: "Oh, how unlike are your spirit in you and my spirit in me! But when it pleases the Spirit who is in you, I shall be perfectly healed; for he himself, because of my disbelief and my hidden demerits, has given me over into the hands of a cruel exactor." She answered him: "I promise you that you shall be quickly healed, but I ask why you speak such great abominations against God." And he said: "I do not rule myself." When he had said this word, he began to speak, as it were, more bitterly against God and to blaspheme him, saying: "Him who created heaven and earth, I worship; about your new God Christ, be silent!" Then the bride of Christ said: "Be silent, wretched devil, in your speech against God; for even if you are this creature's punisher, nevertheless you shall not be his eternal owner." And at once that man, as if drowsing, fell silent; but after several days, he was cured.

Still another miracle took place. In a revelation, it had been divinely told to the aforementioned Lady Bridget that on God's behalf she should instruct a certain Brother Peter - the prior of the Cistercian order's monastery of Saint Mary of Alvastra in Sweden - to write the books of the revelations that had been divinely given to that same Lady Bridget in spiritual vision. This same prior was a very simple man; and he would for no reason set his hand to writing; for he reckoned himself, because of his ignorance, less than suitable for so great a work. Then he was driven by Christ with the fear of death - and almost died - until he consented. And when his consent was given, he was suddenly cured without any lapse or interval of time.

So too a demoniac in East Gothland. In the presence of two trustworthy witnesses, at words from the mouth of the aforesaid religious - words whose form this lady heard from Christ and which the brother said to the demon according to Christ's instruction - then indeed the demoniac was cleansed.

Moreover, another demoniac in Sweden was cleansed in the same manner by the same religious, in the presence of trustworthy witnesses, at the instruction of the aforesaid Lady Bridget.

Moreover, through the intervention of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who with Christ appeared to the said Lady Bridget, a certain public prostitute was converted through the prayer of that same Lady Bridget. Moreover, many magnates in the kingdom of Sweden were converted when at one and the same time and place - with the exception of those ungrateful to Christ - they experienced a movement of their hearts for the better: a movement caused by him at the words of the same Lady Bridget and which they confessed had been sent by him.

How Lady Bridget was judged by a certain bishop in his heart, and what things came to her.

One time, at a banquet, when the bride of Christ was sitting at table with a certain devout bishop and, in God's honor, was making use of the delicacies that had been served, she was judged by the bishop interiorly in his mind; for he said in his heart: "Why does this lady of such great spirit not abstain from delicate foods?" Then, toward vespers, she herself, knowing nothing of such thoughts, heard these things in spirit: "Say to the bishop, 'I am he who filled the shepherd with my Spirit. Was this because of the shepherd's fasting? I am he who made married men prophets. What had they done to merit this? I commanded a prophet to take an adulteress as his wife. Did he not obey? I am he who spoke as well to Job in his delights as when he sat upon the dunghill.

Therefore, because I am wonderful, I do all things that please me without dependence on preceding merits.' " And so, hearing this, the bishop recognized himself and now humbled asked the same Lady Bridget to pray for him. And then, on the third day, the most Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to that same bride of Christ and said to her: "Say to that same bishop that because he is accustomed to begin all his sermons with praise of me and because his judgment was made with charity rather than envy, his charity thus merits consolation. Tell him, therefore, that I want to be a mother to him and that I want to present his soul to God. And now I shall expound to you how he is the seventh animal of the animals shown to you and how he will carry my words into the presence of kings and pontiffs." This revelation of the seven animals is more fully recorded in the book of the revelations.

How Lady Bridget returned from the king of Sweden and how her son died.

And so, when Lady Bridget returned from the king of Sweden to the monastery of Alvastra, she found that a son of hers - who, when she left, had long been infirm - was now in extremis. And she wept much over his long infirmity and reckoned that it was happening because of the sins of his parents. Then the devil appeared to her and said: "Why, woman, with all this water of tears, are you weakening your sight and laboring in vain? Could water ascend to heaven?" In the same hour, Christ appeared to his bride in his human form and said: "This boy's infirmity has not been caused by constellations of stars - as the foolish say - nor by his sins. He has become infirm because of his physical condition and so that his crown will be greater.

Therefore, if he has hitherto been called by his own name, Benedict, Ulf's son, from now on he shall be called the son of tears and prayers; and I shall put an end to his distress. In fact, on the fifth day afterward, there was heard a most sweet singing, as it were, of birds between the boy's bed and the wall; and, behold, then the boy's soul went forth; and the Holy Spirit said to that same Lady Bridget: "Behold what tears accomplish! Now the son of waters has passed over to his rest. Therefore the devil hates the tears of good people, which proceed from divine charity."

About a brother who lay in his infirmity for three years and more.

In the said monastery of Alvastra, a certain lay brother of holy life was infirm for three years and more. At Christ's command, his bride visited the brother and said to him: "Repent with greater attention because there is something hidden in your heart. As long as you keep it hidden, you will not be able to die." When he answered that he had nothing that had not been disclosed in penance, she said: "Ask with what intention you entered the monastery and with what intention you have lived up to now." Then he dissolved in tears and said: "Blessed be God who has sent you to me. Now that you have spoken, I want to tell the truth; for I do have something hidden that I never dared to betray because, as often as I repented, my tongue was always, as it were, tied and indeed

excessive shame invaded me so that I did not open the matter.

Therefore, as often as I made my confession, I invented for myself a new conclusion to my words, saying at the end: 'I declare to God and to all God's saints that I am culpable of all the crimes that I have told to you, Father, and of all those that I have not told.' I believed that through this conclusion, all was forgiven. But now, if it should please God, I would gladly tell the whole world." And when a confessor had been called, he fully explained everything with tears; and he did not survive long afterward.

About a temptation to gluttony with which Lady Bridget was tempted.

Now at one time, Lady Bridget was so gravely tempted with gluttony that for hunger, she could scarcely think of anything else. Finally, in spirit, she saw an Ethiopian holding in his hand, as it were, a morsel of bread and a certain very handsome youth holding a gilded vessel. And the youth said: "Why do you solicit that woman who has been given over into my custody?" The Ethiopian responded: "Because she glories in an abstinence that she has not had; for she does not cease to fill her belly until it is full of delicate dung. I therefore hold forth my morsel that grosser things may, for her, become sweet."

The youth responded: "You know quite well that she does not have an immaterial nature as we do but, rather, a sack made of earth. Since earth is slippery and restless, she needs continual re-creation." The Ethiopian said: "Your Christ fasted, eating nothing; and the prophets ate bread and drank water in moderation. Therefore they merited lofty things.

And how will that woman merit when she always feels a satiety?" The youth responded: "Is Christ not yours too as well as ours?" To which the other said: "By no means at all! For I will never humble myself to him but will rather act in opposition to him because I shall not return to his glory!" The youth responded: "Our Christ taught us to fast, not so that the body would be weakened beyond measure, but so that it would be humbled and not grow insolent in opposition to its soul. Our Christ does not ask for things impossible to nature but for moderation; he does not ask the quality or the

quantity of what one eats but, rather, the quality of the eater's intention and charity.”

To which the Ethiopian said: ”It is just that what that woman did not experience in youth, she should feel in old age.” In rebuttal, the youth said: ”The praiseworthy thing is abstinence from sin. There is no obstacle to heaven in purple dye or in delicate flesh when these things are possessed together with the love of God. Sometimes the customs of one's upbringing must be maintained well, with thanksgiving, lest the flesh be too seriously weakened.” After this, at that same hour, the Virgin Mary appeared to her - wearing a crown - and said to the Ethiopian: ”Be silent, you negotiator; look askance, because she has been assigned to me!” And the Ethiopian spoke: ”If I cannot do anything else,” he said, ”I will cast a bramble of the Christ's-thorn plant onto the hem of her garments.” To which the Virgin said: ”I will help her. And as often as you cast it on, it shall be cast back into your face; and her crown will be doubled.” Not long after this vision, the whole temptation to gluttony was taken away.

How she was tempted at prayer.

During her prayers, the bride of Christ was sometimes tempted even with unclean thoughts. Blessed Mary appeared to her and said: ”The devil is like an envious spy, seeking to accuse and impede the good. Therefore try and pray as long as you are being tempted because your desire and good effort will count for you as prayer; and if you cannot cast out of your mind the sordid matters that come to it, those efforts will count for you as merit provided that you not consent and as these things are against your will.”

How the prayer of the bride of God was of profit to someone.

A certain religious was tempted for twelve years concerning the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and concerning the name of blessed Mary, whom he could never name without sordid thought and blasphemy. And so for a long time he omitted even the Angelic Salutation. With tears, he asked Lady Bridget, the bride of Christ, to pray for him; and, obtaining her prayers, he was so freed that, afterward, he rarely pronounced the name of blessed Mary without great joy; and the Body of Christ became so sweet to

him that he could not rest on a day when he did not celebrate Mass.

For a long time, this same man had a desire to visit the holy places in Jerusalem; but, out of obedience and because of his profession, he was not permitted to do so. When he was in extremis, he was enraptured and saw all those places in spirit just as did those who have seen them in body; and when he had shown the arrangement of those places to those who had previously visited them, he passed away, exulting in the Lord.

How the bride of Christ was instructed to go to Rome and to testify to the grace of God.

However, after the passage of almost two years in the Cistercian order's aforesaid monastery of Saint Mary of Alvastra, Christ instructed her to go to Rome, even as it is recorded in the following revelation.

A revelation concerning the same thing.

Our Lord Jesus Christ once spoke to this same Bridget and said: "Go to Rome, where the streets are paved with gold and reddened with the blood of saints and where there is a compendium - i.e., a shorter way - to heaven because of the indulgences that the holy pontiffs have merited by their prayers. Moreover, you shall stay there in Rome until you see the supreme pontiff and the emperor there at the same time in Rome, and to them you shall announce my words."

What she did on the way to Rome.

After she had gone forth from her fatherland, she was divinely instructed in a vision to give up her customary reading and learn grammar. This was when she was given blessed Agnes for her solace and Master Peter, her confessor, for a teacher to instruct her and that she might obey him. Moreover, the said lady, in a brief time, made so much progress in grammatical knowledge that she knew in part how to read, to understand, and to utter Latin speech.

How she was divinely instructed to go to Naples and visit there the places of saints.

After she had stayed a long time in Rome, Christ spoke to her thus and said: "Permission is given you to visit the holy places in Sicily because in that place are the bodies of many who loved me with all their heart. Outstanding among them is Thomas, my apostle. When you arrive there, I am going to show you certain secrets." And since she hesitated somewhat lest her money for expenses chance to fail on the way, the Lord answered: "One who possesses a meadow does not spare the meadow in preference to his laboring horse. So I, the Lord, provide for my friends when their own providence fails; and I stir up the souls of others to do good to them." Look in the Book of Heavenly Revelations for a certain vision that was given to Lady Bridget by Christ in the city of Ortona and which speaks about the praise of blessed Thomas and about that kingdom.

How in Rome she was divinely instructed to go to Jerusalem although the instruction did not determine the time.

Christ once spoke to her and said: "I am like an eagle that foresees those flying in the air who want to harm its young and forestalls them by its own flight lest they do the harm; so I foresee the times and the ways and the ways' difficulties and the dispositions of souls. And so I say to you: sometimes, 'Stand and wait'; now, 'Go and hurry.' Therefore, because it is already the time, go now to the places previously shown to you: where there was a vessel, clean and not clean; and where there was a lamb, shorn and not shorn; where a lion roared and did not roar; where a serpent moved and did not move; where an eagle flew to a place from which it has never withdrawn."

See in the Book of Questions, in the last and the next-to-last chapters, where these things are recorded and divinely clarified. And when she complained of bodily infirmity and of decrepit age, then an answer came to her from Christ: "Who is the Establisher of nature? Is it not I? Therefore I will increase your strength. I will provide for the way. I will guide you and lead you back to this place in Rome."

On a certain occasion - fifteen years before the incident that we last mentioned above - when Lady Bridget was praying in Rome, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and said: "Because of the exceeding love that you have for me, I tell you that you will go to Jerusalem when it pleases my Son; and then you will go also to Bethlehem; and I then will show to you how I gave birth to my Son, Jesus Christ." This promise the Virgin Mary fulfilled sixteen years later, when Lady Bridget was in these said places - as is more amply recorded in the books of revelations, in a certain revelation made to her in Bethlehem that speaks of the Virgin Mary's childbearing.

How she was divinely commanded, while she was in Jerusalem, to return again to Rome.

On a certain occasion, while Lady Bridget was praying in Jerusalem, Christ appeared to her and said: "All the places that other pilgrims visit, you too will visit. For there are still other places where I was in the body and which should be visited; but it is sufficient for you to seek out the nearer ones because of your infirmity and because it is not yet the time of that mercy of which mention has been made; for there are very few who reflect upon the charity of my passion and of my patience. But when you have come back from the Jordan, prepare yourselves for your journey; for there are still some things to be sent to the supreme princes of the earth." Look for the many and beautiful revelations that are contained in the Heavenly Book and which were made to that same Lady Bridget in Jerusalem and in Bethlehem.

About a special sign of the Spirit.

One should also know that from the first time that the bride of God was visited by the Spirit of God she had this sign: that, when she was approached by human beings full of diabolic spirit or who were averse to goodness, she felt so great a stench in her nostrils and so bitter a taste in her mouth that she could hardly bear it. Wherefore, when a certain man - who had undergone a change away from goodness and had returned to his earlier sins - had sat down with the bride of God and was speaking with her, he said to her: "What is this about a spirit that you are said to have? Is it from you or from someone else or from a demon?"

To this she - who scarcely had the strength to bear his stench - responded: "You have a fetid indweller, and fetid things proceed from your mouth. Repent, therefore, lest there come upon you the vengeance of God!" The man went away angry; and, when he had gone to sleep, he heard voices without number saying: "Let us drag the pig to the places for pigs because he has spurned the warnings of salvation." Returning to himself, he perfectly corrected his life; and his odor was perceived by the said lady to have changed into sweetness.

A similar thing, as it were, happened to the same Lady Bridget in Famagusta, in the kingdom of Cyprus, with a certain religious to whom she was speaking; and with many other people, this similarly happened to her.

Item concerning the same thing.

The bride of God had also this special trait: that, in the twenty-eight years from the time she began to have the Spirit of God, she never went or made any change to other cities nor ever tarried in any place except in accord with the infusion and instruction of the Holy Spirit.

About the city of Milan.

When she was in Milan, she stayed there a long time; and there, amidst other words, the Blessed Virgin Mary responded to the words of a certain great master of theology, as is recorded in the Book of Heavenly Revelations.

About Rome.

In truth, the said Lady Bridget stayed in Rome a rather long time, not only because of the indulgences but also because of the promises to be fulfilled. There, in manifold ways, she experienced visitations both concerning the state of the City and concerning

the reparation of all states. There too, she was informed with certainty about many things in the future, as is shown in the revelations made to her, which are more amply recorded in her books. There also in Rome the promise was fulfilled that had been made to her in a revelation in Sweden many years before: namely, that she, would go to Rome and would stay there until she saw there the pope and the emperor.

Moreover, when the lord pope, Urban V, wanted to return from Italy to Avignon, the Virgin Mary appeared to the said Lady Bridget and said to her some words in a vision, saying that this same lord pope should not return from Rome, nor from Italy, to Avignon; otherwise, the outcome would be to his loss in a brief time - as is more amply recorded in that revelation which the same Lady Bridget, with her own hand, presented to that same lord pope in Montefiascone. And present there, on that occasion, was our lord pope, Gregory XI, who was then called Cardinal Beaufort.

Moreover there, on that occasion in Montefiascone, the Virgin Mary instructed her to tell, on her own behalf, a certain hermit-priest Alphonsus, a friend and acquaintance of hers, to write down and copy the books of the revelations that had been divinely given to her and which indeed until then had been kept secret. At the death of this same lady, Christ confirmed this by instructing the same Lady Bridget to tell her confessors to hand over to the said hermit all the secret revelations and all others that they had not yet handed over in order that this same hermit might have them written out and that he might publish them to the nations for the honor and glory of God.

Moreover, in Naples and in Jerusalem too, she stayed for a long time; and there she saw some visions concerning the state and the tribulation of kingdoms and concerning the nativity and the passion of Jesus Christ and concerning the calling of the nations. Wherefore, in Jerusalem, Christ spoke to her: "My words," he said, "must for a long time be heard and proclaimed; works and signs will come afterward.

Therefore, know that there are many not yet born who are going to receive my words sweetly. Wherefore, as it says in my gospel: 'Blessed are they who hear the words of God'; so I say now: 'Blessed are they who now hear my words and will perform them in deed.' Nevertheless, know that after your passing more will receive my words and will follow them with sweetness, for they are not like a flower that will fall but like a fruit that

lasts for eternity." One should know also that although during her husband's life Lady Bridget had done some penance in a hidden way, nevertheless after his death she was not content with this penance. Indeed, for thirty years she used no linen garments except the veils for her head.

Also, before her bed, she had them put on the pavement a coverlet and a little cushion for under her head; and thus she used to sleep there, having over her a single garment or a mantle. When questioned as to how she could rest there in the very intense cold that prevails in those parts of Sweden, she spoke in answer: "I feel," she said, "within myself so great a warmth from divine grace that the cold that is without does not much urge me toward a softer bed."

Day and night, however, she was accustomed to perform so many genuflections, bows, and prostrations that it was a wonder that so tender a person could endure such great labors.

It was her custom too, on Fridays, to pour on her bare flesh flaming drops from a burning candle so that they left wounds remaining; and if at any time before the next Friday these wounds healed somewhat by themselves, she then at once put her nails in and plowed them so that her body would not be without the suffering of wounds; and this she did for the sake of the memory of the passion of Christ. She also had knotty bands of cord with which she girded herself right against her flesh and which she never removed, day or night, whether she was ill or well.

When, however, she came to these parts of Rome and of Italy, she visited the holy places with devotion and great frequency; and with sufficiently great toil to herself, she observed the practice of not speaking voluntarily with anyone on the way unless she happened to have been asked a question - in which case she replied with very few words to the one speaking to her. And whenever she uttered any unconsidered word, then at once, on the cord that hung upon her breast for saying the paternoster, she diligently noted that word by which she had offended God, in order that she might not neglect to confess it and make satisfaction for it by means of penance.

Similarly too, when she visited shrines, she held her eyes in check so as not to look

voluntarily at the faces of human beings. When, however, it happened that she had suddenly looked into someone's face, at once, on that same chaplet that hung at her neck, she kept a token, until, through penance, satisfaction for it had been made.

From her infancy, she was accustomed to confess every Friday. But nevertheless, she was not content with this; no, she also confessed more than once on every day of the year concerning light words and thoughts. For in her there was fear of God together with great love of him.

On Fridays, indeed, because of Christ's passion and the bitterness of the drink of gall proffered to him before his death, she was accustomed to hold in her mouth a certain very bitter herb, which is called genciana. She also did this on other days when she had uttered some unconsidered or incautious word.

In making her confession, she was very humble and very prompt in fulfilling whatever things were enjoined upon her. Moreover, she so loved true humility that in no place did she wish to be without an instructor whom she humbly obeyed in all things. Moreover, she so loved poverty that everything that she had in her possession she put into the hands of another; and when she wished to have something, she asked her confessor the master for it in the name of Jesus Christ as humbly as if she had never possessed it.

She attended to the welfare of the persons living with her even more than she did to her own. For sometimes she was actually concealing her own ruined shoes even while asking for new ones to be given to others; and she acted similarly concerning other necessary things. Indeed, she very patiently endured everything that came; and the Blessed Virgin once spoke to her thus in a vision: "You," she said, should be like a mirror, clear and clean, and like a sharp thorn - a mirror through honest and godly behavior and through good example, but a thorn through denunciation of sinners.

In fact, Lady Bridget well demonstrated the latter point; for, wherever she was, she did this to the best of her ability. She showed it well in Famagusta while, in the presence of the king and the queen and the princes and the other magnates of the kingdom of Cyprus, she seriously and boldly narrated a revelation made to her in Jerusalem

concerning the kingdom of Cyprus - despite the fact that at that time she was physically weak and infirm. This revelation too is contained in the books of the Heavenly Revelations.

Moreover, in Naples too she did not keep silent about a revelation made to her concerning the people of that same city but related it in the presence of the archbishop and three masters of theology and other doctors of canon and civil law and the other lords and prudent men, both clerical and lay. She intrepidly reproved the sins of the city and showed how they might amend their lives - just as Jesus Christ had instructed her in a revelation and as it is more clearly and more amply recorded in the books of revelations.

Furthermore, while she was in Jerusalem, she began to weaken; and this infirmity of hers lasted for a whole year. And both at sea and on land, she most patiently endured fatigue and pain; and it was of this infirmity that she died in Rome.

It happened, finally, in Rome - five days before the day of her passing - that our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her in front of the altar that stood in her chamber. He showed himself with a joyful face and said to her: "I had done to you what a bridegroom usually does, concealing himself from his bride so that he may be more ardently desired. Thus I have not visited you with consolations during this time; for it was the time of your testing. Therefore, now that you have been tested, go forward and prepare yourself; for now is the time when - as I had promised you - before my altar, you shall be clothed and consecrated as a nun. And henceforth you shall be counted not only as my bride, but also as a nun and a mother in Vadstena."

This is a certain villa that is called by this name; and there stands that monastery of nuns and brothers whose construction was revealed to her by God and where the said lady was to be buried. Finally Christ said to her: "Nevertheless, know that you will lay down your body in Rome until it come to the place prepared for it. For it pleases me to spare you from your labors and to accept your will in place of the completed action."

After these and many other things had been said, she made mention of and arrangements for some persons living with her and whom, before death, she said she had

seen standing in God's presence.

After those things had been heard, the Lord added these words: "On the morning of the fifth day, after receiving the sacraments, call together one by one all those whom I named above; and to them tell the things to be done. And thus, amidst these words and their hands, you will come to your monastery - i.e., into my joy; and your body will be placed in Vadstena." Then, as the fifth day approached, at the moment of dawn, Christ appeared to her again and consoled her. But when Mass had been said and after she had received the sacraments, in the hands of the aforesaid persons she sent forth her spirit.

Prayers

How to prepare before prayer

Mental prayer contains three parts: the preparation, the meditation, and the conclusion.

1. In the PREPARATION there are three acts: an act of faith, of the presence of God, and of adoration; 2, an act of humility and of sorrow for our sins, and, 3, a petition for light. They may be made in the following manner: My God, I believe Thee present within me; I adore Thee with my whole soul.

Be careful to make this act with a lively faith, for a lively remembrance of the divine presence contributes greatly to remove distractions. Cardinal Caracciolo, Bishop of Aversa, used to say that when a person is distracted in meditation there is reason to think that he has not made a lively act of faith.

2. Lord, I should now be in hell in punishment of the offences I have offered to Thee. I am sorry for them from the bottom of my heart; have mercy on me.

3. Eternal Father, for the sake of Jesus and Mary, give me light in this meditation, that I may draw fruit from it.

We must, then, recommend ourselves to the Blessed Virgin by saying a Hail Mary, to St. Joseph, to our guardian angel, and to our holy patron. These acts, says St. Francis de Sales, ought to be made with fervor, but should be short, that we may pass immediately to the meditation.

II. On entering on the meditation we must take leave of all extraneous thoughts, saying with St. Bernard, "O my thoughts! wait here;" after prayer we shall speak on other matters. Be careful not to allow the mind to wander where it wishes; but should a distracting thought enter, we must not be disturbed, nor seek to banish it with a violent effort, but let us remove it calmly and return to God. Let us remember that the devil labors hard to disturb us in the time of meditation in order to make us abandon it. Let him, then, who omits mental prayer on account of distractions, be persuaded that he

gives delight to the devil. It is impossible, says Cassian, that our minds should be free from all distractions during prayer. Let us, then, never give up meditation, however great our distractions may be. St. Francis de Sales says that if in mental prayer we should do nothing else than continually banish distractions and temptations, the meditation is well made. And before him St. Thomas taught that involuntary distractions do not take away the fruit of mental prayer. When we perceive that we are deliberately distracted, let us desist from the voluntary defect, and banish the distraction, but let us be careful not to discontinue our meditation.

The Fifteen Prayers of Saint Bridget to our Suffering Lord Jesus Christ

For a long time, St. Bridget wanted to know the number of wounds Our Lord received during His Passion. He one day appeared to her and said, "I received 5480 blows on My Body. If you wish to honor them in some way, say 15 Our Fathers and 15 Hail Marys with the following Prayers (which He taught her) for a whole year. When the year is up, you will have honored each one of My Wounds."

First Prayer

1 Our Father...

(Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.)

1 Hail Mary...

(Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Amen.)

O Jesus Christ! Eternal Sweetness to those who love Thee. Joy surpassing all joy and all desire. Salvation and Hope of all sinners. Who hast proved that Thou hast no greater desire than to be among men, even assuming human nature at the fullness of time for the love of men, recall all the sufferings Thou hast endured from the instant of Thy Conception and especially during Thy Passion, as it was decreed and ordained from all Eternity in the Divine Plan. Remember, O Lord, that during the Last Supper with Thy disciples, having washed their feet, Thou gavest them Thy Most Precious Body and Blood and while at the same time Thou didst sweetly console them, Thou didst foretell them Thy coming Passion.

Remember the sadness and bitterness which Thou didst experience in Thy Soul as Thou Thyself bore witness saying, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." Remember the

fear, anguish and pain that Thou didst suffer in Thy Delicate Body before the torment of the Crucifixion, when, after having prayed three times, bathed in a sweat of blood. Thou wast betrayed by Judas, Thy disciple. Arrested by the people of a nation Thou hadst chosen and elevated. Accused by false witnesses. Unjustly judged by three judges during the Flower of Thy Youth and during the Solemn Paschal Season. Remember that Thou wast despoiled of Thy Garments and clothed in those of derision. That Thy Face and Eyes were veiled. That Thou wast buffeted, crowned with thorns and a reed placed in Thy Hands. That Thou was crushed with blows and overwhelmed with affronts and outrages. In memory of all these pains and sufferings which Thou didst endure before Thy Passion on the Cross, grant me before my death, true contrition, a sincere and entire confession worthy satisfaction and the remission of all my sins. Amen.

Second Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! True Liberty of Angels, Paradise of Delights, remember the horror and sadness which Thou didst endure when Thy enemies, like furious lions, surrounded Thee and by thousands of insults, spits, blows, lacerations and other unheard of cruelties, tormented Thee at will. In consideration of these torments and insulting words, I beseech Thee, O My Savior, to deliver me from all my enemies, visible and invisible and to bring me under Thy Protection to the perfection of Eternal Salvation. Amen.

Third Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Creator of Heaven and earth. Whom nothing can encompass or limit. Thou who dost enfold and hold all under Thy Loving Power, remember the very bitter pain Thou didst suffer when the Jews nailed Thy Sacred Hands and Feet to the Cross by blow after blow with big blunt nails and not finding Thee in a pitiable enough state to satisfy

their rage, they enlarged Thy Wounds and added pain to pain and with indescribable cruelty, stretched Thy Body on the Cross, pulled Thee from all sides thus dislocating Thy Limbs. I beg of Thee, O Jesus, by the memory of this most Loving Suffering of the Cross, to grant me the Grace to fear Thee and to love Thee. Amen.

Fourth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Heavenly Physician, raised aloft on the Cross to heal our wounds with Thine. Remember the bruises which Thou didst suffer and the weakness of all Thy Members which were distended to such a degree that never was there pain like unto Thine. From the Crown of Thy Head to the Soles of Thy Feet, there was not one spot on Thy Body that was not in torment and yet, forgetting all Thy Sufferings, Thou didst not cease to pray to Thy Heavenly Father for Thy enemies saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Through this Great Mercy and in memory of this suffering, grant that the remembrance of Thy Most Bitter Passion may effect in us, a perfect contrition and the remission of all our sins. Amen.

Fifth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Mirror of Eternal Splendor, remember the sadness which Thou experienced when contemplating in the Light of Thy Divinity, the predestination of those who would be saved by the Merits of Thy Sacred Passion, Thou didst see at the same time, the great multitude of reprobates who would be damned for their sins and Thou didst complain bitterly of those hopeless lost and unfortunate sinners. Through this Abyss of Compassion and Pity, and especially through the Goodness which Thou displayed to the good thief when Thou didst say to him, "This day, thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." I beg of Thee, O Sweet Jesus, that at the hour of my death, Thou wilt show

me Mercy. Amen.

Sixth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Beloved and Most Desirable King, remember the grief Thou didst suffer, when naked and like a common criminal, Thou was fastened and raised on the Cross. When all Thy friends abandoned Thee, except Thy Beloved Mother, who remained close to Thee during Thy Agony and whom Thou didst entrust to Thy faithful disciple when Thou saidst to Mary, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to St. John, "Son, behold thy Mother!" I beg of Thee, O My Savior, by the sword of sorrow which pierced the soul of Thy Holy Mother, to have compassion on me in all my trials and tribulations, both corporal and spiritual, and to assist me in all my trials, and especially at the hour of my death. Amen

Seventh Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Inexhaustible Fountain of Compassion. Who by a profound gesture of Love, said from the Cross, "I thirst!" Suffered from the thirst for the salvation of the human race. I beg of Thee, O My Savior, to inflame in our hearts the desire to tend toward perfection in all our acts and to extinguish in us the concupiscence of the flesh and the ardor of worldly desires. Amen.

Eighth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Sweetness of Hearts, Delight of The Spirit, by the bitterness of the vinegar and gall which Thou didst taste on the Cross for Love of us, grant us the grace to receive worthily, Thy Precious Body and Blood during our life and at the hour of our death, that They may serve as a remedy and consolation for our souls. Amen.

Ninth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Royal Virtue, Joy of the Mind, recall the pain Thou didst endure when, plunged in an ocean of bitterness at the approach of death, insulted, outraged by the Jews, Thou didst cry out in a loud voice that Thou wast abandoned by Thy Father, saying, “ My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Through this anguish, I beg of Thee, O My Savior, not to abandon me in the terrors and pains of my death. Amen.

Tenth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Who art the beginning and end of all things, life and virtue, remember that for our sakes, Thou was plunged in an abyss of suffering from the Soles of Thy Feet to the Crown of Thy Head. In consideration of the enormity of Thy Wounds, teach me to keep, through pure love, Thy Commandments, whose way is wide and easy for those who love Thee. Amen.

Eleventh Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Deep Abyss of Mercy. I beg of Thee, in memory of Thy Wounds which penetrated to the very Marrow of Thy Bones and to the Depth of Thy Being, to draw me, a miserable sinner, overwhelmed by my offenses, away from sin and to hide me in Thy Wounds until Thy anger and just indignation shall have passed away. Amen.

Twelfth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Mirror of Truth, Symbol of Unity, Link of Charity, remember the multitude of wounds with which Thou wast covered from head to foot, torn and reddened by the spilling of Thy Adorable Blood. O Great and Universal Pain which Thou didst suffer in Thy Virginal Flesh for the love of us! Sweetest Jesus! What is there that Thou couldst have done for us that Thou hast not done?! May the Fruit of Thy Sufferings be renewed in my soul by the faithful remembrance of Thy Passion, and may Thy Love increase in my heart each day until I see Thee in Eternity. Thou who art the treasury of every real good and every joy, which I beg Thee to grant me, O Sweetest Jesus, in Heaven. Amen.

Thirteenth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Strong Lion, Immortal and Invincible King, remember the pain which Thou didst endure when all Thy Strength both moral and physical, was entirely exhausted, Thou didst bow Thy Head saying, "It is consummated!" Through this anguish and grief, I beg of Thee Lord Jesus, to have mercy on me at the hour of my death when my mind will be greatly troubled and my soul will be in anguish. Amen.

Fourteenth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! Only Son of the Father, Splendor and Figure of His Substance, remember the simple and humble recommendation Thou didst make of Thy Soul to Thy Heavenly Father saying, "Father, into Thy Hands, I commend My Spirit!" And with Thy Body all torn, Thy Heart broken and the Bowels of Thy Mercy open to redeem us, Thou didst expire. By this Precious Death, I beg of Thee, O King of Saints, comfort me and help me to resist the devil, the flesh and the world, so that being dead to the world, I may live to Thee alone. I beg of Thee, at the hour of my death, to receive me, a pilgrim and an exile returning to Thee. Amen.

Fifteenth Prayer

1 Our Father...

1 Hail Mary...

O Jesus! True and Fruitful Vine, remember the abundant outpouring of Blood which Thou didst so generously shed from Thy Sacred Body as juice from grapes in a wine press. From Thy Side, pierced with a lance by a soldier, Blood and Water issued forth until there was not left in Thy Body a single drop and finally, like a bundle of myrrh, lifted to the top of the Cross, Thy Delicate Flesh was destroyed, the very Substance of Thy Body withered and the Marrow of Thy Bones dried up. Through this bitter Passion and through the outpouring of Thy Precious Blood, I beg of Thee, O Sweet Jesus, to receive my soul when I am in my death agony. Amen.

Conclusion

O Sweet Jesus! Pierce my heart so that my tears on penitence will be my bread day and night. May I be converted entirely to Thee. May my heart be Thy perpetual habitation. May my conversation be pleasing to Thee and may the end of my life be so praiseworthy, that I may merit Heaven and there with Thy saints, praise Thee forever.

Amen.

The Rosary

We highly recommend that all 15 decades of the Rosary be prayed daily. Our Lady repeatedly emphasized the importance of praying the Rosary each day in her messages at Fatima. She even said that Francisco would have to pray “many rosaries” before he could go to Heaven. Praying all 15 decades of the Rosary each day can be accomplished in a variety of ways. However, for many it is best accomplished by praying a part of the Rosary at different times of the day, for example, the joyful mysteries in the morning, sorrowful mysteries at midday, and glorious mysteries in the evening. The Hail, Holy Queen only needs to be prayed at the end of the entire day’s rosary.

St. Louis De Montfort (+1710): “Blessed Alan de la Roche who was so deeply devoted to the Blessed Virgin had many revelations from her and we know that he confirmed the truth of these revelations by a solemn oath. Three of them stand out with special emphasis: the first, that if people fail to say the Hail Mary (the Angelic Salutation which has saved the world – Luke 1:28) out of carelessness, or because they are lukewarm, or because they hate it, this is a sign that they will probably and indeed shortly be condemned to eternal punishment.”

An essential part of the Rosary is meditation on the mysteries, episodes in the life of Our Lord and Our Lady. This means thinking about them, visualizing them, considering the graces and merits displayed in them, and using them for inspiration to better know and love God. It is also common to focus on a particular virtue with each mystery.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

With your right hand, trace a cross by touching your forehead, then chest, left shoulder and right shoulder while saying: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

APOSTLE'S CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, was

born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He went down to the dead. On the third day, he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

OUR FATHER

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

SAY THREE "HAIL MARY" PRAYERS

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

- * At the first "Hail Mary" you add after the word "Jesus" 'who increases our faith'.
- * At the second "Hail Mary" you add after the word "Jesus" 'who increases our hope'.
- * At the third "Hail Mary" you add after the word "Jesus" 'who increases us in love'.

GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

- ANNOUNCE THE MYSTERY (JOYFUL, SORROWFUL OR THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES)

- * First Joyful Mystery – The Annunciation (Prayer about: Humility)
- * Second Joyful Mystery – The Visitation (Prayer about: Love of Neighbor)
- * Third Joyful Mystery - The Nativity (Prayer about: Poverty of Spirit)
- * Fourth Joyful Mystery - The Presentation (Prayer about: Purity of mind and body)
- * Fifth Joyful Mystery - The Finding of the Child Jesus In the Temple (Prayer about: Obedience)

- * First Sorrowful Mystery - The Agony In the Garden (Prayer about: God's Will be done)
- * Second Sorrowful Mystery - Scourging At the Pillar (Prayer about: Mortification of the senses)
- * Third Sorrowful Mystery - The Crowning With Thorns (Prayer about: Reign of Christ in our heart)
- * Fourth Sorrowful Mystery - The Carrying of the Cross (Prayer about: Patient bearing of trials)
- * Fifth Sorrowful Mystery – The Crucifixion (Prayer about: Pardoning of Injuries)

- * First Glorious Mystery – The Resurrection (Prayer about: Faith)
- * Second Glorious Mystery – The Ascension (Prayer about: Christian Hope)
- * Third Glorious Mystery - The Descent of the Holy Spirit (Prayer about: Gifts of the Holy Spirit)
- * Fourth Glorious Mystery – The Assumption (Prayer about: To Jesus through Mary)
- * Fifth Glorious Mystery - The Coronation (Prayer about: Grace of Final Perseverance)

- SAY ONE "OUR FATHER"

- SAY TEN "HAIL MARY" PRAYERS WHILE MEDITATING ON THE FIRST ROSARY MYSTERY (AFTER EVERY "HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH

THEE, BLESSED ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF
THY WOMB, JESUS" ADD:

Joyful Mysteries

- * 'who you, o Virgin, has received through the Holy Spirit'...
- * 'who you, o Virgin, has carried to Elisabeth'...
- * 'who you, o Virgin, has given birth to'...
- * 'who you, o Virgin, has carried to the temple'...
- * 'who you, o Virgin, has recovered in the temple'...

Sorrowful Mysteries

- * 'who for us has sweated blood'...
- * 'who for us has been scourged'...
- * 'who for us has been crowned with thorns'...
- * 'who for us has carried the cross'...
- * 'who for us has been crucified'...

Glorious Mysteries

- * 'who has risen from the dead'...
- * 'who has ascended into heaven'...
- * 'who has sent us the Holy Spirit'...
- * 'who has taken you up, o Virgin, into heaven'...
- * 'who has crowned you, o Virgin, in heaven'...

- SAY ONE "GLORY BE"

- SAY THE "FATIMA PRAYER"

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls into
heaven, especially those who are in most need of thy mercy. Amen.

- REPEAT THIS SEQUENCE FOR REMAINING MYSTERIES

SALVE REGINA

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. O God, whose only begotten Son, by His life, death, and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech Thee, that meditating upon these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

- FINISH WITH THE "SIGN OF THE CROSS"

With your right hand, trace a cross by touching your forehead, then chest, left shoulder and right shoulder while saying: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

The Prayer of St. Ephram

O Lord and Master of my life,
take from me the spirit of sloth, despondency, lust for power and idle talk.
(Prostration)

But grant unto me, Thy servant,

a spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love.

(Prostration)

Yea, O Lord and King,

grant me to see mine own faults

and not to judge my brothers and sisters.

For blessed art Thou unto ages of ages.

Amen.

(Prostration)

O God, cleanse Thou me a sinner. (Repeat 12 times, with as many bows, and then again the whole prayer from the beginning throughout, and after that one great prostration.)

WWW.CATHOLIC-SAINTS.NET

Free DVDs and Books

Listing of Sections (CLICK ON ANY SECTION BELOW TO GO DIRECTLY TO IT)

- [Important Spiritual Information You Must Know to be Saved \(Introduction\)](#)
- [Natural Family Planning \(NFP\), the Marital Sexual Act, and Procreation](#)
 - [Sexual Pleasure, Lust, and the Various Sexual Acts in Marriage](#)
 - [Chastity: The Angelic Virtue](#)
 - [The Biblical and Apostolic Foundation for Priestly Chastity](#)
- [Important Christian Dogma You Must Believe to be Saved \(Introduction\)](#)
- [About Receiving the Sacraments From Heretics and Prayer in Communion With Heretics \(Introduction\)](#)

IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL INFORMATION YOU MUST KNOW TO BE SAVED

MORTALLY SINFUL MEDIA!

“Know also this, that, in the last days, shall come dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, Traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasures more than of God: Having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Most people of this generation, even those who profess themselves Christian, are so fallen away in morals that even the debauched people who lived a hundred years ago would be ashamed of the many things people today enjoy. And this is exactly what the devil had planned from the start, to step by step lowering the standard of morality in the world through the media until, in fact, one cannot escape to sin mortally by watching it with the intention of enjoying oneself. Yes to watch ungodly media only for enjoyment or pleasure or for to waste time (which could be used for God), as most people do, is mortally sinful.

54 years ago (1956), Elvis Presley had to be filmed above the waist up on a tv-show because of a hip-swiveling movement. Not that it was an acceptable performance, everything tending towards sensuality is an abomination, but still it serves to prove how much the decline has come since then, when even the secular press deemed inappropriate what today would be looked upon as nothing. But even at that time, in major Hollywood films like The Ten Commandments, could be seen both women and men that are incredibly immodestly dressed. The fall and decline of morals have been in progress ever since the invention of motion picture. God allowed this deceit to be invented because of people's sins, especially for sins of the flesh. The media have such power that it preconditions peoples mind in such a way - since people look at TV as reality - that what was shameful yesterday will be the norm today! So if the media shows immodesty as norm, norm it will become!

TV-SERIES, FILMS, CARTOONS

We already know that almost everything on television will have the most abominable impurities and abominations presented in them so that a parent should be appalled by it and refuse his children to even take part of it, but this, sadly, is not the case for most. You will be amazed at how far this goes. Even children cartoons which one could think was acceptable and modest, is far from acceptable or modest but even many times worse then the general media broadcasted for older viewers,

which will be dealt with shortly.

Firstly, you will almost always see fornication and adultery or other sexual impurities and sins of the flesh presented throughout the godless media as the norm to live, along with a rejection of the traditional way that people lived in before the beginning of 19th century. The sexual suggestions and perversions are endless in these shows. To sit and watch such shows or to allow your children to watch such shows is not only insanity but a clear mortal sin.

Secondly, there is a comedic part on almost every show which seems to hold no sin, but when examined closely will be revealed for what it really is. For gloating (also called disability humor) which is a most abominable and uncharitable sin will most certainly be impossible to escape if you watch TV-series! This odious sin of gloating prevails in every kind of media such as cartoons, films and shows, where people are beating each other or laughing at the different calamities or stupidities that another person will experience. Think about how evil this is: to laugh at another person's calamity or sorrow! Yet, you cannot escape seeing this when you watch TV! Do to others as you would have them do to you, was one of the commandments of our Lord! (Matthew 7:12) - You would not want someone laughing or making fun of your calamities and miss-happenings, yet we laugh and approve it when sad things happen to others? Then we have the constant jokes about the Christian religion with countless of derogatory words uttered in a most blasphemous spirit by the media when it tries to depict how utterly stupid, foolish, and out of date it is to be a firm Bible believing Christian. The constant ridicule and mockery of God and the Christian religion should be sufficient cause for rejecting this mortally sinful filth entirely! Again, you would not approve of a show that blasphemed you, a friend, child or wife, yet you watch shows making a mockery of God and religion which is worth infinitely more than weak human beings.

Thirdly, we have the specifically evil sin of immodest clothing and make-up which every show holds as law to be followed, and there is no exception in cartoons for children. Most women-characters are half dressed or half naked in these cartoons

showing off their whole body in a sexually suggestive way. This, in fact, is what the devil wants, for he preconditions children's sexuality to grow at a young age. The little mermaid for example, the main character in the Disney movie called "The Little Mermaid", is completely naked from the waist up except for a small covering of sea shells over her breasts which is outrageous to say the least! Sadly, this is how most characters dress! The woman-character in Aladdin the movie is immodestly dressed showing most parts of her body. She even sexually seduces one of the males in a scene for whatever reason, and this is what our kids are watching and learning, from Satan himself! If you have allowed your children to watch such things, you should be ashamed of yourself!

There is a perfect reason why young children become sexually active at a young age. Young children watching such films and shows imitates the behavior, movements and way of acting by the characters; for example: the eye-rollings, the seducing of men or of women, the hip-swirlings and the seducing way of moving the body and the seducing way of walking, etc.

Tinker bell, a character featured in many Disney shows, is considered to be one of the most important branding icons of Disney, (according to Wikipedia sources).

"Tinker Bell is illustrated as a young (sexy), blonde haired, big blue eyed, white female, with an exaggerated hour-glass (model-shaped) figure. She is clad in a short lime-green (ultra revealing miniskirt) dress with a rigid trim, and green slippers with white puffs. She is trailed by small amounts of pixie dust when she moves, and this dust can help humans fly if they 'believe' it will (we will see more of the magic fairy tale crap and 'belief' in the occult, all for our children to watch as we move along). Some critics have complained that Tinker Bell is too sexually suggestive." (And this is supposed to be a character for children movies. Outrageous to say the least, even the secular world agrees!)

These are just some of the examples I can come to think of, and my knowledge

about children shows is very limited. One with more knowledge could easily fill a number of volumes on the same subject.

The sin of immodest clothing and make-up brings up innumerable impure and lustful thoughts, which is just what the devil wants when he incites people to commit these sins of immodest clothing and painting the face with makeup, as only harlots and heathens did until recently when “Catholics” started to follow this trend. Those who do these things, do them for the sole reason of making others lust at them, or for to make themselves seem more attractive to others. This is sinful to say the least and very displeasing to God.

Billions of souls are burning now as we speak in the excruciating fire of hell since they were tempted to sexual impurities in their thoughts by the media they watched! Will you follow them or let your children follow them and be the cause of your greater sorrow, when on top of being condemned, you must endure to be tormented forevermore by your own child? Absolute madness! You must hinder your child to use makeup and immodest clothing at any cost! You can only hope to save yourself from hell if you do everything in your power to prevent your children going there. Are you? If they refuse to obey you, throw them out! If they are youngsters, why then don't they obey you? There is a perfect reason why sacred scripture commands chastisement in the education of our children!

“He that loveth his son, frequently chastiseth him, that he may rejoice in his latter end... Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid: play with him, and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow, and at the last thy teeth be set on edge. Give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn, and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee. Instruct thy son, and labour about him, lest his lewd behaviour be an offence to thee.” (Ecclesiasticus 30:1-13)

Don't be fooled by the world. You do no sin whatsoever before God if you chastise

your children in the education of righteousness. The world, or in truth, Satan, who rule this world, has made laws that says chastisement of children are wrong. This is one of many reasons he has succeeded to achieve the downfall of society!

Remember that rebellious and ungodly children were one of the end times prophecies that the Bible mentioned (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Fourthly, there is the abominable and mortal sin of blasphemy which is uttered in almost every TV- show, even going so far as to exchange the name of God, Jesus or Christ for curse words. A few hundred years ago, people would have been horrified to commit this sin since it was then rightly punished by execution. But now, people commit this sin constantly and without fear, without anyone raising an eyebrow. Yet, when death comes, all blasphemers will open their eyes and find that they are in a sea of fire to burn and be tormented for all eternity. If you watch things which contain blasphemy, which would be almost every film or show in this age, then you are literally sick and despicable and Hell will be long for you unless you repent immediately and resolve to never do so again. Death will come and grab you whether you like it or not.

Fifthly, there is the universal acceptance of false religions, magic and occultism which was rightly punishable by death earlier in our history but which now is norm in the media. You will see the horrible sin of magic and occultism in every kind of TV-show; for example, in animated cartoons it's almost 'always' the norm; it is also a frequent occurrence on other shows broadcasted for the general public such as Buffy the vampire slayer, Charmed, Sabrina the Teenage Witch, etc! Many famous comedies are also making this evil filth seem fun and acceptable. But then again, the norm of comedian shows is to make fun of things that are abominable and sinful. A person cannot watch comedy-shows without being guilty of grave sin, for how can a person take delight and laugh about things which displease God?

Just to show you how far the sin of idolatry, magic, new age and occultism have come in the media, the following will be presented about the major blockbuster movie hit, Avatar.

This article will prove that a person watching media will be forced to agree or disagree with a number of events that unfolds throughout the storyline, and every time a person agrees with or fails to disagree with that which is against God, he in fact commits a grave sin. This is what makes the watching of media so deadly. People nowadays don't fathom the severity of this crime but it is easily understood to be a most evil crime when one realizes that God will judge our every thought as a deed.

“James Cameron's, Avatar, is a movie where worshipping a tree and communing with spirits are not only acceptable; they are attractive. Avatar is also markedly pantheistic and essentially, the gospel according to James Cameron. This pantheistic theme that equates God with the forces and laws of the universe is outwardly depicted by the heroes and heroine in the movie who all worship Eywa, the "All Mother" Goddess, who is described as "a network of energy" that "flows through all living things.”

“Overall, the movie is strewn with ritualistic magic, communion with spirits, shamanism, and blatant idolatry as it conditions the audience to believe these pagan occult lies. In addition, the audience is led to sympathize with the Avatar and even ends up pulling for him as he is initiated into pagan rituals. Even the lead scientist becomes a pagan in the end, proclaiming that she is "with Eywa, she's real," and goes to be with her upon her death.”

People nowadays don't fathom the severity of this crime of magic, idolatry and paganism but it is easily understood to be a most evil crime when one realizes that magicians and occultists are communing with the devil when they do their magical rituals or offerings, whether it be worshipping a tree or stone, or something made by human hand. We are constantly being bombarded throughout the media to accept, magic, paganism, spiritualism, occultists, etc, in other words, false religions, which clearly shows that Satan is involved here.

Psalms 95:5- "For all the gods of the Gentiles are devils..."

1 Cor. 10:20- "But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. And I would not that you should be made partakers with devils."

If someone were to make a show that presented child perversion paedophilia as a good and normal thing to do, everyone would be appalled, but now the worldly media present the communing with demons as something good and allowable and no one raises an eyebrow. To watch such filth is mortally sinful and your torment in hell will be eternal if you watch such things or allow your children to watch such things.

Sixthly, there is the most evil sin of greed and love of possessions which is showed universally on TV as something good and praiseworthy to follow. You will see the most extravagant displays of worldly excesses! This is abominable first off, since every kind of excess is an affront against the many poor people who don't have enough money to even feed themselves with, and secondly since it tempts people to seek these useless and unnecessary things such as expensive cars, houses, and golden necklaces etc... instead of being content with food, clothing and shelter as the Apostle tells us to be. If God judges even every thought that you will have, how much more will He not judge deeds which is what watching ungodly media is!

It should also be understood that media gives the person who watches it a drug-like experience, an experience of false and unholy fire. The most dangerous effect from media is the dream state it puts a person into. After watching something worldly which made an impression, this is what will occupy your mind and your feelings for most part of the day or even weeks to come. From the blockbuster movie Avatar, this demonstration can be seen clearer. A news article published in the Economic Times reads as following:

'Avatar' driving us to suicide, say fans

LOS ANGELES: 'Avatar' may have enthralled worldwide audiences with its imagery of an utopian alien world but movie-goers have complained of depression and even suicidal thoughts after watching the sci-fi hit.

Fans of James Cameron's 3D magnum opus are seemingly finding it hard to separate fact from fiction and Internet forums have been flooded with posts by movie-goers plagued with suicidal thoughts about not being able to visit the planet Pandora, reported CNN online.

North American fan site 'Avatar Forums' has received 2,000 posts under a thread entitled 'Ways to cope with the depression of the dream of Pandora being intangible'.

Forum administrator Philippe Baghdassarian said, "The movie was so beautiful and it showed something we don't have here on earth. I think people saw we could be living in a completely different world and that caused them to be depressed."

Forum user 'Okoi' writes, "After I watched 'Avatar' at the first time, I truly felt depressed as I 'wake' up in this world again."

It should be understood that this depression arise from a lack of faith in God. The world they really long for is not a fairy tale dream world as depicted in the movie Avatar, but in fact the realm of Heaven and the eternal vision of God – for this is where all humanity were destined to come to had they abstained from sinning and loving the world through their five senses. No one can be happy without God, for God is happiness. Depression arises from a guilty conscience when a person refuses to do what he should to achieve salvation and the eternal vision of God. Satan is exchanging a longing of the real Heaven in people's minds for a longing of fairy-tale-dreams in the media. Saddening to say the least!

A Christian should be spending his time on growing in his faith by praying, reading, and other good works, but most people do instead the contrary, and wastes most of

their time on useless tales and fables, which will occupy their minds instead of God. That is why evil media leads countless souls to eternal damnation and the torments of hell. And this is also a clear fulfillment of end times prophecies, which said many would turn from God unto fables and fairy tales. Are you one of those prophesied about?

“For there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables.” (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

This prophecy also predicted the false theory of evolution which a Christian, of course, cannot believe in since it contradicts the biblical story of creation, with death entering into the world first after sin.

CARTOONS

The second greatest evil after the sexuality and immodesty in children's shows is the constant bullying and fun making of the weaker characters, and the violence in both magazines, shows, films (and video games of course). Even the secular press acknowledges that children's shows oftentimes are more violent than other programs broadcasted for the general public! This article below was taken from the Daily Mail and clearly proves this point further.

“High levels of violence in cartoons such as Scooby-Doo can make children more aggressive, researchers claimed yesterday. They found that animated shows aimed at youngsters often have more brutality than programs broadcast for general audiences. And they said children copied and identified with fantasy characters just as much as they would with screen actors.

The study also found that youngsters tended to mimic the negative behaviour

they saw on TV such as rumour-spreading, gossiping and eye-rolling. The U.S. psychologists quizzed 95 girls aged ten and 11 about their favourite TV shows, rating them for violent content and verbal and indirect aggression. The shows included Lost, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, American Idol, Scooby-Doo and Pokemon.

The researchers found that output aimed at children as young as seven, which included a number of cartoons, had the highest levels of violence. They recorded 26 acts of aggression an hour compared with just five in shows aimed at general audiences and nine in programmes deemed unsuitable for under-14s. 'Results indicated that there are higher levels of physical aggression in children's programmes than in programmes for general audiences,' the study said."

The following story was taken from a Chinese newspaper further proving the point on how bullying, rebellion, disobedience, etc. is taught to children through anime/cartoons/magazines.

Educators Worry About Influence of Cartoons on Children

"Like many other eight-year-olds, Liu Yimin's favorite heroes aren't great scientists, or the national soccer team, or popular Chinese icons like Lei Feng. (According to the worldly norm, one should idolize weak human beings.)

His heroes are two Japanese animated characters who defy their parents and teachers. Local educators are worried and say that some of characters may be a bad influence on youngsters.

Xin San, an arrogant kindergarten student, bullies the weak, battles the strong, and constantly lusts after women - lots of women.

"I think the content of these shows is too mature for children," said Zhang Jinlian, director of the Shanghai Children and Juvenile Psychological

Guidance Center. She said many students like to imitate the actions of these cartoon kids, causing trouble in the classroom and at home. Zhang would like to see steps taken to prevent children from reading books and watching videos and VCDs about Xin San, but the cartoon kid is just too popular to be avoided.

But today's kids don't want to be instructed, they want innovative cartoons with characters who are rebellious, Xu pointed out. Sales of books and VCDs of the two cartoon series, plus viewer ship levels of the "Chibi Maruko Chan" on Shanghai TV prove that rebellion is very popular with local youngsters.

Unfortunately, children are picking up those rebellious attitudes. Zhang said that many children now bully their parents into buying them a new toy - a trick that they picked up from Chibi Maruko Chan (undoubtedly they also bully their weaker classmates as they have been taught). Even worse, she said, some young boys lustfully gaze at their girl classmates."

A while ago, when the Catholic Church had a great impact on morality in the Christian society, people looked up to and adored our divine savior Jesus Christ, the blessed Virgin Mary, and the fame and virtues of the Saints. Every Catholic child had a patron Saint of his choosing to look up to and follow. What better examples in virtues and good manners can there possibly be?

Satan has in fact exchanged an adoration of God for man through the media. This is why children nowadays look up to actors, artists, heroes or characters mainly found in media. What child today would not want to be as Superman, Spiderman or any other Superhero, who is depicted in the media as invincible, adored, and beloved by all? Why are both grownups and children nowadays so prideful and violent, unloving, disobedient, lustful and arrogant, etc., if not because we through media have been conditioned to act and behave in this way? With the devil as an example through his debauched actors and animated characters, it will always end badly.

With holy examples, such as of our Savior himself and of the Saints, virtues such as humility, patience, charity and love flourish and is found. Therefore, learn to educate your children in the knowledge of Christ and of His Saints, give them Catholic books about Saints so that they can learn about virtues, and good Catholic films about the Saints. You can find a lot of different Catholic books from Saints at this site below, and more is added frequently!

<http://www.catholic-saints.net/>

You cannot allow your children to watch anything unless you are 100% certain that the film, show or audio, they are viewing, have nothing in it that are against God's law. Unless you keep this standard, you will have your children tormenting you for all eternity in hell since you allowed evil influences and sins to effect them at an early age. You are responsible for their spiritual well being as long as they live under your roof. This, of course, should make every parent very nervous. For if you had a real live tiger in your bedroom, you would never allow your child in there since the animal could kill them and eat them. The TV, Internet or media is far more dangerous than a tiger ever will be since it kills the immortal soul of your precious child! Yet, most people allow their children to watch TV without any supervision. If you say that you cannot supervise their viewing of media, then throw out the TV and other media appliances that they use to access sinful things or prepare yourself to suffer the eternal consequences in the fire of Hell for your actions!

Now a further examination will be made on the different kinds of programs that are presented throughout the media.

Now, you might ask: "So are you forbidding all media as wrong and sinful to watch?" The answer is no. Not all media is bad, but almost everything on television is however. You might have to watch less at what the box has to offer for you. There are for example numerous great religious films and series which is totally acceptable and good for the Spirit to watch (even though, in many films, especially newer ones, there will be immodest scenes or scenes of impurity. A Christian must not look on

films or series which they know have bad scenes that will tempt them). Religious films are the best since they direct your mind toward spiritual things and God, which cannot be said of worldly films. When I am talking about Religious films, I am not referring to these worldly films disguised as religious films, which really has nothing at all to do about spirituality but really about the world, for example, stories about a man falling in love with a woman or a woman falling in love with a man, or other worldly motives, with jokes, much vain talk, etc. This is complete and utter nonsense and serves nothing at all for the edifying of soul, mind or body, and should be totally avoided as the trash it really is!

Most documentaries for example, (regarding on what documentaries you watch) can be watched even if most of them aren't good or edifying to the soul. Documentaries on prophecies, end times or doomsday, is acceptable since it draws your mind toward the end, death and coming judgment. Documentaries on animals, nature, space, history, etc. are in themselves not evil or sinful or contrary to God, and can be watched. However, they will many times be the beginning of great evil and sin. Whatever you watch or listen to, it is always a danger if you get too attached to it and allow too much time to be spent on it every day. As a rule, if you cannot stand a single day without visual and audible media, (television and music) this is a clear sign that you are addicted to media. So if you must watch something and if you can't abstain, you need to learn to watch programs that are not against God or Christian morals. But, the danger still of watching these are the same as with other bad shows since they will direct your mind towards worldly things, but at least it draws your mind towards God's creation or history which one may contemplate and draw fruit from, which cannot be said of fables and fairy-tale, pro-evolution anti-God films.

People however, that always prioritize worldly activities before spiritual ones will most assuredly lose their souls. A person must be able to make a resolution to leave worldly activities for hours per day and offer up those hours for God in solitude by praying and reading his words. Many people have time, but they spend it badly and chose to watch media or doing other fruitless works of damnation.

You would be a Saint if you had the same desire and longing for God as you have for worldly things. You can only receive a desire, love and longing for God as you have for worldly things when He is whom you desire and strive for above all other things. This will not happen as long as you are over-attached to worldly things. You must also be able - or at least have a desire to be able to - to come to the point where you want to give up watching media completely. For if a person doesn't even desire the better part, how then can he grow? God is the better and best part!

All films and series that leads your mind toward fantasies and fables such as Lord of the rings, Heroes, Smallville, Avatar, etc, even if we were to say, for the sake of argument, that they have nothing in them against God (which is not true), should still be avoided, since they direct our minds from God, from the natural world we live in, toward fantasies and all kinds of thoughts referring thereto. This is the main cause for it being so dangerous and the reason why so many persons watching these shows have unwholesome unrealistic desires or depressions. For a person that spends much time on finding God, will evidently dream and long much for God and come close to Him. In contrast, a person that spends much time on the world, is far from God and dead before God!

Now you might ask: "May I then watch other worldly films or series if the story is fixed on realistic things or the creation of God?" The answer to this question is that it depends on what movie or show you want to watch. I would say that one can watch movies and series about the end of the world, the afterlife and the paranormal, etc, since it leads your mind toward the judgment and the death of the body to come which is a good thing. From this can be understood that it depends on what fruit can be drawn out from it to begin with. *"Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire."* (Luke 3:9)

You will without a doubt bring forth bad fruit if you spend much time on bad things. So if the film or show is about worldly and vain things, then one should not watch such shows since the fruit thereof is empty and vain. This point can be further

proved from sacred scripture.

“Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy, and vain deceit; according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ...” (Colossians 2:8)

This pretty much rules out all the films, shows and series (anime series and video games as well) that has ever been made in the entire world.

News in itself isn't evil or contrary to God or morals, but most newspapers today have totally unacceptable pictures which make them extremely unsuitable to read. To read newspapers which you know will contain many unchaste, immodest and sexual pictures and useless stories about sex, etc., is complete idiocy and will lead to sins of the flesh if you cannot guard yourself. For example, I have gone to numerous mainstream news websites just to read news, and it has become so bad that I never go to them unless I first have all the images blocked. ([Ad block Plus](#) extension for Firefox or Google Chrome webbrowser is also a good tool to get rid of all ads, immoral or otherwise.) We advice you to never watch news on television or the like since it is so filled with sins that it is almost impossible to watch without seeing things that will injure your virtue like immodesty, make-up, blasphemy, gloating, lust, adultery etc... continuing in infinity. However, to watch news daily is hardly necessary and St. Alphonsus clearly rebukes people for this in his most excellent work, *The True Spouse of Christ*.

“St. Dorotheus says: "Beware of too much speaking, for it banishes from the soul holy thoughts and recollection with God." Speaking of religious that cannot abstain from inquiring after worldly news, St. Joseph Calasanctius said: "The curious religious shows that he has forgotten himself." It is certain that he who speaks too much with men converses but little with God, for the Lord says: I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart. If, then, the soul wishes that God speak to its heart, it must seek after solitude; but this solitude will never be found by religious who do not love silence." If,"

said the Venerable Margaret of the Cross, "we remain silent, we shall find solitude." And how will the Lord ever condescend to speak to the religious, who, by seeking after the conversation of creatures, shows that the conversation of God is not sufficient to make her happy? Hence, for a nun that delights in receiving visits and letters, in reading the newspapers, and in speaking frequently of the things of the world, it is impossible to be a good religious. Every time that she unnecessarily holds intercourse with seculars, she will suffer a diminution of fervor."

You might ask: "Could not this way of viewing media then be applied to all shows?" The answer is no! Most shows are evil in themselves whether or not you fix your eyes on bad scenes. And the objects of discussion on those shows are often the cause of it being sinful; for it is vain, foolish or against God. News on the other hand is not unless you deliberately choose to delve in bad news or shows, such as celebrity news or celebrity shows such as 'Idol' and the like which is mortally sinful and complete and utter foolishness to watch and take delight in. For it is idol making of weak human beings. It's truly sickening to behold how people worship worldly fame along with sinful and weak human beings!

We will not make much mention of films or shows like Prison break, Heroes, 24, Matrix, Terminator, 300, X-men, Transformers, Spiderman and the like, etc. For there should be no need of explanation about these shows. They are all against God, they are all based on breaking God's commandments and doing evil or violence, or enjoying others doing evil or violence. Whether or not the world or you claim it's about good vs evil doesn't matter, for these shows in themselves are totally fruitless, often extremely violent, condoning crimes and sins, and often compels the viewer to agree or disagree with the actions of the characters, which more then often are more bad actions then 'good' if it is even possible to call them good. Every time you agree with or fail to disagree with something which obviously is against God, you committed sin! When you watch films or shows for pleasure which have the characters doing crimes and sins, you do in fact agree with them by your continual deed of watching and by your failure in renouncing it in the very same way a

politician that is speaking against abortion would be a pro-abortionist when continually voting for allowing abortion. Thus, you are in fact in favor of evil by not denouncing and renouncing it completely!

Ask yourself, is it fitting for a child of God to take delight in such nonsense? Would God approve of these evil shows? Watching shows like this will only serve to stir you up towards wanting to watch more worldly and ungodly shows. Shows with much violence, superpowers, magic and fighting are the most dangerous since they excite our flesh and body in a false sensation or thrill exceedingly much. A person who does not cut this off from himself will lose his soul!

There are so much blasphemy, adultery, lust, pride, vanity, immodest clothing, idol-making of mortal human beings, greed, gluttony and sinful deeds and speech among countless other sins in today's media, that it is a real abomination and sickening to behold! It is in fact a real and eternal spiritual slaughter of billions of people – which is far more horrifying and lamentable than any physical slaughter will ever be – which we observe happening in real time without anyone lifting an eyebrow! However, their laughter will turn into an eternal sorrow after the very moment their death will come! Then every word of mockery and blasphemy will have its special torment in hell for all eternity to come. Learn to meditate on Hell daily and you will not hesitate one second to quit watching evil and ungodly media!

HOW TO CONTROL YOUR EYES

The learning and controlling of your sight will be most necessary for salvation. You cannot fool God! Every time you look willfully with lust in your heart at an unchaste, enticing or unsuitable object, you have most assuredly committed a mortal sin! Therefore, whenever you come across something sinful (or even something licit but which is very beautiful) with your eyes, you must make a habit to look down or away – for the sin of lust will not be far away – making the sign of the cross and saying a Hail Mary, which is highly recommended and helps against

impurities. Countless of Saints have rebuked people for the great error of failing to controlling their eyes. St. Ignatius Loyola for example rebuked a brother for looking at his face more than a brief moment. St. Bridget made a specific confession for every single face she saw during each day! This is true wisdom, for the world tells you to always watch the person you are with in the face. This will many times lead to sins and impure thoughts.

MODESTY OF THE EYES IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

Question: Is it a sin to willfully look at persons or things that one are sexually attracted to and that arouse one's sexual desire? Is it permitted to seek directly the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor?

Answer: Yes, it is a sin to willfully look at, and to continue to look at, things that arouse one's sexual desire. In addition, the Church also condemns even putting oneself in "the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor" (Pope Innocent XI) which shows us that one is not even allowed to watch or listen to things like dangerous and worldly media or remain in situations where one can become tempted to commit a sin. This, of course, proves that the Church abhors every act of the will where we unnecessarily allow ourselves to be tempted, or to be in a place or situation where we know that there is a great chance that something will tempt us, or be against God.

Custody of the eyes is always necessary for obtaining salvation, and so it is clearly sinful to fix one's eyes on a person or an object that one knows will arouse sinful thoughts and desires. "Brother Roger, a Franciscan of singular purity, being once asked why he was so reserved in his intercourse with women, replied, that **when men avoid the occasions of sin, God preserves them; but when they expose themselves to danger, they are justly abandoned by the Lord**, and easily fall into some grievous transgressions." (St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, Mortification of the Eyes, p. 221)

Our enemy, the Devil, first and foremost comes to us and enter our hearts through our eyes. No other sense is more potent in tempting man. Learning to control what you look at

is absolutely crucial in order to be saved, for every time you look willfully with lust in your heart at an unchaste, enticing or unsuitable object, or any object at all for that matter, even if modest, you have most assuredly committed a mortal sin! Therefore, whenever you come across something sinful with your eyes (or even something licit but which is very beautiful) you must make a habit to look down or away – for the sin of lust will not be far away – making the sign of the cross and saying 1 or 3 Hail Mary's, which is highly recommended since it helps against impurities.

Countless of Saints have rebuked people for the great error of failing to control their eyes. St. Ignatius of Loyola for example rebuked a brother for looking at his face for more than a brief moment. St. Bridget made a specific confession for every single face she saw during each day! This is true wisdom, but the world and current custom and habit tells you to always watch the person you are with, or looking at, in the face, **even if they are on the Television!** This is a bad custom or habit to say the least. This will many times lead to sins and impure thoughts and temptations of the Devil. Modesty and purity requires us to not stare people in the face, and especially the eyes, even at all, or only for a very short moment, even when we talk to them directly. In former times, this was common knowledge.

St. Alphonsus Liguori writes the following concerning this: **“But I do not see how looks at young persons of a different sex can be excused from the guilt of a venial fault, or even from mortal sin, when there is proximate danger of criminal consent. "It is not lawful," says [Pope] St. Gregory, "to behold what it is not lawful to covet." The evil thought which proceeds from looks, though it should be rejected, never fails to leave a stain upon the soul.”** (*The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, Mortification of the Eyes, p. 221)

This virtue may indeed be hard to put into practice for many in the beginning, but overtime and with practice, it will become easier.

The above quote from St. Alphonsus also shows why most of the things broadcasted on the media are totally unsuitable to watch or read. News in itself isn't evil or contrary to God or morals but most newspapers or news-channels today have totally unacceptable pictures or

immodestly dressed or very beautiful tv-hosts, which make them extremely unsuitable to read or watch, or at least to fix one's eye on. Remember, "It is not lawful," says St. Gregory, "to behold what it is not lawful to covet." To read newspapers which you know will contain many unchaste, immodest and sexual pictures and useless stories about sex, etc., is complete idiocy and will lead to sins of the flesh if you cannot guard yourself. Therefore, if you care for your salvation, you must not read any newspaper or magazine or watch any show or film that contains immodesty of people tempting you.

St. Alphonsus, On Avoiding the Occasion of Sin: "**Now, no one can receive absolution unless he purpose firmly to avoid the occasion of sin; because to expose himself to such occasions, though sometimes he should not fall into sin, is for him a grievous sin. And when the occasion is voluntary and is actually existing at the present time, the penitent cannot be absolved until he has actually removed the occasion of sin. For penitents find it very difficult to remove the occasion; and if they do not take it away before they receive absolution they will scarcely remove it after they have been absolved." (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 543)**

For example, in the past I have gone to numerous mainstream news websites just to read news, and it has become so bad that I never go to them unless I first have all the images blocked (on my web-browser). In fact, I have even made a habit of surfing the web without any images or JavaScript enabled at all, or at least without images on depending on the browser and the work I do. Almost all sites works perfectly fine without images and JavaScript enabled anyway. And on the few sites that don't work without JavaScript or images enabled, one can always allow an exception for that site.

It is highly important for one's salvation to block and not allow images to be shown when surfing the internet because without a doubt, almost all sites without exception will have some form or another of immodestly dressed women displayed; and, in the cases they are not immodest, they are still very beautiful or sensual looking. It's unavoidable, even if the article may seem sound. In truth, I have seen and learned that from personal experience too many times.

Adblock or Adblock Plus extension for Firefox or Google Chrome web-browsers are also good tools to **get rid of all internet ads, immoral or otherwise.** And so if people don't use a web-browser that can use extensions (or if they don't have an Adblock installed) they must change internet browser and install an Adblock by virtue of obedience to God's law that demands modesty and the avoidance of occasions of falling into sin when it is possible to do so.

That one must avoid the proximate occasion of sin in order to be *Saved* and receive *Forgiveness of one's sins* from God is a certain fact of the Natural and Divine law that has always been taught by the Church and Her Saints. For instance, Blessed Pope Innocent XI during his papacy, condemned three propositions that denied this truth:

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #61, March 4, 1679: "**He can sometimes be absolved**, who remains in a proximate occasion of sinning, which he can and does not wish to omit, but rather directly and professedly seeks or enters into." – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #62, March 4, 1679: "The proximate occasion for sinning is not to be shunned when some useful and honorable cause for not shunning it occurs." – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #63, March 4, 1679: "It is permitted to seek directly the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor." – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

Here we see that the Church confirms that the opinion that "It is permitted to seek directly the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor" **is directly condemned.** And this condemnation is about those who "seek directly the proximate occasion for sinning" for a good cause, rather than for a selfish cause. But most people in this world do not even watch or listen to evil and ungodly media for a good cause but rather for the sake of pleasure or for other unnecessary reasons, and it

is certainly *not* necessary “for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor.” This shows us that the Church and the Natural Law absolutely abhors and condemns the opinion that one can watch or listen to media that can tempt a person to sin. Indeed, not only the occasions of sin, like evil, worldly and ungodly media, but also the “the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor” must be totally rejected and shunned if one wants to attain salvation.

People who reject this advice and continue to put themselves in a proximate or near occasion of sin will undoubtedly lose their souls, since God will allow the devil to fool them in some way since they rejected the Word of God, and chose to put themselves in the way of temptation. Many there are, indeed, who presumptuously claim that they won’t get tempted by watching or listening to worldly media, or that they will be able to control it, but here we see in the condemnations of Blessed Pope Innocent XI that one may not even put oneself in “the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor”. God will undoubtedly leave a person who is presumptuous and prideful, and the Church and Her Saints have always condemned such individuals that trusts in their own strength. As a matter of fact, one can even understand from the light of natural reason that one is not allowed to put oneself in the occasion of sin, so those who do this act will have no excuse whatsoever on the day of judgment. In addition, a person who watches bad, worldly or ungodly media, tempts his fellow man to watch these evil things also, and thus, by his bad example, puts both himself and others in the way of damnation by his selfishness and presumption. So in addition to damning himself *if he obstinately continues in such a course of life*, such a person also actually tries to damn others by his bad example, trying to drag others with him into the eternal darkness and fire of hell. This is a kind of evil that is breathtaking to behold! It is thus a fact “that **when men avoid the occasions of sin, God preserves them; but when they expose themselves to danger, they are justly abandoned by the Lord, and easily fall into some grievous transgressions.**” (St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, Mortification of the Eyes, p. 221)

The pitiful and unreasonable addiction to media by so many “Catholics” or “Christians” today is something new, and almost no one before the 20th century was so miserably addicted to it as the weak and bad willed population of our own times! The amount of

pitiful and pathetic excuses that we have had to hear from bad willed people who try to excuse their act of putting themselves in the proximate or near occasion of sin is, simply said, almost endless. Even though they understand that they are not allowed to endanger their souls, they just couldn't care since they are hooked on the media, just like a drug addict, who need his daily "fix" to endure the day. For about a hundred years ago, almost no media existed as compared to today, and people thrived and the crime rates was as nothing when compared to today. So the unreasonable addiction to media cannot be excused, for man does not need media at all to survive, and putting oneself in the near or "the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor" is directly condemned by the Church.

Concerning music, it is just a fact that all kinds of popular music are mortally sinful trash that is made by the Devil for the sole reason to drag your soul to an eternal hell fire. There will be countless of impure suggestions toward sin along with a rejection of any kind of morality and decency. Popular music praises sin, and oftentimes speak against God and morality. In short, it contains the same errors and sins that worldly media have, such as: immodest clothing, adultery, blasphemy, foul language and cursing, greed, fornication, make-up, vanity, gloating, magic, occultism, acceptance of false religions, idol-making of mortal humans etc... and are many times even worse. Popular songs that doesn't praise the idolatry and worship of man is hard to find today, and it's even harder today to find popular songs which does not praise or worship sin and worldliness as norm. But worse still are the music-videos. A person cannot even listen to these songs without grave sin, but how much more then does a person sin when watching these sinful music-videos with half naked women/men worshiping sin and the occult by deed and example? This is sadly what many of your children are watching daily on the TV you have given them! You must reject this evil music entirely and not accept this to be played in your home.

Not all music are bad or sinful, you can, for example, listen to religious music, instrumental music, classical music or other music in line with decency and morals. But the highest good is of course not to listen to music at all. Giving up one's own will is always the highest good.

The best music which one may listen to is of course religious music, since it draws your

mind and heart toward our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary, the joy of Heaven, etc.

The next best music which one may listen to is classical music and instrumental music where no singing is involved, for this will not affect your mind toward worldly things as worldly songs always otherwise do.

The worst kind of music one could listen to is music which sings about worldly affairs. A person that listens much to music should avoid listening to worldly songs, otherwise he or she will be drawn toward these worldly things and affairs which are sung about. It is also very necessary to test yourself if you are addicted to music in any way, even totally acceptable music. This is easily done by going a few days without music so that you can test if some withdrawal symptoms effect you. All addictions of earthly things are evil and effect the soul in a harmful way. Just because you don't see or understand the effect doesn't mean that it isn't happening. Spiritual sloth and depression among other things are common attributes of an addiction to media or music.

The effects from the wrong kind of music, and secular songs are very dangerous. There are numerous quotes from the secular world that can be brought forth to prove this point.

"Music directly represents the passions of states of the soul-gentleness, anger, courage, temperance... if one listens to the wrong kind of music he will become the wrong kind of person..." (Quote from Aristotle)

Brain specialists, Dr. Richard Pellegrino declared that music has the uncanny power to "...trigger a flood of human emotions and images that have the ability to instantaneously produce very powerful changes in emotional states." He went on to say: "Take it from a brain guy. In 25 years of working with the brain, I still cannot affect a person's state of mind the way that one simple song can."

Dr. Allan Bloom is quite correct when he asserts that "popular music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to sexual desire... but sexual desire undeveloped and untutored... popular music gives children, on a silver plate, with all the public authority of the entertainment industry, everything their parents always used to tell them they had to wait for until they

grew up... Young people know that rock and popular music has the beat of sexual intercourse... Never was there such an art form directed so exclusively to children... [Every Catholic must of course understand that masturbation is a clear mortal sin!] The words implicitly and explicitly describe bodily acts that satisfy sexual desire and treat them as its only natural and routine culmination for children who do not yet have the slightest imagination of marriage or family." (Dr. Allan Bloom, Closing of the American Mind, pp. 73-74).

Dr. Allan Bloom: "Today, a very large proportion of young people between the ages of 10 and 20 live for music. It is their passion; nothing else excites them as it does; they cannot take seriously anything alien to music. When they are in school and with their families, they are longing to plug themselves back into their music. Nothing surrounding them - school, family, church - has anything to do with their musical world. At best that ordinary life is neutral, but mostly it is an impediment, drained of vital..."

Dr. Paul King, medical director of the adolescent program at Charter Lakeside Hospital, in Memphis, TN, says more than 80% of his teen patients are there because of rock music. Dr. King says, "the lyrics become a philosophy of life, a religion."

To allow yourself or your children to have any kind of evil or ungodly music like rock, pop, rap, techno, trance, or any kind of music that is even remotely similar to this is mortally sinful and really idiotic when presented with these facts. Billions of souls are burning now as we speak in the excruciating fire of hell since they refused to stop listening to bad and sinful music! You will have your children eating your heart out for all eternity in hell because of the violent hatred they will have against you, since you could have hindered them in their sin, but refused to do so. In short, just like with all bad or worldly media, God will abandon a person who listens to such worldly music since they chose to put themselves in the proximate occasion for sinning.

In conclusion: We advice all people to use the internet in this safe way as described above, and always have images blocked. And we want to warn people not be deceived by the Devil or their **evil attachment to images on this point.** Again, remember what St. Alphonsus says: "when men avoid the occasions of sin, God preserves them; but when they

expose themselves to danger, they are justly abandoned by the Lord, and easily fall into some grievous transgressions.”

Attachment to images made me delay using the internet in this safe way for way too long. If there are images you want to view, then you can always open another web-browser (with an ad-block installed!) where images are enabled, or enable them quickly on the web-browser you're currently on. (Or you can just right click on the image and press “view image” on Firefox so that the image can be seen.) Most of the time there are no **real reason or necessity to see any images anyway**. Only curiosity makes us want to see them. Of course, when images are necessary or needed, then it is lawful to surf with them on for as long as it is necessary, provided it is not a danger to one's soul and the site is not bad. But how often do we need to see images at all times? Never. Only at a particular time or occasion, such as for a work, or for curiosity when reading some article, but other than that we have no reason or necessity to have them on, and therefore, they must be off.

The best and easiest user experience in using the internet in this safe way is using Google Chrome or Firefox web-browser with an add-on or extension installed that manually blocks and unblocks all images easily with just one click of a button, which means that you will not have to enter settings all the time to do this. By using extension to block images, you can just click on the icon visible on the top-right side of the web-browser, thus manually blocking and unblocking all images.

For an ad-block for Google Chrome web-browser, visit these links:

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/adblock/ghhmpiojklfepjocnamgkkgbiglidom?hl=en>

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/adblock-plus/cfhdojbkjhnlbpkdaibdcccddilifddb>

For an ad-block for Firefox web-browser, visit these links:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/adblock-plus/>

(The above adblock is the most popular for Firefox. However, this adblock allows non-intrusive ads (usually text ads only) by default but this option can be disabled in settings.)

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/adblock-edge/>

(Adblock Edge is a fork of the Adblock Plus extension for blocking advertisements on the web, without sponsored ads whitelist or showing non-intrusive ads.)

For an image blocker for Google Chrome web-browser, visit this link:

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/block-image/pehaalcefcjfccdpbckoablngfkfgfgj>

For an image blocker for Firefox web-browser, visit this link:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/image-block/>

For a flash block (it blocks videos and other flash related objects from automatically playing or showing themselves without your authorization) for Google Chrome web-browser, visit these links:

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/flashblock/gofhjkjmkpinhpoiabjplobcaignabnl>

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/flashcontrol/mfidmkgfnfgnkihnejklbekckimkipmoe>

For a flash block (java block; image block etc.) for Firefox web-browser, visit these links:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/flashblock/>

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/noscript/>

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/image-and-flash-blocker/>

If you don't use an add-on (which you should be doing) the best browser to use is the Google Chrome web-browser since it allows you the option to disable both images and JavaScript on all specific internet sites (Firefox doesn't allow this option with Java or Images at all unless one first download extensions); and it is best since it allows you (after you have disabled images and Java in settings) an option to enable the images or java on the site you're currently on—without having to enter settings all the time to do this. The bad thing with this option, however, is that it perpetually enables and allows all images to be shown on that domain and not just temporarily. So do not allow images to be shown in this way on all sites or bad sites but only on trustworthy sites you go to often. **It is idiocy to perpetually allow images on various websites just because you are curious of the pictures in *one* article.** (You can also remove sites manually from “allow images” exceptions in settings afterwards if you made a mistake.)

Also, on Firefox, the images displayed by Google is not blocked by image blockers. I don't know why this is. On Chrome however all images get's blocked. (That is why we recommend users to use Google chrome instead of Firefox.) So when you search for something on this browser, you will not risk seeing something bad being displayed by Google against your will. The only option for Firefox is to block these images manually through adblock filters. If anyone want help with this, just contact us and we can give you the information and code needed.

Always surf without images on. Don't be a fool by rejecting this advice of the Popes and Saints of the Church concerning the unlawfulness of putting oneself in the proximate occasion for sinning and of looking on things that are unlawful to covet or behold and that are a danger to one's salvation. If you want to see images on some site, then allow the images only temporarily and afterwards block it again so that you do not continue surfing the internet with images on.

And yes, it is a sin to refuse to follow this advice since it's virtually impossible

to escape bad and immodest images and commercials of men or women tempting you every day when surfing the internet (and the same of course applies to watching most media too, which is why we recommend people never to watch movable images and that they only listen to the audio). Only a *condemned person* not fearing God or sin at all would refuse to follow this good advice that helps him avoid falling into sexual temptations and sins everyday.

St. Alphonus, **On Avoiding the Occasions of Sin**: "We find in this day's gospel that after his resurrection Jesus Christ entered, though the doors were closed, into the house in which the apostles were assembled, and stood in the midst of them. St. Thomas says that the mystical meaning of this miracle is that the Lord does not enter into our souls unless we keep the door of the senses shut. (On John, 20, 4) If, then, we wish Jesus Christ to dwell within us, we must keep the doors of our senses closed against dangerous occasions, otherwise the devil will make us his slaves. I will show today the great danger of perdition to which they who do not avoid the occasions of sin expose themselves.

"1. We read in the Scriptures that Christ and Lazarus arose from the dead. Christ rose to die no more: "Christ rising from the dead, dies no more." (Rom. 6. 9); but Lazarus arose and died again. The Abbot Gueric remarks that Christ arose free and unbound; "but Lazarus came forth bound feet and hands." (John 11.44) Miserable the man, adds this author, who rises from sin bound by any dangerous occasion: he will die again by losing the divine grace. He, then, who wishes to save his soul, must not only abandon sin, but also the occasions of sin: that is, he must renounce such an intimacy, such a house; he must renounce those wicked companions, and all similar occasions that incite him to sin.

"2. In consequence of original sin, we all have an inclination to do what is forbidden. Hence St. Paul complained that he experienced in himself a law opposed to reason: "But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin." (Rom. 7.23) Now, when a dangerous occasion is present, it violently excites our corrupt desires, **so that it is then very difficult to resist them: because God withholds efficacious helps from those who voluntarily expose themselves to the occasion of sin.** "He that

loves danger shall perish in it." (Ecclus. 3.27) "When," says St. Thomas, in his comment on this passage, "we expose ourselves to danger, God abandons us in it." St. Bernardine of Siena teaches that the counsel of avoiding the occasions of sin is the best of all counsel, and as it were the foundation of religion.

"3. St. Peter says that "the devil goes about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5.8) He is constantly going about our souls, endeavoring to enter and take possession of them. Hence, he seeks to place before us the occasions of sin, by which he enters the soul. "Explorat," says St. Cyprian, "an sit pars cujus aditu penetret." When the soul yields to the suggestions of the devil, and exposes itself to the occasions of sin, he easily enters and devours it. The ruin of our first parents arose from their not flying from the occasions of sin. God had prohibited them not only to eat, but even to touch the forbidden apple. In answer to the serpent tempting her, Eve said: "God has commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it." (Gen. 3.3) But "she saw, took, and ate" the forbidden fruit: she first looked at it, she then took it into her hands, and afterwards ate it. This is what ordinarily happens to all who expose themselves to the occasions of sin. **Hence, being once compelled by exorcisms to tell the sermon which displeased him most, the devil confessed that it was the sermon on avoiding the occasions of sin.** As long as we expose ourselves to the occasions of sin, the devil laughs at all our good purposes and promises made to God. **The greatest care of the enemy is to induce us not to avoid evil occasions; for these occasions, like a veil placed before the eyes, prevent us from seeing either the lights received from God, or the eternal truths, or the resolutions we have made: in a word, they make us forget all, and as it were force us into sin.**

"4. "Know it to be a communication with death; for you are going in the midst of snares." (Ecclus. 9.20) Everyone born in this world enters into the midst of snares. Hence, the Wise Man advises those who wish to be secure to guard themselves against the snares of the world, and to withdraw from them. "He that is aware of the snares shall be secure." (Prov. 11.15) But if, instead of withdrawing from them, a Christian approaches them, how can he avoid being caught by them? Hence, after having with so much loss learned the danger of exposing himself to the danger of sin, David said that, to continue faithful to God, he kept at a distance from every occasion which could lead him to relapse. "I have restrained my feet from

every evil way, that I may keep your words." (Ps. 118.101) He does not say from every sin, but from every evil way which conducts to sin. The devil is careful to find pretexts to make us believe that certain occasions to which we expose ourselves are not voluntary, but necessary. When the occasion in which we are placed is really necessary, the Lord always helps us to avoid sin; but we sometimes imagine certain necessities which are not sufficient to excuse us. "A treasure is never safe," says St. Cyprian, "as long as a robber is harbored within; nor is a lamb secure while it dwells in the same den with a wolf." (Lib. de Sing. Cler.) The saint speaks against those who do not wish to remove the occasions of sin, and still say: "I am not afraid that I shall fall." As no one can be secure of his treasure if he keeps a thief in his house, and as a lamb cannot be sure of its life if it remain in the den of a wolf, so likewise no one can be secure of the treasure of divine grace if he is resolved to continue in the occasion of sin. St. James teaches that every man has within himself a powerful enemy, that is, his own evil inclinations, which tempt him to sin. "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, drawn away, and allured." (James 1.14) **If, then, we do not fly from the external occasions, how can we resist temptation and avoid sin?** Let us, therefore, place before our eyes the general remedy which Jesus has prescribed for conquering temptations and saving our souls. "If your right eye scandalize you, pluck it out and cast it from you." (Matt. 5.29) If you find that your right eye is to you a cause of damnation, you must pull it out and cast it far from you; that is, when there is danger of losing your soul, you must fly from all evil occasions. St. Francis of Assisi used to say, as I have stated in another sermon, that the devil does not seek, in the beginning, to bind timorous souls with the chain of mortal sin; because they would be alarmed at the thought of committing mortal sin, and would fly from it with horror: **he endeavors to bind them by a single hair, which does not excite much fear; because by this means he will succeed more easily in strengthening their bonds, till he makes them his slaves. Hence he who wishes to be free from the danger of being the slave of hell must break all the hairs by which the enemy attempts to bind him; that is, he must avoid all occasions of sin,** such as certain manners of speech, places, little presents, and words of affection. With regard to those who have had a habit of impurity, it will not be sufficient to avoid proximate (near) occasions; if they do not fly from remote occasions, they will very easily relapse into their former sins.

“5. Impurity, says St. Augustine, is a vice which makes war on all, and which

few conquer. "The fight is common, but the victory rare." How many miserable souls have entered the contest with this vice, and have been defeated! But to induce you to expose yourselves to occasions of this sin, the devil will tell you not to be afraid of being overcome by the temptation. "I do not wish," says St. Jerome, "to fight with the hope of victory, lest I should sometimes lose the victory." I will not expose myself to the combat with the hope of conquering; because, by voluntarily engaging in the fight, I shall lose my soul and my God. **To escape defeat in this struggle, a great grace of God is necessary; and to render ourselves worthy of this grace, we must, on our part, avoid the occasions of sin.** To practice the virtue of chastity, it is necessary to recommend ourselves continually to God: we have not strength to preserve it; that strength must be the gift of God. "And as I knew," says the Wise Man, "that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, ... I went to the Lord, and besought him." (Wis. 8.21) But if we expose ourselves to the occasions of sin, we ourselves shall provide our rebellious flesh with arms to make war against the soul. "Neither," says the Apostle, "yield your members as instruments of sin unto iniquity." (Rom. 6.13) In explaining this passage, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "You stimulate the flesh; you arm it, and make it powerful against the spirit." St. Philip Neri used to say that in the war against the vice of impurity, the victory is gained by cowards -- that is, by those who fly from the occasions of this sin. But the man who exposes himself to it, arms his flesh, and renders it so powerful, that it will be morally impossible for him to resist its attacks.

"6. "Cry out," says the Lord to Isaiah, "all flesh is grass." (Isa. 40.6) Now, says St. John Chrysostom, **if all flesh is grass, it is as foolish for a man who exposes himself to the occasion of sin to hope to preserve the virtue of purity, as to expect that hay, into which a torch has been thrown, will not catch fire.** "Put a torch into hay, and then dare to deny that the hay will burn." No, says St. Cyprian; it is impossible to stand in the midst of flames, and not to burn. "Impossibile est flammis circumdari et non ardere." (De Sing. Cler.) "Can a man," says the Holy Spirit, "hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn? or can he walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" (Prov. 6.27, 28) Not to be burnt in such circumstances would be a miracle. St. Bernard teaches that **to preserve chastity, and, at the same time, to expose oneself to the proximate occasion of sin, "is a greater miracle than to raise a dead man to life."**

“7. In explaining the fifth Psalm, **St. Augustine says that "he who is unwilling to fly from danger, wishes to perish in it."** Hence, in another place, he exhorts those who wish to conquer, and not to perish, to avoid dangerous occasions. "In the occasion of falling into sin, take flight, if you desire to gain the victory." (Serm. 250 de temp.) Some foolishly trust in their own strength, and do not see that their strength is like that of flax placed in the fire. "And your strength shall be as the ashes of tow." (Isa. 1.31) Others, trusting in the change which has taken place in their life, in their confessions, and in the promises they have made to God, say: Through the grace of the Lord, I have now no bad motive in seeking the company of such a person; her presence is not even an occasion of temptations: Listen, all you who speak in this manner. In Mauritania there are bears that go in quest of the apes, to feed upon them: as soon as a bear appears, the apes run up the trees, and thus save themselves. But what does the bear do? He stretches himself on the ground as if dead, and waits till the apes descend from the trees. The moment he sees that they have descended, he springs up, seizes on them, and devours them. **It is thus the devil acts: he makes the temptation appear to be dead; but when a soul descends, and exposes itself to the occasion of sin, he stirs up temptation, and devours it. Oh! how many miserable souls, devoted to spiritual things, to mental prayer, to frequent communion, and to a life of holiness have, by exposing themselves to the occasion of sin, become the slaves of the devil!** We find in ecclesiastical history that a holy woman, who employed herself in the pious office of burying the martyrs, once found among them one who was not as yet dead. She brought him into her own house, and procured a physician and medicine for him, till he recovered. But, what happened? These two saints (as they might be called -- one of them on the point of being a martyr, the other devoting her time to works of mercy with so much risk of being persecuted by the tyrants) first fell into sin and lost the grace of God, and, becoming weaker by sin, afterwards denied the faith. St. Macarius relates a similar fact regarding an old man who suffered to be half-burned in defense of the faith; but, being brought back into prison he, unfortunately for himself, formed an intimacy with a devout woman who served the martyrs, and fell into sin.

“8. The Holy Spirit tells us that we must fly from sin as from a serpent. "Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent." (Ecclus. 21.2) Hence, as we not only avoid the bite of a serpent, but are careful neither to touch nor approach it, **so we must**

fly not only from sin, but also from the occasion of sin -- that is, from the house, the conversation, the person that would lead us to sin. St. Isidore

says that he who wishes to remain near a serpent, will not remain long unhurt.

"Juxta serpentem positus non erit sin illaesus." (Solit., Bk. 2) Hence, if any person is likely to prove an occasion of your ruin, the admonition of the Wise Man is,

"Remove your way far from her, and come not near the doors of her house." (Prov.

5.8) He not only tells you not to enter the house which has been to you a road to hell

("Her house is the way to hell." Prov. 7.27); but he also cautions you not to approach

it, and even to keep at a distance from it. "Remove your way far from her." But, you

will say, if I abandon that house, my temporal affairs shall suffer. It is better that

you should suffer a temporal loss, than that you should lose your soul and your God.

You must be persuaded that, in whatever regards chastity, there cannot

be too great caution. If we wish to save our souls from sin and hell, we

must always fear and tremble. "With fear and trembling work out your

salvation." (Phil. 2.12) He who is not fearful, but exposes himself to

occasions of sin, shall scarcely be saved. Hence, in our prayers we ought to

say every day, and several times in the day, that petition of the Our Father, "and lead

us not into temptation." Lord, do not permit me to be attacked by those temptations

which would deprive me of your grace. We cannot merit the grace of perseverance;

but, according to St. Augustine, God grants it to every one that asks it, because he

has promised to hear all who pray to him. Hence, the holy doctor says that the Lord,

"by his promises has made himself a debtor" (cf. Romans 4:25)." (*Hell's Widest*

Gate: Impurity, by St. Alphonsus Liguori, Sermons (nn. 2-4) taken from *Ascetical*

Works, Volume XVI: Sermons for all Sundays in the Year (1882) pp. 152-173)

We also advice you to never watch news on television or the like since it is so filled with sins that it's almost impossible to watch without seeing things that will injure your virtue like immodesty, make-up, sensuality, blasphemy, gloating, useless and unnecessary stories, lust, adultery, fornication... continuing in infinity. However, to watch news daily is hardly necessary and St. Alphonsus clearly rebukes people for this in his most excellent work, *The True Spouse of Christ*.

We ourselves do not watch any videos anymore except exclusively when for the sake of

making videos. Now we only listen to audio, having all the movable images blocked. On YouTube, when we still watched YouTube (we now have it blocked), we did not watch the videos but only listened to them by downloading them as audio (or video) and listened to them only in audio, or at least, by avoiding watching at the screen if we were watching it on youtube, or on other video sites. Anyone who cares about virtue and about their eternal salvation and for those who fear not to offend God by viewing or seeing bad scenes or images, will of course do the same thing, since it's almost impossible to watch anything today that does not contain immodesty or that will harm one's virtue. Even purely Christian films, whether on tv or youtube, have many bad and unacceptable scenes, statues or images in them. What then could be said about more secular media, documentaries, or series?

That so much naked religious images have been made, spread and depicted even in churches! during the last 700 years or so is undoubtedly a sign of the gradual falling away from God and the corruption of morals within and without the Church by the people, and indicates why God ultimately abandoned the Church to what it is has become today.

Also consider that it is very easy to sin in one's thought. In fact, **one consent to an evil thought is enough to damn a person to burn in Hell for all eternity!** and all the bad scenes one sees in all the films, television, movies, series etc. tempts one to commit exactly this sin against God.

St. Alphonsus: "**Listen to this example:** A boy used often to go to confession; and every one took him to be a saint. One night he had a hemorrhage, and he was found dead. His parents went at once to his confessor, and crying begged him to recommend him to God; and he said to them: "Rejoice; your son, I know, was a little angel; God wished to take him from this world, and he must now be in heaven; should he, however, be still in purgatory, I will go to say Mass for him." He put on his vestments to go to the altar; but before leaving the sacristy, he saw himself in the presence of a frightful spectre, whom he asked in the name of God who he was. The phantom answered that he was the soul of him that had just died. Oh! is it you? exclaimed the priest; if you are in need of prayers, I am just going to say Mass for you. Alas! Mass! I am damned, I am in hell! And why? "Hear," said the soul: "***I had***

never yet committed a mortal sin; but last night a bad thought came to my mind; I gave consent to it, and God made me die at once, and condemned me to hell as I have deserved to be. Do not say Mass for me; it would only increase my sufferings." Having spoken thus, the phantom disappeared." (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 167)

"O eternity, eternity! The saints tremble at the mere thought of eternity; and ye sinners, who are in disgrace with God, you do not fear? You do not tremble? It is of faith that he who dies in the state of sin goes to burn in the fire of hell for all eternity!" (Ibid, p. 108)

Scripture teaches that few are saved (Mt. 7:13) and that almost the entire world lies in darkness, so much so that Satan is even called the "prince" (John 12:31) and "god" (2 Cor. 4:3) of this world. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is seated in wickedness." (1 John 5:19)

Why are most people damned? Most people are damned because they don't care enough about God nor fear Him enough **to avoid all sin and the occasions of falling into obvious sin**, nor do they love Him more than they love their own perverse will or self-love—*which is the direct reason for their indifferent lifestyle*; neither do they care enough about God so as to avoid even what they obviously know will lead them into possible sin. The great St. Ambrose said concerning this: "**True repentance [and thus love of God] is to cease to sin [all sin, however small].**"

That of course means that one must do all in one's power to avoid not only mortal sin, but also venial sin. It also means to in fact never even have a will to commit even the slightest sin that one knows to be a sin culpably or with full consent against the all good God — **and now we may deduce already why most people in fact are damned.**

Hence that most people are damned and always have been. So the only reason it would be hard for someone to be forgiven his sins and be saved is if he don't love God enough, fear God enough, nor trust God enough with his whole heart—trust and love, such as believing in Him and that He will forgive you if you do what you must—and that He hears all your prayers and grants all your prayers that are good for you, such as all prayers for the grace

of attaining forgiveness and salvation. Therefore, it is only hard to be saved for the bad — and not for the good souls.

Also see: [About the sacrament of penance and contrition and about receiving forgiveness without an absolution](#)

Generally, one of course cannot know whether a film, documentary or show that one watches or desires to watch will have any bad images or scenes in them—*before having already watched it*. (There are some sites that offers warnings of immodesty, bad language, nudity etc., but their warnings probably are not enough, nor will they, in all likelihood, include a warning against the so-called modern day women’s fashion in which women show of their womanly figure by pants or revealing and tight clothing since this is how every one dress today (which in itself would be bad enough to forbid watching these shows entirely), and of course, the modern day “Catholic” or “Christian” standard of modesty is not enough and is even evil in many cases.) Therefore, it is playing with fire to watch movable images and risk one’s soul; and as we have seen, God will ultimately abandon a person that willfully put himself in danger of falling. Again, remember what St. Alphonsus said: “WHEN MEN AVOID THE OCCASIONS OF SIN, GOD PRESERVES THEM; BUT WHEN THEY EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO DANGER, THEY ARE JUSTLY ABANDONED BY THE LORD, AND EASILY FALL INTO SOME GRIEVOUS TRANSGRESSIONS.”

We recommend that no one watch videos or even audios at all (unless perhaps strictly religious things), but if you want to watch more secular things (such as news clips, documentaries or whatever else, even religious films) then listen to audio only. This means that you should turn the television around or put something over the screen. If on the internet, it means that you should avoid watching the video that is playing; or download vlc player and disable video in preferences, and download the videos instead of watching them on the internet, and listen to them only as audio through vlc player or some other video player. You can also download videos and convert them to mp3 or download an extension or program that does it automatically for you. This is a good youtube video downloader that we recommend:

<http://www.imtoo.com/download-youtube-video.html>

You can set settings 360P and mp4 for easiest configuration that takes not too much space and yet is good quality, and just download the video you want to hear instead of watching it on youtube. If you enter youtube videos, you should disable auto play so that videos do not play automatically for the same reason (the flashblock addons linked to above does the trick). You can also disable youtube comments in channel settings. Many of them are pure evil, filthy and spiritually distracting anyway. But the comments vary in badness depending on the video you are watching or entering. But just so you know, it is possible to disable seeing them.

Images must also be blocked when surfing on youtube! The number of bad, immodest and mortally sinful inducing images I myself have seen on youtube, and especially in the related videos while watching a video, or after it ended, is almost innumerable! (and no, I don't watch sensual material and anyone who has spent any time on youtube will know from experience that related thumbnails can be pure evil and filthy regardless of what videos you are watching, be it a news clip or a religious video, and the latter example is especially true if it concerns a moral subject). Having images blocked goes for all websites that have any bad images in them, even wikipedia, unless the article is deemed safe. (For the same reason, it is evil and a sin to link to articles that one knows contains any bad images. Yet many people, even traditional so-called Catholics, frequently, and without any scruple, link to such articles all the time just as if they thought they will not receive a judgment for every person that has becomes affected or aroused sensually by what they posted, linked to or were personally responsible for.) Also, on Firefox, **never watch a youtube video to the end**, or, if you do, scroll down before the film ends, **since the related video images on Firefox—that are shown in the video screen—sadly doesn't get blocked by having images disabled**. I have seen not a few evil images because of that, sadly. Now I know better, and that one must avoid seeing this and falling into this devilish trap (but happily, we don't even watch videos anymore and we encourage all to follow this same advice).

St. Alphonsus, **On avoiding the occasions of sin**: "Some also believe that it is only a venial sin to expose themselves to the proximate occasion of sin. **The**

catechist must explain that those who do not abstain from voluntary proximate occasions of grievous sin are guilty of a mortal sin, even though they have the intention of not committing the bad act, to the danger of which they expose themselves. ... It is necessary to inculcate frequently the necessity of avoiding dangerous occasions; for, if proximate occasions, especially of carnal sins, are not avoided, all other means will be useless for our salvation.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 351-355)

Considering the quotes of St. Alphonsus on avoiding occasions of sin and about how God demands more of certain souls that He has given more graces: it is highly important for one’s salvation to not watch media or expose oneself to dangerous occasions (such as by surfing the internet with images on).

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #61, March 4, 1679: “**He can sometimes be absolved**, who remains in a proximate occasion of sinning, which he can and does not wish to omit, but rather directly and professedly seeks or enters into.” – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #62, March 4, 1679: “The proximate occasion for sinning is not to be shunned when some useful and honorable cause for not shunning it occurs.” – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #63, March 4, 1679: “It is permitted to seek directly the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor.” – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori describes in his masterpiece book “*The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*” how *Modesty of the Eyes* is absolutely crucial for all people to have in order to save their souls:

St. Alphonsus: “**On the mortification of the eyes, and on modesty in**

general. Almost all our rebellious passions spring from unguarded looks; for, generally speaking, it is by the sight that all inordinate affections and desires are excited. Hence, holy Job "made a covenant with his eyes, that he would not so much as think upon a virgin." (Job xxxi. 1) Why did he say that he would not so much as think upon a virgin? Should he not have said that he made a covenant with his eyes not to look at a virgin? **No; he very properly said that he would not think upon a virgin; because thoughts are so connected with looks, that the former cannot be separated from the latter, and therefore, to escape the molestation of evil imaginations, he resolved never to fix his eyes on a woman.**

"St. Augustine says: "The thought follows the look; delight comes after the thought; and consent after delight." From the look proceeds the thought; from the thought the desire; for, as St. Francis de Sales says, what is not seen is not desired, and to the desire succeeds the consent.

"If Eve had not looked at the forbidden apple, she should not have fallen; but because "she saw that it was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and beautiful to behold, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." (Gen. iii. 6) The devil first tempts us to look, then to desire, and afterwards to consent.

"St. Jerome says that Satan requires "only a beginning on our part." If we begin, he will complete our destruction. **A deliberate glance at a person of a different sex often enkindles an infernal spark, which consumes the soul.** "Through the eyes," says St. Bernard, "the deadly arrows of love enters." The first dart that wounds and frequently robs chaste souls of life finds admission through the eyes. By them David, the beloved of God, fell. By them was Solomon, once the inspired of the Holy Ghost, drawn into the greatest abominations. Oh! how many are lost by indulging their sight!

"The eyes must be carefully guarded by all who expect not to be obliged to join in the lamentation of Jeremiah: "My eye hath wasted my soul." (Jer. iii. 51) By the introduction of sinful affections my eyes have destroyed my soul. Hence St. Gregory says, that **"the eyes, because they draw us to sin, must be depressed." If not restrained, they will become instruments of hell, to force the soul to sin almost against its will. "He that looks at a dangerous object," continues the saint, "begins to will what he wills not."** It was this the

inspired writer intended to express when he said of Holofernes, that "the beauty of Judith made his soul captive." (Jud. xvi 11)

"Seneca says that "blindness is a part of innocence;" and Tertullian relates that a certain pagan philosopher, to free himself from impurity, plucked out his eyes. Such an act would be unlawful in us: but he that desires to preserve chastity must avoid the sight of objects that are apt to excite unchaste thoughts. "Gaze not about," says the Holy Ghost, "upon another's beauty; . . . hereby lust is enkindled as a fire." (Ecc. ix. 8, 9) Gaze not upon another's beauty; for from looks arise evil imaginations, by which an impure fire is lighted up. Hence St. Francis de Sales used to say, that "they who wish to exclude an enemy from the city must keep the gates locked."

"Hence, to avoid the sight of dangerous objects, the saints were accustomed to keep their eyes almost continually fixed on the earth, and to abstain even from looking at innocent objects. After being a novice for a year, St. Bernard could not tell whether his cell was vaulted. In consequence of never raising his eyes from the ground, he never knew that there were but three windows to the church of the monastery, in which he spent his novitiate. He once, without perceiving a lake, walked along its banks for nearly an entire day; and hearing his companions speak about it, he asked when they had seen it. St. Peter of Alcantara kept his eyes constantly cast down, so that he did not know the brothers with whom he conversed. It was by the voice, and not by the countenance, that he was able to recognize them.

"The saints were particularly cautious not to look at persons of a different sex. St. Hugh, bishop, when compelled to speak with women, never looked at them in the face. St. Clare would never fix her eyes on the face of a man. She was greatly afflicted because, when raising her eyes at the elevation to see the consecrated host, she once involuntarily saw the countenance of the priest. St. Aloysius never looked at his own mother in the face. It is related of St. Arsenius, that a noble lady went to visit him in the desert, to beg of him to recommend her to God. When the saint perceived that his visitor was a woman, he turned away from her. She then said to him: "Arsenius, since you will neither see nor hear me, at least remember me in your prayers." "No," replied the saint, "but I will beg of God to make me forget you, and never more to

think of you."

"From these examples may be seen the folly and temerity of some religious who, though they have not the sanctity of a St. Clare, still gaze around from the terrace, in the parlour, and in the church, upon every object that presents itself, even on persons of a different sex. And notwithstanding their unguarded looks, they expect to be free from temptations and from the danger of sin. For having once looked deliberately at a woman who was gathering ears of corn, the Abbot Pastor was tormented for forty years by temptations against chastity. St. Gregory states that the temptation, to conquer which St. Benedict rolled himself in thorns, arose from one incautious glance at a woman. St. Jerome, though living in a cave at Bethlehem, in continual prayer and macerations of the flesh, was terribly molested by the remembrance of ladies whom he had long before seen in Rome. Why should not similar molestations be the lot of the religious who willfully and without reserve fixes her eyes on persons of a different sex? "It is not," says St. Francis de Sales, "the seeing of objects so much as the fixing of our eyes upon them that proves most pernicious."

"If," says St. Augustine, "our eyes should by chance fall upon others, let us take care never to fix them upon any one." Father Manareo, when taking leave of St. Ignatius for a distant place, looked steadfastly in his face: for this look he was corrected by the saint. From the conduct of St. Ignatius on this occasion, we learn that it was not becoming in religious to fix their eyes on the countenance of a person even of the same sex, particularly if the person is young. But I do not see how looks at young persons of a different sex can be excused from the guilt of a venial fault, or even from mortal sin, when there is proximate danger of criminal consent. "It is not lawful," says St. Gregory, "to behold what it is not lawful to covet." The evil thought that proceeds from looks, though it should be rejected, never fails to leave a stain upon the soul. Brother Roger, a Franciscan of singular purity, being once asked why he was so reserved in his intercourse with women, replied, that when men avoid the occasions of sin, God preserves them; but when they expose themselves to danger, they are justly abandoned by the Lord, and easily fall into some grievous

transgressions.

“The indulgence of the eyes, if not productive of any other evil, at least destroys recollection during the time of prayer. For, the images and impressions caused by the objects seen before, or by the wandering of the eyes, during prayer, will occasion a thousand distractions, and banish all recollection from the soul. It is certain that without recollection a religious can pay but little attention to the practice of humility, patience, mortification, or of the other virtues. Hence it is her duty to abstain from all looks of curiosity, which distract her mind from holy thoughts. Let her eyes be directed only to objects which raise the soul to God.

“St. Bernard used to say, that to fix the eyes upon the earth contributes to keep the heart in heaven. "Where," says St. Gregory, "Christ is, there modesty is found." Wherever Jesus Christ dwells by love, there modesty is practiced. However, I do not mean to say that the eyes should never be raised or never fixed on any object. No; but they ought to be directed only to what inspires devotion, to sacred images, and to the beauty of creation, which elevate the soul to the contemplation of the divinity. Except in looking at such objects, a religious should in general keep the eyes cast down, and particularly in places where they may fall upon dangerous objects. In conversing with men, she should never roll the eyes about to look at them, and much less to look at them a second time.

“To practice modesty of the eyes is the duty of a religious, not only because it is necessary for her own improvement in virtue, but also because it is necessary for the edification of others. God only knows the human heart: man sees only the exterior actions, and by them he is edified or scandalized. "A man," says the Holy Ghost, "is known by his look." (Ecc. xix. 26) By the countenance the interior is known. Hence, like St. John the Baptist, a religious should be "a burning and shining light." (John, v. 35) She ought to be a torch burning with charity, and shining resplendent by her modesty, to all who behold her. To religious the following words of the Apostle are particularly applicable: "We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men." (1 Cor. iv. 9) And again: "Let your modesty be known to all men: the Lord is nigh." (Phil. iv. 5)

“Religious are attentively observed by the angels and by men; and therefore their modesty should be made manifest before all; **if they do not practice modesty, terrible shall be the account which they must render to God on**

the day of judgment. Oh! what devotion does a modest religious inspire, what edification does she give, by keeping her eyes always cast down! St. Francis of Assisi once said to his companion, that he was going out to preach. After walking through the town, with his eyes fixed on the ground, he returned to the convent. His companion asked him when he would preach the sermon. We have, replied the saint, by the modesty of our looks, given an excellent instruction to all who saw us. It is related of St. Aloysius, that when he walked through Rome the students would stand in the streets to observe and admire his great modesty.

“St. Ambrose says, that to men of the world the modesty of the saints is a powerful exhortation to amendment of life. "The look of a just man is an admonition to many." The saint adds: "How delightful it is to do good to others by your appearance!" It is related of St. Bernardine of Sienna, that even when a secular, his presence was sufficient to restrain the licentiousness of his young companions, who, as soon as they saw him, were accustomed to give to one another notice that he was coming. On his arrival they became silent or changed the subject of their conversation. It is also related of St. Gregory of Nyssa, and of St. Ephrem, that their very appearance inspired piety, and that the sanctity and modesty of their exterior edified and improved all that beheld them. When Innocent II visited St. Bernard at Clairvaux, such was the exterior modesty of the saint and of his monks, that the Pope and his cardinals were moved to tears of devotion. Surius relates a very extraordinary fact of St. Lucian, a monk and martyr. By his modesty he induced so many pagans to embrace the faith, that the Emperor Maximian, fearing that he should be converted to Christianity by the appearance of the saint, would not allow the holy man to be brought within his view, but spoke to him from behind a screen.

“That our Redeemer was the first who taught, by his example, modesty of the eyes, may, as a learned author remarks, be inferred from the holy evangelists, who say that on some occasion he raised his eyes. "And he, lifting up his eyes on his disciples." (Luke, vi. 20) "When Jesus therefore had lifted up his eyes." (John, vi. 5.) From these passages we may conclude that the Redeemer ordinarily kept his eyes cast down. Hence the Apostle, praising the modesty of the Saviour, says: "I beseech you, by the mildness and modesty of Christ." (2 Cor. x. 1)

“I shall conclude this subject with what St. Basil said to his monks:

"If, my children, we desire to raise the soul towards heaven, let us direct the eyes towards the earth." From the moment we awake in the morning, let us pray continually in the words of holy David: "Turn away my eyes, that they may not behold vanity" (Ps. cxviii. 37)." (St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, Modesty of the Eyes, pp. 252-261)

St. Francis of Assisi used to exhort his brethren frequently to guard and mortify their senses with the utmost care. He especially insisted on the custody of the eyes, and he used this parable of a King's two messengers to demonstrate how the purity of the eyes reveals the chastity of the soul:

"A certain pious King sent two messengers successively to the Queen with a communication from himself. The first messenger returned and brought an answer from the Queen, which he delivered exactly. But of the Queen herself he said nothing because he had always kept his eyes modestly cast down and had not raised them to look at her.

The second messenger also returned. But after delivering in a few words the answer of the Queen, he began to speak warmly of her beauty. "Truly, my lord," he said, "the Queen is the most fair and lovely woman I have ever seen, and thou art indeed happy and blessed to have her for thy spouse."

At this the King was angry and said: "Wicked servant, how did you dare to cast your eyes upon my royal spouse? I believe that you may covet what you have so curiously gazed upon."

Then he commanded the other messenger to be recalled, and said to him: "What do you think of the Queen?"

He replied, "She listened very willingly and humbly to the message of the King and replied most prudently."

But the Monarch again asked him, "But what do you think of her countenance? Did she not seem to you very fair and beautiful, more so than any other woman?"

The servant replied, “My lord, I know nothing of the Queen’s beauty. Whether she be fair or not, it is for thee alone to know and judge. My duty was only to convey thy message to her.”

The King rejoined, “You have answered well and wisely. You who have such chaste and modest eyes shall be my chamberlain. From the purity of your eyes I see the chastity of your soul. You are worthy to have the care of the royal apartments confided to you.”

Then, turning to the other messenger, he said: “But you, who have such unmortified eyes, depart from the palace. You shall not remain in my house, for I have no confidence in your virtue.” (*The Works of the Seraphic Father St. Francis of Assisi*, London: R. Washbourne, 1882, pp. 254-255)

Concerning modesty of the eyes and related virtues, St. Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170-236 A.D.), *From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs*, writes:

“[Proverbs 4:25 “Let thy eyes look straight on, and let thy eyelids go before thy steps.”] He “looks right on” who has thoughts free of passion; and he has true judgments, who is not in a state of excitement about external appearances.

....

“[Proverbs 6:27 “Can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn?”] That thou mayest not say, What harm is there in the eyes, when there is no necessity that he should be perverted who looks? he shows thee that desire is a fire, and the flesh is like a garment. The latter is an easy prey, and the former is a tyrant. And when anything harmful is not only taken within, but also held fast, it will not go forth again until it has made an exit for itself. For he who looks upon a woman, even though he escape the temptation, does not come away pure of all lust. And why should one have trouble, if he can be chaste and free of trouble? ... And, figuratively speaking, he keeps a fire in his breast who permits an impure thought to dwell in his heart. And he walks upon coals who, by sinning in act, destroys his own soul.

“[Proverbs 7:21-25 “[21] She entangled him with many words, and

drew him away with the flattery of her lips. [22] Immediately he followeth her as an ox led to be a victim, and as a lamb playing the wanton, and not knowing that he is drawn like a fool to bonds, [23] Till the arrow pierce his liver: as if a bird should make haste to the snare, and knoweth not that his life is in danger. [24] Now therefore, my son, hear me, and attend to the words of my mouth. [25] Let not thy mind be drawn away in her ways: neither be thou deceived with her paths.”] The “cemphus” [the fool] is a kind of wild sea-bird, which has so immoderate an impulse to sexual enjoyment, that its eyes seem to fill with blood in coition; and it often blindly falls into snares, or into the hands of men [Footnote: “The cemphus is said to be a sea-bird “driven about by every wind,” so that it is equal to a fool.” [Proverbs 7:22]]. To this, therefore, he [Solomon] compares the man who gives himself up to the harlot on account of his immoderate lust; or else on account of the insensate folly of the creature, for he, too, pursues his object like one senseless. And they say that this bird is so much pleased with foam, that if one should hold foam in his hand as he sails, it will sit upon his hand. And it also brings forth with pain.

“[Proverbs 7:26 “For she hath cast down many wounded, and the strongest have been slain by her.”] You have seen her mischief. Wait not to admit the rising of lust; for her death is everlasting. And for the rest, by her words, her arguments in sooth, she wounds, and by her sins she kills those who yield to her. For many are the forms of wickedness that lead the foolish down to hell. And the chambers of death mean either its depths or its treasure. How, then, is escape possible?” (The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus, "On Proverbs," by St. Hippolytus of Rome, 170-236 A.D., vol. 5, Ante-Nicene Fathers)

HOW TO CONTROL YOUR SPEECH

*“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they grow much towards ungodliness.”
(2 Timothy 2:16)*

To talk overmuch of worldly and unnecessary things is also considered vain babblings and should be totally avoided. If you have nothing good to say, referring

to God or the edification of the soul, then one should keep quiet. Vain babbling will lead to ungodliness as stated above, for that which a person talks much about, that he is full of in his heart. If God is not in the heart of man, then Satan must occupy that place, and you cannot serve both God and man!

VIDEO GAMES

Almost every kind of game that exists in our sad time has numerous mortally sinful things in them which make them impossible to play without going to hell. The younger generation especially, but also older people, is so perverted and drugged by these new games that they seem to live for nothing else!

Firstly, there are the countless games who have a person going around killing or hurting other humans or creatures for fun; for example, Counter-Strike, Halo, Grand Theft Auto, Starcraft, Modern Warfare, Gears of Wars, Tekken, etc. To play such a game is not only sick but abominable. Think about it: to play a game for fun or pleasure which is constituted of the murder or hurt of another being!

God solemnly declares that he will judge our every thought, how much more then will he judge our deeds? When we in our mind take delight and enjoy killing or hurting other beings, God takes this as an act in the very same way as he judges us as murderers if we hate our brother, or, as an adulterer if we look at a woman with lust in our heart. What then will God judge you to be when you in your heart love abominable things?

Secondly, there is the constant danger of hate, uncontrollable wrath, and pride in games when it doesn't go as people would like it to go, and this is more true when playing games online. For when people think of themselves that they are good in the game they play, they are puffed up and deceived into thinking that this victory in a worthless game actually makes them someone. This is truly pathetic! But if someone then beats them, their pride and arrogance gets hurt, and they get mad,

angry and wrath. Who have not had experience of this in online-gaming? Sure, these things happen on single player games as well but it isn't as common. Online games are by far the worst and sinful of all the games, since they not only affects you, but the others you play with as well. Do you understand now why online games are the most dangerous of all the games? Do you realize now that every person you have affected by your gaming will demand just vengeance over you, unless you blot these sins out by penance, repentance and confession? Giving others a bad example and being the cause or accessory of another person's damnation is the worst of all the sins one can be guilty of in this life. Every single thought, word, and deed will be carefully judged and avenged the moment you die. You cannot hide from death.

Thirdly, there are countless of games who try to display magic and the occult as not only acceptable but even good and praiseworthy; for example, World of Warcraft, Diablo, Oblivion, etc. Yes in those games, one is even awarded by magic and occult themes for murdering or hurting the opponent. Eternal Hell will be the home of all you who plays such games, for they are all against God, they are all based on breaking God's commandments and doing evil and violence, or enjoying others doing evil and violence. Whether or not you or the world say its good vs evil, or whether it be humans or monsters you are murdering or hurting, does not change the fact that the games in themselves are totally evil and fruitless, often extremely violent, and as with movies, often compels the player to take actions, agree or disagree with occurrences, which in godly terms are unacceptable and abominable. Playing these games will only serve to stir you up towards wanting to play more. Games with much violence and fighting, or with the ability of sinning in pride by show-offs, or with much usage of magic-powers of the occult, or with the ability to achieve personal fame in a fantasy land, or the show-off with skills, as with online-games, are all the most dangerous since they serve to stir up the flesh and body the most in a false and unholy fire of pleasure and thrill. A person that doesn't cut this off from himself will in fact lose his soul!

PRO-SPORTS

Pro-sports may seem to have no sin in it, but countless of mortal sins will be exposed when one examines it carefully.

First, almost every kind of pro-sports supports the mortal sin of gambling, and it is just a fact that these teams or players get a large portion of their pay-check from gambling. Pro-sports is in fact one of the biggest, if not the biggest generator of the mortal sin of gambling, which has destroyed countless of families and lead millions of poor souls to despair, suicide and hell. Thus, those who watch these games, watch people who are getting paid for supporting and making the mortal sin of gambling exist. To enjoy the eternal soul killing of other human beings is a clear cut mortal sin.

Second, almost every kind of pro-sport is played on Sundays which is a clear mortal sin since it is a work for these players and they get a pay-check from it. Therefore, they are breaking one of God's Ten Commandments, and there is no excuse for such things. It is a clear mortal sin to enjoy someone committing mortal sin.

Third, as we can see from the Book of the Machabees, the Jewish people neglected the divine worship in order to attend to different sport festivities at the arena. This is now prophetically fulfilled in many people who call themselves Catholic. For instead of praying the Rosary, reading the word of God and playing with and educating their children in good Christian morals as the Sunday is intended for, they watch these sinful games while placing their children in front of another TV set, neglecting their spiritual well being. Many saints teach that sports in of itself is no sin - which it of course isn't - but when it becomes too serious and more than a fun game between friends or when one take too much delight in it or makes too big thing of that which has no value, then they unanimously teach that it becomes sinful.

St. Francis de Sales- "Sports, plays, festivities, etc, are not in themselves evil, but rather indifferent matters, capable of being used for good or ill; but

nevertheless they are dangerous, and it is still more dangerous to take great delight in them.”

St. Francis de Sales- “Walking, harmless games, music, instrumental or vocal, field sports, etc., are such entirely lawful recreations that they need no rules beyond those of ordinary discretion, which keep every thing within due limits of time, place, and degree. So again games of skill, which exercise and strengthen body or mind, such as tennis, rackets, running at the ring, chess, and the like, are in themselves both lawful and good. Only one must avoid excess, either in the time given to them, or the amount of interest they absorb; for if too much time be given up to such things, they cease to be a recreation and become an occupation; and so far from resting and restoring mind or body, they have precisely the contrary effect. After five or six hours spent over chess, one’s mind is spent and weary, and too long a time given to tennis results in physical exhaustion; or if people play for a high stake, they get anxious and discomposed, and such unimportant objects are unworthy of so much care and thought. But, above all, beware of setting your heart upon any of these things, for however lawful an amusement may be, it is wrong to give one’s heart up to it. Not that I would not have you take pleasure in what you are doing,—it were no recreation else,—but I would not have you engrossed by it, or become eager or over fond of any of these things.”

Fourthly, people are spending billions of dollars on something that is supposed to be a game of fun. They have made a worthless game which holds no significance whatsoever, to become something serious. Think about it. People say: This or that person runs so and so fast or won this or that game. And people think about it as though it is some kind of achievement worthy of praise, when it in fact is saddening and abominable since it leads souls to hell. It is grown people valuing a worthless game or sport as something that holds significance or value: it is truly pathetic. They waste their money and time on this filth when they could be trying to help souls that are falling daily to the eternal fire in hell.

“And so the human heart which is cumbered with useless, superfluous, dangerous clingings becomes incapacitated for that earnest following after God which is the true life of devotion. No one blames children for running after butterflies, because they are children, but is it not ridiculous and pitiful to see full-grown men eager about such worthless trifles as the worldly amusements before named, (SPORTS, balls, plays, festivities, pomps), which are likely to throw them off their balance and disturb their spiritual life.” (St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction into the Devout Life*)

Fifthly, most of the different athletes or players are very immodestly dressed in clothes that are absolutely abominable for God since they are tight and reveal so much flesh. Only a few hundred years ago, women would have been arrested and jailed for wearing the clothes that athletes or players wear now. To watch any game or sport that supports or condones the five reasons mentioned above is totally sinful and any honest person who has not refused to meditate on hell and who realizes that it is possible that he or she may go to hell will agree as long as he thinks about this issue in a rational and calm manner. Don't allow your dependency on sports to trivialize clear cut mortal sins that are acted out in front of everyone. Repent before it is too late!

PRO-SPORTS AND GAMBLING - ADDENDUM

Objection: “I see... watching professional sports constitutes a mortal sin because professional sports leads to gambling and peoples lives have been ruined from gambling... but professional sports aren't made FOR gambling, by their logic they would have to be for gun control to stay logical, and we all know that gun control is evil.”

Answer: What we said was that pro-sports supports the mortal sin of gambling; that their activities makes it exist; and that the players get a paycheck for this activity and for their support of gambling and other mortal sins – and that they thus are a part of all of this. We also said that **it is a mortal sin to enjoy people**

committing mortal sin. The same truth of course applies to venial sins as well. For example, one cannot actually “enjoy” someone committing a mortal sin (or even venial sin), such as “enjoying” or “laughing” at someone committing adultery. For that is totally evil.

We will add some new thoughts in addition to the above:

1. Everyone knows that they play pro-sport matches on Sundays, and therefore it would be wrong to watch them play sports on Sundays by default. I think everyone can agree with that, since they get a paycheck for playing their games and it is a work for them.
2. Having guns have a necessity. So if judging things by necessity, having or buying guns is nothing wrong. So this argument is clearly false and the Church condemns gambling and vain games of chance but not self-defense. **That is also why the Church (since the beginning) outlawed the Olympics and it is only recently – prior to the Great Apostasy – that this useless activity started to be promoted again by the World and by Satan.** It is very interesting to consider this fact, for it proves that the Church disapproves of such vain, useless and harmful activities which makes one forget about God and neglect one’s duties. In truth, the Church undoubtedly understood this truth about pro-sports in part from the example of the Old Testament and the books of the Maccabees which shows us that these kinds of vain games deceives people (as is proved by the example of the Jews during the time of the Maccabees who neglected God and their duties because of the sports arena that had been built there, in the Kingdom of Judah).

Apostolic Constitutions, Book II, Section 7:62, A.D. 380: **“That Christians Must Abstain From All The Impious Practices Of The Heathens -** Take heed, therefore, not to join yourselves... with those that favour the things of the devil, [for you] will be esteemed one of them, and will inherit a woe... lest by uniting ourselves to them we bring snares upon our own souls;

that we may not by joining in their feasts... be partakers with them in their impiety. You are also to avoid their public meetings, and those sports which are celebrated in them. For a believer ought not to go to any of those public meetings, unless to purchase a slave, and save a soul? and at the same time to buy such other things as suit their necessities. Abstain, therefore, from all idolatrous pomp and state, all their public meetings, banquets, duels, and all shows belonging to demons.” (*Apostolic Constitutions, Treatises on Early Christian Discipline*)

3. And one could indeed say that today’s professional sport is in a large part made for and supported by gambling, and evil commercials, since this is what much of their income comes from. And obviously, sports today have become “Pro” for a reason; and that is that there is great profit to make from it.

4. Many professional sports teams and games also promote cheerleaders which is a damnable mortal sin similar to prostitution since they incite people to commit sins of impurity and adultery in their hearts (Matthew 5:28). One can truly say that the abominable activities of cheerleaders of today are very similar to striptease since they are not only half naked, showing almost every part of their body either directly or indirectly by tight clothes, but also because they dance and move in a sensual way in accordance to the match times. Thus, those who are watching these games are taking enjoyment in mortal sins that are integral to the game, and which would not exist but for this special game there and that are so evil that it screams to heaven for vengeance.

One can only shudder in amazement, trembling and fear over how many billions of impure thoughts that have been directly incited by these games, and how many millions or billions of people that have been damned because of them. Indeed, if we could see all those lost people right now as we speak burning in Hell, we would immediately cease watching these accursed games or have a liking for their evil activities, and would repent in sackcloth and ashes, never daring to open our eyes or mouth in contradiction to Our Lord’s Holy Will. But for the most part of humanity,

the time of repentance will never come or come too late when they are already dead and judged to an eternal torment in Hell; but then it is sadly too late for them. For they all chose to do and enjoy things that their conscience knew was opposed to God's Holy Law.

Objection: "You are blaming football players for scantily-clad cheerleaders. There's no connection, they don't make the rules or set the program about what the cheerleaders are wearing. This isn't even material participation."

Answer: **The cheerleaders are part of the same team, and wouldn't be there unless their team played the game. Hence that the players themselves are the direct cause of this problem.** They are there and a part of the game. They are not excluded from it, but known by all. They are part of the game and attraction. They dance and move in accordance to the match times. They are part of the whole thing. To deny this is just simply to be a mortal sinner and an outrageous liar.

The players are obviously not unaware of the fact that millions of people are watching their games and thus see these whorish women half naked dancing there for the exact cause of their deed of approving of and consenting to playing these games. In fact, none of this would happen unless they (the players, their team, their supporters, and their viewers) all approved of this and supported this activity by their continual presence at these games or by their support of them, whether materially or directly. If someone were really opposed to the fact that this sin should take place, he would be obliged to stop participating in these matches and stop support the evil team that allows this to happen. If they don't, they become a partner in the sin.

Catechism Question: "In how many ways may we either cause or share in the guilt of another's sin?" **Answer: "We may either cause or share the guilt of another's sin in nine ways: 1. By counsel. 2. By command. 3. By consent. 4. By provocation. 5. By praise or flattery. 6. By**

concealment. 7. By being a partner in the sin. 8. By silence. 9. By defending the ill done.”

They are thus guilty in every way possible. Even more so when one considers that their games or work constitutes non-necessities. Their work is completely unnecessary and serves no real purpose except for a useless entertainment for vain people. It is also the greatest waste of money possibly on earth, billions or trillions of dollars are wasted on absolutely nothing.

Behold a perfect comparison of the evilness of cheerleaders and tacit consent: If there were a game like a gladiator game where people took amusement in other people killing each other - like in the old roman time - this would of course be a mortal sin to view and enjoy. Now, if there was a football game as the main attraction beside the gladiator game, and the gladiators (that is, the soul murdering cheerleaders in this comparison) were killing souls as a side attraction that is part of the main game, would it then be allowed for the players to be a part of this game or the viewers to view this game, if they knew that this game contained these things? Of course not! Now the cheerleaders are perhaps worse in killing souls than the gladiators since they tempt billions of people into sin and eternal death in Hell. They murder souls, yet the people who make this objection above sadly don't seem to care one bit about this fact. Hell, however, will make all of them confess the truth the moment or second after they die.

Instead of excusing the players from culpability when they so obviously are all in on this together – and are a direct part of this problem – concerned people should rather tell these people to stop playing and supporting these evil, vain and useless matches and sports-teams that promotes such evil, soul slaying activities.

5. If you don't enjoy any of the above mentioned things that are evil, then there is no reason for why you would even want to watch professional sports at all, or care that much about it. For if one considers this matter seriously, that is, that those people

who take part in pro-sports activities are totally deceived by their vanity, vainglory, pride, fame, and by the praise and idolization of themselves by other weak human beings, then one would mourn for their sake rather than seek a useless, unprofitable enjoyment from them. For why would anyone want to enjoy people commit or support mortal sin and worldliness or be happy about that they are totally deceived by the world and that they are headed for Hell? It is totally evil.

Indeed, the enjoyment derived from such pro-sports games is completely useless anyway. One doesn't even learn anything from it as one does from watching a documentary, an educational program or a good Christian film. And that is why some media can be excused while pro-sports that have any sin connected to it must be avoided. All one learns from pro-sport today essentially consists in this: vainglory, pride, vanity and lasciviousness (from the cheerleaders); bad, ungodly, sensual, superfluous and vain commercials; idolization and praise of weak human beings; and useless cares and worries for certain teams or players that will not help a person one bit in any way to get to Heaven, **and what is worse, one may even start to secretly idolize or like them and what they do** (and this last point undoubtedly often happens if one frequently watch or follows this useless activity).

Indeed, St. Francis de Sales' words about the evil occupation of gambling applies *perfectly* to those who take vain pleasure in pro-sports matches, games and teams:

“Moreover, though such games may be called a recreation, and are intended as such, they are practically an intense occupation. Is it not an occupation, when a man's mind is kept on the stretch of close attention, and disturbed by endless anxieties, fears and agitations? Who exercises a more dismal, painful attention than the [person obsessed by his beloved sports team, player, or superstar]? No one must speak [against them, their team, or idols] or laugh [or defeat them],—if you do but cough you will annoy [or sadden] him and his companions. The only pleasure in [these games] is to win, and this cannot be a satisfactory pleasure, since it can only be enjoyed at the expense of your antagonist.” (St Francis de Sales, writing “On Gambling”, but this could as

well have been written directly with pro-sports in mind!)

All of this will thus lead to that one will become sad or happy based on the fact whether or not those whom one *avored* lost or won; and this is totally evil since this means one enjoys their deeds in their worldliness and ungodly lifestyle that is leading them to Hell. One is thus becoming worried, happy or sad about all of this – the evil they do and the deceived, unhappy lifestyle they lead – and the sadness, anxiety or attention about what they do in this case is not even about the right thing (that is, for their spiritual blindness and that they are deceived and are headed for Hell) but rather about the evil attachment for a vain pleasure and because one’s self-love was hurt; and because they lost a useless game – and because one cares for all of this! It is totally evil, useless and vain.

6. It is evil to be happy about musicians, sports players or other people living an ungodly lifestyle just because one likes what they do, and in this way, enjoy what they do. For example, it is evil to want Madonna to continue making music because she is committing mortal sin while she is doing so. One can enjoy a lawful moral song, **but one cannot enjoy mortal sin or venial sin being committed or be happy about them or that their life is such; nor can one want them to continue in such a state or career or have a mindset to be obsessed by such** (as many people sadly are today by being totally obsessed with pro-sports, players, artists, actors, musicians, and so called “superstars”). And even if one likes the song (a moral, lawful song), one must be sad and mournful for the person’s soul and spiritual state when thinking about their spiritual state, and wish that they will stop doing whatever they are doing that are leading them to Hell.

Objection: “Even if cheerleaders is wrong, modest gambling is not wrong, nor is it a sin. Neither does the Church forbid it. And one cannot really say that watching sports would be wrong because it supports gambling.”

7. Several councils as well as saints and holy people in addition to tradition have condemned and disapproved of gambling since the very beginning (as we will see below). Therefore, it is clear that God and the Church condemned *and still condemns* these activities as evil and forbidden.

So since the players get a paycheck for directly supporting evil and forbidden activities against the Church's laws—such as gambling—as well as the cheerleaders—it is utterly unlawful, condemned and sinful to watch these sinful games and find enjoyment in them. Again, since all their pro-sport matches revolves around supporting and promoting condemned activities, mortal sins and non-necessities, it is clearly sinful and evil to watch and find enjoyment in their criminal activities.

SOME QUOTES CONDEMNING GAMBLING

Council of Elvira, Canon 79 (A.D. 306): “**Christians who play dice for money are to be excluded from receiving communion.** If they amend their ways and cease, they may receive communion after one year.”

Apostolic Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Canon 42: “Let a bishop, or presbyter, or deacon **who indulges himself in dice or drinking, either leave off those practices, or let him be deprived.**” Canon 43: “**If a sub-deacon, a reader, or a singer does the like, either let him leave off, or let him be suspended; and so for one of the laity.**” (The Apostolic Constitutions, Treatises on Early Christian Discipline)

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D.), who is regarded as one of the most important Doctors of the Church, writes the following concerning the above two canons: “We read in the Canons of the apostles (Can. xli, xlii): ‘A bishop, priest or deacon **who is given to drunkenness or gambling, or incites others thereto,** must either cease or be deposed; a subdeacon, reader or precentor who does these things must either give them up or be excommunicated; the same applies to the laity.’ **Now such punishments are not inflicted save for mortal sins.** Therefore drunkenness

[and gambling] is a mortal sin.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 150, A. II. Whether drunkenness is a mortal sin?)

St. Clement of Alexandria, echoing the Church’s constant tradition from the beginning against gambling, and the pursuit of gain caused by the evil desire for riches “apart from the truth”, wrote in the second century A.D.: “**The game of dice is to be prohibited, and the pursuit of gain, especially by dicing [and other such games of gambling]**, which many keenly follow. Such things the prodigality of luxury invents for the idle. For the cause is idleness, and a love for frivolities apart from the truth. For it is not possible otherwise to obtain enjoyment without injury; and each man’s preference of a mode of life is a counterpart of his disposition.” (Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol 2, p. 485)

The venerated Dominican friar and preacher Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) expounds on gambling and related activities at some length, but more frequently inveighs against the corrupt manners of the age, denouncing in turn every vice that was then prevalent. This, for instance, is how he speaks against gambling: “If you see persons engaged in gambling in these days, believe them to be no Christians, since they are worse than infidels, are ministers of the evil one, and celebrate his rites. They are avaricious men, blasphemers, slanderers, detractors of others’ fame, fault-finders, they are hateful to God, are thieves, murderers, and full of all iniquity. I cannot permit ye to share in these amusements; ye must be steadfast in prayer, continually rendering thanks to the Almighty in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He that gambles shall be accursed, and accursed he that suffers others to gamble; shun ye their conversation, for the father that gambles before his son shall be accursed, and accursed the mother that gambles in her daughter’s presence. Therefore, whoever thou art, thou shalt be accursed if thou dost gamble or allow others to gamble;” (*Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola*, chapter VIII, p. 105)

The Catholic Encyclopedia adds that: “From very early times gambling was forbidden by canon law. Two of the oldest (41, 42) among the so-called canons of

the Apostles **forbade games of chance under pain of excommunication** to clergy and laity alike. The 79th canon of the Council of Elvira (306) decreed that one of the faithful who had **been guilty of gambling might be, on amendment, restored to communion after the lapse of a year**. A homily (the famous "De Aleatoribus") long ascribed by St. Cyprian, but by modern scholars variously attributed to Popes Victor I, Callistus I, and Melchiades, and which undoubtedly is a very early and interesting monument of Christian antiquity, **is a vigorous denunciation of gambling**. *The Fourth Lateran Council* (1215), by a decree subsequently inserted in the "Corpus Juris", **forbade clerics to play or to be present at games of chance**. Some authorities, such as Aubespine, have attempted to explain the severity of the ancient canons against gambling by supposing that idolatry was often connected with it in practice. The pieces that were played with were small-sized idols, or images of the gods, which were invoked by the players for good luck. However, as Benedict XIV remarks, **this can hardly be true, as in that case the penalties would have been still more severe.**" [Notice how a modernistic scholar tried to explain away the ancient Church teaching against gambling. However, this false theory of him (and of others like him) was of course refuted by Pope Benedict XIV]. (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6, "Gambling", A.D. 1909)

Wikipedia relates a little history of gambling and says the following concerning this evil activity: "Though lotteries were common in the United States and some other countries during the 19th century, by the beginning of the 20th century, **most forms of gambling, including lotteries and sweepstakes, were illegal in the U.S. and most of Europe as well as many other countries.**"

St. Francis de Sales, *Doctor of the Church*, in the section "Of Forbidden Amusements" in his book *Introduction to the Devout Life*, clearly shows us the inherent evil, unlawfulness and unreasonableness of gambling and how both civil and ecclesiastical law outlawed gambling in the past: "Dice, cards, and the like games of hazard, are not merely dangerous amusements, like dancing, but they are plainly bad and harmful, and therefore they are forbidden by the civil as by

the ecclesiastical law [thus showing us that Catholic states banned or outlawed gambling totally]. What harm is there in them? you ask. Such games are unreasonable:—the winner often has neither skill nor industry to boast of, which is contrary to reason. You reply that this is understood by those who play. But though that may prove that you are not wronging anybody, it does not prove that the game is in accordance with reason, as victory ought to be the reward of skill or labour, which it cannot be in mere games of chance. Moreover, though such games may be called a recreation, and are intended as such, they are practically an intense occupation. Is it not an occupation, when a man's mind is kept on the stretch of close attention, and disturbed by endless anxieties, fears and agitations? Who exercises a more dismal, painful attention than the gambler? No one must speak or laugh,—if you do but cough you will annoy him and his companions. The only pleasure in gambling is to win, and this cannot be a satisfactory pleasure, since it can only be enjoyed at the expense of your antagonist. Once, when he was very ill, St. Louis [IX, King of France] heard that his brother the Comte d'Anjou and Messire Gautier de Nemours were gambling, and in spite of his weakness the King tottered into the room where they were, and threw dice and money and everything out of the window, in great indignation. And the pure and pious Sara, in her appeal to God, declared that she had never had dealings with gamblers. "I beg, O Lord, that thou loose me from the bond of this reproach, or else take me away from the earth. Thou knowest, O Lord, that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust. Never have I joined myself with them that play: neither have I made myself partaker with them that walk in lightness" [Tobias 3:15-17]." (St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Chapter XXXII, Of Forbidden Amusements)

St. Francis de Sales also explains that we must confess all our motives in Confession when we have sinned, and he mentions gambling as a sin: "Again, do not be satisfied with mentioning the bare fact of your venial sins, but accuse yourself of the motive cause which led to them. For instance, do not be content with saying that you told an untruth which injured no one; but say whether it was out of vanity, in order to win praise or avoid blame, out of heedlessness, or from obstinacy. If you have exceeded in society, say whether it was from the love of talking, or gambling

for the sake of money, and so on.” (St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, p. 63)

As with the use of alcohol, gambling can soon get out of hand and even become addictive, and this type of problem definitely has moral and religious overtones. An English proverb says, “The best throw of the dice is to throw them away” — and in light of the harm gambling can cause to one’s career, family life, and other relationships, such an approach is of course the wisest one. The examples from the lives of the saints that address this issue suggest a need for great prudence and restraint when gambling is involved. They also teach us to shun and avoid getting involved in gambling at all cost. St. Augustine stated very simply and bluntly that, “The Devil invented gambling,” and in one of his homilies, St. Basil the Great told his people that, “If I let you go, and if I dismiss this assembly, some will run to the dice, where they will find bad language, sad quarrels and the pangs of avarice. There stands the devil, inflaming the fury of the players with the dotted bones, transporting the same sums of money from one side of the table to the other, now exalting one with victory and throwing the other into despair, now swelling the first with boasting and covering his rival with confusion. Of what use is bodily fasting and filling the soul with innumerable evils? He who does not play spends his leisure elsewhere. What frivolities come from his mouth! What follies strike his ears! Leisure without the fear of the Lord is, for those who do not know the value of time, a school of vice. I hope that my words will be profitable; at least by occupying you here they have prevented you from sinning. Thus the longer I keep you, the longer you are out of the way of evil.” (St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron*, Homily 8:8)

As should be absolutely clear by now, the Catholic Church and Her Saints and Tradition condemns gambling and the evil pursuit of gain.

8. Instead of gambling for money you do not need to survive, you should instead use it to save another persons life from starvation, or their soul from eternal death in Hell, which is the only really absolutely important thing to do in this world. As a matter of fact, those who gamble truly mock those who starve physically or

spiritually on this earth, since for the sake of materialism and greed, they waste money on things that are utterly worthless, unnecessary and devoid of godliness.

Consider very carefully how you would feel if you were starving or in need of a little money for something important, such as a medical treatment, and someone you knew just went and squandered it on something totally unnecessary without caring one bit that you were starving before his face. In truth, this is very similar to what gamblers are doing. They refuse to see that many people on this earth would only dream of having the money they themselves thoughtlessly squander for the purpose of superfluity, love of riches and materialism; but in Hell, the poor and those who had almost nothing in this life will indeed be thankful that they were not rich or had more possessions since everything we own, as well as every single word we utter in this life, will have to be accounted for in the day of judgment. All other things being equal on earth, the torment in the hellfire of all those who were poor on this earth will undoubtedly be less severe than for those who had much more money and squandered it on unnecessary things.

Consider that most of the world's poor population in the developing world lives on less than \$1 dollar a day. It's shocking to learn how many hundred of millions of people live on less or a little more than \$1 dollar a day—and yet people who gamble and waste money on nothing squander much more than that—the money those poor people could live on to survive.

9. Our Lord Jesus Christ's words in *The Revelations of St. Bridget* clearly shows us that a person who does not use his possessions for His sake “will incur a judgment” and “that every person who does not hearken to others will himself cry out and not be heard”, which means that he who does not have charity with others, using his time, money and effort to help and save them from Hell, or their temporal and spiritual necessities, “will himself cry out [to God] and not be heard” both in this life when he seeks to be relieved from his own troubles on this earth, as well as in the eternal fire of Hell in the next, which is the eternal abode of all who lack charity and

love for their fellow human beings.

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke, saying: “Reply firmly to him with the four things I tell you now. The first is that **many people lay up treasure but do not know for whom. The second is that every person entrusted with the Lords talent who does not spend it cheerfully will incur a judgment.** The third is that a person who loves land and flesh more than God will not join the company of those who hunger and thirst for justice. The fourth is that every person who does not hearken to others will himself cry out and not be heard.” (In *The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 4, Chapter 81)

10. One argument that wicked people use to try to defend the sin of gambling is that one may do whatever one wants with one’s money. But is this really true? May one do whatever one wants with one’s money? Of course not. It should go without saying that one may only use one’s money **in accordance to the laws of God!**

11. And if you think this moral truth of God and of His Church is “strict,” what do you think most critics, heretics and lax people throughout the ages have thought of the very teachings of the greatest amongst the Popes, Fathers and the Saints themselves?

It is indeed a characteristic of the saints and of holiness and zealousness to be strict and condemn and forbid useless, vain, and dangerous activities, teachings or things. That is also why the Church forbids and still forbids these things. Yet, it is not infrequently one hears or reads about how some people impiously claims that the Fathers, Saints, Popes and Councils were “wrong” or “too harsh” on many of the things they taught or wrote about. Some even go so far as to claim that they wrote for monks and similar ascetics or for the benefit of the people of their own time, and that as such, their writings or admonitions does not really apply to us, just as if they thought that the sinner in this world and age of ours will be judged by another judgment than the monk or the spiritual man of former times! Well, they will not! St. John Chrysostom writes concerning this, “You certainly deceive yourself and are

greatly mistaken if you think that there is one set of requirements for the person in the world and another for the monk. The difference between them is that one is married [and cares for the vanities of the world] and the other is not: in all other respects they will have to render the same account.” (*Oppugn.*, III; PG 47.372; Harkins (1977), p. 156.)

So all of their criticisms and excuses solely stems from their own personal, biased opinions rather than the truth **that the Church has always taught**, since they obviously want to excuse themselves and follow their own indulgent, worldly, selfish, and sensual lifestyle rather than the safer, stricter, and narrower way.

St. Anselm, Archbishop and Doctor of the Church: **“If thou wouldst be certain of being in the number of the elect, strive to be one of the few, not of the many. And if thou wouldst be quite sure of thy salvation, strive to be among the fewest of the few; that is to say: Do not follow the great majority of mankind, but follow those who enter upon the narrow way, who renounce the world, who give themselves to prayer, and who never relax their efforts by day or by night, that they may attain everlasting blessedness.”** (Fr. Martin Von Cochem, *The Four Last Things*, p. 221)

Few are saved from being judged to Hell for all eternity according to God’s Holy and Infallible word in the Bible (Mt. 7:14). That means that most people are damned and always have been. Yet most people seem totally oblivious to this fact and ignores it, and therefore choose to live their lives accordingly, as if nothing really was required of them - just as in the days of Noah!

“And as in the days of Noe, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage [*and living as bad as always as if nothing really was required of them in order to be saved*], even till that day in which Noe entered into the ark, And they knew not till the flood came, and took them all

away [*that is, all the bad people, which was the whole world!*]...” (Matthew 24:37-39)

Look at the world today, does anyone even care anything about penances, mortifications, and prayer? No. That is also why most people choose to ignore the Church’s constant teaching and tradition from the beginning, and why they despise the harsher, stricter and narrower way and advice of those few saints and Catholic writers who actually have managed to save themselves from the eternal hellfire. For as we have seen already, the saints and Councils of the Church are unanimous in teaching that pro-sports and gambling are completely evil and vain, and indeed, many more quotes from them on this issue could be quoted in addition to the ones already quoted, if one just looked for them.

It is thus clear that this is not only the “opinions” of mere men, but the teaching tradition of the Church and of the Bible, as well as of the Popes, Fathers and Saints of the Catholic Church, in addition to reason and logic – which all can understand – that all proves that gambling and modern day pro-sports with all its evils are completely forbidden to take part in, support and enjoy. The unreasonableness and inherent evil of gambling and pro-sports have thus been abundantly proven both from the teachings of the Church, as well as from the teaching of the Divine and Natural Law.

ON MUSIC

It is just a fact that all kinds of popular music are mortally sinful trash that is made by the Devil for the sole reason to drag your soul to an eternal hell fire. There will be countless of impure suggestions toward sin along with a rejection of any kind of morality and decency. Popular music praises sin, and oftentimes speak against God and morality. In short, it contains the same errors and sins that worldly media have, such as: immodest clothing, adultery, blasphemy, foul language and cursing, greed, fornication, make-up, vanity, gloating, magic, occultism, acceptance of false

religions, idol-making of mortal humans etc... and are many times even worse. Popular songs that doesn't praise the idolatry and worship of man is hard to find today, and its even harder today to find popular songs which does not praise or worship sin and worldliness as norm. But worse still are the music-videos. A person cannot even listen to these songs without grave sin, but how much more then does a person sin when watching these sinful music-videos with half naked women/men worshiping sin and the occult by deed and example? This is sadly what many of your children are watching daily on the TV you have given them! You must reject this evil music entirely and not accept this to be played in your home.

Not all music are bad or sinful, you can for example listen to religious music, instrumental music, classical music or other music in line with decency and morals. But the highest good is of course not to listen to music at all. Giving up one's own will is always the highest good.

The best music which one may listen to is of course religious music, since it draws your mind and heart toward our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary, the joy of Heaven, etc. The next best music which one may listen to is classical music and instrumental music where no singing is involved, for this will not affect your mind toward worldly things as worldly songs always otherwise do.

The worst kind of music one could listen to is music which sings about worldly affairs. A person that listens much to music should avoid listening to worldly songs, otherwise he or she will be drawn toward these worldly things and affairs which are sung about. It is also very necessary to test yourself if you are addicted to music in any way, even totally acceptable music. This is easily done by going a few days without music so that you can test if some withdrawal symptoms effect you. All addictions of earthly things are evil and effect the soul in a harmful way. Just because you don't see or understand the effect doesn't mean that it isn't happening. Spiritual sloth and depression among other things are common attributes of an addiction to media or music.

The effects from the wrong kind of music, and secular songs are very dangerous.

There are numerous quotes from the secular world that can be brought forth to prove this point.

"Music directly represents the passions of states of the soul-gentleness, anger, courage, temperance...if one listens to the wrong kind of music he will become the wrong kind of person..." (Quote from Aristotle)

Brain specialists, Dr. Richard Pellegrino declared that music has the uncanny power to "...trigger a flood of human emotions and images that have the ability to instantaneously produce very powerful changes in emotional states." He went on to say: "Take it from a brain guy. In 25 years of working with the brain, I still cannot affect a person's state of mind the way that one simple song can."

Dr. Allan Bloom is quite correct when he asserts that "popular music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to sexual desire... but sexual desire undeveloped and untutored ... popular music gives children, on a silver plate, with all the public authority of the entertainment industry, everything their parents always used to tell them they had to wait for until they grew up ... Young people know that rock and popular music has the beat of sexual intercourse ... Never was there such an art form directed so exclusively to children...(Every Catholic should understand that masturbation is a clear mortal sin!) The words implicitly and explicitly describe bodily acts that satisfy sexual desire and treat them as its only natural and routine culmination for children who do not yet have the slightest imagination of marriage or family." (Dr. Allan Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, pp. 73-74).

Dr. Allan Bloom: "Today, a very large proportion of young people between the ages of 10 and 20 live for music. It is their passion; nothing else excites them as it does; they cannot take seriously anything alien to music. When they are in school and with their families, they are longing to plug themselves back

into their music. Nothing surrounding them - school, family, church - has anything to do with their musical world. At best that ordinary life is neutral, but mostly it is an impediment, drained of vital..."

Dr. Paul King, medical director of the adolescent program at Charter Lakeside Hospital, in Memphis, TN, says more than 80% of his teen patients are there because of rock music. Dr. King says, "the lyrics become a philosophy of life, a religion."

To allow yourself or your children to have any kind of music like rock, pop, rap, techno, trance, or any kind of music that is even remotely similar to this is mortally sinful and really idiotic when presented with these facts. Billions of souls are burning now as we speak in the excruciating fire of hell since they refused to stop listening to bad and sinful music! You will have your children eating your heart out for all eternity in hell, because of the violent hatred they will have against you, since you could have hindered them in their sin, but refused to do so.

ON BOOKS

"Bad books will abound over the earth, and the spirits of darkness will everywhere spread universal relaxation in everything concerning God's service..."
(*Prophecy of La Salette, 19th of September 1846*)

According to Catholic Prophecy, bad books would dominate in the end, and we can now see this happening right in front of our eyes with the worldly school system and with worldly evil books like the Harry Potter series which teaches kids that magic and the occult is something good and praiseworthy to do or enjoy. Magic is an abominable mortal sin which was rightly punished by execution when the Catholic Faith was in control of Europe and South America. But now, blinded "Catholics" not only tell their kids that being a magician or an occultist is fine, they also buy these books to their kids. Think about it: If someone made a game on how to make

contact with demons and on top of this sold this for your children to play with in stores, then every Christian would be appalled, for every Christian know that making contact with demonic spirits are possible. Yet, many parents let their children read filth or watch movies which portray magic and channeling with demonic spirits as normal and good.

Believe it or not, the example used has now in fact become a reality because of parents as yourself, whom says that bad is good and good is bad. Satan has no limit, he would do even worse if the world or God would allow him. Sadly, as time goes on however, worse things will become a norm.

Ouija board a controversial toy for tots

Toys R Us is selling Ouija boards, promoting them as acceptable for children as young as eight years old.

The pink edition of the Ouija board is listed for girls eight-years-old and up while the regular version is designated for all children eight and up. Stephen Phelan, communications manager of Human Life International, checked the website and reports that the findings are disturbing.

"It is just troubling that these things are treated as casually as any other game, like Monopoly or anything else on this Toys R Us site -- and I think it's something Christians should be aware of and really not support," he states.

"If you go to the comments section on the Toys R Us [web]site, you'll read comments from people who talk about being obsessed with it, talk about missing school for it, talk about the spirits they spoke to on the other side and how creepy it was," Phelan describes.

The communications manager adds that the primary groups that deny the evils of the Ouija board are the ones who deny the spirit world entirely. He

goes on to say Christians have a biblical mandate.

"We're supposed to deal with the truth only," he notes. "We're supposed to have nothing to do with dark spirits. We're not supposed to dabble in anything that would compromise our souls, and that's exactly what this does." The manufacturer of the product is Hasbro.

Lord of the Rings is another famous book series which presents magic, occultism, fairy tales and fables as something good and praiseworthy but is in reality just another abomination before the Lord. Sadly, many "Catholics" refuses to accept these facts and still believes that Lord of the Rings is good or even Catholic. You can fool yourself, but you cannot fool God!

"For there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables." (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

St. Teresa even confessed that reading books which in themselves was not evil, was still a beginning of great harm and lukewarmness on her part. What then are one to say about evil media, evil video games and sinful stinking books? A person cannot do these things without becoming completely lukewarm and cold in the service of God exactly as it also happened to the glorious St. Theresa, for those who always seek after worldly things are in fact diminishing in the fervor of God!

The following quote further proving this point was taken from the Life of St. Teresa- "What I shall now speak of was, I believe, the beginning of great harm to me. I contracted a habit of reading books; and this little fault which I observed was the beginning of lukewarmness in my good desires, and the occasion of my falling away in other respects. I thought there was no harm in it when I wasted many hours night and day in so vain an occupation, even when I kept it a secret from my father. So completely was I mastered by this

passion, that I thought I could never be happy without a new book.”

Doesn't this sound familiar? Don't we all think as Teresa did, that we cannot be happy without our daily media, our evil movies and series, our bad video games or bad books? If the effect on this Saint was the start of a great harm, what then will it be for you, when what you do in comparison with her is infinitely more damaging and dangerous to your soul? How utterly stupid and foolish is it not to spend one's time reading bad worldly books, when one can spend time reading good Catholic books about virtue that would edify soul, mind and body? You will find innumerable good Catholic books if you just look for them, one good place to start is here:

<http://www.catholic-saints.net/>

“To a spiritual life the reading of holy books is perhaps not less useful than mental prayer. St. Bernard says reading instructs us at once in prayer, and in the practice of virtue. Hence he concluded that spiritual reading and prayer are the arms by which hell is conquered and paradise won...” St. Alphonsus

Burn every book, film or music album immediately which can be accounted to be sinful, and repent, do penance, and confess of this evil. As you would throw away poison in order that it may not be able to hurt yourself or your child, do the same here. Think about pleasing God first and not yourself or your child. Life is too short and Hell is too long and painful to refuse to follow God's law.

HOME-SCHOOLING

For the Love of God, keep your children away from public school, (if that option is available for you) and the company of other bad men. You must do everything in your power to hinder the worldly school-system from indoctrinating your children, even going so far as moving from your country if your country forces public school on children. The responsibility of an eternal soul that is greater than the universe must not be lightly dealt with. If you can home-school your kids but doesn't do it,

then you really don't care for the spiritual well being of your children. How can a Catholic parent with good conscience let his kids go to public school where he know they will be exposed to bad influences by other children, and brainwashed by teachings such as evolution and sexual education? Most of the things we learn in school is superfluous anyway and will never be needed. We are bombarded with unnecessary teachings that will occupy much of our time. This will lead souls to forget God and their own spiritual well being! The school system before was very different from today, for back then most states was Christian, and God and the Bible was not banned from school.

Will you allow your children to go to public school and go out with worldly or ungodly friends? Then sadly, you will in fact lose them to the world! God does not tell us as much as to be on guard against demons as with men (Matthew 10:17), for men are oftentimes more harmful to us then the devils are, for demons can be expelled by invoking the most holy names of Jesus and Mary, but man on the other hand cannot be expelled in the same way. And if a man tries to change his life, he will be reviled, despised, and called a most miserable fool, a good for nothing and a man of no education. Many weak souls sadly turn back to the vomit from such and like reproaches out of fear for the loss of human respect!

ON MASTURBATION

Since so many are coming out of mortal sin and are convincing themselves that certain things are not sins, we must preach against those sins with some specificity lest people perish in their ignorance.

Masturbation is definitely a mortal sin. There are about three places where St. Paul gives a list of some of the main mortal sins which exclude people from Heaven. These lists do not comprise every mortal sin, of course, but some of the main ones. Well, it always puzzled many people exactly what is being referred to in the following passages by the sin of “uncleanness” and “effeminacy.” St. Paul says that

these sins exclude people from Heaven. Does “effeminacy” refer to acting like a homosexual? What does “uncleanness” refer to?

Galatians 5:19-21- “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, **uncleanness**, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that **they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**”

1 Corinthians 6:9-11- “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, **nor effeminate**, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, **shall inherit the kingdom of God.** And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Ephesians 5:5-8- “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, **nor unclean person**, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, **hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.** Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”

St. Thomas Aquinas identifies masturbation as the biblical “uncleanness” and “effeminacy.”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Pt. II-II, Q. 154, A. 11: “I answer that, As stated above (A6,9) wherever there occurs a special kind of deformity whereby the venereal act is rendered unbecoming, there is a determinate

species of lust. This may occur in two ways: First, through being contrary to right reason, and this is common to all lustful vices; secondly, because, in addition, it is contrary to the natural order of the venereal act as becoming to the human race: and this is called "the unnatural vice." This may happen in several ways. **First, by procuring pollution, without any copulation, for the sake of venereal pleasure: this pertains to the sin of "uncleanness" which some call "effeminacy."** Secondly, by copulation with a thing of undue species, and this is called "bestiality." Thirdly, by copulation with an undue sex, male with male, or female with female, as the Apostle states (Romans 1:27): and this is called the "vice of sodomy." Fourthly, by not observing the natural manner of copulation, either as to undue means, or as to other monstrous and bestial manners of copulation."

Thus, not only is masturbation a mortal sin, but it's a mortal sin which is identified in three different places in Scripture as one which excludes from the Kingdom of God. It's also classified by St. Thomas as one of the sins against nature, for it corrupts the order intended by God. That's probably why it's called "effeminacy." Though it's not the same as the abomination of Sodomy, it's disordered and unnatural. We believe that this sin – since it's contrary to nature and is classified as "effeminacy" and "the unnatural vice" – is the cause of some people being given over to unnatural lusts (homosexuality).

Therefore, people who are committing this sin need to cease the evil immediately and, when prepared, make a good confession. If people are really struggling in this area, then they are not near the spiritual level where they need to be. God's grace is there for them; but they need to pray more, pray better, avoid the occasions one of sin (bad media being one of them) and exercise their wills. They need to consistently pray the 15-decade Rosary (i.e. daily). They need to put out more effort spiritually and then it shouldn't be a problem.

For the full article on masturbation and all the information, questions, objections, help & how to overcome, etc., please see: <http://www.catholic->

saints.net/masturbation/

VANITY, IMMODEST DRESSING, AND MAKEUP

Our Lady of Fatima: "The sins of the world are too great! The sins which lead most souls to hell are sins of the flesh! Certain fashions are going to be introduced which will offend Our Lord very much. Those who serve God should not follow these fashions. The Church has no fashions; Our Lord is always the same. Many marriages are not good; they do not please Our Lord and are not of God."

"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women [and men] of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful." (1 Peter 3:3-6)

The divine authority of God's word demands that you always dress humbly by not wearing tight clothes that show your breasts or your behind or by showing too much skin that leads to temptation, and that you also abstain from using any kind of makeup, jewelry, and accessories (except for Rosaries or Brown Scapulars and the like which is a very great way to protect oneself against the devil) in order not to give a bad example or tempt your neighbor into carnal lust and sin. For every single person you have tempted with your immodest appearance will demand that God executes his righteous vengeance on you since you tempted them into lustful thoughts!

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches in St. Bridget's revelations, that all who uses make-up or immodest clothing will be especially tormented for every single person that have seen them in their entire life unless they amend before the moment of their death, which is, sad to say, impossible to know when it will be. That can be thousands and thousands of people executing vengeance on you in hell for all

eternity! What a horror! That of course means you cannot go and bathe in public since that would be even more immodest and immoral! The world has indeed changed very much the last 100-200 years; yet, no one should think that he could do these things just because they are universally accepted. Do you want to go with the majority? Then, sadly, Hell awaits you for all eternity!

"A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God." (Deut 22:5).

Women should not dress or act like men, for this is an abomination in God's eyes. God created the human race with two genders, intending each to have his and her proper place in Creation. Men and women are not meant to behave or dress the same manner. Part of the beauty of the human race is found in the differences between men and women.

We each live within a larger society. We are each influenced by the culture around us. Yet society and culture often teach us false things, which lead us away from God. Most women (at least in Western society and culture) dress and act very much like men. They seek the same roles in society, the family, and the Church. They are following a popular teaching of our culture today, that women and men are meant to have the same roles, and especially that women are meant to take up roles formerly held only or mainly by men. They are displaying their adherence to this teaching by dressing like men. This teaching of our culture is contrary to the teaching of Christ.

God wants men and women to act and dress according to their gender and the place God has given each one in Creation. Clothing and hairstyles are expressions of one's thoughts, behavior, and attitude. Women are not meant to behave like men, nor to have the same roles as men, therefore they should not dress or groom themselves like men. And vice versa.

"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:17-19).

Padre Pio used to refuse to hear the confession of women who were wearing pants or an immodest dress.

PADRE PIO ON MODERN-DAY FASHIONS

1 Timothy 2:9: "In like manner I wish women also in decent apparel: adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety..."

Galatians 5:19: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty..."

Padre Pio had strong views on female fashions in dress. When the mini-skirt craze started, no one dared to come to Padre Pio's monastery dressed in such an inappropriate fashion. Other women came not in mini skirts, but in skirts that were shortish. Padre Pio got very upset about this as well.

Padre Pio tolerated neither tight skirts nor short or low-necked dresses. He also forbade his spiritual daughters to wear transparent stockings. He would dismiss women from the confessional, even before they got inside, if he discerned their dress to be inappropriate. Many mornings he drove one out after another – ending up hearing only very few confessions. He also had a sign fastened to the church door, declaring: "By Padre Pio's explicit wish, women must enter his confessional wearing skirts at least eight inches (20 cm) below the knees. It is forbidden to borrow longer dresses in church and to wear them for the confessional."

Padre Pio would rebuke some women with the words, "Go and get dressed." He would at times add: "Clowns!" He wouldn't give anyone a pass, whether they were people he met or saw the first time, or long-time spiritual daughters. In many cases, the skirts were many inches below the knees, but still weren't long enough for Padre Pio! Boys and men also had to wear long trousers, if they didn't want to be kicked out of the church.

The immodest have in truth a special place in hell waiting for them since they are the source of the most abominable sins of the flesh, as St. Paul teaches us in First Corinthians, *"Fly fornication. Every sin that a man doth, is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body!"* (1 Cor 18)

This should of course be understood in the sense of literal fornication as well as fornication in the mind which also is a mortal and damnable sin! You will be held accountable for every eye that have seen you if you use make-up or immodest clothing. That can account for thousands and thousands of people executing vengeance on you in hell for all eternity! Even if you don't use any make-up or dress vainly, God will still judge you to hell if you take delight in vain thoughts or have vain opinions of yourself. If a single thought can damn a person, how much more should tempters with immodest clothing and makeup be damned! This accounts for all kinds of makeup a person may use for vanity. How abominable to want to be accepted for your appearance rather than for your opinions! Oh, vanity, you shall soon rot in the grave, but your soul shall burn for ever more in hell since you thought to make your exterior beautiful, and, in so doing, perverted your interior.

ON BAD THOUGHTS

"But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28)

God solemnly declares that he will judge our every thought, how much more then will he judge our deeds? When we in our mind take delight in sinful thoughts, God takes this as an act in the very same way as he judges us as murderers if we hate our brother, or, as an adulterer if we look at a woman with lust in our heart. What then will God judge you to be when you in your heart love abominable things?

No one can escape to have bad thoughts, for we are not yet angels but mere men. We cannot escape these bad thoughts, but we can refuse to enjoy them. Don't be surprised if you have all kinds of abominable thoughts. Many people are unlearned and do not understand that this is Satan tempting and giving them these thoughts. Sure, many bad thoughts arise from various bad occasions you have put yourself in during the course of the day or life, but still, if you do not think about these thoughts willfully and it still assail you, then it must be Satan tempting you!

Every time you get bad thoughts against your own will, and you resist them, you have not committed any sin.

When you get bad thoughts against your will and you enjoy them a little, and repents almost immediately, you have still committed sin.

If you however, willfully delve in bad thoughts and enjoy them, you have without a doubt committed mortal sin! A clearer demonstration of this can be seen in St. Bridget's revelations:

The Son of God speaks to the bride (St. Bridget): "What are you worried and anxious about?" She answered: "I am afflicted by various useless thoughts that I cannot get rid of, and hearing about your terrible judgment upsets me." The Son answered: "This is truly just. Earlier you found pleasure in worldly desires against my will, but now different thoughts are allowed to come to you against your will.

“But have a prudent fear of God, and put great trust in me, your God, knowing for certain that when your mind does not take pleasure in sinful thoughts but struggles against them by detesting them, then they become a purgation and a crown for the soul. But if you take pleasure in committing

even a slight sin, which you know to be a sin, and you do so trusting to your own abstinence and presuming on grace, without doing penance and reparation for it, know that it can become a mortal sin. Accordingly, if some sinful pleasure of any kind comes into your mind, you should right away think about where it is heading and repent.

“... God hates nothing so much as when you know you have sinned but do not care, trusting to your other meritorious actions, as if, because of them, God would put up with your sin, as if he could not be glorified without you, or as if he would let you do something evil with his permission, seeing all the good deeds you have done, since, even if you did a hundred good deeds for each wicked one, you still would not be able to pay God back for his goodness and love. So, then, maintain a rational fear of God and, even if you cannot prevent these thoughts, then at least bear them patiently and use your will to struggle against them. You will not be condemned because of their entering your head, unless you take pleasure in them, since it is not within your power to prevent them.

“Again, maintain your fear of God in order not to fall through pride, even though you do not consent to the thoughts. Anyone who stands firm stands by the power of God alone. Thus fear of God is like the gateway into heaven. Many there are who have fallen headlong to their deaths, because they cast off the fear of God and were then ashamed to make a confession before men, although they had not been ashamed to sin before God. Therefore, I shall refuse to absolve the sin of a person who has not cared enough to ask my pardon for a small sin. In this manner, sins are increased through habitual practice, and a venial sin that could have been pardoned through contrition becomes a serious one through a person's negligence and scorn, as you can deduce from the case of this soul who has already been condemned.

“After having committed a venial and pardonable sin, he augmented it through habitual practice, trusting to his other good works, without thinking that I might take lesser sins into account. Caught in a net of habitual and inordinate pleasure, his soul neither corrected nor curbed his sinful intention, until the time for his sentencing stood at the gates and his final moment was

approaching. This is why, as the end approached, his conscience was suddenly agitated and painfully afflicted because he was soon to die and he was afraid to lose the little, temporary good he had loved. Up until a sinner's final moment God abides him, waiting to see if he is going to direct his free will away from his attachment to sin.

“However, if a soul's will is not corrected, that soul is then confined by an end without end. What happens is that the devil, knowing that each person will be judged according to his conscience and intention, labors mightily at the end of life to distract the soul and turn it away from rectitude of intention, and God allows it to happen, since the soul refused to remain vigilant when it ought to have...” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget of Sweden*, Book 3, Chapter 19)

DANCES, PUBS, BALLS

“There is not a commandment of God which dancing does not cause men to break! Mothers may indeed say: ‘Oh, I keep an eye on their dress; you cannot keep guard over their heart.’ Go, you wicked parents, go down to Hell where the wrath of God awaits you, because of your conduct when you gave free scope to your children; GO! It will not be long before they join you, seeing that you have shown them the way so well! **Then you will see whether your pastor was right in forbidding those Hellish amusements.”** (*The Curé D’Ars, St. Jean-Marie-Baptiste Vianney*, p. 146)

St. Alphonsus (c. 1755): “In the year 1611, in the celebrated sanctuary of Mary in Montevergine, **it happened that on the vigil of Pentecost the people who thronged there profaned that feast with balls, excesses, and immodest conduct, when a fire was suddenly discovered bursting forth from the house of entertainment** where they were feasting, so that in less than an hour and a half it was consumed, and **more than one**

thousand five hundred persons were killed. Five persons who remained alive affirmed upon oath, that they had seen the Mother of God herself, with two lighted torches set fire to the inn.” (*The Glories of Mary*, p. 659.)

From these quotes, everyone can see how evil dances are. Dancing causes thousands of tempting and lascivious thoughts that leads countless of lost souls to hell. To obstinately defend dances between boys and girls or between men and women is absolutely despicable, and those parents who allow their children to go to such events or those who even at times force their children to such events, will experience the most excruciating torment in hell unless they amend immediately. To go to pubs which only sell alcohol or which propagate gambling or other mortal sins is absolutely unacceptable and sinful. These places were fervently preached against by St. John Vianney, and he called them real hell holes and the cause of countless of mortal sins!

KEEP HOLY THY SABBATH DAY OR SUNDAY

Since many people who are reading this have not been taught these concepts by modernist heretics, we must point out a few other things in this regard: servile works are forbidden on Sundays; people should not do laundry on Sundays; people should not do yard work (such as mowing the lawn, etc.) on Sundays; people should not shop food on Sundays unless they are starving etc... Exceptions to this would be work that absolutely must be done. For example, making a fire in your home so that you can be warm and survive is works that are completely acceptable. If you are able to make your food for the whole family before the Sunday, you must do so. One should not spend the Sunday on preparing food for the family which may take several hours of the day. You may of course (if you don't have any prepared food) take time to make something small for you or the family which does not require much of your time or take some food that you already have and warm it up. You cannot cut wood on Sundays and you must restrict yourself to only do things that

are absolutely necessary for survival. If you must shovel out your driveway after a heavy snowfall, so that you can get to work, then you could do so on a Sunday. This, of course, implies some preplanning, but no one should refuse to obey the divine commandments since this action will undoubtedly lead to eternal damnation. An obedient person will see the beauty of God forcing man to rest from physical works.

To do unnecessary works on Sundays is completely unacceptable unless you starve and don't have the means necessary to support your family. In the richer countries, even going so far as begging or receiving social welfare checks every month is far better than to do unnecessary work on Sundays, since this not only damns yourself, but also damns your employer (unless ignorance excuse him). Your employer will in fact be punished for every single person he has allowed or forced (by threatening with layoffs) to work on Sundays. That can be thousands and thousands of people attacking one man for all eternity! What a horror!

People should of course also try to arrange with their employers that they don't have to work on Sundays. Likewise, other work that should or must be done on Sundays, due to one's work, occupation or state (such as tending the sick), can be done. If you have exhausted all the options for not working on Sundays or for receiving an income, for example: looking for another job or moving to another place, or any other lawful means of receiving an income, (like receiving social welfare checks for the support of the necessities for you or your family, as long as this do not imply that you have to compromise your faith or safety in any way,) then you are not obligated to stay away from work and can safely work on Sundays as long as it is your last option. Below are some examples of acceptable reasons of why you can work on Sundays.

If you cannot continue home-schooling your children for example, this would be an acceptable reason with continuing to work on Sundays. Another example would be if you had to move to a bad neighbourhood with much drugs, violence or lasciviousness that would influence you or your family in a sinful way, or if by quitting your work, you may be forced to take another work that is sinful or

immoral. This would be another reason to continue to work on Sundays until you have found another work where you are not forced to work on Sundays or forced to put your family's spiritual wellbeing in jeopardy.

This goes to say if the work you do is acceptable before God. If you sin against God or your neighbour by the specific work you do, such as selling, packing or stocking contraception, porn, bad newspapers with immodest images or stories about sex or other sins etc, then you cannot go to that work even if you starve or don't have the means to support yourself or your family. In such cases you have to put your entire trust in God. You cannot be the cause of your brothers mortal sins without yourself being guilty of mortal sin!

“Therefore I say to you: Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. The life is more than the meat: and the body is more than the raiment... seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice: and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Lk. 12:22-24, 27-28, 31)

However, in the poorer countries where there is no chance of getting social welfare or income in any other way, it is totally acceptable to work on Sundays as long as the person must do it in order to survive. Many people do not operate under these conditions but work on Sundays in order to have more money than they need to survive. Yes, many people have the means necessary to stay away from work on Sundays, but only go to work to receive more abundance in riches. This is a clear mortal sin!

The following example on this can be seen clearer from St. Bridget's revelations, in the book rightly entitled the Book of Questions. It is composed of questions which Our Lord and Judge give wonderful answers to:

“Third question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying:
"Why should I not exalt myself over others, seeing that I am rich?"

Answer to the third question. The Judge answered: "As to why you must not take pride in riches, I answer: The riches of the world only belong to you insofar as you need them for food and clothing. The world was made for this: that man, having sustenance for his body, might through work and humility return to me, his God, whom he scorned in his disobedience and neglected in his pride. However, if you claim that the temporal goods belong to you, I assure you that you are in effect forcibly usurping for yourself all that you possess beyond your needs. All temporal goods ought to belong to the community and be equally accessible to the needy out of charity.

You usurp for your own superfluous possession things that should be given to others out of compassion. However, many people do own much more than others but in a rational way, and they distribute it in discreet fashion. Therefore, in order not to be accused more severely at the judgment because you received more than others, it is advisable for you not to put yourself ahead of others by acting haughtily and hoarding possessions. As pleasant as it is in the world to have more temporal goods than others and to have them in abundance, it will likewise be terrible and painful beyond measure at the judgment not to have administered in reasonable fashion even licitly held goods."

<http://www.catholic-saints.net/saints/st-bridget/st-bridget-book5.php>

“The third commandment is that thou have mind and remember that thou hallow and keep holy thy Sabbath day or Sunday. That is to say, that thou shalt do no work nor operation on the Sunday or holy day, but thou shalt rest from all worldly labour and intend to prayer, and to serve God thy maker, which rested the seventh day of the works that he made in the six days before, in which he made and ordained the world. This commandment accomplish he that keep to his power the peace of his conscience for to serve God more holily. Then this day that the Jews called Sabbath is as much to say as rest. This commandment may no man keep spiritually that is encumbered in his conscience with deadly sin, such a conscience can not be in rest

nor in peace as long as he is in such a state. In the stead of the Sabbath day which was straightly kept in the old law, holy church hath established the Sunday in the new law. For our Lord arose from death to life on the Sunday, and therefore we ought to keep it holily, and be in rest from the works of the week before, and to cease of the work of sin, and to intend to do spiritual works, and to follow our Lord beseeching him of mercy and to thank him for his benefits, for they that break the Sunday and the other solemn feasts that be established to be hallowed in holy church, they sin deadly, for they do directly against the commandment of God aforesaid and holy church, but if it be for some necessity that holy church admitteth and granteth. But they sin much more then, that employ the Sunday and the feasts in sins, in lechery, in going to taverns in the service time, in gluttony and drinking drunk, and in other sins, outrages against God. For alas for sorrow I trow there is more sin committed on the Sunday and holy days and feasts than in the other work days. For then be they drunk, fight and slay, and be not occupied virtuously in God's service as they ought to do. And as God command us to remember and have in mind to keep and hallow the holy day, they that so do sin deadly and observe and keep not this third commandment." (From the Golden legend or the Lives of the Saints, volume 1, page 122-123)

From the above quote can be learned that man should not do the things on a Sunday as he would do on the other days. The Sunday is intended for God to be kept in holiness. Thus, if the only difference for you on Sundays is that you keep away from servile work, and do not give any of your time to God and the well-being your family, what profit is there for you? (It is nothing wrong with walking the dog on a Sunday, or to have sporting activities with friends and family.)

God commanded at least one day off for man so that man could rest from the world and use it for his and his family's spiritual wellbeing, in praying, reading, picnicking and doing other good works for the soul of oneself and the family. You should thus spend the Sunday in abstaining from your own will, such as watching the tv, playing games, listening to music or the radio, etc, and instead strive to know God in solitude, prayer and meditation.

SMOKING AND DRUGS

We don't know if smoking in very small amounts once in a while is a sin. But we believe that smoking habitually or regularly is a sin, and it definitely cuts out graces from people's lives. We don't see how those who smoke habitually, for example throughout the day, would be any different from people who eat candy all day and thus try to constantly gratify themselves in that way. This is not even to get into the issue that we know it's horrible for health and leads to death. If you are smoking, you are giving a horrible example to people, tempting them to start smoking which is highly addictive and lethal. Smoking is so addictive that medical scientists have compared the addiction to Heroin addiction. Most people who get addicted to cigarettes will never be able to stop and will be life long slaves under a most filthy, evil and grace diminishing habit.

The same can be said of all addictive substances that you don't need to survive, such as: coffee, candy, chips, cookies, soda, good meats etc... If you can't abstain from these substances for even a few days, then you are addicted to them and need to learn to abstain from them. Good days for learning to abstain from one's own desires are Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Fridays has always been a day of abstinence in the Catholic Church – since Our Lord suffered and died on that day – which means that one cannot eat anything containing meat under pain of mortal sin (there is no obligation of fast or abstinence on a holy day of obligation such as Christmas, even if it falls on a Friday). One should of course also abstain from other superfluous substances. While some substances may appear to be harmless, grace is highly diminished in people who always uses things which are superfluous.

St. Francis of Assisi was well aware of the truth that seeking pleasure corrupts the soul. St. Francis even used to put ashes in his food in order to make it taste bad since he understood that the five senses and the search to gratify them made the soul weaker. Someone might ask: “Does that mean that eating good things is a sin?”

The answer is of course that eating good things in itself is no sin. However, one should definitely try to avoid all things that are tasty and addictive, such as superfluous and tasty foods, meats, beverages, cigarettes, candy, chips, cakes, spices, sauces, dressings, etc. The reason why man should do his utmost to avoid pleasurable things is because the five senses of man, after the fall, was corrupted by self-love and self-gratification. That's precisely why countless saints have refused to eat food that taste good. However, no one should get the idea that it's sinful to eat tasty foods, but understand that people who always want to eat these foods will fall into sin, for gluttony and lack of moderation is certainly sinful.

Everyone of course knows that the consuming of mind altering drugs such as smoking marijuana or taking LSD or ecstasy is a mortal sin, just like getting drunk is a mortal sin, because when "a man willingly and knowingly deprives himself of the use of reason, whereby he performs virtuous deeds and avoids sin... he sins mortally by running the risk of falling into sin. For [Saint] Ambrose says (De Patriarch. [De Abraham i.]): "We learn that we should shun drunkenness, which prevents us from avoiding grievous sins. For the things we avoid when sober, we unknowingly [or knowingly] commit through drunkenness." Therefore drunkenness, properly speaking, is a mortal sin. " (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 150, Article 2. Whether drunkenness is a mortal sin?)

A person who uses a drug that makes him intoxicated needs an absolutely necessary reason (such as a grave illness) to excuse his usage of the drug from being a sin, and when he does not have such an absolutely necessary excuse to excuse his drug usage, he commits the sin of drug abuse. A sick person is allowed by God's permission to take drugs in order to lessen his pain. But when this sick person uses more drugs than he needs in order to get intoxicated and for mere pleasure, or continues to use the drug after he gets well, he commits the sin of drug abuse. This is a perfect example of those who use drugs for the mere sake of pleasure. They are gluttonous or overindulgent in their sensual appetite, and are thus sinning against their reason and the Natural Law. For "the sin of lust [or pleasure seeking] consists

in seeking venereal pleasure not in accordance with right reason...” and “lust there signifies any kind of excess.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 1)

St. Alphonsus Liguori, one of the most well known doctors of the Church, in his masterpiece “The True Spouse of Jesus Christ”, shows us the inherent evil of acting in accordance to our sensual desires: “Pope Innocent XI Odescalchi has condemned the proposition which asserts that it is not a sin to eat or to drink from the sole motive of satisfying the palate. However, it is not a fault to feel pleasure in eating: for it is, generally speaking, impossible to eat without experiencing the delight which food naturally produces. But it is a defect to eat, like beasts, through the sole motive of sensual gratification, and without any reasonable object. Hence, the most delicious meats may be eaten without sin, if the motive be good and worthy of a rational creature; and, in taking the coarsest food through attachment to pleasure, there may be a fault.” ([*The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*](#), p. 282)

ON FALSE JUDGMENTS AND SLANDER

Since almost the whole world today have fallen into this mortal vice of judging falsely, it is necessary to speak briefly about it in order to make people aware of that evil thoughts, judgments or conclusions about other people – thinking negatively, evil or bad about them, calumniating their intentions, character or meanings with slight or no proof – **is a mortal sin.**

This means that you are not to presume why or what other people are or what their intentions or motives are when they do or say certain things **with slight or no proof other than your own evil presumptions.** To do otherwise is to slander them and think evil of them. Evil men usually judge others by themselves and hence conclude that others must be evil as themselves and therefore, they do not think good of others or try to excuse them first since they are evil and would have, or think they could have, done evil in the same or a similar situation.

However, and the sad thing is, the very same people who so easily judge and condemn their neighbor at the slightest apprehension of evil, would many times instantly have tried to excuse their own friend, child, family, or wife in the same situation, but whenever their neighbor is involved, or someone they don't like or know about, then this just and right thought process that they would have had towards their own family members or friend is instantly abandoned. So while many of them want to excuse their own loved ones as much as possible and not think evil of them without some proof or reason – however much their actions or deeds seem to have been evil at first – they cannot stand and, in most cases never have, the same just thought process towards other people they don't know about or like. This is clearly an injustice!

For example, some people presume that just because someone is homeless, this means he must be a bum, a thief, a lazy person or a drug and alcohol addict without even considering the circumstances that led him to become homeless. Others still imagine that one can conclude calumniating, slanderous or evil things about others just because they don't speak about a specific subject or are silent about it or because they behave in a certain way. In truth, what would you think if people always judged you evilly based on what you did or did not say or because of how you behaved in certain citations?

In contrast to this, others still presume to conclude that just because someone spoke favorably of some subject, this means he himself must do this or be guilty of it, such as practicing contraception, performing abortions, or be a homosexual! No, just because someone spoke favorably of homosexuality, abortion or contraception, doesn't mean he or she himself is a practicing homosexual, use contraception, or perform abortions. That is common sense. Sure, those people who speak favorably of these evil things are themselves evil and damned people and heretics against the natural law, but just because they are evil, doesn't mean one can leave of justice and presume unjustified, additional evils about them concerning what they do or do not do.

So many people fall into these deadly errors all the time today. To presume things about others have sadly become the norm. That is mostly due to the media, magazines and the internet where one is exposed to this evil behavior or attitude almost daily by evil, judgmental, presumptuous and prideful people that think they can presume things about other people's intentions without having to render a strict account of every word, thought or deed that they have ever said or thought of their neighbor – whether it be true or false. *“For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.”* (Matthew 7:2)

Innumerable more examples could be given. St. John Vianney in the [Sermons of the Cure of Ars](#), explains this vice further and gives some additional examples demonstrating the evil of Rash Judgments:

ST. NICHOLAS AND THE THREE GIRLS

Tell me, now, my brethren, **on what foundation are rash judgments and sentences based? Alas! They are based upon very slight evidence only, and most often upon what “someone said.”** But perhaps you are going to tell me that you have seen and heard this and that. Unfortunately, you could be mistaken in the testimony of both your sight and hearing, as you are going to see.... Here is an example which will show you, better than anything else can, how easily we can be mistaken and how we are nearly always wrong.

What would you have said, my dear brethren, if you had been living during the time of St. Nicholas and you had seen him coming in the middle of the night, walking around the house of three young girls, watching carefully and taking good care that no one saw him. Just look at that bishop, you would have thought at once, degrading and dishonouring his calling; he is a dreadful hypocrite. He seems to be a saint when he is in church, and look at him now, in the middle of the night, at the door of three girls who do not have a very good reputation! And yet, my dear

brethren, this bishop, who would certainly have been condemned by you, was indeed a very great saint and most dear to God. What he was doing was the best deed in the world. In order to spare these young persons the shame of begging, he came in the night and threw money in to them through their window because he feared that it was poverty which had made them abandon themselves to sin.

This should teach us never to judge the actions of our neighbour without having reflected very well beforehand. ... Yes indeed, my brethren, **I have seen people making wrong judgments about the intentions of their neighbour when I have known perfectly well that these intentions were good** [Vianney was a confessor and heard peoples confessions]. I have tried in vain to make them understand, but it was no good. Oh! Cursed pride, what evil you do and how many souls do you lead to Hell!

YOUR HEART IS BUT A MASS OF PRIDE

You will tell me, perhaps, that you never judge people except by what you see or after you have actually heard or been the witness of some action: “I saw him doing this action, so I am sure. I heard what he said with my own ears. After that, I could not be mistaken.”

But I shall reply by telling you to begin by entering into your own heart, which is but a mass of pride wherein everything is dried up. You will find yourself infinitely more guilty than the person whom you are so boldly judging, and you have plenty of room for fear, lest one day you will see him going to Heaven while you are being dragged down to Hell by the demons. “Oh, unfortunate pride,” says St. Augustine to us, **“you dare to judge your brother on the slightest appearance of evil, and how do you know that he has not repented of his fault and that he is not numbered among God’s friends? Take care rather that he does not take the place which your pride is putting you in great danger of losing.”**

Yes, my dear brethren, **all these rash judgments and all these**

interpretations come only from a person who has a secret pride, who does not know himself, and who dares to wish to know the interior life of his neighbour, something which is known to God alone. **If only, my dear children, we were able to arrive at the stage of eradicating this first of the capital sins from our hearts [envy and pride], our neighbour would never do any wrong according to us.** We should never amuse ourselves by examining his conduct. We should be content to do nothing else save weep for our own sins and work as hard as we could to correct them.

THE TONGUE OF THE SCANDAL-MONGER

Anyone who is unfortunate enough to come under the tongue of the scandalmonger is like a grain of corn under the grinding stone in a mill: he is torn, crushed, entirely destroyed. **People like these will fasten onto you intentions that you never had;** they will poison all your actions and your movements. If you have enough piety to wish to fulfill your religious duties, you are only a hypocrite, an angel in the church and a demon in the house. If you do any good or charitable works, they will think that this is just through pride and so that you may gain notice. If you are not worldly and not interested in worldly affairs, you are said to be odd and singular and to have no spirit. If you look after your own affairs carefully, you are nothing but a miser. Let me go further, my dear brethren, and say that the tongue of **the scandalmonger is like the worm which gnaws at the good fruit – that is, the best actions that people do – and tries to turn all to bad account.** The tongue of the scandalmonger is a grub which taints the most beautiful of the flowers and upon them leaves behind it the disgusting trace of its own slime.

THE EVIL TONGUES

There are some who, through envy, for that is what it amounts to, belittle and slander others, especially those in the same business or profession as their own, in order to draw business to themselves. They will say such evil things as “their merchandise is worthless” or “they cheat”; that they have nothing at home and that

it would be impossible to give goods away at such a price; that there have been many complaints about these goods; that they will give no value or wear or whatever it is, or even that it is short weight, or not the right length, and so on.

A workman will say that another man is not a good worker, that he is always changing his job, that people are not satisfied with him, or that he does no work, that he only puts in his time, or perhaps that he does not know how to work. “What I was telling you there,” they will then add, “it would be better to say nothing about it. He might lose by it, you know.” “Is that so?” you answer. **“It would have been better if you yourself had said nothing. That would have been the thing to do.”**

A farmer will observe that his neighbour’s property is doing better than his own. This makes him very angry so he will speak evil of him. There are others who slander their neighbours from motives of vengeance. If you do or say something to help someone, even through reasons of duty or of charity, they will then look for opportunities to decry you, to think up things which will harm you, in order to revenge themselves. **If their neighbour is well spoken of, they will be very annoyed and will tell you: “He is just like everyone else. He has his own faults. He has done this, he has said that. You didn’t know that? Ah, that is because you have never had anything to do with him.”**

A great many people slander others because of pride. They think that by depreciating others they will increase their own worth. They want to make the most of their own alleged good qualities. Everything they say and do will be good, and everything that others say and do will be wrong. But the great bulk of malicious talk is done by people who are simply irresponsible, **who have an itch to chatter about others without feeling any need to discover whether what they are saying is true or false.** They just have to talk. Yet, although these latter are less guilty than the others – that is to say, than those who slander and backbite through hatred or envy or revenge – yet they are not free from sin. Whatever the motive that prompts them, they should not sully

the reputation of their neighbour. ... perhaps, my friend, you are mistaken [in your judgments], and although everything may have been exactly as you have said, perhaps he is already in Heaven, perhaps God has pardoned him. But, in the meantime, where is your charity?

ON ENVY AND PRIDE

From St. John Vianney's [Sermons of the Cure of Ars](#)

NOT LIKE THE OTHERS

“I am not like the others!” That, my dear brethren, is the usual tone of false virtue and the attitude of those proud people who, always quite satisfied with themselves, are at all times ready to censure and to criticize the conduct of others. That, too, is the attitude of the rich, who look upon the poor as if they were of a different race or nature from them and who behave towards them accordingly.

Let us go one better, my dear brethren, and admit that it is the attitude of most of the world. **There are very few people, even in the lowliest conditions, who do not have a good opinion of themselves.** They regard themselves as far superior to their equals, and their detestable pride urges them to believe that they are indeed worth a great deal more than most other people. **From this I conclude that pride is the source of all the vices and the cause of all the evils which have occurred, and which are still to come, in the course of the centuries.** We carry our blindness so far that often we even glorify ourselves on account of things which really ought to cover us with confusion. **Some derive a great deal of pride because they believe that they have more intelligence than others; others because they have a few more inches of land or some money, when in fact they should be in dread of the formidable account which God will demand of them one day.** Oh, my dear brethren, if only some of them felt the need to say the prayer that St. Augustine addressed to God: “My God, teach me to know myself for what I am and I shall have no need of

anything else to cover me with confusion and scorn for myself.”

We could say that this sin is found everywhere, that it accompanies man in what he does and says. It is like a kind of seasoning or flavouring which can be tasted in every portion of a dish. Listen to me for a moment and you can see this for yourselves. Our Lord gives us an example in the Gospel when He tells us of the Pharisee who went up into the temple to pray and, standing up where all could see him, said in a loud voice: “O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men steeped in sin. I spend my life doing good and pleasing you.” Herein consists the very nature of the proud man: **instead of thanking God for condescending to make use of him for a good purpose and for giving him grace, he looks upon whatever good he does as something which comes from himself, not from God.** Let us go into a few details and you will see that **there are hardly any exceptions to this general *sin of pride*.** The old and the young, the rich and the poor, all suffer from it. Each and everyone congratulates himself and flatters himself because of what he is or of what he does – or rather because of what he is *not* and what he *does not*. Everyone applauds himself and loves also to be applauded. Everyone rushes to solicit the praises of the rest of the world, and everyone strives to draw them to himself. In this way are the lives of the great majority of people passed.

The door by which pride enters with the greatest ease and strength is the door of wealth. Just as soon as someone improves his possessions and his sources of wealth, you will observe him change his mode of life. He will act as Jesus Christ told us the Pharisees liked to act: **these people love to be called master and to have people saluting them. They like the first places. They begin to appear in better clothes. They leave behind their air of simplicity.** ... Take a young woman who has a shapely figure or who, at any rate, thinks she has. **You see her walking along, picking her steps, full of affectation, with a pride which seems colossal enough to reach the clouds! If she has plenty of clothes, she will leave her wardrobe open [or be sure to display them to others in some way] so that they can be seen [and this vice applies to**

any material possessions, deeds, or even body parts that people are sure to display to others through vanity and pride].

People take pride in their animals and in their households. They take pride in knowing how to go to Confession properly, in saying their prayers, in behaving modestly and decorously in the church. A mother takes pride from her children. You will hear a landowner whose fields are in better condition than those of his neighbours criticising these and applauding his own superior knowledge. **Or it may be a young man with a watch, or perhaps only the chain, and a couple of coins in his pocket, and you will hear him saying, “I did not know that it was so late,” so that people will see him looking at the watch or will know that he has one.** ... No, my dear brethren, there is nothing that is quite as ridiculous or stupid as to be forever talking about what we have or what we do. Just listen to the father of a family when his children are of an age to get married; in all the places and gatherings where he is to be found you will hear him saying: “I have so many thousand francs ready; my business will give me so many thousands, etc.” But if later he is asked for a few coppers for the poor, he has nothing.

If a tailor or a dressmaker has made a success of a coat or a frock and someone seeing the wearer pass says, “That looks very well. I wonder who made it?” **they will make very sure to observe: “Oh, I made that.” Why? So that everyone may know how skilful they are.** But if the garment had not been such a success, they would, of course, take good care to say nothing, for fear of being humiliated. ... And I will add this to what I have just said. **This sin is even more to be feared in people who put on a good show of piety and religion.**

A PUBLIC PLAGUE

As you know my dear brethren, we are bound as fellow creatures to have human sympathy and feelings for one another. Yet one envious person would like, if he possibly could, to destroy everything good and profitable belonging to his

neighbour. You know, too, that as Christians we must have boundless charity for our fellow men. But the envious person is far removed indeed from such virtues. He would be happy to see his fellow man ruin himself. Every mark of God's generosity towards his neighbour is like a knife thrust that pierces his heart and causes him to die in secret. Since we are all members of the same Body of which Jesus Christ is the Head, we should so strive that unity, charity, love, and zeal can be seen in one and all. To make us all happy, we should rejoice, as St. Paul tells, in the happiness of our fellow men and mourn with those who have cares or troubles. But, very far from experiencing such feelings, the envious are forever uttering scandals and calumnies against their neighbours. It appears to them that in this way they can do something to assuage and sweeten their vexation. ...

We can see that this sin makes its first appearance among children. You will notice the petty jealousies they will feel against one another if they observe any preferences on the part of the parents. **A young man would like to be the only one considered to have intelligence, or learning, or a good character. A girl would like to be the only one who is loved, the only one well dressed, the only one sought after; if others are more popular than she, you will see her fretting and upsetting herself, even weeping, perhaps,** instead of thanking God for being neglected by creatures so that she may be attached to Him alone. What a blind passion envy is, my dear brethren! Who could hope to understand it?... This is surely a cursed sin which puts a barrier between brothers and sisters, too. **The very moment that a father or a mother gives more to one member of the family than the others, you will see the birth of this jealous hatred against the parent or against the favoured brother or sister – a hatred which may last for years, and sometimes even for a lifetime.** There are children who keep a watchful eye upon their parents just to insure that they will not give any sort of gift or privilege to one member of the family. If this should occur in spite of them, there is nothing bad enough that they will not say.

Unfortunately, this vice can be noted even among those in whom it should never be

encountered – that is to say, among those who profess to practice their religion. They will take note of how many times such a person remains to go to Confession or of how So-and-So kneels or sits when she is saying her prayers. They will talk of these things and criticise the people concerned, for they think that such prayers or good works are done only so that they may be seen, or in other words, that they are purely an affectation. You may tire yourself out telling them that their neighbour's actions concern him alone. They are irritated and offended if the conduct of others is thought to be superior to their own....

Take another example. Here is a merchant who wants to have all the business for himself and to leave nothing at all for anyone else. If someone leaves his store to go elsewhere, he will do his best to say all the evil he can, either about the rival businessman himself or else about the quality of what he sells. He will take all possible means to ruin his rival's reputation, saying that the other's goods are not of the same quality as his own or that the other man gives short weight. You will notice, too, that an envious man like this has a diabolical trick to add to all this: "It would not do," he will tell you, "for you to say this to anyone else; it might do harm and that would upset me very much. I am only telling you because I would not like to see you being cheated."

A workman may discover that someone else is now going to work in a house where previously he was always employed. This angers him greatly, and he will do everything in his power to run down this "interloper" so that he will not be employed there after all. Look at the father of a family and see how angry he becomes if his next-door neighbour prospers more than he or if the neighbour's land produces more. Look at a mother: she would like it if people spoke well of no children except hers. If anyone praises the children of some other family to her and does not say something good of hers, she will reply, "They are not perfect," and she will become quite upset. How foolish you are, poor mother! The praise given to others will take nothing from your children. ... You will see this even among the poor. If some kindly person gives a little bit extra to one of them, they will make sure to speak ill of him to their benefactor in the hope of preventing him from

benefiting on any further occasion. Dear Lord, what a detestable vice this is! It attacks all that is good, spiritual as well as temporal.

We have already said that this vice indicates a mean and petty spirit. That is so true that no one will admit to feeling envy, or at least no one wants to believe that he has been attacked by it. People will employ a hundred and one devices to conceal their envy from others. If someone speaks well of another in our presence, we keep silence: we are upset and annoyed. If we must say something, we do so in the coldest and most unenthusiastic fashion. No, my dear children, there is not a particle of charity in the envious heart. St. Paul has told us that we must rejoice in the good which befalls our neighbour. Joy, my dear brethren, is what Christian charity should inspire in us for one another. But the sentiments of the envious are vastly different.

I do not believe that there is a more ugly and dangerous sin than envy because it is hidden and is often covered by the attractive mantle of virtue or of friendship. Let us go further and compare it to a lion which we thought was muzzled, to a serpent covered by a handful of leaves which will bite us without our noticing it. Envy is a public plague which spares no one. We are leading ourselves to Hell without realising it.

But how are we then to cure ourselves of this vice if we do not think we are guilty of it? I am quite certain that of the thousands of envious souls honestly examining their consciences, there would not be one ready to believe himself belonging to that company. It is the least recognised of sins.

Some people are so profoundly ignorant that they do not recognise a quarter of their ordinary sins. And since the sin of envy is more difficult to know, it is not surprising that so few confess it and correct it. Because they are not guilty of the big public sins committed by coarse and brutalised people, **they think that the sins of envy are only little defects in charity, when, in fact, for the most part, these are serious and deadly sins which they are harbouring and tending in**

their hearts, often without fully recognising them. “But,” you may be thinking in your own minds, “if I really recognised them, I would do my best to correct them.”

If you want to be able to recognise them, my dear brethren, you must ask the Holy Ghost for His light. He alone will give you this grace. No one could, with impunity, point out these sins to you; you would not wish to agree nor to accept them; you would always find something which would convince you that you had made no mistake in thinking and acting in the way you did. Do you know yet what will help to make you know the state of your soul and to uncover this evil sin hidden in the secret recesses of your heart? It is humility. Just as pride will hide it from you, so will humility reveal it to you.

From St. Francis de Sales’ [Introduction to the Devout Life](#)

CHAPTER IV.

OF EXTERIOR HUMILITY.

Some become proud and insolent, either by riding a good horse, wearing a feather in their hat, or by being dressed in a fine suit of clothes; but who does not see the folly of this? for if there be any glory in such things, the glory belongs to the horse, the bird, and the tailor; and **what a meanness of heart must it be, to borrow esteem from a horse, from a feather, or some ridiculous new fashion! Others value themselves for a well-trimmed beard, for curled locks, or soft hands; or because they can dance, sing, or play;** but are not these effeminate men, who seek to raise their reputation by so frivolous and foolish things? **Others, for a little learning, would be honored and respected by the whole world, as if everyone ought to become their pupil, and account them his masters. These are called pedants. Others strut like peacocks, contemplating their beauty and think themselves admired by every one.** All this is extremely vain,

foolish, and impertinent; and the glory which is raised on so weak foundations is justly esteemed vain and frivolous. ... Honors, rank, and dignities, are like saffron, which thrives best, and grows most plentifully, when trodden under foot. It is no honor to be beautiful when a man prizes himself for it: beauty, to have a good grace, should be neglected; and learning is a disgrace to us when it degenerates into pedantry. If we stand upon the punctilio for places, precedence, and titles, besides exposing our qualities to be examined, tried, and contradicted, we render them vile and contemptible; for as honor is beautiful when freely given, so it becomes base when exacted or sought after.

CHAPTER V.

OF MORE INTERNAL HUMILITY.

We often confess ourselves to be nothing, nay, misery itself, and the refuse of the world; **but would be very sorry that any one should believe us, or tell others that we are really so miserable wretches.** On the contrary, we pretend to retire, and hide ourselves, so that the world may run after us, and seek us out. We feign to wish ourselves considered as the last in the company, and sit down at the lowest end of the table; but it is with a view that we may be desired to pass to the upper end. **True humility never makes a show of herself... A man that is truly humble would rather another should say to him that he is miserable, and that he is nothing, than to say it himself; at least, if he knows that any man says so he does not contradict it [or feels sad or angry or seek to excuse himself], but heartily agrees to it; for, believing it himself firmly, he is pleased that others entertain the same opinion.**

The Secret of Sanctity of St. John of the Cross, by Fr. Lucas of St. Joseph, O.C.D., Bruce, Milwaukee, 1962. (Fr. Lucas was martyred by the Communists in Spain in 1936.)

EXPLAINING THE LAWS OF FAST AND ABSTINENCE, FOR DAYS OF FAST AND ABSTINENCE

On days of fast, only one full meal is allowed, at which meat may be taken. Two other meatless meals, which together are less than the full meal, are also permitted. Only liquids may be taken between meals. The law of fast must be observed by all between the ages of 21 and 59 inclusive under pain of mortal sin.

If fasting poses a serious risk to health or impedes the ability to do necessary work, it does not oblige.

There are also certain days of abstinence.

On days of complete abstinence (such as all Fridays), meat and soup or gravy made from meat (or anything made from meat) may not be taken at all under pain of mortal sin.

On days of partial abstinence, meat (and soup or gravy made from meat) can be eaten only once. The law of abstinence must be observed by everyone age 7 and older under pain of mortal sin.

There is no obligation of fast or abstinence on a holy day of obligation, even if it falls on a Friday (such as Christmas).

Eucharistic Fast

1. Priests and faithful before Mass or Holy Communion – whether it is the morning, afternoon, evening, or Midnight Mass – must abstain for three hours from solid foods and alcoholic beverages, and for one hour from non-alcoholic beverages. Water does not break the fast.

2. The infirm, even if not bedridden, may take non-alcoholic beverages and that which is really and properly medicine, either in liquid or solid form, before Mass or Holy Communion without any time limit.

Priests and faithful who are able to do so are exhorted to observe the old and venerable form of the Eucharistic fast (from foods and liquids from midnight). All those who will make use of these concessions must compensate for the good received by becoming shining examples of a Christian life and principally with works of penance, self-denial and charity (and fervent prayer).

(Pope Pius XII, *Sacram Communionem*, 1957)

The Old and Venerable Form of Fasting

Priests and faithful who are able to do so are exhorted to observe the old and venerable form of fasting (see Black Fast below). However, since this strictness may not be suitable for most people a compensation may be made, and that is that only one full meal a day or two smaller meals that is about the same (or a little more than the full meal per day) be taken. So either one of these per day and not both as the modern day weak and pathetic fast permits. Most people should be able to do this on regular fasts. However, this fast is much harder to practice during Lent. In general, the less one eats the better, and if the above fast is too much for a person, then he should try to eat three smaller meals a day instead and skipping the full meal or eating a full meal and one smaller meal and skipping the second small meal. All those who will make use of these concessions must compensate for the good received by becoming shining examples of a Christian life and principally with works of penance, self-denial and charity (and fervent prayer).

See the: [Traditional Catholic Calendar and for the Laws of fast and Abstinence, for Days of Fast and Abstinence](#)

The Black Fast (from Catholic Encyclopedia)

This form of fasting, the most rigorous in the history of church legislation, was marked by austerity regarding the quantity and quality of food permitted on fasting days as well as the time wherein such food might be legitimately taken.

In the first place more than one meal was strictly prohibited. At this meal flesh meat, eggs, butter, cheese, and milk were interdicted (Gregory I, Decretals IV, cap. vi; Trullan Synod, Canon 56). Besides these restrictions abstinence from wine, specially during Lent, was enjoined (Thomassin, *Traité des jeûnes de l'Église*, II, vii). **Furthermore, during Holy Week the fare consisted of bread, salt, herbs, and water** (Laymann, *Theologia Moralis*, Tr. VIII; *De observatione jejuniorum*, i). **Finally, this meal was not allowed until sunset [for most people, a 4 hour wait period (at least) before the meal may be more suitable]**. St. Ambrose (*De Elia et jejunio*, sermo vii, in Psalm CXVIII), St. Chrysostom (*Homil. iv in Genesim*), St. Basil (*Oratio i, De jejunio*) furnish unequivocal testimony concerning the three characteristics of the black fast. The keynote of their teaching is sounded by St. Bernard (*Sermo. iii, no. 1, De Quadragesima*), when he says "hitherto we have fasted only until none" (3 p.m.) "whereas, now" (during Lent) "kings and princes, clergy and laity, rich and poor will fast until evening". It is quite certain that the days of Lent (Muller, *Theologia Moralis*, II, Lib. II, Tr. ii, sect. 165, no. 11) as well as those preceding ordination were marked by the black fast. **This regime continued until the tenth century when the custom of taking the only meal of the day at three o'clock was introduced** (Thomassin, *loc. cit.*). **In the fourteenth century the hour of taking this meal was changed to noon-day** (Muller, *loc. cit.*). Shortly afterwards the practice of taking a collation in the evening began to gain ground (Thomassin, *op. cit.*, II, xi). Finally, the custom of taking a crust of bread and some coffee in the morning was introduced in the early part of the nineteenth century. **During the past fifty years, owing to ever changing circumstances of time and place, the Church has gradually relaxed the severity of penitential requirements, so that now little more than a vestige of former rigour obtains.**

ON RASH JUDGMENTS AND SLANDER [CONTINUED]

Chapter 7

RASH JUDGMENT

St. John [of the Cross] repeats the admonition relative to judgment of one's neighbor in the first of his *Four Maxims to a Religious*. As he says: "Those who fail in charity toward their neighbor fail likewise to profit by any other works of virtue they may perform, and they continually go from bad to worse."

It is sad to think that after many years in religious life one has lost not only the merit of his virtuous actions but has actually fallen into the dangerous state of sin. Let us consider in logical order the evils which may result from a neglect of this important admonition. There is, first of all, a tendency to judge one's neighbor unfavorably, and this is termed "rash judgment." This is equally serious, whether interior or exterior. St. John says that this consists in mental criticism and murmuring resulting in rash statements against one's neighbor. This is corroborated in the celebrated passage of St. James: "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, this man's religion is vain."

In every order, religious, social, or moral, there are certain truths which are fundamental because everyone agrees to them. In secondary truths and the appreciation of details and concrete acts, each one sees them according to his own dispositions. Thus in the actions of our neighbor we see only the external action and know little or nothing of the motives which prompted him to do this act. **In order to judge correctly whether a person is worthy of praise or blame, knowledge is a principal requisite. Usually we are ignorant of the true principle of morality guiding the actions of others, therefore it is inevitable that when we judge according to our own light we are often**

guilty of error.

In every rank of life there are narrow-minded individuals whose horizon is limited to the private and public life of their neighbor. This is not only deplorable but it is a genuine spiritual infirmity.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the tendency to judge one's neighbor proceeds from two causes: **"...either the person is evil-minded and unconsciously judges others by his own evil dispositions or he harbors such envy, hatred, or contempt for his neighbor that he experiences a secret delight in thinking evil of him and readily believes any misconception of his neighbor's actions."** This teaching of St. Thomas should teach us to restrain our judgment of our neighbor, because suspicious and unfavorable judgments are a revelation of the infirmities of our own souls. When we are caught by a keen observer in a merciless judgment against our neighbor we should blush at the portrayal of a quality in ourselves which even natural pride would prompt us to conceal. It was St. Bonaventure who said, "When you perceive anything reprehensible in your neighbor, turn your eyes on yourself; before you cast any judgment, examine yourself well, and condemn in yourself that which you would have condemned in him."...

St. Paul is even more severe when he says, "thou art inexcusable O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself." To the Corinthians he adds, "Therefore judge not... until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness." The same exhortation is found in St. Luke: "Condemn not and you shall not be condemned. Forgive and you shall be forgiven. ... For with the same measure that you shall mete, it shall be measured out to you." **Such words are indicative of the fact that on the day of final judgment the same standards will be applied to us personally as we have applied to our fellow men. ...**

Only when man possesses a deep self-knowledge and a broader knowledge of men

will he find himself mild in his judgment of others. Yet this is the goal we must strive for, first in our thoughts, since charitable thoughts transform material actions into acts of supernatural value, and this only when we are completely imbued with the spirit of divine love and mercy. ... **Regardless of the actions of our fellow men we must always view them in the spirit of charity and in the realization that “judgment is the Lord’s, not man’s.” ...**

Our judgments are usually based on personal antagonism, ignorance, and perhaps a clash of personalities; yet it is not expedient that we rely on such excuses for judging our neighbor. ... we are bound to regulate our charity and justice toward our neighbor in accordance with God’s law of charity. This regulation must begin in the interior since it is our thoughts which govern our speech and our actions.

Charitable thoughts will beget charitable words; likewise envious and uncharitable thoughts dispose us to hideous sins against charity and justice.

Everyone is aware from personal experience that rash judgment is moral poisoning. **Once the imagination is given free reign then we find evil in others. The insidious poison which we have administered to ourselves increases with each uncharitable thought. We soon find it difficult to be amiable and indulgent toward our fellow religious and as the poison spreads we become more and more intolerant of any weakness, until even the smallest fault becomes magnified to alarming proportions.** We can no longer remain master of our speech when we have arrived at this stage because it is always true, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

The evils resulting from lack of interior silence and uncharitable speech are without number and God alone knows the damage caused both in the cloister and out of it once this evil has been indulged in. If a rock is dislodged from the top of the mountain, we cannot measure the destruction it will cause until it finally comes to rest in the valley below. This is an apt picture of the slanderous tongue which is a weight from the heart. As it breaks from the sanctuary

in which it has been nurtured it hurtles into an abyss which becomes fathomless, leaving bitterness and disaster in its wake. Such words may be filled with resentment and anger, envy and jealousy, but they are always weighted with selfishness, mirroring the narrow soul from which they emerged. They are as arrows shot from one heart to another, communicating to each new victim poison and bitterness. Innocent and pure aspirations become dissipated; souls which have lived in happiness are filled with discontent; but those who have harbored mutual distrust are filled with malice and hatred. What, then, shall stop these icy waves of uncharitableness launched forth by a cold and restless heart in a moment of imprudent confidence? God alone knows, as He alone reads the depths of a human heart.

It is not our intention to study the sins of the tongue in their various forms since volumes are written on this subject. We need only to say that all the evil aspects related to rash judgment are applicable to slander and faultfinding, which evils cover a vaster field than the subject treated here. Rash judgment is self-toxic, whereas slander and faultfinding serve to poison all whom it contacts. Thus a single slanderous word, imprudently uttered, can be more destructive than a drop of poison assimilated by the system, destroying the vital principles of an organic being. Such words cool charity, destroy the most prudent sensibility, and poison the finest sentiments. Each one can study for himself the disastrous effects of backbiting, especially when he hears a person whom he had hitherto esteemed being the subject of such insidious slander. As a result he finds himself becoming suspicious and distrustful, even of his friend, carefully watching for evidences of the evil report. Distrust magnifies the defects of those under observation making it very difficult for us to be outwardly charitable toward them. These sins of the tongue are the worst of all enemies against charity since they ruin peace and confidence. Therefore the Holy Ghost warns us: "A wicked word shall change the heart, making what is good, evil — what is life, death — and the tongue is the ruler of them."

Another danger which threatens those occupied in observing the defects of their neighbors is the consequence of these actions. In speaking about this St. John cites

the example of Lot's wife being changed into a pillar of salt, claiming that the wretched souls occupied with other people's actions likewise acquire saline qualities themselves. Just as salt becomes hard, so too, the soul which indulges in meddling in another's affairs, becomes hardened and unkind toward those around him. His haughtiness and intolerance serve to build a wall of separation between the offender and the offended, causing numerous unreasonable and illogical judgments to be passed. Salt is likewise a sign of barrenness; life cannot develop near rocks of salt. Neither can a soul engaged in uncharitableness do otherwise than render barren all that they may contact. Their skill in revealing another's weakness and their hard and merciless criticisms cause generous hearts to feel completely depressed and insecure in their company. Near them there is only barrenness, there is no joy; there is no life.

It is impossible for simplicity and confidence to exist where restless and uncharitable souls are continually observing others for the sole pleasure of malicious criticism. Such a spirit is bound to breed discontent and an attitude of reserve which soon degenerates into jealousy and suspicion. Eventually the charm of religious life, which is love and mutual confidence, is destroyed and a rigid formalism replaces the original spirit of peace. Nothing remains but the letter of the law, that letter, which, according to St. Paul "...kills, instead of quickening."

It is certain that while we live among men we shall have to bear with their weaknesses and they, in turn, will have to bear with ours; but we must try to live oblivious of the faults which are ever present in human nature. It is with this in mind that St. John of the Cross admonishes us to refrain from interfering in the affairs of our neighbor, to detach ourselves from created objects, and to regulate our affections toward our fellow men.

Never should the faults of our neighbor be discussed with our fellow men, unless with one who has the authority to correct the situation, and then only in the spirit of the greatest charity. This is insisted on by St. John of the Cross when he says: "Never under the pretext of zeal, or of charity, reveal what we know about our

neighbor save to the person who has a right to hear of this, and then with great charity, and at the proper time.”

If those who are afflicted with undue curiosity about their neighbor’s welfare would thus assiduously make reparation for the faults they observe in others, then they would be less inclined to notice the trivial actions of those around them. Doing this would further the plans of Divine Providence to make religious houses the delightful garden where the tree of love would be preserved in its full luxuriance. It is here that Christ meant the great commandment to grow and bear much fruit: “Love one another as I have loved you....”

St. John of the Cross shows us clearly that to be just to God and to fulfill His command of mutual love and understanding we must be merciful to men in thought and deed. Our fraternal charity is then but the fulfillment of our filial piety toward God. Not only in fact, but in reality, Christ has identified Himself with each one of our neighbors so intimately that charity toward our neighbor is but a means of serving Christ Himself. Thus, whether we are living in the cloister or in the world, as long as our hearts remain a garden of delight for Christ through the spirit and practice of charity then “...we are the good odor of Christ unto God, ...to others the odor of life unto life....”

St. Francis de Sales in his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part III, Chapter 28, explains the vice of Hasty Judgments:

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged,” said the Saviour of our souls; “condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned:” and the Apostle Saint Paul, “Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” Of a truth, hasty judgments are most displeasing to God, and men’s judgments are hasty, because we are not judges one of another, and by judging we usurp our Lord’s own office. **Man’s judgment is hasty, because the chief malice of sin lies in the intention and counsel of the heart, which is shrouded in darkness to us.**

Moreover, man's judgments are hasty, because each one has enough to do in judging himself, without undertaking to judge his neighbour. If we would not be judged, it behoves us alike not to judge others, and to judge ourselves. Our Lord forbids the one, His Apostle enjoins the other, saying, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." But alas! for the most part we precisely reverse these precepts, judging our neighbour, which is forbidden on all sides, while rarely judging ourselves, as we are told to do.

We must proceed to rectify rash judgments, according to their cause. Some hearts there are so bitter and harsh by nature, that everything turns bitter under their touch; men who, in the Prophet's words, "turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth." Such as these greatly need to be dealt with by some wise spiritual physician, for this bitterness being natural to them, it is hard to conquer; and... it is very dangerous, because it gives rise to and fosters rash judgments and slander within the heart. **Others there are who are guilty of rash judgments less out of a bitter spirit than from pride, supposing to exalt their own credit by disparaging that of others. These are self-sufficient, presumptuous people, who stand so high in their own conceit that they despise all else as mean and worthless.** It was the foolish Pharisee who said, "I am not as other men are." Others, again, have not quite such overt pride, **but rather a lurking little satisfaction in beholding what is wrong in others, in order to appreciate more fully what they believe to be their own superiority.** This satisfaction is so well concealed, so nearly imperceptible, that it requires a clear sight to discover it, and those who experience it need that it be pointed out to them. **Some there are who seek to excuse and justify themselves to their own conscience, by assuming readily that others are guilty of the same faults, or as great ones, vainly imagining that the sin becomes less culpable when shared by many.** Others, again, give way to rash judgments merely because they take pleasure in a philosophic analysis and dissection of their neighbours' characters; **and if by ill luck they chance now and then to be right, their presumption and love of criticism strengthens almost incurably.**

Then there are people whose judgment is solely formed by inclination; who always think well of those they like, and ill of those they dislike. To this, however, there is one rare exception, which nevertheless we do sometimes meet, when an excessive love provokes a false judgment concerning its object; the hideous result of a diseased, faulty, restless affection, which is in fact jealousy; an evil passion capable, as everybody knows, of condemning others of perfidy and adultery upon the most trivial and fanciful ground. In like manner, fear, ambition, and other moral infirmities often tend largely to produce suspicion and rash judgments.

What remedy can we apply? They who drink the juice of the Ethiopian herb Ophiusa imagine that they see serpents and horrors everywhere; **and those who drink deep of pride, envy, ambition, hatred, will see harm and shame in every one they look upon.** The first can only be cured by drinking palm wine, and so I say of these latter,—Drink freely of the sacred wine of love, and it will cure you of the evil tempers which lead you to these perverse judgments. **So far from seeking out that which is evil, Love dreads meeting with it, and when such meeting is unavoidable, she shuts her eyes at the first symptom, and then in her holy simplicity she questions whether it were not merely a fantastic shadow which crossed her path rather than sin itself. Or if Love is forced to recognise the fact, she turns aside hastily, and strives to forget what she has seen.** Of a truth, Love is the great healer of all ills, and of this above the rest. Everything looks yellow to a man that has the jaundice; and it is said that the only cure is through the soles of the feet. Most assuredly the sin of rash judgments is a spiritual jaundice, which makes everything look amiss to those who have it; and he who would be cured of this malady must not be content with applying remedies to his eyes or his intellect, he must attack it through the affections, which are as the soul's feet. If your affections are warm and tender, your judgment will not be harsh; if they are loving, your judgment will be the same. Holy Scripture offers us three striking illustrations. **Isaac, when in the Land of Gerar, gave out that Rebecca was his sister, but when**

Abimelech saw their familiarity, he at once concluded that she was his wife. A malicious mind would rather have supposed that there was some unlawful connection between them, but Abimelech took the most charitable view of the case that was possible. And so ought we always to judge our neighbour as charitably as may be; and if his actions are many-sided, we should accept the best. Again, when Saint Joseph found that the Blessed Virgin was with child, knowing her to be pure and holy, he could not believe that there was any sin in her, and he left all judgment to God, although there was strong presumptive evidence on which to condemn her. And the Holy Spirit speaks of Saint Joseph as “a just man.” When a just man cannot see any excuse for what is done by a person in whose general worth he believes, he still refrains from judging him, and leaves all to God’s Judgment. Again, our Crucified Saviour, while He could not wholly ignore the sin of those who Crucified Him, yet made what excuse He might for them, pleading their ignorance. **And so when we cannot find any excuse for sin, let us at least claim what compassion we may for it, and impute it to the least damaging motives we can find, as ignorance or infirmity.**

... [Many times] We do not necessarily judge because we see or are conscious of something wrong. Rash judgment always presupposes something that is not clear, in spite of which we condemn another. It is not wrong to have doubts concerning a neighbour, **but we ought to be very watchful lest even our doubts or suspicions be rash and hasty.** A malicious person seeing Jacob kiss Rachel at the well-side, or Rebecca accepting jewels from Eleazer, a stranger, might have suspected them of levity, though falsely and unreasonably. **If an action is in itself indifferent, it is a rash suspicion to imagine that it means evil,** unless there is strong circumstantial evidence to prove such to be the case. And it is a rash judgment when we draw condemnatory inferences from an action which may be blameless.

Those who keep careful watch over their conscience are not often liable to form rash judgments, for just as when the clouds lower the bees make for the

shelter of their hive, so really good people shrink back into themselves, **and refuse to be mixed up with the clouds and fogs of their neighbour's questionable doings**, and rather than meddle with others, they consecrate their energies on their own improvement and good resolutions.

No surer sign of an unprofitable life than when people give way to censoriousness and inquisitiveness into the lives of other men. Of course exception must be made as to those who are responsible for others, whether in family or public life;—to all such it becomes a matter of conscience to watch over the conduct of their fellows. Let them fulfill their duty lovingly, and let them also give heed to restrain themselves within the bounds of that duty.”

From Spirago-Clark's The Catechism Explained (1899), pp. 402-404.

3. Furthermore, we ought to refrain from everything that may wound our neighbor's honor. **Thus *suspicion, detraction, slander, and abuse are forbidden, also listening with pleasure when our neighbor is spoken against.***

Suspicion implies malice of heart; *detraction, slander* (both of which are directed against the absent) and *abuse* (which is directed against one who is present), are sins of the tongue; listening with *gratification* when another is evilly spoken of, is a sin, if it is in the evil speaking that we take pleasure.

1. *Suspicion* consists in supposing evil of one's neighbor without reasonable grounds.

The Pharisee in the Temple took for granted that the publican was a sinner and how greatly he was mistaken (Luke xviii.)! Job's three friends thought he must needs be ungodly merely because he was afflicted by God. Simon the Pharisee thought the Magdalen, when he saw her at Our Lord's feet, was still a sinner, but he deceived himself; she was then a penitent (Luke vii. 39 seq.). When St. Paul shipwrecked on the island of Malta, lighted a fire, a viper, coming out of the sticks, fastened on his

hand; in consequence of this the inhabitants of the island instantly judged him to be a murderer, pursued by divine vengeance (Acts xxviii.). A goldsmith had an apprentice who bore a very good character. One day he found two precious stones concealed in a hole in the wall close to the boy's head. He directly accused him of theft, chastised him soundly, and drove him out of the house. Soon after he again discovered two stones in exactly the same place. He watched, and found they were put there by a magpie which he had in the house, and deeply regretted his rash judgment, when it was too late to repair his fault. If he had detected the boy in dishonesty, he would not have done wrong in suspecting him. **People judge of others by themselves; for the affections are apt to mislead the understanding. He who is not evil himself does not lightly think evil of others, whereas a bad man readily concludes his neighbor to be as bad as himself.** Molten metal takes the shape of the mould into which it is poured; so every man's judgment of what he sees and hears takes its shape from his own feelings. The most wholesome aliments disagree with the man whose digestion is out of order; thus a corrupted mind always takes an evil view of things, while a good man puts the best construction on everything. **"I would far rather err,"** says St. Anselm, **"by thinking good of a bad man than by thinking evil of a good man."** "Charity thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. xiii. 5). **The just man, in whom dwells the spirit of love, even when he sees an action which is unquestionably reprehensible, does not allow his thoughts to dwell on it;** he leaves the judgment of it to God. This is what St. Joseph did, in regard to his spouse, the Blessed Virgin (Matt. i. 19). "Let none of you imagine evil in your heart against his friend" (Zach. viii. 17). Trust others, if you would have others trust you. Trust engenders confidence, and mistrust the want of it.

2. Detraction consists in disclosing the fault committed by another without necessity. ... Some people, like hyenas, who tear from their graves and devour dead bodies, **deface the memory of the [living and] dead by their malicious words and bring to light faults long since forgotten.** Like insects which alight, not on the sound part of the apple, but on the decayed portion, **detractors do not enlarge on the virtues of the deceased, but they**

pitilessly dwell upon their faults. They may be compared to dogs who prefer carrion to fresh meat, **for they pass over the good which they cannot help seeing in their neighbor, and care to keep alive the remembrance of his failings.** The sin of detraction is one most frequently met with. “Rarely,” says St. Jerome, “do we find anyone who is not ready to blame his neighbor’s conduct.” **This comes from pride, for many people imagine they exalt themselves in proportion as they decry others.** Detraction is a hateful sin. It is an ugly and shameless thing to do, if one goes to a stranger’s house and spies into every corner; but how much more so to scrutinize and criticize our neighbor’s course of life!

Mud should be covered over, not stirred up, for no one can touch it without defiling himself. “O fool!” exclaims St. Alphonsus. “Thou dost declaim against the sin of another, and meanwhile, by evil speaking, dost commit a far greater sin than that thou blamest in thy neighbor.” **Besides the detractor in disclosing the faults of another, discloses his own, for he shows that he has no charity. However, to speak of another man’s sin is *not* wrong, unless one has the intention of lowering him in the eyes of others [without necessity or justice, such as by helping others not to be deceived by evil people or heretics, showing them their evil ways and words that they may not fall into these sins or errors themselves and hence learn from it]; it is not detraction to tell some one else of it in order to prevent a repetition of the sin. One may also blame the fault of another, if this may be useful to a third person; but it must be done from a sense of duty, and the *sin* rather than the *sinner* is to be condemned.** The crime of any malefactor who has been brought to justice may be freely spoken of, as it is already made public. **Tale-telling is a form of detraction; it consists in repeating to another what a third person has said of him.** Tale-telling ruins the peace of families, and is a fruitful source of feuds. It is worse than ordinary detraction because it not only destroys the reputation of one’s neighbor, but puts an end to friendly relations and brotherly love. Therefore God says: “The whisperer and double-tongued are accursed” (Eccclus. xxviii. 15).

3. Slander consists in attributing to one's neighbor faults of which he is not guilty. If the accusation is made publicly it is called a libel.

Slander or calumny is taking away a man's good name. Putiphar's wife accused Joseph to her lord of having attempted to lead her astray (Gen. xxxix.). The Jews accused Our Lord before Pilate of having perverted the nation and forbidden to give tribute to the emperor (Luke xxiii. 2). **Exaggeration of another's fault also comes under the head of calumny. The motives that actuate the slanderer are generally revenge, hatred or ingratitude**; his sin is twofold, for he lies, and at the same time destroys his neighbor's reputation. "He that backbiteth secretly is like a serpent that biteth in silence" (Ecclus. x. 11).

Some slanderers accompany their calumnies with a jest, or accentuate them with a witty or amusing speech [such as irony]. This is the greatest cruelty of all, for the slander which might have passed in at one ear and out at the other, is then firmly lodged in the mind of all who hear it. Again, slanders that are prefaced by words of eulogy make more impression on the hearer, just as an arrow flies with more force and penetrates more deeply if the bow be drawn back first. Of such persons David says: "The poison of asps is under their lips" (Ps. xiii. 3).

4. Abuse consists in making public the low opinion which one has of another.

In evil speaking one makes known a man's fault behind his back, abuse utters it in his presence. Abuse therefore stands in the same relation to detraction as robbery to theft. While detraction and slander undermine the good opinion others have of a man, abuse aims at depriving him of the outward respect that is shown him. Semei reviled King David; he called him a man of Belial, and threw stones at him (2 Kings xvi. 5). The Jews reviled Our Lord; they called Him a Samaritan, and said He had a devil (John viii. 48).

If two men quarrel, the one who is in the wrong [or is overpowered] usually resorts

to abuse. The one who is in the right does not need such weapons; truth conquers of itself. Sneers and sarcasms are a form of this sin. Their object is to make a man ridiculous before others and put him to confusion. By such unkind speeches one may deeply wound one's neighbor, and fill him with bitter resentment. "The stroke of a whip maketh a blue mark, but the stroke of the tongue will break the bones" (Ecclus. xxviii. 21).

5. He who takes *pleasure* in listening to detraction commits the same sin as the speaker to whom he listens.

He who asperses his neighbor's good name kindles a fire, and he who listens to him throws fuel on it. Were it not for the latter, the former would soon be silent. **St. Ignatius says we should not talk about our neighbor's faults did we not find eager listeners. St. Bernard says he cannot decide which is more blameworthy, the man who slanders his neighbor, or he who lends his ear to the slanderer;** the only difference is that one serves the devil with his tongue, the other with his ear. **What do I care to know that such a one is a wicked man? The knowledge only does me harm. How much better to spend one's pains on scrutinizing one's own conduct.** Our Lord exhorts us to do this: "Cast first the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to take out the mote from thy brother's eye" (Luke vi. 42). **It is those who are blind to their own faults who are most keenly alive to the faults of others. Never listen to detraction. St. Augustine had these words inscribed upon his dining-table: "There is not place at this table for those who love to defame their neighbor."**

Hedge in thy ears with thorns, hear not a wicked tongue" (Ecclus. xxviii. 28). Slander is a three-edged sword; at one blow it inflicts three wounds; it wounds the slanderer, for he commits a sin; it wounds the slandered, because he is robbed of his good name; it wounds the hearer, for he also falls into sin. And since the slanderer injures the soul of him who listens to his calumny, he imitates the serpent, whose poisoned words were the means of driving Eve out of paradise.

4. He who has injured his neighbor's reputation is strictly bound to restore his good name; either by apologizing, if the offence was committed in private, or by publicly retracting his words, if they were spoken before others.

Any one who has unjustly diminished his neighbor's reputation, is bound to make satisfaction, according to the nature of the offence. It is not enough to draw the arrow out of the wound, the hurt must be healed; nor is it enough to desist from evil-speaking; the injury done must be set right. That is bitter to human nature, for it requires no slight self-humiliation. Moreover, it is almost impossible fully to make amends for calumny; it is easy to break a seal, but difficult to repair it so that no one can perceive that it has been broken. An ink-spot is soon made on a sheet of paper, but no efforts will remove all traces of the blot.

5. Those who do not endeavor to repair the harm they have done by slandering their neighbor, cannot obtain pardon from God, nor absolution from the priest.

What are the Reasons which should Deter us from Injuring our Neighbor's Good Name?

1. He who is severe in his judgment of his neighbor, will in his turn be judged severely by God.

Our Lord says: "Judge not [unjustly], that you may not be judged" (Matt, vii. 1).

"For with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (v. 2).

"Condemn not and you shall not be condemned" (Luke vi. 37). [Our Lord tells us to judge righteous judgments instead of rash and unjust judgments: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge just judgment." (John 7:24)]...

2. To judge one's fellow-man is to commit an offence against God, for it is an usurpation of His rights.

There is one Lawgiver and Judge; but who art thou that [unjustly or rashly] judgest thy neighbor?" (Jas. iv. 12.) "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" (Rom. xiv. 4.)...

3. He who robs another of his good name is often severely punished by God upon earth; not unfrequently he is overtaken by the same calamity which he sought to bring on his neighbor.

A man of evil tongue shall not be established upon the earth (Ps. Cxxxix. 12). Jezabel, the wife of King Achab, suborned two wicked men to falsely accuse Naboth, who would not give up his vineyard to the king, of blasphemy. Retribution eventually fell upon her; she was thrown from the palace window, trampled upon by horses and eaten by dogs (3 Kings xxi.)

It is now no uncommon thing for the slanderer to meet with the self-same fate which he prepared for another, as the following story shows: St. Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal, had a favorite page, who used to distribute her alms. One of the king's servants, who was jealous of the large share of the queen's favor enjoyed by that page, calumniated him to the king, one day when he was out hunting. The king believed the calumny; and going up to a lime-kiln which he saw in the forest, he said to the proprietor: "To-morrow I shall send a young man hither, who will ask you whether you have executed the king's orders; seize him instantly and cast him into the kiln." On the following morning the king dispatched the queen's page to the lime-burner with the message agreed upon. On his way thither the young man passed a church, and as the bell was ringing for Mass, he went in and assisted at the holy sacrifice. Meanwhile the servant who had slandered him, curious to know his fate, followed him, as he thought, to the lime-kiln, and on arriving, eagerly asked if the king's orders had been executed. Almost before he had uttered the question, he was thrown into the furnace. When the queen's page shortly made his appearance, he was told that the royal behest had been obeyed, and the workmen expected a reward. On his return to the palace, the king was astonished and horrified, and saw clearly that he had been foully deceived. "He hath opened a pit and dug it, and he is

fallen into the hole he made” (Ps. vii. 16).

4. He who indulges a habit of detraction is in danger of losing his soul.

The pulse does not always correctly indicate the progress of a fatal disease, but if the tongue becomes black, it is a sure sign of approaching dissolution. **So many people are assiduous in their prayers, are diligent churchgoers, and are considered to be pious, but their tongue, wherewith they blacken the character of others, infallibly indicates the mortal disease of their soul. To blast a man’s reputation is a great sin, because his good name is better than great riches (Prov. xxii. 1). It is a kind of murder, because it destroys a man’s life as a citizen, i.e., his social standing, which depends on the repute in which he is held. It is also sinful because thereby one causes distress to one’s neighbor. The man of honor values his good name above everything. He would rather part with his money, with all he possesses, with life itself, than lose his honor.**

Hence we may conclude how grievous a sin is detraction. “Railers shall not possess the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. vi. 10). “Detractors . . . are worthy of death” (Rom. i. 32).” Whosoever shall say to his brother, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matt. v. 22).

CHASTITY, HUMILITY, OBEDIENCE, AND LOVE

The word of God proclaims that all who wants to obtain Salvation must strive to live in Chastity (according to one's state in life), Humility, Obedience, and Love of God, in the true Catholic Faith, by renouncing all kinds of heresies and heretics.

Pope Pius IV, *Council of Trent*, Sess 14, Nov. 11, 1563, on Matrimony: **“If anyone says that the married state is to be preferred to the state of virginity or celibacy, and that it is not better and happier to remain in virginity or celibacy than to be united in matrimony (Matt. 19:11; 1 Cor. 7:25): let him be anathema.”** (Denzinger 980)

St. John Chrysostom, A.D. 392: **“That virginity is good I do agree. But that it is even better than marriage, this I do confess.** And if you wish, I will add that it is as much better than marriage as Heaven is better than Earth, as much better as angels are better than men.” (*The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 2: 1116)

You should fast often with moderation and abstain from eating superfluous food and drink in order to crucify your fleshly lusts and desires. Fasting is in truth one of the greatest ways to be victorious against fleshly lusts and desires along with the Rosary and spiritual reading.

Let every man understand that whenever he sins or speaks ungodly words and blasphemy, he murders himself and gives scandal to his brothers and sisters who beholds this behaviour in a spiritual way. To give others occasion of sin is the worst of all sins! Remember this and you will always fear the Lord and remain in humility! No one should think himself better than his neighbour; for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God! It is of great importance not to attend any kind of dance, ball, discotheque or the pub. Your eternal soul depends on it.

Be sure to not associate with worldly and ungodly people who refuse to obey the will

of God, for they will tempt you with their sinful and ungodly life, and you will not escape punishment for being a friend with an unrepentant sinner, unless for the express purpose of his conversion. As all saints exclaim: most people that go to hell, go there because they sought human approval and friendship rather than friendship with God!

There will be no friendships in hell. In hell everyone will hate one another, and the more a person knew another, the more will that person hate the other, since that person was the greater cause of his eternal damnation. If this is so with friends, what then, will it be in regards to your own family? Accursed be you my wife, who led me to these sins of lust! Accursed be you my children, who after following my bad examples, fell headlong down to hell to my greater sorrow! Accursed by you my father and mother, for giving me bad advice, and accursed be me, wretched and sad, forever more in this lake of eternal fire!

In hell there will be perfect hatred for one another. One would rather be alone in hell if the option was given him, but this will not be. You will torment each other to the utmost in hell for all eternity, since you led each other down to this place of torments by your bad living and example. How much a person will hate another in hell is indeed impossible for us still living to understand, but that the hatred will be perfect, infinite and eternal, is easy to grasp!

"Most people fail to see that the sin of the Angels was a thought of revolt, and as a result a third part of those glorious spirits lost their thrones in Heaven. It was the eating of a little fruit by our First Mother, Eve, that proved the undoing of the human race. Was it not an act of disobedience that deprived Saul of his throne, and was it not a sinful glance that led holy David to the commission of a heinous crime? An act of vanity too, lost him 70,000 of his subjects. Did not the venerable Eleazar sacrifice his life rather than eat swine's flesh? And what about the death of Oza and Ahio for daring to touch the Ark? You fail to see that it is not the trifling act which is wrong, but the principle involved: the malice of the offence against an infinite God, to whom we owe our love, our gratitude and our allegiance. Surely, if God died on

account of sin, sin must be dreadful. If sin is punished by Hell-fire, sin must be enormous. When you make light of sin, you judge not Catholics, but God Himself."

Sadly, only death and hell will serve to wake up the majority of the people reading this! You will read this and then continue in your sloth and worldliness, or you will have a short lived spiritual fervor that will cool as times goes by! The greatest error among those people that are condemned to hell are that they presume that they are in the state of grace and fit for heaven, thus showing of their pride and arrogance in that they do not even consider themselves as great sinners, who really do nothing at all to better themselves and their bad living, and who do not even consider their unworthiness of heaven, and the possibility of them actually being on the road to destruction. God condemns such presumption. We are sinful creatures who are able to fall into sin at every moment of our life. We must always trust in God and his mercy, not on our own strength. A person who is really humble will never think of himself that he is already saved while still living on earth. He will have death before his eyes and the constant thought of the possibility of losing God though sin. These and like thoughts will make him constant in the prayers to God for help to achieve salvation, and the grace to avoid sin. A person who does not pray to God for help to achieve salvation, is already condemned and will not make it!

INFORMATION ABOUT US AND OUR MISSION

God Bless You!

We are three unworthy servants of our God and Lord Jesus Christ who, by the grace of God, live like monks, in chastity, self-denial and humility and in dedicating our lives to love God above all, while spreading Jesus' words in [St. Bridget's Revelations](#) all over the world. Our mission is to gather brothers and sisters who have the good will to preach, teach and spread these Holy Revelations to our beloved brothers and sisters in the world. Please put a link to our homepage and tell all your friends, relatives and everyone you know about this site and the wonderful words of our Lord for the salvation of souls. If you are a preacher, we hope and pray that you will preach these words from the Holy Spirit to your whole congregation.

Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

This verse clearly teaches that in order to be saved you need to save yourself and others from hell. It also clearly teaches that if you are not trying to save souls, you are, in fact, damaging and scattering souls. And Christ says that those who do not try to save souls are his enemies. So, are you really doing all you can?

We humbly ask you all to print out copies of these [books](#) with a link to our homepage and give them free of charge to all your brothers and sisters. Go to the churches and hand them out or place them on vehicles parked for church services. We also suggest that you ask your congregation leader if he is willing to buy The Prophecies and Revelations of Saint Bridget of Sweden for his whole congregation at a discounted bulk rate. We also ask you to place copies of these great revelations everywhere: on doors, trees and other places where they can be seen by all in order to save as many souls as possible for our Lord Jesus Christ!

Millions of people are finding the truth every year through the material on our websites, and we need some helpers and co-workers to continue to reach more people. What we needs the most right now is helpers who can produce articles about different topics like herbs, medicine, definitions etc. You would not write the

article by yourself, but would get the information from other websites and cut and paste the info into a new document. No specific medical or other knowledge is needed for this work, but only a knowledge of the language that one makes the article in. These texts about medicine, health, definitions etc. are great conduits for people to find the truth, and when they read the article, they can see the spiritual material on our websites too, and thus, they can get both spiritual and physical help! This can help millions of people to find the truth, and is a great way to reach out to the sheep of the world. If you feel inspired to help people find the truth, [please contact us here!](http://www.prophecyfilm.com/contact/) (<http://www.prophecyfilm.com/contact/>)

We are also looking for a webdesigner who can work for us for free. It will often be minor works. Please send an email to us if you're interested.

Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

Please contact us today and tell us you want to help us with making articles if you want to make a difference in the world and help our beloved brothers and sisters!

We are also looking for willing translators who have the skill to make a good translation of [St. Bridget's Revelations](#) into different languages.

We are also in need of translators of other important articles into different languages for the salvation of souls. If you can help us on this important work, please contact us by [clicking here](http://www.prophecyfilm.com/contact/) (<http://www.prophecyfilm.com/contact/>) We are also looking for someone who can make an audio book in mp3. We wish to have at least 50 translated languages, one day, with the help of you, the reader. Please help us find more books of Saint Bridget's Revelations in other languages. You will be rewarded greatly by our Lord Jesus Christ if you make an effort to spread His divine words to others in any way you can. You can help to spread the word of God in many ways: for example, by writing about our website and quoting the Revelations of St. Bridget or the things said in the videos with our link or our hyperlink added to the text on forums and blogs and the like so that people can find the wonderful

words by Our Lord and His Mother and the videos on our site. You can upload the videos to different video sites, embed them on your own site or on forum sites and the like, and share them with your friends and even your enemies so that they may grow in the true faith or come to the true faith. You can also contact book salesmen and book publishers in order to ask them to buy these books from us or print these books for us. Please give out and share the books and DVD's on our website free of charge and send e-mails to people about our site. We also beg you to pray the Rosary for their sake and plead with them to also begin to pray the Rosary (see [How to Pray the Rosary](#)). For a hardened heart will become soft by continuing praying the Rosary. No prayer is as powerful as the Holy Rosary! If you are able and willing to help us with the salvation of souls, please contact us and we will give you further instructions. For by helping other people's souls, you help yourself!

Saint Bridget was canonized by Pope Boniface IX in the year 1391 and confirmed by Pope Martin V in the Council of Constance in the year 1415.

The Revelations of St. Bridget were accorded an exceptionally high degree of authenticity, authority and importance from an early date. Pope Gregory XI (1370-78) approved and confirmed them and judged them favorably, as did Boniface IX (1389-1404) in the papal Bull *Ab origine mundi*, par. 39 (7 Oct 1391). They were later examined at the Council of Constance (1414-18) and at the Council of Basel (1431-49), both judging them to be in conformity with the Catholic faith; The Revelations were also strongly defended by numerous highly regarded theologians, including Jean Gerson (1363-1429), Chancellor of the University of Paris and Cardinal Juan de Torquemada (1388-1468) (not to be confused with the inquisitor Tomas).

Saint Bridget was born of a noble and rich family. Her family was good in their faith according to our Lord Jesus Christ and they gave a lot of their riches to the uprising of churches and monasteries and also a lot to the poor. Once, at the age of ten, she saw the Lord crucified, and the Lord Jesus Christ said: "Look, how I suffer!" She thought it had happened at the same time and answered: "O Lord, who has done this to you?" The Lord answered: "Those, who despise me and forget my great love." When her husband died she became a nun and gave away all of her riches. All of her

prophecies have been fulfilled to this day and there are still a few left that shall be fulfilled.

Please do not forget to read these revelations of St. Bridget and other scriptures of God everyday to grow in spirit and virtue, because the devil will be doing everything in his power to make you stop reading God's word so that you will forget them and fall into sin. Do not forget to print out copies of these great revelations so that you always have them in your hand for when the great disasters which the Holy Bible warns about come to pass, and so that you do not rely (for example) on electricity that will not always be available.

This [book](#) is a mirror in which the soul can see its stains and learn what is pleasing to God and what displeases him. Read this book again and again and you will learn how you must love God and your neighbor, despise what is earthly and transient, striving after the everlasting and heavenly, enduring for Christ's sake the adversities of this world and despising its prosperity and enticements, thanking God in sickness, not taking pride in good health, not becoming presumptuous in good fortune nor downcast in trials.

St. Louis De Montfort (+1710): “Blessed Alan de la Roche who was so deeply devoted to the Blessed Virgin had many revelations from her and we know that he confirmed the truth of these revelations by a solemn oath. Three of them stand out with special emphasis: the first, that if people fail to say the 'Hail Mary' (the Angelic Salutation which has saved the world – Luke 1:28) out of carelessness, or because they are lukewarm, or because they hate it, this is a sign that they will probably and indeed shortly be condemned to eternal punishment.”

We highly recommend that all 15 decades of the Rosary be prayed daily. Our Lady repeatedly emphasized the importance of praying the Rosary each day in her messages at Fatima. She even said that Francisco would have to pray ‘many rosaries’ before he could go to Heaven. You should prioritize reading the word of God and praying before other activities to grow in the spirit. Praying all 15 decades of the Rosary each day can be accomplished in a variety of ways. However, for many it is best accomplished by praying a part of the Rosary at different times of the day,

for example, the joyful mysteries in the morning, sorrowful mysteries at midday, and glorious mysteries in the evening. 'Salve Regina' only needs to be prayed at the end of the entire day's rosary. An essential part of the Rosary is meditation on the mysteries, episodes in the life of Our Lord and Our Lady. This means thinking about them, visualizing them, considering the graces and merits displayed in them, and using them for inspiration to better know and love God. It is also common to focus on a particular virtue with each mystery.

Our Lady to St. Dominic (1214): "Dominic, do you know which weapon the Blessed Trinity wants to use to reform the world? 'Oh, my Lady,' answered St. Dominic, 'you know far better than I do...' Then Our Lady replied: 'I want you to know that, in this kind of warfare, the battering ram has always been the Angelic Psalter (the Rosary) which is the foundation stone of the New Testament. Therefore if you want to reach these hardened souls and win them over to God, preach my Psalter (the Rosary).'" (The Secret of the Rosary, p. 18.)

"Ever since Blessed Alan de la Roche re-established this devotion, the voice of the people, which is the voice of God, called it "The Rosary". The word Rosary means "Crown of Roses," that is to say that every time people say the Rosary devoutly they place a crown of one hundred and fifty-three red roses and sixteen white roses upon the heads of Jesus and Mary. Being heavenly flowers, these roses will never fade or lose their exquisite beauty. In truth, they will stand before you for all eternity and bring you happiness and delight! Our Lady has shown her thorough approval of the name Rosary; she had revealed to several people that each time they say a Hail Mary they are giving her a beautiful rose and that each complete Rosary makes her a crown of roses.

The well-known Jesuit, Brother Alphonsus Rodriguez, used to say his Rosary with such fervor that he often saw a red rose come out of his mouth at each Our Father and a white rose at each Hail Mary. The red and white roses were equal in beauty and fragrance, the only difference being in their color.

The chronicles of Saint Francis tell of a young friar who had the praiseworthy habit of saying the Crown of Our Lady (the Rosary) every day before dinner. One day for some reason or other he did not manage to say it. The refectory bell had already

been rung when he asked the Superior to allow him to say it before coming to the table, and having obtained the permission he withdrew to his cell to pray.

After he had been gone a long time the Superior sent another Friar to fetch him, and he found him in his room bathed in a heavenly light facing Our Lady who had two angels with her. Beautiful roses kept issuing from his mouth at each Hail Mary; the angels took them one by one, placing them on Our Lady's head, and she smilingly accepted them.

Finally two other friars who had been sent to find out what happened to the first two saw the same lovely scene, and Our Lady did not go away until the whole Rosary had been said.”

(The Secret of the Rosary by St. Louis De Montfort)

“Show me a new road to our Lord, pave it with all the merits of the saints, adorn it with their heroic virtues, illuminate and enhance it with the splendour and beauty of the angels, have all the angels and saints there to guide and protect those who wish to follow it. Give me such a road and truly, truly, I boldly say—and I am telling the truth—that instead of this road, perfect though it be, I would still choose the immaculate way of Mary. It is a way, a road without stain or spot, without original sin or actual sin, without shadow or darkness”.

(True devotion to Mary by St. Louis De Montfort)

We also recommend you read the Word of God ([The Revelations](#), [The Lives of the Saints](#), Good [Catholic Books](#), The [Catholic Bible](#)) at least one to two hours every day until the moment of your death if it is possible. If you do not read enough everyday, your prayer will become empty since an ignorant person does not know what to ask and pray for in virtues and spiritual blessings. If you are unable to accomplish this right away, you should slowly but surely take steps to move to this point by making a resolution in your heart to never read or pray less than you have decided. Then when you have grown accustomed to maybe one hour reading and one hour praying per day, you can slowly try to add to this until you have reached your goal. It is much wiser to do it in this way and the goal will be reached much easier. For spiritual exercises are like most activities of the world: the more practice you have, the better you get. The best time for prayer is in the morning, since the mind is

more clear from the thoughts and discussions of the world, so we advise you to always dedicate time in the morning for the Rosary. The Rosary is the most powerful weapon in existence against the devil and those who neglect it will indeed be eternally sorry for refusing to honor our Lady as she deserves! Think and reflect upon what greatness it is to be able to speak with the God of the whole creation and His Mother whenever we want. It is almost impossible for a man to be able to speak with a king or queen of this world, and yet the King of kings and his beloved Mother hear your every word. In truth, I tell you, that even one good word of prayer has more worth than all gold and jewels and an infinite amount of universes, for they will all perish, but God's words will never perish. Think about how much you would concentrate and fight against distracting thoughts if someone were to tell you that you could have 10,000 dollars or a new car if you prayed a Rosary with full concentration and without yielding to distracting thoughts. This example should shame us all since we humans are, by our very nature, wicked at heart and are inclined to search for filth rather than gold (worldly things rather than heavenly ones). Everyone should try to remember this example, and then we will all be able to pray better which will bring us an everlasting, heavenly reward! The devils concentrate exceedingly much on getting a person to despise prayer in these ways: either they try to make you bored by it, or to have a difficulty in concentrating when praying, or to pray a little; for they know that prayer is the only way to salvation. The devices the devils use to distract you and lead you to hell in this age is are obviously worldly and ungodly media, video games and music and the like, but sins like the lust of the flesh, vanity and immodest clothing, gluttony, greed and pride among others also give them more power over the mind since the person searches for earthly comforts instead of heavenly ones.

St. Alphonsus (1760): "To a spiritual life the reading of holy books is perhaps not less useful than mental prayer. St. Bernard says reading instructs us at once in prayer, and in the practice of virtue. Hence he concluded that spiritual reading and prayer are the arms by which hell is conquered and paradise won... Hence St. Athanasius used to say that we find no one devoted to the service of the Lord that did not practice spiritual reading." (T.S., p. 513)

'Wherefore, children, let us hold fast our discipline, and let us not be careless. For in it the Lord is our fellow-worker, as it is written, "to all that choose the good, God worketh with them for good." But to avoid being heedless, it is good to consider the word of the Apostle, "I die daily." For if we too live as though dying daily, we shall not sin. And the meaning of that saying is, that as we rise day by day we should think that we shall not abide till evening; and again, when about to lie down to sleep, we should think that we shall not rise up. For our life is naturally uncertain, and Providence allots it to us daily. But thus ordering our daily life, we shall neither fall into sin, nor have a lust for anything, nor cherish wrath against any, nor shall we heap up treasure upon earth. But, as though under the daily expectation of death, we shall be without wealth, and shall forgive all things to all men, nor shall we retain at all the desire of women or of any other foul pleasure. But we shall turn from it as past and gone, ever striving and looking forward to the day of Judgment. For the greater dread and danger of torment ever destroys the ease of pleasure, and sets up the soul if it is like to fall. 'Wherefore having already begun and set out in the way of virtue, let us strive the more that we may attain those things that are before. And let no one turn to the things behind, like Lot's wife, all the more so that the Lord hath said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and turning back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven.

(St. Athanasius, The Life of Anthony)

Catholics must also understand that few are saved. Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed that the road to Heaven is straight and narrow and few find it, while the road to Hell is wide and taken by most (Mt. 7:13).

Matthew 7:13- "Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!"

Luke 13:24- "Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able."

Scripture also teaches that almost the entire world lies in darkness, so much so that Satan is even called the "prince" (John 12:31) and "god" (2 Cor. 4:3) of this world.

1 John 5:19- "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is seated in wickedness."

It's the sad fact of history that most people in the world are of bad will and don't want the truth. That's why almost the whole world lies in darkness and on the road to perdition. This has been the case since the beginning. It was the case when only eight souls out of the world's entire population (Noah and his family) escaped God's wrath in the deluge that covered the entire earth, and when the Israelites rejected God's law and fell into idolatry over and over again. Only two men out of the whole population of Israelites (Joshua and Caleb) made it into the Promised Land since the people opposed God time upon time even though they had seen such miracles as the world had never seen!

Saint Leonard of Port Maurice [A.D. 1676-1751], on the fewness of the saved: "After consulting all the theologians and making a diligent study of the matter, he [Suarez] wrote, 'The most common sentiment which is held is that, among Catholics, there are more damned souls than predestined souls.' Add the authority of the Greek and Latin Fathers to that of the theologians, and you will find that almost all of them say the same thing. This is the sentiment of Saint Theodore, Saint Basil, Saint Ephrem, Saint John Chrysostom. What is more, according to Baronius it was a common opinion among the Greek Fathers that this truth was expressly revealed to Saint Simeon Stylites and that after this revelation, it was to secure his salvation that he decided to live standing on top of a pillar for forty years, exposed to the weather, a model of penance and holiness for everyone. Now let us consult the Latin Fathers. You will hear Saint Gregory saying clearly, "Many attain to faith, but few to the heavenly kingdom." Saint Anselm declares, "There are few who are saved." Saint Augustine states even more clearly, "Therefore, few are saved in comparison to those who are damned." The most terrifying, however, is Saint Jerome. At the end of his life, in the presence of his disciples, he spoke these dreadful words: "Out of one hundred thousand people whose lives have always been bad, you will find barely one who is worthy of indulgence."

Vision of Archdeacon of Lyons, who died the same day as St. Bernard (1153):

"Know, Monsignor, that at the very hour I passed away, thirty-three thousand people also died. Out of this number, Bernard and myself went up to heaven without delay, three went to purgatory, and all the others fell into Hell." (Told to St. Vincent Ferrer)

Think about how almost the whole of Europe was fully Catholic and how the kingdoms outlawed false religions at this time, making this moment of time much more spiritually beneficial for souls than we see today! If so few were saved at this moment of time, how many are saved now? One can only shudder and cry at this thought!

Christ speaking about all the monks of the world at the time and the fewness of them being saved from hell: "They are in truth slaves, and there are very few who are different, yea so few that you hardly can find one in a hundred!"

(The Prophecies and Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 6 - Chapter 35)

If Christ says that not even one in a hundred monks will be saved, how many do you think will be saved of normal people who do not even try to renounce the world and its pleasures! Sadly, only [death and hell](#) will serve to wake up the majority of the people reading this! You will read this and then continue in your sloth and worldliness, or you will have a short lived spiritual fervor that will cool as times goes by! We pray with tears that you are not one of these Judases that will suffer for all eternity in hell!

"Hell is so hot inside that if the whole world and everything in it were on fire, it could not compare to that vast furnace. The various voices heard in the furnace all speak against God. They begin and end their speech with laments. The souls look like people whose limbs are forever being stretched without relief or pause."

(The Prophecies and Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 4 - Chapter 7)

"Nicholas of Nice, speaking of the fire of Hell, says that nothing on earth could give an idea of it. He adds that if all the trees of the forests were cut down, piled into a vast heap and set on fire, this terrible pile would not be a spark of Hell."

"For the smallest sin, lusted after, is enough to damn anyone from the kingdom of Heaven, who does not repent."

(The Prophecies & Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 1 - Chapter 32)

“Other Christians accepted Hell on faith, because Christ had said repeatedly and with solemn emphasis that there is a Hell, but Jacinta had seen it; and once she grasped the idea that God’s justice is the counterpart of His mercy, and that there must be a Hell if there is to be a Heaven, nothing seemed so important to her except to save as many souls as possible from the horrors she had glimpsed under the radiant hands of the Queen of heaven. Nothing could be too hard, nothing too small or too great to give up.”

(Our Lady of Fatima, p. 89)

Below is an interesting quote from St. Alphonsus concerning the idea of conversion to the Catholic Faith at the end of one’s life. Although these types of conversions are possible, they are extremely rare. St. Alphonsus states that these types of conversions proceed out of necessity, and that it would be very difficult for God to pardon such a person:

He that lives in sin till death shall die in sin. “You shall die in your sin.” (John 8:21.) It is true that, in whatsoever hour the sinner is converted, God promises to pardon him; but to no sinner has God promised the grace of conversion at the hour of death. “Seek the Lord while he may be found.” (Isaiah 55:6.) Then, there is for some sinners a time when they shall seek God and shall not find him. “You shall seek me, and shall not find me.” (John 7:34.) The unhappy beings will go to confession at the hour of death; they will promise and weep, and ask mercy of God, but without knowing what they do. A man who sees himself under the feet of a foe pointing a dagger to his throat, will shed tears, ask pardon, and promise to serve his enemy as a slave during the remainder of his life. But, will the enemy believe him? No; he will feel convinced that his words are not sincere—that his object is to escape from his hands, and that, should he be pardoned, he will become more hostile than ever. In like manner, how can God pardon the dying sinner, when he sees that all his acts of sorrow, and all his promises, proceed not from the heart, but from a dread of death and of approaching damnation.”

(Sermon 38: On the death of the sinner, par. 8)

Many people today do not care about helping other souls. They waste their time watching worldly tv, series, movies, playing video games and only searching for earthly pleasures rather than saving their own and other people's souls. They do not spend even an hour a day on trying to save their own selves and others from the eternal hellfire. These heartless sinners will not enter into heaven for they did not really care about other people's souls but only about what their next pleasure or enjoyment would be. (Mt. 12:30) Our Lord will surely cast them into an eternal hell fire for their lack of charity!

Imagine seeing your friend or family member being mercilessly tortured and you not being able to prevent this. Most people would do almost anything to prevent this situation from happening. Yet, this is exactly what will happen unless you make an effort to save your friend. (Mt. 7:13-14) So, if you really care about your family and friends, please tell them about the Word of God and the great Revelations of St. Bridget. A single soul has more worth than an infinite amount of universes, for the material universe will cease to exist, but your friend's soul will never cease to exist. Always remember: A true friend is the one who tells the truth. As a Catholic, one has an obligation to attempt to convert friends and family members. Thus, if one is completely unaware of what his or her friend believes, then that person is not evangelizing the way he or she must evangelize. Therefore, let us all invite people to the marriage feast of our Lord as we have been bidden to do by Him! If we are satisfied that we have the faith, and are not zealous to spread it to others, how can we ever expect to be saved?

If you are able to do so, please make a donation in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to help us spread the Prophecies & Revelations of Saint Bridget of Sweden and the true Christian Faith all over the world to save our beloved brothers' and sisters' souls. To be able to reach this goal with your help, we need financial help to reach out to people, publish these books in different languages, and much more. We humbly ask you all to give from your abundance to help us save souls from the eternal hellfire. Your financial support could possibly make part of the difference where a person will spend eternity.

It is written: "And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of

cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:42)

[We need your help, make a donation here please.](#)

We also need your prayers! We pray that God will bless you all and strengthen your spiritual life through his precious words found in the [Revelations of St. Bridget!](#)

Contact us here: <http://www.prophecyfilm.com/contact/>

More important information will be added soon!

We are looking for translators. Please contact us

<http://www.prophecyfilm.com/contact/>

SEXUAL PLEASURE, THE VARIOUS SEXUAL ACTS, AND PROCREATION

Listing of Sections (CLICK ON ANY SECTION BELOW TO GO DIRECTLY TO IT)

- **[Part 1. Natural Family Planning \(NFP\), The Marital Sexual Act, and Procreation](#)**
- **[Part 2. Sexual Pleasure, Lust, and the Various Sexual Acts in Marriage](#)**
- **[Part 3. Chastity: The Angelic Virtue](#)**
- **[Part 4. The Biblical and Apostolic Foundation for Priestly Chastity](#)**

WWW.CATHOLIC-SAINTS.NET

Free DVDs and Books

PART 1. NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING, THE MARITAL SEXUAL ACT, AND PROCREATION

1. WHAT IS NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the practice of deliberately restricting the marital act exclusively to those times when the wife is infertile so as to avoid the conception of a child. NFP is used for the same reasons that people use artificial contraception: to deliberately avoid the conception of a child while carrying out the marital act.

2. WHY IS NFP WRONG?

NFP is wrong because it's birth control; it's *against* conception. It's a refusal on the part of those who use it to be open to the children that God planned to send them. **It's no different in its purpose from artificial contraception**, and therefore it's a moral evil just like artificial contraception. **Contraception** (Latin: *against conception*) generally refers to various methods of preventing pregnancy (**birth control**). The Catholic Church is officially opposed to contraception, but the great majority of self-professed Catholics ignore the prohibition. The Catholic Church officially condemns all forms of contraception as a heinous sin against God and life.

3. PROCREATION IS THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

It is a divine law, a dogma of the faith (*de fide*), that the primary end of marriage is procreation (bearing children) and the education of children. Pope Pius XI decrees it "is beyond the power of any human law" to teach otherwise.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 8), Dec. 31, 1930: "To take away from man the natural and primeval right of marriage, to circumscribe in any way the principal ends of marriage laid down in the beginning by God Himself in the words 'Increase and multiply,' is beyond the power of any human law. ... This is also expressed succinctly in the [1917] Code of Canon Law [Canon 1013]: 'The primary end [or purpose] of marriage is the procreation and the education of children.'"

A Practical Commentary on Canon 1013 explains that: "there can be no controversy over the primary object of marriage. The perpetuation of the human race is willed by the Creator, who from the creation of mankind appointed the means for this purpose... The Holy Office condemned the opinion defended by some recent authors who deny that the procreation of children is the primary end of matrimony, and regard its secondary ends not

subordinate to its primary end but independent of it.” (April 1, 1944; *Acta Ap. Sedis*, XXXVI, 103.)

It could not be more clear from both the Natural Law as well as the teachings of the Church that: “The primary purpose of marriage is the procreation and education of children.” (*The 1917 Code of Canon Law*, Canon 1013) Therefore, it is heresy to teach that procreation and education of children is not the only primary end of marriage. Any deliberate plan by man to frustrate the marital act by attempting to make conception impossible is a grave sin against this primary purpose of marriage.

The 1917 Code of Canon Law, Canon 1081: “The matrimonial consent is an act of will by which each party gives and accepts the perpetual and exclusive right to the body for the performance of actions that of their nature pertain to the procreation of children.”

A Practical Commentary on Canon 1081 explains that: “The Canon, in specifying the purpose for which the right to the body exchanged, also indicates what is lawful and what is unlawful in this matter for married persons. Whatever contributes to the procreation of children is licit, while whatever use of each other’s body impedes procreations is illicit.” Any plan by spouses to prevent conception when they engage in the marital act is illicit. Since it impedes procreation, it does not contribute to the procreation of children, but works against it.

4. THE TEACHING OF THE SOLEMN AND INFALLIBLE MAGISTERIUM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONDEMNS ALL FORMS OF BIRTH CONTROL AS WELL AS THE INTENTION THAT IS OPPOSED TO PROCREATING CHILDREN AS A MORTAL SIN AGAINST NATURE

A pope can teach infallibly, not just in matters of faith, but also in matters of morals.

Pope Pius IX, *First Vatican Council*, Session 4, Chapter 4. **Definition of infallibility:** “... we teach and define as a divinely revealed **dogma** that when the Roman pontiff speaks **EX CATHEDRA**, that is, when, **1. in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of *all Christians*, 2. in virtue of his *supreme apostolic authority*, 3. he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole church, he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals. Therefore, such definitions of the Roman pontiff**

are of themselves, and not by the consent of the church, **irreformable**. So then, should anyone, which God forbid, have the temerity to reject this definition of ours: **let him be anathema.**”

A doctrine of faith or morals becomes part of the Solemn (Extraordinary) Magisterium when a pope infallibly defines it and hence makes it a dogma of faith or morals. Not only the Ordinary Magisterium (non-infallibly defined doctrines) but also the Solemn Magisterium (dogmas of faith), by an infallible definition from Pope Pius XI’s encyclical *Casti Connubii* in 1930, condemns the contraceptive intent and hence any method used to carry out that intent (which includes any new methods that science and medicine had not yet invented, such as birth control pills that were introduced to the public in the early 1960’s.)

Casti Connubii is an encyclical addressed to the **entire Church**. In this encyclical, Pius XI plainly states what the **Faith of the Church is on Christian Marriage**. When a Pope **plainly and authoritatively states what the Faith of the Church is** in an encyclical to **the entire Church**, that represents the teaching of the **Ordinary and Universal Magisterium**, to which a Catholic is **bound**. His teaching shows that **all forms of birth prevention are evil**. (We quote a long excerpt from his encyclical which sums up the issue below.) **In addition, there is solemn language used by Pope Pius XI in *Casti Connubii* which constitutes a solemn and infallible (ex cathedra) pronouncement. Note the bolded and underlined portions.**

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (#’s 53-56), Dec. 31, 1930: “And now, Venerable Brethren, we shall explain in detail the evils opposed to each of the benefits of matrimony. First consideration is due to the offspring, which many have the boldness to call the disagreeable burden of matrimony and which they say is to be carefully avoided by married people not through virtuous continence (which Christian law permits in matrimony when both parties consent) but by frustrating the marriage act. Some justify this criminal abuse on the ground that they are weary of children and wish to gratify their desires without their consequent burden. Others say that they cannot on the one hand remain continent nor on the other can they have children because of the difficulties whether on the part of the mother or on the part of the family circumstances.

“But no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in *exercising it deliberately* frustrate its natural powers and purpose sin

against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.

“Small wonder, therefore, if Holy Writ bears witness that the Divine Majesty regards with greatest detestation this horrible crime and at times has punished it with death. As St. Augustine notes, ‘**Intercourse even with one’s legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of offspring is prevented.** Onan, the son of Judah, did this and the Lord killed him for it (Gen. 38:8-10).’

“Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, TO WHOM GOD HAS ENTRUSTED THE DEFENSE OF THE INTEGRITY AND PURITY OF MORALS, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: ANY USE WHATSOEVER OF MATRIMONY EXERCISED IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE ACT IS DELIBERATELY FRUSTRATED IN ITS NATURAL POWER TO GENERATE LIFE IS AN OFFENSE AGAINST THE LAW OF GOD AND OF NATURE, AND THOSE WHO INDULGE IN SUCH ARE BRANDED WITH THE GUILT OF A GRAVE SIN.”

These sentences fulfill the conditions of an infallible teaching regarding a doctrine of morals. The Pope is addressing the ***Universal Church***, “the Catholic Church.” He makes it clear he is ***proclaiming a truth***, “Our mouth proclaims.” The topic deals with ***morals***, “the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and the purity of morals.” And lastly, he ***binds Catholics to this teaching under pain of grave sin***, “those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.” **This is infallible, ex cathedra language**; anyone who denies this simply doesn’t know what he is talking about. This also serves to refute those many voices today who say things such as: “there have only been two infallible statements in Church history, the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception.” That is complete nonsense, of course, but one hears it quite frequently.

One can see that Pope Pius XI condemns all forms of contraception as mortally sinful because they frustrate the marriage act. Does this condemn NFP? Yes it does, but the defenders of Natural Family Planning say “no.” They argue that in using Natural Family Planning to avoid conception they are not *deliberately frustrating* the marriage act or

designedly depriving it of its natural *power* to procreate life, as is done with artificial contraceptives. They argue that NFP is “natural.”

Common sense should tell those who deeply consider this topic that these arguments are specious because NFP has as its entire purpose the avoidance of conception. However, the attempted justification for NFP – the claim that it doesn’t interfere with the marriage act *itself* and is therefore permissible – must be specifically refuted. This claim is specifically refuted by a careful look at the teaching of the Catholic Church on marriage and ITS PRIMARY PURPOSE. It is the teaching of the Catholic Church on the primary purpose of marriage (and the marriage act) which condemns NFP.

Catholic dogma teaches us that the primary purpose of marriage (and the conjugal act) is the procreation and education of children.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 17), Dec. 31, 1930: “**The primary end of marriage is the procreation and the education of children.**”

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 54), Dec. 31, 1930: “Since, therefore, **the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural powers and *purpose* sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.”

Besides this primary purpose, there are also secondary purposes for marriage, such as mutual aid, the quieting of concupiscence and the cultivating of mutual love. **But these secondary purposes must always remain subordinate to the primary purpose of marriage (the procreation and education of children).** This is the key point to remember in the discussion on NFP.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 59), Dec. 31, 1930: “For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial right there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider **SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN]** and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.”

Therefore, even though NFP does not directly interfere with the marriage *act itself*, as its defenders love to stress, it makes no difference. **NFP is condemned because it subordinates the primary end (or purpose) of marriage and the marriage act (the procreation and education of children) to the secondary ends.**

NFP subordinates the primary end of marriage to other things, by deliberately attempting to avoid children (i.e., to avoid the primary end) while having marital relations. NFP therefore inverts the order established by God Himself. It does the very thing that Pope Pius XI solemnly teaches may not lawfully be done. And this point **crushes** all of the arguments made by those who defend NFP; because all of the arguments made by those who defend NFP focus on the marriage act itself, while they blindly ignore the fact that it makes no difference if a couple does not interfere with the act itself *if they subordinate and thwart the primary PURPOSE of marriage*.

To summarize, therefore, the only difference between artificial contraception and NFP is that artificial contraception frustrates the power of the marriage *act itself*, while NFP frustrates its primary purpose (by subordinating the procreation of children to other things).

5. THE HOLY BIBLE INFALLIBLY CONDEMNS ALL FORMS OF BIRTH CONTROL AND TEACHES THAT BOTH THE INTENTION AS WELL THE ACT AGAINST PROCREATION OF CHILDREN IS DAMNABLE AND A MORTAL SIN

The best example of God's utter hatred and detestation of all those who perform the marital act while trying to thwart the procreation of the children that God wanted to bless them with is found in *The Book of Genesis* where God Himself directly killed a man named Onan for practicing contraception. The reason Onan in *The Book of Genesis* was killed was because "*He knowing that the children should not be his, when he went in to his brother's wife, spilled his seed upon the ground, lest children should be born in his brother's name.*" Notice how clearly the biblical text shows that the reason he did this "detestable thing" was "lest children should be born in his brother's name", thus showing us that the act of performing the marital act while taking steps to hinder procreation is hated by God. This absolutely proves that the act of trying to hinder conception (in action or thought) is condemned and sinful according to God's Holy Law.

Genesis 38:8-10 "Go in to thy brother's wife and marry her, that thou mayst raise seed to thy brother." He knowing that the children should not be his, when he went in to his brother's wife, spilled his seed upon the ground, **lest children should be born in his brother's name.** And therefore the Lord slew him, because he did a detestable thing."

What deed was Onan killed for by God? Obviously, **he was killed for the wicked and selfish deed of having sexual relations while practicing contraception; and for**

being against conception; for, “As St. Augustine notes, ‘Intercourse even with one’s legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of offspring is prevented. Onan, the son of Judah, did this and the Lord killed him for it (Gen. 38:8-10).’” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* # 55; St. Augustine, *De Conjugiis Adulterinis*, Book II, Chapter 12)

Since Onan wanted to selfishly and lustfully enjoy the sex act without intending having children as God’s holy law requires, the evil angel Asmodeus that kills lustful and wicked people, was permitted by God to slay him (cf. Tobias 3:8). Haydock commentary explains: “[Genesis 38] Ver. 10. *Slew him*, perhaps by the hand of *evil angels*, Psalm lxxvii. 49. Asmodeus, &c., who slew the libidinous husbands of Sara. (Tobias iii. 7[8].) (Menochius)”

In addition to this irrefutable biblical example from *The Book of Genesis* that shows that contraceptive marital sexual acts are hated by God, we read in the biblical *Book of Tobias* or *Tobit* (which not surprisingly is missing from most protestant “bible” versions; whereas in the few versions they are included, these verses shown below are nevertheless missing) that the holy youth Tobias was commanded by almighty God through the Archangel Raphael to never perform the marital act for the sake of lust and that he shall be **“moved rather for love of children than for lust,”** so **“that in the seed of Abraham”** he **“mayest obtain a blessing in children”**. Tobias who was a holy and virtuous person consented to this admonishment by the holy angel and answered God in his prayer that **“not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity”**.

The Holy Bible, Tobias 6:22; 8:9 “And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, **moved rather for love of children than for lust**, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children... [Tobias said:] And now, Lord, thou knowest, that **not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity**, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.”

The holy youth Tobias approached his bride Sara after three days of prayer, not for fleshly lust but only for the love of posterity, having been instructed by the Archangel Raphael that to engage in the marital act he shall “be moved rather for love of children than for lust”.

According to God’s will, spouses are to engage in the marital act for the “love of posterity” (children), not for lust. No, contrary to what most people today say, the Holy Bible is clear that spouses are to come together **“only for the love of posterity”** if they want to please Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Word of God in the Bible is indeed true when it says that,

“the devil has power” over all spouses who come together for the purpose of gratifying their fleshly pleasures, giving **“themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding”**.

Tobias 6:16-17 “Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. **For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.”**

Haydock Commentary adds about: **“Verse 17. Mule**, which are very libidinous, [Showing excessive sexual drive; lustful.] Psalm xiii.”

The interesting thing about the sexual connection of a horse and a mule is that they cannot produce offspring, thus making their sexual relations completely sterile and unproductive. So what does this mean for marriage? It means that this verse alone proves that God’s Holy Word in the Bible condemns as sinful and unlawful all human sexual relations or acts that (1) are performed for the sole sake of lust; (2) that cannot produce offspring naturally (not referring to natural infertility or defects); and (3) that are done with an intention or mindset opposed to procreating offspring. St. Paul in the New Testament also connects the will to bear children to salvation, teaching that a woman: **“shall be saved through child-bearing; if she continue in faith, and love, and sanctification, with sobriety.”** (1 Timothy 2:15)

We also see in *The Book of Tobit* that the Holy Bible teaches that both the intention as well as the act against procreation of children is damnable and a mortal sin since we see described in the Bible that the devil is able to both gain control and prevail over those vile and wretched people who commit lustful acts of birth control either in thought or deed. And so, it is certain that all spouses who are opposed to procreation while at the same time desiring to perform the marital act are committing a mortal sin. In truth, “I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail” and who “give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding” that the “the devil hath power” over. **“For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.”** (Tobias 6:16-17)

Origen (c. 184-254), in his *Homilies on Genesis*, comments on a similar passage of *The Book of Tobias* found in Psalm 31:9 (Psalm 32:9), and he says that people who have

marital relations for any other purpose than the procreation of children are even worse than “dumb beasts”. Therefore, “Let the married women examine themselves and seek if they approach their husbands for this reason alone, that they might receive children, and after conception desist. For those women... when they have attained conception, do not later assent to copulation with a man. But some women, for we do not censure all equally, but there are some who serve passion incessantly, like animals without any distinction, whom I would not even compare to the dumb beasts. For even the beasts themselves know, when they have conceived, not to further grant opportunity to their males. The divine Scriptures also censures such when it says: "Do not become like the horse and the mule who have no understanding," [Ps. 31:9 (Ps. 32:9)] and again, "They have become stallions." [Jer. 5:8] But, O people of God, "who love Christ in incorruption," [Eph. 6:24] understand the word of the Apostle in which he says: "Whether you eat or drink or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God." [1 Cor. 10:31] For his remark after eating and drinking, "whatever else you do," has designated with a modest word the immodest affairs of marriage, showing that even these acts themselves are performed to the glory of God if they are attended to with a view to posterity alone.” (Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, Homily V, Section 4, On Lot And His Daughters)

God’s words are clear. Spouses are to engage in the marital act moved rather for love of children than for lust. So when a married couple goes out of its way to avoid children by deliberately avoiding the fertile times and restricting the marriage act exclusively to infertile times, they are committing a sin against nature – they are sinning against the God whom they know sends life. NFP is therefore a sin against God and nature, since God is the author of life, and NFP thwarts His designs. **This is so obvious that one can only marvel at how utterly unreasonable and stupid all those NFP defenders are who claim that one can practice birth control in one way, but not in another; and that by doing it in one way (which they deem lawful) one is not committing a sin, but while doing it in another way (which they deem unlawful) one is committing a sin! But is not the motive, purpose or intention exactly the same in both cases? Of course they are! How then can one be lawful and the other not lawful? Greater stupidity and unreasonable thinking is hard to imagine!**

It is not a complicated matter to understand that using Natural Family Planning to avoid pregnancy is wrong. It is written on man’s heart that such activity is wrong. It is also clear from the infallible word of God and the Bible that all forms of birth control are inherently evil and against nature.

Genesis 30:1-2 “And Rachel seeing herself without children, envied her sister, and

said to her husband: 'Give me children, otherwise I shall die.' **And Jacob being angry with her, answered: 'Am I as God, who hath deprived thee of the fruit of thy womb?'**"

We all know that God is the One who opens the womb, the One who killeth and maketh alive. "*The Lord also remembering Rachel, heard her, **and opened her womb.***" (Genesis 30:22) In truth, "*The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to hell, and bringeth back again.*" (1 Kings 2:6)

So why would a woman who desires to fulfill the will of God make a systematic effort to avoid God sending her a new life? What excuse could such a person possibly make for going out of her way to calculate how to have marital relations without getting pregnant with the child God was going to send? Why would a woman (or a man) who believes that God opens the womb try to avoid His opening of the womb by a meticulous and organized effort, involving charts, cycles and thermometers? The answer is that those who engage in such behavior as NFP selfishly turn from God (which is the essence of sin) and refuse to be open to His will.

God, and not man, is the only one that can lawfully decide whether a couple shall receive a child or not. Can you imagine what Jacob would have said to Rachel if she had discovered a new way to avoid "the Lord opening her womb?" He would probably have rebuked her as an infidel.

Contrary to the many heretics of our times, *The Holy Bible* does have quite a lot to say about the greatness and blessing of receiving children from God. The Bible presents children as a gift from God (Genesis 4:1; Genesis 33:5), a heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3-5), a blessing from God (Luke 1:42), and a crown to the aged (Proverbs 17:6). God sometimes blesses barren women with children (Psalm 113:9; Genesis 21:1-3; 25:21-22; 30:1-2; 1 Samuel 1:6-8; Luke 1:7, 24-25). God forms children in the womb (Psalm 139:13-16). God knows children before their birth (Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15)."

The first thing we must recognize is that children are a gift from God (Psalm 127:3-5). They are not burdens to bear, but blessings to receive with joy. From a biblical perspective, every married couple should "expect" to have children and at least be prepared for the possibility. The inability to have children was considered a curse, and the ability to conceive a joy. No one was ever recorded in the Bible as being unhappy about bearing children.

6. THE TEACHING OF THE ORDINARY MAGISTERIUM AND THE HOLY

FATHERS AND SAINTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH INFALLIBLY AND UNANIMOUSLY CONDEMNNS NFP AND ALL FORMS OF BIRTH CONTROL AS WELL AS THE INTENTION AGAINST PROCREATION AS MORTALLY SINFUL

A doctrine of faith or morals that is taught by the *unanimous* consent of the Fathers is part of the Ordinary Magisterium. The Catholic Church infallibly teaches that all biblical doctrines that have been held by the *unanimous* consensus of the Church Fathers are true and hence, binds all Catholics to believe them also.

Pope Pius IX, *First Vatican Council*, Session 2, January 6th, 1870, *ex cathedra*: “I, Pius, bishop of the Catholic Church, with firm faith... **accept Sacred Scripture according to that sense which Holy mother Church held and holds**, since it is her right to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures; **nor will I ever receive and interpret them except according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.**”

The Council of Trent in the 16th century was the first to infallibly define that a consensus can indeed make a doctrine part of the Ordinary Magisterium. And it was the first to infallibly define that the only kind of consensus that can do this is the *unanimous* consensus of the Church Fathers.

Pope Paul III, *Council of Trent*, Session 4, AD 1546, *ex cathedra*: “Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall, in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, **presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary** to that sense which holy mother Church, whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures, hath held and doth hold; **or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers**; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. Contraveners [that is, those who oppose or contradict this] shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established.”

As we will see, the unanimous consent of the Fathers, and therefore the Ordinary Magisterium, condemns the contraceptive intent and hence any method used to carry out that intent (which includes the new methods that modern science has invented, such as NFP, foams, and birth control pills).

All the fathers and saints teach that the sin of contraception is committed in thought (intent) as well as in deed. St. Augustine sums it up well: “I am supposing,

then, although you are not lying [with your wife] for the sake of procreating offspring, you are not for the sake of lust obstructing their procreation by an **evil prayer** or an **evil deed...**” (St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence* 1:15:17, A.D. 419)

The intent, plan, deed, desire, or prayer (thought or wish) that conception does not occur during conjugal relations is when and where the mortal sin of contraception is first committed, even if no contraceptive method is used, because “*evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord.*” (Proverbs 15:26) Spouses who are having marital relations must always desire to beget children (and cannot be against it in their will, thoughts or actions), even if for some reason it is humanly impossible to beget children. **This is the unanimous teaching of the Fathers and of the Saints.**

First, we must learn about the truth that the Holy Fathers of the Church unanimously teaches that one **must** perform every single marital act for the explicit and direct purpose of procreation of children for the act to be lawful and without sin. **This means, according to the Fathers of Church, that spouses must actively think about the fact that they are performing the marital act for the sake of begetting children before they perform the marital act, while also desiring to beget children for the love and glory of God.** The Holy Bible even gives spouses a good example of a short prayer to use before they perform the marital act: “*And now, Lord, thou knowest, that **not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.***” (Tobias 8:9)

The Holy Fathers, of course, got their teaching from Holy Scripture and Apostolic Tradition. We see this truth being taught to us in the Holy Bible by God when He spoke to Tobias through the Archangel Raphael, saying: “thou **shalt** take [that is, perform the marital act with] the virgin with the **fear** of the Lord, **moved rather for love of children than for lust**, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children... [Tobias said:] And now, Lord, thou knowest, that **not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity**, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.” (Tobias 6:22; 8:9) Our Lord’s words about “the seed of Abraham” is explained by St. Paul to refer to those who are going to be saved from Hell by Christ’s blood since God says in the New Testament that “if you be Christ’s, then are you the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:29)

It is thus clear that the Holy Bible teaches us that spouses who perform the marital act **must make an explicit act of their will** before they perform every single marital act, desiring to beget children and being “*moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children.*” Notice how insistently

and clearly the infallible, Holy Scripture commands spouses to perform the marital act for the explicit purpose and love of begetting children (and not for lust), teaching them that: “thou **shalt** take [that is, perform the marital act with] the virgin with the **fear** of the Lord, **moved rather for love of children than for lust**”.

The Magisterium of the Church also teaches that one must desire to beget children before one performs every single marital act in order for the act to be lawful and without sin since “**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #54) and since “**the act of marriage exercised for pleasure only**” is condemned as a sin for both the married and unmarried people alike (Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* # 9, 1679).

Pope Pius XI adds in *Casti Connubii* that the “sacredness of marriage which is intimately connected with religion and all that is holy, arises... **from its purpose which is the begetting and education of children for God**” and that all “Christian parents **must** also understand that they are destined... to propagate and preserve the human race on earth”. Our Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament of the Bible also connects the will to bear children to salvation, teaching that a woman: “**shall be saved through child-bearing; if she continue in faith, and love, and sanctification, with sobriety.**” (1 Timothy 2:15) **The Holy Fathers of the Church all agree with the Holy Scriptures and the Magisterium of the Church in this regard.**

St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 198 A.D.): “**To have coitus other than to procreate children is to do injury to nature.**” (*The Paedagogus or The Instructor*, Book II, Chapter X.--On the Procreation and Education of Children)

St. Caesarius of Arles (c. 468-542): “AS OFTEN AS HE KNOWS HIS WIFE WITHOUT A DESIRE FOR CHILDREN...WITHOUT A DOUBT HE COMMITS SIN.” (W. A. Jurgens, *The Faith of The Early Fathers*, Vol. 3: 2233)

St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, A.D. 419: “**It is one thing not to lie [with one’s wife] except with the sole will of generating [children]: this has no fault.** It is another to seek the pleasure of the flesh in lying, although within the limits of marriage: this has venial fault [that is, venial sin as long as one is not against procreation].” (Book I, Chapter 17.--What is Sinless in the Use of Matrimony? What is Attended With Venial Sin, and What with Mortal?)

St. Jerome, *Against Jovinian*, A.D. 393: “But I wonder why he [the heretic Jovinianus] set Judah and Tamar before us for an example, unless perchance even

harlots give him pleasure; or Onan, who was slain because he grudged his brother seed. **Does he imagine that we approve of any sexual intercourse except for the procreation of children?** ... He who is too ardent a lover of his own wife is an adulterer [of his God and of his wife].” (Book 1, Section 20; 40)

St. Augustine, *De Conjugiis Adulterinis*, A.D. 396: “**Since, therefore, the institution of marriage exists for the sake of generation, for this reason did our forebears enter into the union of wedlock and lawfully take to themselves their wives, only because of the duty to beget children.**” (Book II, Chapter 12)

Pope St. Clement of Rome (1st century A.D.): “**But this kind of chastity is also to be observed, that sexual intercourse must not take place heedlessly and for the sake of mere pleasure, but for the sake of begetting children.** And since this observance is found even amongst some of the lower animals, it were a shame if it be not observed by men, reasonable, and worshiping God.” (*Recognitions of Clement*, Chapter XII, Importance of Chastity)

Athenagoras the Athenian (c. 175 A.D.): “Therefore, having the hope of eternal life, we despise the things of this life, even to the pleasures of the soul, each of us reckoning her his wife whom he has married according to the laws laid down by us, **and that only for the purpose of having children. For as the husbandman throwing the seed into the ground awaits the harvest, not sowing more upon it, so to us the procreation of children is the measure of our indulgence in appetite.**” (*A Plea For the Christians*, Chapter XXXIII.-- Chastity of the Christians with Respect to Marriage)

St. Finnian of Clonard (470-549), *The Penitential of Finnian* #46: “We advise and exhort that there be continence in marriage, since marriage without continence is not lawful, but sin, **and [marriage] is permitted by the authority of God not for lust but for the sake of children,** as it is written, ‘And the two shall be in one flesh,’ that is, in unity of the flesh **for the generation of children, not for the lustful concupiscence of the flesh.**”

St. Athanasius the Great (c. 296-373), *On the Moral Life*: “The law of nature recognizes the act of procreation: **have relations with your wife only for the sake of procreation, and keep yourself from relations of pleasure.**”

St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215): “For it [the Holy Scripture] regards it not

right that this [sexual intercourse] should take place either in wantonness or for hire like harlots, **but only for the birth of children.**” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book II, Chapter XVIII.--The Mosaic Law the Fountain of All Ethics, and the Source from Which the Greeks Drew Theirs)

St. Augustine, *Against Faustus* 22:30, A.D. 400: “For thus the eternal law, that is, the will of God creator of all creatures, taking counsel for the conservation of natural order, not to serve lust, but to see to the preservation of the race, permits the delight of mortal flesh to be released from the control of reason in copulation **only to propagate progeny.**”

Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* 5:8, A.D. 307: “There would be no adulteries, and debaucheries, and prostitution of women, if it were known to all, that **whatever is sought beyond the desire of procreation is condemned by God.**”

Lactantius, *The Epitome of the Divine Institutes*, A.D. 314: “**Moreover, the passion of lust is implanted and innate in us for the procreation of children;** but they who do not fix its limits in the mind use it for pleasure only. Thence arise unlawful loves, thence adulteries and debaucheries, thence all kinds of corruption. **These passions, therefore, must be kept within their boundaries and directed into their right course [for the procreation of children], in which, even though they should be vehement, they cannot incur blame.**” (Chapter LXI.--Of the Passions)

Lactantius, *The Epitome of the Divine Institutes*, A.D. 314: “**Let lust not go beyond the marriage-bed, but be subservient to the procreation of children.** For a too great eagerness for pleasure both produces danger and generates disgrace, and that which is especially to be avoided, leads to eternal death. Nothing is so hateful to God as an unchaste mind and an impure soul.” (Chapter LXII.--Of Restraining the Pleasures of the Senses)

Apostolic Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, A.D. 375: “And fornication is the destruction of one’s own flesh, **not being made use of for the procreation of children, but entirely for the sake of pleasure, which is a mark of incontinency, and not a sign of virtue. All these things are forbidden by the laws;**” (*The Sacred Writings of Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions*, Book V, Chap. XXVIII)

Apostolic Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, A.D. 375: “When the natural

purgations do appear in the wives, let not their husbands approach them, out of regard to the children to be begotten; for the law has forbidden it, for it says: "Thou shalt not come near thy wife when she is in her separation." [Lev. xviii. 19; Ezek. xviii. 6.] Nor, indeed, let them frequent their wives' company when they are with child. **For they do this not for the begetting of children, but for the sake of pleasure. Now a lover of God ought not to be a lover of pleasure.**" (*The Sacred Writings of Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions*, Book V, Chap. XXVIII)

St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 198 A.D.): "Marriage in itself merits esteem and the highest approval, for the Lord wished men to "be fruitful and multiply." [Gen. 1:28] **He did not tell them, however, to act like libertines, nor did He intend them to surrender themselves to pleasure as though born only to indulge in sexual relations.** Let the Educator (Christ) put us to shame with the word of Ezekiel: "Put away your fornications." [Eze. 43:9] Why, even unreasoning beasts know enough not to mate at certain times. **To indulge in intercourse without intending children is to outrage nature**, whom we should take as our instructor." (*The Paedagogus or The Instructor*, Book II, Chapter X.--On the Procreation and Education of Children)

St. Augustine, *On The Good of Marriage*, Section 11, A.D. 401: "For **necessary** sexual intercourse for begetting [of children] is free from blame, and itself is **alone** worthy of marriage. **But that which goes beyond this necessity [of begetting children] no longer follows reason but lust.**"

Pope St. Gregory the Great (c. 540-604): "**The married must be admonished to bear in mind that they are united in wedlock for the purpose of procreation, and when they abandon themselves to immoderate intercourse, they transfer the occasion of procreation to the service of pleasure.** Let them realize that though they do not then pass beyond the bonds of wedlock, yet in wedlock they exceed its rights. Wherefore, it is necessary that they efface by frequent prayer what they befoul in the fair form of conjugal union by the admixture of pleasure." (St. Gregory the Great, "Pastoral Care," Part 3, Chapter 27, in "Ancient Christian Writers," No. 11, pp. 188-189)

Pope St. Gregory the Great (c. 597 A.D.): "**Lawful copulation of the flesh ought therefore to be for the purpose of offspring, not of pleasure; and intercourse of the flesh should be for the sake of producing children, and not a satisfaction of frailties.**" (*Epistles of St. Gregory the Great*, To Augustine, Bishop of the Angli [English], Book XI, Letter 64)

St. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662): “**Again, vice is the wrong use of our conceptual images of things, which leads us to misuse the things themselves. In relation to women, for example, sexual intercourse, rightly used, has as its purpose the begetting of children. He, therefore, who seeks in it only sensual pleasure uses it wrongly, for he reckons as good what is not good. When such a man has intercourse with a woman, he misuses her. And the same is true with regard to other things and one’s conceptual images of them.**” (*Second Century on Love*, 17; *Philokalia* 2:67-68)

St. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662): “There are also three things that impel us towards evil: passions, demons, and sinfulness of intention. **Passions impel us when, for example, we desire something beyond what is reasonable, such as food which is unnecessary or untimely, or a woman who is not our wife or for a purpose other than procreation.**” (*Second Century on Love*, 33; *Philokalia* 2:71)

St. John Damascene (c. 675-749): “**The procreation of children is indeed good, enjoined by the law;** and marriage is good on account of fornications, for it does away with these, **and by lawful intercourse does not permit the madness of desire to be inflamed into unlawful acts.** Marriage is good for those who have no continence; but virginity, which increases the fruitfulness of the soul and offers to God the seasonable fruit of prayer, is better. "Marriage is honourable and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" [Hebrews 13:4].” (St. John of Damascus, also known as St. John Damascene, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book IV, Chap. 24)

Gratian, *Medieval Marriage Law* (c. 1140): “Also, Jerome, [on Ephesians 5:25]: C. 14. **The procreation of children in marriage is praiseworthy, but a prostitute’s sensuality is damnable in a wife. So, as we have said, the act is conceded in marriage for the sake of children. But the sensuality found in a prostitute’s embraces is damnable in a wife.**”

Venerable Luis de Granada (1505-1588): “Those that be married must examine themselves in particular, if in their mind thinking of other persons, **or with intention not to beget children, but only for carnal delight, or with extraordinary touchings and means, they have sinned against the end, and honesty of marriage.**” (*A Spiritual Doctrine, containing a rule to live well*,

with divers prayers and meditations, p. 362)

There are three main reasons for why the Natural Law, the Holy Bible, Apostolic Tradition, as well as the Church and Her Popes and Saints all teach that spouses must always desire to beget children before they perform the marital act for the act to be lawful and without sin.

The first reason is that the Natural Law teaches that “**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*) and that “**the act of marriage exercised for pleasure only**” is condemned as a sin for both the married and unmarried people alike (Pope Innocent XI). The Natural Law is rooted in design. God, the Supreme Designer, has imprinted a design on all created things – including the human person, both in his spiritual and physical being – a purpose for which each has been created. Thus, with regard to the human person, the Creator has designed speech for communicating the truth and the mouth to swallow food etc. Likewise, the Creator has designed the sexual organs for something noble, namely, for procreating children.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 60), Dec. 31, 1930: “This sacredness of marriage which is intimately connected with religion and all that is holy, arises from the divine origin we have just mentioned, **from its purpose which is the begetting and education of children for God**, and the binding of man and wife to God through Christian love and mutual support; and finally it arises from the very nature of wedlock, whose institution is to be sought for in the farseeing Providence of God, whereby it is the means of transmitting life, thus making the parents the ministers, as it were, of the Divine Omnipotence.”

The second reason why spouses must always desire to beget children before they perform the marital act (in order to be able to perform the marital act without any sin) is that all sexual acts (even marital, natural, lawful and procreative ones) are intoxicating and affects the person similar to the effect of a strong drug. In fact, the sexual act is many times more intoxicating than many drugs that are unlawful to abuse. But when people are performing the sexual act, not for the motive of begetting children, but for the sake of lust or for satisfying or quenching their fleshly desires, they are committing an act that is intrinsically sinful, selfish, and unreasonable, and are thus abusing the marital act in a similar way that a drug user abuses drugs, or a glutton abuses food. It is an inherently selfish act that are not founded on reason, but only on their unlawful, unbridled and shameful search for a carnal pleasure, similar to the action of a person that uses drugs in order to get intoxicated or high.

This is also why the Church teaches that even the normal, natural and procreative “**act of marriage exercised for pleasure only**” is condemned as a sin for both the married and unmarried people alike (Pope Innocent XI) and “**that those marriages will have an unhappy end which are entered upon... because of concupiscence alone,** with no thought of the sacrament and of the mysteries signified by it.” (Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos*, #12)

Since the Church and the Natural Law condemns even the normal, natural and procreative marital act exercised for the motive of pleasure only, it is obvious that all sexual acts that is performed without the will to beget children are condemned for the same reason by the Church since they are utterly **unreasonable, shameful, and selfish.**

A sick person is allowed by God’s permission to take drugs in order to lessen his pain. But when this sick person uses more drugs than he needs in order to get intoxicated, or continues to use the drug after he gets well, he commits the sin of drug abuse. This is a perfect example of those who perform the marital act for the only sake of lust or for pleasing or quenching their sensual desires. They are gluttonous or overindulgent in the marital act, and are thus sinning against their reason and the Natural Law. For “**the sin of lust consists in seeking venereal pleasure not in accordance with right reason...**” and “**lust there signifies any kind of excess.**” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 1)

A person who uses a drug that makes him intoxicated needs an absolutely necessary reason (such as a grave illness) to excuse his usage of the drug from being a sin, and when he does not have such an absolutely necessary excuse to excuse his drug usage, he commits the sin of drug abuse. It is exactly the same in the case of married people. When married spouses do not excuse the marital act (which is intoxicating in a way similar to a drug) with the honorable motive of begetting children, they perform an act that is inherently sinful, selfish, unreasonable, and unnatural since “**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*) and since “**the act of marriage exercised for pleasure only**” is **condemned as a sin by the Natural Law (Pope Innocent XI)**. And so, the marital act needs an absolutely necessary excuse to legitimize and make moral the inherently evil act of getting intoxicated just like one needs an excuse like a grave illness to legitimize and make moral the inherently evil act of getting intoxicated by a drug.

An inherently evil act must always be excused with an absolutely necessary motive or purpose. Otherwise, it will always be a sin. Two examples that clearly demonstrates this

fact of “excusing” an otherwise evil act are found in the case of a man injuring another person, which is excused in the case of self-defense; or as in the case of a man getting intoxicated, which is excused when a man is sick and requires this intoxication in order to get pain relief. All other inherently evil acts than what is absolutely necessary are strictly condemned as sins, since they cannot be excused with an absolutely necessary motive. For example, a man cannot hurt another man if he wants his money, or if he does not like him, and a man cannot get drunk or intoxicated just because he is sad or unhappy, for none of these excuses are absolutely necessary. Thus, these excuses are not enough by themselves to excuse these acts from being sinful. In truth, some evil acts cannot even be excused at all, such as in the case of a man suffering from hunger, but who nevertheless is never allowed to hurt or kill another person in order to get food to survive. It is thus a dogmatic fact of the Natural Law that “the generative [sexual] act is a sin unless it is excused.” (St. Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Four Books of Sentences*, d. 31, a. 2, q. 1) It could not be more clear from the Natural Law as well as the teachings of the Church that “Coitus is reprehensible and evil, unless it be excused” (Peter Lombard, Archbishop of Paris, *Sententiarum*, 3, d. 37, c. 4) and that is also why all who commit the marital act without excusing it, will always commit sin. **“Therefore the marriage act also will always be evil unless it be excused...”**. (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, Supplement*, Q. 49, Art. 5)

Someone might claim (in opposition to the teaching of Pope Innocent XI and the Natural Law) that the marital act for the sole purpose of pleasing or quenching one’s sexual desire or concupiscence is really necessary and allowed and not sinful because it helps people stay away from committing sins like adultery, fornication or other sexual sins, but this argument is false and easily refuted since no one will ever be so tempted that he cannot withstand the sensual temptation of the flesh. It is thus *not absolutely necessary* to perform the marital act for the sole purpose of quenching one’s sexual desire or concupiscence, and that is why this selfish act will always be sinful for all spouses who perform the act for this purpose. Everyone can withstand their sensual temptations with the help of God, and to say otherwise is blasphemous impiety and heresy and against God’s Holy Word, since all the unmarried must do this every day.

James 1:13-15 “Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils, and he tempteth no man. **But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured. Then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.** But sin, when it is completed, begetteth death.”

Even the married must be able to resist their sensual temptations every time their spouse

is away from them, or when their spouse is sick or unable to perform the marital act for any other reason. In the case of a grave illness, however, the reason why a person needs to take a drug that makes him intoxicated is absolutely necessary. This proves that the act of marriage for the sole reason of sexual pleasure or for the purpose of quenching concupiscence is not absolutely necessary or that this motive by itself can excuse the marital act. All spouses can obviously remain chaste if they want too but they never (or almost never) choose to do so, but this is ultimately their own fault. **The marital act must be excused with the motive of procreation. The secondary motives of the marital act (such as the quenching or quieting of concupiscence) can follow the first motive of procreation, but performing the marital act for the sole motive of quenching concupiscence cannot excuse the sexual act as procreation always must excuse the sexual act.** The secondary ends or motives of the marital act can thus follow after the first motive of procreation, but performing the sexual act for the sole reason of quenching concupiscence cannot excuse the act from being a sin **since procreation is the only motive that always must excuse the act from being a sin, according to the teaching of the Church.**

The third reason why spouses must always desire to beget children before they perform the marital act (in order for the marital act to be without any sin) is that all sexual acts (even marital, natural, lawful and procreative ones) are shameful, which is why people never perform any sexual acts in front of other people. “Now men are most ashamed of venereal acts, as Augustine remarks (De Civ. Dei xiv, 18), so much so that even the conjugal act, which is adorned by the honesty of marriage, is not devoid of shame... Now man is ashamed not only of this sexual union but also of all the signs thereof, as the Philosopher observes (Rhet. Ii, 6).” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 151, Art 4)

And so, when people are performing such inherently shameful acts not governed by a will to procreate children, but rather for lustful and selfish reasons, they are sinning against the Natural Law imprinted on their hearts since **“the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children”** (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*) and since **“the act of marriage exercised for pleasure only” is condemned as a sin (Pope Innocent XI)**. Since the marital act is shameful by its own nature, it must be excused by a motive that is absolutely necessary – and this purpose is procreation of children.

Some people may object that there are many other events that are shameful and that are not yet inherently sinful such as soiling one’s pants or being forced to show oneself naked to other people against one’s own will. This objection, however, fails to notice the obvious difference between 1) people committing acts of lust with a desire or longing; and 2) events

which are shameful but who are not desired or longed for by a person in a sensual way.

Acts of lust are acts performed for the sake of a pleasure and are performed with the will and purpose of satisfying a sensual desire while the events or acts of soiling one's pants or being forced to show oneself naked to other people is not a desire or lust that is sought after. Thus, these people do not desire that these events should happen. If those people who endured the events of soiling their clothes or naked exhibition against their will would sensually desire or lust for that these shameful events would happen in the same way that a man or a woman lust for and desire that sexual acts or acts of lust happen, they would indeed be declared the most disgusting perverts. Who but a complete and satanic pervert would sensually desire or lust after soiling their pants or being exhibited naked? Consequently, it is not a mere shameful act or event that is sinful, but the shameful act that is performed with the intention of pleasing oneself sensually—that is sinful.

“For St. Augustine says (Soliloq. i, 10): ‘I consider that nothing so casts down the manly mind from its height as the fondling of a woman, and those bodily contacts.’”
(St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 153, Art. 2)

St. Methodius taught that the marital act was “unseemly,” and St. Ambrose agreed with the Holy Bible that it causes a “defilement” (Leviticus 15:16). St. Augustine agreed with the Holy Bible that “It is good for a man **not** to touch a woman” (1 Corinthians 7:1) and that sexual pleasure, lust or concupiscence for both the married and unmarried people alike are *not* something “good” or “praiseworthy” but are truly the “*evil of concupiscence*” and the “*disease of concupiscence*” that arose as an evil result of the original sin of Adam and Eve.

This is also why the Holy Bible urges people to remain unmarried and in a life of chastity since the married man “**is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided**” (1 Corinthians 7:33). The sexual pleasure is very similar to the effect of a strong drug, and drugs as we all know are very easy to become addicted to by abusing them or overindulging in them. The stronger a drug is, the more is also our spiritual life hindered, and that is why the angelic life of chastity will always be more spiritually fruitful than the marital life according to the Bible and God's Holy Word. And so, it is clear that Holy Scripture infallibly teaches that marriage and the marital life is an impediment to the spiritual life, while the chaste and pure life “give you power to attend upon the Lord, without impediment.” (1 Corinthians 7:35)

Someone might say that it is the sexual member that is shameful or evil to expose to others, and not concupiscence or the sexual lust. But this argument is false and easily

refuted since no one who is not a complete pervert would have sex in front of other people even though their whole body was covered by sheets or blankets. This proves to us that it is the **sexual pleasure or concupiscence itself that is shameful and evil**, and not only the exhibition of the sexual organ. For “man is ashamed not only of this sexual union but also of all the signs thereof,” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*) and this proves to us that not only the sensual desire is shameful, but also the very sexual act and “also of all the signs thereof”.

St. Jerome: “Thus it must be bad to touch a woman. If indulgences is nonetheless granted to the marital act, this is only to avoid something worse. But what value can be recognized in a good that is allowed only with a view of preventing something worse?”

The sexual pleasure is always an evil pleasure to experience in itself since it is a **shameful and intoxicating pleasure** that is very similar to the evil pleasure people experience when they abuse alcohol or drugs, and that is why it is always an evil pleasure to experience even for married couples, even though married spouses do not sin during their normal, natural and procreative marital acts, since “those who use the shameful sex appetite licitly are making good use of evil.” (St. Augustine, *Anti-Pelagian Writings*) St. Augustine in his book *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, explains this evil thus: “Wherefore the devil holds infants guilty [through original sin] who are born, not of the good by which marriage is good, but of the **evil of concupiscence [lust]**, which, indeed, marriage uses aright, but at which even marriage has occasion to feel shame.” (Book 1, Chapter 27)

St. Augustine’s reference to the lawful use of “the shameful sex appetite” means that spouses are only allowed to engage in marital intercourse as long as they perform the act for the sake of conceiving a child. Spouses who perform the marital act without excusing it with the motive or purpose of procreation are thus “making evil use of evil” according to St. Augustine. “I do not say that the activity in which married persons engage for the purpose of begetting children is evil. As a matter of fact, I assert that it is good, because it makes good use of the evil of lust, and through this good use, human beings, a good work of God, are generated.” (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, 3.7.15) It is thus obvious that the cause of the shame that is inherent in the sexual act, as we have seen, is “the evil of the sex appetite.” (St. Augustine, *Anti-Pelagian Writings*)

Second, we must also learn about the truth about that the Holy Fathers, Popes and Saints of the Catholic Church unanimously condemns all forms of birth control and contraception (in deed as well as in thought) as not only

intrinsically evil and mortally sinful, but also as an act worthy of hellfire, since it is of the divine law that “the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*). In truth, **some of the Saints and Fathers of the Church even condemn birth control as murder.** Thus, anything or any act that is opposed to the primary end of marriage, is a sin against nature.

St. Augustine, *De Conjugiis Adulterinis*, Book II, Chapter 12, A.D. 396: “... **intercourse, even with one’s lawfully wedded spouse, can take place in an unlawful and shameful manner, whenever the conception of offspring is avoided.** Onan, the son of Juda, did this very thing, and the Lord slew him on that account. **Therefore, the procreation of children is itself the primary, natural, legitimate purpose of marriage.** Whence it follows that those who marry because of their inability to remain continent ought not to so temper their vice that they preclude the good of marriage, **which is the procreation of children.**”

St. Epiphanius, *Medicine Chest Against Heresies*, A.D. 375: “They [certain Egyptian heretics] exercise genital acts, **yet prevent the conceiving of children. Not in order to produce offspring, but to satisfy lust, are they eager for corruption.**” (*Panarion* or *Medicine Chest Against Heresies*, Book I, Chapter 26:5:2.--Epiphanius Against the Gnostics, or Borborites)

St. Epiphanius, *Medicine Chest Against Heresies*, A.D. 375: “**There are those who when they have intercourse deliberately prevent having children.** They indulge in pleasure not for the sake of offspring but to satisfy their passion. To such an extent has the devil deceived these wretched people that they betray the work of God by perverting it to their own deceits. **Moreover, they are so willing to satisfy their carnal desires as to pollute each other with impure seed, by which offspring is not conceived but by their own will evil desires are satisfied.**” (*Panarion* or *Medicine Chest Against Heresies*, Book I, Chapter 26:5:2-3.--Epiphanius Against the Gnostics, or Borborites)

St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Paedagogus* (c. 198 A.D.): “Because of its divine institution for the propagation of man, **the seed is not to be vainly ejaculated, nor is it to be damaged, nor is it to be wasted.**” (*The Paedagogus* or *The Instructor*, Book II, Chapter X.--On the Procreation and Education of Children)

St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 28:5, A.D. 391: “... **and that which is**

sweet, and universally desirable, the having of children, they esteem grievous and unwelcome. Many at least with this view have even paid money to be childless, and have mutilated nature, not only killing the newborn, but even acting to prevent their beginning to live [by birth control methods such as NFP or contraception].”

St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 24, A.D. 391: **“Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit [NFP], where there are medicines of sterility [oral contraceptives], where there is murder before birth? [birth prevention] You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well... Indeed, it is something worse than murder, and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gift of God and fight with his [natural] laws, and follow after what is a curse as if a blessing, and make the chamber of procreation a chamber for murder...”**

St. Caesarius of Arles [A.D. 468-542], *Sermon* 51:4: **“They sin still more grievously when they kill the children who are already conceived or born, and when by taking impious drugs to prevent conception they condemn in themselves the nature which God wanted to be fruitful. Let them not doubt that they have committed as many murders as the number of the children they might have begotten. ... As many as they kill after they are already conceived or born, before the tribunal of the eternal Judge they will be held guilty of so many murders. If women attempt to kill the children within them by evil medicines, and themselves die in the act, they become guilty of three crimes on their own: suicide, spiritual adultery, and murder of the unborn child.”**

St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon* 1:12, A.D. 522: **“Who is he who cannot warn that no woman may take a potion so that she is unable to conceive or condemns in herself the nature which God willed to be fecund? As often as she could have conceived or given birth, of that many homicides she will be held guilty, and, unless she undergoes suitable penance, she will be damned by eternal death in Hell.** If a woman does not wish to have children, let her enter into a religious agreement with her husband; for chastity is the sole sterility of a Christian woman.”

St. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9:7, A.D. 225: **“Whence women, reputed believers, began to resort to drugs for producing sterility,** and to

gird themselves round, so to expel what was being conceived **on account of their not wishing to have a child** either by a slave or by any paltry fellow, for the sake of their family and excessive wealth. **Behold, into how great impiety that lawless one has proceeded, by inculcating adultery and murder at the same time!**”

St. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9:12, A.D. 225: “... **the so-called faithful want no children [but want to have sexual relations]**... [so] they use drugs of sterility or bind themselves tightly in order to expel a fetus which has already been engendered.”

John the Faster, Patriarch John IV of Constantinople (6th century): “If someone to satisfy his lust or in **deliberate** hatred does something to a man or woman **so that no children be born** of him or her, or gives them to drink (pharmakon), **so that he cannot generate or she conceive, let it be held as homicide.**”
(Penitential of John IV Nesteutes)

St. John Climacus (c. 525-606): “God neither caused nor created evil and, therefore, those who assert that certain passions come naturally to the soul are quite wrong. What they fail to realize is that we have taken natural attributes of our own and turned them into passions. **For instance, the seed which we have for the sake of procreating children [which is the natural attribute of the sexual act] is abused by us for the sake of fornication [or by any sexual act without intending having children].**” (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, "Step 26: On Discernment," by St. John Climacus, p. 251)

Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, Book VI, Chapter 23, A.D. 307: “God gave us eyes not to see and desire pleasure, but to see acts to be performed for the needs of life; so too, the genital [generating] part of the body, as the name itself teaches, has been received by us for **no other purpose than the generation of offspring.**”

St. Epiphanius, *Medicine Chest Against Heresies*, A.D. 375: “The like of this fornication and licentiousness may be seen in the extremely dreadful snake the ancients called the pangless viper. For the nature of such a viper is similar to the wickedness of these people. **In performing their filthy act** either with men or with women **they forbear insemination, rendering impossible the procreation God has given his creatures**—as the apostle says, "receiving in themselves the recompense of their error which was meet" [Rom. 1:27], and so on.”
(*Panarion or Medicine Chest Against Heresies*, Book I, Chapter 26:5:19:2-3.--

Epiphanius Against the Gnostics, or Borborites)

St. Epiphanius, *Medicine Chest Against Heresies*, A.D. 375: “**But if the apostle says to bear children [1 Tim. 5:11; 14], but they decline procreation, it is the enterprise of a serpent and of false doctrine.** Because they are mastered by the pleasure of fornication [fornication is often mentioned by the Fathers as the desire for sexual relations but without desiring or intending having offspring] they invent excuses for their uncleanness, so that their licentiousness may appear to fulfill Paul’s commandment. Really these things should neither be said nor considered worth mentioning in treatises, but buried like a foul corpse exuding a pestilent vapour, to protect people from injury even through their sense of hearing. **And if a sect of this kind [which teaches the heresy that non-procreative sexual acts are moral or that they are without sin] had passed away and no longer existed, it would be better to bury it and say nothing about it at all. But since it does exist and has practitioners, and I have been urged by your Honors to speak of all the sects, I have been forced to describe parts of it, in order, in all frankness, not to pass them over but describe them, for the protection of the hearers—but for the banishment of the practitioners.**” (*Panarion or Medicine Chest Against Heresies*, Book I, Chapter 26:5:14:3-5.--Epiphanius Against the Gnostics, or Borborites)

Third, we must also learn about the truth that the Fathers, Popes and Saints of the Catholic Church all teach that people who choose to get married (and that desire to have sexual relations) must also desire to beget children for the glory and honor of God, as well as educating them in the Catholic religion, since it is of the Divine Law and the teaching of the Church and of Pope Pius XI that “**Christian parents must also understand that they are destined not only to propagate and preserve the human race on earth, indeed not only to educate any kind of worshippers of the true God, but children who are to become members of the Church of Christ, to raise up fellow-citizens of the Saints, and members of God’s household, that the worshipers of God and Our Savior may daily increase.**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, # 13) This is also expressed succinctly in the 1917 Code of Canon Law: “The primary purpose of marriage is the procreation and education of children.” (Canon 1013)

The following Fathers and Saints of the Church teach the same as Pope Pius XI and *The 1917 Code of Canon Law*:

St. Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, Sermon 1:22: “**The [marriage] contract is read... in the presence of all the attesting witnesses... that**

they marry "for the procreation of children;" and this is called the marriage contract. If it was not for this that wives were given and taken to wife, what father could without blushing give up his daughter to the lust of any man? But now, that the parents may not blush, and that they may give their daughters in honorable marriage, not to shame, the contract is read out. **And what is read from it?--the clause, "for the sake of the procreation of children."** And when this is heard, the brow of the parent is cleared up and calmed. Let us consider again the feelings of the husband who takes his wife. The husband himself would blush to receive her with any other view, if the father would blush with any other view to give her."

St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Chapter 29 (c. 160 A.D.): "We **Christians either marry only to produce children**, or, if we refuse to marry, are completely continent."

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, Chapter IV, A.D. 107: "For I pray that, being found worthy of God, I may be found at their feet in the kingdom, as at the feet of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; as of Joseph, and Isaiah, and the rest of the prophets; as of Peter, and Paul, and the rest of the apostles, that were married men. **For they entered into these marriages not for the sake of appetite, but out of regard for the propagation of mankind.**"

St. Robert Bellarmine, *The Art of Dying Well*, Chapter XV, On Matrimony, A.D. 1619: "There are three blessings arising from Matrimony, if it be made a good use of, viz: Children, fidelity, and the grace of the sacrament. **The generation of children, together with their proper education, must be had in view, if we would make a good use of matrimony; but on the contrary, he commits a most grievous sin, who seeks only carnal pleasure in it.**"

St. John Damascene, On Marriage: "**Marriage was devised that the race of men may be preserved through the procreation of children.**" (*An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book IV, Chapter XXIV)

St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 6, A.D. 401: "Therefore **married persons owe one another not only the faith of their sexual intercourse itself for the begetting of children**, which is the first fellowship of the human kind in this mortal state; but also, in a way, a mutual service of sustaining one another's weakness, [that is, paying the marital debt when it is asked for] in order to shun unlawful intercourse."

St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (c. 180 A.D.): “**God made the male and female for the propagation of the human race.**” (Book I, Chapter XXVIII, Section 1)

St. Clement of Alexandria, *On Marriage* (c. 199 A.D.): “**Marriage is the first union of man and woman for the procreation of legitimate children.**” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book II, Chapter XXIII)

St. Clement of Alexandria, *On Marriage* (c. 199 A.D.): “**For every one is not to marry, nor always.** But there is a time in which it is suitable, and a person for whom it is suitable, and an age up to which it is suitable. **Neither ought every one to take a wife**, nor is it every woman one is to take, nor always, nor in every way, nor inconsiderately. **But only he who is in certain circumstances, and such an one and at such time as is requisite, and for the sake of children**, and one who is in every respect similar, and who does not by force or compulsion love the husband who loves her.” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book II, Chapter XXIII)

St. John Chrysostom [A.D. 347-407], *Homilies on Timothy*: “**Shall not women then be saved? Yes, by means of children.** For it is not of Eve that he says, "If they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." [1 Tim. 2:15] What faith? what charity? what holiness with sobriety? It is as if he had said, "Ye women, be not cast down, because your sex has incurred blame. **God has granted you another opportunity of salvation, by the bringing up of children**, so that you are saved, not only by yourselves, but by others" [cf. 1 Tim. 2:15].” (*Homilies on the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy*, Homily IX, 1 Timothy 2:11-15)

St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 19 & 32, A.D. 401: “**Marriage itself indeed in all nations is for the same cause of begetting sons, and of what character soever these may be afterward, yet was marriage for this purpose instituted**, that they may be born in due and honest order... Therefore the good of marriage throughout all nations and all men stands in the occasion of begetting [children], and faith of chastity: but, so far as pertains unto the People of God, also in the sanctity of the Sacrament, by reason of which it is unlawful for one who leaves her husband, even when she has been put away, to be married to another, so long as her husband lives, no not even **for the sake of bearing children: and, whereas this is the alone cause, wherefore marriage takes place...**”

The main reason why the Church and Her Popes and Saints all teach that a man and a woman who intends to marry **and have sexual relations** must also desire to beget children and educate them in the Catholic religion for the glory and honor of God, is that a “marriage” without this desire would be similar to the cohabitation of unmarried people who only live with each other for the motive of gratifying their sensual desires. In truth, **“the aforesaid [marital sexual] act does not differ from the act of fornication... But the act of fornication is always evil. Therefore the marriage act also will always be evil unless it be excused...”** (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, Supplement*, Q. 49, Art. 5) Thus, what separates fornication from a true marriage is the active wish to beget and educate children for the love and honor of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This is also why St. Augustine writes that **“the [marriage] contract is read... in the presence of all the attesting witnesses... that they marry ‘for the procreation of children’”** (*On the New Testament 1:22*).

The necessity to beget and educate one’s offspring in the true Catholic Faith cannot be understated; and especially so today since almost all people reject the true Catholic Faith, which is also why the world has been allowed to fall into such degradation. Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Arcanum (on Christian Marriage)* teaches that: “the Christian perfection and completeness of marriage are not comprised in those points only which have been mentioned. For, first, there has been vouchsafed to the marriage union a higher and nobler purpose than was ever previously given to it. By the command of Christ, **it not only looks to the propagation of the human race, but to the bringing forth of children for the Church, ‘fellow citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God’; so that ‘a people might be born and brought up for the worship and religion of the true God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.’**” St. Clement of Alexandria further explains that, “for the married He [the Lord] goes on to say, “My elect shall not labour in vain nor bear children to be accursed; for they are a seed blessed by the Lord.” [Isaiah 65:23] For him who begets children and brings them up and educates them in the Lord, just as for him who begets children by means of the true teaching, a reward is laid up, as also for the elect seed. ... Those who are in truth the Lord’s elect neither teach doctrines nor beget children to be accursed, as the [heretical] sects do.” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter XV, Section 98)

If we take upon us the heavy burden of Matrimony, we are obligated under pain of mortal sin to educate our children in the Catholic Faith. “For a person does not become a father simply because he helped to bring about the birth of a child, but by raising the child correctly.” (St. Chrysostom, *Sermon regarding Anna, Homily 1*, PG 54, 636) In truth, St. Chrysostom is completely right in saying that those who refuse to educate their children in the true Catholic Faith are the very reason for all kinds of evils in society. “The reason for the overturning of all things is that we aren’t caring for our own children. We take care of

their bodies, but we ignore the upbringing of their souls.” Chrysostom goes on to ask, “Do you want a child that is obedient? From their first steps, feed them on the wisdom and counsels of the Lord.” If we showed the same interest in the spiritual education of children as we do in their education in other spheres, we would forestall many evils. “When the father of a very gentle child only gives him sweets, refreshments, and whatever he likes when he’s ill, but not what he actually needs for his sickness; or if a doctor checks him out and confesses, “What can I do? I can’t stand to see the child cry.” Poor, foolish traitor! The only name I can’t give such a person is that of father. How much better it would be for you if you upset your child a little bit so that he might be healthy for all time, rather than making this fleeting pleasure the foundation for continuous sorrow.” (St. Chrysostom, *On the Acts of the Apostles, Homily 30*, PG 60, 226) With the satisfaction of the child’s every desire, we make him egocentric, and with such a character, he will be unhappy in the world. The Saint encourages us to “be like sculptors and make every effort to make your children wonderful sculptures that look like God. It will happen if you take away everything that is unnecessary, if you add whatever is necessary, and if you check daily to see what physical defects they have that you can fix.” (St. John Chrysostom, *On Vanity and the Upbringing of Children*)

The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles also teaches us that all parents who disregard correcting and educating their child in the Lord “will be guilty of their souls”, thus showing us that educating our children in the Lord is not something we choose to do, but something we are obligated to do under pain of mortal sin:

“Ye fathers, educate your children in the Lord, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and teach them such trades as are agreeable and suitable to the word, lest they by such opportunity become extravagant, and continue without punishment from their parents, and so get relaxation before their time, and go astray from that which is good. Wherefore be not afraid to reprove them, and to teach them wisdom with severity. For your corrections will not kill them, but rather preserve them. As Solomon says somewhere in the book of Wisdom: "Chasten thy son, and he will refresh thee; so wilt thou have good hope of him. Thou verily shalt smite him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from death." (Prov. 29:17, 19:18, 23:14.) And again, says the same Solomon thus, "He that spareth his rod, hateth his son;" (Prov. 13:24) and afterwards, "Beat his sides whilst he is an infant, lest he be hardened and disobey thee." (Ecclus. 30:12) He, therefore, that neglects to admonish and instruct his own son, hates his own child. Do you therefore teach your children the word of the Lord. Bring them under with cutting stripes, and make them subject from their infancy, teaching them the Holy Scriptures, which are Christian and divine, and delivering to them every sacred writing, "not giving them such liberty that they get the mastery," (Ecclus. 30:11) and act against your opinion,

not permitting them to club together for a treat with their equals. For so they will be turned to disorderly courses, and will fall into fornication; and if this happen by the carelessness of their parents, those that begat them will be guilty of their souls. For if the offending children get into the company of debauched persons by the negligence of those that begat them, they will not be punished alone by themselves; but their parents also will be condemned on their account. For this cause endeavour, at the time when they are of an age fit for marriage, to join them in wedlock, and settle them together, lest in the heat and fervour of their age their course of life become dissolute, and you be required to give an account by the Lord God in the day of judgment.” (*Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, Book IV, Section II, Chapter XI.-- On Domestic and Social Life Of Parents and Children)

Pope Pius XI also teaches this noble truth in great detail in his marvelous Encyclical called *Casti Connubii*, which means “Chaste Marriage”.

Pope Pius XI *Casti Connubii* (# 10-13), Dec. 31, 1930: “Now when We come to explain, Venerable Brethren, **what are the blessings that God has attached to true matrimony, and how great they are**, there occur to Us the words of that illustrious Doctor of the Church whom We commemorated recently in Our Encyclical *Ad salutem* on the occasion of the fifteenth centenary of his death: “These,” says St. Augustine, “are all **the blessings of matrimony on account of which matrimony itself is a blessing; offspring, conjugal faith and the sacrament.**” And how under these three heads is contained a splendid summary of the whole doctrine of Christian marriage, the holy Doctor himself expressly declares when he said: “By conjugal faith it is provided that there should be no carnal intercourse outside the marriage bond with another man or woman; **with regard to offspring, that children should be begotten of love, tenderly cared for and educated in a religious atmosphere;** finally, in its sacramental aspect that the marriage bond should not be broken and that a husband or wife, if separated, should not be joined to another even for the sake of offspring. This we regard as the law of marriage by which the fruitfulness of nature is adorned and the evil of incontinence is restrained.”

“Thus amongst the blessings of marriage, the child holds the first place. And indeed the Creator of the human race Himself, Who in His goodness wishes to use men as His helpers in the propagation of life, taught this when, instituting marriage in Paradise, He said to our first parents, and through them to all future spouses: “Increase and multiply, and fill the earth.” As St. Augustine admirably deduces from the words of the holy Apostle Saint Paul to Timothy when he says: **“The Apostle himself is therefore a witness that marriage is for**

the sake of generation: ‘I wish,’ he says, ‘young girls to marry.’ And, as if someone said to him, ‘Why?,’ he immediately adds: ‘To bear children, to be mothers of families’.”

“How great a boon of God this is, and how great a blessing of matrimony is clear from a consideration of man’s dignity and of his sublime end. For man surpasses all other visible creatures by the superiority of his rational nature alone. Besides, **God wishes men to be born not only that they should live and fill the earth, but much more that they may be worshippers of God, that they may know Him and love Him and finally enjoy Him for ever in heaven; and this end, since man is raised by God in a marvelous way to the supernatural order, surpasses all that eye hath seen, and ear heard, and all that hath entered into the heart of man. From which it is easily seen how great a gift of divine goodness and how remarkable a fruit of marriage are children born by the omnipotent power of God through the cooperation of those bound in wedlock.**

“But Christian parents **must** also understand that they are destined not only to propagate and preserve the human race on earth, indeed not only to educate any kind of worshippers of the true God, but children who are to become members of the Church of Christ, to raise up fellow-citizens of the Saints, and members of God’s household, that the worshippers of God and Our Savior may daily increase.”

The 1917 Code of Canon Law also accurately describes the nature of the Sacrament of Marriage: “Marital consent is an act of the will whereby each party grants and accepts a permanent and exclusive right over the body regarding its acts which are of themselves apt for the generation of offspring.” (*Codex Iuris Cononici*, 1081.2) Thus, marriage is understood as a lawful contract in which the two parties handed over to each other the right to use one another for acts suitable for the generation of children. If two persons were to use the vocabulary of the Church’s canonical definition in their wedding vows, the bride and groom might say to each other, “I understand our marrying as an act in which I hand over to you the right to use my body for acts that are apt for generating children. I want to do this in a contractual context before these gathered witnesses.” Canon 1013 fittingly combined the teachings of both St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, teaching that: “The primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of children; its secondary end is mutual help and the remedying of concupiscence.” (*Codex Iuris Cononici*, 1013)

St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 1, A.D. 401: “The first natural bond of human society is man and wife. Nor did God create these each by himself, and join them together as alien by birth: but He created the one out of the other, setting a sign also of the power of the union in the side, whence she was drawn, was formed.

For they are joined one to another side by side, who walk together, and look together whither they walk. Then follows the connexion of fellowship in children, which is the one alone worthy fruit, not of the union of male and female, but of the sexual intercourse. For it were possible that there should exist in either sex, even without such intercourse, a certain friendly and true union of the one ruling, and the other obeying.”

Pope Gregory XVI in his encyclical *Mirari Vos*, which exposed liberalism and religious indifferentism explains that those marriages that are devoid of the “**thought of the sacrament and of the mysteries signified by it [that is, the procreation and education of children, faithfulness, and mutual love and help]**” or that was entered into because of “**concupiscence alone,**” will have “**an unhappy ending**” since these kinds of selfish, lustful and impious “marriages” in effect are nothing but fornication in disguise of a marriage, thus firmly contradicting and exposing the modernistic and heretical teachings of certain impious men and women who dared to assert that one could marry for mere selfish, lustful or worldly motives, rather than for pious and good motives that a true and honorable marriage always is based on.

Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos* (# 12), Aug. 15, 1832: “Now the **honorable marriage** of Christians, which Paul calls “a great sacrament in Christ and the Church,” [Heb. 13:4, Eph. 5:32] demands our shared concern lest anything contrary to its *sanctity* and *indissolubility* is proposed. Our predecessor Pius VIII would recommend to you his own letters on the subject. However, troublesome efforts against this sacrament still continue to be made. The people therefore must be zealously taught that a marriage rightly entered upon cannot be dissolved; for those joined in matrimony God has ordained a perpetual companionship for life and a knot of necessity which cannot be loosed except by death. Recalling that matrimony is a sacrament and therefore subject to the Church, let them consider and observe the laws of the Church concerning it. Let them take care lest for any reason they permit that which is an obstruction to the teachings of the canons and the decrees of the councils. **They should be aware that those marriages will have an unhappy end which are entered upon contrary to the discipline of the Church or without God’s favor or because of concupiscence alone, with no thought of the sacrament and of the mysteries signified by it.**”

In truth, Pope Gregory IX (1145-1241) also affirms the Church’s teaching on the sacrament of marriage, saying that: “As much as the contract of marriage is favored, it lacks effect if conditions are stipulated against the substance of marriage. For example, **if one says to the other, “I contract with you if you will prevent the conception of children,”**

or, “until I find another woman more worthy in honor or riches,” or, “if you will sell yourself in adultery for money.”” (Gratian, *Marriage Canons From The Decretum*, Case Thirty-Two, Question IV, Conditions Set in Betrothals or Other Contracts)

Pope Gregory IX’s three examples here shows us the three goods of marriage: proles (offspring), sacramentum (indissolubility), and fides (fidelity) without which a marriage contract is invalid. “It seems evident that a woman taken merely to have sex is not a wife, because God instituted marriage for propagation, not merely for satisfying lust. For the nuptial blessing is [Gen. 1:28], “Increase and multiply.”... It is shameful for a woman when her marriage bears no fruit, for this alone is the reason for marrying. ... bearing children is the fruit of marriage and the blessing of matrimony is without doubt the reason that [the Blessed Virgin] Mary’s virginity defeated the Prince of this World [the Devil]. Thus anyone who joins himself to another, not for the sake of procreating offspring, but rather to satisfy lust is less a spouse than a fornicator. ... As no congregation of heretics can be called a Church of Christ because they do not have Christ as their head, so no matrimony, where one has not joined her husband according to Christ’s precept, can properly be called marriage, but is better called adultery.” (Gratian, *Marriage Canons From The Decretum*, Case Thirty-Two, Question II)

St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, A.D. 421: “Nevertheless, because human soundness agrees that the motive in taking a wife is the procreation of offspring, regardless of how weakness yields to lust, I note, in addition to the faithfulness which the married owe to each other so that there be no adultery, and the offspring, for whose generation the two sexes are to be united, that a third good, which seems to me to be a sacrament, should exist in the married, above all in those who belong to the people of God, so that there be no divorce from a wife who cannot bear, and that a man not wishing to beget more children give not his wife to another for begetting, as Cato is said to have done [Plutarch, *In vita Catonis*; Lucan 2]. ... I say that there is another way in which marriage is good when offspring can be procreated only through intercourse. If there were another way to procreate, yet the spouses had intercourse, then they evidently must have yielded to lust, and made evil use of evil. But, since the two sexes were purposely instituted, man can be born only from their union, and thus spouses by their union for this purpose [of procreation] make good use of that evil [of lust]...” (Book V, Chapter 12, Section 46)

Thus, Pope St. Gregory the Great (c. 540-604), in his work “*Pastoral Rule*”, which deals with sexual sins from a biblical perspective, could rightly admonish Christians to never marry or perform the marital act for carnal or lustful motives: “**The married must be admonished to bear in mind that they are united in wedlock for the purpose of**

procreation, and when they abandon themselves to immoderate intercourse, they transfer the occasion of procreation to the service of pleasure. Let them realize that though they do not then pass beyond the bonds of wedlock, yet in wedlock they exceed its rights. Wherefore, it is necessary that they efface by frequent prayer what they befool in the fair form of conjugal union by the admixture of pleasure. For hence it is that the Apostle, skilled in heavenly medicine, did not so much lay down a course of life for the whole [of humanity] as point out remedies to the weak when he said, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman: but on account of fornication let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:1-2). For in that he premised the fear of fornication, he surely did not give a precept to such as were standing [in the greater and more blessed life of chastity], but pointed out the bed to such as were falling, lest haply they should tumble to the ground. Whence to such as were still weak he added, "Let the husband render unto the wife her due; and likewise also the wife unto the husband" (1 Cor. 7:3). And, while in the most honorable estate of matrimony allowing to them something of pleasure, he added, "But this I say by way of indulgence, not by way of command" (1 Cor. 7:6). Now where indulgence is spoken of, a fault is implied; but one that is the more readily remitted in that it consists, not in doing what is unlawful, but in not keeping what is lawful under control.

"Which thing Lot expresses well in his own person, when he flies from burning Sodom, and yet, finding Zoar, does not still ascend the mountain heights. For to fly from burning Sodom is to avoid the unlawful fires of the flesh. But the height of the mountains is the purity of the continent. Or, at any rate, they are as it were upon the mountain, who, though cleaving to carnal intercourse, still, beyond the due association for the production of offspring, are not loosely lost in pleasure of the flesh. For to stand on the mountain is to seek nothing in the flesh except the fruit of procreation. To stand on the mountain is not to cleave to the flesh in a fleshly way. But, since there are many who relinquish indeed the sins of the flesh, and yet, when placed in the state of wedlock, do not observe solely the claims of due intercourse, Lot went indeed out of Sodom, but yet did not at once reach the mountain heights; because a damnable life is already relinquished, but still the loftiness of conjugal continence is not thoroughly attained... married life is neither far separated from the world, nor yet alien from the joy of safety... They are therefore to be admonished that, if they suffer from the storms of temptation with risk to their safety, they should seek the port of wedlock. For it is written, "It is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7:9). They come, in fact, to marriage without blame, if only they have not vowed better things [chastity]." (Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, Book III, Chapter XXVII.--How The Married And The Single Are To Be Admonished.)

In A.D. 191 St. Clement of Alexandria (a Greek theologian of considerable influence in the early Church) referred to Onan's evil act in these words: "He broke the law of coitus." (St. Clement of Alexandria, *Comments on Genesis* 6, PG 69:309) He went on to explain that

“Because of its divine institution for the propagation of man, the seed is not to be vainly ejaculated, nor is it to be damaged, nor is it to be wasted.” (St. Clement of Alexandria, *Pedagogus*, "The Educator", 2.10.91.2)

St. Clement of Alexandria agrees with the Popes and Saints of the Church in this regard concerning the procreation and education of children, teaching us that: “it remains for us now to consider the restriction of sexual intercourse to those who are joined in wedlock. Begetting children is the goal of those who wed, and the fulfillment of that goal is a large family, just as hope of a crop drives the farmer to sow his seed, while the fulfillment of his hope is the actual harvesting of the crop. But he who sows in a living soil is far superior, for the one tills the land to provide food only for a season, the other to secure the preservation of the whole human race; the one tends his crop for himself, the other, for God. We have received the command: "Be fruitful" [Gen. 1:28], and we must obey. In this role man becomes like God, because he co-operates, in his human way, in the birth of another man.” (*The Paedagogus* or *The Instructor*, Book II, Chapter X) And so, it should be absolutely clear to all pure servants of Christ that “Marriage is the first conjunction of man and woman for the procreation of legitimate children. Accordingly Menander the comic poet says: "For the begetting of legitimate children, I give thee my daughter.”” (St. Clement of Alexandria, "On Marriage", *The Stromata* or *Miscellanies*, Book II, Chapter XXIII)

Origen (a theologian of the early 3rd century Alexandrian Church) considered by many to be the most accomplished biblical scholar of the early church — refuted the teachings of the pagan philosopher Celsus by reference to God’s people in the Old Testament: “nor were there among them women who sold their beauty to anyone who wished to have sexual intercourse without offspring, and to cast contempt upon the nature of human generation.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, Book 5, Chapter 42) In the early Church it was clear that **to have sexual intercourse without wishing to beget offspring was to commit an evil act.**

7. SAINT AUGUSTINE CONDEMNS ALL SPOUSES THAT ARE AGAINST PROCREATION AND THAT PRACTICE A TIME-BASED METHOD OF CONTRACEPTION SIMILAR TO NFP AS ADULTERERS, CALLING THEIR BED-CHAMBER A “BROTHEL”

Arguing against the Manicheans on contraception, St. Augustine appears to refer to a timing-based method as practiced by the Manicheans. His view on the matter is clear.

St. Augustine, *On the Morals of the Manichaeans* 18:65, A.D. 388: “**Is it not you who used to counsel us to observe as much as possible the time when a**

woman, after her purification, is most likely to conceive, and to abstain from cohabitation at that time, lest the soul should be entangled in flesh? This proves that you [Manicheans] approve of having a wife, not for the procreation of children, but for the gratification of passion. **In marriage, as the marriage law declares, the man and woman come together for the procreation of children.** Therefore, whoever makes the procreation of children a greater sin than copulation, forbids marriage and makes the woman not a wife but a mistress, who for some gifts presented to her is joined to the man to gratify his passion. Where there is a wife there must be marriage. **But there is no marriage where motherhood is not in view; therefore neither is there a wife.**”

Here, the exact Manichean method is unknown, though it sounds like a rhythm method similar to NFP. Manicheans disdained any procreation, which is the point of Augustine’s argument. He condemns marriage with permanent or temporary contraceptive intent.

St. Augustine, *Against Faustus* 15:7, A.D. 400: “... [the Manichean heretics] directly opposes the next precept, "Thou shalt not commit adultery"; for those who believe this doctrine, in order that their wives may not conceive, are led to commit adultery even in marriage. They take wives, as the law declares, for the procreation of children; but... their wives is not of a lawful character; **and the production of children, which is the proper end of marriage, they seek to avoid.** As the apostle long ago predicted of thee [the heretic Faustus], thou dost indeed forbid to marry, for thou seekest to destroy the purpose of marriage. **Thy doctrine [against childbearing] turns marriage into an adulterous connection, and the bed-chamber into a brothel.**”

Here we see that the true teaching of the Church and the Holy Saints condemns those who perform sexual acts where conception is hindered, calling their marriage “**an adulterous connection**” and their bed-chamber a “**brothel**”. In truth, “For what gratification is there (except perhaps for lascivious persons, and those who, as the apostle says with prohibition, possess their vessel in the lust of concupiscence [1 Thess. 4:5]) in the mere shedding of seed as the ultimate pleasure of sexual union, unless it is followed by the true and proper fruit of marriage—conception and birth?” (St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book II, Chapter 19)

The Manicheans and the other gnostic heretics of the early Church that St. Augustine fought against and refuted was one of the greatest haters and rejecters of the goodness of procreation. The Fathers and Saints of the Church, however, fought fearlessly against them in debates and writings and condemned their impious doctrine which turns family life,

society and her laws upside down, and that is why this unnatural doctrine was almost completely obliterated until our time—the last days—when this practice again was adopted by the worldly and sensual people of our time. St. Augustine, in his work *Against Faustus*, (A.D. 400) could rightly condemn these unnatural heretics for hating offspring, which is a true blessing of the Lord: **“Moreover, the only honorable kind of marriage, or marriage entered into for its proper and legitimate purpose [that is, for the procreation of children], is precisely that you hate most [since procreation of children is regarded as one of the greatest of evils by the Manichean heretics]. So, though you may not forbid sexual intercourse, you forbid marriage; for the peculiarity of marriage is, that it is not merely for the gratification of passion, but, as is written in the contract, for the procreation of children.”** (*Against Faustus*, Book XXIX, Section 6)

Confirming that only the normal, natural and procreative marital sexual act is allowed to be performed in a marriage, St. Thomas Aquinas, who quotes St. Augustine in his *Summa Theologica*, speaks about chastity, and he explains that the right, proper and pure use of the sexual organs is when one uses them for the sake of procreation, which of course refutes all those lustful perverts of our own day and age that defend non-procreative or unnecessary forms of sexual acts, such as foreplay and sensual kisses and touches, as well as all acts where the spouses deliberately try to hinder the procreation of children. Thus, in contrast to these lustful and impure spouses: “Augustine says (De Perseverantia xx): “We must give praise to purity, that he who has ears to hear, may put to **none** but a lawful use the organs intended for procreation.” Now the use of these organs is the proper matter of chastity. Therefore purity belongs properly to chastity.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 151, Art. 4.--Whether purity belongs especially to chastity?)

As we have seen from all the Fathers and Saints of the Catholic Church, contraceptive practices are nothing new. St. Hippolytus, in his book “*Refutation of All Heresies*,” (A.D. 225) describes how wicked people and so-called faithful committed this mortal sin even in the beginning of the third century: “... **the so-called faithful want no children... [so] they use drugs of sterility or bind themselves tightly in order to expel a fetus which has already been engendered.**” (Book IX, Chapter 12) Heretics and mortal sinners of this kind have always existed, “**For they forbid chaste wedlock and procreation, but are seared in their consciences since they have sex and pollute themselves, and yet hinder procreation.**” (St. Epiphanius, *Panarion* or *Medicine Chest Against Heresies*, Book I, Chapter 26:5:16:4.--Against the Gnostics, or Borborites, A.D. 375)

It should now be clear that marriage was created for chastity, procreation, and partnership. "Thou marriest a wife for chastity and procreation" (Chrysostom, *Hom. XII. in Col.*; PG 62.386; NPNF. p 318). Chrysostom explains that it was in response to Adam's new fallen condition that the Lord God established marriage as we know it. The establishment of marriage was designed by God for a redemptive purpose: to tame man's wild and out-of-control nature. "The profit of marriage is to preserve the body pure, and if this be not so, there is no advantage of marriage" (Chrysostom, *Hom. LIX in Mt.*; PG 58.583; NPNF, p. 371). This is contrary to the opinions of many modern scholars who labor in vain to "discover" modern and romantic notions in St. John Chrysostom's theology of marriage.

St. Augustine, *Adulterous Marriages*, Book II, Chapter 12, A.D. 396: "It is that weakness, namely, incontinence, that the Apostle wished to remedy by the divinity of marriage. He did not say: If he does not have sons, let him marry, but: "If he does not have self-control, let him marry." Indeed, the concessions to incontinence in marriage are compensated for by the procreation of children. Incontinence surely is a vice, while marriage is not. So, through this good [procreation], that evil [concupiscence or sexual pleasure] is rendered pardonable. Since, therefore, the institution of marriage exists for the sake of generation, for this reason did our forebears [ancestors] enter into the union of wedlock and lawfully take to themselves their wives, only because of the duty to beget children. There then was a certain necessity for having children which does not exist now, because "the time to embrace," [Esdras 3:5] as it is written, was in those days, but now is "the time to refrain from embracing." Alluding to the present age, the Apostle says: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short; it remains that those who have wives be as if they had none." [1 Cor. 7:29] Whence, with perfect conviction, the following can be said: "Let him accept it who can," [Matt. 19:12] but "let her marry who cannot control herself." [1 Cor. 7:9] In former times, therefore, even continence was made subordinate to marriage for the sake of propagating children. Now, the marriage bond is a remedy for the vice of incontinence, so that children are begotten by those who do not practice continence, not with a disgraceful display of unbridled lust, but through the sanctioned act of lawfully wedded spouses. Then why did the Apostle not say: If he does not have sons let him marry? Evidently, because in this time of refraining from embrace it is not necessary to beget children. And why has he said: "If he cannot control himself, let him marry"? Surely, to prevent incontinence from constraining him to adultery. If, then, he practices continence, neither let him marry nor beget children. However, if he does not control himself, let him enter into lawful wedlock, so that he may not beget children in disgrace or avoid having offspring by a more degraded form of intercourse. There are some lawfully wedded couples who resort to this last, for intercourse, even with one's lawfully wedded spouse, can take place in an unlawful and shameful manner, whenever the conception of offspring is

avoided. Onan, the son of Juda, did this very thing, and the Lord slew him on that account. [Cf. Gen. 38:8-10] Therefore, the procreation of children is itself the primary, natural, legitimate purpose of marriage. Whence it follows that those who marry because of their inability to remain continent ought not to so temper their vice that they preclude the good of marriage, which is the procreation of children.

“The Apostle was certainly speaking of the incontinent when he said: "I desire, therefore, that younger widows marry, bear children, rule their households, and give the adversary no occasion for abusing us. For already some have turned aside after Satan." [1 Tim. 5:14,15] So, when he said: "I desire that the younger widows marry," [1 Cor. 7:29] he surely gave the advice to bolster their collapsing self-control. Then, lest thought be given only to this weakness of carnal desire, which would only be strengthened by the marital act, while the good of marriage would be either despised or overlooked, he immediately added: "to bear children, rule their households." [1 Tim. 5:14] In fact, those who choose to remain continent certainly choose something better than the good of marriage, which is the procreation of children. Whence, if the choice is continence, so that something better than the good of marriage is embraced, how much more closely is it to be guarded so that adultery may be avoided! For, when the Apostle said: "But if they do not have self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn," [1 Cor. 7:9] he did not say that it is better to commit adultery than to burn.”

8. THE SECOND COUNCIL OF BRAGA
EXCOMMUNICATES ALL SPOUSES WHO PRACTICE NFP
AND ANY FORM OF BIRTH CONTROL

One of the earliest extant documents of formal Church legislation (that we know of) on the use of contraceptives comes in the sixth century. Its originator in canonical form was St. Martin, Archbishop of Braga in Spain (520-580). Drawing on previous episcopal synods of the East and West, he simplified the existing laws and codified them for the people of Portugal and Spain.

Martin's condemnation of contraception and the contraceptive intent first occurred in the famous collection *Capitula Martini*. It was later incorporated in the laws of the Second Council of Braga (June, 572), at which he presided as the head of twelve bishops.

His reference to *earlier* more severe penalties implies that ecclesiastical authority had condemned the practice long before the sixth century.

St. Martin, Archbishop of Braga, *Second Council of Braga*, Canon 77, June, 572: “If

any woman has fornicated and has killed the infant who was born of her; or if she has tried to commit abortion and then slain what she conceived; **or if she contrives to make sure she does not conceive, either in adultery or in legitimate intercourse**—regarding such women the *earlier* canons decreed that *they should not receive communion even at death*. However, we mercifully judge that both such women and their accomplices in these crimes shall do penance for ten years.” (Mansi IX, 858)

In truth, “she (the wife) is the only one with whom it is lawful to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh for the purpose of begetting lawful heirs. This is to share in God’s own work of procreation, and in such a work the seed ought not to be wasted nor scattered thoughtlessly nor sown in a way it cannot grow.” (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Paedagogus* or *The Instructor*, Book II, Chapter X.--On the Procreation and Education of Children, A.D. 198)

9. THE FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAEA EXCOMMUNICATED ALL PRIESTS THAT DELIBERATELY CASTRATED THEMSELVES

The First Council of Nicaea (which is the first Ecumenical Council in Church history) rejected already in the Fourth Century priests who had consented to the act of **castrating themselves**. This teaching is very relevant for our time since many people nowadays perform operations or undergo different procedures castrating themselves.

The First Council of Nicaea, Canon 1, A.D. 325: “[I]f anyone in sound health **has castrated himself**, it behooves that such a one, if enrolled among the clergy, should cease [from his ministry], and that from henceforth no such person should be promoted. **But, as it is evident that this is said of those who willfully do the thing and presume to castrate themselves**, so if any have been made eunuchs by barbarians, or by their masters, and should otherwise be found worthy, such men this canon admits to the clergy.”

10. SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS CONDEMNS NFP AND BIRTH CONTROL AS A SIN SECOND IN NATURE ONLY TO MURDER

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who is considered as one of the most important doctors of the Church, is abundantly clear on that any completed sex act without the proper goal of procreation is sinful.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Section 1.3.122: “**Hence it is clear**

that every emission of the semen is contrary to the good of man, which takes place in a way whereby generation is impossible; and if this is done on purpose, it must be a sin.” He concludes: “... the inordinate emission of the semen is repugnant to the good of nature, which is the conservation of the species. Hence, after the sin of murder, whereby a human nature already in actual existence is destroyed, this sort of sin seem to hold the second place, whereby the generation of human nature is precluded. The above assertions are confirmed by divine authority. The unlawfulness of any emission of semen, upon which offspring cannot be consequent, is evident from such texts as these: Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind: Thou shalt not lie with any beast (Levit. xviii, 22, 23): Nor the effeminate, nor sodomites, shall possess the kingdom of God (1 Cor. Vi, 10).”

Thus, it is clear that St. Thomas teaches that: “Matrimony was instituted for the begetting of children.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supp., Q. 42, Art. 2) “Therefore, since in matrimony man receives by Divine institution the faculty to use his wife **for the begetting of children**, he also receives the grace without which he cannot becomingly do so.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supp., Q. 42, Art. 3)

11. THE CATECHISM OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT CONDEMNS ALL FORMS OF BIRTH CONTROL AS A “WICKED CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT MURDER”

We also find some references in the 16th century Roman Catechism of the Council of Trent, designed for parish priests. In the section on the Sacrament of Matrimony, the section on the use of marriage teaches spouses to abstain from the marriage debt before they will receive the Body of Our Lord in the Most Holy Eucharist. For instance, there is to be no marital sexual relations before Communion since, “**The dignity of so great a Sacrament also demands that married persons abstain from the marriage debt for some days previous to Communion.** This observance is recommended by the example of David, who, when about to receive the showbread from the hands of the priest, declared that he and his servants had been clean from women for **three days.**” (*The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, Preparation Of Body) Married as well as unmarried are also taught to “approach the Holy Table fasting, having neither eaten nor drunk anything at least from the preceding midnight until the moment of Communion.” (*The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, Preparation Of Body) The unitive and natural aspect is mentioned, under the **Motives and Ends of Marriage**: “First of all, nature itself by an instinct implanted in both sexes impels them to such companionship.” Desire of family and avoiding lust is also mentioned. Though there is a reminder that “**marriage**

is not to be used for purposes of lust or sensuality, but that its use is to be restrained within those limits which, as we have already shown, have been fixed by the Lord” and “therefore married persons who, to prevent conception... are guilty of a most heinous crime—**nothing less than wicked conspiracy to commit murder.**” (*The Catechism of the Council of Trent, The Motives And Ends Of Marriage*) Wikipedia also makes the interesting claim that “[all] Canon law until 1917 labeled contraception as murder.”

The Catechism of the Council of Trent: “The faithful are moreover to be taught, that there are three advantages of marriage — **offspring**, faith, the sacrament — which alleviate, by compensating for, those disadvantages which the Apostle points out in these words: “Such [that is, married people who perform the sexual act] shall have tribulation of the flesh ” (1 Corinthians 7:28); and by which sexual intercourse, which, without marriage, would be deservedly reprobated, becomes an honourable union. **The first advantage, then, is offspring, that is, children begotten from a true and lawful wife; an advantage so highly appreciated by the Apostle, that he says: “The woman shall be saved by bearing children”** (1 Timothy 2:15). This, however, is not to be understood solely of the procreation of children, but also of the education and discipline by which children are reared to piety. Thus the Apostle immediately subjoins: “If she continue in faith;” for the Scripture admonishes: “Hast thou children? Instruct them, and bow down their neck from their childhood” (Ecclesiasticus 7:25). The Apostle teaches the same; and of such an education the Scripture affords the most beautiful examples in the persons of Tobias, Job, and other Patriarchs eminent for holiness. But what are the duties of parents and children shall be more fully explained in the exposition of the fourth commandment.

“... Matrimonial faith also demands, that husband and wife be united by a certain singular, and holy, and pure love, a love not such as that of adulterers, but such as that which Christ cherishes towards his Church; for this is the model which the Apostle proposed, when he said: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church” (Ephesians 5:25); **and very great indeed was the love with which Christ embraced his Church, not a selfish love, but a love that proposed to itself the sole interest of his spouse...**” (*Catechism of Trent – What Are The Advantages Accruing To Married Persons From This Sacrament*)

12. POPE SIXTUS V CONDEMNS BIRTH CONTROL

In the late sixteenth century, Pope Sixtus V (1521-1590) passed a series of laws to curb the immorality of his day. Among these laws was one that simultaneously covered abortion

and contraception.

There is nothing new about the legislation, except the added solemnity of its being passed by direct order of the pope. Abortion and contraception are equally called crimes.

Pope Sixtus V, *Bull Effranatum*, Oct. 27, 1588: “Who does not abhor the lustful cruelty or cruel lust of impious men, a lust which goes so far that they procure poisons to extinguish and destroy the conceived fetus within the womb, **even attempting by a wicked crime to destroy their own offspring before it lives**, or, if it lives, to kill it before it is born?”

Pope Sixtus V: “Who, finally, would not condemn with the most severe punishments the crimes of those who by poisons, potions and evil drugs induce sterility in women, **so that they might not conceive** or, by means of evil-working medication, that they might not give birth?” (Quoted in *Bullarium Romanum*, Vol. 1)

13. THE BELGIAN, GERMAN, FRENCH AND AMERICAN BISHOPS UNANIMOUSLY CONDEMN ALL FORMS OF BIRTH-CONTROL

By the early years of the twentieth century the Catholic Church had developed a standard confessional practice regarding the sin of contraception. Catholics who chose to have intercourse while taking steps to avoid the primary purpose of marital intercourse were refused absolution (forgiveness) in the sacrament of Penance or Confession, and were thus considered damned in the eyes of the Church and of God. Considered “habitual sinners,” those who “practiced birth control” were also barred from the reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist (Holy Communion). Addressing their priests in 1909, the Belgian bishops condemned the “most evil sin of Onan” in every form of birth control. The bishops then instructed priests to teach the laity to avoid a materialistic understanding of life. Priests were to remind husbands that “those who have wives should use them as if they had them not.” (1 Cor. 7:29–30) Some married couples attempted to justify limiting their offspring on the grounds that they would have more children than they could feed. Citing the words of Jesus that we should not be anxious about what we would eat or how we would be clothed (Matt. 6:31), the Belgian bishops asked husbands and wives to put their faith in divine Providence. It could be the case that some husbands would fear that further pregnancies would endanger the health of their wives. In such cases, priests were instructed to point out the advantages of modern medical care. However, if another pregnancy was truly a serious danger to the wife’s health or life, the husband and wife, by mutual consent, should courageously abstain from the marital act. (*Instruction des*

Evêques de Belgique sur l'onanisme,” the Bishops of Belin in *Nouvelle-Revue Theologique* 41 (1909), 617)

In their 1913 pastoral letter the German bishops declared: “It is serious sin to will to prevent the increase of the number of children, so that marriage is abused for pleasure alone and its principal purpose knowingly and willingly frustrated.” (See Joseph Laurentius, S.J., “*Das Bischofswort zum Schutze der Familie*,” in *Theologisch Praktische Quartalschrift* 67 (1914), 517–28)

The French bishops joined the crusade against birth control in May of 1919. Reminding the married that “the principal end of marriage is the procreation of children,” the bishops of France declared: “It is to sin seriously against nature and against the will of God to frustrate marriage of its end by an egotistic or sensual calculation.” All practices that led to the restriction of births were seen to be “as disastrous as they are criminal.” (*Documentation Catholique* 1 (1919), 578–79)

In September 1919, the American bishops met in Washington, D.C., and produced their first joint pastoral letter since 1884. Referring to *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, the bishops stated that procreation was the first and most serious obligation of marriage. Using the traditional Catholic teaching of the biblical account of Onan’s sin, the bishops condemned all forms of birth regulation because “the selfishness which leads to race suicide . . . is, in God’s sight, a ‘detestable thing.’” According to the American bishops, the increase of children brought about such good effects as a “fresh stimulus given to thrift” brought about by the virtuous necessity of stretching the family income as well as the “industrious effort” of mother and father who had to work harder. Indeed, more children necessitates making more “sacrifices,” but sacrifices are “sources of blessing.” (National Council of Catholic Bishops, *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy*, 1792–1919, 313)

14. POPE GREGORY IX CONDEMNS CONTRACEPTION AND THE CONTRACEPTIVE INTENT AS A MORTAL SIN OF MURDER AGAINST THE NATURAL LAW

Pope Gregory IX (1148-1241), who was a personal friend of St. Francis of Assisi, ordered St. Raymond of Penafort to collect all the papal decrees published until that time and edit them in systematic form. *The Decretals of Gregory IX* as they are called was published in 1234 by order of the Pope, and were a summary of the Church’s legislation in the lifetime of St. Thomas Aquinas. Like the *Summa Theologica* they synthesize the Church’s whole past tradition. Two things are noteworthy about the decree quoted: 1) it summarily and

simply identifies as contraception whatever is taken to prevent generation or conception or birth; 2) it distinguishes between taking a drug out of lust (instead of abstaining from intercourse) and giving a drug from hostile motives; and 3) it calls all of these actions homicidal, in the technical sense of destroying life at any state of the vital process.

The Decretals of Gregory IX, Book V, A.D. 1234: “**If anyone, to satisfy his lust** or in meditated hatred, does something to a man or woman or gives them something to drink **so that he cannot generate or she conceive, or the offspring be born**—let him be held a homicide.”

A significant principle was also enunciated under Pope Gregory IX on the validity of marriage. Already in the thirteenth century, a marriage was null and void if the couple had agreed (or even if one partner insisted) to marry but avoid having children. It was presumed they would have intercourse, but contraceptively. “If conditions are set against the substance of marriage—for example, if one says to the other, “I contract with you if you avoid offspring”—the matrimonial contract, as much as it is favored, lacks effect.” (*The Decretals of Gregory IX*, Book IV)

15. THE HOLY OFFICE UNDER POPE PIUS IX CONDEMNS CONTRACEPTION AND THE CONTRACEPTIVE INTENT AS A SIN AGAINST THE NATURAL LAW

During the pontificate of Pius IX (1792-1878), at least five decisions were made by the Holy See with regard to contraception in one or another form. The following was made by the Holy Office and approved by the Pope. It touches on one type of contraception, but in doing so clarifies two important elements: that Onanism is against the Natural Law, and that confessors have a duty to inquire about this practice if they have a good reason to suppose that it is being done.

The question is asked what theological note the following three heretical propositions deserve:

1. It is permissible for spouses to use marriage the way Onan did, if their motives are worthy.
2. It is probable that such use of marriage is not forbidden by the natural law.
3. It is never proper to ask married people of either sex about this matter, even though it is prudently feared that the spouses, whether the wife or the husband abuse matrimony.

The officials of the Holy Office ordered the following to be stated:

1. The first proposition is scandalous, erroneous, and contrary to the natural right of matrimony.
2. The second proposition is scandalous, erroneous, and elsewhere implicitly condemned by Innocent XI: “Voluptuousness is not prohibited by the law of nature. Therefore if God had not forbidden it, it would be good, and sometimes obligatory under pain of mortal sin” [Condemned Statement by Innocent XI] (March 4, 1679).
3. The third proposition, as it stands, is false, very lax, and dangerous in practice (*Decisiones S. Sedis de Usu et Abusu Matrimonii*, Rome, 1944, pp. 19-20; May 21, 1851).

16. THE CHURCH ALWAYS PUNISHED THOSE WHO COMMITTED THE SIN OF BIRTH-CONTROL WITH EXCOMMUNICATION FOR A LONG TIME

From the very beginning of the Catholic Church, anyone who dared to commit the act of birth-control while they chose to perform the marital act had to do penance for a long time since this was considered such an evil act.

Around the year 1000, *The Decretals of Burchard* was compiled by Burchard, (965-1025) Bishop of Worms in Germany. This collection of canon law called the *Decreta* exercised great influence for centuries in the history of the Church. Several features of the following legislation are significant. The penalty is less severe than it had been, i.e., ten years of penance instead of pardon only at death; abortion and contraception are equally reprehended; and a distinction is made in the culpability (always grave) of a woman who aborts or interferes with conception because she is poor, and a woman who does the same to avoid the humiliation of having a child out of wedlock:

“Have you done what some women are accustomed to doing when they fornicate and wish to kill their offspring; they act with their poisons (*maleficia*) and their herbs to kill or cut out the embryo, or, if they have not yet conceived they contrive not to conceive? If you have done so, or consented to this, or taught it, you must do penance for ten years on legal ferial days. Legislation in former days excommunicated such persons from the Church till the end of their lives. As often as a woman prevented conception, she was guilty of that many homicides. It makes a great deal of difference, however, whether the woman in question is a pauper who acted the way she did for lack of means to nourish (her offspring) or whether she did so to conceal the crime of her fornication.” (*The Decretals of Burchard, Decreta*,

num. 19; PL 140, 972)

The evilness of all forms of birth-control cannot be understated, and that is also why the Church from the beginning severely punished all Her children who committed this crime. It is an act that is similar to playing God, an outright mockery of God and His creation and a perversion of nature. Just as we ourselves wish to continue to live, so we have no right to hinder another soul from also living. Thus, “He who does this [that is, he who drinks a contraceptive potion] in order not to have children shall do penance for twelve years. (*Poenitentiale Vigilatum*, num. 79-80 (A.D. 850); PL 129, 1123ff.)

Conclusion

The Fathers as well as the tradition of the early Church are so unanimous in interpreting the Bible as condemning as sinful and forbidden the evil use of birth control that it is unbelievable how some people calling themselves “Christian” or “Catholic” can deny that it is sinful, evil or condemned, and especially so, since *The Councils of Trent* and *Vatican I* infallibly teaches that the Fathers must be obeyed when their teachings unanimously agree with one another. In this context, Saint Jerome condemns all those who see nothing wrong about fornication, or contraception or even abortion. *St. Jerome’s letter to Eustochium* contains a typical patristic condemnation of contraception. It is associated with the defection from the Church of those women who find the Church’s position on chastity too demanding.

First he cites those who have intercourse out of wedlock, but make sure they do not become pregnant by taking appropriate drugs to prevent conception. Others become pregnant and then commit abortion to avoid exposure of their guilt.

Most pertinent is Jerome’s quoting such women as saying they see nothing particularly wrong about fornication, or contraception or even abortion. Their conscience approves of what they are doing; so how can these be sins?

The final reference to food and drink points out the fact that these women are critical of those who practice mortification. Consistent with their attitude on sex, they argue that all of this is God’s gift—so why not use it?

St. Jerome, *Letter 22:13*, To Eustochium, A.D. 384: “It becomes wearisome to tell how many virgins fall daily; what important personages Mother Church loses from her bosom; over how many stars the proud enemy sets up his throne [Isaiah 14:13]; how many rocks the serpent makes hollow and then enters through their openings.

You may see many who were widowed before they were wed, shielding a guilty conscience by a lying garb. Did not a swelling womb or the crying of their infant children betray them, they would go about with head erect and on skipping feet. But others drink potions to ensure sterility and are guilty of murdering a human being not yet conceived. Some when they learn they are with child through sin, practice abortion by the use of drugs. Frequently they die themselves and are brought before the rulers of the lower world guilty of three crimes: suicide, adultery against Christ, and murder of an unborn child. These are the women who are accustomed to say: “‘Unto the pure all things are pure.’ [Titus 1:15] The approval of my conscience is enough for me. A pure heart is what God desires. Why should I abstain from foods which God created to be used with thanksgiving?” [1 Timothy 4:3] And whenever they wish to appear bright and festive, and have drowned themselves in wine, they say—adding sacrilege to drunkenness: “God forbid that I should abstain from the blood of Christ.” And whenever they see a woman pale and sad, they call her a poor wretch, a nun, and a Manichean: and with reason, for according to their belief fasting is heresy.”

Another good quotation from St. Caesarius of Arles condemns all spouses that are against procreation and that practice abortion and says that “the only sterility of a very pious wife is chastity”. The second passage from Caesarius deals with abortion, but of a contraceptive kind. Some women took medication to destroy unborn life already conceived in the womb. Others took drugs by anticipation; they would not mind becoming pregnant, but provided that the child would not reach viability.

St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon 52:4*: “Does not the Devil clearly exercise his deceits still further, dearly beloved, when he persuades some women, after they have had two or three children, to kill either any more or those already born, by taking an abortion draught? Apparently, such women fear that if they have more children they cannot become rich. For, what else must they think when they do this, except that God will not be able to feed or direct those whom He has commanded to be born? Perhaps some are killed who could serve God better or obey those same parents with a perfect love. Instead, by an impious, murderous practice women take poisonous draughts to transmit incomplete life and premature death to their children through their generative organs. By such an exigency they drink a cup of bereavement with the cruel drug. O sad persuasion! They maintain that the poison which has been transmitted through their drinking is unconnected with them. Moreover, they do not realize that they conceive in sterility the child which they receive in death, because it was conceived in their flesh. However, if there is not yet found a tiny infant that could be killed within the womb of its mother, it is no less true that even the natural power (of generation) within the woman is destroyed.

Why unhappy mother—or, rather, not even the step-mother of a new-born son—why did you seek, from outside, remedies that would be harmful for eternity? You possess within you more salutary remedies, if you wish. You do not want to have a child? Settle a pious agreement with your husband; let him agree to an end of childbearing in accord with the virtue of chastity. The only the sterility of a very pious wife is chastity.”

All other quotations from the Popes, Fathers and the Saints of the Church unanimously teach the same on the subject of the primary end or purpose of marriage and the marital act. Not a single one of them teaches that God allows spouses to have marital relations while also hindering conception from taking place.

Saint Augustine sums it up as follows: “It is one thing not to lie [with one’s wife] except with the sole will of generating [children]: this has no fault. It is another to seek the pleasure of the flesh in lying, although within the limits of marriage: this has venial fault [that is, venial sin as long as one is not against procreation]. I am supposing that then, although you are not lying for the sake of procreating offspring, you are not for the sake of lust obstructing their procreation by an evil prayer or an evil deed. Those who do this, although they are called husband and wife, are not [that is, they commit an act equivalent to fornication in their marriage and hence, are guilty of mortal sin]; nor do they retain any reality of marriage, but with a respectable name cover a shame. ... Sometimes this lustful cruelty, or cruel lust, comes to this, that they even procure poisons of sterility, and, if these do not work, extinguish and destroy the fetus in some way in the womb, preferring that their offspring die before it lives, or if it was already alive in the womb to kill it before it was born. Assuredly if both husband and wife are like this, they are not married, and if they were like this from the beginning they come together not joined in matrimony but in seduction [that is, they are like filthy adulterers and fornicators and commit a mortal sin against God, nature and the Holy Sacrament of Marriage]. If both are not like this, I dare to say that either the wife is in a fashion the harlot of her husband or he is an adulterer with his own wife.” (St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book I, Chapter 17.-- What is Sinless in the Use of Matrimony? What is Attended With Venial Sin, and What with Mortal?)

The intention, deed or *desire* of the spouses that conception does not occur during conjugal relations is the crux of the matter, the root of the mortal sin of contraception. Even before conjugal relations, spouses have committed the mortal sin of contraception if they had planned or only desired that conception should not take place during conjugal relations. Jesus teaches that sin is first committed in the heart even before a man carries

out his sinful deed. He says, “*You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.*” (Matthew 5:27-28)

Tragically, however (as if the proof wasn't clear enough already), some bad willed people will indeed try to excuse themselves and object to these clear statements, some perhaps by saying that the Holy Bible and Apostolic Tradition, as well as all the Popes, Fathers and Saints of the Catholic Church couldn't have referred to the modern practice of NFP (since it was invented by modern science), and hence that their condemnation couldn't have been about NFP, but about something else, such as Onanism, sterilization, drugs and potions.

However, this objection is easily refuted for just because men have invented new ways to commit murder, such as with modern weapons that didn't exist in the days of many of the saints and Catholic writers, doesn't mean that men who commit murder with these weapons are not guilty since the saints or Church tradition did not specifically condemn murder by the use of these new killing methods. (St. Augustine however did condemn a timing-based method of contraception, as we saw before.) It is the same with NFP. Spouses commit the mortal sin of contraception no matter what weapon (method) they use to attempt to prevent conception during conjugal relations. If people cannot see this, it is because they are like the evil, blind, and obstinate Pharisees during Jesus' first coming who made laws to break God's laws and thus lost all common sense. NFP contradicts reason, the law in our heart, the Word of God (the Bible) and the teachings of the ordinary and solemn magisterium. The gift of many children from the Lord is truly a great blessing, and it is truly vile and unnatural to try to hinder this blessing from Our Lord by selfish and lustful acts inspired by the devil. “Far more excellent, in my opinion, than the seeds of wheat and barley that are sown at appropriate seasons, is man that is sown, for whom all things grow; and those seeds temperate husbandmen ever sow. Every foul and polluting practice must therefore be purged away from marriage; that the intercourse of the irrational animals may not be cast in our teeth, as more accordant with nature than human conjunction in procreation. Some of these, it must be granted, desist at the time in which they are directed, leaving creation to the working of Providence.” (St. Clement of Alexandria, "On Marriage", *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book II, Chapter XXIII)

St. Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, Book 1, Section 27, A.D. 393: “Adam was first made, then the woman out of his rib; and that the Devil could not seduce Adam, but did seduce Eve; and that after displeasing God she was immediately subjected to the man, and began to turn to her husband; and he points out that she who was once tied with the bonds of marriage and was reduced to the condition of Eve, might blot out the old transgression by the procreation of children: provided, however, that she

bring up the children themselves in the faith and love of Christ, and in sanctification and chastity... For if the woman is saved in child-bearing, and the more the children the greater the safety of the mothers, why did he add "if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with chastity"? [1 Tim. 2:15]"

People Know that NFP is a Sin

Below are a few very interesting testimonies from people who have either used NFP or were taught NFP. Their comments have been taken from "the letters to the editor" section of a publication which carried an article on NFP. (Their names were given in the original letter.) Their letters demonstrate that the women who use NFP, as well as the men who tolerate or cooperate with it, are convicted of its sinfulness by the law written on their hearts. Those who use NFP know that they are thwarting the will of God and practicing contraception.

"Dear Editor... I was a non-religious divorced pagan before I met my husband who was, at the time, a minimal practicing Catholic. I became Catholic in 1993 and we were married in 1994. I had no idea at that time that Catholics were allowed to do anything to prevent a child. I had never even heard of NFP until the priest we were meeting with during the six months prior to our wedding handed me a packet of papers and basically said, "here, you'll want to learn this." When I got home, I briefly thumbed through the papers. I saw calendars, stickers, and charts. To be honest, it was mind-boggling all the effort people would go through just so they could have intimacy without consequence. It was also shocking to me that this was being promoted before I even took the vows on my wedding day! I threw the packet away and have never looked back. I am thankful that I never learned NFP... I wonder which of my children wouldn't be here had I chosen to keep those papers and learn NFP?"

"Dear Editor... I am a mother to seven children and can share my own experiences. NFP did NOT bring my marriage closer. I struggled with reconciling myself to the fact that scripture states a husband and wife should be submissive and not separate unless for prayer. We were avoiding pregnancy.....plain and simple. There can be nothing spiritual about telling your spouse that you can't participate in the marital embrace for fear of a child being conceived. Webster's dictionary defines contraception as: "deliberate prevention of conception or impregnation". Systematically charting and watching out for those fertile days is the deliberate prevention of conception. I know friends who use it. I've talked to them in a very personal way. They do not want any more children. They are using NFP as birth

control, which it is. And one friend has been using it for 11 years and “hasn’t had any accidents.”... I can say that St. Augustine was right on target when he wrote in *The Morals of the Manichees*: “Marriage, as the marriage tablets themselves proclaim, joins male and female for the procreation of children. Whoever says that to procreate children is a worse sin than to copulate thereby prohibits the purpose of marriage; and he makes the woman no more a wife than a harlot, who, when she has been given certain gifts, is joined to a man to satisfy his lust. If there is a wife, there is matrimony. But there is no matrimony where motherhood is prevented, for then there is no wife.”... My favorite comment recently was made by another author comparing NFP to a farmer who plants his corn in the dead of winter so as to avoid a plentiful harvest.”

“Dear Editor... Let me put the NFP debate simply: if it is your intention to avoid having children, it really doesn’t matter what method you use. You’ve already committed the sin. If, however, you use contraception as your method of choice, you add to the first sin a second one. As to the oft-repeated mantra of “grave reasons”, allow me to say this: name one. Look deep into your heart and name one that is really, truly grave... We did the NFP bit for awhile... and have felt revulsion over it ever since. During that time we might have had at least two more children.”

“To the Editor: NFP is one of the chief infiltrations of the new-age sex cult into the Church, along with sex-ed and immodest dress... As modern Catholics have been conditioned to embrace mutually contradictory ideas while defending them as consonant, they have been easily deceived by the notion that NFP, as commonly practiced, is somehow different from birth control. I have no training in moral theology, but even I know that the goal of an action determines its substance. When a couple engages in deliberately sterile relations, this is known as birth control, plain and simple.”

Planned Parenthood and NFP of the same cloth

Have you noticed the similarities between Planned Parenthood (the world’s largest abortion provider) and Natural Family Planning? Artificial contraceptives and abortifacients are found under store aisles marked “Family Planning.” Like abortionists, family planners consider children as something undesirable, at least temporarily; whereas the true faithful have always considered them as an undeniable blessing from God Himself, planned by His providence from all eternity. “*Behold, children are the inheritance of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward... Blessed is the man whose desire is filled with them; he shall not be confounded.*” (Psalm 126:3,5)

In publications promoting NFP, the fertile period of the wife is sometimes classified as “not safe” and “dangerous,” as though generating new life were considered a serious breach of national security and a little infant a treacherous criminal. This is truly abominable.

“However, you say: ‘It is no sin to know one’s wife except with the desire for children.’ So great a sin is it, that the repentant Prophet exclaims: ‘I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me.’ [Ps. 50.7]...

Now, since we have all been created interiorly in our soul according to God’s image, as often as we say or do something shameful we defile God’s image. Consider, then, whether this is becoming or proper for you [that is, performing the sexual act for the purpose of concupiscence without a desire for children]. I say truly, brethren, that God does not deserve this of us, that His image in us should suffer insult through evil concupiscence.”

(St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon* 44:5,6)

Could it be more clear that those who subscribe to this type of behavior and this method shut God and children out and replace them with their own selfish agenda? “Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive *matrimony*, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.” (Tobias 6:16-17)

The word *Matrimony* means “the office of Motherhood.” Those who use NFP try to avoid Matrimony (the office of Motherhood) and shut out God from themselves. Indeed, “You may see a number of women who are widows before they are wives. Other, indeed, will drink sterility and ***murder*** a man not yet born.” (St. Jerome, *Letter* 22:13, To Eustochium, A.D. 384)

NFP has eternal and infinite consequences

The following facts may be the most incriminating to the practice of “Natural Family Planning.”

If family planners had their way, there would be no St. Bernadette of Lourdes who was born from a jail flat; nor St. Therese of Lisieux, who came from a sickly mother who lost three children in a row; nor St. Ignatius Loyola, who was the thirteenth of thirteen children; **and most certainly not a St. Catherine of Siena, who was the twenty-fourth child in a family of twenty-five children!** Examples of Saints who were the last of many children or second to last could probably be multiplied for pages. St.

Catherine of Siena and the rest of the Saints who would have been phased out of existence by NFP will rise in judgment against the NFP generation. Natural Family Planners would have been sure to inform St. Catherine's mother that there was no need having twenty-five children (let alone five), and that she was wasting her time going through all those pregnancies.

Only in eternity shall we know the immortal souls who have been denied a chance at Heaven because of this selfish behavior. The only thing that can foil the will of the all-powerful God is the will of His puny creatures; for He will not force offspring on anyone, just as He will not violate anyone's free will. NFP is a crime of incalculable proportions.

If family planners had their way, the appearances of Our Lady of Fatima would not have occurred, as she appeared to Lucia (the 7th of 7 children), Francisco (the 8th of 9 children) and Jacinta (the 9th of 9 children). Family Planners, by their selfish thwarting of the will of God, **would have erased from human history the entire message of Fatima** as well as: the incredible miracle of the Sun; the extraordinary lives of these three shepherd children; and all the graces of conversion obtained by their heroic sacrifices. How many saints, conversions and miracles have been erased by this abominable birth control practice? Only God knows.

A mother of many children, who was about to be a mother once more, came to Ars (the place where St. John Vianney (1786-1859) resided) to seek courage from him. She said to him, "Oh, I am so advanced in years Father!" St. John Vianney responded: "*Be comforted my child, if you only knew the women who will go to Hell because they did not bring into the world the children they should have given to it!*" These true words of the great St. John Vianney of course agrees perfectly with Holy Scripture which teaches us that a woman "***shall be saved through child-bearing; if she continue in faith, and love, and sanctification, with sobriety.***" (1 Timothy 2:15)

After reading such words in the Holy Bible itself—that is, in God's Holy Word—no one who is not a complete liar can deny that Holy Scripture teaches that a woman shall be saved through child-bearing (if she is Catholic and in the state of grace). But NFP advocates, however, would have us believe that a woman is saved through child-avoiding. Moreover, just as a woman who fulfills the will of God and maintains the state of grace in the state of Matrimony is saved by her childbearing, so too are countless women going to be damned for not bearing the children that God wanted them to have. "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice and all things will be added unto you.*" (Matthew 6:33)

Sexual intercourse is given for the procreation of children (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom.*

XXI in Col.; PG 62.387). The essential unity between sexual intercourse and procreation of children is everywhere upheld by Chrysostom to be the natural end and purpose of marriage. This is evidenced, for example, in St. Chrysostom's explanation of the sin of Sodom. Rather than focusing only on the functional "unnaturalness" of the sex of the Sodomites, Chrysostom writes, "Sodom devised a barren intercourse, not having for its end the procreation of children, so did God bring on them such a punishment, as made the womb of the land even barren, and destitute of all fruits." (*Stat. Hom. XIX*; PG 49.191; NPNF, p. 467). Indeed, it should thus be clear now to all of good will that the Church and Her Saints teaches that, "As often as he [the husband] knows his wife without a desire for children... without a doubt he commits sin." (Saint Caesar of Arles, *The Faith of The Early Fathers*, Vol. 3:2233)

The sin of inflaming concupiscence

As we have seen, the Catholic Church teaches that the marital act cannot be used to inflame concupiscence. If the marital act is used to inflame concupiscence, sin is committed. The goal of a godly couple's marital relations is to put out the fire of lust by committing the act with a sense of shame and acknowledgment of the weakness of the flesh in order "*That... you may be made partakers of the divine nature: flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world.*" (2 Peter 1:4) The sinful goal of inflaming concupiscence is to ignite the fire of lust to greater levels, higher excitement, exalting the flesh while suppressing shame and the weakness of the flesh.

Examples of sinful inflaming of the flesh are fore-or-after play, dressing sensual, striptease, masturbation of self or spouse, touching oneself or the spouse at inappropriate places, taking part in sexual role playing games, inappropriate sexual positions, shaving the genital hair for the sake of enhancing sexual pleasure and the sexual experience, or to kiss each other for the sake of enhancing sexual pleasure or "for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight which arises from the kiss", and using aphrodisiacs for the evil purpose of enhancing sexual pleasure rather than for a just cause, such as impotence. (In case of impotence, however, a husband should not use the compounds which he knows will increase his pleasure, but should first and foremost use the compounds that will increase his blood flow without necessarily affecting his lust, such as PDE-5 inhibitors.) None of these perverted acts mentioned are necessary for fulfilling the primary purpose of the marital act, that is, the procreation and education of children, but serves only lust, and are therefore considered as mortal sins.

If spouses do not work toward perfection by trying to eliminate concupiscence, then, when one dies, the other is very susceptible to commit mortal sin by illicitly quelling

concupiscence. When I told a married man that NFP is a mortal sin, he said that this couldn't be true because he cannot control his lust and he cannot afford to have any more children; therefore, he had to practice NFP. Sad to say, this man mocks and denies God's grace by saying he cannot control his lust, and he has no true faith in God who feeds the birds who neither reap nor sow nor gather into barns. Jesus Christ is the divine physician and healer who can cure any and all faults and sinful conditions. I asked him, "If you cannot control your lust now, what would you do if your wife dies tomorrow?" "How would you fulfill your lust then?" If, as he said, he cannot control his lust, he would commit mortal sin by finding a way to fulfill his lust one way or another.

Take note, however, that what this man said about himself is not really true, that is, that he cannot control his lust, for the fact of the matter is that all people who practice NFP must control their lust at least at certain periods of time every month in order to avoid the wife's fertile period. Thus, this man is not really unable to control his lust but only chooses to control it on those days of the month that he fears that a child may be conceived. However, even if this man would be unable (or rather unwilling) to control his lust through faithlessness or weakness of the flesh, he should still not be so rash and even more faithless as to claim that he cannot afford more children or provide for them, as if the means to provide for his family really was in his own hands. God is perfectly aware of the needs of the family. He will not burden it with anything it cannot handle, provided it does not incur God's wrath for other purposes, one being contraception, another faithlessness. Through faithlessness, overindulgence and lack of restraint in the marital act, this man has sadly allowed the lust of the flesh to take so much control over his will that he now claims he cannot control it. Truly, if this man had any faith in God, he would not be so faithless as to claim that he cannot control his lust. For him it might be impossible, but for God, all is possible.

Indeed, one of the reasons why so many married couples have such problems restraining themselves is because they want to have marital relations too often or more than what is necessary. The consequence of this is that their overindulgence in sexual pleasure has led them to become controlled by their passions like animals without any reason instead of being able to control their passions like rational human beings. For just as a man can commit gluttony in eating too much and too extravagantly, so too can a man commit gluttony in the marital act by doing it too often, or in an unreasonable manner.

St. Augustine, *On Merit and the Forgiveness of Sins, and the Baptism of Infants* (A.D. 412): "The good, then, of marriage lies not in the passion of desire, but in a certain legitimate and honorable measure in using that passion, appropriate to the propagation of children, not the gratification of lust. ... When, however, it is curbed

from unlawful desires, and is permitted only for the orderly propagation and renewal of the human race, this is the good of wedlock, by which man is born in the union that is appointed.” (Book I, Chapter 57, XXIX.--The Good of Marriage; Four Different Cases of the Good and the Evil Use of Matrimony)

Paul VI promotes sinful birth control in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*

Antipope Paul VI, who promulgated the heretical decrees of Vatican II and implemented the New Mass, explained correctly that NFP is birth control when he promoted it in his heretical encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

Antipope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (# 16), July 25, 1968: “... married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and engage in marital intercourse **only during those times that are infertile, thus controlling birth** in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which We have just explained.”

Even though it’s a dogma of Faith (as have been abundantly proved thus far) that (1) procreation and education of children is the primary purpose of marriage and the marital act; and (2) that to deliberately frustrate the natural power or purpose of the marital act to generate life in any way is contrary to nature, most advocates of NFP, however, would like to have us believe the exact opposite. Tragically, these people also seem to be completely ignoring the fact that this new teaching of NFP (if it’s used to avoid Children), **was non-existent in the Catholic Church prior to the modern world and the Vatican II revolution.**

What is Vatican II?

Vatican II was a council that took place from 1962-1965. Vatican II was a false council that constituted a revolution against 2000 years of Catholic teaching and Tradition. Vatican II contains many heresies that were directly condemned by past popes and infallible councils. Vatican II attempted to give Catholics a new religion. In the period following Vatican II, massive changes in every aspect of Catholic Faith ensued, including the implementation of a New Mass.

(To learn what really happened to the Catholic Church after the Vatican II revolution, please consult this book: [The Truth about What Really Happened to the Catholic Church after Vatican II](#) - [LINK TO SECTION])

Now, the defenders of NFP couldn't seem to care less that the new "Church" they follow today in fact contradicts 2000 years of Catholic teaching and Tradition. These people actually seem to believe that the Catholic Church and all Her Popes and Saints (prior to the Vatican II revolution) was wrong or ignorant for about 2000 years in condemning such practices as NFP, while naively believing that the Vatican II "Church" (that sprung up in the last days to deceive Catholics) is right in teaching that one is perfectly fine to deliberately avoid children, while only striving to satisfy one's own depraved and damnable lust.

However, both cannot be right at the same time. Either the Vatican II "Church" and Paul VI is right in teaching that NFP is acceptable, or 2000 years of Catholic Church teaching and Tradition (pre-Vatican II) and Pope Pius XI is right in infallibly condemning it.

Because as any honest person reading this article will be forced to admit, Pope Pius XI was clearly contradicted by Antipope Paul VI on NFP (see below). But the idea that the Catholic Church was wrong for about 2000 years in infallibly condemning evil practices like NFP, and that the new end times church is right in allowing it, thus contradicting what the Catholic Church has previously infallibly taught since ancient times, is not only absurd and ridiculous, but also heretical; and none who is honest with himself would ever dare to make such an outrageous argument.

The Catholic Church (pre-Vatican II) condemns birth-control	The heretical Vatican II "Church" approves of birth-control
<p>Pope Pius XI, <i>Casti Connubii</i> (# 17), Dec. 31, 1930: "<u>THE PRIMARY END OF MARRIAGE IS THE PROCREATION AND THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.</u>"</p> <p>Pope Pius XI, <i>Casti Connubii</i> (# 54), Dec. 31, 1930: "Since, therefore, <u>THE CONJUGAL ACT IS DESTINED PRIMARILY BY NATURE FOR THE BEGETTING OF CHILDREN</u>, those who in exercising it <i>deliberately</i> frustrate its natural powers and <i>purpose</i> sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful</p>	<p>Antipope Paul VI, <i>Humanae Vitae</i> (# 16), July 25, 1968: "... married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and engage in marital intercourse <u>ONLY DURING THOSE TIMES THAT ARE INFERTILE, THUS CONTROLLING BIRTH</u> [SO THAT NONE MAY RESULT] in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which We have just explained."</p>

<u>and intrinsically vicious.</u>	
--	--

Note the word “purpose” by Pius XI. What is the purpose of the marital act? Obviously, it is the procreation of Children. But what is the purpose of the couple who practice NFP? Is it to fulfill the main “purpose” of marriage and raise holy and godly children? No! Their only “purpose” is selfishness; to satisfy their own selfish agenda while deliberately trying to avoid the children that God wanted to bless them with.

Another keyword is “deliberate” attempt to prevent conception. Pope Pius XI teaches all forms of deliberately frustrating the marital act by depriving it of its natural power and purpose (conception) is a “sin against nature” and is “intrinsically vicious” (intrinsically evil). He does not qualify deliberate frustration by saying, only if physical devices are used during the act, or by withdrawal during the act.

Not only did Paul VI contradict the Church’s teaching on NFP and birth control, but he also contradicted Her on the declared sinfulness of performing the marital act ***exclusively*** for the purpose of satisfying one’s own lust. **Marital relations performed for the sole sake of sexual pleasure is condemned as sinful by the Magisterium of the Church and the Word of God in the Holy Bible (Tobias 6:16-17, 22; 8:9, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, Genesis 38:9-10).**

Various Errors on Moral Subjects, Condemned in a decree, March 4, 1679: “THE ACT OF MARRIAGE EXERCISED FOR PLEASURE ONLY IS ENTIRELY FREE OF ALL FAULT AND VENIAL DEFECT.” – Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI. (Denz. 1159)

Therefore all aspects of NFP or “Natural Family Planning”, both the deed of deliberately avoiding children while having marital relations, and the motive of having marital relations only for the sake of venereal pleasure, **is condemned by the Catholic Church.**

So while Vatican II and Paul VI teaches that the primary purpose (or reason) of marriage and the marital act is to satisfy one’s own shameful and damnable lust (since they even allow for the total exclusion of bearing children by a systematic effort and deliberate plan), the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church and dogmatic teaching teaches us that the primary purpose of marriage (and the marital act) is the procreation and education of children: “However, you say: ‘It is no sin to know one’s wife except with the desire for children.’ So great a sin is it, that the repentant Prophet exclaims: ‘I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me.’ [Psalm 50:7] So, too, we read in the Old Testament that,

when the Jewish people were about to approach Mount Sinai, it was said to them in the Lord's teaching: 'Be sanctified, and be ready against the third day, and come not near your wives,' [Exodus 19:15] and: 'if any man be defiled in a dream by night, let him not eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of salvation, lest his soul be cut off from his people.' [Deuteronomy 23:10; Leviticus 7:20] If after defilement which happens to us even unwillingly we may not communicate [receive the Eucharist] unless compunction and almsgiving come first, and fasting, too, if infirmity does not prevent it, who can say that there is no sin if we do such things intentionally when we are wide awake?" (St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon 44*)

The Great Apostasy in the Bible and the writings of the Catholic Prophets prophesied the almost complete destruction of the Catholic Faith and morals that we are now living through

St. Paul, in his epistles to the Romans and St. Timothy speaks of the prophesied great loss of faith during the Great Apostasy and the accompanying evil fruits (sins of immorality). Dear reader, if you are or have been a defender of NFP, please consider the following inspired and prophetic words from the Bible perfectly applying to our situation today.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 "Know also this, **THAT IN THE LAST DAYS**, shall come dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers, **incontinent**, unmerciful, without kindness, traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and **lovers of pleasure more than of God**: Having an appearance indeed of godliness but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid."

1 Corinthians 11:16-19 "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the church of God. Now this I ordain: not praising you, that you come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all I hear that when you come together in the church, there are schisms among you; and in part I believe it. **For there must be also heresies: that they also, who are approved, may be made manifest among you.**"

Douay-Rheims & Haydock Bible Commentaries explains First Corinthians 11: "Ver. 19. *There must be also heresies*: By reason of the pride and perversity of man's heart; not by God's will or appointment; who nevertheless draws good out of this evil, **manifesting, by that occasion, who are the good and firm Christians**, [and who are not,] and making their faith more remarkable. (Challoner) --- The providence of God draweth good out of evil, but *woe to the man*, says the Scripture, *by whom scandal cometh*, such as sects and heresies. Hence St. Augustine, chap. viii. de vera relig. says: 'Let us use heretics not so

as to approve their errors, but to make us more wary and vigilant, and more strenuous in defending Catholic doctrine against their deceits.”

These bible verses are an exact description of modern, wicked and heretical men in these final days and is the end result of an unrepentant, sinful and selfish lifestyle that always ends in sinful practices like contraception, and eventually in the loss of the Catholic Faith. This is known as the Romans One Curse. “*And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are not convenient.*” (Romans 1:28) Fallen-away Catholics say they believe in God with their lips and continue with outward actions of worship. They have an appearance of godliness indeed, but in their hearts they deny God by denying His power, making their worship vain. “*Well did Isaias prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines and precepts of men.*” (Mark 7:6-7) Fallen-away Catholics teach precepts of men, such as NFP, and not of God, making their worship vain and without fruit.

Once faith is lost, sin abounds and spirals out-of-control producing the resultant evil fruits. “*Augustine was wont to say ‘When all restraints are removed by which men are kept on the narrow path of truth, their nature, which is already inclined to evil, propels them to ruin.’*” (Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos* #14, 1832)

The reason God honored the Patriarchs and the Prophets of the Old Testament period was because they all performed the marital act for the motive of begetting children

Many Fathers and Saints of the Church taught that the reason God honored and blessed the Patriarchs and the Prophets so exceedingly much was that they all performed the marital act for the sole sake of begetting children, instead of for the motive or purpose of selfishly pleasing their concupiscence or sexual desire that most people through the ages have performed the marital act for. For instance, it could be said of the marital intercourse between the Holy Patriarch Abraham and Righteous Sarah that “their one concern was the heir not their pleasure” (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. XXXVIII in Gen.*; PG 53.356). St. Chrysostom calls the Patriarch Abraham in this homily a “man of steel” and a “noble athlete of God”. St. Chrysostom calls the bridal-chamber the “chamber of procreation” (*Hom. XXIV in Rom.*; PG 60.626). The necessary end of desire is procreation (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. XXIV in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.563).

St. Augustine who similarly wrote extensively about procreation and sexuality explains in

his “*Sermons on the New Testament*,” that the Patriarchs and the Prophets of old searched for and desired children and purity rather than fulfilling their own selfish and sensual interests, thus living a chaste lifestyle directly opposed to most of the lustful people of today. Augustine writes, “So then, my brethren, give heed. Those famous men who marry wives only for the procreation of children, such as we read the Patriarchs to have been, and know it, by many proofs, by the clear and unequivocal testimony of the sacred books; whoever, I say, they are who marry wives for this purpose only, if the means could be given them of having children without intercourse with their wives, would they not with joy unspeakable embrace so great a blessing? would they not with great delight accept it? For there are two carnal operations by which mankind is preserved, [eating and sex] to both of which the wise and holy descend as matter of duty, but the unwise rush headlong into them through lust; and these are very different things.” (St. Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, Sermon 1:23)

“Hence, my brethren, understand the sense of Scripture concerning those our ancient fathers, whose sole design in their marriage was to have children by their wives. For those even who, according to the custom of their time and nation, had a plurality of wives, lived in such chastity with them, as not to approach their bed, but for the cause I have mentioned, thus treating them indeed with honor. But he who exceeds the limits which this rule prescribes for the fulfillment of this end of marriage, acts contrary to the very contract by which he took his wife. The contract is read in the presence of all the attesting witnesses; and an express clause is there that they marry "for the procreation of children;" and this is called the marriage contract. If it was not for this that wives were given and taken to wife, what father could without blushing give up his daughter to the lust of any man? But now, that the parents may not blush, and that they may give their daughters in honorable marriage, not to shame, the contract is read out. And what is read from it?—the clause, "for the sake of the procreation of children." And when this is heard, the brow of the parent is cleared up and calmed. Let us consider again the feelings of the husband who takes his wife. The husband himself would blush to receive her with any other view, if the father would blush with any other view to give her.

“Nevertheless, if they cannot contain (as I have said on other occasions), let them require what is due, and let them not go to any others than those from whom it is due. Let both the woman and the man seek relief for their infirmity in themselves. Let not the husband go to any other woman, nor the woman to any other man, for from this adultery gets its name, as though it were "a going to another." And if they exceed the bounds of the marriage contract, let them not at least exceed those of conjugal fidelity. Is it not a sin in married persons to exact from one another more than this design of the "procreation of children" renders necessary? It is doubtless a sin... The Apostle saith... "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for

a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." [1 Cor. 7:5] What does this mean? That you do not impose upon yourselves any thing beyond your strength, that you do not by your mutual continence fall into adultery. "That Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." And that he might not seem to enjoin what he only allowed (for it is one thing to give precepts to strength of virtue, and another to make allowance to infirmity), he immediately subjoined; "But this I speak of allowance, not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself [that is, chaste]." As though he would say, I do not command you to do this; but I pardon you if you do." (St. Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, Sermon 1:22)

The Catechism of the Council of Trent in the part about the "Sacrament of Matrimony" confirms that the Patriarchs of old loved God with a pure and chaste love, explaining that: "A second reason for marriage is the desire of family, not so much, however, with a view to leave after us heirs to inherit our property and fortune, as to bring up children in the true faith and in the service of God. That such was the principal object of the holy Patriarchs when they married is clear from Scripture. Hence the Angel, when informing Tobias of the means of repelling the violent assaults of the evil demon, says: "I will show thee who they are over whom the devil can prevail; for they who in such manner receive matrimony as to shut out God from themselves and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power." He then adds: "Thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children." It was also for this reason that God instituted marriage from the beginning; and therefore married persons who, to prevent conception or procure abortion, have recourse to medicine, are guilty of a most heinous crime – nothing less than wicked conspiracy to commit murder." Children, the Catholic Church teaches, are a blessing from God. They are not a curse, neither are they an impediment.

Furthermore, Origen, (c. 184-254) in his "*Homilies on Genesis*," which deals with the topic of the circumcision of Abraham, explains that God's purpose with the circumcision of the foreskin that He commanded in the Old Law (and the Old Testament) symbolizes a person's will to have marital relations only for the motive of procreating offspring, rather than for satisfying their own lusts and desires: "But now let us see how also, according to our promise, circumcision of the flesh ought to be received. There is no one who does not know that this member, in which the foreskin is seen to be, serves the natural functions of coitus and procreation. If anyone, therefore, is not troublesome in respect to impulses of this kind, nor exceeds the bounds set by the laws, **nor has known a woman other than his lawful wife, and, in the case of her also, makes use of her in the determined and lawful times for the sake of posterity alone, that man is to be**

said to be circumcised in the foreskin of his flesh. But that man is uncircumcised in the foreskin of his flesh who fall down in all lasciviousness and everywhere loiters for diverse and illicit caresses, and is carried along unchecked in every whirlpool of lust. But the Church of Christ, strengthened by the grace of him who has been crucified for it, abstains not only from illicit and impious beds but also from those allowed and legitimate, and flourishes like the virgin bride of Christ with pure and chaste virgins in whom true circumcision of the foreskin of the flesh has been performed and truly God's covenant and the eternal covenant is preserved in their flesh." (Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, Homily III, Section 6)

It is thus clear that married spouses who want to please Our Lord and His Holy Will must follow the holy and pure example of the Patriarchs and the Prophets of the Old Testament time, "For they [that is, the men of the Old Law] had them [their wives] in the work of begetting children, not "in the disease of desire, as the nations which know not God." [1 Thess. 4:5] And this is so great a thing, that many at this day more easily abstain from all sexual intercourse their whole life through, than, if they are joined in marriage, observe the measure of not coming together except for the sake of children." (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 15) Hence, "the case being thus, enough and more than enough answer has been made to the heretics, whether they be Manichees, or whosoever other [heretics] that bring false charges against the Fathers of the Old Testament, on the subject of their having several wives, thinking this a proof whereby to convict them of incontinence... [however the Fathers] used those women not for wantonness, but for the begetting of children" (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 33)

We see the same kind of teaching about Abraham in Augustine's work *Against Faustus*:

"Referring, then, to the eternal law which enjoins the preservation of natural order and forbids the breach of it, let us see how our father Abraham sinned, that is, how he broke this law, in the things which Faustus has charged him with as highly criminal. In his irrational craving to have children, says Faustus, and not believing God, who promised that his wife Sara should have a son, he defiled himself with a mistress. But here Faustus, in his irrational desire to find fault, both discloses the impiety of his heresy, and in his error and ignorance praises Abraham's intercourse with the handmaid. For as the eternal law—that is, the will of God the Creator of all—for the preservation of the natural order, permits the indulgence of the bodily appetite under the guidance of reason in sexual intercourse, not for the gratification of passion, but for the continuance of the race through the procreation of children; so, on the contrary, the unrighteous law of the Manichæans, in order to prevent their god, whom they bewail as confined in all seeds, from suffering still closer

confinement in the womb, requires married people not on any account to have children, their great desire being to liberate their god. Instead, therefore, of an irrational craving in Abraham to have children, we find in Manichæus an irrational fancy against having children. So the one preserved the natural order by seeking in marriage only the production of a child; while the other, influenced by his heretical notions, thought no evil could be greater than the confinement of his god.” (St. Augustine, *Against Faustus*, Book 22, Section 30)

As we can see, for St. Augustine, the purpose of sexual relations is only to produce children. This is also the teaching of all the Fathers on this subject.

St. Augustine, *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis* 9.3.5-6: “If one should ask why it was necessary that a helper be made for man, the answer that seems most probable is that it was for the procreation of children, just as the earth is a helper for the seed in the production of a plant from the union of the two. This purpose was declared in the original creation of the world: “Male and female he made them. And God blessed them and said, ‘Increase and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.’” This reason for creation and union of male and female, as well as this blessing, was not abrogated after the sin and punishment of man. It is by virtue of this blessing that the earth is now filled with human beings who subdue it. Although it was after the expulsion of the man and woman from paradise that they came together in sexual intercourse and begot children, according to Scripture, nevertheless I do not see what could have prohibited them from honorable nuptial union and “the bed undefiled” even in paradise. God could have granted them this if they had lived in a faithful and just manner in obedient and holy service to him, so that without the tumultuous ardor of passion and without any labor and pain of childbirth, offspring would be born from their seed. In this case, the purpose would not be to have children succeeding parents who die. Rather those who had begotten children would remain in the prime of life and would maintain their physical strength from the tree of life that had been planted in paradise. Those who would be born would develop to the same state and eventually, when the determined number would be complete, if all live just and obedient lives, there would be a transformation. Thus without any death their natural bodies would receive a new quality since they obeyed every command of the spirit that ruled them. With the spirit alone vivifying them, without any help from corporeal nourishment, they would be called spiritual bodies. This could have been if the transgression of God’s command had not merited the punishment of death.”

EVIL FRUITS OF NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

Abortion is the result of failed contraceptive practices

All sin produces evil fruit according to its quality and quantity. What are the fruits of NFP? They are very evil fruits indeed: small families, unbridled lust, selfishness, materialism, greed, discord, contentions, disobedience in all ranks, alcoholism, drug addiction, also abortion, which is a direct result of failed contraceptive practices.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 65), Dec. 31, 1930: “All of which agrees with the stern words of the Bishop of Hippo in denouncing those wicked parents who seek to remain childless, and failing in this, are not ashamed to put their children to death: ‘Sometimes this lustful cruelty or cruel lust goes so far as to seek to procure a baneful sterility, and if this fails, the foetus conceived in the womb is in one way or another smothered or evacuated, in the desire to destroy the offspring before it has life, or if it already lives in the womb, to kill it before it is born. If both man and woman are party to such practices, they are not spouses at all; and if from the first they have carried on thus they have come together not for honest wedlock, but for impure gratification.’”

If the plan to prevent conception fails then abortion, the murder of the infant in the womb of the mother, is the solution. This is the great cost men pay to fulfill their unbridled and sinful lust. This monstrous, unbridled lust shows its ugly head in many ways such as by sexual abuse of all sorts to sexual harassment and rape, to the carrying out of the act with family members (incest) and others; by viewing pornography and in their children who cannot control their lusts because they were conceived primarily in lust and raised in lust. Greed manifests itself because of the selfish nature that leads spouses to practice contraception. Objects and things that bring them momentary pleasure are more important to them than people, more important than having children. The children they do have are only sentimental ornaments that lend their perverted marriage an air of acceptance. They have no true love or care for their children, because the parents are lovers of themselves more than God. They are more interested in what brings them momentary pleasure. What they do not realize is that true pleasure and peace only comes from obeying all of God’s commandments and raising godly children if God wills they should have children. Parents sit their children in front of a Television to baby-sit them while the parents fulfill, or work to fulfill, their own selfish interests. They drop off their children at day care centers for strangers to care for them. Imagine if our Blessed Mother Mary, after having received the greatest gift that any man can ever receive, the infant Jesus, God and Man, dropped Him off with godless strangers to care for Him. Parents, due to their selfish, materialistic, and covetous nature, have shirked their duty to bring children into the world

and then educate and train them to be pious, faithful and obedient Catholics, so that they may have a hope to save their souls. “The having of children, they esteem grievous and unwelcome. Many at least with this view have even paid money to be childless, and have mutilated nature, not only killing the newborn, but even acting to prevent their beginning to live.” (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 28:5, A.D. 391) “Whence women, reputed believers, began to resort to drugs for producing sterility, and to gird themselves round, so to expel what was being conceived on account of their not wishing to have a child either by a slave or by any paltry fellow, for the sake of their family and excessive wealth. Behold, into how great impiety that lawless one [the Devil] has proceeded, by inculcating adultery and murder at the same time!” (St. Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies*, Book IX, Chapter 7, A.D. 225)

In truth, “No woman should take drugs for purposes of abortion, nor should she kill her children that have been conceived or are already born. If anyone does this, she should know that before Christ’s tribunal she will have to plead her case in the presence of those she has killed. Moreover, women should not take diabolical draughts [contraceptive drugs] with the purpose of not being able to conceive children. A woman who does this ought to realize that she will be guilty of as many murders as the number of children she might have borne. I would like to know whether a woman of nobility who takes deadly drugs to prevent conception wants her maids or tenants to do so. Just as every woman wants slaves born for her so that they may serve her, so she herself should nurse all the children she conceives, or entrust them to others for rearing. Otherwise, she may refuse to conceive children or, what is more serious, be willing to kill souls which might have been good Christians. Now, with what kind of a conscience does she desire slaves to be born of her servants, when she herself refuses to bear children who might become Christians?” (St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon* 44:2)

The following question can truly be asked to all those evil and impure people who kill their children or who use any form of birth-control: “Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit, where there are medicines of sterility, where there is murder before birth? [NFP and contraception] You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well. . . . Indeed, it is something worse than murder, and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gift of God and fight with his laws? . . . Yet such turpitude. . . . the matter still seems indifferent to many men -- even to many men having wives. In this indifference of the married men there is greater evil filth; for then poisons are prepared, not against the womb of a prostitute, but against your injured wife. Against her are these innumerable tricks.” (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 24, A.D. 391)

Also, in *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, by St. Augustine: “Sometimes lustful cruelty, or better cruel lust, leads one to take contraceptive drugs, and, if they do not work, kill the living infant in the womb. Or they abort it before it is born, because they would rather have the child die in the uterus than live. If both spouses subsequently agreed to this they are not really husband and wife. If they intended this from the start, their union was not marriage but debauchery. If only one intended this, I dare say that she or he was merely her husband’s whore or his wife’s paramour.” (Quoted by Gratian, in *Marriage Canons From The Decretum*, Case Thirty-Two, Question II, C.7)

They work harder and are not at peace

Spouses who use contraception to limit the number of children actually increase their burden instead of lessening it. It does not matter if they have small or large families. Even spouses that have large families who then decide to use contraception fall under the same curse from God as those who use contraception and have small families. What the faithless do not see is that God punishes them by making them work much harder than they would if they did not use contraception. They work harder as a result of their sins, which are selfish in nature. All the work they do is for carnal purposes, to support and maintain a gluttonous and extravagant lifestyle, at least that is their goal even if they have not achieved it to their satisfaction. In reality gluttons and materialistic men are never satisfied no matter how much they have, thus they are disquieted most of the time and in many ways. “*The eye of the covetous man is insatiable in his portion of iniquity: he will not be satisfied till he consume his own soul, drying it up.*” (Ecclesiasticus 14:9) “*There is no peace to the wicked.*” (Isaiah 57:21)

The sin of materialism they are afflicted with causes them to covetously desire fancy homes with all the modern conveniences and gadgets, fancy new cars, two vacations or more a year, etc. All this has caused them to work harder than if they had a larger unplanned family and lived frugally. How often do we hear them say, “I have all these things but no time to enjoy them?” They run around like chickens with their heads cut off, every which way, busy about much, with no time to contemplate on what is really important. One of Satan’s main ploys is to keep men so busy that they cannot think about God. Remember Satan’s ploy against the Israelites. Satan, speaking through Pharaoh, increased the workload of the Israelites so they would not have time to worship God. “Moses and Aaron went in, and said to Pharaoh: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Let my people go, that they may sacrifice to me in the desert... The king of Egypt said to them: Why do you Moses and Aaron draw off the people from their works? Get you gone to your burdens. ... Therefore he commanded the same day the overseers of the works, and the task-masters of the people, saying: You shall give straw no more to the people to make brick, as before; but

let them go and gather straw. And you shall lay upon them the task of bricks, which they did before; neither shall you diminish any thing thereof, for they are idle, and therefore they cry, saying: Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let them be oppressed with works, and let them fulfill them.” (Exodus 5:1. 4,6-9)

If men do not have proper time to think about God, not just a fleeting thought, they have no hope of finding Him. Just look around any city and you will see people running hither and thither going about at a mad pace with barely enough time to say hello to anyone. You do not see people talking with one another at leisure anymore on street corners or in parks. *“Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life: and that day come upon you suddenly.”* (Luke 21:34-36) It is only when people soberly think, contemplate, and talk that there can be any hope for them to find God. This is not a guarantee that they will find God, but without it there is no hope at all. *“Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is: and is a rewarder to them that seek him.”* (Hebrews 11:6) *“Seek and you shall find.”* (Matthew 7:7) Those who seek God with a true and unfeigned heart will find God and godly peace because they are the elect who are of good will.

Parents do not even have time to spend with their own children, thus they invented the worldly evil slogan, “Quality time over quantity.” This is another tradition of men that has done away with God’s commandment to raise and educate godly children in the Catholic religion. Parents imagine they can spend around one hour a day with their children, heaping on them a false, worldly love, many times bribing them by giving them what ever they want and then ignore them the other 23 hours. If the infant needs his diaper changed outside the quality time limit, then he must sit in his mess until his scheduled visit from his mom, or she could get someone else to do her duty. Children need 24-hour care, not just one, two, three, or twelve hours a day. Raising godly children is a full time job. It means cooking, cleaning, teaching, and vigilance every hour of every day of every year. Yes, it is a duty, and woe to those who shirk it. For surely as God is the God of the Holy Catholic Church, He will abandon you also, just as you have abandoned your own children, by your refusal to raise and educate them in holiness and the Catholic faith. He will let you sit in the mess of your own sins.

St. Augustine, On The Natural Good of Marriage, A.D. 419: “With respect, however, to what I ascribed to **the nature of marriage, that the male and the female are united together as associates for procreation**, and consequently do not defraud each other (forasmuch as every associated state has a natural abhorrence of a fraudulent companion), although even men without faith possess this palpable blessing of nature, yet, since they use it not in faith, they only turn it to evil and sin.

In like manner, therefore, the marriage of believers converts to the use of righteousness that carnal concupiscence by which the flesh lusts against the Spirit. [Gal. 5:17] **For they entertain the firm purpose of generating offspring to be regenerated -- that the children who are born of them as children of the world may be born again and become sons of God.** Wherefore all parents who do not beget children with this intention, this will, this purpose, of transferring them from being members of the first man into being members of Christ, but boast as unbelieving parents over unbelieving children—however circumspect they be in their cohabitation, studiously limiting it to the begetting of children—really have no conjugal chastity in themselves.” (*On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book I, Chapter 5)

If a person truly loved his own soul and the souls of his spouse and children, he would first and foremost do whatever he must to procure eternal salvation for himself and his family. If the father and mother have done their duty well, let them say in all humility, “*We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do.*” (Luke 17:10) In other words, do not pat yourselves on the back, for you have only done what you must do if you want to have a hope to be saved and enter Heaven. “Undoubtedly, by the eternal law, which requires the preservation of natural order, and forbids the transgression of it, conjugal intercourse should take place only for the procreation of children, and after the celebration of marriage, so as to maintain the bond of peace.” (St. Augustine, *Against Faustus*, Book XXII, Section 61, A.D. 400)

The evil fruit of disobedience

Even when parents and children are home and at rest they sit in front of the Television and get brainwashed. Perverted families look at perverted shows about perverted families, while not even talking with their own family members. They live through the perverted families they see on Television and imitate them. They turn fantasy into reality, thus their lives have become nightmares. They have become robots with no true personalities, who are programmed to sin without the least pang of conscience. God, indeed, punishes these perverted families by the natural consequences of their sins. “*By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented.*” (Wisdom 11:17) One of these punishments is disobedient wives and children. Thus you have families in which the natural order of hierarchical submission is turned upside down and the resultant discord that follows. “As for my people, their oppressors have stripped them, and women have ruled over them... I will give children to be their princes, and the effeminate shall rule over them... And the people shall rush one upon another, and every man against his neighbor: the child shall make a tumult against the ancient, and the base against the honorable.” (Isaiah 3:12, 4-5)

“And the brother shall betray his brother unto death, and the father his son; and children shall rise up against their parents and shall work their death.” (Mark 13:12)

When wives disobey their husbands and children rise up against their parents, husbands and parents act surprised! But by what right do they have to complain? Have they not fostered rebellion in their homes? Because they have rebelled against God, fallen-away Catholics being the worst of all, rebellion is in the midst of them: “*Because it is like the sin of witchcraft, to rebel: and like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey.*” (1 Kings 15:23) Because they would not obey God, obedience is not rendered to them when it is due. Where does it all end? It ends in most cases in adultery, separation, or divorce and sinful second unions that are not marriages (see [The Annulment Fiasco – The Vatican II Sect’s De Facto acceptance of Divorce and Remarriage](#)). In other cases it maintains an illusion of a marriage and family, in which the spouses and children are alienated from one another, each going about their own selfish interests. These perverted families are cold and sterile with happy-faces pasted in front of their true faces of greed, selfishness, pride, envy, hopelessness, despair, melancholy, boredom, restlessness, the root being hatred toward the true God. There is only one remedy, and that is to come to God with one’s whole heart and soul by becoming Catholic in word and deed before it is too late.

Pope Pius XI, *Ingravescentibus Malis* (# 1), On the Rosary, 1937: “There is no remedy for the ever-growing evils of our times except a return to Our Lord Jesus Christ and to His most holy precepts. Truly, only He “hath the words of eternal life” (cf. John 6:69), and individuals and society can only fall into immediate and miserable ruin if they ignore the majesty of God and repudiate His Law.”

St. Pope Pius X, *Communium Rerum* (# 24), 1909: “More bitter shall be the consequences of these threats when the vices of society are being multiplied, when the sin of rulers and of the people consists especially in the exclusion of God and in rebellion against the Church of Christ: that double social apostasy which is the deplorable fount of anarchy, corruption, and endless misery for the individual and for society.”

Honorable continence and chastity

One of the times conception can legally be deferred is if the spouses agree to abstain from marital relations through virtuous chastity for a period of time. They must then abstain altogether from the marital act, both during the infertile periods as well as the fertile periods. This is referred to by Pope Pius XI as “virtuous continence” in *Casti Connubii*, where he discusses the **Vices Opposed To Christian Marriage**:

“And now, Venerable Brethren, We shall explain in detail the evils opposed to each of the benefits of matrimony. **First consideration is due the offspring, which many have the audacity to call the disagreeable burden of matrimony and which they say is to be carefully avoided by married people *not through virtuous continence, but by frustrating the marriage act.* Some justify this *criminal abuse on the ground that they are weary of children* and wish to gratify their desires without their consequent burden.**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, # 54)

“Virtuous continence” or abstinence is neither virtuous nor honorable if spouses have marital relations during the infertile period while having deliberately planned to avoid having relations during the fertile period. The intent is not to abstain from marital relations. Rather, the intent is to have marital relations while having planned to prevent conception.

To deliberately remain chaste during the fertile period while having marital relations only during the infertile period is dishonorable continence and is chastity for Satan. It is chastity in the service of lust, and that is not true chastity. Far from honorable is this dark and dastardly deed. The only reason the spouses remain chaste during the fertile period is so they will not have children while at the same time having planned to commit the sexual act as soon as the fertile period is over. This is only pretend chastity; pretend continence. “You do not want to have a child? Settle a pious agreement with your husband; let him agree to an end of childbearing in accord with the virtue of chastity. The only sterility of a very pious wife is chastity.” (St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon* 52:4)

Despite this fact, the overwhelming majority of NFP users will actually have the boldness to claim that they are practicing “abstinence” or “continence” while using “Natural Family Planning,” just as if there was something “virtuous” or “good” about their dastardly deed of avoiding the children that God wanted to bless them with. In truth, Pope Pius XI rightly calls these people “criminals” and their evil and filthy action a “criminal abuse” in the above mentioned encyclical.

Again, the sin of contraception is incurred when two conditions are met, the planning to engage in the marital act while also having planned to prevent conception: “Who is he who cannot warn that no woman may take a potion so that she is unable to conceive or condemns in herself the nature which God willed to be fecund? **As often as she could have conceived or given birth, of that many homicides she will be held guilty,** and, unless she undergoes suitable penance, she will be damned by eternal death in Hell. **If**

a woman does not wish to have children, let her enter into a religious agreement with her husband; for chastity is the sole sterility of a Christian woman.” (St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon* 1:12, A.D. 522)

Medical condition, danger to the mother or child, does not excuse

Honorable continence can also be practiced if the wife has a medical condition in which pregnancy would endanger her life. If the husband and wife decide to have relations, they must do so with the intention to beget children if God wills they should have children and be prepared to risk the life of the mother; for neither abortion, contraception nor NFP is allowed in case of a medical problem on the part of the mother.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 64), Dec. 31, 1930: “As to the ‘medical and therapeutic indication’ to which, using their own words, we have made reference, Venerable Brethren, however much we may pity the mother whose health and even life is imperiled in the performance of the duty allotted to her by nature, nevertheless, what could ever be a sufficient reason for excusing in any way the direct murder of the innocent? This is precisely what we are dealing with here. Whether inflicted upon the mother or upon the child, it is against the precept of God and the law of nature: “Thou shalt not kill”. The life of each is equally sacred, and no one has the power, not even the public authority, to destroy it... Upright and skillful doctors strive most praiseworthy to guard and preserve the lives of both mother and child; on the contrary, those show themselves most unworthy of the noble medical profession who encompass the death of one or the other, through a pretense at practicing medicine or through motives of misguided pity... Holy Mother Church very well understands and clearly appreciates all that is said regarding the health of the mother and the danger to her life. And who would not grieve to think of these things? **Who is not filled with the greatest admiration when he sees a mother risking her life with heroic fortitude, that she may preserve the life of the offspring which she has conceived?** God alone, all bountiful and all merciful as He is, can reward her for the fulfillment of the office allotted to her by nature, and will assuredly repay her in a measure full to overflowing.”

If the wife’s life is threatened by bearing children, then either the marital act is abstained from altogether by honorable continence, or it is done with the hope of conception if God wills they should have children, being ready to bear the consequences of the possible death of the mother.

Lack of faith that God can regulate, feed, clothe, and protect families

Fallen-away Catholics exhibit their loss of the Catholic faith by a lack of faith in the God whom they profess to believe in. How does this lack of faith in God exhibit itself with those who practice contraception? They deny God's power to open and close wombs, to feed, shelter, and provide for all the other necessities of their families. Many verbally profess belief in miracles, while in their hearts they do not really believe. Many do not even profess belief in miracles.

Do the couples who use NFP, or the priests who promote it, possess supernatural faith in the providence of God? Do they believe that God is the one who sends life? Does anyone have a right to have 3 children when God willed them to have 10? God is perfectly aware of each couple's needs, and he knows precisely what they can handle. Those with the true Catholic faith should be totally unconcerned with charts and calendars. These are all unnatural instruments which frustrate God's will. Disregard this nonsense and accept the fact that God will not send you any children that you cannot handle. He will not burden anyone with anything too heavy, for His yoke is always easy and His burden always light. "For the virtue of each [good] thing then discovers itself when it is brought to its own fitting work... For instance, wine is given for cheerfulness, not drunkenness, bread for nourishment, **sexual intercourse for the procreation of children.**" (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, Homily XII, Colossians iv. 12-18, Ver. 18)

God feeds the birds which neither reap nor sow

The word of God condemns anyone who attempts to excuse the mortal sin of contraception for any reason, one being the economic excuse. Those who use the economic excuse faithlessly say that if they have too many children they will not be able to feed or clothe them, or provide their other necessities. These fallen-away Catholics do not really believe in the word and power of God.

Regarding the so-called "necessities" and "grave circumstances" that so many people excuse themselves with today, Our Lord Jesus Christ explicitly teaches us in the Holy Gospels how we are to behave on such occasions: "Therefore I say to you: Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. The life is more than the meat: and the body is more than the raiment. Consider the ravens, for they sow not, neither do they reap, neither have they storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them. How much are you more valuable than they? . . . Consider the lilies, how they grow: they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. Now, if God clothe in this manner the grass that is to-day in the

field and to-morrow is cast into the oven: how much more you, O ye of little faith?
seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice: and all these things shall be added unto you." (Luke 12:22-24, 27-28, 31)

Dear reader, you will either truly believe in the word of God or not. It does no good to say you believe while your actions prove otherwise. "*Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*" (1 John 3:18) Your professed faith is tested when it comes time to put it into action. "*Faith without works is dead.*" (James 2:20) "*Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*" (James 1:22) Only those are blessed who hear the word of God and keep it. "*Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.*" (Luke 11:28) Do you really believe God can feed, clothe, and shelter your family no matter how big it is? "[Some] complain of the scantiness of their means, and allege that they have not enough for bringing up more children, as though, in truth, their means were in [their] power... or God did not daily make the rich poor and the poor rich. Wherefore, if any one on any account of poverty shall be unable to bring up children, it is better to abstain from relations with his wife." (Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 6:20, A.D. 307)

Woe to faithless fallen-away Catholics who say they cannot feed their families due to difficult economic conditions, implying God cannot provide for them. Nothing is impossible with God.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (#'s 60-61), Dec. 31, 1930: "We are deeply touched by the sufferings of those parents who, in extreme want, experience great difficulty in rearing their children. However, they should take care lest the calamitous state of their external affairs should be the occasion for a much more calamitous error. No difficulty can arise that justifies putting aside the law of God which prohibits all acts intrinsically evil. **There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the Grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted. This truth of Christian faith is expressed by the teaching of the Council of Trent: 'Let no one be so rash as to assert that which the Fathers of the Council have placed under anathema, namely that there are precepts of God impossible for the just to observe. God does not ask the impossible, but by His commands, instructs you to do what you are able, to pray for what you are not able that He may help you.'**"

Pope Pius XI is crystal clear: not even "in extreme want" may people justify "putting aside the law of God which prohibits all acts intrinsically evil", thus condemning all forms of contraception and birth control. He then proceeds to give a cure for those who are living

“in extreme want” by saying that: “There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the Grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their **chastity unspotted**” and “**God does not ask the impossible, but by His commands, instructs you to do what you are able, to pray for what you are not able that He may help you.**”

God will always honor and bless a couple who seeks to please Him first and foremost in this life by doing what He commands. This is an infallible truth found in His Holy Word, and all people who wish to save their own souls – which is the only thing that really matters in this short life – must of course strive to please Our Lord in every way possible. *“And he will love thee and multiply thee, and will bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy vintage, thy oil, and thy herds, and the flocks of thy sheep upon the land, for which he swore to thy fathers that he would give it thee.”* (Deuteronomy 7:13)

If God wills for a couple to have none, few, or many children, He will regulate conception during the marital act so that it will be so. Dear reader, do you believe that? Prove it by condemning contraception and never practice it again. Always desire and hope that conception should take place during every marital act, even if by a miracle. Do not take the place of God. Let God regulate whether or not conception occurs during your marital act. He will not burden you with anything too heavy, for His yoke is always easy and His burden always light.

St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book II, Chapter 7:20, A.D. 421: “He [Julian] asserts that woman was given to man only for the purpose of generation, a matter which you thought it necessary to argue so long in vain, as if any of us denied this statement. ... God cares for the universe, you will find that this must please God more in which there is the cause of the universe... Therefore, because the propagation of the human race could not be from the man alone, God said it is not good for man to be alone. ... [Therefore] He did not permit Cain, guilty of fratricide, to perish before he had generated children. Therefore, woman was given to man for the sake of the generation of human posterity.”

Famine, plague, war, exile, and death are not due to big families

If you cannot feed your family it is not because of the size of your family. If God is not shunned by the deliberate prevention of conception, then God will certainly provide for the family. God will make available all they need, provided the family does not incur God’s wrath for other reasons, or if God sees they should die as persecuted martyrs. To suffer

persecution for God, such as martyrdom by starvation, is the greatest provision God can give, by providing the soul with immediate entry into Heaven as a saint. Famine, plague, all sorts of calamity, or martyrdom that befalls families is not due to the number of children, but because of disobedience or obedience to God. When God strikes a land with famine, or similar conditions that make it impossible for families to sustain themselves, they all die, no matter how small or large their families are. The punishment is not due to the size of the family. When God allows persecution and martyrdom to come upon His faithful chosen to test their faith and to witness to unbelievers, they die in obedience to God. Their death has nothing whatsoever to do with the number of children they have. God has demonstrated many times how He protects His faithful while at the same time sending famine and death to obstinate evildoers.

“The Lord will take away from thee all sickness: and the grievous infirmities of Egypt, which thou knowest, he will not bring upon thee, but upon thy enemies.” (Deuteronomy 7:15) “The Lord will make a wonderful difference between the possessions of Israel and the possessions of the Egyptians, that nothing at all shall die of those things that belong to the children of Israel... The Lord therefore did this thing the next day: and all the beasts of the Egyptians died, but of the beasts of the children of Israel there died not one.” (Exodus 9:4, 6) “Moses stretched forth his rod towards heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and lightning running along the ground: and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt... And the hail destroyed through all the land of Egypt all things that were in the fields, both man and beast: and the hail smote every herb of the field, and it broke every tree of the country. Only in the land of Gessen, where the children of Israel were, the hail fell not.” (Exodus 9:22-26)

What they fear comes upon them in unknown ways

“*That which the wicked feareth, shall come upon him.*” (Proverbs 10:24) When spouses deliberately plan to prevent conception, taking the place of God, God abandons them and their families. Many times people cry out to God for help when they are in dire straits. When all is well they disobey or ignore Him. If they should appeal to God in a time of need, God says to them, “You abandoned Me by following your own sinful ways, now provide for your needs yourselves!”

Proverbs 1:25-31 “You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared. When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand: when tribulation and distress shall come

upon you: Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear: they shall rise in the morning, and shall not find me: Because they have hated instruction, and received not the fear of the Lord, Nor consented to my counsel, but despised all my reproof. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and shall be filled with their own devices.”

NFP is a tradition of men that replaces the law of God

NFP is simply a tradition of men. It has eliminated the commandment of God that forbids contraception, by making it seem that NFP is not contraception simply because physical devices or techniques are not used during the marital act. They ignore the very heart of this commandment of God by violating it in a most deceptive manner. The ancestors of the Pharisees that Jesus condemned, the apostate and Talmudic Jews and their false religion of apostate Judaism have carried on these traditions of men to absurd proportions. One such teaching is that it is only murder if one directly kills another, such as by stabbing, shooting, or choking, etc. They teach it is not murder if one locks a man in a room with no food or water and does not give him any. In this case, they teach, the man dies from thirst and starvation, and not by the hands of any man; thus no murder was committed (Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 77a). In truth, these apostate Jews are a perfect parallel to those who practice NFP. The tradition of men teaches that as long as a physical device or technique is not used during the marital act, the planning ahead of time by charting cycles to prevent conception is not a crime.

In every case a deliberate plan is made before the act

Married couples that attempt to frustrate conception while engaging in the marital act must formulate a deliberate plan in order to do so. In every case they deliberately formulate a plan to prevent conception before the marital act. Whether they plan to use physical contraceptive devices during the act, or plan to withdraw during the act, or plan to take birth control pills that prevent ovulation before the act, or plan to use NFP by only having relations during the infertile period, or they plan by charting fertile and infertile periods, it is exactly the same plan. In every case the goal of the plan is the same: to prevent conception while engaging in the marital act. In a sense it could be said about NFP that a contraceptive is placed over the fertile period while engaging in the marital act during the infertile period, or, the husband withdraws from the act during the fertile period while engaging in it during the infertile period, or, instead of preventing ovulation with a pill, it is prevented by charting cycles. Dear reader, open your eyes and ears, can you not see that the intention is the same in every case! Can you not see that NFP is contraception! **“Dost thou not know what thou art at? Thou marriest a wife for**

chastity, and procreation of children..." (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, Homily XII, Colossians iv. 12-18, Ver. 18)

It is intrinsically evil when spouses plan to have sexual relations while also having planned to hinder the conception of the child that God wanted to bless them with. It does not matter in what way the spouses plan to prevent conception. The principle is the same in all cases: the deliberate prevention of conception (bearing children) by the spouses while engaging in the marital act. Guilt of mortal sin occurs when these two conditions are met, either in the mind or in the act. Our Lord teaches us that all sin proceeds from the heart, and manifests itself in men's actions. "*The things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man. . . . For from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies.*" (Matthew 15:11, 19)

St. Augustine, *City of God* 7:30, A.D. 426: "**And now, to begin to go over those works of the one true God... we worship that God who has appointed... the union of male and female for the propagation of offspring...**"

The natural cycles of a fruit tree

A fruit tree has its natural cycles for fertility and infertility. There is a proper time to fertilize the tree. If a gardener fertilized the tree when it was not fertile nothing will come of it. If he were a good gardener he would only fertilize it during its known fertile cycle in order for it to conceive and thus produce fruit. Now, what is to be said of a gardener who only fertilizes the tree during its infertile cycle, while deliberately not fertilizing it during its fertile period? He would have made an unnatural use of the natural cycles of the tree, so unnatural that the people would think him either insane or a hater of fruit. Bad enough, would they say he is, if they see him stupidly wasting time and fertilizing material when nothing can come of it, but worse beyond compare is he when he deliberately stops fertilizing the tree just when it is fertile. Indeed, "Dare not to do the deeds of Sodom," St. John Chrysostom says, "lest ye suffer the lot of Sodom... Even as they devised a barren intercourse, not having for its end the procreation of children, so did God bring on them such a punishment..." (*On the Statues, Hom. XIX*; NPNF, p. 467) Commenting on the sin of Sodom St. John Chrysostom writes, "How great is that sin, to have forced hell to appear even before its time?" (*Hom. IV in Rom.*; NPNF, p. 358)

Now, if for some reason, not in contempt for the fruit and with the good of the tree in mind, the gardener does not want the tree to bear fruit, then he would not fertilize the tree at all. This is equivalent to honorable continence or chastity, and this state is the most

honorable for married people. In truth, God loves purity and chastity so much that He often uses His chaste servants to save souls. The chaste or barren husband and wife still conceive and give birth to children, but they are of a spiritual kind, which is infinitely more valuable: **“That virginity is good I do agree. But that it is even better than marriage, this I do confess. And if you wish, I will add that it is as much better than marriage as Heaven is better than Earth, as much better as angels are better than men.”** (St. John Chrysostom, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 2: 1116, A.D. 392)

Man plays stupid, and God will not be mocked

Some, evading the issue, say that when NFP is used, conception can still take place if God grants it. Thus, according to them, the spouses are open to conception. But if it were true that the spouses are open to conception then why all the planning by the spouses to prevent conception by only having relations during the infertile period? The sin resides in the intention of the spouses, not the fact that God may still grant conception in spite of their plan against it. The same can be said of any contraceptive device or technique. None are 100 percent guaranteed to prevent conception. Even those who were sterilized have conceived. Sadly, these are the children that are referred to by these bastard parents as mistakes. The children they bear will be children of fornication whom God will use to torment the parents. Question this not, O blind men, who love evil and love to play stupid. Do you not see the discord in your own families, the rebellion of children against their rebellious parents? Sin begets sin. In that which you sin, you shall be punished. Think not that God is like sinful men in that He lets sin go unpunished. Open your eyes and observe the history of fallen man. Has God ever allowed sin to go unpunished? Look at the lust that infects the fallen-away priests who promote NFP?

Examine your conscience now, all you who use NFP, and confess your mortal sins before it is too late. Examine your conscience real good and ask yourself if you had **deliberately planned to prevent conception** when you performed the marital act. It does not matter what the lust filled faithless priest tells you. He cannot quell your conscience, because this sin violates the law God has written upon your heart. This priest will not be able to console you when you are both in Hell. Take to heart Pope Pius XI's warning in *Casti Connubii*: **“They are blind and leaders of the blind: and if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.”** The priests and the people they are leading astray will all go to Hell for this sin alone.

A last most important point, there is no remission of sin outside the Catholic Church and that is where most of you readers are. The infallible Catholic dogma which teaches that

“*Outside the Church there is no salvation nor remission of sins*” have no exceptions according to the teachings of the Church (Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctum*, A.D. 1302). You must learn the Catholic Faith and abjure from your heresies or schisms and thus enter the Catholic Church before your sins can be forgiven.

Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctum*, A.D. 1302: “Urged by faith, we are obliged to believe and to maintain that the Church is one, holy, catholic, and also apostolic. We believe in her firmly and we confess with simplicity that outside of her there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins, as the Spouse in the Canticles [Sgs. 6:8] proclaims: ‘One is my dove, my perfect one. She is the only one, the chosen of her who bore her,’ and she represents one sole mystical body whose Head is Christ and the head of Christ is God [1 Cor. 11:3]. In her then is one Lord, one faith, one baptism [Eph. 4:5]. There had been at the time of the deluge only one ark of Noah, prefiguring the one Church, which ark, having been finished to a single cubit, had only one pilot and guide, i.e., Noah, and we read that, outside of this ark, all that subsisted on the earth was destroyed.”

The root of the whole problem that leads to sins of immorality and sins against the Natural Law and the loss of the Catholic Faith is evil practices like NFP. Bad lives coupled with intentions of persevering in sin always precedes before a person falls into more grievous errors, heresies or schisms. For when man refuses to heed the Natural Law and the conscience that God has imprinted on his heart, God allows him to fall into more grievous errors and heresies because of his negligence and scorn of God’s divine and natural laws.

Please read this text called “[Important Spiritual Information You Must Know About to be Saved](#)” to see if you are living in some mortal or venial sins that you have not yet wished to break free from. This important text addresses some of the most common sins committed by men today that they fall into Hell for.

COMMON OBJECTIONS

Objection: How can you say that the only motive that can excuse the marital act is the procreation of children? It is not against the Natural Law or the Law of the Church to excuse intercourse for the sake of pleasure, health, or love. You are wrong when you say that one must perform the marital act for the purpose or motive of begetting children, and that the procreation of children is the only primary purpose or motive that a couple can use to excuse the marital act. There are many primary purposes or motives of marriage that excuse the marital act from being sinful. One can perform the marital act for many primary reasons such as for the sole purpose or motive of health, satisfying the fleshly lust, quenching

concupiscence, mutual help, paying the marital debt, as well as for cultivating mutual love and unitive purposes. Any one of these purposes or motives are enough to perform the marital act in a lawful way, and this proves that spouses can perform sexual acts that are not intended or able to procreate in themselves.

Not so, since the Church and Pope Pius XI, as we have seen, teaches that the primary end or motive of the marital sexual act is the procreation of children, while he describes the other ends or motives of the marital act (if spouses choose to perform the act for these reasons) as secondary ends or motives that are not necessary for the act to be lawful and that are dependent on and which must follow the primary motive of procreation in order for the sexual act to be lawful. The teaching of the Natural Law as well as that of the Church is clear that “***the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children***” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #54) and this is also why Pope Pius XI teaches that spouses are not forbidden to consider the secondary ends of marriage “such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love [unitive purpose], and the quieting of concupiscence... so long as they are subordinated to the primary end [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN] and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.” This proves that all other motives than the procreation of children are secondary ends or motives.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 59), Dec. 31, 1930: “**For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial right there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence** which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider **SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN]** and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved [that is, all sexual acts must be able to procreate in themselves, which means that no unnatural and non-procreative form of a sexual act can ever be performed without sin].”

This means that the primary end or purpose of procreation (in thought and action) can *not* be made subordinate or subject to the secondary ends or purposes and that the primary end must always exist for the marital act to be lawful while the secondary ends or motives are not needed at all in order to lawfully perform the marital act. The secondary ends “such as mutual aid, the cultivation of mutual love, [unitive purpose] and the quieting of concupiscence” can follow after the primary end or purpose of begetting children if the spouses choose this, but the secondary ends or motives are not absolutely needed to lawfully perform the marital act in the same way as the primary purpose of begetting children, nor is the secondary motive of quieting

concupiscence meritorious even though it is allowed. This is also exactly how Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Bible wants us to view the sexual pleasure and the marital act, since it is a higher calling to live for the Spirit than for our own selfish and fleshly desires. “*And now, Lord, thou knowest, that **not for fleshly lust** do I take my sister to wife, **but only for the love of posterity**, [children] in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.*” (The Holy Bible, Tobias 8:9)

While some have erroneously asserted that the motive of paying the marital debt to one’s spouse can be used as a primary motive to excuse the marital act from sin, we see that Pope Pius XI defines *the paying of the marital debt* as a secondary end or motive, by using the words “*mutual aid*” to explain its nature, since according to God’s Law and Saint Paul in the Holy Bible, a spouse must **help** his or her spouse by paying the marital debt when the other spouse asks for it in order to not allow the requesting spouse to become tempted to fall into sins of sensuality (1 Corinthians 7).

Many other heretics of our own times also claim that the “unitive” purpose is a primary motive of the marital act along with the motive of procreation, but we can see that Pope Pius XI relegates the unitive purpose, which he calls “the cultivating of mutual love”, to a secondary purpose that are not necessary to exist in order for the act to be lawful.

In fact, the modern day proposition that health, pleasure or love might be the sole object of intercourse is a heresy that has no biblical, apostolic, patristic or medieval authority whatsoever. St. Thomas Aquinas explains in his *Summa* that: “Although it is not evil in itself to intend to keep oneself in good health, this intention becomes evil, if one intend health by means of something that is not naturally ordained for that purpose; for instance if one sought only bodily health by the sacrament of baptism, and the same applies to the marriage act in the question at issue.” (*Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 5, Reply to Objection 4)

The Holy Bible confirms the fact that God wants spouses to perform the marital act for the only purpose of procreation. The holy youth Tobias was commanded by almighty God through the Archangel Raphael to never perform the marital act for the sake of lust and that he shall be “**moved rather for love of children than for lust**,” so “**that in the seed of Abraham**” he “**mayest obtain a blessing in children**”. Tobias who was a holy and virtuous person consented to this admonishment by the holy angel and answered God in his prayer that “**not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity**”.

The Holy Bible, Tobias 6:22; 8:9 “And when the third night is past, thou shalt take

the virgin with the fear of the Lord, **moved rather for love of children than for lust**, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children... [Tobias said:] And now, Lord, thou knowest, that **not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity**, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.”

The holy youth Tobias approached his bride Sara after three days of prayer, not for fleshly lust but only for the love of posterity, having been instructed by the Archangel Raphael that to engage in the marital act he shall “be moved rather for love of children than for lust”.

According to God’s will, spouses are to engage in the marital act for the “love of posterity” (children), not for lust. No, contrary to what most people today say, the Holy Bible is clear that spouses are to come together “**only for the love of posterity**” if they want to please Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Word of God in the Bible is indeed true when it says that “**the devil has power**” over all spouses who come together for the purpose of gratifying their fleshly pleasures, giving “**themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding**”.

Tobias 6:16-17 “Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. **For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.**”

It is a divine law, a dogma of the faith (*de fide*), that the primary end of marriage is procreation (bearing children) and the education of children. Pope Pius XI decrees it “is beyond the power of any human law” to teach otherwise.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 8), Dec. 31, 1930: “To take away from man the natural and primeval right of marriage, to circumscribe in any way the principal ends of marriage laid down in the beginning by God Himself in the words ‘Increase and multiply,’ is beyond the power of any human law. ... This is also expressed succinctly in the [1917] Code of Canon Law [Canon 1013]: ‘The primary end [or purpose] of marriage is the procreation and the education of children.’”

A Practical Commentary on Canon 1013 explains that: “there can be no controversy over the primary object of marriage. The perpetuation of the human race is willed by the Creator, who from the creation of mankind appointed the means for this purpose... **The Holy Office condemned the opinion defended by some recent authors who**

deny that the procreation of children is the primary end of matrimony, and regard its secondary ends not subordinate to its primary end but independent of it. (April 1, 1944; *Acta Ap. Sedis*, XXXVI, 103.)

It could not be more clear from both the Natural Law as well as the teachings of the Church that: “The primary purpose of marriage is the procreation and education of children.” (*The 1917 Code of Canon Law*, Canon 1013) Therefore, it is heresy to teach that procreation and education of children is not the only primary end of marriage.

Objection: The Bible doesn't condemn birth control. Modern birth control methods were unknown in Bible times, and the Bible is, therefore, silent on the matter. The closest that Scripture comes to condemning birth control is Genesis chapter 38, the account of Judah's sons Er and Onan. Onan's motivation was selfish; he used Tamar for his own pleasure, but refused to perform his legal duty (from Deuteronomy 25:5-10) of creating an heir for his deceased brother. This passage (in Genesis 38) is often used as evidence that God does not approve of birth control. However, it was not the act of contraception that caused the Lord to put Onan to death as you say; it was Onan's selfish motives behind the action. God did not kill Onan for practicing contraception but because he refused to obey the Law from Deuteronomy 25:5-10 that instructed brothers to raise up seed for his dead brother. This fact proves that God doesn't directly condemn contraception in the Bible. Contraception, by definition, is merely the opposite of conception. It is not the use of contraception that is wrong or right. As we learned from Onan, it is the motivation behind the contraception that determines if it is right or wrong. Ultimately, a couple's motives for delaying childbearing, using contraception, or even having numerous children, are between them and God. Therefore, we can find no biblical admonition against the use of birth control in and of itself.

Answer: God's law in the Old Testament did not even command the death penalty for the person who refused to create heirs to his deceased brother. **The brother who refused this duty was, as a punishment, only to be publicly disgraced!**

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 “When brethren dwell together, and one of them dieth without children, the wife of the deceased shall not marry to another: but his brother shall take her, and raise up seed for his brother: And the first son he shall have of her, he shall call by his name, that his name be not abolished out of Israel. **But if he will not take his brother's wife, who by law belongeth to him, the woman shall go to the gate of the city, and call upon the ancients, and say: My husband's brother refuseth to raise up his brother's name in Israel: and will not take me to wife.** And they shall cause him to be sent for forthwith, and shall ask him. If he answer: I will not take her to wife: **The woman**

shall come to him before the ancients, and shall take off his shoe from his foot, and spit in his face, and say: So shall it be done to the man, that will not build up his brother's house: And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of the unshod.”

This bible verse shows us that disobeying the Law of the Old Testament that directed a man to marry his dead brother's wife in order to raise up seed for his brother, was not something that was a particularly serious infraction in the eyes of the Lord, for if God would have considered this act of disobedience as a great crime, He would have instituted a punishment that was much more severe than being only a little disgraced or mocked, which almost is no punishment at all.

According to *The Book of Genesis*, the reason for why Onan was killed was because: “*He knowing that the children should not be his, when he went in to his brother's wife, spilled his seed upon the ground, lest children should be born in his brother's name.*” Notice how clearly this biblical text shows that the reason Onan did this “**detestable thing**” was “**lest children should be born in his brother's name**”, *thus showing us that the act of performing the marital act while taking steps to hinder procreation is hated by God.* This absolutely proves that a person who performs the marital sexual act with an intention opposed to procreation – is condemned according to God's Holy Law.

Genesis 38:8-10 “Juda, therefore said to Onan his son: ‘Go in to thy brother's wife and marry her, that thou mayst raise seed to thy brother.’ He knowing that the children should not be his, when he went in to his brother's wife, spilled his seed upon the ground, **lest children should be born in his brother's name.** And therefore the Lord slew him, because he did a detestable thing.”

Therefore, it is abundantly clear from the Bible itself that Onan was not killed for his deed **of refusing to fulfill his duty to create heirs for his deceased brother**, as the protestants claim, since this act was only punished with a public disgrace (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). What deed then was Onan killed for? Obviously, **he was killed for the wicked and selfish deed of having sexual relations while practicing contraception; and for being against conception.** Truly, if Onan did not want to raise up heirs for his deceased brother, he should not have had sexual relations with her while pretending to fulfill the marital duty of procreating children (even though he did not); and obviously, he must not practice coitus interruptus while selfishly indulging in the sex act, since this is an act against nature.

God did not even ordain for a man to die or even be hurt if he refused to raise up seed for

his deceased brother according to the Old Testament Law, **but when Onan performed the actual marital sexual act without wishing to beget children, God instantly killed him in order to show us the hatred God have of those who do not excuse the marital sexual act with the absolutely necessary motive of procreation.**

Thus, the refusal to not raise up children for one's brother is not a very grave crime in the eyes of God as long as one does not perform the marital act, but performing the marital sexual act without wanting to have children is a very grave crime according to God's Holy Law. Since God foresaw the great evil and selfishness of many in the future (and especially in our own time) who were to practice contraceptive sexual acts, and in order to help future generations of Jews and Christians to abstain from all contraceptive acts: it is clear that God killed Onan to set an example for future generations.

Since God utterly detests the act of contraception, God also sometimes allows the evil demons who incite men and women to commit this act, to kill them when they consent to their temptations, as is recorded in the Book of Tobit, where the seven husbands of Sarah was killed; since they tried to perform the marital act for selfish and lustful reasons. As in the case from Tobit, it seems clear that since Onan wanted to selfishly and lustfully enjoy the sex act without intending having children, as God's holy law requires, that a demon, or the evil angel Asmodeus that kills lustful and wicked people, was permitted by God to slay him (cf. Tobias 3:8). Haydock commentary explains: "[Genesis 38] Ver. 10. *Slew him*, perhaps by the hand of *evil angels*, Psalm lxxvii. 49. Asmodeus, &c., who slew the libidinous husbands of Sara. (Tobias iii. 7[8].) (Menochius)"

The design of this institution of raising up seed for a brother – which was not originated by Moses, but came down from early times (Genesis 38:8) and is to be found amongst other nations than the Jews, and that even in the present day – was to preserve a family from becoming extinct and to secure the property of a family from passing into the hands of a stranger.

Thus, the claim that "*it was not the act of contraception that caused the Lord to put Onan to death; it was Onan's selfish motives behind the action*" is of course ludicrous and false, and is easily refuted not only from the Bible itself as we have seen, but also from the writings of the Fathers. We will quote only St. Augustine:

"As St. Augustine notes, '**Intercourse even with one's legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of offspring is prevented.**

Onan, the son of Judah, did this and the Lord killed him for it (Gen. 38:8-10)."

(Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* # 55; St. Augustine, *De Conjugiis Adulterinis*, Book II, Chapter 12)

Furthermore, this objection of excusing contraception is also condemned by the Holy Word of God in both an explicit and implicit way. Indeed, the Bible does have quite a lot to say about children. The Bible presents children as a gift from God (Genesis 4:1; Genesis 33:5), a heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3-5), a blessing from God (Luke 1:42), and a crown to the aged (Proverbs 17:6). God sometimes blesses barren women with children (Psalm 113:9; Genesis 21:1-3; 25:21-22; 30:1-2; 1 Samuel 1:6-8; Luke 1:7, 24-25). God forms children in the womb (Psalm 139:13-16). God knows children before their birth (Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15).

It's not a couple that decides for themselves whether God should send them new life or not as the biblical verses already provided proves, but this is wholly up to God and His holy will (Matthew 6:10).

Genesis 30:1-2 “And Rachel seeing herself without children, envied her sister, and said to her husband: ‘Give me children, otherwise I shall die.’ **And Jacob being angry with her, answered: ‘Am I as God, who hath deprived thee of the fruit of thy womb?’**”

We all know that God is the One who opens the womb, the One who killeth and maketh alive. “*The Lord also remembering Rachel, heard her, **and opened her womb.***” (Genesis 30:22) In truth, “*The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to hell, and bringeth back again.*” (1 Kings 2:6)

So why would a woman who desires to fulfill the will of God make a systematic effort to avoid God sending her a new life? What excuse could such a person possibly make for going out of her way to calculate how to have marital relations without getting pregnant with the child God was going to send? Why would a woman (or a man) who believes that God opens the womb try to avoid His opening of the womb by a meticulous and organized effort, involving birth control methods, charts, cycles or thermometers? The answer is that those who engage in such behavior as contraception selfishly turn from God (which is the essence of sin) and refuse to be open to His will.

God, and not man, is the only one that can lawfully decide whether a couple shall receive a child or not. Can you imagine what Jacob would have said to Rachel if she had discovered a new way to avoid “the Lord opening her womb?” He would probably have rebuked her as an infidel.

Objection: Natural Family Planning is a justifiable practice of birth control because it does

nothing to obstruct the natural power of procreation.

Answer: Natural Family Planning obstructs the primary end of marriage: the procreation and education of children. This makes the fact that NFP does nothing to obstruct the marital act itself irrelevant.

In order to quickly refute this *most common of all objections in favor of NFP*, it will be necessary to repeat the section from the beginning of this article.

Catholic dogma teaches us that the primary purpose of marriage (and the conjugal act) is the procreation and education of children.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 17), Dec. 31, 1930: “**The primary end of marriage is the procreation and the education of children.**”

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 54), Dec. 31, 1930: “Since, therefore, **the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural powers and *purpose* sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.”

Besides this primary purpose, there are also secondary purposes for marriage, such as mutual aid, the quieting of concupiscence and the cultivating of mutual love. **But these secondary purposes must always remain subordinate to the primary purpose (or end) of marriage (the procreation and education of children)**. This is the key point to remember in the discussion on NFP.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 59), Dec. 31, 1930: “For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial right there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider **SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN]** and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.”

Therefore, even though NFP does not directly interfere with the marital *act itself*, as its defenders love to stress, it makes no difference. **NFP is condemned because it subordinates the primary end (or purpose) of marriage and the marriage act (the procreation and education of children) to the secondary ends.**

NFP subordinates the primary end of marriage to other things, by deliberately attempting

to avoid children (i.e., to avoid the primary end) while having marital relations. NFP therefore inverts the order established by God Himself. It does the very thing that Pope Pius XI solemnly teaches may not lawfully be done. And this point **crushes** all of the arguments made by those who defend NFP; because all of the arguments made by those who defend NFP focus on the marriage act itself, while they blindly ignore the fact that it makes no difference if a couple does not interfere with the act itself *if they subordinate and thwart the primary PURPOSE of marriage*.

To summarize, therefore, the only difference between artificial contraception and NFP is that artificial contraception frustrates the *power* of the marital *act itself*, while NFP *frustrates its primary purpose* (by subordinating the procreation of children to other things).

Objection: I know that NFP is always wrong, except for certain reasons, and in those cases it is allowable.

Answer: Pope Pius XI specifically condemns all reasons and all excuses.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 54), Dec. 31, 1930: “**BUT NO REASON, HOWEVER GRAVE, MAY BE PUT FORWARD by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good.** Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, **those who in exercising it *deliberately* frustrate its natural powers and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.**”

No reason, however grave it may be, can make something that is intrinsically evil, such as contraception or NFP, to become good. NFP subordinates the primary purpose of the conjugal act (the procreation and education of children) to other things and is therefore evil and against nature and infallibly condemned by the Church, the Bible, and God. **No reason can make it good or lawful.**

And this brings us to another point. If NFP is not a sin – if it is simply “natural,” as they say – then why can’t married couples use NFP during the whole marriage and have zero children? If NFP is not a sin, then all women are perfectly free to use this method of birth control to phase out of existence all children so that not even one is born! But basically all of the defenders of NFP would admit that it would be immoral and gravely sinful to use NFP to avoid all new life. But when they make this admission they are admitting that NFP is a sin; otherwise (which God may forbid) let

them confess that it can be used by all couples for any reason to avoid all children.

Objection: Everyone admits that “Natural Family Planning” can be used to help a woman achieve a pregnancy. Therefore, the same method can be used to avoid pregnancy.

Answer: There is nothing wrong with achieving a pregnancy.

If a couple is using Natural Family Planning to gain a pregnancy it is lawful, because in this case they are trying to fulfill the primary end of marriage (the procreation and education of children). If a couple is using Natural Family Planning to avoid pregnancy it is unlawful, because in this case they are trying to avoid the primary end of marriage (the procreation and education of children) while selfishly engaging in the marital act.

Objection: In *Casti Connubii* itself, Pope Pius XI teaches that spouses can engage in the marital act during known infertile periods and not commit sin. Spouses who use Natural Family Planning attempt to only have marital relations during the known infertile periods, thus they commit no sin.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*: “Nor are those considered as acting against nature who, in the married state, use their right in the proper manner, although on account of natural reasons either of time or of certain defects, new life cannot be brought forth. For in matrimony as well as in the use of matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivation of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider, **SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [PROCREATION OF CHILDREN]** and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.”

Answer: It’s permissible to engage in the marital act during the known infertile periods, **SO LONG AS CONCEPTION IS NOT DELIBERATELY FRUSTRATED BY AN ORGANIZED EFFORT**.

Yes, Pope Pius XI taught that married couples could use their marriage right in the infertile periods of the wife (or when there is a defect of nature or age which prevents new life from being conceived). But he did not teach that they could designedly restrict the marital act ONLY to the infertile periods to avoid a pregnancy, as in Natural Family Planning. (Although it is not sinful to have relations during the known infertile periods of the woman, it is still best to remain chaste during this time period in order to nurture virtue and holiness.)

Contraception or NFP does not just subordinate the primary end of childbearing to the quenching of concupiscence, but it eliminates the primary end altogether by the spouses' refusal to fulfill the primary end or purpose of marriage while they are performing the marital act for purely selfish reasons.

And this is why, in the very passage quoted above, Pope Pius XI reiterates that all use of the marital right – including when new life cannot be brought forth due to time or nature – must keep the secondary ends of marriage subordinate to the primary end! This teaching is the deathblow to NFP, as NFP itself is the subordination of the primary end of marriage (the procreation and education of children) to other things (lust and the avoiding of children). So, in summary, the passage above does not teach NFP, but merely enunciates the principle that married couples may use their conjugal rights at any time.

It is not a sin of contraception to engage in the marital act during the known infertile period, provided the known fertile period has not been deliberately frustrated in order to prevent conception, either by inhibiting it by the use of birth control pills or some other contraception method or avoiding it by the use of Natural Family Planning. If the spouses know conception cannot take place, and they did not deliberately plan to prevent conception, they can perform the marital act without committing any sin of contraception provided they desire having children. This does not rule out other sins that can occur during the marital act, such as using it to excite or inflame lust instead of quelling lust, or using it in an unnatural and abusive manner. These sins can be committed even when childbearing is a goal of the marital act.

Therefore, even when the spouses engage in the marital act to quell concupiscence during known infertile periods, they must still desire and hope to have children if God wills they should have children. The act must still have as its primary goal the conception of children, which means to desire and be open to all new life and not hindering it from taking place in any way or form, even though the spouses believe conception cannot occur. In this way the quelling of concupiscence is subordinate to the primary end of the act, which is childbearing.

Objection: The sin of contraception is committed when physical devices are used during the marital act so as to prevent conception. NFP does not use a physical device during the marital act to prevent conception, thus the marital act is left open to conception if God so wills it. Therefore, Natural Family Planning is not contraception.

Answer: All methods of contraception are open to conception.

Just as the use of Onanism and Birth Control Pills are no guarantee that conception will not occur, because it does, so also, Natural Family Planning is no guarantee that conception will not occur, because it does. They are all open to conception if God so wills it. **The sin of contraception has thus nothing whatsoever to do with the fact that God can make conception happen, in spite of the spouses' deliberate plan not to make it happen. The mortal sin of contraception lies in the intent of the spouses, not whether conception actually happens or not.**

All marital acts, no matter what contraception method is used, are open to conception if God so wills it. God opens barren wombs past the childbearing years. If the spouses' Natural Family Planning succeeds according to their desires and careful planning, then, conception will not take place when they engage in the marital act. I say if it succeeds, because no form of contraception is 100 percent guaranteed. Even men who had vasectomies and women who had their tubes tied or hysterectomies still conceive children sometimes. The fact that conception can take place, even after spouses had planned to prevent it, does not allow the spouses the excuse that the act is still open to conception. Because, according to their premeditated plan and intent it is their hope that the marital act is not open to conception, and that is where the mortal sin lies.

For example, is a man who plots to murder another man innocent if an accident prevents him from murdering the man? Even though the murder did not occur, he is guilty because he wanted to murder him. Mortal sin is committed in the intent, even if for some reason the crime cannot be carried out. A married man desires to commit adultery with a woman. He attempts to carry out his plan, but God thwarts it, and he does not succeed. Is this man innocent because his plan and attempted act of adultery failed? No! He is guilty of the mortal sin of adultery because adultery was in his heart. He would have committed it if God did not prevent it. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us this truth many times, "*I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (Matthew 5:28) If after the man failed, he continued to plan and attempt to commit adultery with the woman, he would be guilty of mortal sin every time, whether the plan and attempt succeeds or not.

What is a plan? A plan is the words of a man that proceed from his mouth that come forth from his heart that he seeks to put into action. The root of every plan is in the heart. What is in the heart of spouses who plan to use physical contraceptive devices during the marital act, or plan to withdraw so as to make conception improbable, or plan to have marital relations only during the infertile period? In the heart of these spouses is the desire to have marital relations to satisfy their vile and perverse lust while having deliberately planned to prevent conception. Pope Pius XI in *Casti Connubii* describes what is in their heart,

“Offspring... they say is to be carefully avoided by married people... by frustrating the marriage act... [They] *deliberately* frustrate its natural power and purpose.” Sin originates from what is in the heart. I ask spouses who practice NFP, “What is in your heart when you practice NFP?” While engaging in the marital act, after having planned to do so only during the infertile period, ask yourself in the heat of your lust, “Am I not committing this very act with the explicit, deliberate, premeditated, planned intention of preventing conception while fulfilling my lust?” If your wish or prayer is to have relations and that conception does not occur, then you committed the mortal sin of contraception.

St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence* 1:17, A.D. 419: **“It is one thing not to lie [with one’s wife] except with the sole will of generating [children]: this has no fault.** It is another to seek the pleasure of the flesh in lying, although within the limits of marriage: this has venial fault [that is, venial sin as long as one is not against procreation]. I am supposing that then, **although you are not lying for the sake of procreating offspring,** you are not for the sake of lust obstructing their procreation by an evil prayer or an evil deed. Those who do this, although they are called husband and wife, are not [since they commit adultery in their marriage and a mortal sin]; nor do they retain any reality of marriage, but with a respectable name cover a shame [of an adulterous connection, which means that they sin mortally against the Sacrament of Marriage]. They give themselves away, indeed, when they go so far as to expose their children who are born to them against their will; for they hate to nourish or to have those whom they feared to bear. Therefore a dark iniquity rages against those whom they have unwillingly borne, and with open iniquity this comes to light; a hidden shame is demonstrated by manifest cruelty. Sometimes this lustful cruelty, or cruel lust, comes to this, that they even procure poisons of sterility, and, if these do not work, extinguish and destroy the fetus in some way in the womb, preferring that their offspring die before it lives, or if it was already alive in the womb to kill it before it was born. Assuredly if both husband and wife are like this, they are not married, [since they commit adultery in their marriage and a mortal sin against God] and if they were like this from the beginning they come together not joined in matrimony but in seduction. If both are not like this, I dare to say that either the wife is in a fashion the harlot of her husband or he is an adulterer with his own wife.”

All one needs to know if the sin of contraception has been committed is to ask oneself while engaging in the marital act, “Do I desire and hope conception takes place if God should grant it?” If you answer no, you committed the mortal sin of contraception. If you answered yes, while having planned by NFP for conception not to take place, you add a mortal sin of lying to the mortal sin of contraception. For if you really wanted conception

to take place you would not have planned to prevent it.

It is the unwillingness to conceive a child while engaging in the marital act that constitutes the mortal sin of contraception, and if there was a premeditated plan to prevent conception, then the mortal sin is committed before the act as soon as the plan is consented to.

St. Augustine, *Against Faustus* 15:7, A.D. 400: “You [Manicheans] make your Auditors adulterers of their wives when they take care lest the women with whom they copulate conceive. They take wives according to the laws of matrimony by tablets announcing that the marriage is contracted to procreate children; and then, fearing because of your law [against childbearing]... they copulate in a shameful union only to satisfy lust for their wives. **They are unwilling to have children, on whose account alone marriages are made.** How is it, then, that you are not those prohibiting marriage, as the Apostle predicted of you so long ago [1 Tim. 4:1-4], when you try to take from marriage what marriage is? When this [childbearing] is taken away [by a deliberate plan], husbands are shameful lovers, wives are harlots, bridal chambers are brothels, fathers-in-law are pimps.”

Objection: Natural Family Planning (NFP) can be both sinful and not sinful. It is sinful if it is used as a method of contraception, which is to stop the chance of conceiving because children are not desired. It is not sinful if it is used because of a medical condition, such as the wife’s reproductive system is damaged placing her and her infant in danger of death if she was to conceive and bear children. In this case NFP is not used to prevent conception because children are not desired, but to prevent the possible death of the wife and infant.

Answer: The medical condition is no excuse.

Natural Family Planning is contraception. Therefore, it cannot be practiced for any reason. Pope Pius XI condemned contraception for any and all reason, no matter how grave, **specifically mentioning the medical excuse** of “difficulties... on the part of the mother” and the excuse of “difficulties... on the part of family circumstances.”

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (#’s 53-54), Dec. 31, 1930: “Others say that they cannot on the one hand remain continent nor on the other can they have children **because of the difficulties**, whether **on the part of the mother** or on the part of family circumstances. But, **no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good.** Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined

primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural *power* and *purpose*, sin against nature, and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.”

The thing that he is talking about that is “intrinsically against nature” is contraception and all the various forms and disguises it takes. If the mother and/or infant would be in danger of death due to pregnancy, and provided the couple doesn’t want to risk the death of the mother and/or infant, then the spouses must refrain from the marital act, not just during the fertile period but also the infertile period. Pope Pius XI refers to this as “virtuous continence.” Or, if they do engage in the marital act, they must not deliberately plan to prevent conception or deliberately plan to have relations only during known infertile periods. They must desire to have children if God wills they should have children, and they must bear the consequences of the wife and infant’s possible death if the wife gets pregnant, while favoring the life of neither if pregnancy occurs; and most importantly of all, they must never perform an abortion or in anyway murder the child in favor of the life of the mother in case a dangerous pregnancy occurs, but must risk the life of both while favoring the life of neither. Pope Pius XI sums this up as follows:

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 64), Dec. 31, 1930: “As to the ‘medical and therapeutic indication’ to which, using their own words, we have made reference, Venerable Brethren, however much we may pity the mother whose health and even life is imperiled in the performance of the duty allotted to her by nature, nevertheless, what could ever be a sufficient reason for excusing in any way the direct murder of the innocent? This is precisely what we are dealing with here. Whether inflicted upon the mother or upon the child, it is against the precept of God and the law of nature: ‘Thou shalt not kill’. The life of each is equally sacred, and no one has the power, not even the public authority, to destroy it... Holy Mother Church very well understands and clearly appreciates all that is said regarding the health of the mother and the danger to her life. And who would not grieve to think of these things? Who is not filled with the greatest admiration when he sees a mother risking her life with heroic fortitude, that she may preserve the life of the offspring which she has conceived? God alone, all bountiful and all merciful as He is, can reward her for the fulfillment of the office allotted to her by nature, and will assuredly repay her in a measure full to overflowing.”

Further, scripture teaches that a woman shall be saved through child-bearing (if she is Catholic and in the state of grace). Therefore, a good Catholic woman has absolutely nothing to fear from child-bearing, even if her life is threatened: “**Yet she shall be saved through child-bearing**; if she continue in faith, and love, and sanctification,

with sobriety.” (1 Timothy 2:15)

If the mother or infant’s life is threatened by child bearing, then either the marital act is abstained from altogether by virtuous continence, or it is done with the hope of conception if God should grant it, being ready to bear the consequences of the death of the mother or the infant.

Objection: But we simply cannot afford more children, therefore we must use NFP. Our situation is clearly an exception...

Answer: “Difficulties” on the part of “family circumstances” and “sufferings of those parents who, in extreme want, experience great difficulty in rearing their children” are no excuses whatsoever for practicing contraception (*Casti Connubii*).

In reality, the economic excuse is nothing new; in fact, the Church has had to deal with it for thousands of years. For instance, Lactantius, an early Christian author, wrote in 307 A.D. on this very subject.

Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 6:20: “[Some] complain of the scantiness of their means, and allege that they have not enough for bringing up more children, as though, in truth, their means were in [their] power... or God did not daily make the rich poor and the poor rich. Wherefore, if any one on any account of poverty shall be unable to bring up children, it is better to abstain from relations with his wife.”

In more recent times, Pope Pius XI specifically mentions the economic excuse and condemns it, along with all people who defend it.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (#’s 60-61), Dec. 31, 1930: “We are deeply touched by the sufferings of those parents **who, *in extreme want, experience great difficulty in rearing their children.* However, they should take care lest the calamitous state of their external affairs should be the occasion for a much more calamitous error. **No difficulty can arise that justifies putting aside the law of God which prohibits all acts intrinsically evil.** There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the Grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted. This truth of Christian faith is expressed by the teaching of the Council of Trent: ‘Let no one be so rash as to assert that which the Fathers of the Council have placed under anathema, namely that there are precepts of God impossible for the just to observe.**

God does not ask the impossible, but by His commands, instructs you to do what you are able, to pray for what you are not able that He may help you.”

This condemns the extreme poverty excuse as well as all excuses. Pope Pius XI teaches that spouses who do not desire conception to take place during conjugal relations because of poverty, even if it is extreme, have no faith in God and that He can provide for them and regulate the size of their family, and they have also committed a mortal sin if they tried to prevent, or are against (either by thought or deed) the conception of a child in anyway, which is an intrinsically evil act.

He also warns that God will curse spouses for committing this mortal sin, and thus their problems will only get worse without God to help them. To their calamitous state (for example, extreme poverty), they would have added a calamitous error, mortal sin, and thus bring down God’s wrath upon themselves. For Pope Pius XI warns: “However, they should take care lest the calamitous state of their external affairs should be the occasion for a much more calamitous error.”

Objection: Pope Pius XII taught that NFP is lawful for at least certain grave reasons. So you have no right to condemn it, as he was the Pope.

Answer: Even Popes can be wrong in their fallible capacity.

It is true that Pope Pius XII taught that Natural Family Planning is lawful for certain grave reasons in a series of *fallible* speeches in the 1950’s. However, this does not justify NFP. Pius XII’s speeches were fallible, and were therefore vulnerable to error.

In studying papal errors throughout history in preparation for its declaration of papal infallibility, the theologians at Vatican I found that over 40 popes held wrong theological views. In a notorious case of papal error, Pope John XXII held the false view that the just of the Old Testament don’t receive the Beatific Vision until after the General Judgment (and this false view was later infallibly rejected by the Church and condemned as a heresy after he died, although the Pope was not obstinate nor condemned himself during his life). And many other errors have been held by various Popes, and also great scandals have been caused by many bad Popes throughout the Church’s 2000 year long history, as can be consulted in *The History of the Popes* book series. But none of these errors were taught by popes from the Chair of St. Peter in an infallible manner, just like Pius XII’s speech to Italian midwives is not a declaration from the Chair of St. Peter.

One of the most notorious cases of papal error in Church history is the “Synod of the

Corpse” of 897. This was where the dead body of Pope Formosus – who by all accounts was a holy and devoted pope – was condemned after his death by Pope Stephen VII for a number of supposed violations of canon law. Pope Sergius III was also in favor of the judgment, while later Popes Theodore II and John IX opposed it. This should show us very clearly that **not every decision, speech, opinion or judgment of a pope is infallible.**

Those who think that they are safe following something simply because it was endorsed by pre-Vatican II theologians or by Pope Pius XII in his fallible capacity are gravely mistaken. Even though the explosion of the Great Apostasy occurred at Vatican II, its momentum by a departure from the Faith was well in motion prior to Vatican II, as is evidenced from many pre-Vatican II books which promoted condemned heresy and modernism. Most of the priests had already fallen into heresy in the 1950’s, as is proven by the fact that almost all of them accepted and embraced the new religion of the Vatican II Church when it was imposed.

The bottom-line remains that it is an infallible teaching of the Catholic Church that the primary end of marriage (and the conjugal act) is the procreation and education of children. This is a *de fide* teaching of the Catholic Church; it is a dogma. Natural Family Planning subordinates the primary end of marriage and the conjugal act to other things and is therefore gravely sinful and forbidden.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 8), Dec. 31, 1930: “To take away from man the natural and primeval right of marriage, to circumscribe in any way the principal ends of marriage laid down in the beginning by God Himself in the words ‘Increase and multiply,’ is beyond the power of any human law. ... This is also expressed succinctly in the Code of Canon Law ‘The primary end of marriage is the procreation and the education of children.’”

Objection: Pope Paul VI also taught that NFP is lawful in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Surely, two Popes successively teaching the same thing on matters of morals cannot be wrong. **God would not allow them to teach wrong.** Therefore, NFP is not wrong.

Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (# 16), July 25, 1968: “... married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system **and engage in marital intercourse *only* during those times that are infertile, thus controlling birth** in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which We have just explained.”

Answer: Yes, Antipope Paul VI explained correctly that NFP is birth control when he promoted it in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, as we saw above.

And regarding the objection that God would not allow errors or even heresies to be embraced by men in the Church, we must consider the following prophetic words from the Bible: “*there must be also heresies: that they also, who are approved, may be made manifest among you.*” (1 Corinthians 11:16-19) Haydock Commentary explains: “*There must be also heresies: By reason of the pride and perversity of man’s heart; not by God’s will or appointment; who nevertheless draws good out of this evil, manifesting, by that occasion, who are the good and firm Christians, [and who are not,] and making their faith more remarkable. (Challoner)*”

Despite the Magisterial teaching which condemns “Natural Family Planning”, simple logic will tell Catholics that it’s wrong. If the Church has condemned artificial contraception because it prevents the conception of offspring, why would it be permissible to do the same thing by means of a different method? In truth, Holy Scripture itself could not be more clear when it says that: “*thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, **moved rather for love of children than for lust**, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayst obtain a blessing in children.*” (Tobias 6:22)

Paul VI’s endorsement of “natural” birth control, or NFP (as though there were something *natural* about constantly taking temperatures, consulting charts and jumping through other such hoops to determine the infertile periods), **is not the official position of the Catholic Church, but the official and accepted position of the heretical Vatican II sect.**

The bottom-line remains that it is an infallible teaching of the Catholic Church that the primary end of marriage (and the conjugal act) is the procreation and education of children. This is a *de fide* teaching of the Catholic Church; it is a dogma. **No Pope or law can change this dogma because dogmas never change. Dogmas are thus unchangeable, eternal truths revealed by God through scripture, the Natural Law and the Popes through their infallible capacity from the Chair of St. Peter; and they must be believed by all under pain of heresy and mortal sin and no one can ever deviate from these laws and truths without losing his faith.**

Pope Pius X, *Lamentabile*, The Errors of the Modernists, July 3, 1907, #22: “**The dogmas which the Church professes as revealed are not truths fallen from heaven**, but they are a kind of interpretation of religious facts, which the

human mind by a laborious effort prepared for itself.” – **CONDEMNED STATEMENT by Pope Pius X.**

As we can see here, **dogmas are truths fallen from heaven which cannot possibly contain error.** To better illustrate the point that dogmas can never change, consider the following example: The Catholic Church or a Pope could never officially hold or teach that which is against nature, such as the secular heresy that abortion is a human “right” or that homosexuality is “natural”. Similarly, a Pope could never proclaim as an infallible dogma (a dogma that must be believed by all the faithful under pain of heresy and mortal sin) any doctrine that would contradict an already established dogma of the Catholic Faith, such as a “dogma” that would deny the Divinity of Jesus Christ. That is common sense. Therefore, any “Pope” or so-called “Catholic Church” that would hold to such an error or declare such a “dogma” **would not be Catholic or the Catholic Church, but a heretic (an antipope) and a non-Catholic Church.**

Catholic Prophecy foretold that there would be a Great Apostasy and a counterfeit Church in the Last Days. Catholic prophecy and the New Testament paint a picture of the last days as a massive spiritual deception aimed to deceive those who intend to practice the true faith (the Catholic Faith), and which leaves the Earth with almost no one maintaining the true faith. So it is not at all impossible or strange that God would allow such a deception to occur. In fact, it was specifically predicted to occur. Did not Our Lord Himself prophesy that the true Faith would be almost extinguished when he comes back the second time to judge the living and the dead? Yes he did. ***“But yet the Son of man, when he cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on Earth?”*** (Luke 18:8)

The exact same message is heard in the *Church approved Revelation and Prophecy of Our Lady of La Salette*, which prophesies the exact same situation, warning us that: ***“Rome will lose the Faith and become the seat of the Anti-Christ... the Church will be in eclipse [meaning that the Catholic Church will not be visible to most men due to something being in its way (i.e., the Vatican II sect) obscuring its sight].”*** (*Our Lady of La Salette*, Sept. 19, 1846)

Henry Edward Cardinal Manning, *The Present Crisis of the Holy See*, 1861, London: Burns and Lambert, pp. 88-90: “The apostasy of the city of Rome from the vicar of Christ and its destruction by Antichrist may be thoughts so new to many Catholics, that I think it well to recite the text of theologians of greatest repute. First Malvenda, who writes expressly on the subject, states as the opinion of Ribera, Gaspar Melus, Biegas, Suarez, **Bellarmino** and Bosius that **Rome shall apostatize from the faith, drive away the Vicar of Christ** and return to its ancient paganism. ...

Then the Church shall be scattered, driven into the wilderness, and shall be for a time, as it was in the beginning, invisible hidden in catacombs, in dens, in mountains, in lurking places; for a time it shall be swept, as it were from the face of the earth. **Such is the universal testimony of the Fathers of the early Church.**”

Thus, this is the kind of spiritual deception we’re talking about here—that would occur in the last days, in our days. Mortal sins such as NFP (which is no different from artificial contraception in intent), and other sins, especially sexual sins, and immodest dress, are undoubtedly major causes for why most people have been entirely abandoned by God.

2 Peter 2:1-5 “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there shall be among you lying teachers, who shall bring in sects of perdition, and deny the Lord who bought them: bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their riotousnesses, through whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you. Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their perdition slumbereth not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but delivered them, drawn down by infernal ropes to the lower hell, unto torments, to be reserved unto judgment: And spared not the original world, but preserved Noe, the eighth person, the preacher of justice, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.”

In the Gospel, Jesus Christ not only informs us that in the last days the true faith would hardly be found on the Earth, but that “in the holy place” itself there will be “the abomination of desolation” (Mt. 24:15), and a deception so profound that, if it were possible, even the elect would be deceived (Mt. 24:24). St. Paul says that the man of sin will sit “in the temple of God” (2 Thess. 2:4). The Apocalypse describes in detail the Whore of Babylon, a false bride (i.e. a Counter Church) which arises in the last days in the city of seven hills (Rome) and which spreads spiritual fornication all over the Earth. The fact that the last days are characterized by a spiritual deception intending to ensnare Catholics proves, rather than disproves, the authenticity of the Catholic Church.

For more information, please consult the texts: [The Great Apostasy and a counterfeit Church predicted in the New Testament and in Catholic Prophecy](#); and: [Is the Vatican II sect the Whore of Babylon prophesied in the Apocalypse?](#)

These articles gives the stunning evidence that the Vatican II sect, a counterfeit Church which opposes the true Catholic Church in the last days, is the Whore of Babylon prophesied in Apocalypse chapters 17 and 18.

Pope Leo XIII's Supernatural Revelation is also a great example and proof that the Vatican II Church is not the Catholic Church: [Pope Leo XIII's supernatural experience and Original Prayer to St. Michael prophesying an apostasy in Rome in the last days](#)

Now, Paul VI was the man who claimed to be the head of the Catholic Church from June 21, 1963 to August 6, 1978. He was the man who promulgated the [Second Vatican Council](#) and the [New Mass](#). Paul VI solemnly ratified all 16 documents of Vatican II. It is not possible for a true Pope of the Catholic Church to solemnly ratify teachings that are heretical. The fact that Paul VI did solemnly ratify the heretical teachings of Vatican II proves that Paul VI was not a true pope, but an antipope.

It's important to keep in mind that Paul VI was the one who gave the world the [New Mass](#), the other new "sacraments," and the heretical teachings of Vatican II (i.e. religious liberty, salvation outside the Church, esteem for false religions, prayer and divine worship with false religions, NFP, etc). If you go to the New Mass or embrace the teachings of Vatican II, **the confidence that you have that these things are legitimate is directly connected to the confidence that you have that Paul VI was a true Catholic Pope.**

You can read an expose of the amazing heresies of Antipope Paul VI in the article: [The Heresies of Paul VI](#). The article will show, from his official speeches and writings, that Paul VI was a complete apostate who was not even remotely Catholic. All of the official speeches and writings of the men who claim to be pope are contained in the Vatican's weekly newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*. The Vatican has reprinted issues of their newspaper from April 4, 1968 to the present. From those speeches, one will see that Paul VI was not a true pope because of the irrefutable and undeniable evidence that he was a complete heretic and an apostate.

Objection: The Pope in his teaching to the universal Church on matters of Faith and morals cannot lead us astray. Pope Pius XII placed the teaching to midwives in the *Acta*, thus making it universal, since it was sent to all the bishops of the world. An honest person would realize that Catholics learn from the Pope, and submit to his judgments. If you refuse to believe Pius XII's authoritative teaching, it is the matter for mortal sin. You should not be quick to judge a bad motive on Catholics who submit to the Pope. It is necessary for one's salvation to submit to the Pope, and you are advocating rebellion. Pope Pius XII's speech to midwives is an authoritative statement. Learn from the Pope, love the Pope, and never dissent from the Pope. There is no holiness where there is dissent from the Pope. The Pope's teaching on the lawful use of the sterile times was not an ex Cathedra pronouncement,

therefore it is not infallibly true, but it is infallibly safe since he made it universal. All teachings of the Fathers must be understood and interpreted through the teaching of the magisterium. Our Lord commissioned St. Peter and his successors. The Papal office is an office created by God Himself, and it cannot fail and those that sit in that office cannot lead Catholics astray. The office protects the Pope. Pope Pius XI and Pius XII have spoken on this issue, the matter is settled. To rebel against the Pope's teaching is to foster schism. You need to submit and obey by believing what these Pope's have taught. A refusal to assent to Pius XII's teaching is mortally sinful; and it is schism, and therefore you are outside the Church.

Answer: It is an easily proven fact of history that fallible people in the Church as well as fallible statements by the Popes can lead us astray and teach error. Indeed, even the Pope himself is only infallible when speaking from the Chair of St. Peter.

First, Pope Pius XII's statement is not an authoritative statement as this objection falsely claims. In fact, it is not even an encyclical! **Rather, all it is is simply a heretical and fallible speech to midwives that also directly contradicts the Holy Bible, Apostolic Tradition, as well as the unanimous teaching of the Popes, Fathers, and Saints of the Catholic Church from the beginning, as we have seen in this article. In truth, nothing more than this should be needed to be said to an honest person than to point out to him *that the Church has always rejected every form of birth-control for 2000 years.*** Furthermore, in contrast to Pope Pius XII's *fallible statement* concerning NFP, Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Casti Connubii* **is an infallible declaration** from the Chair of St. Peter that directly condemns as a mortal sin all kinds of birth control, which of course includes NFP.

Second, a fallible statement cannot be "*infallibly safe*"! That a normal person even makes such a directly contradictory statement in the same sentence makes one question the sanity or honesty of those people who make this argument. Indeed, this perverse and false argument could not be made more false or erroneous even if one tried to.

It is also a known fact that Pope John XXII taught heresy in a sermon, yet this false argument denies that Pope Pius XII could do the same in his speech to midwives, even though his speech to midwives is just as fallible and in no way different from Pope John XXII's fallible, condemned and heretical sermon. If Pope John XXII could teach heresy in a sermon not intended to be the universal or infallible teaching of the Catholic Church, then so could Pope Pius XII in his speech to midwives that was also not intended to be made universal and infallible even in the first place. It is clearly evil and false to claim otherwise and to give the Pope infallibility outside of infallibility — which obviously is a

ridiculous and false argument — and in this way make his statement out to be more than what it really is.

Third, it is claimed that Pope Pius XII placed the teaching to midwives in the *Acta* (the Vatican’s official organ for publishing authentic documents and speeches) thus making it universal, since it was sent to all the bishops of the world. But where is the proof that Pope Pius XII ever did this? We have never seen this proof nor has it ever been provided by anyone so far even though we have asked for it specifically; hence that it is still not even certain or a fact that it was ever put in the *Acta* at all.

But even if it was put in the *Acta*, it is still ***not known that the Pope himself put it there***. Anyone of his subjects with the authority to do so could have put it in the *Acta* themselves without the pope knowing it or even intending it. Indeed, if the heretics who use this false objection cannot even prove that the Pope himself put it in the *Acta*, then their supposed “evidence” is even more worthless.

But even if Pope Pius XII himself did put it in the *Acta*, and this could be proven, **the evidence would still be fallible! That’s the point. *It’s fallible***. Indeed, this argument even admits that the evidence is *fallible*, yet, in its sheer stupidity, it perversely makes it out to become “*infallibly safe*”, teaching that: “*The Pope’s teaching on the lawful use of the sterile times was **NOT an ex Cathedra pronouncement, therefore IT IS NOT INFALLIBLY TRUE, but it is infallibly safe since he made it universal.***”

Just because a teaching of a Pope is universal doesn’t make it *infallible* or *infallibly safe*. Infallibility must also be invoked by the Pope (and the Pope must meet certain requirements) in order for his teaching to become “*infallibly safe*”. Otherwise it is always liable to error. Thus, since a Pope is only infallible when [speaking from the Chair of St. Peter and when fulfilling certain conditions](#) — and since popes have been allowed to fall into errors in the past by God in their fallible capacity — this proves that it’s entirely possible for a valid Pope to teach grave errors or even heresy on faith or moral matters in his *fallible* capacity, and that it’s possible God could allow such a thing to occur in the last days.

If Pius XII’s speech to midwives is *not infallible*, then it cannot be “*infallibly safe*”. How can something be “*infallibly safe*” when it **so obviously contradicts 2000 years of Catholic teaching and tradition, in addition to the *infallible* decree in the encyclical *Casti Connubii* of Pope Pius XI, that condemns as a mortal sin all forms of birth-control, which of course includes NFP?** No heretic has ever been able to answer this question or with any Church teaching. All they ever say is that *it cannot*

be wrong and that *God could or would not allow such an error to be taught*. **However, as we have already seen, this can indeed happen and God has allowed it to happen. In fact, it was even foretold that it would happen in the last days, but the heretics just refuse to believe it in this case since they want to believe in and defend this vile doctrine.**

The fact that God would allow the Popes, Fathers and Saints of the Church to teach for about 2000 years that all forms of birth control (which includes NFP) is mortally sinful, and that thus those who are using this false argument about NFP have to hold that the whole Church erred in 2000 years, in addition to having to argue that the infallible decree of Pope Pius XI in *Casti Connubii* is false, or that it doesn't mean what it actually says when it teaches that no excuse (not even starvation or death) can be used to prevent procreation, does not seem to move these bad willed people one bit, sad to say.

Again, a *fallible* statement (Pope Pius XII's Speech to midwives) cannot contradict an *infallible* decree of the Catholic Church (*Casti Connubii* and the *unanimous consent of the Fathers*). Yet, this is the most common and dishonest tactic used by the heretics, that is, that they always cling to the *fallible*, presenting it as if it outweighs or precedes the *infallible*. **Only a faithless heretic would even try to argue against the *infallible* dogmas of the Church with *fallible* speeches or texts that prove nothing. But this evil tactic is so common and persistent among the false traditionalist groups that it's almost impossible to get through to them. Only a condemned person would fail to understand this or refuse to see it when it can be proven that popes in the past have taught heresies and been wrong in many instances. In truth, to make *fallible* out to become *infallibly safe* is one of the most perverse, evil and false arguments that we have heard so far in defense of this heresy.**

Those people who perversely want to argue that God approves of birth control or of methods that encourages people to try to avoid God sending them new life, are nothing less than sacrilegious blasphemers and mortal enemies to God's Holy and Chaste Word in the Bible: "*And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, [children] in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.*" (The Holy Bible, Tobias 8:9)

Fourth, concerning the statement that: "*The Papal office... cannot fail and those that sit in that office cannot lead Catholics astray. The office protects the Pope.*" It is a fact that God has allowed a Pope (in his fallible capacity) to teach error and to lead Catholics astray in our days—the last days—mainly because people have rejected Him, His dogmas and the Natural Law written in their hearts. And since they love the world and the pleasures of the

world more than they love God (2 Timothy 3:1-5), God has rightly rejected them.

Is it reasonable to believe that God would have allowed His Church to be eclipsed like this by the Whore of Babylon (the Vatican II sect) unless the majority of Catholics were already bad or displeasing to Him? Of course not. Indeed, we learn from Jacinta herself – the Prophetess of Fatima – that even before Vatican II, almost all people were in a state of damnation; and it is just a fact that the people of that time were many times more virtuous than the “Catholics” of our own time. “**Jacinta, what are you thinking of?**” Jacinta, the prophetess and seer of Fatima replied: “**About the war which will come. So many people will die, and almost all of them will go to hell!**” Consider that this statement by Jacinta was made *before* the Vatican II revolution. And many Catholic nations participated in the war. Yet almost all Catholics were damned. Are you any better than they were?

Some things that God has permitted to occur in His Church before the Great Apostasy, among other things have been: 1) a universal Arian crisis where about 98% of all bishoprics became Arian and almost everyone who claimed to be a Catholic became Arian; 2) a Great Western Schism lasting 39 years—Massive confusion, multiple antipopes, antipopes in Rome, an antipope recognized by all the cardinals; and 3) bad priests, bad bishops, bad popes giving bad examples, causing scandal and teaching grave errors and even heresies later condemned by the Church, and other bad people in the Church in general that has led people astray by their evil teachings and bad examples.

In truth, if one doesn't have dogmatic teaching backing up one's assertions, one shouldn't say what God **would** or **would not** allow to happen in the Great Apostasy, or that He would not allow a faithless, godless people that rejects Him, and that loves pleasure more than they love Him, to *receive the fruits of their sins* and their *own evil ways* (Proverbs 1:31; Proverbs 14:14), just as they *desired* (2 Timothy 3:1-5) and in fact *deserves* as a recompense for their evil crimes (Proverbs 1:25).

That most people have rejected the Faith (and the Natural Law) is proven by Our Lord's words in Luke 18:8, where He even questions if anyone will have the faith when He comes back to judge the world: “*But yet the Son of man, when he cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on earth?*”

Fifth, Do not let yourself be deceived by the lie that if you reject Pius XII's *fallible* and *erroneous* speech to midwives (which is in no way different from John XXII's heretical and condemned sermon), **this means you reject the Church and commit mortal sin!** The objection said: “*If you refuse to believe Pius XII's authoritative teaching, it is the*

matter for mortal sin. ... You need to submit and obey by believing what these Pope's have taught. A refusal to assent to Pius XII's teaching is mortally sinful; and it is schism, and therefore you are outside the Church." We have already seen that the Church dogmatically teaches that no one is allowed in anyway to deviate from the Church's infallible and official teachings, and that not even the Pope himself or anyone else can contradict Her teachings. This truth about the Church's dogmatic and unchangeable teachings is so obvious that the Church Herself has declared that *even the Pope himself **may** be resisted or contradicted "**if he be found to have deviated from the [Catholic] Faith.***"

Pope Paul IV, *Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio* (# 1), Feb. 15, 1559: "In assessing Our duty and the situation now prevailing, We have been weighed upon by the thought that a matter of this kind [i.e. error in respect of the Faith] is so grave and so dangerous **that the Roman Pontiff, who is the representative upon earth of God and our God and Lord Jesus Christ**, who holds the fulness of power over peoples and kingdoms, who may judge all and be judged by none in this world, **may nonetheless be contradicted if he be found to have deviated from the Faith.**"

This teaching of Pope Paul IV in *Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio* above of course also answers the heretical statement which said that: "*An honest person would realize that Catholics learn from the Pope, and submit to his judgments. ... It is necessary for one's salvation to submit to the Pope, and you are advocating rebellion. ... Learn from the Pope, love the Pope, and never dissent from the Pope. There is no holiness where there is dissent from the Pope. ... **To rebel against the Pope's teaching is to foster schism.**" According to the heretics' logic in this objection, since John XXII was the Pope, if his heretical sermon would have been put in something equivalent to the *Acta* at his own time, we would have no right to contradict and rebel against his heretical teaching, and it would have to be considered to "foster schism" to choose to rebel against his heretical teaching, and – according to the heretics – **we would have to believe in and submit to his heretical and condemned teaching**. This is the inescapable and illogical conclusion that the heretics would have to come to if they actually were consistent with their own teaching and followed it to its full extent *as they claim we must do when the pope is making a statement that they deem to be authoritative*.*

As we have seen already, to openly disagree with the pope when he teaches manifest error is **not** to advocate rebellion or to commit schism as the heretics make it out to be, but it is in fact the exact opposite, since if you follow and adhere to this new teaching, **you evidently and directly *reject and rebel* against the infallible definitions of the**

Church — *The Council of Trent, Vatican I* and the unanimous consent of the Fathers, in addition to Pope Pius XI's dogmatic encyclical *Casti Connubii* — all of which unanimously condemn Pius XII's fallible and erroneous teaching on NFP, as well as all other heretical teachings on birth control.

It should be clear by now that what has been stated above is absolutely true, and in fact, *infallibly safe*, and anyone who is honest while reading this will of course agree with it. Indeed, it is very easy to understand that it is infallibly safe to believe what has *always* been believed unanimously by the whole Church since the beginning. It is *not*, as the heretics make it out to be, *infallibly safe* to believe in a new teaching which not a single Pope, Father or Saint ever has believed in or taught before — *until just prior to the Great Apostasy*. Anyone with even a little honesty left in his soul will of course understand that this is true.

Objection: I have read many Catholic books approved by the Church that teach timing-based methods of contraception, or NFP. These Catholic books teaching timing-based methods of contraception also had Nihil Obstat Church imprimaturs -- many of which was obtained *before* Vatican II. This clearly shows that these contraceptive methods were permitted by the Church then as well as now. If NFP or timing-based methods of contraception were not the accepted or official teaching of the Church, these books would never have been approved nor would these theologians have wasted their time writing on contraception, or NFP.

Answer: Nihil Obstat Church imprimaturs are not infallible; and all heretical so-called theologians' opinions are worthless!

In reality, there are a lot of heretical imprimatured books. It is illogical to presume that a Pope reads and thus personally approves all official decrees and responses from the Roman Congregations, along with all unofficial ones attributed to the Roman Congregations found in the many books that publish them, along with reading all books in the world with imprimaturs, along with ruling the Church spiritually and temporally, along with sanctifying his own soul by prayer and meditation, along with sanctifying Catholics as the chief shepherd, and along with calling non-Catholics to conversion.

Pope St. Pius X testifies to the impossibility of a pope's inspection of every imprimatured book, even with the help of the Holy Office, and also testifies that there were many bad books that were given imprimaturs.

St. Pope Pius X, *Pacendi Dominici Gregis*, A.D. 1907: "51. We bid you do everything

in your power to drive out of your dioceses, even by solemn interdict, any pernicious books that may be in circulation there. The Holy See neglects no means to put down writings of this kind, but **the number of them has now grown to such an extent that it is impossible to censure them all**. Hence it happens that the medicine sometimes arrives too late, for the disease has taken root during the delay. We will, therefore, that the Bishops, putting aside all fear and the prudence of the flesh, despising the outcries of the wicked, gently by all means but constantly, do each his own share of this work, remembering the injunctions of Leo XIII in the Apostolic Constitution *Officiorum*: “Let the Ordinaries, acting in this also as Delegates of the Apostolic See, exert themselves to prescribe and to put out of reach of the faithful injurious books or other writings printed or circulated in their dioceses.” In this passage the Bishops, it is true, receive a right, but they have also a duty imposed on them. Let no Bishop think that he fulfills this duty by denouncing to us one or two books, while a great many others of the same kind are being published and circulated. Nor are you to be deterred by the fact that a book has obtained the Imprimatur elsewhere, both because this may be merely simulated, and because it may have been granted through carelessness or easiness or excessive confidence in the author as may sometimes happen in religious Orders.”

The same logically applies to the official Roman Congregations’ decrees and responses, and more so to the unofficial decrees and responses found in the many books that list them.

Also consider our Lady’s prophecy in the *Church approved apparition of La Salette*:

“Bad books will abound over the earth, and the spirits of darkness will everywhere spread universal relaxation in everything concerning God’s service...” (Prophecy of La Salette, 19th of September 1846)

Yet many “Natural Family Planning” supporters resort into quoting fallible and heretical theologians who support the contraception heresy of NFP, also known as the Rhythm Method, who lived either before or after the heretical Second Vatican Council. Their opinions are utterly worthless and totally heretical. **God has already spoken by the mouth of Pope Pius XI in *Casti Connubii*, infallibly declaring that all forms of Contraception, including NFP, is heretical and a mortal sin – and nothing can change that fact!** The Great Apostasy—Vatican II, the Conciliar Church, and her apostate antipopes—did not come about overnight.

Objection: But my traditional priest instructed me in NFP...

Answer: Satan instructs people in NFP.

When the blind lead the blind they both fall into the pit. Couples who use NFP know that they are committing a sin. It is written on their hearts. They don't need a priest to tell them that it's wrong. Yes, the priests who obstinately instruct people that NFP is okay and defend this birth control method are also guilty, but this does not take away the responsibility of the couples who follow their bad advice.

Pope Pius XI teaches there are no exceptions and no excuses. No excuses, even if your priest or bishop said it can be used.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 57), Dec. 31, 1930: "We admonish, therefore, priests who hear confessions and others who have the care of souls, in virtue of Our Supreme authority and in Our solicitude for the salvation of souls, not to allow the faithful entrusted to them to err regarding this most grave law of God; much more, that they keep themselves immune from such false opinions, in no way conniving in them. If any confessor or pastor of souls, which may God forbid, lead the faithful entrusted to him into these errors, or should at least confirm them by approval or by guilty silence, let him be mindful of the fact that he must render a strict account to God, the Supreme Judge, for the betrayal of his sacred trust, and let him take to himself the words of Christ: They are blind and leaders of the blind: and if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit."

This is why we stress that those who are contributing money to or who receive the sacraments from heretical or schismatical priests who promote or accept heresies such as NFP or any other condemned heresy must cease immediately if they don't want to share in their sin and follow them to Hell, since these priests are leading souls to Hell.

This includes the priests of the Vatican II sect, the Society of St. Pius X, the Society of St. Pius V, the C.M.R.I and almost all independent priests in this time of the Great Apostasy.

Objection: Both of the Sacred Penitentiary's Responses of the years 1853 and 1880 taught that NFP is allowed for married spouses, and so, you have no right to reject the Church's teaching on this matter.

Answer: The 1853 and 1880 responses are not only unofficial and fallible, but they are also illogical and heretical, and they do not even defend the current practice of NFP, as we will see.

In this section, we will refute a specific argument in favor of NFP promoted by various heretics and heretical sects posing as “traditional Catholics,” priests, and even bishops. Precisely because these people claim to be traditional Catholic and hold the true Faith, it is especially important to refute their arguments. One such heretical individual bent on murdering and deceiving souls is the heretical so-called Bishop Mark. A. Pivarunas of CMRI, a sedevacantist religious so-called community. However, Mark. A. Pivarunas’ “evidence” that defends NFP is neither infallible nor official nor certified as authentic. It is also ambiguous and contradictory.

There was a need in the Church for an organ that contained the official decrees and responses from the Roman Congregations because many decrees and responses were fraudulent or doubtful.

Therefore, the Roman Congregations needed an official organ in which to publish their decrees and responses that would guarantee authenticity. Authentic and official decrees and responses from the Roman Congregations are found in the *Acta Sanctae Sedis* (ASS) from 1904 to 1908 and in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (AAS) from 1909 onward.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1907, *Acta Sanctae Sedis*: “A Roman monthly publication containing the principal public documents issued by the Pope, directly or through the Roman Congregations. It was begun in 1865, under the title of ‘Acta Sanctae Sedis in compendium redacta, etc.’, and was declared, 23 May, 1904, an organ of the Holy See to the extent that all documents printed in it are ‘authentic and official.’... On the Roman Congregations: Editors of periodicals on ecclesiastical subjects have been allowed for several years back to publish in their magazines the acts of the Congregations, and one of these periodicals, *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, has received the privilege of being declared ‘authentic and official for publishing the acts of the Apostolic See’ (S.C. de Prop. Fid., 23 May, 1904).”

The 1917 Code of Canon Law, Canon 9: “The laws issued by the Holy See are promulgated by being published in the official organ of the Holy See, the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, unless in particular cases another mode of promulgation is prescribed.”

A Practical Commentary: “The publication of the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* began in January, 1909, and from the very beginning it was declared the official organ of the Holy See. [Footnote: The Constitution ‘Promulgandi’ of Pius X, Sept. 29, 1908; *Acta Ap. Sedis*, I, 5.]”

Consequently, any so-called Holy Office decree or response that exists outside these

organs, the Acta Apostolicae Sedis (ASS) from 1904 and the AAS from 1909, is not certified as authentic and is not official. (Hereafter I will simply refer to these documents as unofficial while understanding that they are also not certified as authentic.) Hence, Mark. A. Pivarunas' argument has no credibility because it rests on responses that are not official and cannot be certified as authentic.

Official Roman Congregations' decrees and responses are also fallible

Even if Mark. A. Pivarunas produced the official Roman Congregations' decrees or responses defending NFP, that does not help his case because they are also fallible.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1913, *Infallibility*: "Proof of Papal Infallibility - The pope, of course, can convert doctrinal decisions of the Holy Office, which are not in themselves infallible, into ex cathedra papal pronouncements..."

The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1913, *Acts of the Roman Congregations*: "...(b) Authority of doctrinal decrees - Doctrinal decrees are not of themselves infallible; the prerogative of infallibility cannot be communicated to the Congregations by the Pope."

People that calls themselves Catholic, I believe, would agree with this. Consequently, they would also have to believe that the unofficial evidence that he uses to defend NFP is likewise fallible.

The 1853 response

The source

The 1853 response is one such piece of incredible evidence. The source quoted, a local moral theology book, is not a first hand source for a Sacred Penitentiary (a Roman Congregation) response. Therefore, it is an unofficial and fallible response. And even if it were an official response, it would still be fallible. That is the main point: the evidence is fallible.

The meaning

The meaning of the response is ambiguous. While it has two interpretations, heretical and orthodox, one cannot be certain of either.

Mark A. Pivarunas, *On the Question of Natural Family Planning*: "The very concept of "rhythm" was first considered by the Catholic Church in 1853. The Bishop of

Amiens, France, submitted the following question to the Sacred Penitentiary:

“[Q.] Certain married couples, relying on the opinion of learned physicians, are convinced that there are several days each month in which conception cannot occur. Are those who do not use the marriage right except on such days to be disturbed, especially if they have legitimate reasons for abstaining from the conjugal act?”

Mark A. Pivarunas: “On March 2, 1853, the Sacred Penitentiary (during the reign of Pope Pius IX) answered as follows:

“[A.] Those spoken of in the request are not to be disturbed, providing that they do nothing to impede conception.”

The first part of the response seems to allow for the contraceptive method of NFP, but the second part does not by saying the spouses can “do nothing to impede conception.”

The purpose of NFP is to impede conception when the spouses have conjugal relations. If spouses come together only during the infertile period with the purpose of preventing conception, they are clearly attempting to impede conception. Therefore, the seemingly heretical first part of the response contradicts the orthodox second part.

I will now present a possible orthodox interpretation.

There are non-sinful reasons why spouses cannot have relations during known fertile periods, such as the husband is on a business trip or one spouse is sick, etc. Because they did not deliberately impede the fertile period for the purpose of preventing conception, they can have relations during the known infertile period without sinning, even though they did not have relations during the fertile period. For instance, if a husband is away from home during his wife’s known fertile period and returns to his wife during her known infertile period, he can still have conjugal relations with her without sinning as long as he did not deliberately avoid the fertile period for the purpose of preventing conception. In this case the spouses did not sin, even though they had marital relations only during the wife’s known infertile period. Pope Pius XI specifically refers to this fact in his encyclical, *Casti Connubii*.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 59), Dec. 31, 1930: “Nor are those considered as acting against nature who, in the married state, use their right in the proper manner, although on account of natural reasons either of time or of certain defects,

new life cannot be brought forth. For in matrimony as well as in the use of matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivation of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider, **SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [PROCREATION OF CHILDREN] AND SO LONG AS THE INTRINSIC NATURE OF THE ACT IS PRESERVED.**”

Pope Pius XI says that the “primary end,” that is, bearing children, must be desired and preserved; therefore, the spouses must not do anything that is against the primary end of marriage, that is, the procreation and education of children.

Nowhere does Pius XI teach that spouses can deliberately avoid the wife’s fertile period in order to prevent conception when they come together during the infertile period. He is only teaching that spouses can have conjugal relations during the known infertile period or if one of the spouses has a defect, a barren womb or sterile seed. And, he clearly adds that even then they must be “subordinated to the primary end [bearing children].”

The spouses must conform to the intrinsic nature of the act by being open to conception both in mind and deed. If they are not, they are denying the intrinsic nature of the act.

The last part of the 1853 response, “provided they do nothing to impede conception,” supports the orthodox interpretation. There can be no act, plan, or desire to impede conception when the marital act takes place. The spouses must always desire to have children if God wills they should have children, even if conception is improbable or impossible (such as in a barren womb). The 1853 response clearly says that no action may be taken by the spouses that would impede conception: “[A.] *Those spoken of in the request are not to be disturbed, providing that they do **nothing** to impede conception.*” All impediments are condemned. The goal of NFP is to impede conception when the spouses engage in the marital act.

The decree does not specify any specific type of impediment. It condemns all impediments. The point of the response is if spouses are going to have relations during known infertile periods, they must still be subordinated to the primary purpose of marriage, the procreation and education of children, and thus cannot do or have done anything that would impede or prevent it.

The 1880 response

The source

No doubt, there were those who interpreted the 1853 response in a heretical way. Yet, NFP defenders knew they needed to be more specific so there would be no doubt that NFP, according to them, is not sinful. The 1853 response did not say anything about the spouses deliberately avoiding the fertile period and only having conjugal relations during the wife's infertile period with the purpose of preventing conception. This motive is not mentioned in the 1853 question and is even condemned in the last sentence, which says, "providing that they [spouses] do nothing to impede conception."

Therefore, the NFP defenders needed a decree or response that specifically mentions and justifies the motive of preventing conception while leaving out the part about spouses not impeding conception. Digging deep in their hat of tricks, they found what they believe defends their heresy in one response (found in two unofficial sources) that supposedly refers to a response from the Sacred Penitentiary.

The meaning

The NFP defenders have another serious problem with this so-called evidence—this fallible 1880 response. It is ambiguous, confusing, and contradictory, and it even condemns Mark A. Pivarunas' idea of NFP.

Mark A. Pivarunas, *On the Question of Natural Family Planning*: "Another reference to rhythm appeared in 1880. Fr. Le Conte submitted the following questions to the Sacred Penitentiary:

"[Q.] Whether married couples may have intercourse during such sterile periods without committing mortal or venial sin?"

"Whether the confessor may suggest such a procedure either to the wife who detests the onanism of her husband but cannot correct him, or to either spouse who shrinks from having numerous children?"

Mark A. Pivarunas: "The response of the Sacred Penitentiary (during the reign of Pope Leo XIII), dated June 16, 1880, was:

"[A.] Married couples who use their marriage right in the aforesaid manner are not to be disturbed, and the confessor may suggest the opinion in question, cautiously, however, to those married people whom he has tried in vain by other means to dissuade from the detestable crime of onanism."

1) If this fallible response is meant to allow NFP, it only allows it as a substitute for the

husband's obstinately sinful Onanism (withdrawal during the marital act by the husband), which presents serious dilemmas.

2) If the husband is not obstinate and repents of his sin of Onanism, then the spouses cannot use NFP, which is how this response has to be interpreted. Let me explain. The first part of the Sacred Penitentiary's response was only addressed to Conte's first question: "*Whether married couples may have intercourse during such sterile periods without **committing mortal or venial sin?***" As we have seen already, there is no sin in having marital relations during known infertile periods provided conception is not deferred deliberately. That is why the Sacred Penitentiary answered favorably in their first part of the response: "*Married couples who use their marriage right in the aforesaid manner are not to be disturbed*". This response, however, was only directed at Conte's first question, and hence it cannot be used to support NFP.

The second part of the response which supports NFP only allows it in case of Onanism: "... and the confessor **may suggest the opinion in question**, cautiously, however, **to those married people** whom he has tried in vain by other means to dissuade from **the detestable crime of onanism**." Since the Sacred Penitentiary made no further mention of Conte's other statement, "*Whether the confessor may suggest such a procedure... to either spouse **who shrinks from having numerous children?***" this means that they only allowed the confessor to suggest deliberate sterile relations in case of Onanism. Since they made no mention of those who "shrinks from having numerous children", one cannot use this response in favor of NFP in any other case than Onanism. So the only non-sinful use of NFP, according to this response, would be if the husband obstinately commits the sin of Onanism. If not, the confessor cannot even suggest the use of NFP. Therefore, according to this response, NFP cannot be used for any other reason put forward by NFP defenders.

3) The 1880 response appeased stiff-necked sinners by rewarding their obstinate disobedience to God and their confessors. If the obstinate sinner does not listen to the confessor, the confessor must pander to the sinner. Instead of punishing him, the confessor rewards him with another sinful contraceptive method. It is like saying that it is better for a single man to fornicate with an unmarried woman than a married woman because there is no additional sin of adultery. Both actions are mortally sinful. It is like a confessor telling an alcoholic who drinks hard liquor that he will not sin if he gets less drunk by using soft liquor, such as beer or wine. The purpose, getting drunk, remains the same in both cases. Since when do God and His representatives compromise faith and morals by appeasing obstinate sinners? The proper action for a good confessor in such a case is to forbid the wife to have relations with her husband under pain of sin until he

repents of his sin and thus promises to no longer use Onanism, NFP or artificial contraception. To conclude, this 1880 response is not only unofficial and fallible, but it is also illogical and heretical, and it does not even defend the current practice of NFP.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Is it sinful to have sterile relations during breast-feeding?

Answer: A natural consequence of breast-feeding is that the mother is infertile while breast-feeding. The only just reason for breast-feeding is for the nourishment of the infant. The sin of contraception is committed if at anytime that just reason – breast-feeding to nourish the infant – is perverted by being replaced with the unjust reason of having relations without the possibility of conception. The fact that conception cannot take place is naturally beyond the control of the spouses during this period of time. The very second spouses use breast-feeding to maintain the infertile period so as to prevent conception when they have relations, they commit the mortal sin of contraception. They have replaced the only just and natural reason for breast-feeding, which is nourishment of the infant, with the unjust and unnatural reason of deliberately using it to maintain the infertile period so conception will not take place when they have sexual relations. Breast-feeding, when perverted in this evil manner, is used as a contraception. It is also best to remain chaste during this period.

Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Epistle To Augustine, Bishop of the English* (c. 597 A.D.): “Further, her husband ought not to cohabit with her till that which is brought forth be weaned. But an evil custom has arisen in the ways of married persons, that women scorn to nurse the children whom they bring forth, and deliver them to other women to be nursed. Which custom appears to have been devised for the sole cause of incontinency, in that, being unwilling to contain themselves, they think scorn to suckle their offspring [and live continent]. Those women therefore who, after an evil custom, deliver their children to others to be nursed ought not to have intercourse with their husbands unless the time of their purification has passed, seeing that, even without the reason of childbirth, they are forbidden to have intercourse with their husbands while held of their accustomed sicknesses [menses]; so much so that the sacred law smites with death any man who shall go into a woman having her sickness [Leviticus 20:18].” (*Epistles of St. Gregory the Great*, Book XI, Letter 64, To Augustine, Bishop of the Angli)

Question: Must a husband or wife refrain from marital relations with a contracepting spouse?

Answer: Yes. The use of contraception is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral because it deprives the marital act of the procreative meaning. Intrinsically evil acts are not justified by intention or circumstances. So even if the intention of one spouse is good, and the circumstances are very difficult, he or she cannot morally choose to engage in marital relations with a contracepting spouse. To do so would be an objective mortal sin.

The Church's teaching is clear that "**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**" (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, # 54) and that is why it will always be a mortal sin of contraception against the primary purpose of marriage to knowingly perform the marital act with a contracepting spouse.

In one sense, only the contracepting spouse is "using" the contraception (taking the pill, or using a condom, etc.). But in another sense, both spouses are contracepting because both are knowingly choosing to engage in contracepted marital relations. The "non-contracepting" spouse is deliberately choosing to participate in contraceptive marital relations, and so he or she is participating in an act that is deprived of the procreative purpose that must accompany all marital acts. The lack of an intention to use a contraceptive on the part of the one spouse does not change the moral object of the act that he or she has deliberately chosen.

Moreover, if the wife is using an abortifacient contraceptive, such as the birth control pill, and the husband chooses to have relations with her, both spouses are participating in the mortal sin of direct abortion as well as the mortal sin of contraception.

The only lawful action for a good husband or wife to do if one of the spouses is using contraception is to abstain from having marital relations with their spouse until he or she repents of the sin and thus promises to no longer use contraception. If the husband should force himself on his wife (rape her), then that is a reason for separation.

There are times when a spouse cannot prevent the other spouse from sinning during the marital act. In these cases, the spouse sinned against does not sin. For instance, a husband can pretend he repented of his sin of Onanism or of other forms of contraception and can promise his wife he will no longer use it, but he could still use it, and the wife would not be able to prevent it. Or, one spouse may do something immoral previous to, during, or after the marital act, and the other spouse may be helpless to prevent it. In these cases the spouse sinned against does not sin, "*provided that, mindful of the law of charity, he or she does not neglect to seek to dissuade and to **deter** the partner from sin.*" (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, # 59)

Question: Can an unmarried woman, who is not sexually active, use the contraceptive pill for a medical purpose?

Answer: Yes. When the contraceptive pill (the birth control pill) is taken by a woman who is not sexually active for different medical purposes (other than hindering the conception of a child), the pill does not deprive sexual acts of the procreative meaning, because there are no sexual acts. Since the person using the contraceptive pill does not perform the sexual act that always must be excused with the motive of procreation, the moral object is not evil, and the usage of the contraceptive pill is not intrinsically evil.

Question: Can a married woman use the contraceptive pill for a medical purpose, while refraining entirely from marital relations?

Answer: Yes. But when a woman is married, she must have a grave reason to refrain from marital relations with her husband for an extended period of time. The husband and wife have a moral obligation (called the marriage debt) to have natural marital relations if or when one of the spouses wants to have marital relations.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 64. Art. 1: “Further, marriage is directed to the avoiding of fornication [adultery, masturbation, etc.] (1 Corinthians 7:2). But this could not be the effect of marriage, if the one were not bound to pay the debt to the other when the latter is troubled with concupiscence. Therefore the payment of the debt is an obligation of precept.”

If a wife has a serious medical problem, which can only be effectively treated with the contraceptive pill, then she is allowed to take the contraceptive pill while refraining from marital relations with her husband, and the husband has no right to ask for the debt. As long as she is not sexually active while taking the pill, the marital act is not deprived of the procreative meaning, and so she avoids committing an intrinsically evil act.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 64. Art. 1, Reply to Objection 3: “If the husband be rendered incapable of paying the debt through a cause consequent upon marriage, for instance through having already paid the debt and being unable to pay it, the wife has no right to ask again, and in doing so she behaves as a harlot rather than as a wife. But if he be rendered incapable through some other cause [such as sickness or fatigue], then if this be a lawful cause, he is not bound [to pay the marital debt], and she cannot ask, but if it be an unlawful cause [i.e., he has no grave reason for refusing to pay the marital debt], then he sins,

and his wife's sin, should she fall into fornication [adultery, impure thoughts or masturbation] on this account, is somewhat imputable to him. Hence he should endeavor to do his best that his wife may remain continent."

Since the person using the contraceptive pill does not perform the sexual act (that always must be excused with the motive of procreation), the moral object is not evil, and the usage of the contraceptive pill is not intrinsically evil.

Question: On what authority does the protestant sects deny the biblical, Apostolic and Patristic teaching that all marital acts must be excused with the motive of procreation?

Answer: Protestants have no biblical basis whatsoever for practicing contraception and being against conception; neither have they any basis for this teaching from the Early Church or Christian tradition.

It is also a little known fact of history, but the protestants were actually in agreement with the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage and family life that contraception and birth control methods is sinful and forbidden to use for married people up until the year of 1930. The watershed event that changed this ancient teaching in these apostate "churches" was a conference of Anglican so-called "bishops".

On August 14, 1930, with 193 favoring and 67 opposing, the leaders of the Anglican Church passed seven resolutions dealing with "marriage and sex." The "bishops" stated in the fifteenth resolution that: "Where there is a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or to avoid parenthood, the primary and obvious method is complete abstinence from intercourse (as far as may be necessary) in a life of discipline and self-control lived in the power of the Holy Spirit." But that same fifteenth resolution also stated that, if a couple faced "a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood" and the couple had "a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence, the conference agrees that other methods may be used." (*The Lambeth Conferences*, 166) Thus the Anglican sect had taken a position different from any previous teaching of both the Old and New Testament Church. According to their unnatural and novel teaching, married couples could now engage in marital intercourse while taking specific measures to prevent conception. On October 4, 1930, Cardinal Francis Bourne, the Catholic archbishop of Westminster, denounced the decision made by the conference of the Anglican bishops. He declared that they "had forfeited any claim to be 'authorized organs of Christian morality.'" (Arthur Vermeersch, "*La Conférence de Lambeth et la morale du mariage*," in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 57, A.D. 1930, 850) Arthur Vermeersch, the moral theologian who played a large role in writing the marvelous statement on marriage made by the Belgian bishops in

1909 (that affirmed the biblical teaching that the marital act must be procreative), was greatly disturbed by the way the Anglican “bishops” had perverted the teaching of St. Alphonsus Liguori on conscience. Vermeersch and other theologians thought that only a “strong papal action” could put an end to the assault on Catholic doctrine regarding the purposes of sexual relations in marriage.

The strong papal action followed swiftly by the promulgation of the encyclical *Casti Connubii*. On December 31, 1930, Pope Pius XI (1922–1939) promulgated *Casti Connubii* (On Chaste Marriage). The pope provided the Catholic Church with “one of the great papal documents of all time.” This encyclical “defined not only the nature of Matrimony but also the moral duties flowing therefrom.” As he gazed out upon the world from “the watchtower” of the Vatican, Pope Pius XI observed that certain “pernicious errors and degraded morals” had spread “even among the faithful.” (*On Chaste Marriage* # 3) The pope wanted to remind everyone that both the Bible and the Council of Trent had declared that **matrimony was created not by human beings but by God. Thus there was little scope for human decision-making when it came to contractual marriage:** “the only function of . . . human freedom is to decide that each of the consenting parties in fact wishes to enter the state of matrimony.” (*On Chaste Marriage* # 6) **Therefore, having consented to marry, the spouses were subject to the way God instituted marriage with its particular “ends, laws and blessings.”** (Pope Pius XI, *On Chaste Marriage* # 9)

Procreation or Abstinence: The Married Couple’s Only Choice

Referring to St. Augustine as the great Christian authority on marriage, Pope Pius XI reminded his readers of the three goods of marriage: “These . . . are the blessings which make matrimony itself a blessing: OFFSPRING, FIDELITY, SACRAMENT.” (*On Chaste Marriage* # 10) These traditional goods provide “the law of marriage, which gives luster to the fruitfulness of nature and sets a curb upon shameful incontinence.” (Ibid) The pope next referred to the summary found in the 1917 Code of Canon Law: “The primary end of matrimony is the procreation and education of offspring.” (Canon 1013) In sum, *Casti Connubii* simply repeated what church leaders and theologians had asserted from the time of Our Lord and the Apostles—namely, that the purpose of marital intercourse was to produce a child. If, at any particular time, husband and wife did not want to conceive a child, **they could avoid conception in only one way—namely, “by means of a virtuous continence.”** (*On Chaste Marriage* # 53) The pope noted that some couples were using a false argument in excusing their birth control, claiming “that they can neither observe continence, nor, for personal reasons or for reasons affecting the mother, or on account of economic difficulties, can they consent to have children.” Since Pope Pius XI saw the use of birth control devices as a “criminal abuse,” (Ibid) he rejected all the reasons

offered for engaging in marital acts while trying to avoid conception. Repeating the traditional teaching of the Bible, the Apostles, and the Church from the beginning, the pope taught that: **“The conjugal act is of its very nature designed for the procreation of offspring; and therefore those who in performing it deliberately deprive it of its natural power and efficacy, act against nature and do something which is shameful and intrinsically immoral.”** (Pope Pius XI, *On Chaste Marriage* # 54)

Condemnation of the Anglican Bishops’ teaching

Referring to the Onan incident in the book of Genesis, the pope repeated his condemnation of contraception: **“The Divine Majesty detests this unspeakable crime with the deepest hatred and has sometimes punished it with death.”** (*On Chaste Marriage* # 55) Again citing Augustine, the bishop of Rome wrote: “Sexual intercourse even with a lawful wife is unlawful and shameful if the conception of offspring is prevented. This is what Onan, the son of Judah, did, and on that account God put him to death.” (Ibid) With his reference to the traditional interpretation of the story of Onan in place, the pope scolded the Anglican “Church” as “openly departing from the Christian teaching which has been handed down uninterruptedly from the beginning.” (*On Chaste Marriage* # 56) Against the unlawful and unnatural teaching of the Anglican “bishops” “the Catholic Church” had to raise “her voice in sign of her divine mission to keep the chastity of the marriage contract unsullied by this ugly stain.” (Ibid)

The Pope’s warning to married spouses against loving “as adulterers love” shows us that the search for selfish sexual pleasure and concupiscence are alien to authentic marital love: “This is the rule prescribed by the Apostle when he says, ‘Husbands, Love your wives as Christ also loved the Church.’ Now Christ certainly loved the Church with a boundless charity, and not for His own personal advantage but solely for the good of His Bride.” (*On Chaste Marriage* # 23) According to various commentators, the high point of this encyclical is the papal declaration that spouses should perfect each other’s “interior life.” Spousal love **“is not confined to mutual help; it must have as its higher and indeed its chief objective that of shaping and perfecting the interior life of husband and wife.”** (Ibid) When the pope speaks of charity, it is not charity “founded on a mere carnal and transitory desire . . . it is a deep-seated devotion of the heart.” (Ibid) Thus, the perfecting of the interior life of one’s partner is good but the enjoyment of “carnal and transitory desire” is not.

Return to the Divine teaching of Matrimony

In part three the pope warned that God might well “punish men for their pride and their

audacity” if they dared to tamper with the divine idea of marriage (*On Chaste Marriage* # 95). Relying on St. Augustine’s teaching on sexuality, Pius XI singled out “the violence of rebellious concupiscence” as the chief obstacle to carrying out God’s plan for marriage (*On Chaste Marriage* # 97). Such rebellion of the flesh can only be subdued by obeying the church’s leaders who know “the divine laws in marriage and in married life.” (*On Chaste Marriage* # 100) For this reason married persons must pay special attention to such laws lest they, by reason of their human nature, fall “prey to carnal passion” that so readily deceives and corrupts (*On Chaste Marriage* # 102). Married persons must be ready to sacrifice their sexual desires in order to refrain from marital intercourse: “God’s law sometimes requires of married persons difficult and enduring sacrifices, sacrifices which, as experience shows, the weak man is apt to invoke as so many excuses for not keeping with the divine law.” (Ibid) The pope also warned married couples to keep “as far as possible aloof from all idolatry of the flesh and from the degraded slavery of the passions.” (*On Chaste Marriage* # 107)

Dismissing the “exaggerated physiological education” advocated by “the so-called reformers of our day,” (*On Chaste Marriage* # 108) **the pope firmly rejected the legitimacy of limiting marital intercourse to the sterile period (the rhythm method) in order to avoid pregnancy.** Pope Pius XI accused the “so-called reformers” of teaching the “art of skillful sinning” instead of “the virtue of chastely living.” (Ibid) After husband and wife had given birth to the maximum number of children they could rear, the pope confirmed that they should cease having marital relations: “Whatever the theories sustained and propagated by certain persons, husband and wife must . . . use their matrimonial rights always in a Christian and sacred way, especially in the early days of wedlock, so that should circumstances subsequently require them to observe continence, their habit of self-restraint will help them more easily to do so.” (*On Chaste Marriage* # 110) We can see that this papal teaching relegates sexual feelings to the lowest part of the house of married living. Since the desire for sexual intimacy has always been regarded as a defect that arose from the fall of Adam and Eve, such desire has to be repressed in order to develop restraint and attention to the interior life of one’s partner and oneself.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (#’s 106-108), December 31, 1930: “Certainly, if the latter day subverters of marriage are entirely devoted to misleading the minds of men and corrupting their hearts, to making a mockery of matrimonial purity and extolling the filthiest of vices by means of books and pamphlets and other innumerable methods, much more ought you, Venerable Brethren, whom “the Holy Ghost has placed as bishops, to rule the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood,” [*Acta*, XX, 28] to give yourselves wholly to this, that through yourselves and through the priests subject to you, and, moreover, through the laity welded together by Catholic Action, so much desired and recommended by Us, into

a power of hierarchical apostolate, you may, by every fitting means, oppose error by truth, vice by the excellent dignity of chastity, the slavery of covetousness by the liberty of the sons of God, [John, VIII, 32 sqq.; Gal., V, 13] that disastrous ease in obtaining divorce by an enduring love in the bond of marriage and by the inviolate pledge of fidelity given even to death.

“Thus will it come to pass that the faithful will wholeheartedly thank God that they are bound together by His command and led by gentle compulsion to fly as far as possible from every kind of idolatry of the flesh and from the base slavery of the passions. They will, in a great measure, turn and be turned away from these abominable opinions which to the dishonor of man’s dignity are now spread about in speech and in writing and collected under the title of "perfect marriage" and which indeed would make that perfect marriage nothing better than "depraved marriage," as it has been rightly and truly called.

“Such wholesome instruction and religious training in regard to Christian marriage will be quite different from that exaggerated physiological education by means of which, in these times of ours, some reformers of married life make pretense of helping those joined in wedlock, laying much stress on these physiological matters, in which is learned rather the art of sinning in a subtle way than the virtue of living chastely.”

Question: Why are these and other verses from the Book of Tobit or Tobias that you cite not found in my bible?

The Holy Bible, Tobias 6:22; 8:9 “And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, **moved rather for love of children than for lust**, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children... [Tobias said:] And now, Lord, thou knowest, that **not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity**, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.”

Answer: In the few protestant “bible” versions where the Book of Tobias actually is included, the entire crucial verse found in Tobit 6:22 quoted above is completely missing, and verse 8:9 (Tobit 8:7 in protestant versions) “**but only for the love of posterity**” is nowhere to be found! The reason why the devil had to exclude these important verses from their bibles is because he knows how important and absolutely necessary it is for one’s salvation to follow the Natural Law in all things—such as the Natural Law on sexual morality—because one can never be ignorant about the Natural Law, or be a “material heretic” in its regard. Since the devil foresaw the great damage the exclusions of these books and passages would have on his followers, and since the protestants are impure and

lustful in every way, he was permitted by God to inspire their leaders to remove these crucial teachings of Our Lord. This is also why some protestants have told us they are not familiar with the above and related bible verses from the Book of Tobit and why they have told us that they are not found in their bible.

In addition to verse 22 already noted above, the following other important verses found in Chapter 6 in the Book of Tobit, verses 16 to 18, and verse 20, are completely missing from the protestant versions, while verse 21 in most of their versions have been modified to read something like this: “Moreover I *suppose* [or *presume*] that she shall bear thee children”.

Tobias 6:18, 20-21 “**But thou when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her.** ... But the second night thou shalt be admitted into the society of the holy Patriarchs. **And the third night thou shalt obtain a blessing that sound children may be born of you.**”

Tobias 6:16-17 “Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. **[17] For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.**”

Furthermore, the differences between the verse numbering in the Protestant and Catholic versions of the Book of Tobit are very great indeed, which makes it highly probable that many other important verses are missing, omitted or changed in the Protestant versions. **In fact, only 2 chapters out of entire 15 had the similar number of verses in the protestant and Catholic version; in all other chapters the Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible had 1 to 10 (or even more) extra verses per chapter than the protestant King James version.** The devil sure does not like this book, teaching purity, virtue and chastity as it does. No wonder Luther so much wanted these books out of his own corrupt bible.

See: ***The Bible Proves the teachings of the Catholic Church***

Question: I want a child, but my spouse does not. What do I do?

Answer: We have already abundantly proved from the Bible and Apostolic Tradition as well as the teaching of the Popes, Fathers and Saints of the Church that spouses must

directly wish to beget children if they are to perform the marital sexual act. A spouse who refuses to desire children cannot therefore perform the marital act without sin, which obligates the other spouse who desires children to abstain from performing the marital act with the offending spouse until he or she comes to his senses and repents. The Bible declares children to be a blessing. Psalm 127:3-5 says, “*Behold the inheritance of the Lord are children: the reward, the fruit of the womb. As arrows in the hand of the mighty, so the children of them that have been shaken. Blessed is the man that hath filled the desire with them; he shall not be confounded when he shall speak to his enemies in the gate.*” This is contrary to the way much of the world views children—as a hindrance and a burden. Children cannot be viewed as a liability.

The lack of desire to have children while also wanting to perform the sexual act stems from selfish motives. Some people do not want children because they want to focus on themselves, their careers, and their money. They do not want to be "tied down" or give up their expensive cars, homes, or vacations. Others do not want children because of fears about not being able to parent successfully, not being able to afford to raise the child properly, or fears about childbirth itself—although they want to indulge in the marital act. All of these kinds of so called excuses are directly mortally sinful, unless one abstains from the marital act completely, since the marital act needs to be excused with the motive of procreation: “**Therefore the marriage act also will always be evil unless it be excused...**” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 5) A person who do not want children must therefore stay unmarried until he or she changes his intention. In the case of the married, if a couple does not want to have children, they are obligated to abstain from the marital act under pain of mortal sin.

As Christians, our devotion must first be to God, who says that children are a blessing. If we devote ourselves to prayer, spiritual reading, and meditation, God will reveal His will to us if we put Him first. Romans 12:2 declares, “*And be not conformed to this world; but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God.*”

Question: What is your thought on childbearing today? Is it wise to raise children today? And should husband and wife live a chaste life rather than having children?

Answer: No one must believe that it is a bad thing to want to raise and love children, and especially so, if it is done for godly purposes. However, even though the will of wanting to have and raise children for the love and honor of God is a good and noble thing, the consequences following upon this good thing are many times bad; a few examples being disobedient, evil and mortally sinful children that, sad to say, in most cases are headed for

Hell. Scripture also testifies to this most sad truth.

Matthew 7:13 **“Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!”**

Luke 13:24 **“Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able.”**

The above words has been true for all ages, but it has never been more true than what it is for us today. The Bible prophetically warned of this: *“And woe to them that are with child, and that give suck in those days.”* (Matthew 24:19) Many marriages are also not good and are displeasing to God since many spouses marry for sinful and lustful reasons.

Our Lady of Fatima: “The sins of the world are too great! The sins which lead most souls to hell are sins of the flesh! Certain fashions are going to be introduced which will offend Our Lord very much. Those who serve God should not follow these fashions. The Church has no fashions; Our Lord is always the same. Many marriages are not good; they do not please Our Lord and are not of God.”

And considering some of the “woes” of our days. Unless you will lock up your children in a room without a television, media or contact with other people (except good friends and family members), it is almost guaranteed that they will be exposed to innumerable mortal sins and be lost. Why? Because the world has become so evil, corrupted and sensual today so that one will see even half naked women displayed on billboards in public places! This was totally unheard of before. One look with consent to impure thoughts is enough for a mortal sin to have been committed. And I ask you this: Will you ever let your children go out? If yes, then, can you guard their eyes and their desires? or keep them away from bad companions?

Gratian, *Medieval Marriage Law*: “Also, [Pope St.] Gregory, [in Moral Reflections, XXI, ix]: C. 13. One commits adultery when one sinfully desires a married or an unmarried woman. **“Anyone who so much as looks with lust at a woman, has already become an adulterer with her in his heart.”** [cf. Mt. 5:28] Now Greek uses the word moechus for adulterer, because it prohibits looking not only at another’s wife but also at any other woman. This shows plainly that, when an unmarried woman is desired with lust, adultery can be committed by sight alone.”

And this is without even considering all other evils of today, such as porn, the media, and the world with all its allurements that are, in truth, too numerous to even mention.

And then we have the public school system, which is mandatory in most western countries, wherein all kinds of ungodly and dangerous teachings are being taught, such as evolution, false religions, and as if that was not enough, sexual education. Will you allow your children to go to public school and be perverted and familiarize with worldly and ungodly friends? Then sadly, you will in fact lose them to the world! **In fact, some statistics show that a large percentage of all children raised in so-called Christian homes who attend public schools will outright and openly reject the Christian faith by the first year of college.** It was Adolf Hitler that once said, “Let me control the textbooks and I will control the state. The state will take youth and give to youth its own education and its own upbringing. Your child belongs to us already... what are you?” Pope Pius XI says concerning this: “By nature parents have a right to the training of their children, but with this added duty that the education and instruction of the child be in accord with the end for which by God’s blessing it was begotten. Therefore it is the duty of parents to make every effort to prevent any invasion of their rights in this matter, and to make absolutely sure that the education of their children remain under their own control in keeping with their Christian duty, **and above all refuse to send them to those schools in which there is danger of imbibing the deadly poison of impiety.**” (*Rappresentanti in terra* #35, Dec. 31, 1929) God does not tell us as much as to be on guard against demons as with men (Matthew 10:17), for men are oftentimes more harmful to us than the devils are, for demons can be expelled by invoking the most holy names of Jesus and Mary, but man on the other hand cannot be expelled in the same way. And if a man tries to change his life, he will be reviled, despised, and called a most miserable fool, a good for nothing and a man of no education. Many weak souls sadly turn back to the vomit from such and like reproaches out of fear for the loss of human respect!

If you are thinking of raising children, then you should first seriously consider if this is God’s will for you. No one should be thinking of raising children unless they believe it’s God’s will that they should have children. After one has entered into the married state, however, one is not allowed to abstain from the marital act if or when the other spouse asks for the marital debt to be payed, unless both the spouses agree to live the more virtuous and meritorious life of chastity and purity; and that is why one must seriously consider the needs of one’s future children before entering the state of matrimony.

God naturally wants all spouses to live a chaste life and avoid bad occasions for themselves or their children, and so spouses should only have relations if they believe that God wants them to have children. But how will a couple know if God wants them to have children?

They will of course understand this by praying to Him and asking His Holy will in this matter. God will implant a fervent love and longing for children in the spouses' hearts, or reveal to them through some sign or special revelation if He wills they should have children. Thus, a husband and wife should ask God and seriously consider if it's His will that they should have children. For it is certain that if God wills that a couple should have children, that it is for a greater purpose, such as giving birth to a saint.

St. Augustine teaches that the first man and woman were waiting for God's order and commandment to engage in intercourse since God created Adam and Eve without sexual desire for each other. Thus, St. Augustine, with the rest of the Church taught that sexual desire was not an aspect of God's design for the male and the female, since concupiscence is an evil effect of the original sin. "For why should they not await God's authorization for this, since there was no drive of concupiscence coming from rebellious flesh?" Indeed, Augustine concludes that sexual desire is "fundamentally alien to the original definition of humanity." By this we can understand that the biblical teaching in Tobias 6:18 of chaste and humble prayer for three days – before one consummates the marriage by the marital act – comes directly from God's original plan and will for humanity before the fall and original sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden; for before the fall, the human will was infinitely more directed to obeying and following God's perfect will and direction in all things rather than their own reason and judgment, as it sadly is now.

The Word of God and Holy Scripture teaches that one should not consummate the marriage immediately after one has been married, but that one should wait for three days while praying earnestly to God to bless their marriage: "*because for these three nights we are joined to God: and when the third night is over, we will be in our own wedlock.*" (Tobias 8:4) The Holy Archangel Raphael, acting as God's messenger, instructs husbands and wives to always wait three days in chastity and in prayer before consummating the marriage: "*But thou when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her.*" (Tobias 6:18)

Indeed, according to God's Holy Word, those who refuse to practice continence and virtue in their marriage, will undoubtedly fall into all kinds of sins because of their bad will and sensuality: "*Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. **For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.***" (Tobias 6:16-17)

It is thus certain and an established fact by both the Holy Bible and Apostolic Tradition that those spouses who do not practice chastity and prayer for a while before they perform the marital act will much more easily fall into sexual sins of various sorts since they will be more easily controlled by the devil and his demons because of their carelessness and sloth in praying to God and invoking His Holy aid in resisting sinful inclinations and temptations. God's Word in the Holy Scripture were not written down just for show or because they sounded good or pleasant, but it was explicitly written down for the purpose of saving our souls from sin and the eternal hellfire, and this truth of Sacred Revelation obviously applies to the biblical and Apostolic teaching that spouses – who want to please Our Lord – should pray and observe chastity for a while before having sexual relations.

If spouses wish to honor Our Lord and Our Lady in a perfect way they should always pray to God in chastity for three days every time before they perform the marital act, and God will hear them and keep them from sinning and bless them with good offspring for His Holy Name's sake for their virtuous and pure love of God, prayer and chastity. In the case that spouses do not receive offspring, however, this is many times God's sign to them that He wants another way for them and that they should serve Him in total chastity and purity instead, which is a much more virtuous life where they beget spiritual children for the love of God rather than fleshly children.

In truth, "he who neglects prayer in the time of temptation is like a general, who, when surrounded by the enemy, does not ask for reinforcements from his monarch. **Adam fell into sin because when he was tempted he did not look to God for help.** We should say a Hail Mary, or at least devoutly utter the holy names of Jesus and Mary. "These holy names," St. John Chrysostom declares, "have an intrinsic power over the devil, and are a terror to hell." At the name of Mary the devils tremble with fear; when she is invoked their power forsakes them as wax melts before the fire." (Rev. Francis Spirago, *The Catechism Explained*, A.D. 1899)

St. Ephraim, On Prayer Before Intercourse: "O Blessed Fruit conceived without intercourse, bless our wombs during intercourse. Have pity on our barrenness, Miraculous Child of virginity." (*Hymns of St. Ephraim: Hymn 7 On the Nativity*)

Question: Should a traditional Catholic be living a single life if no traditional Catholic is available for him or her to marry? I am unsure what God would like my life's vocation to be (married, single or even a religious). I would prefer to get married and have children but with so few traditional Catholics who are sedevacantists I am not sure where to turn or what to do. I hope to marry a traditional Catholic and sedevacantist or someone who is willing to convert to the true Catholic faith. It would cause too many problems with a Novus Ordo "catholic"

when it came to his family/friends concerning weddings/ wakes/ funerals which a Catholic can't go to. Am I correct on this? So I guess it would be a traditional Catholic and sedevacantist husband or nothing. Any thoughts or recommendations concerning what I could/should do would be greatly appreciated.

In Jesus and Mary

Answer: Yes, you should not pursue marriage with a person who is not in agreement on all the issues. In this apostasy, that means that many people might have to embrace a single life. One should of course pray for the specific intention of fulfilling God's Will in one's life.

Question: What is marital modesty? And is it absolutely necessary for two married spouses to be modest towards each other in their dress, conversations and acts?

Answer: Marital modesty is modesty within a marriage and concerns the modesty and purity the husband and wife must have towards each other in order to have a fruitful and good marriage. Modesty within a Christian Marriage is very important.

Ecclesiasticus 7:21 "Depart not from a wise and good wife, whom thou hast gotten in the fear of the Lord: for the grace of her modesty is above gold."

A wife must be modest even before her husband, and a husband should be modest even before his wife. Whoever teaches immodesty to married couples, leads them away from Christ, and harms the Sacrament of Marriage. For the relationship between a husband and wife is a reflection of the relationship between Christ and His Church. Should Christ be immodest with His Bride, the Church? Should the Church be immodest before Christ? So then, neither can a husband and wife be immodest with one another, neither in thought, nor in word, nor in deed. For immodesty leads to every sexual sin.

Marriage is not an exception to the eternal moral law. Natural marital relations for the purpose of procreation is morally good only when it is practiced in accord with morality. Lust within marriage is gravely immoral. If the spouses use one another for mere sexual pleasure, apart from love, faith, fidelity, hope, apart from the primary goods of marital relations (found in the procreation and education of children), then they have sinned against the end, and honesty of marriage. And all unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, even within marriage.

But lesser, although still grave sins are also possible concerning sexuality within marriage. Even for a husband and wife, it is a sin to speak or act in a licentious manner, to speak or act as if marital relations were base or were merely for pleasure, to speak or act with immodesty and impurity. Even spouses must have respect for the dignity of the body, and a holy fear of God, in order to avoid various misuses of the body and of sexuality.

A just war does not justify all acts of violence within that war. And a holy marriage does not justify all sexual acts within that marriage. The eternal moral law prohibits intrinsically evil and gravely immoral sexual acts, as well as acts that are not intrinsically evil, but are sinful due to intention or circumstances. So the thoughts, words, and deeds of immodesty are not justified by marriage.

Modesty within marriage requires the spouses to treat one another as whole persons, with respect and affection, and with a holy fear of sin. Modesty within marriage requires the spouses to view the marital sexual act as integral to the Sacrament of Marriage, and not as a mere source of entertainment or pleasure. Modesty within marriage requires the spouses to subjugate the lesser and baser motive of sexuality (pleasure and quenching of concupiscence), to the higher motives of sexuality (the procreation and education of children), and to the marriage as a whole. Respect for the human body as a gift from God requires the spouses to act with self-restraint or even self-denial, and to avoid excessive indulgence in even lawful acts.

St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book IV, Chapter 2, Section 6: “I could not have called good that concupiscence of the flesh which the Apostle John said is not from the Father, but I call conjugal modesty good which resists the evil of concupiscence lest, when aroused, it draw men to unlawful acts.” (*The Fathers Of The Church A New Translation*, Vol. 35, pp. 170-171)

Question: What is concupiscence and how does it effect us?

Answer: Concupiscence is an ardent, usually sensual, longing. In Christian theology, concupiscence is the selfish human desire for an object, person, or experience. For Christians, concupiscence is what they understand as the orientation, inclination or innate tendency of human beings to long for fleshly appetites, often associated with a desire to do things which are proscribed.

The husband and wife, joined in the holy Sacrament of Matrimony for the purpose of procreation of children and in order to remedy concupiscence, remain nevertheless in the fallen state. Although baptism entirely wipes away original sin, there remains an effect of

original sin in the human person called concupiscence, which is a tendency toward personal sin. The Council of Trent explains this inclination to sin inherent in human persons:

Pope Paul III, *Council of Trent*, Session V, Section 5, June 17, 1546: “But this holy council perceives and confesses that **in the one baptized there remains concupiscence or an inclination to sin, which, since it is left for us to wrestle with, cannot injure those who do not acquiesce but resist manfully by the grace of Jesus Christ**; indeed, he who shall have striven lawfully shall be crowned. **This concupiscence, which the Apostle sometimes calls sin, the holy council declares the Catholic Church has never understood to be called sin in the sense that it is truly and properly sin in those born again, but in the sense that it is of sin and inclines to sin.**”

Even the holiest of persons, if they were conceived with original sin, have concupiscence. Only Jesus and the Virgin Mary were conceived without original sin, and never had concupiscence. (Adam and Eve were created without original sin, but they later fell from grace, and as a result they had concupiscence.) We mere weak and mortal sinners must always struggle against this tendency toward selfishness, toward valuing lesser goods over greater goods, toward the disorder of values that is the basis for sin.

As *The Council of Trent* declared, we must “**walk not according to the flesh, but, putting off the old man [of sin] and putting on the new one who is created according to God, are made innocent, immaculate, pure, guiltless and beloved of God [through baptism and a holy life], heirs indeed of God, joint heirs with Christ; so that there is nothing whatever to hinder their entrance into heaven.**” (Pope Paul III, *Council of Trent*, Session V, Section 5)

Therefore, throughout any marriage, both spouses must continually struggle against the misuse of sexuality. For sexuality has great power to do harm within marriage. There is an intrinsic danger to sexuality. The spouses can be pushed apart by this misuse of sexuality, resulting in disunity. Sin of any kind, mortal or venial, does not cooperate with grace and does not benefit any relationship.

CONCLUSION

Hell will be long and excruciatingly painful for all those who practice or promote NFP or contraception.

We implore, beg and entreat all priests and laymen to accept the Church's teaching on this point and regain their faith in God's providence.

Couples who have used NFP but who are resolved to change should not despair. NFP is a great evil, but God is merciful and will forgive those who are firmly resolved to change their life and confess their sin. Those who have used NFP need to be sorry for their sin and confess to a validly ordained non-heretical priest (if one is available) that they have practiced birth control (for however long it may have been used). Both the husband and wife who agreed to the use of NFP need to confess. They should then be open to all of the children that God wishes to bestow upon them – without concern or knowledge of charts or cycles, seeking first the kingdom of God and His justice, letting the King of Heaven plan their family.

PART 2. SEXUAL PLEASURE, LUST, AND THE VARIOUS SEXUAL ACTS IN MARRIAGE

Can spouses sin sexually with each other in their sexual acts?

There are three main reasons for why the Natural Law, The Holy Bible, Apostolic Tradition, as well as the Church and Her Popes and Saints (as we will see) teaches that all spouses who perform unnecessary and non-procreative forms of sexual acts (**such as masturbation of self or of spouse, oral and anal sex, foreplay, and sensual touches and kisses**) either by themselves or in relationship to the marital act before, during or after it, are sinning mortally against their conscience and the Divine and Natural Law instituted by God.

The first reason is that they are a kind of **drug abuse** since they are **selfish, intoxicating and unnecessary just like drug abuse is**; *the second* is that they are **shameful** since the people who commit these unnecessary acts are ashamed to do them in front of other people; and *the third* is that they are **non-procreative** even though God's law teaches that the "**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**". (Pope Pius XI) These three reasons are also why the Church teaches that even **the normal, natural and procreative "act of marriage exercised for pleasure only"** is condemned as a sin for both the married and unmarried people alike (Blessed Pope Innocent XI) and why this truth was taught already in the Old Testament by God long before even the New Testament was revealed to us by Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Bible, Tobias 6:16-17, 22; 8:9 "Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: **Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.** ... And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, **moved rather for love of children than for lust**, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children... [Tobias said] And now, Lord, thou knowest, **that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife**, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever."

The first reason for why all non-procreative and unnecessary forms of sexual acts are mortally sinful is that all sexual acts (even marital, natural, lawful and procreative ones)

are intoxicating and affects the person similar to the effect of a drug. In fact, the sexual pleasure is many times more intoxicating than many drugs that are unlawful to abuse. But when people are performing unnatural and non-procreative forms of sexual acts, they are abusing the marital act in a similar way that a drug user abuses drugs, or a glutton abuses food. It is an inherently selfish act that are not founded on reason, but only on their unlawful and shameful search for carnal pleasure, similar to the action of a person that uses drugs in order to get intoxicated or high.

This is also why the Church teaches that even the normal, natural and procreative “**act of marriage exercised for pleasure only**” is condemned as a sin for both the married and unmarried people alike (Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters Condemned in Decree (# 8), March 4, 1679*). Since the Church and the Natural Law condemns even the normal, natural and **procreative** “**act of marriage exercised for pleasure only**”, even though this act is **procreative** in itself, it is obvious that **all non-procreative** and unnecessary forms of sexual acts (such as sensual kisses and touches) are condemned as even worse sins (that is, as mortal sins) – since they are utterly **unnatural, unreasonable, shameful, and selfish**.

A sick person is allowed by God’s permission to take drugs in order to lessen his pain. But when this sick person uses more drugs than he needs in order to get intoxicated, or continues to use the drugs after he gets well, he commits the sin of drug abuse. This is a perfect example of those who perform non-procreative forms of sexual acts either by themselves or in relationship to the marital act. They are gluttonous or overindulgent in the marital act, and are thus sinning against their reason and the Natural Law. For “**the sin of lust consists in seeking venereal pleasure not in accordance with right reason...**” and “**lust there signifies any kind of excess.**” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 1)

The “excess” that St. Thomas and the Church condemns as a sin are all sexual acts except for what is inherent in the normal, natural and procreative marital act itself. All other sexual acts are by their own nature inexcusable and a sin against the Natural Law, which means that even though a person has never been told or taught that they are sins, they are still committing a mortal sin, just like a person do not have to be told or taught that murder, abortion, stealing, or getting intoxicated or drunk is a sin against the Natural Law in order for this person to be able to commit a mortal sin. As the Haydock Bible and Commentary correctly explains about The Natural Law and Romans 2:14-16: “**these men are a law to themselves, and have it written in their hearts, as to the existence of a God, and their reason tells them, that many sins are unlawful...**”

In truth, **“We may also reply that "lasciviousness" relates to certain acts circumstantial to the venereal act, for instance kisses, touches, and so forth.”** (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, Art. 1) Notice that St. Thomas even rejects as lascivious and unlawful **“acts circumstantial to the venereal act, for instance kisses, touches, and so forth”** and so it is clear that St. Thomas taught that all non-procreative and unnecessary sexual acts are sinful and against nature. This is also why the Natural Law and the Church teaches that even sensual kisses performed **“*for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight which arises from the kiss*”** is condemned as a mortal sin for both the married and the unmarried people alike (Pope Alexander VII, *Various Errors on Morals Condemned in Decree #40*, September 24, 1665; Denz. 1140).

Can a sick person who only need one pain killer tablet to ease his pain claim that he can take more tablets in order to get intoxicated or high and escape the sin of drug abuse? Of course not! But this is the kind of unnatural and idiotic logic we have to deal with from those perverse, evil and damned persons who defend such vile sexual acts against God and nature as foreplay, and anal, oral, and manual sexual acts. Not only are these acts in themselves abominable and a kind of drug abuse – and thus a mortal sin – but just like drug addicts they add a lie to their mortal sin of drug abuse when they claim that they need or are entitled to perform such acts and thus derive more sexual pleasure than nature and God allows them to have.

Venerable Luis de Granada (1505-1588): “Those that be married must examine themselves in particular, if in their mind thinking of other persons, **or with intention not to beget children, but only for carnal delight, or with extraordinary touchings and means, they have sinned against the end, and honesty of marriage.**” (*A Spiritual Doctrine, containing a rule to live well, with divers prayers and meditations*, p. 362)

Since all humans knows by instinct and nature that one may not get intoxicated for selfish or unnecessary reasons, it is clear that both the married as well as the unmarried people who perform non-procreative or unnecessary sexual acts are in a state of damnation, since they are sinning mortally against both nature and their own reason. “For ***necessary*** sexual intercourse for begetting [of children] is free from blame, and itself is ***alone*** worthy of marriage. **But that which goes beyond this *necessity* [of begetting children, such as sensual kisses and touches] no longer follows reason but lust.” (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 11)**

Just like in the case of the person who use drugs, one must have an absolutely necessary

reason for using the drugs, such as an illness, and motives that aren't absolutely necessary such as "love", "pleasure" or "fun" can never be used as an excuse to excuse the marital act, just like one cannot use such unnecessary and evil excuses for the purpose of excusing one's drug abuse. In this context of speaking about the truth that the vehemence of the marital sexual act is "more oppressive on the reason than the pleasures of the palate", St. Thomas shows that the sexual act is intoxicating and thus oppressive on the reason just like a drug is, which shows us that it is a fact of the Natural Law and the Law of the Church that the marital sexual act must be excused by the absolutely necessary motive of procreation just like the drug use must be excused with an absolutely necessary motive.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 153, Art. 2: "**Venereal pleasures are more impetuous, and are more oppressive on the reason than the pleasures of the palate:** and therefore they are in greater need of chastisement and restraint, since if one consent to them this increases the force of concupiscence and weakens the strength of the mind. Hence Augustine says (Soliloq. i, 10): 'I consider that nothing so casts down the manly mind from its heights as the fondling of women, and those bodily contacts which belong to the married state.'"

Here we see the very evident truth from the Natural Law that the sexual act deprives people of the ability to reason, explained in a very eloquent way by *The Angelic Doctor*. In another section of his *Summa*, he explains this truth about the marital sexual act again:

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 1: "**Now there is a loss of reason incidental to the union of man and woman, both because the reason is carried away entirely on account of the vehemence of the pleasure, so that it is unable to understand anything at the same time, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. vii, 11); and again because of the tribulation of the flesh which such persons have to suffer from solicitude for temporal things (1 Corinthians 7:28).** Consequently the choice of this union cannot be made ordinate except by certain compensations whereby that same union is righted, and these are the goods which ***excuse*** marriage and make it right."

Therefore, the normal, natural and procreative marital act performed by two married spouses is the only sexual act that can be excused from sin since man knows by nature and instinct that one must excuse an act of intoxication with an absolutely necessary motive. Anything contrary to this is unnatural and evil.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 5: “Whether the marriage act can be excused without the marriage goods [sacrament, fidelity, procreation]? On the contrary, If the cause be removed the effect is removed. **Now the marriage goods are the cause of rectitude in the marriage act. Therefore the marriage act cannot be excused without them.** Further, the aforesaid act does not differ from the act of fornication except in the aforesaid goods. But the act of fornication is always evil. Therefore the marriage act also will always be evil unless it be excused...”

In this context, St. Thomas Aquinas taught the following concerning the vice of sexual intemperance and how the “the reason is absorbed” when one performs unlawful sexual acts: “**Among the vices of intemperance, venereal sins are most deserving of reproach, both on account of the insubordination of the genital organs, and because by these sins especially, the reason is absorbed.**” (*Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 151, Art. 4, Reply to Objection 3, Whether purity belongs especially to chastity?)

When married spouses do not excuse the marital act (which is intoxicating in a way similar to a drug) with the honorable motive of begetting children by only performing the normal, natural and procreative marital act, they perform an act that is inherently sinful, selfish, unreasonable, and unnatural since “**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, # 54) and since “**the act of marriage exercised for pleasure only**” is **condemned as a sin by the Natural Law (Pope Innocent XI)**. And so, the marital act needs an absolutely necessary excuse to legitimize and make moral the inherently evil act of getting intoxicated just like one needs an excuse, like a grave illness, to legitimize and make moral the inherently evil act of getting intoxicated by a drug.

An inherently evil act must always be excused with an absolutely necessary motive or purpose. Otherwise, it will always be a sin. Two examples that clearly demonstrates this fact of “excusing” an otherwise evil act are found in the case of a man injuring another person, which is excused in the case of self-defense; or in the case of a man getting intoxicated, which is excused when a man is sick and requires this intoxication in order to get pain relief. All other inherently evil acts than what is absolutely necessary are strictly condemned as sins, since they cannot be excused by an absolutely necessary motive. For example, a man cannot hurt another man if he wants his money, or if he does not like him; and a man cannot get drunk or intoxicated just because he is sad or unhappy, for none of these excuses are absolutely necessary. Thus, these excuses are not enough by themselves to excuse these acts from being sinful. In truth, some evil acts cannot even be excused at

all, such as in the case of a man who is suffering from hunger, but who nevertheless is never allowed to kill another person in order to get food to survive. It is thus a dogmatic fact of the Natural Law that **“the generative [sexual] act is a sin unless it is excused.”** (St. Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Four Books of Sentences*, d. 31, a. 2, q. 1) It could not be more clear from the Natural Law as well as the teachings of the Church that **“Coitus is reprehensible and evil, unless it be excused”** (Peter Lombard, Archbishop of Paris, *Sententiarum*, 3, d. 37, c. 4) and that is also why all who commit the marital act without excusing it, will always commit sin. **“Therefore the marriage act also will always be evil unless it be excused...”** (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 5)

The second reason for why all non-procreative and unnecessary forms of sexual acts are mortally sinful is that all sexual acts (even marital, natural, lawful and procreative ones) are shameful, which is why people never perform any sexual acts in front of other people.

“Now men are most ashamed of venereal acts, as Augustine remarks (De Civ. Dei xiv, 18), so much so that even the conjugal act, which is adorned by the honesty of marriage, is not devoid of shame... Now man is ashamed not only of this sexual union but also of all the signs thereof, as the Philosopher observes (Rhet. II, 6).” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 151, Art. 4)

And so, when people are performing such inherently shameful acts for lustful and selfish reasons, they are sinning against the Natural Law imprinted on their hearts.

Some people may object that there are many other events that are shameful and that are not yet inherently sinful such as soiling one’s pants or being forced to show oneself naked to other people against one’s own will. This objection however fails to notice the obvious difference between 1) people committing acts of lust with a desire or longing; and 2) events which are shameful but who are not desired or longed for by a person in a sensual way.

Acts of lust are acts performed for the sake of a pleasure and are performed with the will and purpose of satisfying a sensual desire while the events or acts of soiling one’s pants or being forced to show oneself naked to other people is not a desire or lust that is sought after in a sensual way. Thus, these people do not desire that these events should happen. If those people who endured the events of soiling their clothes or naked exhibition against their will would sensually desire or lust for that these shameful events would happen in the same way that a man or a woman lust for and desire that sexual acts or acts of lust happen, they would indeed be declared the most disgusting perverts. Who

but a complete and satanic pervert would sensually desire or lust after soiling their pants or being exhibited naked? Thus, it is not just a mere shameful act or event that is sinful, but the shameful act that is performed with the intention of pleasing oneself sensually, that is sinful.

St. Methodius taught that the marital act was “unseemly,” and St. Ambrose agreed with the Holy Bible that it causes a “defilement” (Leviticus 15:16). St. Augustine agreed with the Holy Bible that “It is good for a man **not** to touch a woman” (1 Corinthians 7:1) and that sexual pleasure, lust or concupiscence for both the married and unmarried people alike are *not* something “good” or “praiseworthy” but are truly “*evil of concupiscence*” and the “*disease of concupiscence*” that arose as an evil result of the original sin of Adam and Eve.

This is also why the Holy Bible urges people to remain unmarried and in a life of chastity since the married man “*is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided*” (1 Corinthians 7:33). St. Paul in the Bible also warns those who would marry as opposed to those who would remain virgins that spouses “shall have tribulation of the flesh”: “*But if thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned: nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh. But I spare you.*” (1 Corinthians 7:28) It is certain that St. Paul does not refer to the desire to procreate as a tribulation of the flesh. Consequently, he can be referring only to one thing—sexual pleasure. Indeed, sexual pleasure is a tribulation of the flesh that must hence be fought against in thought and deed in some way or the Devil will succeed in tempting a spouse to fall into mortal sins of impurity either with the other spouse, with himself or with someone other than his spouse. “Nothing so casts down the manly mind from it’s height as the **fondling** of women and those bodily contacts which belong to the married state.” (St. Augustine of Hippo, *The Soliloquies* 1:10; cf *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 151, Art. 3)

The sexual pleasure is very similar to the effect of a strong drug, and drugs as we all know are very easy to become addicted to by abusing them or overindulging in them. The stronger a drug is, the more is also our spiritual life hindered, and that is why the angelic life of chastity will always be more spiritually fruitful than the marital life according to God’s Holy Word in the Bible. And so, it is clear that Holy Scripture infallibly teaches that marriage and the marital life is an impediment to the spiritual life, while a life of chastity and purity “*give you power to attend upon the Lord, without impediment.*” (1 Corinthians 7:35)

St. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662): “**Again, vice is the wrong use of our conceptual images of things, which leads us to misuse the things**”

themselves. In relation to women, for example, sexual intercourse, rightly used, has as its purpose the begetting of children. He, therefore, who seeks in it only sensual pleasure uses it wrongly, for he reckons as good what is not good. When such a man has intercourse with a woman, he misuses her. And the same is true with regard to other things and one's conceptual images of them. (Second Century on Love, 17; Philokalia 2: 67-68)

Someone might say that it is the sexual member that is shameful or evil to expose to others and not concupiscence or the sexual lust. But this argument is false and easily refuted since no one who is not a complete pervert would have sex in front of other people even though their whole body was covered by sheets or blankets. This proves to us that it is the sexual pleasure that is shameful and evil, and not only the exhibition of the sexual organ. For **“man is ashamed not only of this sexual union but also of all the signs thereof,”** (St. Thomas Aquinas) and this proves to us that not only the sensual desire is shameful, but also the very sexual act and “also of all the signs thereof”.

St. Jerome: “Thus it must be bad to touch a woman. If indulgences is nonetheless granted to the marital act, this is only to avoid something worse. But what value can be recognized in a good that is allowed only with a view of preventing something worse?”

The sexual pleasure is always an evil pleasure to experience in itself since it is a **shameful and intoxicating pleasure** that is very similar to the evil pleasure people experience when they abuse alcohol or drugs, and that is why it is always an evil pleasure to experience even for married couples, even though married spouses do not sin during their normal, natural and procreative marital acts since **“those who use the shameful sex appetite licitly are making good use of evil.”** (St. Augustine, *Anti-Pelagian Writings*) St. Augustine in his book *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, explains this evil thus: “Wherefore the devil holds infants guilty [through original sin] who are born, not of the good by which marriage is good, but of the **evil of concupiscence [lust]**, which, indeed, marriage uses aright, but at which even marriage has occasion to feel shame.” (Book 1, Chapter 27)

St. Augustine's reference to the lawful use of “the shameful sex appetite” means that spouses are only allowed to engage in marital intercourse as long as they perform the act for the sake of conceiving a child. Spouses who perform the marital act without excusing it with the motive or purpose of procreation are thus “making evil use of evil” according to St. Augustine. “I do not say that the activity in which married persons engage for the purpose

of begetting children is evil. As a matter of fact, I assert that it is good, because it makes good use of the evil of lust, and through this good use, human beings, a good work of God, are generated.” (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, 3.7.15) It is thus obvious that the cause of the shame that is inherent in the sexual act, as we have seen, is “the evil of the sex appetite.” (St. Augustine, *Anti-Pelagian Writings*)

The third reason for why all non-procreative and unnecessary forms of sexual acts are mortally sinful is that the Natural Law teaches that “**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #54) and that even the normal, natural and procreative “**act of marriage exercised for pleasure only**” is condemned as a sin for both the married and unmarried people alike (Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters Condemned in Decree* (# 8), March 4, 1679).

The Natural Law is rooted in design. God, the Supreme Designer, has imprinted a design on all created things – including the human person, both in his spiritual and physical being – a purpose for which each has been created. Thus, with regard to the human person, the Creator has designed speech for communicating the truth and the mouth to swallow food etc. Likewise, the Creator has designed the sexual organs for something noble, namely, for procreating children. Because of this, the Church’s teaching has always been clear from the beginning that: “**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #54).

Any action of the sexual organisms (the private parts) or other acts that are intended to arouse sensuality that is lacking the procreative function, is always sinful and against the Natural Law. An action of the sexual faculties outside of the normal and natural marital act are lacking the procreative dimension and consequently, it would be sexual pleasure sought for itself, isolated from its procreative function – and that is always an unlawful lust. The fact that sinful spouses may engage in the normal, natural and procreative marital act before, during or after they have engaged in another kind of sinful, non-procreative and unnecessary sexual act (such as masturbation of self or of spouse, oral and anal sex, foreplay, and sensual touches and kisses) does not make these two different acts the same action, just as the fact that a person taking another footstep immediately after he have taken a previous footstep does not make the two footsteps the same action.

“Lastly comes the sin of not observing the right manner of copulation, which is **more grievous** if the abuse regards the ‘vas’ [the vessel or the orifice of a woman] than if it affects the manner of copulation in respect of other circumstances.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art.

12)

The Church teaches that any act which is intrinsically evil cannot be moral, regardless of circumstance or intention. Unnatural sex acts (such as oral, anal and manual sex) are intrinsically evil and therefore cannot become moral by being combined with, preceded by, or followed by, a moral act of natural marital relations performed for the primary purpose of begetting children. **“No difficulty can arise that justifies the putting aside of the law of God which forbids all acts intrinsically evil.”** There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted.” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #61)

Now (in the 20th and the 21st century) there are many ‘teachers’ who are teaching the exact opposite idea, but they have no explanation for how an act that is intrinsically evil can become good by being combined with another act. As an analogy, killing an innocent person in order to steal his money is immoral, and it does not become moral by being combined with or followed by the act of donating the money to charity. *“And should we not do evil, so that good may result? For so we have been slandered, and so some have claimed we said; **their condemnation is just.**”* (Romans 3:8)

One of the greatest evidences that proves that non-procreative sexual acts are inherently sinful and that they can never be excused or justified in any circumstance is that not a single Pope or Saint in the 2000 year history of the Church ever taught that they could be done either by themselves or in relationship to the marital act but that, as we have seen, and as we will see, The Holy Bible and all Popes, Church Fathers, and Saints unanimously condemned these acts. Only in the debauched and immoral 20th century did this vile and monstrous teaching spring up from the pit of Hell, directly fulfilling biblical prophecy: *“For there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their **own desires**, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.”* (2 Timothy 4:3)

Unnatural sexual acts are inherently non-procreative; such acts are, by their very nature, not open to the possibility of conceiving a child.

“But no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who, in exercising it, deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose, sin against nature and commit a deed

which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #54)

Unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically against nature because the conjugal act is primarily directed toward procreation – the begetting of children. Those persons (married or not) who deliberately choose sexual acts deprived of the natural power and purpose of procreation “sin against nature” and commit a shameful and intrinsically evil act.

“Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine [that is, a heretical and false doctrine which contradicts the Church’s constant and infallible teaching that the primary end or purpose of the marital act is the procreation of children] regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: **any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #56)

This infallible teaching of the Church which says that “*any use whatsoever of matrimony in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature,*” must be understood to condemn not only contracepted sexual acts, but also any and all non-procreative sexual acts, even within marriage, including unnatural sexual acts. For all sexual acts are a deliberate use of the sexual faculty, and all unnatural sexual acts are a deliberate choice of an act that are inherently non-procreative. If the Pope had wished to narrow his statements to only contraception, he would not have said “any use whatsoever,” or if he had wished to allow unnatural sexual acts within marriage, he would not have said “any use whatsoever of matrimony.”

Instead, he unequivocally proclaimed the Magisterium’s definitive teaching, which is also found in Holy Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the Natural Law, that each and every marital sexual act must include the procreative meaning. This teaching necessarily prohibits the married couple from engaging in any kind of unnatural sexual act (with or without climax), because all such acts lack the procreative meaning. This is also why Pope

Pius XI teaches that spouses are not forbidden to consider the secondary ends of marriage **“SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN]”** and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.”

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 59), Dec. 31, 1930: “For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial right there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider **SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN]** and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved [that is, all sexual acts must be able to procreate in themselves, which means that no unnatural and non-procreative form of a sexual act can ever be performed without sin].”

This means that the primary end or purpose of procreation (in thought and action) can *not* be made subordinate or subject to the secondary ends or purposes and that the primary end must always exist for the marital act to be lawful while the secondary ends or motives are not needed at all in order to lawfully perform the marital act. This is also exactly how Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Bible wants us to view the sexual pleasure and the marital act, since it is a higher calling to live for the Spirit than for our own selfish and fleshly desires. “*And now, Lord, thou knowest, that **not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, **but only for the love of posterity,** [children] in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.*” (The Holy Bible, Tobias 8:9)**

Notice how clearly and unambiguously Pope Pius XI teaches that married people are not even allowed to “consider” the secondary ends of marriage unless they are **subordinated to the primary purpose of marriage (procreation)** and unless “the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved” **which means that one may never perform anything other than the normal, natural and procreative marital act itself since all other sexual acts are not in conformity to procreation and “the intrinsic nature of the [marital] act”**. It is therefore clear that it is totally “forbidden” and mortally sinful to even consider the secondary ends or motives, much less to perform the sexual act, unless “the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved”. The secondary ends “such as mutual aid, the cultivation of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence” can follow after the primary end or purpose of begetting children if the spouses choose this, but the secondary ends or motives are not absolutely needed to lawfully perform the marital act in the same way as the primary purpose of begetting children, nor is the secondary motive of quieting concupiscence meritorious even though it is allowed.

St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Chapter 11, 12, A.D. 401: "... nor be changed into that use which is against nature, on which the Apostle could not be silent, when speaking of the excessive corruptions of unclean and impious men. For ***necessary*** sexual intercourse for begetting [of children] is free from blame, and itself is ***alone*** worthy of marriage. **But that which goes beyond this necessity [of begetting children] no longer follows reason but lust.** ... they [must] not turn away from them the mercy of God... **by changing the natural use into that which is against nature, which is more damnable when it is done in the case of husband or wife.** Of so great power is the ordinance of the Creator, and the order of creation, that... **when the man shall wish to use a body part of the wife not allowed for this purpose, the wife is more shameful, if she suffer it to take place in her own case, than if in the case of another woman.**"

The expression "*that use which is against nature*" refers to unnatural sexual acts, such as oral, anal, or manual sex (masturbation). St. Augustine condemns such acts unequivocally. He even states that such unnatural sexual acts are more damnable (i.e. even more serious mortal sins) when these take place within marriage. The reason why is that God is even more offended by a sexual mortal sin that takes place within the Sacrament of Marriage, since this offense is not only against nature, but also against a ***Holy Sacrament***. "*So then, of all to whom much has been given, much will be required. And of those to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be asked.*" (Luke 12:48)

The Catechism of the Council of Trent: "Matrimonial faith also demands, that husband and wife be united by a certain singular, and holy, and pure love, ***a love not such as that of adulterers***, but such as that which Christ cherishes towards his Church; for this is the model which the Apostle proposed, when he said: "*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church*" (Ephesians 5:25); and very great indeed was the love with which Christ embraced his Church, ***not a selfish love***, but a love that proposed to itself the sole interest of his spouse..." (Question XXIV. — What is Faith in Matrimony, and how it is to be preserved)

Therefore, non-procreative sexual acts cannot be justified by saying that it leads to the marital act; it is by nature a separate action whose object is gravely immoral. Unnatural sexual acts are non-procreative, intrinsically evil, and always gravely immoral, regardless of intention or circumstances, even within marriage. Unnatural sexual acts cannot be justified as a type of foreplay in order to prepare for the natural marital act because the end never justifies the means. And the absence of sexual climax does not change an

intrinsically evil, gravely immoral, unnatural sexual act into an act that is good or morally defensible.

Neither can one argue that these kinds of non-procreative sexual acts can be used if necessity requires it for the sexual act to be performed or if there is a problem with performing the marital act without them, for acts that are gravely immoral can never be justified in any circumstance. “But no reason, ***however grave***, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good.” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #54)

Those who have a problem in performing the marital act should use a lubricant in order to be able to complete the normal, natural and procreative marital act, for this is a lawful and honorable solution to use if there is a problem to perform the marital act. “*May marriage be **honorable** in all, and may the bed be undefiled. For God will judge fornicators and adulterers.*” (Hebrews 13:4)

Further, the consequences of this behavior of deviant sexuality (consequences are a witness as well to the Natural Law), is disease. There is research that shows women’s risk of fungal infection increases 10 fold with this type of behavior. There are other risks as well, some mouth cancers, which research is beginning to show may be a result of the sexually transmitted disease. “*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting sanctification in the fear of God.***” (2 Corinthians 7:1)

The leading cause of mouth and throat cancer is not tobacco smoking or alcohol use. Oral sex is now listed as the leading cause of cancer of the mouth and throat (oropharynx cancer). A new research published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology and authored by Dr. Maura Gillison states that persons who had practiced oral sex are eight times more likely than those who have not had oral sex to develop human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV, the most commonly transmitted sexual disease, is the leading cause of cancer of the oropharynx in the US. The number of people diagnosed with HPV-related oral cancers in the U.S. tripled from 1998 to 2004.

St. Barnabas, *Letter of Barnabas*, Chapter 10:8, A.D. 74: “Moreover, he [Moses] has rightly detested the weasel [Leviticus 11:29]. For he means, “Thou shalt not be like to those whom we hear of as **committing wickedness with the mouth through uncleanness [oral sex]**; nor shalt thou be joined to **those impure women who commit iniquity with the mouth with the body through uncleanness.**” (Chapter X. — Spiritual Significance of the Precepts of Moses

Respecting Different Kinds of [Forbidden] Food)

It is clear that the Church and Her Saints rejects the heretical modern-day idea that the mere deposit of semen in the correct location justifies all other sexual acts. Every single sexual act must be marital and procreative, and one is not justified in adding sexual acts (such as oral or anal sex) that are not procreative in themselves. One cannot justify a set or number of non-procreative forms of sexual acts by performing a procreative form of a sexual act before, during or after one has performed these non-procreative forms of sexual acts, because every sexual act must be able to beget children in itself. The sexual act is only allowed to be performed as long as the purpose and ability of the act itself to procreate is present, and when this intention and ability is not there, the sexual act will always be a sin.

Pope St. Clement of Rome (1st century AD): “**But this kind of chastity is also to be observed, that sexual intercourse must not take place heedlessly and for the sake of mere pleasure, but for the sake of begetting children.** And since this observance is found even amongst some of the lower animals, it were a shame if it be not observed by men, reasonable, and worshiping God.”
(*Recognitions of Clement*, Chapter XII, Importance of Chastity)

The Catholic Church and Her Saints have always taught that illicit, non-procreative and unnecessary sexual acts within marriage are equivalent to fornication and adultery.

St. Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, Book 1, Section 49, A.D. 393: “And it makes no difference how honorable may be the cause of a man’s insanity. Hence Xystus in his Sentences tells us that ‘He who too ardently loves his own wife is an adulterer.’ It is disgraceful to love another man’s wife at all, or one’s own too much. A wise man ought to love his wife with judgment, not with passion. Let a man govern his voluptuous impulses, and not rush headlong into intercourse. There is nothing blacker than to love a wife as if she were an adulteress.”

Gratian, *Medieval Marriage Law*, Case Thirty-Two, Question IV: “Also, Jerome, [in *Against Jovinian*, I]: C. 5. Nothing is more sordid than to make love to your wife as you would to an adulteress. The origins of love are respectable, but its perversion is an enormity. §1. It gives no respectable motive for losing one’s self control. Hence, the Sentences of Sixtus says, “He is an adulterer who is too passionate a lover of his wife.” Just as all passion for another’s wife is sordid, so also is excessive passion for one’s own. The wise man should love his wife reasonably, not emotionally. The mere stimulus of lust should not dominate him, nor should he force her to have sex. Nothing is more sordid than to make love to your wife as you would to an

adulteress.”

Notice that St. Jerome states that “it makes no difference how honorable may be the cause of a man’s insanity.” In other words, the intention which motivates a man to sin is irrelevant to the morality of the act. If a sexual act is a sin, it does not matter how honorable the man’s intentions are, it is still a serious moral disorder, comparable, as a figure of speech, to the serious mental disorder of insanity. St. Jerome plainly taught that there are sexual sins and excessive passion within marriage and between spouses, just like countless of others Popes and Saints taught. He said: “Let a man govern his voluptuous impulses, and not rush headlong into intercourse.” The idea that “nothing is shameful or sinful” in the marital act as long as the marital act occurs at some point in time is plainly rejected by St. Jerome, the Church and the rest of the Saints. It is contrary to wisdom and good judgment for a man to have sexual relations with his wife in an inordinate and excessive manner. The fact of the matter is that all those who have sexual relations with their spouse in an inordinate and excessive manner, or who perform unnatural or non-procreative forms of sexual acts, are guilty of the crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ by their evil, sinful and selfish acts. This truth was expressly revealed by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself in a revelation to Blessed Angela of Foligno (1248-1309) in the following words:

*Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke, saying: “**For the sins of thy hands and arms, with which thou hast done much wickedness in embraces, touches, and other evil deeds, My hands were driven into the wood of the Cross by large nails and torn through bearing the weight of My body in Mine agony.**” (Blessed Angela of Foligno, 1248-1309, *The Book of Divine Consolations*, p. 217)*

Therefore, unnatural and non-procreative sexual acts do not become permissible when these take place within marriage. Instead, **unnatural sexual acts are made even more sinful when they take place within marriage because they offend not only against nature and a Holy Sacrament, but also against God and the Law written in our hearts.**

“And since the man who is too ardent a lover of his wife acts counter to the good of marriage if he use her indecently, although he be not unfaithful, he may in a sense be called an adulterer; and even more so than he that is too ardent a lover of another woman.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 8)

Notice in the quote above that St. Thomas held sexual sins within marriage **to be worse than adultery**, because the act occurs within marriage. He did not teach that all sexual acts between a husband and wife are moral as many heretical and perverted “Catholics” nowadays do. **“Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting. And in doing good, let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing. Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”** (Galatians 6:7-10)

The marital act performed for pleasure only is condemned as a sin for both the married and unmarried people alike

The Catholic Church teaches that the normal, natural and **procreative** marital act when it is performed for the sole sake of pleasure, is at least a venial sin, and many times a mortal sin, **provided one is not against conception or hinder it from taking place in anyway in either deed or thought.**

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #9, March 4, 1679: **“THE ACT OF MARRIAGE EXERCISED FOR PLEASURE ONLY IS ENTIRELY FREE OF ALL FAULT AND VENIAL DEFECT.”** – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.** (Denz. 1159)

St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book 1, Chapter 17, A.D. 419: “It is, however, one thing for married persons to have intercourse only for the wish to beget children, which is not sinful: it is another thing for them to desire carnal pleasure in cohabitation, but with the spouse only, which involves venial sin. For although propagation of offspring is not the motive of the intercourse, there is still no attempt to prevent such propagation, either by wrong desire or evil appliance.”

As we can see here, it is at least a venial sin to have normal, natural and procreative marital relations merely for lustful motives, provided that the spouses are open to conception (and do not hinder it in anyway) and no other sinful deed or thought is committed during the act of marriage. From this can be understood that a couple must have a reason (other than carnal pleasure) for coming together without sin during the act of marriage. Thus, spouses are not to come together for whatever lustful reason or desire they may come to think of— for that would be, at least (if not more than) a venial sin according to the Catholic Church. All venial sins open up the soul to graver sins, and that is why one must always guard

oneself very carefully from falling into venial sins.

Pope St. Gregory the Great (c. 540-604): “**The married must be admonished to bear in mind that they are united in wedlock for the purpose of procreation, and when they abandon themselves to immoderate intercourse, they transfer the occasion of procreation to the service of pleasure.** Let them realize that though they do not then pass beyond the bonds of wedlock, yet in wedlock they exceed its rights. Wherefore, it is necessary that they efface by frequent prayer what they befoul in the fair form of conjugal union by the admixture of pleasure.” (St. Gregory the Great, "Pastoral Care," Part 3, Chapter 27, in "Ancient Christian Writers," No. 11, pp. 188-189)

The Catholic Church's condemnation of even natural and normal so-called marital relations performed solely for lustful motives shows us that the Catholic Church absolutely abhors and condemns all sexual acts that are unnecessary for conception to occur (such as oral sex or masturbation of self or spouse, before, during or after the marital act). Every unnecessary and non-procreative form of a sexual act (such as sensual kisses, touches and masturbation) are obviously even more evil and depraved than the normal, natural and **procreative** “act of marriage exercised for *pleasure only*,” **which the Church condemns as a sin**. This clearly shows us that Holy Mother Church absolutely condemns all sexual acts performed for the sake of sensual pleasure that goes above or beyond what is inherent in the marital act itself, and that is necessary for conception to occur.

St. Athanasius the Great (293-373): “Which use [of marriage] are you referring to? That in the Law which God allowed... or that which, while popular, is performed secretly and adulterously [even by married people]? ... Blessed is the man who in his youth having a free yoke employs his natural parts for the purpose of producing children. **But if for licentiousness, the punishment spoken of by the Apostle shall await the immoral and adulterous (Heb. 13:4).**” (First Epistle of Athanasius the Great addressed to the Monk Amun, Quoted in *The Rudder*, pp. 576-77)

The Church teaches that all unnecessary and non-procreative sexual acts are *sinful*, both before, during and after the act of marriage, and that these acts may never be performed in any circumstance or for any reason whatsoever by anyone. For just as it is blameworthy and sinful to have sexual relations only for sensual pleasure for both the married and unmarried people alike, so too is this true with other pleasures as well, such as “eating and drinking even to satiety for pleasure only,” and kissing “for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight which arises from the kiss”. **This has always been the teaching of the**

Catholic Church and Her Saints.

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #8, March 4, 1679: “Eating and drinking even to satiety for pleasure only, are not sinful, provided this does not stand in the way of health, since any natural appetite can licitly enjoy its own actions.” – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

Pope Alexander VII, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #40, September 24, 1665 and March 18, 1666: “It is a probable opinion which states that a kiss is only venial when performed for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight which arises from the kiss, if danger of further consent and pollution is excluded.” – **Condemned statement by Pope Alexander VII.** (Denz. 1140)

St. Alphonsus Liguori, one of the most well known doctors of the Church, expounds on this teaching of Pope Innocent XI in his masterpiece “*The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*”, showing us the inherent evilness of acting in accordance to our sensual desires: “Pope Innocent XI Odescalchi has condemned the proposition which asserts that it is not a sin to eat or to drink from the sole motive of satisfying the palate. However, it is not a fault to feel pleasure in eating: for it is, generally speaking, impossible to eat without experiencing the delight which food naturally produces. **But it is a defect to eat, like beasts, through the sole motive of sensual gratification, and without any reasonable object. Hence, the most delicious meats may be eaten without sin, if the motive be good and worthy of a rational creature; and, in taking the coarsest food through attachment to pleasure, there may be a fault.**” (*The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, p. 282)

This condemnation of “Eating and drinking even to satiety for pleasure only” and kissing “performed for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight” is not only reasonable, but part of the Natural Law, yet it may come as a surprise to many, but this is only because so many commit sins of this nature. Indeed, all people who fall into these kinds of sins have become slaves to their passions and do not order their acts in accordance with natural reason, but in accordance with their unmortified desires, like beasts, and yet, even worse than beasts.

St. Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, Sermon 1, Section 24: “Seeing then that... the faithful man descends to both [marriage and food] as matter of duty, and does not fall into them through lust. But how many are there who rush greedily to their eating and drinking, and make their whole life to consist in them, as if they were the very reason for living. For whereas men really eat to live, they think that they live to eat. These will every wise man condemn, and Holy Scripture especially,

all gluttons, drunkards, gormandizers, "whose god is their belly." [Phil. 3:19] Nothing but the lust of the flesh, and not the need of refreshment, carries them to the table. ... And so in that other duty of marriage, sensual men seek for wives only to satisfy their sensuality, and therefore at length are scarce contented even with their wives. ... Nevertheless, if you were to say to such a man, "why do you marry?" he would answer perhaps for very shame, "for the sake of children." But if any one in whom he could have unhesitating credit were to say to him, "God is able to give, and yea, and will give you children without your having any intercourse with your wife;" he would assuredly be driven to confess that it was not for the sake of children that he was seeking for a wife. Let him then acknowledge his infirmity, and so receive that which he pretended to receive only as matter of duty."

The Bible states that a demon of lust "hath power" over all spouses who come together for various lustful reasons in their marital acts

In the Biblical book of Tobit or Tobias, we can read about how a powerful devil or demon of lust that is called Asmodeus kills and deceives lustful people, and that this demon "hath power" over married spouses and individuals who come together for various lustful reasons in their marital acts.

Tobias 6:16-17 "Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. **For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust,** as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, **over them the devil hath power.**"

Haydock Commentary adds: "**Verse 17.** *Mule*, which are very libidinous, [Showing excessive sexual drive; lustful.] Psalm xiii."

The interesting thing about the sexual connection of a horse and a mule is that they cannot produce offspring, thus making their sexual relations completely sterile and unproductive. So what does this mean for marriage? It means that this verse alone proves that God's word condemns as sinful and unlawful all human sexual relations or acts that (1) are performed for the sole motive of lust; (2) that cannot produce offspring naturally (not referring to natural infertility or defects); (3) and that are done with an intention or mindset opposed to procreating offspring. Our Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament of the Bible also connects the will to bear children to salvation, teaching us that a woman: "**shall be saved through child-bearing;** if she continue in faith, and love, and sanctification, with sobriety." (1 Timothy 2:15)

The biblical book of Tobias describes how the pious and pure virgin “Sara daughter of Raguel” had married seven husbands, but all seven of them had mysteriously died when they first entered the nuptial chamber, that is, when they first tried to perform the marital act: “... she [Sarah] had been given to seven husbands, and a devil named **Asmodeus** had killed them, at their first going in unto her.” (Tobias 3:8). Haydock Commentary explains the reason for this: “*God justly suffers the wicked to fall victims to their iniquitous appetites. (St. Gregory, mor. ii.)*”

This specific demon who is allowed to control and kill people who fall into sins of the flesh is named Asmodeus, according to Holy Scripture. Haydock Commentary adds the following about this demon: “*Asmodeus, "the fire of Media." Hebrew, "king of the devils," of that country, exciting people to lust, (Menochius; Serarius, q. 8.) and destroying them. (Worthington) --- Unto her. Greek and Hebrew intimate, when they first entered the nuptial chamber, chap. vi. 14.*”

The Catholic Encyclopedia gives the interesting explanation that “God allowed the demon to slay these men because they entered marriage with unholy motives,” and that “the permission given by God to the demon in this history seems to have as a motive to chasten man’s lust and sanctify marriage.” The only reason why the demon Asmodeus was allowed to kill all seven of Sarah’s husbands “at their first going in unto her,” that is, when they first tried to perform the marital act, was because they all intended to perform the sexual act for sinful, selfish, impure and lustful reasons instead of for the love of God and of children that always must be connected to the marital act. Thus, St. Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636), *Doctor of the Church*, could rightly say that in a true marriage “couples seek not pleasure but offspring” and that “therefore when a person is more sexually active than [is] needed for... procreation, he sins.” (St. Isidore, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*)

In the same Book of Tobit the holy angel Raphael told Tobias to marry Sarah the Virgin but Tobias was afraid to do this since he knew about the death of Sarah’s seven former husbands. St. Raphael however assured him that only those husbands and wives who are lustful and who seek fleshly pleasures are able to be controlled or killed by the demon, thus reassuring him in his holy motives.

Tobias 6:14-18,22 “Then Tobias answered, and said: I hear that she hath been given to seven husbands, and they all died: moreover I have heard, that a devil killed them. Now I am afraid, lest the same thing should happen to me also: and whereas I am the only child of my parents, I should bring down their old age with sorrow to hell [not the literal Hell, but to the place where the souls of the good were kept

before the coming of Christ]. **Then the angel Raphael said to him: Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.** But thou when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her. ... But the second night thou shalt be admitted into the society of the holy Patriarchs. And the third night thou shalt obtain a blessing that sound children may be born of you. **And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayst obtain a blessing in children.**”

Haydock Commentary explains: “**Ver. 14.** *Died.* Greek, "were destroyed in the nuptial chamber, (*numphe*). ... he was permitted by God to exercise his malice against those who would have gratified their impure desires. (Calmet) --- **Ver. 20.** *Society (copulatione.)* He then obtained this blessing, though he knew not his wife till the fourth night. (Worthington) --- His marriage resembled that of the patriarchs. (Calmet)”

The archangel Raphael also told Raguel (Sarah’s father) that his daughter Sarah could only be married to a man that feared God, thus showing us the necessity of fearing God in all our actions.

Tobias 7:11-12 “Now when Raguel heard this he was afraid, knowing what had happened to those seven husbands, that went in unto her: and he began to fear lest it might happen to him also in like manner: and as he was in suspense, and gave no answer to his petition, The angel said to him: Be not afraid to give her to this man, for to him who feareth God is thy daughter due to be his wife: therefore another could not have her.”

This shows us that Sarah’s seven former husbands did not fear God; hence that they deserved to die. For Sarah, who was a holy and devout virgin, did not deserve to be united with such impure and unholy men that did not fear God — and especially during the marital act. For this reason, God allowed the demon Asmodeus to kill all seven of her former husbands.

Before Sarah had met with Tobias, she had fervently prayed to God and fasted for three days so as to be delivered from her reproach after she experienced the sad event of the death of her seven husbands. Her words while praying clearly shows that her intention

when marrying was not to gratify pleasure (that, sad to say, is the most common reason today of why so many marry), but rather that she may be joined in wedlock in the fear of the Lord and for love of children.

Tobias 3:16 “[Sarah said:] Thou knowest, O Lord, that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust. Never have I joined myself with them that play: neither have I made myself partaker with them that walk in lightness. But a husband I consented to take, with thy fear, not with my lust.”

Haydock Commentary explains: “**Verse 16.** *Coveted*, through impure love. Greek, "I am pure from all the sin of a man, and I have not defiled my name, nor the name of my father, in the land of our captivity. I am an only child," &c. (Haydock) --- *Lust*: a very high encomium; which Sara mentions without vanity, placing her confidence in God. (Menochius) (Proverbs xx. 9.) --- **Ver. 17.** *Play*, lasciviously, (Menochius) or dance. (Hugo.) (Exodus xxxii. 1.)”

In contrast to Sarah’s seven former husbands, Tobias was spared from being attacked and killed by Asmodeus since he was holy and desired to please God instead of his own flesh.

Tobias 8:9-10 “And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever. Sara also said: Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, and let us grow old both together in health.”

Haydock Commentary explains: “**Ver. 9.** *Only*. Greek, "for truth," resolving to be ever faithful to her. (Haydock) --- We cannot read the pure sentiments of Tobias and Sara, brought up in the midst of infidels, without surprise. Nothing more perfect could be required of Christians (Calmet) in the married state. (Haydock) --- St. Augustine (Doct. x. and xviii.) adduces this text to shew the true intent of marriage. --- **Ver. 10.** *And*. Greek, "Order pity to be shewn me, and that I may grow old with this woman. And she said along with him, Amen. And they both slept the night," probably on separate beds, ver. 15. (Haydock)”

While most people are not physically killed by the demon Asmodeus when performing the sexual act with unholy and sinful motives, this text from the Bible demonstrates that those who are sexually lustful with their spouse, or with other people they are not married with, die a spiritual death through their sins. Most people do not like to think about these facts, but the amount of people today who are controlled and killed bodily, spiritually and eternally by the Devil is, sad to say, far too many. For “*they that commit sin and iniquity,*

are enemies to their own soul." (Tobias 12:10) If lust is not controlled and in some sense fought against, it will almost always end in mortal sin, because all control is lost. "*Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will.*" (Ecclesiasticus 18:30)

It is thus absolutely clear that the Holy Bible and the Christian Faith teaches us "**that those marriages will have an unhappy end which are entered upon... because of concupiscence alone, with no thought of the sacrament and of the mysteries signified by it**" since those kinds of sinful, selfish, and lustful "marriages" in effect are nothing but fornication in disguise of a marriage (Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos* #12).

St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 198 A.D.): "Marriage in itself merits esteem and the highest approval, for the Lord wished men to "be fruitful and multiply." [Gen. 1:28] He did not tell them, however, to act like libertines, nor did He intend them to surrender themselves to pleasure as though born only to indulge in sexual relations. Let the Educator (Christ) put us to shame with the word of Ezekiel: "Put away your fornications." [Eze. 43:9] Why, even unreasoning beasts know enough not to mate at certain times. To indulge in intercourse without intending children is to outrage nature, whom we should take as our instructor." (*The Paedagogus* or *The Instructor*, Book II, Chapter X.--On the Procreation and Education of Children)

In conclusion, it should be totally clear that "**the devil hath power**" over all people who shut God out from themselves and their hearts, "as the horse and mule," and who do things such as masturbation, oral sex, or any other act that are completely shameful, unnecessary, non-procreative and selfish (both before, during, or after the marital act) that they normally wouldn't do if they really believed that God was present with them. Good and virtuous spouses always remember that God is present with them, and that is also why they do not stoop to the evil and unnatural sexual sins that so plague humanity today. "The activities of marriage itself, if they are not modest and do not take place under the eyes of God as it were, so that the only intention is children, are filth and lust." (St. Jerome, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, Book III, Chapter 5:21, A.D. 387)

In truth, "filth" is the most suitable word that sums up the worth of every marital act that lacks a procreative purpose. While most people looks upon carnal lust as something good or normal, God, on the other hand, views it as "filthiness" and "unclean stench". *The Son of God spoke to Saint Bridget, saying, "The evil spirit fills and incites those in the worldly marriage to carnal lust where there is nothing but unclean stench, but those in the spiritual marriage are filled with my Spirit and inflamed with the fire of my love that will never fail them."* (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 1, Chapter 26) In another part of the same book, Christ explains that "**lusty pleasure** and worldly delight

are well compared to a sulfurous mountain” because of “**the stench of concupiscence and the fire of punishment**” that all who perform unlawful sexual acts have within themselves. “**In truth, lusty pleasure** and worldly delight are well compared to a sulfurous mountain, since they have within themselves the swelling of the spirit **and the stench of concupiscence and the fire of punishment.**” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 5, Revelation 11)

Thus, “... when it [the sexual act] is from lust or for the sake of pleasure, then the coition is a mortal sin and the man sins mortally. ... **And these dicta assume that the man and his wife have sex according to the order of nature, for anyone who goes against nature always sins mortally and more seriously with his wife than with anyone else and should be punished more seriously**... Note the difference between the two cases of husband-wife sex, for incontinence and for pleasure and lust... **In the second case, he seeks to procure pleasure with hands or thought or passionate uses and incentives so he can do more than just have sex with his wife**... [thus sinning mortally] because he acts as an adulterer when he burns like an adulterer even with his own wife.” (Gratian, *On Marriage*, Dictum Post C. 32. 2. 2)

That is why it is of the greatest importance that a couple learn to control their lust. Risking eternal damnation and insufferable, indescribable torments in the fires of hell for a momentary, brief, pleasure or sin is not worth it, and is a horribly bad choice to make.

Jesus Christ spoke to St. Bridget, saying: “Therefore, two holes will be opened in him. Through the first there will enter into him every **punishment earned for his least sin up to his greatest, inasmuch as he exchanged his Creator for his own lust.** Through the second there will enter into him every kind of pain and shame, and no divine consolation or charity will ever come to him, **inasmuch as he loved himself rather than his Creator. His life will last forever and his punishment will last forever,** for all the saints have turned away from him.’ My bride, see how miserable those people will be who despise me and **how great will be the pain they purchase at the price of so little pleasure!**” (*St. Bridget’s Revelations*, Book 2, Chapter 9)

The more sexual pleasure and sensual gratification a person seeks to derive from the sexual act, the more the devil’s power over him will be increased also, and the more the sin is increased (with an intention of persevering) the more the devil’s power is increased as well, until, what was a venial and pardonable sin, becomes a mortal and damnable sin. Therefore, if a person understands that he may be living in venial or mortal sin with respect to sexual pleasure, he or she must learn to control their lust immediately, keeping

it within the range of what is licit and permitted (non-sinful) within a marriage, and not going any further.

*The Catechism of the Council of Trent, **What Instruction is to be given touching the Use of Marriage:*** “The last remaining point regards the use of marriage, a subject which pastors will so treat as that no expression that may seem unfit to meet the ears of the faithful, or that could offend pious minds, or excite laughter, fall from their lips. For as “The words of the Lord are chaste words” (Psalms 6:7), so also does it eminently become a teacher of the Christian people to make use of such language as is characterized by singular gravity and integrity of soul. Two lessons of instruction are then to be specially impressed on the mind of the faithful. **The first is that marriage is not to be used from motives of sensuality or pleasure**, but that its use is to be restrained within those limits, which, as we have above shown, are prescribed by the Lord. **They should be mindful of the exhortation of the Apostle: “They that have wives, let them be as though they had them not,”** (1 Cor. 7:29) and that St. Jerome says: **“The love which a wise man cherishes towards his wife is the result of judgment, not the impulse of passion; he governs the impetuosity of desire, and is not hurried into indulgence. There is nothing more shameful than that a husband should love his wife as an adulteress.”**”

Recent studies prove that 75% of men who died during intercourse committed adultery

Recent studies have proven that the demon Asmodeus is still very active today and that he kills a considerable amount of people who commit sexual sins of various sorts. According to these studies, the risk of a heart attack is 2.7 times greater when compared with those *not* engaging in sex. Of those who died during intercourse, 82-93% were male of which 75% were having extra-marital sex, usually with a younger partner, at an unfamiliar location and after excessive food and alcohol! *Beware!* The fact that 75% of all people who die during sexual relations are adulterers and that they were committing an act of adultery when they died is an astonishing and undeniable proof of the fact that the demon of lust, Asmodeus, still kills wicked, sinful and lustful people even today. All those unrepentant adulterers whom the demon killed are burning in Hell right now as we speak, and nothing they will ever say or do will change that fact however much they weep and plead in their eternal abode of excruciating fire.

However hard this might seem to some people, especially unbelievers, a considerable amount of people really do die of heart attacks or sudden cardiac arrest during sex. And

almost all of those people who die are older married men cheating on their wives with younger women in unfamiliar surroundings. I came across this information while reading this article: "**Heart 411: The Only Guide to Heart Health You'll Ever Need**", by Marc Gillinov and Steven Nissen, both high-ranking cardiologists at the Cleveland Clinic.

They wrote: "Men with coronary heart disease do need to follow the rules. When heart attacks occur during or after sex, they almost always involve older men in extramarital affairs with young women. For those men, it would have been safer to stay at home and burn off excess energy on a treadmill in the basement."

I wrote to Steven Nissen, and asked him to back that statement up with some data. Almost instantly he sent me two scientific papers, the first of which was "**On the association of sex with cardiac events**", and the second was a scientific statement from the "**American Heart Association on sexual activity and cardiovascular disease**". The latter states: "Of the subjects who died during coitus, 82% to 93% were men, and the majority (75%) were having extramarital sexual activity, in most cases with a younger partner in an unfamiliar setting and/or after excessive food and alcohol consumption."

The astonishing level of people that dies during sex when committing adultery (75%) compared to those of the rest of humanity who dies during sex (25%) is irrefutable proof of God's holy indignation and displeasure of sexual sin, and especially adultery (which even most people of the world looks upon with horror and disgust). It is a fair assumption to say that married men have much more sex with their wives than with other women, and yet 75% of all people who die in the sexual act die when they are committing adultery. This gives us solid statistical evidence that adultery and sinful sexual lust actually kills people.

You who are reading this document may not be committing the sin of adultery, but most of you are certainly committing some form or another of marital sexual sin since that is what you have been taught by the media, the world, and even by the so-called "moral theologians", false priests and heretical bishops. In fact, an incredible 25% of all people who die during sexual activity perform some form of sexual activity other than adultery. This is not an insignificant number, but every 1 out of 4. So the scientific claim about extramarital and marital sexual activity holds true and is just another proof of how God allows demons to kill and damn people who sin sexually. Thus, it is true to say that "Inordinate love of the flesh is cruelty, because under the appearance of pleasing the body we kill the soul." (St. Bernard of Clairvaux, A.D. 1090-1153)

All people should seriously consider and think about what it actually means to give oneself over to a devil or a demon as the Bible describes happening with those who commit sexual

sin. The implications and result of giving oneself over to the devils and demons are endless, but some obvious examples are murder, divorce, incest, rape, arguing, adultery, fornications, abuse, gloating, and drug and alcohol abuse. This list could obviously go on for pages. Even a worldly couple would appreciate the inestimable worth of having a peaceful home free from all strife and troubles, but most people, however, live as though they cared nothing for such things. It is true to say that a huge part of the abuse or other problems that people endure in this world happens as a result of the married and unmarried performing unlawful sexual acts (such as kisses and touches for venereal pleasure) that are not able to procreate in themselves. When men and women abuse the sexual act by performing unnatural sexual acts, they cease seeing each other as persons created in the image of God, and start seeing each other as objects to be used to gratify themselves. Since they do not use the marital act for the good purpose of procreation but abuse it in order to derive more pleasure than God and nature allows them to have, they sin mortally by committing a sin that is selfish in nature, and this selfishness will in turn taint all of their conversations and relationships. It is easy to understand that a person who is seen as an object will be much more easy to maltreat or abuse than someone who is seen as a person. Indeed, one can understand this fact from the light of natural reason, as selfishness is the cause of abuse, and non-procreative or unnecessary sexual acts are at the root cause of all selfishness, as we have shown. This shows us that reason itself confirms that non-procreative and unnecessary sexual acts are at the root cause of abuse or other problems in a marriage and in the world.

The sexual act and the desire to please oneself sexually is so powerful to invoke the powers of darkness and devils that almost all satanic cults have sexual acts and rituals along with all kinds of abominable perversion as a prerequisite in their rituals to invoke the devils and demons of hell. These servants of Satan knows that the sexual act is especially powerful to summon various demons, and so they always try to act out their sexual perversions in order to be able to better commune with their lord and god, who is the Devil.

The book *Malleus Maleficarum*, which means “hammer of the witches”, and which was a very influential writing in the 16th century, explains that “God allows the devil more power over the venereal act, by which the original sin is handed down, than over other human actions”, adding that this happens, “because of its natural nastiness, and because by it the first sin was handed down to posterity.” The book also explains that spouses can sin with each other in their sexual acts, and that sexual sins in the marriage and between spouses makes the spouses more liable to bewitchment, or in our language, possession or obsession of demons or devils. Thus, “even in a state of matrimony it is possible to commit the sin of incontinence in various ways. ... He who loves his wife to excess is an adulterer. And they who love in this way are more liable to be bewitched after the manner we have said.”

Malleus Maleficarum, Part 2, Chapter II: “Although far more women are witches than men, as was shown in the First Part of the work, yet men are more often bewitched than women. And the reason for this lies in the fact that God allows the devil more power over the venereal act, by which the original sin is handed down, than over other human actions. In the same way He allows more witchcraft to be performed by means of serpents, which are more subject to incantations than other animals, because that was the first instrument of the devil. And the venereal act can be more readily and easily bewitched in a man than in a woman, as has been clearly shown. For there are five ways in which the devil can impede the act of generation, and they are more easily operated against men. ...

“And the infirmity we are considering can only be due to the sin of incontinence. For, as we have said, God allows the devil more power over that act than over other human acts, because of its natural nastiness, and because by it the first sin was handed down to posterity. Therefore when people joined in matrimony have for some sin been deprived of Divine help, God allows them to be bewitched chiefly in their procreant functions. But if it is asked of what sort are those sins, it can be said, according to St. Jerome, that even in a state of matrimony it is possible to commit the sin of incontinence in various ways. See the text: He who loves his wife to excess is an adulterer [*Against Jovinianus* 1.49]. And they who love in this way are more liable to be bewitched after the manner we have said.”

Another interesting example which shows us that the devil—by tempting lustful spouses to commit sexual sin—is the mastermind behind why spouses perform non-procreative and unnecessary sexual acts, is found in the great *Revelations of St. Bridget*, where Our Lord Himself also reveals that spouses who perform unnatural or unnecessary sexual acts with their spouse will be damned to suffer and be tormented for all eternity in the fire of hell unless they repent and cease committing these acts:

“A demon appeared at the court of divine judgment with a certain deceased man’s soul that was trembling the way a heart trembles. The demon said to the judge: “Here’s my prey! Your angel and I have been following this soul from start to finish—he did it to protect her, I to harm her. Both of us chased her like hunters. But in the end she fell into my hands. My passion to gain possession of her is like a torrential stream rushing along which nothing can resist but the barrier of your justice. However, your justice has not yet been applied against this soul, so I am not yet secure in her possession. I long for her as intensely as an animal consumed by starvation that hunger drives to eat its own limbs. Therefore, since you are the just judge, adjudge a just judgment upon her!”

The judge [Our Lord Jesus Christ] answered: “Why has she fallen into your hands and why were you closer to her than my angel?”

The demon answered: “Because her sins were greater in number than her good deeds.”

The judge answered: “Show me which!” The demon replied: “I have filled a book with her sins.” The judge: “What is the name of this book?”

The demon answered: “Its name is disobedience, and it is really seven books, each one containing three columns. Each column contains more than a thousand words: none less than a thousand but some many more. ... **The seventh book was his lust and it, too, had three columns. The first was that he spilled his seed in an undue and intemperate way. Although he was married and kept away from the stain of other women, nevertheless he spilled his seed unduly as a result of embraces and unsuitable words and immodest behavior. The second column was that he was extremely frivolous in his speech. He not only led his own wife on to more passionate sexual desire, his words also lured others many times to hearing and imagining indecent things.** The third column was that he fed his body too luxuriously, having sumptuous dishes prepared for the greater enjoyment of his body and for the sake of his reputation, in order to be called a great man. Over a thousand words are in these columns—sitting longer at table than he ought, not keeping to schedule, speaking unsuitably, eating beyond natural requirements.”
(*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 6, Chapter 39)

In Book 4, Chapter 52 of the *Revelations* a similar vision describes how a married couple that performed non-procreative or unnecessary sexual acts was condemned to eternal punishments. After an angel’s explanation to St. Bridget about the terrible vision of a man and a woman and their spiritual significance, he says the following concerning the woman: **“You saw the woman’s hands were like the tails of foxes and her feet like scorpions. This is because, just as she was undisciplined in her whole body and all her passions, so too by the lightness of her hands and her way of walking she excited her husband’s physical delight and stung his soul worse than any scorpion.”** This shows us that unlawful lust outside of the normal and natural marital act kills the soul. In truth, today too many people in this world fall into hell because of “the lightness of her hands” by performing masturbatory acts with their hands either on their spouse, or on themselves, or by arousing their own or their spouse’s lust by lascivious and impure behavior, just like this woman in this example did.

The following words describes the woman and man’s terrible punishment due to their lustfulness and worldliness:

“At that very moment an Ethiopian appeared with trident in hand and three sharp claws on his feet. He shouted and said: “Judge, it is my hour now. I have waited and been silent. Now is the time for action!” Immediately, I beheld a naked man and woman before the judge as he sat there together with his innumerable host. The judge said to them: “Though I know all things, tell us what you have done!” The man answered: “We heard and knew about the ecclesial bond, and we paid no attention but disdained it.” The judge answered: “Because you refused to follow the Lord, justice says you must experience the malice of the executioner.” Right then the Ethiopian thrust his claws into their hearts and pressed them together so tightly that they looked like they were in a winepress. And the judge said: “Look, daughter, this is what people deserve when they knowingly distance themselves from their creator for the sake of creation.”

The judge spoke again to the two of them: “I gave you a sack to fill with the fruit of my delights. What, then, do you bring me?” The woman answered: “O judge, we sought the delights of our belly and have nothing to bring but shame.” Then the judge said to the executioner: “Let them have their just reward!” And he immediately thrust his second claw into both their bellies and wounded them so badly that all their intestines appeared to be pierced through and through. The judge said: “Look, daughter, this is what people deserve when they transgress the law and thirst after poison [that is, sensual pleasure] as though it were medicine.”

The judge spoke again to the two of them: “Where is my treasure that I provided for your use?” Both of them answered: “We trampled it underfoot, for we sought an earthly treasure and not an eternal one.” Then the judge said to the executioner: “Let them have what you must and can give to them!” He immediately thrust his third claw into their hearts and bellies and feet in such a way that everything seemed to be like one big ball. The Ethiopian said: “Lord, where shall I go with them?” The judge answered: “It is not for you to rise or rejoice.” At that the man and woman disappeared with a wail from the face of the judge. The judge spoke again: “Rejoice, daughter, because you have been kept apart from such creatures.” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 4, Chapter 52)

Another Revelation of Our Lord Jesus Christ confirms the fact that non-procreative sexual acts are hated by God in an even more horrifying manner. Our Lord tells us about a woman who used to use her arms in a lascivious manner, and tells us that in Hell “**The arms and other limbs with which she used to lasciviously embrace the loved one so tenderly are now stretched out like two snakes that coil themselves around her, mercilessly devouring and tearing her to pieces without rest.**”

The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 6, Chapter 16: “Then the Lord said to the same saint: “Tell my bride here what those persons deserve who care more about the world than about God, who love the creature more than the Creator. Tell her what kind of punishment that woman is now undergoing who spent her entire lifetime in the world in sinful pleasure.” The saint replied: “Her punishment is most severe. For the pride she had in her every limb, [through vanity] her head and hands, arms and legs burn horribly in a blazing fire. Her bosom is being pricked as though by the hide of a hedgehog whose quills fasten to her flesh and mercilessly press into her. **The arms and other limbs with which she used to lasciviously embrace the loved one so tenderly are now stretched out like two snakes that coil themselves around her, mercilessly devouring and tearing her to pieces without rest. Her belly is terribly twisted, as though a sharp pole were being driven into her private parts and thrust violently inward so as to penetrate ever more deeply.** Her thighs and knees are like ice, hard and stiff, with no warmth nor rest. The feet that used to carry her to her pleasures and lead others along with her now stand atop sharp razors slicing them incessantly.”

This hair raising example shows us the miserable end in hell of all who perform unlawful, non-procreative and lascivious sexual acts and touches, like this woman did.

Indeed, all people who are performing inherently shameful, unnatural or non-procreative sexual acts for lustful and selfish reasons of course knows by nature and instinct – just like the satanist do – that they are sinning against the Natural Law imprinted on their hearts. St. Augustine in his book *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, explains to us that the “law of righteousness [the law in our hearts] forbids allegiance” to such lusts.

“Now this [shameful] concupiscence [or lust], this law of [original] sin which dwells in our members, **to which the law of righteousness forbids allegiance, saying in the words of the apostle, "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin:"** [Rom. 6:12-13]—this concupiscence [of original sin], I say, which is cleansed only by the sacrament of regeneration [Baptism], does undoubtedly, by means of natural birth, pass on the bond of [this] sin to a man’s posterity [children], unless they [the children] are themselves loosed from it by regeneration. In the case, however, of the regenerate [the baptized], **concupiscence is not itself sin any longer, whenever they do not consent to it for illicit works, and when the members are not applied by the presiding mind to perpetrate such deeds.** So that, if what is enjoined in one passage, "Thou shalt not covet," [Ex.

20:17] is not kept, that at any rate is observed which is commanded in another place, "Thou shalt not go after thy concupiscences." [Ecclus. 18:30] Inasmuch, however, as by a certain manner of speech it is called sin, since it arose from sin [i.e., the first sin and consequent fall from grace by Adam and Eve], and, when it has the upper hand, produces sin, the guilt of it prevails in the natural man; **but this guilt, by Christ's grace through the remission of all sins, is not suffered to prevail in the regenerate man, if he does not yield obedience to it whenever it urges him to the commission of evil.**" (St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book 1, Chapter 25, A.D. 419)

The lawful quieting of concupiscence vs the sinful inflaming of concupiscence

According to Catholic teaching, a husband and wife are allowed to quiet their concupiscence as a secondary motive after the first motive of procreation. This is the authoritative teaching proclaimed by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Casti Connubii*. This means that spouses are allowed to ***put down*** the flames of concupiscence and not to inflame it in any sinful way. The goal is to get the spouse to Heaven, to glorify God, and sanctify one self, and not primarily about pleasure.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 17), Dec. 31, 1930: "**THE PRIMARY END OF MARRIAGE IS THE PROCREATION AND THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN...** For in matrimony as well as in the use of matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivation of mutual love, and the ***quieting of concupiscence*** which husband and wife ***are not forbidden to consider, SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN]*** and so long as the *intrinsic nature* of the act is preserved [*intrinsic nature*, that is, only the normal, natural and procreative marital act is allowed to be performed by the Church without sin]."

The gravity of sin when inflaming concupiscence depends on the thoughts and actual deeds that a couple consents to before, during or after the sexual act. However, while a couple are allowed to quiet their concupiscence as a secondary end that must follow and be subordinated to the primary end or motive of begetting children, they are ***never*** allowed to prevent the conception of a child in any way, either through contraceptives, or by withdrawal, or by the use of NFP, since this is contrary to the first end or purpose of marriage and the marital act—the procreation of children. This is the infallible and binding teaching of the Catholic Church (see **NFP and Contraception is Sinful Birth Control**).

Now, since many couples today, and especially those who call themselves by the name of

Catholic and who should live like angels, inflame their lust to the fullest both before, during and after the procreative act just as they have been taught by the world, the media, the Vatican II Church and many other false, evil “traditional” sects and perverted, evil and satanic theologians and heretical laymen, we must condemn this idea in specific detail.

Notice the words of Pope Pius XI above, which said that the “quieting of concupiscence” is allowed. This means to *put down* the flame of concupiscence and not to inflame it in any unlawful or sinful way. **Those who thus commit acts which are not necessary for the quieting of concupiscence or the completion of the marital act and the begetting of children absolutely commit sin**, since they are inflaming their flesh in a totally sinful way.

The inflaming of concupiscence or sexual lust is condemned as sinful because it subordinates the primary or secondary ends (or purposes) of marriage and the marital act (the procreation and education of children, and the quieting of concupiscence) to other ends, by deliberately attempting to avoid the normal sexual procreative act as their first or only act of marriage while having sexual relations. The inflaming of concupiscence therefore inverts the order established by God Himself. It does the very thing that Pope Pius XI solemnly teaches may not lawfully be done. And this point ***crushes*** all of the arguments made by those who defend unnatural, unlawful non-procreative forms of fore-or-after-play outside of normal intercourse, because all of the arguments made by those who defend inflaming the flesh focus on the concupiscence and lust within the marital act itself, and not on the primary or secondary ends of lawful marital intercourse (the procreation and education of children, and the quieting of concupiscence).

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 54), Dec. 31, 1930: “Since, therefore, **the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural powers and *purpose* sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.”

Therefore, all unnatural, unnecessary and non-procreative sexual acts are intrinsically evil and against nature because the conjugal act is primarily directed toward procreation and the begetting of children. Those persons (married or not) who deliberately choose sexual acts deprived of the natural power and purpose of procreation “sin against nature” and commit a shameful and intrinsically evil act.

In truth, what these lustful couples do when they are enhancing their pleasure is not the only lawful *quieting of concupiscence* that Pope Pius XI spoke about, **but is in fact the exact opposite**, since they first inflame their lust and concupiscence before putting it out.

They are therefore then, without a doubt, committing a mortal sin. For if it is even considered minimally a **venial sin** for spouses to come together only for normal lustful motives while performing what is intrinsic or necessary for conception to occur in the normal and natural marital act, **what then must not those unnatural, unnormal, unholy and unnecessary sexual acts be that these lustful couples live out during the heat of their shameful lust?** Hence it is totally clear that every sexual act whereby lust is inflamed through acts such as oral, anal or manual sexual acts instead of quenched in the natural way is contrary to the good of marriage – the **HOLY** sacrament – and if this is done on purpose, it must be a mortal sin.

A “venial sin is made mortal if a human being delights in it with the intention of persevering” according to Our Lord Jesus Christ

As we have already seen, the Church’s official teaching that condemns the statement that “*the [normal, natural and procreative] act of marriage exercised for pleasure only is entirely free of all fault and venial defect*” shows us that all unnatural and non-procreative sexual acts are mortally sinful. This teaching of Blessed Pope Innocent XI, however, does not say that it is only a venial sin to perform the normal, natural and **procreative** marital act for pleasure only, but merely condemns the unnatural and selfish opinion and heresy that this vile act “is entirely free of all fault and venial defect”. This teaching of Pope Innocent XI does not specify whether even the normal, natural and procreative “act of marriage exercised for pleasure only” is a mortal or a venial sin, and so, it is still possible that this act could be a mortal sin rather than a venial sin.

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Subjects* #9, March 4, 1679: “THE ACT OF MARRIAGE EXERCISED FOR PLEASURE ONLY IS ENTIRELY FREE OF ALL FAULT AND VENIAL DEFECT.” – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.** (Denz. 1159)

Although a venial sin does not separate us from God as does a mortal sin, a venial sin can still lead a person to Hell, since it might cause him to commit other graver sins, and, because he did not care to stop doing what he knew was a danger to his soul, but even took great delight in it, though he knew it was offending God. To consent to deliberate venial sins is of course very bad. We can learn this truth from Jesus Christ Himself, because according to Jesus Christ: “*a venial sin is made **mortal** if a human being delights in it **with the intention of persevering.***” This shocking truth was expressly revealed to St. Bridget in the following Revelation, in which Our Lord spoke, saying:

“Moreover, know that just as all mortal sins are very serious, so too a

venial sin is made mortal if a human being delights in it with the intention of persevering. (The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 7, Chapter 27)

According to this definition by Our Lord Jesus Christ, if a person were to commit a venial sin but does not want to or intend to continue committing this sin again in the future, such a person would not be in a state of damnation because of his sin, even if it turned out that he committed it again in the future, because his will at the time was not to continue doing it.

In contrast, if another person has “the intention of persevering” in a venial sin and does not repent with a firm resolution or will to stop doing this sin again in the future, but intends to continue doing it and are unrepentant for his sin, **then he is in a state of damnation**.

Our Lord’s words are crystal clear that a “venial sin is made mortal if a human being delights in it *with the intention of persevering.*” Thus, the venial sin that is practiced “with an intention of persevering” and “if a human being delights in it” is made mortal, and all mortal sins must always be wiped away by perfect contrition and repentance if one wishes to be saved. Unless a person repents and firmly resolves to change and stop doing the venial sin that he had “an intention of persevering” in, he will be damned. So don’t think that you are “safe” just because you’re “only” sinning venially. For the fact of the matter is that you in fact are **in mortal sin** and will be damned to burn in Hell for all eternity **because of the venial sin if you intend to persevere in it!** It is thus clear that “**the smallest sin, lusted after, is enough to damn anyone from the kingdom of Heaven, who does not repent.**” (Jesus speaking to St. Bridget, Book 1, Chapter 32)

The Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, has the following interesting things to say about how a venial sin can become a mortal sin, and about the evil action of choosing sin before choosing to love God:

“The very fact that anyone chooses something that is contrary to divine charity, proves that he prefers it to the love of God, and consequently, that he loves it more than he loves God. Hence it belongs to the genus of some sins, which are of themselves contrary to charity, that something is loved more than God; so that they are mortal by reason of their genus... Sometimes, however, the sinner’s will is directed to a thing containing a certain inordinateness, but which is not contrary to the love of God and one’s neighbor, e.g. an idle word, excessive laughter, and so forth: and such sins are venial by reason of their genus... It is written (Sirach 19:1): “He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.” Now he that sins

venially seems to condemn small things. Therefore by little and little he is disposed to fall away together into mortal sin.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part of the Second Part, Q. 88, Art. 2 & 3, Reply to Objection 1/On the contrary)

And further on, he says:

“Whether a venial sin can become mortal? I answer that, The fact of a venial sin becoming a mortal sin... **This is possible**, in so far as one may **fix one’s end in that venial sin**, or **direct it to some mortal sin as end**, as stated above (Article 2). [Excerpt from article 2:] ... it happens sometimes that a sin which is venial generically by reason of its object, **becomes mortal** on the part of the agent, either because **he fixes his last end therein**, or **because he directs it to something that is a mortal sin** in its own genus; for example, if a man direct an idle word to the commission of adultery.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part of the Second Part, Q. 88, Art. 4 & 2)

A good example that demonstrates the difference between venial and mortal sin is the sin of drunkenness. For instance, a person who only gets a “little drunk” has committed a venial sin, while the person who gets “drunk” has committed a mortal sin. However, the first moment the person who committed the venial sin of getting a “little drunk” have made up his mind (or intention) to persevere in his venial sin of drunkenness, that is, he has no intention of stopping to commit this sin against God, **then this venial sin has turned into a mortal and damnable one because of his deliberate contempt and scorn of the all good God whom he is willfully offending.**

These facts, then, demonstrates that all those people who have an “intention of persevering” in performing even the normal, natural and procreative marital act for the sole sake of sensual pleasure are in a state of damnation, and that they would be condemned to Hell for this sin alone. And this is just speaking about those who perform the *normal* sexual act without any other immoral or sinful act. Today, it is indeed true to say that a huge part of both men and women in the western world not only have an “intention of persevering” in performing the normal sexual act for the sole sake of pleasure until death, which is damnable in itself, but that almost all of them have an “intention of persevering” in committing all kinds of damnable sexual perversions in the sexual act as well, such as masturbation of self or of spouse, foreplay, anal or oral sex, and shameful and sensual kisses or touches on different body parts, etc., which are acts so shameful, detestable and wicked that they scream to Heaven for vengeance! **Eternal Hell and insufferable, indescribable torments will rightly and justly be the lot of all**

those people!

Considering the above facts, for a person then to deliberately and consciously live in venial sin or to commit even a single venial sin (even without an intention of persevering) is of course very bad, since it has always been a wide gateway into committing more grave sins. Many people, for instance, fail to see (or don't think about) that most mortal sinners (like alcoholics and perverts) did not start out their life in this way. In the beginning, people are generally lured by the Devil by first committing a venial sin, and then, gradually, when he's got a grip on them and has fooled them and made them comfortable in their sin, he easily inspires them into committing graver sins, such as mortal sins. No person starts out as a rapist or a child molester. This is a gradual process of evolution in wickedness. Therefore, it is of the greatest importance to fight against all venial sins and to do one's utmost not to consent to them.

A clearer demonstration of this fact can also be found in the following revelation in St. Bridget's Revelations:

The Son of God speaks to the bride (St. Bridget), saying: "What are you worried and anxious about?" She answered: "I am afflicted by various useless thoughts that I cannot get rid of, and hearing about your terrible judgment upsets me." The Son answered: "This is truly just. Earlier you found pleasure in worldly desires against my will, but now different thoughts are allowed to come to you against your will.

*"But have a prudent fear of God, and put great trust in me, your God, knowing for certain that when your mind does not take pleasure in sinful thoughts but struggles against them by detesting them, then they become a purgation and a crown for the soul. **But if you take pleasure in committing even a slight sin, which you know to be a sin, and you do so trusting to your own abstinence and presuming on grace, without doing penance and reparation for it, know that it can become a mortal sin.** Accordingly, if some sinful pleasure of any kind comes into your mind, you should right away think about where it is heading and repent.*

"... God hates nothing so much as when you know you have sinned but do not care, trusting to your other meritorious actions, as if, because of them, God would put up with your sin, as if he could not be glorified without you, or as if he would let you do something evil with his permission, seeing all the good deeds you have done, since, even if you did a hundred good deeds for each wicked one, you still would not be able to pay God back for his goodness and love. So, then, maintain a rational fear of God and, even if you cannot prevent these thoughts, then at least bear them patiently and use your will to struggle against them. You will not be condemned

because of their entering your head, unless you take pleasure in them, since it is not within your power to prevent them.

“Again, maintain your fear of God in order not to fall through pride, even though you do not consent to the thoughts. Anyone who stands firm stands by the power of God alone. Thus fear of God is like the gateway into heaven. Many there are who have fallen headlong to their deaths, because they cast off the fear of God and were then ashamed to make a confession before men, although they had not been ashamed to sin before God. Therefore, I shall refuse to absolve the sin of a person who has not cared enough to ask my pardon for a small sin. **In this manner, sins are increased through habitual practice, and a venial sin that could have been pardoned through contrition becomes a serious one through a person’s negligence and scorn, as you can deduce from the case of this soul who has already been condemned.**

“After having committed a venial and pardonable sin, he augmented it through habitual practice, trusting to his other good works, without thinking that I might take lesser sins into account. Caught in a net of habitual and inordinate pleasure, his soul neither corrected nor curbed his sinful intention, until the time for his sentencing stood at the gates and his final moment was approaching. This is why, as the end approached, his conscience was suddenly agitated and painfully afflicted because he was soon to die and he was afraid to lose the little, temporary good he had loved. **Up until a sinner’s final moment God abides him, waiting to see if he is going to direct his free will away from his attachment to sin.**

“**However, if a soul’s will is not corrected, that soul is then confined by an end without end.** What happens is that the devil, knowing that each person will be judged according to his conscience and intention, labors mightily at the end of life to distract the soul and turn it away from rectitude of intention, and God allows it to happen, since the soul refused to remain vigilant when it ought to have...” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget of Sweden*, Book 3, Chapter 19)

Again, Our Lord’s words are crystal clear: a deliberate venial sin becomes a mortal sin if it’s done with an intention of persevering in it. Our Lord also explained that even a slight sin without an intention of persevering in it “can become a mortal sin” **if a person does not do “penance and reparation for it” and if they don’t feel any sorrow for their sin.** But why? Jesus goes on to explain that as well, saying that “**sins are increased through habitual practice**” and that “**a venial sin that could have been pardoned through contrition becomes a serious one through a person’s negligence and scorn, as you can deduce from the case of this soul who has already been condemned.**” He then proceeds to describe this sorrowful and condemned person that tragically was living in sin even until death: “After having committed a venial and

pardonable sin, he augmented [increased] it through habitual practice” and “Caught in a net of habitual and inordinate pleasure, his soul neither corrected nor curbed his sinful intention, until the time for his sentencing stood at the gates and his final moment was approaching.”

Considering all of the above, what then does God think of married couples who come together in the marital act in sinful lust and concupiscence and about those who work on inflaming their sinful lust rather than quieting it?

“They seek a warmth and sexual lust that will perish and love flesh that will be eaten by worms. ... When the couple comes to bed, my Spirit leaves them immediately and the spirit of impurity approaches instead, because they only come together for the sake of lust and do not discuss or think about anything else with each other. ... Such a married couple will never see my face unless they repent. For there is no sin so heavy or grave that penitence and repentance does not wash it away.” (Jesus Christ speaking to St. Bridget, in the *Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 1, Chapter 26)

As we can see, Jesus Christ views such foul, impure spouses as described above as eternally condemned. Therefore, a couple may not do anything before, during or after the procreative act that is against the primary or secondary purpose of marriage: the begetting of children, and the quieting of concupiscence.

So contrary to modern day notion and common opinion (even amongst those who dare to call themselves by the name of Catholic and who should live like angels), a husband and wife are never allowed to “help” themselves with their hands or do other things to enhance their lust and in this way make themselves “ready” before the act as they so call it and their shameful and sinful excuse is. If a couple really believes in God they should pray to God before coming together and God will hear their prayers and make them ready without any further need by the couple to inflame their lust in a sinful way. Lubricants are of course also acceptable and the non-sinful and honorable way to use if there is a problem to complete the marital act. However, lubricants that increase sexual pleasure and that now are being manufactured and sold are of course totally unacceptable.

Likewise, if a woman was not able to quiet her concupiscence before the completion of the procreative act, it is unlawful for her (or her husband) to help herself afterwards. If husband and wife engage in unlawful activities such as masturbation, oral sex, or any other unnecessary or non-procreative evil act, they always commit a mortal sin. Barren couples and people with defects or old age still fulfills the primary end of marriage through normal

intercourse by being open to conception and desiring children and not being against conception if it should occur. Husband and wife are forbidden to indulge in all unnecessary sexual acts, that is, to masturbate themselves or their spouse or to fondle with their hands in improper, shameful bodily places (like the genital and breast area) and in this way enhance their lust. Masturbation, lewd or sensual kisses and touches is as forbidden during the procreative act as it is at any other time for any person. To avoid falling into mortal sin, a good husband and wife must learn to pray to God for relief in their concupiscence and lust. (The Most Holy Rosary is also the best weapon to use in order to conquer the Devil's temptations.) If a pious couple really wants help from God, He will help them and remove the concupiscence and sinful lust from them. It is also many times necessary to offer up penances to God like fasting and eating less tasty food in order to acquire this goal. These small penances coupled with spiritual reading and prayer will help a couple to stem their sinful inclinations, as long as they stay out of mortal and venial sins.

God almost never allows sinners to be freed from their attachment to sin unless they first offer up "penance and reparation for it." Our Lord is crystal clear that penance is a great necessity for freeing the soul from the bondage of sin.

Jesus Christ speaking to St. Bridget: "But if you take pleasure in committing even a slight sin, which you know to be a sin, and you do so trusting to your own abstinence and presuming on grace, **without doing penance and reparation for it**, *know that it can become a mortal sin.*" (St. Bridget's Revelations, Book 3, Chapter 19)

It is also of the greatest importance that husband and wife are not influenced by the evil and demonic teachings that are rampant in the secular world – even amongst those who dare to call themselves "Catholic" or "traditional Catholic", or even worse, "Priest" or "Bishop". These perverted people will tell you things such as, "*that almost nothing is wrong in the marital act as long as the primary purpose of the act was achieved at some point. Whatever happens before, during or afterwards, was part of that act and is therefore licit and permitted.*" **This statement, as we have seen, is clearly false and have been thoroughly refuted by the teaching of Pope Pius XI that condemns all non-procreative sexual acts, as well as from the teaching of Pope Innocent XI that condemns the heretical idea that the marital act performed for pleasure only is without any fault or venial defect.**

In truth, all men and women of good will can of course see that the words of Holy Scripture – that prophesies and directly describes our lamentable, evil time where almost universal perversion rules all of society – has been directly fulfilled to the letter by those who hold such perverted views concerning the marital sexual act. "*Knowing this first, that in the last*

days there shall come deceitful scoffers, walking after their own lusts...” (2 Peter 3:3)
“Now the Spirit manifestly saith, that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils, Speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared...” (1 Timothy 4:1-2)

Anyone therefore that agrees with or acts upon the teachings of such demonically inspired people will lose their souls, since they are rejecting the [natural law](#) that God has imprinted on their hearts, which tells them that such activities are inherently wrong, evil, selfish, unnecessary, and above all, shameful. *“For the things that are done by them in secret are shameful, even to mention.”* (Ephesians 5:12)

Some pleasures are intrinsically evil and hence always forbidden

That some pleasures are intrinsically evil is taught by the Natural Law and by the positive laws of God’s Church. Certain sins give a pleasure unique to themselves and hence are intrinsically evil pleasures. This is attested to in the following verse: *“The discourse of sinners is hateful, and their laughter is at the pleasures of sin.”* (Ecclesiasticus 27:14) For instance, the pleasure one gets from murdering a man is an intrinsically evil pleasure. The pleasure one gets from demeaning and degrading someone who is not as smart or rich or physically attractive as oneself is an intrinsically evil pleasure. The pleasure one gets from enjoying riotous assemblies is an intrinsically evil pleasure. *“Take no pleasure in riotous assemblies, be they ever so small: for their consternation is continual.”* (Ecclesiasticus 18:32) The love of money is an intrinsically evil pleasure. *“There is not a more wicked thing than to love money.”* (Ecclesiasticus 10:10) The pleasure one gets from mind-altering drugs such as LSD or marijuana is an intrinsically evil pleasure just as getting drunk is. When I was trying to convert a young boy, he told me that marijuana is good because God created it and it makes him feel good. I told him that God also created poison and some poisons taste good and may make you feel good for a while but will nevertheless kill you. This example applies perfectly to sexual pleasure because to some it tastes and feels good for a while but it surely kills the soul if not fought against and controlled.

King Solomon is a good example of what happens to a man who doesn’t fight against bad pleasures and that lets himself get overcome by them. Today, sad to say, most people act in the precise same way as King Solomon did, for they do not fight against or resist any of the temptations that they are tempted with, whether lawful or unlawful, but commit them without any shame or scruple or pangs of conscience whatsoever. Carnal temptations led Solomon into mortal sins of immorality which led him into mortal sins of idolatry and apostasy: *“And whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not: and I withheld not my heart from enjoying **every** pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had*

prepared: and esteemed this my portion, to make use of my own labour.” (Ecclesiastes 2:10) In truth, Pope St. Gregory the Great explains in his *Moral Reflections* 7:7 that “Immoderate relations with women led Solomon into idolatry. His immoderate relations with and devotion to women brought Solomon to such a state that he built a temple to idols. Indeed he was so addicted to lust and reduced to such infidelity that he did not fear to construct a temple to idols before constructing a temple to God.” (Gratian, *Medieval Marriage Law*, Case Thirty-Two, Question IV, Part 4, C. 13)

The Fall and Original Sin of Adam and Eve is the origin and cause of fleshly lusts and sexual desires

From where comes this fleshly lust, this momentary pleasure of the flesh that so deceives us and tempts us to commit sins and excesses of various sorts? It came after Adam and Eve committed the *Original Sin*—after their sin of disobedience against God and His Law in the garden of Eden.

The Holy Bible expressly reveals that Original Sin and thus all the temptations and defects that we now all experience and are plagued with entered the world and became a part of all Adam’s children (and descendants) because of Adam’s first sin, and that by this sin *death* followed, passing upon all Adam’s children and posterity for all generations to come: “*Wherefore as by one man [Adam] sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.*” (Romans 5:12) The only thing that saves us from this sure death is the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of Baptism that washes away the stain or guilt of Original Sin, but not its effect. In truth, “*for as by the disobedience of one man [Adam], many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of One [Our Lord Jesus Christ], many shall be made just.*” (Romans 5:19) God’s Holy Word not only makes clear the fact that death entered the world because of Adam’s transgression or first sin, but it also makes clear that sin entered the world because of him—thus passing upon all men.

The Church of course understood from the beginning that all our fleshly lusts and desires (whether inside or outside of marriage), arose as a direct result and evil effect of the sin of Adam and Eve, and that is why the Papal Magisterium and the Saints unanimously teach this doctrine of the Christian Faith.

St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIV, Chapter 12 (c. 426 A.D.): “... lust, which only afterwards sprung up as the penal consequence of [the original] sin, the iniquity of violating it was all the greater in proportion to the ease with which it might have been kept.”

St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 18:12: “Now, Adam had intercourse with his wife Eve.’ Consider when this happened. After their disobedience, after their loss of the Garden, then it was that the practice of intercourse had its beginning. You see, before their disobedience they followed a life like that of the angels, and there was no mention of intercourse. How could there be, when they were not subject to the needs of the body? So at the outset and from the beginning the practice of virginity was in force, but when through their indifference disobedience came on the scene and the ways of sin were opened, virginity took its leave for the reason that they had proved unworthy of such a degree of good things, and in its place the practice of intercourse took over for the future.”

St. Jerome: “Eve in paradise was a virgin... understand that virginity is natural and that marriage comes after the Fall.” (Quoted in *Honest to Man*: p. 120 by Margaret Knight)

St. Jerome, *Against Jovinianus* 1:16, A.D. 393: “And as regards Adam and Eve we must maintain that before the fall they were virgins in Paradise: but after they sinned, and were cast out of Paradise, they were immediately married.”

St. John Damascene (c. 676-749 A.D.): “Adam and Eve were created sexless; their sin in Eden led to the horrors of sexual reproduction. If only our earliest progenitors had obeyed God, we would be procreating less sinfully now.”

St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215 A.D.): “... the first man of our race did not await the appropriate time, desiring the favor of marriage before the proper hour and he fell into sin by not waiting the time of God’s will... they [Adam and Eve] were impelled to do it before the normal time because they were still young and were persuaded by deception.” (*The Stromata* or *Miscellanies*, On Marriage XIV:94, XVII:102-103)

St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book 14, Chapter 26 (c. 426 A.D.): “In Eden, it would have been possible to beget offspring without foul lust. The sexual organs would have been stimulated into necessary activity by will-power alone, just as the will controls other organs. Then, without being goaded on by the allurements of passion, the husband could have relaxed upon his wife’s breasts with complete peace of mind and bodily tranquility, that part of his body not activated by tumultuous passion, but brought into service by the deliberate use of power when the need arose, the seed dispatched into the womb with no loss of his wife’s virginity. So, the two sexes

could have come together for impregnation and conception by an act of will, rather than by lustful cravings.”

St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 15:14: “... the consummation of that intercourse occurred after the fall; up till that time they were living like angels in paradise and so were not burning with desire, not assaulted by other passions, not subject to the needs of nature; on the contrary, they were created incorruptible and immortal, and on that account at any rate they had no need to wear clothes.”

God had originally created the sexual act between man and woman to be a perfect act of love for God through mutual devotion and union of the flesh without any shameful lust. The act would have been no more pleasing to the flesh than a hug or caress, and childbirth was not to be painful. The emphasis on the flesh, both the momentary pleasure during the act and the pain during childbirth, are evil effects of Adam and Eve’s original sin. After Adam and Eve committed the original sin they covered their private parts indicating shame and that a violation had occurred in this area not intended by God: “*and when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves aprons.*” (Genesis 3:7) This strange sensation that Adam and Eve experienced, this momentary fleshly pleasure, was at the same time very shameful, something alien to them, to which they sensed a loss of control over their own bodies. “Hence, it happened that the defilements which flowed into the nature of man from Adam’s sin, especially the infirmity of the will and the unbridled desires of the soul, survive in man.” (Pope Pius XI, *Divini illius magistri*; Denzinger 2212)

After the fall, the sexual act became shameful and disordered since the will to produce offspring had to compete with the will of self-gratification. This quick, momentary pleasure during the sexual act placed the excitation of the flesh at the center of attention instead of the true cause, which is the love of God and the procreation of a child. Satan always promises a quick thrill while death lies underneath. Circumcision which brings pain where a pleasure never belonged is an external sign that God reclaimed dominion over those that faithfully bore it, so that the devil may not tempt them with lust.

The pleasure of the marital act was to be purely spiritual, the joy of bringing a godly child into the world who can be loved and return love, who would be a source of joy, comfort, and aid. The whole focus of attention during the marital act was to solely be the love of God and the joy of bringing a godly child into their family and the world. “For, if man had not sinned, union would have been like the union of other bodily members and would have been without the fervor and itching of pleasure just like the union of other members is. For member would have been joined to member... just like a slate to a slate.” (Gratian, *On*

Marriage 32.2.2) Since the fall of Adam and Eve, however, the deep, spiritual love of God and of bringing a soul, a human being, into the world, had to compete with the pleasure of the flesh. It is a misplaced and inordinate pleasure that distracts from the true intention of why the marital act should be performed, and it is selfish in nature, because gratification of the flesh had entered a realm where it does not belong. The motive of bringing a child into the world had to compete with the motive of self-gratification of the flesh. Spouses who allow the motive of self-gratification (fleshly lust) to usurp the motive of pleasing God and of bringing a child into the world will be infected with the sin of self-love. They will not be able to truly love God, their children, or even themselves. “*Men shall be... lovers of pleasure more than of God.*” (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

One can accurately describe sexual lust and concupiscence as a cancer that started to grow in humankind at the moment that sin entered into creation. Yet many deluded and lust filled souls that live today have fooled themselves and others into believing that sexual lust inside of marriage is something good and praiseworthy, instead of something dangerous and abnormal—*dangerous* since it tempts us into committing sins of the flesh—*abnormal* since it is an evil product of original sin. These people say that one of the purposes of marriage is so that they can have sex in order to inflame their fleshly lust and that marital relations is a sign of true love between the man and the wife (as if staying chaste would be a sign of not loving each other) and that spouses are allowed to have as much sexual pleasure as they can when they have marital relations as long as they do not prevent conception. They even go so far as to say that provoking the flesh by foreplay, masturbation or fondling with the hands in improper bodily places is according to God’s will. They think that sexual pleasure is a gift from God intended to satisfy them, when it in fact is an evil product of the fall. Marital relations, however, is to be used for the love, honor and glory of God by bringing into the world godly children.

Sex was never intended by God to please or ease mankind’s lust since He willed spouses to perform the act solely with the intention of raising godly children for the love and honor of His holy name, and sexual temptations and the sexual lust didn’t even exist before the fall of Adam and Eve. After the fall however, and due to the weakness and frailty of the flesh, spouses are not forbidden to consider the secondary ends of marriage (such as the quieting of concupiscence) “**so long as they are subordinated to the primary end [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN] and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved**” *but only in so far as to avoid something worse*. St. Jerome explains it well: “Thus it must be bad to touch a woman. If indulgences is nonetheless granted to the marital act, this is only to avoid something worse. But what value can be recognized in a good that is allowed only with a view of preventing something worse?”

The Holy Bible itself could not be more clear that God wants us to perform the marital act only for the love and sole motive of begetting children: “*And now, Lord, thou knowest, that **not for fleshly lust** do I take my sister to wife, **but only for the love of posterity**, [children] in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.*” (The Holy Bible, Tobias 8:9) **The Church’s teaching is clear on this point as well, teaching that: “the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children,”** (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #54) and that is why the secondary end or purpose of quieting concupiscence must always be subordinated to the primary end or purpose of procreation.

In *The Revelations of St. Bridget of Sweden*, Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed to the saint how He originally intended the marital act to be performed by good and godly spouses before the fall.

The Son of God speaks: “But now, my bride, for whose sake all these things are being said and shown, you might ask, how children would have been born by them if they had not sinned? I shall answer you: In truth, by the love of God and the mutual devotion and union of the flesh wherein they both would have been set on fire internally, love’s blood would have sown its seed in the woman’s body **without any shameful lust**, and so the woman would have become fertile. **Once the child was conceived without sin and lustful desire**, I would have sent a soul into the child from my divinity, and the woman would have carried the child and given birth to it without pain. When the child was born, it would have been perfect like Adam when he was first created. But this honor was despised by man when he obeyed the devil and coveted a greater honor than I had given to him. **After the disobedience was enacted, my angel came over them and they were ashamed over their nakedness, and they immediately experienced the lust and desire of the flesh and suffered hunger and thirst. Then they also lost me, for when they had me, they did not feel any hunger or sinful fleshly lust or shame, but I alone was all their good and pleasure and perfect delight.**

“But when the devil rejoiced over their perdition and fall, I was moved with compassion for them and did not abandon them but showed them a threefold mercy: I clothed them when they were naked and gave them bread from the earth. And for the sensuality the devil had aroused in them after their disobedience, I gave and created souls in their seed through my Divinity. And all the evil the devil tempted them with, I turned to good for them entirely.

“Thereafter, I showed them how to live and worship me, and I gave them permission to have relations, because before my permission and the enunciation of

my will they were stricken with fear and were afraid to unite and have relations. Likewise, when Abel was killed and they were in mourning for a long time and observing abstinence, I was moved with compassion and comforted them. And when they understood my will, they began again to have relations and to procreate children, from which family I, their Creator, promised to be born. When the wickedness of the children of Adam grew, I showed my justice to the sinful, but mercy to my elect; of these I was appeased so that I kept them from destruction and raised them up, because they kept my commandments and believed in my promises.” (*St. Bridget’s Revelations*, Book 1 Chapter 26)

St. Paul warns those who would marry as opposed to those who would remain virgins that spouses “shall have tribulation of the flesh”: “*But if thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned: nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh. But I spare you.*” (1 Corinthians 7:28) It is certain that St. Paul does not refer to the desire to procreate as a tribulation of the flesh. Consequently, he can be referring only to one thing—sexual pleasure. Indeed, sexual pleasure is a tribulation of the flesh that must hence be fought against in thought and deed in some way or the Devil will succeed in tempting a spouse to fall into mortal sins of impurity either with the other spouse, with himself or with someone other than his spouse. There is no neutral ground with sexual pleasure—one either seek to enjoy it and hence inflame it by foreplay and other vile practices or seek to quench it and hence douse the fire of lust.

In this context, Halitgar, a ninth-century bishop who was known as *The Apostle to the Danes*, declared that: “God did not create men and women so that they might enjoy carnal desire or live in the delights of the flesh”, adding that: “if there had been no transgression of God’s command [in the garden of Eden by Adam and Eve], no one would experience carnal pleasure in the intercourse of the married.” In perfect agreement with 2000 years of Church tradition, *The Apostle to the Danes* summed up his teaching on Original Sin in the following way: “Carnal pleasure is an uncleanness of the body which comes from uncontrolled lust and the weakness of the soul which gives in to the sin of the flesh.” (Halitgar, *De Vitiis et Virtutibus et de Ordine Poenitentiarum Libri Quinque*)

St. Thomas Aquinas in his great work *The Summa Theologica* also agreed “that the infection of original sin is most apparent in the movements of the members of generation, which are not subject to reason.” He also taught that a man’s lack of rational control over his arousal and orgasm was the result of “the infection of original sin.” Although all aspects of the human soul were seen as “corrupted by original sin,” the three aspects pertaining to human sexual response were most deeply infected, namely, “the generative power, the concupiscible faculty and the sense of touch.” The sense of touch was “the most powerful

incentive to concupiscence.” Thus, St. Thomas linked the physical touching of bodies, with the effects of original sin. *The Angelic Doctor* concluded that: “Whoever, therefore, uses copulation for the delight which is in it, not referring the intention to the end intended by nature, acts against nature.” (cf. *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 5; *In Sententiarum*, 4.33.1.3)

In truth, all our senses were soiled by the original sin after the fall—even our thoughts. Thus, people who let themselves grow attached to pleasures and feelings of various kinds will never be able to advance very far in their spiritual life, and in their search for God, since they will always be drawn towards earthly, carnal and perishable things. We read in the book of Genesis how God cursed the earth because of Adam and Eve’s transgression:

Genesis 3:16-19 “To the woman also He [God] said: I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband’s power, and he shall have dominion over thee. And to Adam he said: Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work: with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.”

There are, sad to say, too many things to recount that arose as a direct cause of the original sin of Adam and Eve. Death, injury, physical as well as emotional pain, painful childbirth, fatigue, hunger and thirst, and fleshly lusts and desires did not even exist before the fall of humanity into death and sin, and not only that, but nature also completely obeyed the will of humans. Thus, everything in nature was perfect, and matter and animals was in complete subjection to the will of man. In truth, “Matrimony was first instituted in Paradise so that the bridal chamber might be unblemished and marriage honorable, and so that conception be without lust and childbirth without pain [cf. Gen. 3:16].” (Gratian, *Marriage Canons From The Decretum*, C. 32, Q. 2, P. 2)

After the fall of man and his disobedience against God, all of nature – not only animals, but also the human body – started to rebel against the will of man in consequence of this first sin, the body consequently no longer being subservient to the will of man as before the fall. Thus nature started to act against man and harm him, and the body started to tempt man and disobey his will, especially in the private parts.

In *The Revelations of Saint Bridget*, Book 5, also called *The Book of Questions*, and in

Interrogation 5, Christ Himself reveals to Saint Bridget in a supernatural revelation that the only reason why nature and animals are able to harm us is because we consent to sin. In fact, Christ tells us that we humans endure illnesses “because of the vice of incontinence and excess, in order that people may learn spiritual moderation and patience by restraining the flesh”, thus showing us very clearly how the sin of concupiscence is especially effective in bringing about the many different illnesses that we humans endure today.

“First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: “O Judge, why did you create worms that are harmful and useless?”

“Answer to the first question. The Judge [Our Lord Jesus Christ] answered: “Friend, as God and Judge I have created heaven and earth and all that are in them, and yet nothing without cause nor without some likeness to spiritual things. Just as the souls of holy people resemble the holy angels who live and are happy, so too the souls of the unrighteous become like the demons who are eternally dying. Therefore, since you asked why I created worms, I answer you that I created them in order to show forth the manifold power of my wisdom and goodness. For, although they can be harmful, nevertheless they do no harm without my permission and only when sin demands it, so that man, who scorns to submit to his superior, may bemoan his capacity to be afflicted by lesser creatures, and also in order that he may know himself to be nothing without me – whom even the irrational creatures serve and they all stand at my beck and call.”

“Second question. “Why did you create wild beasts that are also harmful to humankind?”

“Answer to the second question. “As to why I created wild beasts, I answer: All things that I have created are not only good but very good and have been created either for the use or trial of humankind or for the use of other creatures and in order that humans might so much the more humbly serve their God inasmuch as they are more blessed than all the rest. However, beasts do harm in the temporal world for a twofold reason. First, so that the wicked may be corrected and beware, and so that wicked people might come to understand through their torments that they must obey me, their superior. Second, they also do harm to good people with a view to their advancement in virtue and for their purification. And because the human race rebelled against me, their God, through sin, all those creatures that had been subject to humans have consequently rebelled against them.”

“Third question. “Why do you let sickness and pain into bodies?”

“Answer to the third question. “As to why sickness comes upon the body, I answer that this happens both as a strong warning and because of the vice of incontinence and excess, in order that people may learn spiritual moderation and

patience by restraining the flesh.”

“... Fifth question. “Why is the human body afflicted even at the point of death?”

“Answer to the fifth question. “As to why the body suffers pain in death, it is just that a person should be punished by means of that in which she or he has sinned. If she sins through inordinate lust, it is right for her to be punished with proportionate bitterness and pain. For that reason, death begins for some people on earth and will last without end in hell, while death ends for others in purgatory and everlasting joy commences.” (*The Revelations of Saint Bridget*, Book 5, Interrogation 5)

The *Apocalypse of Moses* and *Life of Adam and Eve* (*LAE*) also devote a considerable space to the results of the fall. God’s judgment on the first human transgression profoundly affected both humanity and the rest of creation. The disobedience of Adam and Eve resulted in sin becoming part of the experience of all humanity (*LAE* 44.3). The whole human race is under God’s wrath (*Apoc. Mos.* 14.2; *LAE* 49.3; 50.2) and will face God’s judgment and destruction (*LAE* 49.3; 50.2; *Apoc. Mos.* 14.2). There are two judgments: (1) The water judgment undoubtedly refers to the flood. (2) A judgment by ‘fire’, which refers to the end of the world or eternal hell fire for the wicked and unrepentant.

Although the final judgment is expected, the books emphasize the changes that the fall brought to life in this world. When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost their original glory and were estranged from the glory of God (*Apoc. Mos.* 20.2; 21.6). All people lost immortality (*Apoc. Mos.* 28.3) and death became certain (*LAE* 26.2; *Apoc. Mos.* 14.2). Life is now full of hardship, labour, enmity, strife, disease, pain, suffering and other evils (*LAE* 44.2-4; *Apoc. Mos.* 24.2-3; 25.1-4; 28.3). Due to the fall, human life is marked by futile labour and failure: ‘those who rise up from us shall labour, not being adequate, but failing’ (*LAE* 44.3; cf. *Apoc. Mos.* 24.3). Humanity is banned from paradise, with all its pleasures and comforts (*Apoc. Mos.* 27–29).

There are several physical aspects to God’s curse on the human race in response to the fall: (1) death, (2) disease and bodily pains and (3) birth pangs. These affected not only Adam and Eve, but also all their descendants (*LAE* 34.2; 44.2 [= *Apoc. Mos.* 14.2]; 49.3; 50.2).

Due to the transgression of Adam and Eve, not only Adam and Eve but also all of their descendants die (*LAE* 26.2; *Apoc. Mos.* 14.2; 28.3). Human beings would not have died if Adam and Eve had not disobeyed God.

The book also describes how Adam and Eve’s transgression brought disease and bodily

pains. There are ‘seventy plagues’ on the body (*LAE* 34.2 [= *Apoc. Mos.* 8.2.]). Seventy is probably a symbolic number indicating that the ailments affect the entire body. Sin leads to affliction of the entire body, ‘from the top of the head and the eyes and ears down to the nails of the feet and in each separate limb’ (*LAE* 34.2). This is a figure of speech in which the extreme members of the body are mentioned to indicate the whole body. Prior to the fall there were no disease (*LAE* 34.2). When Adam is on his deathbed, Seth asks, ‘What is pain and illness?’ (*Apoc. Mos.* 5.5. [= *LAE* 30.4]; *LAE* 31.5). Seth’s query suggests that the curse of illness was delayed until just prior to Adam’s death, since illness was still unknown to Adam’s children at that time. Romans 5:12 say in this regard: “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.” The physical curse due to the fall also brought pain in childbirth (*Apoc. Mos.* 25.1-3). This important change in the operation of the physical world is based on Genesis 3:16.

Nature also suffered damage as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Immediately after Eve ate the forbidden fruit, the nearby plants in paradise lost their leaves, except for the fig tree (*Apoc. Mos.* 20.4). This suggest a solidarity between humanity and the natural world so that when human beings sin, nature suffers damage. By contrast, when God entered paradise to judge the original humans, the plants blossomed and prospered (*Apoc. Mos.* 22.3). God’s divine glory and righteousness bring healing to nature, but human unrighteousness damages the natural world.

Indeed, we see that this fact is also true after the fall since man lived to about 900 years before the flood, and that after this judgment, the human lifespan was drastically changed, undoubtedly as a direct result of the sins of men. Man’s actions are thus directly effective and causative in bringing either destruction or healing from God, and this shows us the inherent need of all men to conform to God’s Laws.

The fall brought a profound change in plant life. The curse on the ground (*Apoc. Mos.* 24.1-3), which is based on Genesis 3:17-19, involves several aspects. First, the Ground would require hard labour to grow crops (vv. 2-3. Second, the ground would never be as productive as before the fall (v. 2, ‘it shall not give its strength’). Third, weeds, thistles and thorns would grow easily and abundantly, but these plants would be of no value for food and would make growing food crops more difficult (v. 2). After Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise, they no longer had access to many plants that grew in paradise (*LAE* 2.2; 4.1). Thus humans were reduced to eating the same food as animals (*LAE* 4.1). The only special plants Adam and Eve could take from paradise were certain aromatic spices (*LAE* 42.4; *Apoc. Mos.* 29.3-6).

The fall also brought changes to the animal world. The serpent was cursed because it allowed itself to be used as a vessel for the devil (*Apoc. Mos.* 26.1-4). The serpent underwent fundamental changes in its physical nature: It was forced to crawl on its belly. Although other animals did not undergo such radical physical changes, their behavior changed profoundly after the fall. Prior to the fall, animals were subservient to humanity, since the image of God is in humans (*Apoc. Mos.* 10.3). When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, the nature of animals was changed and they began to rebel against humans (*Apoc. Mos.* 11.3; 24.4). Animals took on some of the rebellious nature that is passed on to the descendants of Adam and Eve.

The rebellion of the animals is illustrated by the attack of a wild animal who bites Seth (*Apoc. Mos.* 10–12). In the *Apoc. Mos.*, the attack is a result of a fundamental change in animals due to the fall (*Apoc. Mos.* 11.2-3; cf. 10.2). The type of wild animal is not specified, since it represents the fundamental change in the nature of all animals. In *LAE*, however, the animal is identified as a serpent (*LAE* 37.1; 44.1), the animal that the devil indwelt. Yet, even in the passage where the wild animal attacks Seth, the beast obeys Seth when he commands it to be silent and to leave (*Apoc. Mos.* 12.1-2). Thus although nature was corrupted by the fall, the damage is not comprehensive or to the same extent as for the future generations. This again suggest a solidarity between humanity and the natural world so that when human beings sin more, nature suffers more and rebels more.

It is indeed perfect justice that man, who refused to obey God, should labor under the servitude of inferior passions, desires and creatures that rebel against him – just as man rebel and rebelled against God – so that through humility and acknowledgment of our own worthlessness, sin, weakness, infirmity, and nothingness, we should again be able to humbly approach Our Lord and God “with the assistance of grace”.

Pope Pius XI, *Mit brennender Sorge* #25, March 14, 1937: “Original sin’ is the hereditary but impersonal fault of Adam’s descendants, who have sinned in him (Rom. 5:12). It is the loss of grace, and therefore eternal life, together with a propensity to evil, which everybody must, with the assistance of grace, penance, resistance and moral effort, repress and conquer.”

An accurate description or definition of the current state of humanity’s existence that best describe our state would be that we are living in exile. In truth, we are exiled from the presence of Our Lord and the Tree of Life because of the sin of our first parents. Very few people understand this great truth which says that we are living in exile and that we are enduring a most grievous punishment of exclusion from the presence of Our Lord. The direct consequence of this lack of knowledge and understanding of the state of our

miserable existence, undoubtedly contributes enormously to the amount and severity of sin that people commit. The main reason behind this is that a person who knows or considers that he is in a state of punishment, or living under a curse, will almost always act more cautiously and refrain from doing more to infuriate his Lord.

In fact, the power of original sin over humanity is so great that Pope Eugene IV in *The Council of Florence* infallibly declared that all children are born under “**the domination of the Devil**” through original sin, and that the only way to save them from this lamentable state of servitude to our eternal foe, the Devil, is to give them the sacrament of Baptism, “**through which they are snatched from the domination of the Devil [original sin] and adopted among the sons of God**” (Denzinger 712).

But there is yet another truth very important to remember. As soon as we wish to speak of education, Our human nature, the nature of every man who comes into this world since the original sin (except for Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary) is no longer an intact or balanced nature that is subject to God. This human nature that all human beings have inherited from Adam, is a wounded, corrupted, and fallen nature, “**whose will is no longer directed towards God, but is self-centered, and consequently, selfish; a nature whose tendencies and passions are no longer adapted to reason, but are carnal and opaque, permeated with the selfishness of the will.**”

St. Thomas Aquinas writes concerning this: “Through the sin of our first parents, all the powers of the soul are left destitute of their proper order, whereby they are naturally directed to virtue. This destitution is called a wounding of nature. First, in so far as the reason, where prudence resides, is deprived of its order to the true, there is the wound of ignorance. Second, in so far as the will is deprived of its order to the good, there is the wound of malice. Third, in so far as the sensitive appetite is deprived of its order to the arduous, there is the wound of weakness. Fourth, in so far as it is deprived of its order to the delectable moderated by reason, there is the wound of concupiscence.” St. Thomas adds: “These four wounds, **ignorance, malice, weakness and concupiscence** are afflicted on the whole of human nature only as a result of our first parents’ sin. But since the inclination to the good of virtue is diminished in each individual on account of actual sin, these four wounds are also the result of other sins, in so far as, through sin, the reason is obscured, especially in practical matters, the will hardened to evil, good actions become more difficult, and concupiscence more impetuous.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part of the Second Part, Q. 85, Art. 3)

Although we are born under the domination of the Devil through original sin, this “wounded” nature that we have all inherited from Adam is nonetheless redeemed by Christ

through the Sacrament of Baptism. Thus since original sin, grace is not only elevating, but also healing. We are redeemed in Christ, healed by his wounds, and called to sanctity by our conformity to Christ crucified, offered in sacrifice. To resume, grace makes our human nature partake in the Divine Nature, and it is thus elevating; and since our human nature is wounded, it is also healing.

2 Peter 1:3-10 “As all things of His [Our Lord Jesus Christ’s] divine power which appertain to life and godliness, are given us, through the knowledge of him who hath called us by his own proper glory and virtue. **By whom He hath given us most great and precious promises: that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature: flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world.** And you, employing all care, minister in your faith, virtue; and in virtue, knowledge; And in knowledge, abstinence; and in abstinence, patience; and in patience, godliness; And in godliness, love of brotherhood; and in love of brotherhood, charity. For if these things be with you and abound, they will make you to be neither empty nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that hath not these things with him, is blind, and groping, having forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. For doing these things, you shall not sin at any time.”

Since human nature is wounded in every man and woman as well as in all our children, education must strive to heal, to rectify, and to purify the tendencies of our fallen nature, with the grace of Jesus Christ, with authority that dares to command, and with the use of punishment when they refuse to obey. Today, there are far too many parents who, through living an ungodly and selfish life, refuse to understand the inborn weakness of our human nature, and the inherent evilness of sexual desire or concupiscence, as well as its inherent danger and potential to tempt us to commit evil acts, **“but in this such persons gravely err, because they do not take into account the inborn weakness of human nature, and that law planted within our members, which, to use the words of the Apostle Paul, ‘fights against the law of my mind [Rom. 7:23]’”** (Pope Pius XI, *Divini illius magistri*; Denzinger 2214)

Baptism cleanses us from original sin, but leaves intact in us the effect of the original sin, which are the four wounds of **ignorance, malice, weakness, and concupiscence**. The grace that baptism gives us truly makes us children of God in Christ Jesus, and through Christ Jesus, since this grace conforms us to Christ through His passion and death, and consequently, it demands that we die on the cross to ourselves and our own will in order that we may learn “to live according to the Spirit” rather than “according to the

flesh” (Romans 8:5).

St. Paul tells us: “Do you not know that all we who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, have been baptized into His death? For we know that our old self has been crucified with Him, in order that the body of sin may be destroyed.” These words are very strong: “in order that the body of sin may be destroyed, that we may no longer be slaves to sin.” (Romans 6:2-6) And also: “If you have risen with Christ (through Baptism) seek the things that are above, not the things that are on earth. For you **have died** and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:1-3)

This death of which St. Paul speaks in so many of his Epistles, is nothing other than the most necessary Christian mortification, the putting to death of our evil tendencies, our pride, of our selfishness, of our laziness, and most importantly, of our sensuality. This death is nothing other than the daily renunciation that Our Lord demands from those who want to be saved: “***If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.***” (Matthew 16:24) Let him deny himself each day, from the cradle, early childhood, to the grave.

The Life of St. Philip Neri, Apostle of Rome, A.D. 1534: “Ever since sin so fatally disordered our nature there is a dark and profound mystery in pleasure, as there is in pain... Only Jesus, who cleared up the mystery of pain and sanctified it, has cast his light on the mystery of pleasure and purified it. He has taught us that pleasure is no longer since the Fall inseparably linked with virtue, but that the ordinary companion of virtue is suffering, so that blessed are they that suffer for justice’ sake, blessed they that mourn. (Matthew 5:5,10) And hence it follows that we should approach pleasure with self-restraint and forethought—nay, with fear and trembling; that many pleasures are evil and unholy, and those alone safe which are noble, spiritual, and restrained [that is, those pleasures that alone are safe are not sensual or fleshly]; those in short which, being bound up with some spiritual good, are accompanied by charity and are expansions of charity.” (Extracts from "St. Philip Neri", by Alfonso, Cardinal Capecelatro, transl. by Thomas Pope, Burns, Oates, & Washbourne, London, 1926. pp. 36-37)

According to the teaching of the Church, superbly articulated by the Holy Fathers, man was created for the purpose of being in communion with God in love; or according to the Apostle Peter, to partake of divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

Man was supposed to move toward the goal of becoming “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4) by living in accordance with his own nature, that is, in accordance with God’s

will that was innate in human nature. But his God-implanted natural motion toward the ultimate goal was interrupted by the fall. Adam's sin and the beginning of evil in the visible world, according to Saint Maximos, consists in the misuse (use contrary to nature) of his natural powers and of God's other creations in general. From then on, man slavishly served the irrational impulses of these powers, which impulses drove him to incline toward pleasure alone, and as far as possible to avoid pain. For fallen man "directs his whole effort toward pleasure and does all he can to avoid pain. He struggles with all his might to attain pleasure and fights against pain with immense zeal." ("First Century of Various Texts" 53 in *The Philokalia* 2, p. 175)

Man's reward for sin is seen not only in his body's changeable and mortal condition. Man did not simply lose the incorruptibility of his nature, but he was also condemned to passionate sexual generation in the manner of animals:

"The first man was fittingly condemned to a bodily generation that is without choice, material and subject to death, God thus rightly judging him who had freely chosen what is worse over what is better... to bear the dishonorable affinity with the irrational beasts, instead of the divine, unutterable honor of being with God." (Saint Maximos, "Peri diaforon aporion" ("On Various Perplexing Topics"), PG 91, 1348A)

In reference to the consequences of the fall, Saint Gregory of Nyssa likewise elaborates on the subject of man's condemnation to sexual generation: "Through the beguilement of the enemy of our life, man freely acquired the bent toward what is bestial and without intelligence." ("Pros tous penthountas" ("To Those Who Mourn"), PG 46, 521D–524A.) Elsewhere, this Holy Father characterizes all the consequences of the fall as "the putting on of the skin garments." By "skin garments," the Saint means the sum total of the evident signs of the corruption of human nature, namely: "copulation, conception, parturition, impurities, suckling, feeding, evacuation, gradual growth to full size, prime of life, old age, disease, and death." ("Peri psychis ke anastaseos" ("On the Soul and Resurrection"), PG 46, 148C–149A.)

According to Saint Maximos, it is precisely through the birth from the first Adam that the sensual pleasure, as well as pain, is transmitted to all human beings; for in every birth through generation, the ancestral sin is transmitted in its entirety: "When our forefather, Adam, broke the divine commandment, in place of the original form of generation, he conceived and introduced into human nature, at the prompting of the serpent, another form, originating in pleasure and terminating through suffering in death... And because he introduced this ill-gotten pleasure-provoked form of generation, he deservedly brought on himself, and on all men born in the flesh from him, the doom of death through suffering."

(Saint Maximos, “Fourth Century of Various Texts” 44, Philokalia 2: 246–47)

Hence, it appears that herein chiefly lies the ancestral sin, with and in which every human is born, since “all those born of Adam are ‘conceived in iniquities,’ thus coming under the forefather’s sentence.” (Saint Maximos, “Peusis ke apokrisis” (“Questions and Answers”) 3, PG 788B.) Elsewhere, when asked the meaning of the Psalm verse “I was conceived in iniquities, and in sin did my mother bear me” (Psalm 50:5), Saint Maximos answers: “God’s original purpose was not that we be born from corruption through marriage. But Adam sinned, and the transgression of the commandment introduced marriage.” (“Peusis ke apokrisis” (“Questions and Answers”), 3, PG 788B.) It should be noted that David and the holy Fathers speak of birth “in sins” within lawful marriage. Such views on birth are seen already in the Old Testament, where special “sin offerings” are prescribed by God for the purification of a woman after she gives birth (see Lev. 12:6-8: cf. Luke 2:24). Even before Saint Maximos, Saint John Chrysostom taught the same thing:

“After he was created, he lived in Paradise, and there was no reason for marriage. A helper needed to be made for him, and one was made, and even then marriage was not deemed necessary. It had not yet appeared. But, rather, they continued without it, living in Paradise as if in heaven and delighting in their converse with God As long as they were unconquered by the devil and respected their own Master, virginity also continued, adorning them more than the diadem and golden clothing adorn the emperors. But when, becoming captives, they took off this garment and laid aside the heavenly adornment and sustained the dissolution deriving from death, the curse, pain, and toilsome existence, then together with these, enters marriage, this mortal and slavish garment. Do you see whence marriage had its beginning, whence it was deemed necessary? From the disobedience, from the curse, from death. For where there is death, there also is marriage. Whereas, when the first does not exist, then neither does the second follow.” (Saint John Chrysostom, “Peri Parthenias” (“On Virginity”) 14, PG 48, 543–44)

It should be emphasized here that, according to Saint Maximos—and according to all the other Fathers of the Church—evil (that is, sin) does not exist within things themselves (for God made all things “very good”) but only in man’s misuse of them. Specifically, Saint Maximos writes:

“It is not food that is evil but gluttony, not the begetting of children but unchastity, not material things but avarice, not esteem but self-esteem. This being so, it is only the misuse of things that is evil, and such misuse occurs when the intellect fails to cultivate its natural powers.” (Saint Maximos, “Third Century on Love” 4, Philokalia

2:83)

Consequently, every man must fight against his concupiscence in some way if he is going to be able to reach the safe harbor of salvation and eternal life. St. Thomas Aquinas, speaking on this subject: “**answer that, Chastity takes its name from the fact that reason "chastises" concupiscence, which, like a child, needs curbing**, as the Philosopher states (Ethic. iii, 12). Now the essence of human virtue consists in being something moderated by reason, as shown above (I-II, 64, 1).” (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 151, Art. 1) Speaking on the same context of the necessity of all men to subdue their concupiscence and fallen nature, St. Thomas compares giving way to concupiscence to “the case of a child left to his own will” growing strong: “As stated above (1; 142, 2), the concupiscence of that which gives pleasure is especially likened to a child, because the desire of pleasure is connatural to us, especially of pleasures of touch which are directed to the maintenance of nature. Hence it is that if the concupiscence of such pleasures be fostered by consenting to it, it will wax very strong, as in the case of a child left to his own will. Wherefore the concupiscence of these pleasures stands in very great need of being chastised: and consequently chastity is applied antonomastically to such like concupiscences, even as fortitude is about those matters wherein we stand in the greatest need of strength of mind.” (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 151, Art. 2, Reply to Objection 2)

In this context of speaking about the need to resist and conquer our concupiscence, *The Holy Council of Trent* explains in the Fifth Session on Original Sin that we all need to “**resist manfully by the grace of Jesus Christ**” our own concupiscence and sensual nature if we wish to be saved.

“But this holy council perceives and confesses that **in the one baptized there remains concupiscence or an inclination to sin, which, since it is left for us to wrestle with, cannot injure those who do not acquiesce but resist manfully by the grace of Jesus Christ**; indeed, he who shall have striven lawfully shall be crowned. **This concupiscence, which the Apostle sometimes calls sin, the holy council declares the Catholic Church has never understood to be called sin in the sense that it is truly and properly sin in those born again, but in the sense that it is of sin and inclines to sin.**”
(Pope Paul III, *Council of Trent*, Session V, Section 5, June 17, 1546)

The husband and wife, joined in the holy Sacrament of Matrimony for the purpose of procreation of children and in order to remedy concupiscence, remain nevertheless in the fallen state. Although baptism entirely wipes away original sin, there remains an effect of original sin in the human person called concupiscence, which is a tendency toward

personal sin. The Council of Trent explains that this inclination to sin is inherent in human persons. Even the holiest of persons, if they were conceived with original sin, have concupiscence. Only Jesus and the Virgin Mary were conceived without original sin, and never had concupiscence (Adam and Eve were created without original sin, but they later fell from grace, and as a result they had concupiscence). We mere weak and mortal sinners must always struggle against this tendency toward selfishness, toward valuing lesser goods over greater goods, toward the disorder of values that is the basis for sin. Thus, “Self-restraint is to prevail over sensual pleasure; on the other hand, the prevalence of the latter is what I call licentiousness.” (Saint Gregory of Nazianzus the Theologian, Vol. II, “Epi Ithika” (“Moral Epopees”) 31, “Ori pachimereis,” PG 37, 651A.)

Concupiscence and sexual desire is an evil disease that transmits the Original Sin to the offspring according to the Holy Bible and the Church

Today, most people are unaware of the fact that the ancient tradition of the Church teaches that concupiscence and sexual desire actually transmits the Original Sin to the offspring, but this has always been the Church’s teaching from the very beginning of its foundation by Our Lord Jesus Christ, and it was also taught in the Old Testament long before the New Testament was revealed to us. God Himself revealed this doctrine in *The Book of Psalms*, teaching us that we are conceived in the iniquity of the Original Sin: “For behold I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me.” (Psalms 50:7)

Pope Innocent III as well, taught that the “foul concupiscence” that is inherent in all marital sexual acts transmits the stain of the *Original Sin* to one’s children and that “the conceived seeds [of the children] are befouled and corrupted” by this “foul concupiscence.”

Pope Innocent III, *On the Seven Penitential Psalms*: “Who does not know that conjugal intercourse is never committed without itching of the flesh, and heat and foul concupiscence, whence the conceived seeds [of the children] are befouled and corrupted?”

Pope Pius XI confirmed this teaching by the Papal Magisterium in his authoritative encyclical *Casti Connubii*, teaching us that the sexual act became “**the way of death by which original sin is passed on to posterity**” after the fall and original sin of Adam and Eve, and that the only way to cleanse the child from the stain of the original sin is through the Sacrament of Baptism, which makes all of them “living members of Christ, partakers of immortal life, and heirs of that eternal glory to which we all aspire from our inmost heart.”

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 14), Dec. 31, 1930: “**For although Christian spouses even if sanctified themselves cannot transmit sanctification to their progeny, nay, although the very natural process of generating life [that is, the marital sexual act] has become the way of death by which original sin is passed on to posterity,** nevertheless, they share to some extent in the blessings of that primeval marriage of Paradise, since it is theirs to offer their offspring to the Church in order that by this most fruitful Mother of the children of God they may be regenerated through the laver of Baptism unto supernatural justice and finally be made living members of Christ, partakers of immortal life, and heirs of that eternal glory to which we all aspire from our inmost heart.”

In addition to these facts, *The Council of Trent* infallibly teaches that the sexual generative act is the reason behind why humans contract the stain of original sin.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Session 5, On Original Sin, *ex cathedra*: “By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death... so that in them there may be washed away by regeneration, **what they have contracted by generation [that is, by the marital sexual act]**, ‘*For unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God [John 3:5].*” (Denzinger 791; *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*)

In another part of the Fifth Session of Trent, the Council confirmed the fact that the sexual act transmits the original sin: “If any one asserts, that this sin of Adam,--which in its origin is one, **and being transfused into all by propagation [procreation]**, not by imitation, is in each one as his own,--is taken away either by the powers of human nature, or by any other remedy than the merit of the one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath reconciled us to God in his own blood, made unto us justice, sanctification, and redemption; or if he denies that the said merit of Jesus Christ is applied, both to adults and to infants, by the sacrament of baptism rightly administered in the form of the church; let him be anathema.”

In St. Augustine’s time, there were many heretics just like today that praised concupiscence and sexual desire and called it a good gift from God instead of what it really is, that is, an evil effect of the original sin of Adam and Eve. By the grace of God, however, the Church from the very beginning was completely united against all of these heretics and condemned and excommunicated those who held to this impious faction and heresy.

Pelagius (350-425), a British monk teaching in Rome, had proposed a heretical and false view of human nature that included the wicked heresy that a man have a capacity for doing

good apart from God's grace. Pelagius publicly disagreed with the Church and St. Augustine's teaching that mankind was badly crippled by sin. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* explains that "during his sojourn in Rome he [Pelagius] composed several works... A closer examination of this work... brought to light the fact that it contained the fundamental ideas which the Church afterwards condemned as "Pelagian heresy". In it Pelagius denied the primitive state in paradise and original sin (cf. P.L., XXX, 678, "Insaniunt, qui de Adam per traducem asserunt ad nos venire peccatum"), insisted on the naturalness of concupiscence and the death of the body, and ascribed the actual existence and universality of sin to the bad example which Adam set by his first sin. As all his ideas were chiefly rooted in the old, pagan philosophy, especially in the popular system of the Stoics, rather than in Christianity, he regarded the moral strength of man's will (*liberum arbitrium*), when steeled by asceticism, as sufficient in itself to desire and to attain the loftiest ideal of virtue. The value of Christ's redemption was, in his opinion, limited mainly to instruction (*doctrina*) and example (*exemplum*), which the Savior threw into the balance as a counterweight against Adam's wicked example, so that nature retains the ability to conquer sin and to gain eternal life even without the aid of grace."

In 415 A.D. Saint Augustine attacked Pelagius's teachings. By this time in his life Augustine had become a battle-hardened foe of heretics. He had defeated the Manichees and crushed the Donatists. When Pelagius began to oppose the Bible and the Church's teaching, Augustine set out to destroy this deceiver. Contrary to Augustine, Pelagius had concluded that infants had no original sin at all. The biblical core of St. Augustine's teaching of original sin centered on the account of the sin of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3) and St. Paul's teaching that "through one person sin entered the world" (Rom. 5:12).

Thus he understood "that by his sin Adam fell from his original supernatural status, and that through human propagation, which involved concupiscence, the lack of grace was passed on to every human being descended from Adam." In his confrontation with Pelagius, Augustine's teaching concerning the effects of Adam and Eve's sin took on hard, clear connections involving sex, sin, and shame. Augustine taught that original sin was passed on to persons at their conceptions. When spouses conceived a child, they passed on the effects of Adam's original sin. Thus every human being received a human nature deformed by Adam's sin. St. Augustine's teaching about original sin was "received," that is, accepted as doctrine by the Catholic Church. His clear explanation of original sin helped to resolve three issues. First, it explained the practice of baptizing infants that was taught from the beginning of the Church by the Apostles and Apostolic Tradition. Secondly, it explained why concupiscence remained even after baptism. This sacrament removed original sin, but not its effects. Thirdly, Augustine's teaching about original sin provided a weapon that could be used to defeat Pelagius' false and heretical teachings about the basic goodness of the fallen human nature.

The account of Adam and Eve's recognition of their nakedness and their subsequent sewing of fig leaves to make loincloths (Gen. 3:7) led Augustine to conclude that the human genitals were the means of transmitting original sin: "The truth, however, is, that we are ashamed of that very thing which made those primitive human beings ashamed, when they covered their loins, namely their genital organs." (St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence* 1:24) Showing his disapproval of concupiscence, Augustine eloquently taught: "That is the penalty of sin; that is the plague and mark of sin; that is the temptation and very fuel of sin; that is the law in our members warring against the law of our mind; that is the rebellion against our own selves, proceeding from our very selves, which by a most righteous retribution is rendered us by our disobedient members." (St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence* 2:22)

Augustine taught that in Eden the sexual act was totally under the control of the wills of both Adam and Eve because they possessed "the highest tranquility of all the obedient members without any lust." (St. Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 1:35) Neither the man nor the woman needed the stirrings of sexual arousal to perform the act that would conceive a child before the fall. Thus, the human experience of sexual arousal was the effect of the concupiscence that resulted from the first sin. Prior to that sin the man "would have sown the seed, and the woman received it, as need required, the generative organs being moved by the will, not excited by lust." (St. Augustine, *City of God*, XIV:24) Human sexual arousal was both a reminder of and a punishment for the first sin.

In his book *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book I, Chapter 8, Augustine pointed out that concupiscence was comparable to a man's limp. A limping man could still reach his destination. Reaching that destination was good, but the limp was not good. In marital relations the destination was the good of procreation. But the pleasurable orgasm that enabled conception to take place was, like the limp, not good. The pleasure of sexual spontaneity, like the man's limp, was a defect.

Augustine understood that Adam and Eve did not participate in sexual intercourse, as we human beings know it, until after they had sinned, teaching that in Eden the genital organs "would be set in motion at the command of the will; and without the active stimulus of passion, with calmness of mind and with no corrupting of the integrity of the body, the husband would lie on the bosom of his wife." (St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XIV:26) But, after the first sin, whenever married partners felt the desire for sexual union with each other, they experienced the corrupting influence of lust at work in their sin-blighted bodies. Augustine also taught that the act of sexual intercourse was instrumental in passing on original sin. Augustine's proof text came from Psalm 50: "For behold I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me." (Psalms 50:7). Thus,

Augustine understood that every person after Adam and Eve was conceived in iniquity.

As late as 1930 Pope Pius XI echoed St. Augustine's teaching in his *Casti Connubii*: "Indeed, the natural generation of life has become the path of death by which original sin is communicated to the children." Augustine and the North African bishops condemned Pelagius and his followers in 416. In the following year Pope Innocent excommunicated Pelagius.

In 418 Bishop Julian of Eclanum, Italy, objected to the Church's teaching that unbaptized infants share in the guilt of Adam's sin as well as to Her teachings on marriage and concupiscence. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* explains that "when Pope Zosimus issued, in 418, his "Epistola Tractatoria", Julianus was one of the eighteen Italian bishops who refused to subscribe to the condemnation of Pelagius which it contained. In consequence of this refusal he was exiled under the decree of the Emperor Honorius, which pronounced banishment against Pelagius and his sympathizers. Driven from Italy in 421, he commenced an active literary campaign in the interests of the new heresy and by his writings soon won for himself the position of intellectual leader of the heretical party. To him is due the credit [or blame] of having systematized the teachings of Pelagius and Coelestius. His writings, which were frankly Pelagian, were largely directed against the doctrines which St. Augustine had defended, and for several years after the expulsion of the Pelagians the history of the conflict is merely an account of the controversy between Julian and Augustine. Most of Julian's works are lost, and are known only through the copious quotations found in the works of his great adversary. ... Driven from Italy, he found refuge for a time with Theodore of Mopsuestia, who, though sympathetic, subsequently subscribed to his condemnation. At the accession of each pontiff Julian sought to have the Pelagian controversy re-opened, but this merely resulted in further condemnations by [the Popes] Celestine, Sixtus III, and Leo I."

The heretic Julian disagreed with the Church's teaching that the source of concupiscence was sin and that the defect of sexual activity was demonstrated by the fact that couples engaging in sex do not want to be observed by others. Calling incontinence "the mother of all vices," Augustine referred to St. Paul's wanting more than mere avoidance of fornication but also "a certain moderation in marriage itself," which would be attained by setting aside "times of prayer." Further rebuking Julian, the bishop of Hippo scolded: "You notice how you should understand with us in what disease of desire the Apostle was unwilling that one possess his vessel. ... But to you lust seems culpable only toward one other than one's wife." Augustine then accusingly asked, "Who, then, honors marriage more: you, when you deface its dignity by making it a blameless wallowing place of carnal concupiscence; or he who... recalls that the Apostle recommended times of prayer and abstinence from the pleasure of lust, and who does not wish husbands and wives to be given up to that disease

whence original sin is contracted?" (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book II, Chapter 7, Section 20)

We see here the Church's teaching about "original sin," Her rejection of possessing one's vessel in the "disease" of desire, Her condemnation of "the pleasure of lust," and Her revulsion for immoderate marital relations, which St. Augustine calls the "wallowing place of carnal concupiscence." Julian was driven from his diocese in 419. Nevertheless, he and Augustine continued to debate until 431, their debate only terminating with Augustine's death. Just as with other heresies, St. Augustine was on the forefront in crushing this heresy of Pelagius and his followers. Clothed with the authority of the Church and Her Popes, the bishop of Hippo clearly proved that Pelagius's teaching was a heresy, and for a long while after this, this heresy was practically abandoned by all who called themselves Christian.

To St. Augustine, concupiscence is an evil and a disease, although he did not believe the effect of it is evil when it effects procreation. In his many writings on the subject, he clearly proves how those impious heretics who teaches that sexual desire or concupiscence is "good" or not a disease are utterly false and unreasonable. He writes: "... as the Apostle says: "But if they do not have self-control, let them marry." [1 Cor. 7:9] Why do you acknowledge a necessary remedy for concupiscence, yet contradict me when I say concupiscence is a disease? If you acknowledge the remedy [marriage], acknowledge the disease [lust]. If you deny the disease, deny the remedy. I ask you at last to yield to the truth which speaks to you even through your own mouth. No one provides a remedy for health." (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book III, Chapter 15, Section 29, A.D. 421)

Indeed, St. Augustine also clearly teaches that Original Sin is transmitted through lust or concupiscence: "Wherefore the devil holds infants guilty [through original sin] who are born, not of the good by which marriage is good, but of the **evil of concupiscence**, which, indeed, marriage uses aright, but at which even marriage has occasion to feel shame." (St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book I, Chapter 27.--Through Lust Original Sin is Transmitted.)

St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, A.D. 419: "This disease of concupiscence is what the apostle refers to, when, speaking to married believers, he says: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; not in the disease of desire, even as the Gentiles which know not God." [1 Thess 4:3-5] The married believer, therefore, must not only not use another man's vessel, which is what they do who lust after others' wives; but he

must know that even his own vessel is not to be possessed in the disease of carnal concupiscence. ... Whosoever possesses his vessel (that is, his wife) with this intention of heart [for the procreation of children], certainly does not possess her in the "disease of desire," as the Gentiles which know not God, but in sanctification and honor, as believers who hope in God. A man turns to use the evil of concupiscence, and is not overcome by it, when he bridles and restrains its rage, as it works in inordinate and indecorous motions; and never relaxes his hold upon it except when intent on offspring, and then controls and applies it to the carnal generation of children to be spiritually regenerated, not to the subjection of the spirit to the flesh in a sordid servitude" (Book I, Chapter 9.--This Disease of Concupiscence in Marriage is Not to Be a Matter of Will, But of Necessity [For the Procreation of Children])

Adultery, fornication and masturbation are examples of bad and damnable lust, hence that it is described as a disease. All kinds of lust or concupiscence (even the lawful kind) is also an evil in marriage and can easily turn into something damnable if husband and wife goes too far (as sadly happens with almost all couples today... even by those who call themselves by the name of Catholic). Just because it's licit to perform the sexual act for procreative purposes in marriage, does not make the lust caused thereof good or praiseworthy. St. Augustine explains this well in the following quotations:

St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, A.D. 419: "Forasmuch, then, as the good of marriage could not be lost by the addition of this evil [lust]... Since, therefore, marriage effects some good even out of that evil, it has whereof to glory; but since the good cannot be effected without the evil, it has reason for feeling shame. The case may be illustrated by the example of a lame man. Suppose him to attain to some good object by limping after it, then, on the one hand, the attainment itself is not evil because of the evil of the man's lameness; nor, on the other hand, is the lameness good because of the goodness of the attainment. So, on the same principle, **we ought not to condemn marriage because of the evil of lust; nor must we praise lust because of the good of marriage.**" (Book I, Chapter 8.--The Evil of Lust Does Not Take Away the Good of Marriage)

And in another place he writes:

St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, A.D. 421: "I have never censured the union of the two sexes if it is lawfully within the boundaries of marriage. ... I do not say that children, coming from an evil [lustful] action, are evil, since I do not say that the activity in which married persons engage for the purpose of begetting children is evil. As a

matter of fact, I assert that it is good, because it makes good use of the evil of lust, and through this good use, human beings, a good work of God, are generated. But the action is not performed without evil [lust], and this is why the children must be regenerated [baptized] in order to be delivered from evil [which means that the Original Sin is the cause of lust according to Augustine].” (Book III, Chapter 7, Section 15)

In truth, sexual temptations during lawful procreative relations can also be a cause of sin for many people since it may drive them to go further than what is necessary or lawful, either before, during, or after the marital act, and this is of course also a great evil. These temptations, as we have seen, does not turn into something “good” just because a person is married, for he is still tempted to commit sin. And this is just one of the many reasons that shows why lust and sexual temptations are bad, also in marriage, for they are still defects and occasions of falling into sin and an evil product of the fall, and of original sin. Thus, “original evil is not derived from marriage, but from carnal concupiscence. This is the evil... which spouses use well when they come together only for the purpose of procreation.” (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book III, Chapter 24, Section 54)

Temptations, the sexual pleasure or concupiscence are thus *not* something “good” or “praiseworthy” but are truly the “*evil of concupiscence*” and the “*disease of concupiscence*” that arose as an evil result of the original sin of Adam and Eve, as stated by St. Augustine: “It was, indeed, the sinful corruption which had been sown in them by the devil’s persuasion that became the means of their being born in sin; not the created nature of which men are composed. **Shameful lust, however, could not excite our members, except at our own will, if it were not a disease.** Nor would even the lawful and honorable cohabiting of husband and wife raise a blush, with avoidance of any eye and desire of secrecy, if there were not a diseased condition about it.” (St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book II, Chapter 55.--Lust is a Disease; The Word "Passion" In the Ecclesiastical Sense, A.D. 420)

Thus, Augustine could rightly say to Julian the heretic: “You exult over some words from my book, [*On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book 1, Chapter 3] that “By the testimony of the Apostle, conjugal modesty is a gift of God,” as though the Apostle praised the evil [of concupiscence] you praise, by which the flesh lusts against the spirit, [1 Cor. 7:7; Gal. 5:17] and which conjugal modesty uses well. I answered this in a former book. It is no small gift of God when this evil is so restrained that it is used for nothing unlawful but serves only for the generation of children who are to be regenerated [and thus rescued from original sin and the domination of the Devil through the Sacrament of Baptism]. Its force is not self-moderating, for no one abstains from unlawful acts if he follows its lead. Hence it is

praised, not for its disquieting activity, but for the restrained and good use made of it by the individual. When married believers use well that evil from whose guilt they have been freed by the gift of the Savior [through baptism which removes the guilt, but not the effects of the raging lusts], then those born by the gift of that same Creator are not, as you object to me, "made subject to the kingdom of the Devil," but, rather, are prepared to be rescued from it and transferred to the kingdom of the Only-begotten. This is and ought to be the intention of godly married persons: to prepare birth for rebirth. If, however, this evil which parents sense in themselves, the evil against which, in your words, "the legion of the Apostles warred," did not pertain to the children, they would be born without it. But, since they are actually born with it, why do you marvel that they must be reborn in order to be absolved from its guilt, and either be taken from this life free from this evil or be obliged to fight against it in this life, as free men, and be rewarded as victors in the end?" (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book IV, Chapter 1, Sections 2-3, A.D. 421)

In truth, the main reason why so many heretics (both in former times as well as today) so fervently defend this wicked heresy concerning foul lust and concupiscence is that they want to defend or justify their unmortified, lustful, unnatural, non-procreative or unnecessary sexual acts and desires, which in turn forces them to impiously assert that concupiscence is a good gift given to them by God in order to satisfy their lust instead of an evil effect of original sin that needs to be fought against, quelled and resisted. "But now note for a moment how from this law of sin, whose activity the mortal nature even of celibates is compelled to endure; upon which the chastity of marriage strives to place a rule of moderation; whence the concupiscence of the flesh and the pleasure you praise makes its attacks against the purpose of the will whenever it is aroused, even if it does not accomplish its acts... "Behold," he [David] said, "I was conceived in iniquities and in sins did my mother bear me." [Ps. 50:7] Evilly did Eve give birth, thereby leaving to women the inheritance of [original sin and pain in] childbirth, and the result that everyone formed in the pleasure of concupiscence and conceived in it in the womb and fashioned in it in blood, in it wrapped as in swaddling clothes, first undergoes the contagion of sin before he drinks the gift of the life-giving air. ... Should not those first men have blushed, then, at the activity of this concupiscence, which plainly showed that they themselves were guilty, and also foretold that their children would be subject to the sin of their parents? And just as they blushed to leave exposed those parts of their bodies in which they perceived the disobedience of lust, so may you in obedience to the Catholic faith blush to praise what is shameful." (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book II, Chapter 6, Section 15)

Just like Julian the heretic did at the time of St. Augustine, so many people in our own days defend and praise the evil disease of concupiscence or lust just like the ancient heretics did, rejecting the ancient teaching of the Holy Bible, Apostolic Tradition as well as "all the honesty of temperance" in their marriages and teachings.

St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book V, Chapter 9:40, A.D. 421: “You think the Apostle’s warning against possessing one’s vessel in the disease of lust refers only to fornication, not to marriage, and thus you remove from the union of the married all the honesty of temperance, so that none could possess his vessel in the disease of lust, no matter what the passion drawing him to this in his wife. For, if you thought there should be moderation there, you could also have censured the excess of concupiscence in marriage itself, and seen that the Apostle’s “disease of lust” signifies this excess, instead of your groundless denial that “his vessel” means a man’s wife. The Apostle Peter in this matter also uses the word when he tells husbands to honor their wives as weaker vessels and as co-heirs of grace, and adds: “See to it your prayers be not hindered.” [1 Peter 3:7] He [St. Paul] speaks as his fellow Apostle, who prescribed conjugal temperance for times of prayers [1 Cor. 7:5] ... **Let Christian marriage hear this, let it not listen to you [the heretics], who would have it not restrain concupiscence, but satisfy it whenever aroused, and thus secure its dominion. Let the faithful of Christ who are bound in marriage hear this, I say, that they may by consent establish times of temperance for prayer; and when, because of their intemperance, they return from prayer to the same habit, they may also know how to say to God: “Forgive us our trespasses.”** [Matt. 6:12].”

When many of these heretics, such as the protestants and perverted so-called Catholics, hear the arguments from the Holy Scripture and the Saints, they resort into using straw-man arguments and “they argue thus,” says St. Augustine, “‘Is not, then, marriage an evil, and the man that is produced by marriage not God’s work?’ As if the good of the married life were that [evil] disease of concupiscence [i.e. lust] with which they [lustful people] who know not God love their wives—a course which the apostle forbids; [1 Thess. 4:5] and not rather that conjugal chastity, by which carnal lust is reduced to the good purposes of the appointed procreation of children.” (St. Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin*, Book II, Chapter 38.--Original Sin Does Not Render Marriage Evil, A.D. 418)

This heretical teaching about concupiscence and original sin that is now held by many people in this world is a teaching that undoubtedly destroys the Christian Faith for many when one considers its ramifications, since if their teaching was really true, God created us in the way we are now with all the evil temptations, suffering and death that we all have to endure in this world. Thus, all of these evils existed from the original creation of God, according to this evil and perverse teaching, which is absurd and impossible since Our Lord and God said in *The Book of Genesis* that all He created during the first six days of the universe was very good—and evil temptations that tempts us into sins of the flesh as

well as the other defects of nature such as death and suffering, are obviously not good. St. Augustine writes concerning this and explains how marriage existed before sin was committed: “Suppose, however, that nature had not been dishonored by sin, God forbid that we should think that marriages in Paradise must have been such, that in them the procreative members would be excited by the mere ardor of lust, and not by the command of the will for producing offspring,—as the foot is for walking, the hand for labor, and the tongue for speech [so the procreative members are for producing offspring].” (*On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin*, Book II, Chapter 40.--Marriage Existed Before Sin Was Committed. How God’s Blessing Operated in Our First Parents, A.D. 418)

Indeed, even after about a thousand years after the lives of the heretics Pelagius, Julian and their followers, the devil through his servants *the protestants* tried again to corrupt the Church’s changeless doctrine concerning *Original Sin*. The devil, knowing full well that both married and unmarried lustful people try to excuse their unlawful sexual acts with the excuse that God made their lust or that concupiscence is a good gift from God rather than a punishment due to sin, could not remain silent concerning this doctrine, since he knows how much this doctrine means to people’s understanding of sin and concupiscence. As soon as people start to contradict this doctrine, there immediately opens up an almost infinite amount of perversity, since those who start to hold this heresy, use this heresy to claim that their lust is lawful and God-given. Because of this, the Holy Council of Trent in the 16th century "assembled in the Holy Ghost" in order to quench the flames of heresy against the Church’s doctrine of *Original Sin*, by infallibly declaring the Church’s definitive position on this matter.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, On Original Sin, Session 5, June 17, 1546, *ex cathedra*: “That our Catholic faith, without which it is impossible to please God, may, errors being purged away, continue in its own perfect and spotless integrity, and that the Christian people may not be carried about with every wind of doctrine; whereas that old serpent, the perpetual enemy of mankind, amongst the very many evils with which the Church of God is in these our times troubled, has also stirred up not only new, but even old, dissensions touching original sin, and the remedy thereof; the sacred and holy, ecumenical and general Synod of Trent,—lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the three same legates of the Apostolic See presiding therein,—wishing now to come to the reclaiming of the erring, and the confirming of the wavering,—following the testimonies of the sacred Scriptures, of the holy Fathers, of the most approved councils, and the judgment and consent of the Church itself, ordains, confesses, and declares these things touching the said original sin:

“1. If any one does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he had

transgressed the commandment of God in Paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice wherein he had been constituted; and that he incurred, through the offence of that prevarication, the wrath and indignation of God, and consequently death, with which God had previously threatened him, and, together with death, captivity under his power who thenceforth had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil, and that the entire Adam, through that offence of prevarication, was changed, in body and soul, for the worse; let him be anathema.

“2. If any one asserts, that the prevarication of Adam injured himself alone, and not his posterity; and that the holiness and justice, received of God, which he lost, he lost for himself alone, and not for us also; or that he, being defiled by the sin of disobedience, has only transfused death, and pains of the body, into the whole human race, but not sin also, which is the death of the soul; let him be anathema:-- whereas he contradicts the apostle who says; *By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.*

“3. If any one asserts, that this sin of Adam,--which in its origin is one, and being transfused into all by propagation, [procreation] not by imitation, is in each one as his own,--is taken away either by the powers of human nature, or by any other remedy than the merit of the one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath reconciled us to God in his own blood [through the sacrament of baptism], made unto us justice, sanctification, and redemption; or if he denies that the said merit of Jesus Christ is applied, both to adults and to infants, by the sacrament of baptism rightly administered in the form of the church; let him be anathema: *For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.* Whence that voice; *Behold the lamb of God behold him who taketh away the sins of the world;* and that other; *As many as have been baptized, have put on Christ.*”

Saint Augustine in his book “*On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin*” also elaborates on the fact that Adam and his descendents were rightly condemned to the servitude of the devil for his *Original Sin*. In truth, “Where God did nothing else than by a just sentence to condemn the man [Adam] who willfully sins, together with his stock [that is, all the descendants of Adam]; there also, as a matter of course, whatsoever was even not yet born is justly condemned in its sinful root. In this condemned stock carnal generation holds every man; and from it nothing but spiritual regeneration liberates him. In the case, therefore, of regenerate parents, if they continue in the same state of grace, it will undoubtedly work no injurious consequence, by reason of the remission of sins which has been bestowed upon them, unless they make a perverse use of it,—not alone all kinds of lawless corruptions, but even in the marriage state itself, whenever husband and wife toil at procreation, not from the desire of natural propagation of their species, but are mere slaves to the gratification of their lust out of very wantonness. As for the permission which

the apostle gives to husbands and wives, "not to defraud one another, except with consent for a time, that they may have leisure for prayer," he concedes it by way of indulgent allowance, and not as a command; but this very form of the concession evidently implies some degree of fault. The connubial embrace, however, which marriage-contracts point to as intended for the procreation of children, considered in itself simply, and without any reference to fornication, is good and right; because, although it is by reason of this body of death (which is unrenewed as yet by the resurrection) impracticable without a certain amount of bestial motion, which puts human nature to the blush, yet the embrace is not after all a sin in itself, when reason applies the concupiscence to a good end [that is, for the motive of procreation], and is not overmastered to evil." (St. Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin*, Book II, Chapter 43.--Human Offspring, Even Previous to Birth, Under Condemnation at the Very Root. Uses of Matrimony Undertaken for Mere Pleasure Not Without Venial Fault, A.D. 418)

Who but an utterly disgraceful and lustful person could deny that concupiscence or sexual desire is an evil product of the fall and of original sin after seeing all this evidence? "Who can deny this is an evil except one unwilling to hear the Apostle's warning: 'But this I say by way of concession, not by way of commandment,' [1 Cor. 7:6]..."

St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book III, Chapter 16:30, A.D. 421: "Marriage is by all means good in its own kind, but the reason it is good is that it keeps the faith of the marriage bed; that it unites the two sexes for the purpose of begetting offspring; and that it shrinks from the impiety of separation. ... **After [original] sin, however,** and not happily but from necessity, a combat came to marriage, so that **marriage by means of its own good must now war against the evil of concupiscence, not permitting it to do anything unlawful, though concupiscence itself, acting now slackly, now with great violence, never ceases to urge marriage to the unlawful, even when marriage makes good use of the evil of concupiscence in the propagation of offspring.** Who can deny this is an evil except one unwilling to hear the Apostle's warning: "But this I say by way of concession, not by way of commandment," [1 Cor. 7:6]..."

Legal marital relations in the Bible is described as a cause of impurity

In the book of Leviticus, the infallible Word of God describes how even legal marital relations between husband and wife makes them impure or unclean, thus describing the marital act itself as the cause of impurity, and not as something "holy" or "good," as many people nowadays have deceived themselves into believing.

Leviticus 15:16-18,24 “The man from whom the seed of copulation goeth out, shall wash all his body with water: and he shall be unclean until the evening. The garment or skin that he weareth, he shall wash with water, and it shall be unclean until the evening. The woman, with whom he copulateth, shall be washed with water, and shall be unclean until the evening. ... If a man copulateth with her in the time of her flowers, he shall be unclean seven days: and every bed on which he shall sleep shall be defiled.”

Douay-Rheims Bible Commentary explains Leviticus 15 thus: “These legal uncleannesses were instituted in order to give the people a horror of carnal impurities.”

As we can read from these verses from Holy Scripture, God describes even legal marital relations as a cause of defilement and impurity between husband and wife and ordains that both of them shall be considered as unclean on the day they had marital relations. Leviticus also prohibits the man from seeing his wife during her infertile monthly cycle, thus diminishing the temptations of both parties. “*The woman, who at the return of the month, hath her issue of blood, shall be separated seven days.*” (Leviticus 15:19)

However, one must not think that the marital act is evil or impure in and of itself from the moral viewpoint when it is performed for the sake of procreation, but rather that after the fall, the human will or intent almost always yields more or less to concupiscence and self-gratification. St. Augustine explain it thus: “I do not say that nuptial union that is, union for the purpose [or motive] of procreating is evil [or sinful], but even say it is good. But...If men were subject to the evil of lust to such an extent that if the honesty of marriage were removed [such as in the case of most men and women today], all of them would have intercourse indiscriminately [by unnatural and excessively lustful sexual acts], in the manner of dogs...” (*Against Julian*, Book III, Chapter 7:16, A.D. 421)

The main reason why Holy Scripture defines the marital act as a cause of defilement and impurity is because the sexual act is so potent in giving a person lascivious thoughts and desires—by implanting and defiling the mind with countless unholy and ungodly desires. While the marital act performed for the purpose of procreation is a lawful act, the act still defiles the mind by giving it all sorts of lascivious feelings, pictures or thoughts, and this is also the reason why the Holy Bible directs all spouses who have performed the marital act to consider themselves impure, so that they may seek Our Lord’s help in order to conquer their concupiscences, temptations and thoughts that arises as a result of the marital act.

The only couple who performed the marital act without this curse of concupiscence was the parents of Our Blessed Lady at the time they conceived Her, since Our Lord supernaturally

protected them from feeling any concupiscence so that they would not be able to transmit the original sin to Our Lady, who would become the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. That is why Mary was conceived free from original sin from the first moment of her conception in the womb of her mother. Every child would have been born without original sin if Adam and Eve had not sinned. From this we can understand that it is very important for parents to fight against the search for self-gratification in order to draw down abundant blessings and graces from Heaven to themselves and their children.

The Natural Law condemns all unnatural and non-procreative sexual acts

The Natural Law is the law that every person knows by instinct from birth. It is planted by the Creator in our heart, and everyone – even pagans who have never heard about God or the true Catholic religion – receives this gift from God. Examples of sins against the Natural Law that are easy to recognize are: murder, rape, theft, pedophilia, slander and lying. The conscience always convicts a person who commits such sins and thus, there can never be an excuse for people who commit them. As the Haydock Bible and Commentary correctly explains about The Natural Law and Romans 2:14-16: “***these men are a law to themselves, and have it written in their hearts, as to the existence of a God, and their reason tells them, that many sins are unlawful...***”

The Natural Law that God has imprinted on every person’s heart teaches that some sexual acts, touches and kisses are inherently evil, unnecessary, selfish, unnatural, and shameful, while others are not. Some people, however, have hardened themselves in their sins and do not heed this warning or reproach from their conscience. But this is their own fault since they have rejected God and smothered their God given conscience through deliberate sin. This is testified to in the Bible in the following verses: “And Pharaoh seeing that rest was given, hardened his own heart, and did not hear them, as the Lord had commanded. ... And the magicians said to Pharaoh: This is the finger of God. And Pharaoh heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had commanded. ... And Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, so that neither this time would he let the people go.” (Exodus 8:15,19,32)

In the marvelous *Revelations of Saint Bridget of Sweden*, Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks about the “hardening” of a sinner’s heart by using the example of the Pharaoh found in *The Book of Exodus*, chapter 8, in the Old Testament Bible.

Fifth question. “Why are some people exceedingly hardened, while others enjoy wonderful consolation?”

Our Lord Jesus Christ answer to the fifth question. “As to why some people are hardened, I [Jesus] answer: Pharaoh’s hardness of heart was his own fault, not

mine, because he did not want to conform himself to my divine will. Hardness of heart is nothing other than the withdrawal of my divine grace, which is withdrawn when people do not give me, their God, their free possession, namely, their will.

“You can understand this by means of a parable. There was a man who owned two fields, one of which lay fallow, while the other bore fruit at certain times. A friend of his said to him: ‘I wonder why, although you are wise and rich, you do not take more care to cultivate your fields or why you do not give them to others to cultivate.’ The man answered: ‘One of the fields, no matter how much care I take, does not produce anything but the most useless plants that are seized by noxious animals that ruin the place. If I fertilize it with manure, it only insults me by growing wild because, though it does produce a small amount of grain, even more weeds spring up, which I refuse to gather in, since I only want pure grain. The better plan, then, is to leave a field like that uncultivated, since then the animals do not occupy the place or hide in the grass, and, if any bitter herbs do sprout, they are useful for the sheep, because, after tasting them, the sheep learn not to be fastidious about sweeter fodder.

“The other field is managed according to the nature of the seasons. Some parts of it are stony and need fertilizer; other parts are wet and need warmth, while still others are dry and need watering. Thus I organize my work according to the different conditions of the field.’ I, God, am like this man. The first field represents the free activity of the will given to man, which he uses more against me than for me. Even if man does do some things that please me, yet he provokes me in more ways, since man’s will and my will are not in harmony. Pharaoh also acted in this way when, although he knew my power by means of sure signs, nevertheless he set his mind against me and continued on in his wickedness. Therefore, he experienced my justice, because it is only just that a person who does not make good use of small things should not be allowed to rejoice proudly in greater ones.

“The second field represents the obedience of a good mind and the denial of self-will. If such a mind is dry in devotion, it should wait for the rain of my divine grace. If it is stony through impatience and hardheartedness, it should bear chastening and correction with equanimity. If it is wet through carnal lust, it should embrace abstinence and be like an animal alert to its owner’s will. I, God, can proudly rejoice in a mind like that. The human will acting in opposition to me causes people to be hardhearted. I desire the salvation of everyone, but this cannot come about without the personal cooperation of each and every person in conforming his or her will to mine.

“Furthermore, as to why grace and progress are not granted equally to all – that belongs to my hidden judgment. I know and measure out what is beneficial and appropriate to each one, and I hold people back in their designs so that they do not fall more deeply. Many people have received the talent of grace and are capable of

working but refuse to do so. Others keep themselves from sin out of fear of punishment, or because they do not have the possibility of sinning, or because sin does not attract them. Thus, some are not given greater gifts, because I alone understand the human mind and know how to distribute my gifts.” (*The Revelations of Saint Bridget*, Book 5, Interrogation 13)

The description of a sinner “hardening” himself through sin that the Holy Scripture and spiritual writers often use to describe such people is indeed a most perfect description for this process of a sinner’s evolution in wickedness. Indeed, the more a man is of bad will, the less will also his conscience rebuke him for his sinful activities, so that a person hardened in habitual sins will many times totally cease to hear the rebuke of his God given conscience.

The reason behind why people fall into heresies of all kinds, is that they sin against the Natural Law concerning one or more of the seven deadly sins: lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride. Anyone who commits a single one of these sins sins mortally against nature, and damns himself. If people would only keep the Natural Law, the devil would never be able to conquer and damn their souls. However, of all the seven mortal sins, lust is especially powerful in inducing a man to fall into heresy. A great reason why the people who commit sexual sins are so “hardened” in their sins, and so hard to be converted, is because sensual lusts (both for the married and the unmarried people alike) actually **“gives rise to blindness of mind, which excludes almost entirely the knowledge of spiritual things, while dulness of sense arises from gluttony, which makes a man weak in regard to the same [spiritual] intelligible things.”** (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II:II, Q. 15, Art. 3) Indeed, this “blindness of mind” and “dulness of sense” is undoubtedly the main reason why most people, however much evidence is provided against their heresies, *refuse to convert*. It is therefore true to say that **“The perverse are hard to be corrected, and the number of fools [and damned people] is infinite”** (Ecclesiastes 1:15) because of their own bad will and lasciviousness, according to God’s Holy and infallible Word. Their short moment of pleasure in this perishable world blinds them to the truth about God and the Natural Law, precipitating them into an eternal hell fire and torment. This fact also requires married people from not indulging too often in the marital act. For all who overindulge in the marital act will always experience a **“blindness of mind”** of spiritual things. So young as well as old must be kept away from impurity and gluttony, since both of these sins are very powerful in getting a person to abandon the faith, and the moral life, since the “blindness of mind” and “dulness of sense” undoubtedly will effect the minds of both young and old in a very detrimental way. Since the Holy Bible itself infallibly tells us “the number of fools is infinite” and that “The perverse are hard to be corrected” we should not wonder or find it hard to believe or accept that Our Lord’s words in the Gospel that most men are damned,

are true.

Then there is the matter that sexual arousal feels good. We tend to not only repeat the things that make us feel good, we often look to prolong the feeling. The problem is that repeated exposure dulls our sensitivity. It takes longer exposure or new things to fan the flames again. If you have ever ridden a roller coaster, you know the first ride is a major thrill; but part of the thrill comes from not knowing what to expect. Hence, after repeated rides, the roller coaster becomes mundane. It hasn't changed, but we become calloused to its thrills. That is why people search out new roller coasters to ride. When people chase after sexual thrills, one of the things that lends excitement to the act is the newness of the feelings. But after a while, you will know just what to expect but you want those feelings you had when it was new. Hence, you engage in it longer or you go further toward intercourse because it adds new dimensions that you haven't experienced before. Just because you haven't gone too far in the past doesn't mean you won't gradually creep up to too far in the future. This is why it is absolutely imperative for married spouses to never allow their lusts or desires to gain control over their wills, and why they must be obedient to the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Bible which tells spouses to practice chastity from time to time in order to be better disposed for prayer and other spiritual works. In truth, when we indulge our sensual appetites, we forge and make our own chains, binding ourselves to the World, the Devil and Hell. "Out of a forward will lust had sprung; and lust pampered had become custom; and custom indulged had become necessity. These were the links of the chain; this is the bondage in which I was bound." (*Confessions of Augustine*, Book VIII, Chapter 5)

It is of course necessary for salvation that all men should strive to conform to the divine and natural plan, "and since man cannot hold in check his passions, **unless he first subject himself to God**, this must be his primary endeavor, in accordance with the plan divinely ordained." And how this is to be done in marriage, Pope Pius XI explains, is by restraining the unlawful, "unbridled lust, which indeed is the most potent cause of sinning against the sacred laws of matrimony."

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (#'s 96-100), Dec. 31, 1930: "In order, therefore, to restore due order in this matter of marriage, it is necessary that all should bear in mind what is the divine plan and strive to conform to it. Wherefore, since the chief obstacle to this study is the power of unbridled lust, which indeed is the most potent cause of sinning against the sacred laws of matrimony, and since man cannot hold in check his passions, unless he first subject himself to God, this must be his primary endeavor, in accordance with the plan divinely ordained. For it is a sacred ordinance that whoever shall have first subjected himself to God will, by the aid of

divine grace, be glad to subject to himself his own passions and concupiscence; while he who is a rebel against God will, to his sorrow, experience within himself the violent rebellion of his worst passions.

“And how wisely this has been decreed St. Augustine thus shows: "This indeed is fitting, that the lower be subject to the higher, so that he who would have subject to himself whatever is below him, should himself submit to whatever is above him. Acknowledge order, seek peace. Be thou subject to God, and thy flesh subject to thee. What more fitting! What more fair! Thou art subject to the higher and the lower is subject to thee. Do thou serve Him who made thee, so that that which was made for thee may serve thee. For we do not commend this order, namely, 'The flesh to thee and thou to God,' but 'Thou to God, and the flesh to thee.' If, however, thou despisest the subjection of thyself to God, thou shalt never bring about the subjection of the flesh to thyself. If thou dost not obey the Lord, thou shalt be tormented by thy servant."

“This right ordering on the part of God’s wisdom is mentioned by the holy Doctor of the Gentiles [St. Paul], inspired by the Holy Ghost, for in speaking of those ancient philosophers who refused to adore and reverence Him whom they knew to be the Creator of the universe, he says: "Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness, to dishonor their own bodies among themselves;" and again: "For this same God delivered them up to shameful affections." And St. James says: "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble," without which grace, as the same Doctor of the Gentiles reminds us, man cannot subdue the rebellion of his flesh.

“Consequently, as the onslaughts of these uncontrolled passions cannot in any way be lessened, unless the spirit first shows a humble compliance of duty and reverence towards its Maker, it is above all and before all needful that those who are joined in the bond of sacred wedlock should be wholly imbued with a profound and genuine sense of duty towards God, which will shape their whole lives, and fill their minds and wills with a very deep reverence for the majesty of God. Quite fittingly, therefore, and quite in accordance with the defined norm of Christian sentiment, do those pastors of souls act who, to prevent married people from failing in the observance of God’s law, urge them to perform their duty and exercise their religion so that they should give themselves to God, continually ask for His divine assistance, frequent the sacraments, and always nourish and preserve a loyal and thoroughly sincere devotion to God.”

St. Paul teaches us of God’s purpose on marriage and sexuality, saying: “*May marriage be honorable in all, and may the bed be undefiled. For God will judge fornicators and adulterers.*” (Hebrews 13:4) Haydock Commentary explains this teaching of God in the

Holy Bible: “Or, *let marriage be honorable in all*. That is, in *all things* belonging to the marriage state. This is a warning to married people, not to abuse the sanctity of their state, by any liberties or irregularities contrary thereunto. (Challoner) --- As marriage is a great sacrament, (Ephesians 5) married persons should be careful to honor and respect it, by chaste and prudent behavior; (see 1st Peter 3, and 1st Thessalonians 4) **but it too often happens that by criminal incontinence they change a great sacrament into a great sacrilege.**”

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from fornication; That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor: **Not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God**... because the Lord is the avenger of all these things, as we have told you before, and have testified. **For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification.**”

No good Christian can doubt that all selfish, unnatural or non-procreative sexual acts must be totally excluded from a marriage that is “*honorable in all*” that the apostle spoke about, and that all selfish, immoderate or unnatural sexual acts “*that are done by them in secret, it is a shame even to speak of.*” (Ephesians 5:12)

1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 15-20 “Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God? Do not err: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, Nor the effeminate, nor liars with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God. ... [Know you not that] the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Now God hath both raised up the Lord, and will raise us up also by his power. Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. Or know you not, that he who is joined to a harlot, is made one body? For they shall be, saith he, two in one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit. Fly fornication. Every sin that a man doth, is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body. Or know you not, that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God; and you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body.”

Haydock Commentary explains: “*Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ....and the temple of the Holy Ghost*. Man consists of soul and body; by baptism he is made a member of that same mystical body, the Church, of which Christ is the head: **In baptism both the soul and body are consecrated to God: they are made the**

temple of the Holy Ghost, inasmuch as the spirit and grace of God inhabits in men, who are sanctified. Christ redeemed both our souls and bodies, both which he designs to sanctify, and to glorify hereafter in heaven; so that we must look upon both body and soul as belonging to Christ, and not as our own. --- Shall I, then, taking the members of Christ, make them the members of an harlot, by a shameful and unlawful commerce? --- Such sins are chiefly to be avoided by flight, and by avoiding the occasions and temptations. Other sins are not committed by such an injury done to the body, but by an abuse of something else, that is different from the body, **but by fornication and sins of uncleanness, the body itself is defiled and dishonored, whereas the body ought to be considered as if it *were not our own*, being redeemed by our Savior Christ, consecrated to him, with an expectation of a happy resurrection, and of being glorified in heaven. Endeavor, therefore, to glorify God in your body, by employing it in his service, and bear him in your body by being obedient to his will. (Witham) --- We know and we believe that we carry about Jesus Christ in our bodies, but it is the shame and condemnation of a Christian to live as if he neither knew or believed it. ... **Whoever yields to impurity, converts his body into the temple of Satan, glorifies and carries him about, tearing away the members of Jesus Christ, to make them the members of a harlot.”****

Sacred Scripture uses the term fornication in a more general sense that encompasses all sinful sexual acts. The argument is that God is Holy and that we also must be holy. “*Because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy.*” (1 Peter 1:16) The body of each and every Christian is a part of Christ, and is a Temple of the Holy Spirit. We are joined to the Lord with a unity of heart and mind that makes us one in spirit with our Savior, who is God Incarnate, who Himself has a human body and soul. Therefore our bodies, as well as our souls, should be treated as a holy means to glorify God. This understanding of the body is incompatible with the use of the body for mere sexual pleasure or mutual sexual gratification, in any situation, even within marriage, and is directly contrary to the Divine and Natural Law.

Unnatural, immoderate and non-procreative sexual acts within marriage are in fundamental conflict with this call from Scripture to “be holy” and to avoid all sexual sins because the body is a part of the body of Christ and is a Temple of the Holy Spirit. Did Christ teach His disciples to commit such acts within marriage? If you think so, then you do not know Christ. Would the Holy Spirit guide a married couple to commit such acts within the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, which is bestowed on the couple by the Holy Spirit? If you think so, then you understand neither the Spirit nor the holiness of the Sacraments. You have been bought at the great price of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Do not sin against Christ, the Natural Law and against the Sacrament

of Marriage by committing unnatural or excessive lustful sexual acts.

The entire moral law is found implicitly in the single act of Jesus Christ dying on the Cross for our salvation. Look at a crucifix and consider the self-sacrifice and selfless love with which Christ lived and died for you. Do you really think that, within the Sacrament of Marriage established by this same Savior, Christ would permit unnatural, shameful or immoderate sexual acts of any kind, at any time, under any conditions whatsoever? Are such sexual acts compatible with the pure, holy, selfless, self-sacrificing love, which encompasses the entire moral law as well as our salvation? Certainly not.

Putting forward the question concerning sexual pleasure and the Natural Law: “Can a husband use his wife only for delight or principally for delight”, St. Bernardine of Siena (1380-1444) shows us a response or defense that lustful and wicked husbands commonly use in order to excuse their sexual sins, saying: “Why can’t I take delight in my own goods and my own wife?” **St. Bernadine, however, answers the wicked man that the wife is not the husband’s but God’s and that it is a sin (by implication mortal sin) to have sexual intercourse too frequently, with inordinate affection, or with dissipation of one’s strength (Bernadine of Siena, *Seraphic Sermons*, 19.3).**

So contrary to what most deceived people think today, spouses are not married or given to each other to live out, increase or excite their shameful, sexual perversions, but they are married for the purpose of chastity, procreation and honorable companionship, and for the honor and glory of Our Lord: “For she was espoused to her husband to be his partner in life, and for the procreation of children, not for the purposes of indecency and laughter; that she might keep the house, and instruct him also to be grave, not that she might supply to him the fuel of fornication.” (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, Homily V, 1 Thessalonians iv. 1-8, Ver. 8)

All the Saints in the 2000 year history of the Catholic Church as well as the Catholic Magisterium of the Popes (as we have seen), taught that the seeking of pleasure only in natural intercourse, as well as seeking pleasure in unnatural or non-procreative sexual acts, was a selfish insult to God, the “Supreme Lord of our body” and an abuse of the generative power (and thus an abuse of the natural law) in the private parts.

“As the Apostle says (1 Cor. 6:20) in speaking against lust, ‘You are bought with a great price: glorify and bear God in your body.’ Wherefore by inordinately using the body through lust a man wrongs God Who is the Supreme Lord of our body. Hence

Augustine says (De Decem. Chord. 10 [Serm. ix (xcvi de Temp.)]): ‘God Who thus governs His servants for their good, not for His, made this order and commandment, lest unlawful pleasures should destroy His temple which thou hast begun to be.’ (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I:II, q. 153, art. 3, obj. 2)

In truth, “If it is a sin for a man to be intimate with his wife except through a desire for children, [when these spouses are still performing the normal, natural and **procreative** marital act] what can men think or what hope can they promise themselves, if being married, they commit adultery? **By this means they descend to the depths of hell, refusing to hear the Apostle when he says: ‘The time is short; it remains that those who have wives be as if they had none’**; [1 Cor. 7:29] **and: ‘every one of you learn how to possess his vessel in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who have no hope.’** [1 Thess. 4:4,5,12]” (St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon* 42:4, c. 470-543 A.D.)

Nature teaches us that the sexual act is shameful

It is very easy to prove that the marital act is shameful. For no one (if not totally depraved) would have sex in front of their children, friends or parents. Neither would they want people to talk openly about their sex life. They would rather die than allow themselves to be seen or heard in this way. If a person walked in on them during the act or if someone openly talked about their sex life, they would wish to sink through the floor through shame. But how is it that they refuse to feel any shame if no human person other than their spouse is present? Is God not present with them? Does God not see their every thought as well as their deeds? Of course He does! He sees everything!

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 41, Art. 3, Reply to Objection 3: “The shamefulness of concupiscence that always accompanies the marital act is a shamefulness not of guilt [if no sin is committed of course], but of punishment inflicted for the first sin, inasmuch as the lower powers and the members do not obey reason.”

Someone might say that it is the sexual member that is shameful or evil to expose to others and not concupiscence or the sexual lust. But this argument is easily refuted and false since no one who is not a complete pervert would have sex in front of other people even though their whole body were covered by sheets of blankets. Even those people who are not complete perverts would never kiss each other for the sake of venereal pleasure if other people were in their vicinity, and this is true even though they have all of their clothes on. This proves to us that it is the sexual pleasure that is shameful, and not only the exhibition

of the sexual organs. For, as Augustine remarks: “whenever this process is approached, secrecy is sought, witnesses removed, and even the presence of the very children which happen to be born of the process is avoided as soon as they reach the age of observation.” (Book II, *On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin*, Chapter 42)

All couples that sin during sexual relations have clearly suppressed the natural feeling of shame in their hearts and shut God out from themselves and closed their conscience in order to enjoy their sinful and filthy deed to the fullest. If an acknowledgment would be made by the spouses that God is present with them before having marital relations and while having it, this thought that God is present would hinder them in their concupiscence and keep them from sinning. Most couples, however, *want* to sin or do something immoral and unlawful against God and their conscience before, during or after marital relations; and because of this, they choose to forget about God and the natural shame that normally accompany the sexual act.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 151, Art 4: “I answer that, As stated above (Objection 2), "pudicitia" [purity] takes its name from "pudor," which signifies shame. Hence purity must needs be properly about the things of which man is most ashamed. Now men are most ashamed of venereal acts, as Augustine remarks (De Civ. Dei xiv, 18), so much so that even the conjugal act, which is adorned by the honesty [Cf. Q. 145] of marriage, is not devoid of shame: and this because the movement of the organs of generation is not subject to the command of reason, as are the movements of the other external members. Now man is ashamed not only of this sexual union but also of all the signs thereof, as the Philosopher observes (Rhet. ii, 6).”

According to St. Thomas, normal spouses are thoroughly ashamed from simply committing the act. But not only from committing the act, but also from thinking about committing the act and from “all the signs thereof.” This natural shame could only occur or be retained if people do not live lustful lives or have sex often.

Tertullian, *A Treatise on the Soul*, Chapter 27 (c. 203 A.D.): “Nature should be to us an object of reverence, not of blushes. It is lust, not natural usage, which has brought shame on the intercourse of the sexes. It is the excess, not the normal state, which is immodest and unchaste: the normal condition has received a blessing from God, and is blessed by Him: “Be fruitful, and multiply, (and replenish the earth.)” [Genesis 1:28] Excess, however, has He cursed, in adulteries, and wantonness [that is, sexually lawless or unrestrained, loose, lascivious, lewd and wanton behavior], and chambering [wantonness, impurity].”

A good sign that a couple is living in sexual sin is that the natural shame that is inherent in the marital act have been extinguished partly or completely. The evidence for this is that St. Thomas explains to us that there is a “shamefulness of concupiscence that always accompanies the marriage act”. Because of this, all those who have ceased to experience this shame that is natural and inherent in the marital act, should seriously pray to God that he may heal them and help them regain this shame that is so good and helpful in reproofing peoples’ consciences against committing sexual sins.

For most people, this process of smothering their shame and God-given conscience does not happen immediately overnight but slowly over time as they progress and evolve in wickedness by committing acts that are unlawful and unnecessary. Not only those who commit perverted sexual acts will experience a decrease in the natural shame, but also those who have sex too often and who overindulge in it.

Tobias 6:16-17 “Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. **For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust,** as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, **over them the devil hath power.**”

In contrast to the wicked described above, the godly who have not shut God out from themselves and their hearts clearly understand in their conscience that God will approve of them **if they do what is lawful** and that He will disapprove of them if they do something unlawful. That is why only the ungodly (who have repressed the natural thought of God’s presence) could ever fall into grievous mortal sins such as striptease, dressing sensual or masturbation. The godly couple who fears God and who has the thought of that God is present with them would never do such things, for they would feel guilt and be thoroughly ashamed of committing such acts as the ungodly do; **because they understand that God sees them and that He is present with them.** Since the godly couple are not selfish pleasure seekers, the natural feeling of shame for any deviation from what is inherent in the marital act will always be there and help them to keep them from sinning. “Do not, I pray, put off modesty at the same time that you put off your clothes; because it is never right for the just man to divest himself of continence.” (*The Paedagogus* or *The Instructor*, Book II, Chapter X)

Ask yourself, dear reader, has the thought of God or that He is present with you ever even entered your mind or heart when you are having marital relations? If not, then what sinful act or inordinate love of pleasure kept the thought of God away from you? By asking these

questions, one will quickly learn what deeds and inordinate pleasures must be avoided and controlled, and what deeds should be kept during marital relations.

St. Augustine, **On the Shame of Nakedness** (c. 420 A.D.): “This kind of shame—this necessity of blushing—is certainly born with every man, and in some measure is commanded by the very laws of nature; so that, in this matter, even virtuous married people are ashamed. Nor can any one go to such an extreme of evil and disgrace, as, because he knows God to be the author of nature and the ordainer of marriage, to have intercourse even with his wife in any one’s sight, or not to blush at those impulses and seek secrecy, where he can shun the sight not only of strangers, but even of all his own relatives. Therefore let human nature be permitted to acknowledge the evil that happens to it by its own fault, lest it should be compelled either not to blush at its own impulses, which is most shameless, or else to blush at the work of its Creator, which is most ungrateful. Of this evil, nevertheless, virtuous marriage makes good use for the sake of the benefit of the begetting of children. But to consent to lust for the sake of carnal pleasure alone is sin...” (St. Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, Book I, Chapter 33)

There are some more facets of this topic of shame that everyone should consider. Spouses do naturally hate to even think that their respective other could commit adultery with another person. They naturally hate it. Likewise, parents naturally feel a revulsion or aversion thinking about the fact that their children will have marital relations, especially fathers for their daughters. Everyone knows by natural instinct that the marital act plucks the innocence from people and that it is shameful. And so, parents do not like to think on this topic. But while they feel a revulsion for this topic, they feel no shame in lusting after their own spouse or after other people that they are not married with, which of course is someone else’s daughter or son too. Every person on the face of this earth is the earthly or fleshly child of God. God created both their souls as well as their bodies. Everyone knows by natural instinct that the sexual act is shameful in its essence, and that is why they cannot stand the thought that their spouse is committing adultery or that their children are having or will have marital relations.

From this we can learn how God – who has planted this revulsion in the parents for the sexual act – wished to teach the parents how they should act in their own life. Do unto others as you would have others do to you was the saying of our Lord! All husbands and wives know that their spouse has a father and mother who thinks about them in the same protective way that they think about their own children, and yet, these parents feel no shame in themselves when seeking sexual pleasure with their own spouse or with others. But as soon as their own spouse or child is implicated in the thought process, then there

immediately arises a sense of incredible shame and disgust. This shame is only natural and good. However, the sad part is that the spouses have repressed the thought that the marital act is shameful with respect to themselves too, while acknowledging this natural fact when it concerns others.

“The undeniable truth is that a man by his very nature is ashamed of sexual lust. And he is rightly ashamed because there is here involved an inward rebellion which is a standing proof of the penalty which man is paying for his original rebellion against God. For, lust is a usurper, defying the power of the will and playing the tyrant with man’s sexual organs. It is here that man’s punishment particularly and most properly appears, because these are the organs by which that nature is reproduced which was so changed for the worse by its first great sin—that sin from whose evil connection no one can escape, unless God’s grace expiate in him individually that which was perpetrated to the destruction of all in common, when all were in one man, and which was avenged by God’s justice.” (St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XIV, Chapter 20, c. 426 A.D.)

Parents certainly would not like that their child were thought upon in a shameful, sexual or lustful way by other individuals, and both fathers and mothers are naturally endowed with the dislike of this, and yet, they refuse to acknowledge that the object of their own sexual desires is also a child to other parents, who thinks in the exact same way that their children do not deserve to be thought of in a sexual or lustful way. By this rejection of what they know is true and natural, the Devil is allowed to lead them into committing more and more perverted sexual sins as they evolve in wickedness. Indeed, spouses who try to suppress their shame will almost always fall into graver sexual sins of various kinds.

St. Augustine, writing on the evil of lust in marriage, says that it ought not to be ascribed to marriage, and that when “marriage blushes for shame [this] is not the fault of marriage, but of the lust of the flesh”: “The evil [of lust], however, at which even marriage blushes for shame is not the fault of marriage, but of the lust of the flesh. Yet because without this evil it is impossible to effect the good purpose of marriage, even the procreation of children, whenever this process is approached, secrecy is sought, witnesses removed, and even the presence of the very children which happen to be born of the process is avoided as soon as they reach the age of observation. Thus it comes to pass that marriage is permitted to effect all that is lawful in its state, only it must not forget to conceal all that is improper. Hence it follows that infants, although incapable of sinning, are yet not born without the contagion of sin, not, indeed, because of what is lawful, but on account of that which is unseemly: for from what is lawful nature is born; from what is unseemly, sin. Of the nature so born, God is the Author, who created man, and who united male and female under the nuptial law;

but of the sin the author is the subtlety of the devil who deceives, and the will of the man who consents.” (*On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin*, Book II, Chapter 42, A.D. 418)

St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book II, Chapter 37, A.D. 420: “Show me, he [the Manichean heretic] says, any bodily marriage without sexual connection. I do not show him any bodily marriage without sexual connection; but then, neither does he show me any case of sexual connection which is without shame. In Paradise, however, if sin had not preceded, there would not have been, indeed, generation without union of the sexes, but this union would certainly have been without shame; for in the sexual union there would have been a quiet acquiescence of the members, not a lust of the flesh productive of shame.”

The intention of the spouses performing the sexual act defines the moral goodness or evilness of the act

Someone might ask: “Then how is one going to make children since the act is shameful in its essence?” I answer that, when the act is done not for self-gratification but for a pure love of God and of children — then there is no sin committed by the spouses.

It is the intention behind the external deed of sexual intercourse that determines the sinfulness or goodness of the act. However, as with all things that are extremely pleasurable, the risk of becoming a slave under this sensual delight is very great, actually bigger than most things that exist on this Earth. It is no sin for the spouses to experience sensual pleasure in the flesh during the marital act (since this is a natural effect of the deed). The sin rather lies in the will or intent that resolves to love or cherish this sexual pleasure that is earthly and fleeting. The Holy Bible is clear that covetousness is a sin of idolatry. That is why all couples who cherish or love sexual pleasure, and unlawful and unnecessary sexual acts, in truth are fittingly and rightly described as idolaters.

Colossians 3:5 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, **and covetousness, which is the service of idols.**”

Ephesians 5:3-5 “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints: Or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose; but rather giving of thanks. For know you this and understand, that no fornicator, or unclean, **or covetous person (which is a serving of idols)**, hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

The Haydock Bible Commentary explains Ephesians 5:3-5:

“**Ver. 3. Covetousness.** The Latin word is generally taken for a coveting or immoderate desire of money and riches. St. Jerome and others observe, that the Greek word in this and divers other places in the New Testament may signify **any unsatiable desire, or the lusts of sensual pleasures; and on this account, St. Jerome thinks that it is here joined with fornication and uncleanness** [i.e., sexual sins]. --- **Ver. 5. Nor covetous person, which is a serving of idols. It is clear enough by the Greek that the covetous man is called an idolater,** whose idol is mammon; though it may be also said of other sinners, ***that the vices they are addicted to are their idols.*** (Witham)”

The Haydock Bible Commentary explains Colossians 3:5:

“*Your members,...fornication, uncleanness, &c.* He considers man’s body as made up of sins and sinful inclinations. (Witham) --- It is not to bring back Judaism we practice abstinences and fasts, nor with the same motive as the Jews, but to accomplish the precepts of mortifying the irregular desires of the flesh among which gluttony must find a place. In a mortified body sensuality is more easily subdued. (Haydock)”

Whenever the human will decides to seek the enhancement of sexual pleasure (or of any other unreasonable pleasure, such as “eating and drinking even to satiety for pleasure only”), God sees that His creation loves an idol of sorts. It becomes a kind of idolatry of corruptible flesh the moment spouses perform the marital act for the sake of self-gratification instead of for the love of God and love of children. The sin when having marital relations lies in the thought and action that seeks to do more than what is necessary or permitted for conception to occur. Sin will always be decided in the intent, but too few people seem to understand this truth today. Thus it is the will, thought or intent to enjoy, love, and as it were, worship this sexual pleasure, that makes it sinful.

This can be proven by an example. Consider how a man that is sick and suffers much pain is allowed by divine permission and justice to take morphine or other painkillers since he is in need of them. His reason when taking these drugs is not self-gratification but the alleviation of the pain that he experiences. This example could be likened with lawful marital relations, which is permitted and non-sinful as long as the spouses have intercourse for a just and reasonable cause.

However, whenever the sick person mentioned above would have become well and yet continued to use morphine or other painkillers without any need to do so – and for the mere sake of getting high and for pleasure – **he would have committed the sin of drug abuse**. His just reason for using the painkiller became unjust the very moment he became well and did not need to use it anymore. The same can be said about a couple who is having sex often and without a just cause. For just as drug addicts fool themselves into believing that they cannot live without the intake of the drugs they are addicted to – so too do many couples deceive themselves into believing that they need to have sex often and that they cannot live in any other way, claiming that they need their sexual fix just as the drug addict would.

Spouses should hate, despise and fight against the sexual pleasure according to the teaching of the Holy Bible and the Saints

From the beginning, the Holy Bible, the Church, and all Her Saints taught all people, whether married or unmarried, that the best thing to do is to hate and despise the sexual pleasure, since by this virtuous act, all people, and especially the married, would be better able to control and resist the sexual pleasure and concupiscence so as to become victorious over the flesh rather than being defeated by its desires and vices.

This is also exactly how Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Bible wants us to view the sexual pleasure, since it is a higher call to live for the Spirit than for our own selfish desires: “And now, Lord, thou knowest, that ***not for fleshly lust*** do I take my sister to wife, ***but only for the love of posterity***, [children] in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.” (The Holy Bible, Tobias 8:9)

This teaching of God in the Holy Bible is of course also taught in the New Testament Bible of Our Lord Jesus Christ, teaching us that “it remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as if they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as if they used it not: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you to be without solicitude.” (1 Corinthians 7:29-32)

In truth, there are “many [virtuous and chaste people who] in humility and steadfastness persevere in their course [of virtue] to the end, and are saved. There are apparent diversities in these societies [of good Christians]; but one charity unites all who, from some necessity, in obedience to the apostle’s injunction, have their wives as if they had them not, and buy as if they bought not, and use this world as if they used it not.” (St. Augustine, *Against Faustus*, Book V, Section 9, A.D. 400)

Agreeing with the Holy Bible, St. Francis de Sales also stressed that making use of something, in this case the use of wives by their husbands, did not mean enjoying what one uses: “The marriage bed should be undefiled, as the Apostle tells us, i.e. pure, as it was when it was first instituted in the earthly Paradise, wherein no unruly desires or impure thought might enter. All that is merely earthly must be treated as means to fulfill the end God sets before His creatures. Thus we eat in order to preserve life, moderately, voluntarily, and without seeking an undue, unworthy satisfaction therefrom. “The time is short,” says St. Paul; “it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had not, and they that use this world, as not abusing it.” Let every one, then, use this world according to his vocation, but so as not to entangle himself with its love, that he may be as free and ready to serve God as though he used it not. “It is the great evil of man,” says St. Augustine, “to desire to enjoy the things which he should only use.” We should enjoy spiritual things, and only use corporal, of which when the use is turned into enjoyment, our rational soul is also changed into a brutish and beastly soul.” (St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to a Devout Life*, Chapter XXXIX. Of The Sanctity Of The Marriage Bed.)

The Holy Bible makes it clear over and over again that sensuality and selfishness in all its forms will be punished with eternal damnation but that mortification, penance and the rejection of the perishable and carnal will be rewarded with eternal life and glory:

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the Spirit you **mortify the deeds of the flesh**, you shall live.”

Romans 8:1, 4-9, 12-13 “There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh. ... That the justification of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. For they that are according to the flesh, mind the things that are of the flesh; but they that are according to the spirit, mind the things that are of the spirit. For the wisdom of the flesh is death; but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace. Because the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be. And they who are in the flesh, cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. ... Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.”

Haydock commentary explains Romans 8: “**Ver. 5. &c.** *For they who are according to the flesh.* That is, who live according to the false, vain, and deceitful maxims and customs of

carnal men, which he also calls the *prudence of the flesh*: and this prudence he calls *death*, as leading men to eternal death. Such carnal men relish nothing else but such pleasures. But they *who are* and live *according to the spirit*, *mind the things which are of the spirit*, fix their hearts on the things that belong to God, and his service; and this *wisdom of the spirit*, in which they experience much greater pleasure, leads them to eternal *life*, and to eternal *peace* in the enjoyment of God. The false *wisdom of the flesh* is an enemy of God, *cannot be subject to the law of God*, because the maxims of the flesh, and of the world, are so opposite to those of the gospel, and to the doctrine of Christ. (Witham) --- They who are subject to the flesh, by having their affections fixed on the things of the flesh, that is, carnal men, whilst they are such, cannot please God: for this prudence of the flesh makes them the enemies of God. (Estius)”

The Church understood from the beginning that the inspired words in Holy Scripture, which teaches us that: “It is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman” (1 Cor. 7:1) meant that the sexual marital act was especially powerful in influencing a man or a woman to “walk according to the flesh” and thus fall into sins of the flesh and die spiritually. For it is written: “*The soul that sinneth, the same shall die.*” (Ezekiel 18:20)

Carrying on the Apostolic Tradition from the beginning, St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) understood that St. Paul was advising the married to engage in the procreative act while renouncing the enjoyment of sexual pleasure. According to St. Clement, Paul speaks “not to those who chastely use marriage for procreation alone, but to those who were desiring to go beyond procreation, lest the adversary should arise a stormy blast and arouse desire for alien pleasures.” Thus, according to Clement’s treatise “*On Marriage*,” Satan is the source of a couple’s desire for sexual delight and “alien pleasures.” Furthermore, when Clement considered the commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” he understood it as God’s commanding husbands to engage in intercourse “only for the purpose of begetting children.” St. Clement also pointed out that in all the Jewish scriptures there was not a single instance in which “one of the ancients approached a pregnant woman” and taught that the avoidance of sexual relations from the time one’s wife became pregnant to the time of the child’s weaning was “a law of nature given by God.” (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter XI, Section 71, 72)

Being a champion of virtue and the highest moral perfection, St. Clement could thus safely assert that: “The human ideal of continence... teaches that one should fight desire and not be subservient to it so as to bring it to practical effect. But our [Christian] ideal is not to experience desire at all. Our aim is not that while a man feels desire he should get the better of it, but that he should be continent even respecting desire itself. This chastity

cannot be attained in any other way except by God's grace. That was why he said "Ask and it shall be given you."...Where there is light there is no darkness. But where there is inward desire, even if it goes no further than desire and is quiescent so far as bodily action is concerned, union takes place in thought with the object of desire, although that object is not present." (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter VII, Section 57)

St. Clement's divinely inspired teaching that echoes the teaching in the biblical books of *Tobit* and *St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians* clarifies the Scriptural truth that "we should do nothing from desire" which in fact is the most perfect and evangelical teaching that should influence and direct all our deeds on this earth. St. Clement of Alexandria writes, "Our will is to be directed only towards that which is necessary. For we are children not of desire but of will. A man who marries for the sake of begetting children must practice continence so that it is not desire he feels for his wife, whom he ought to love, and so that he may beget children with a chaste and controlled will." (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter VII, Section 58)

If those wondrous words of the Holy Spirit that "we should do nothing from desire" truly influences and directs all our actions and thoughts, the Devil would never be able to cast us down to Hell and eternal torment which all people deserve who live for the sake of the flesh instead of for the spirit. "*For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.*" (Romans 8:13) Indeed, St. Clement rejected as "vulgar and plebeian" any efforts to seek pleasure in the marital act. Although he praised the values of mutual assistance and support, he also held "that 'voluptuous joy' had no proper place in Christian life." In sum, "Christian couples will never have intercourse simply because they enjoy it and each other; they must make love only to beget a child." In truth, the man who marries should do so "for the sake of begetting children" while practicing "continence so that it is not desire he feels for his wife" and begetting "children with a chaste and controlled will" for the glory of God. Thus, St. Clement and the rest of the Church understood the inherent danger in living after our sensual desires. (Cf. *The Paedagogus or Instructor*, Book II, Section 83; *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter VII, Section 58)

St. John Chrysostom, carrying on the apostolic tradition of despising our fleshly lusts and desires, writes that: "Our soul hath by nature the love of life, but it lies with us either to loose the bands of nature, and make this desire weak; or else to tighten them, and make the desire more tyrannous. For as we have the desire of sexual intercourse, but when we practice true wisdom we render the [sexual] desire weak, so also it falls out in the case of life; and as God hath annexed carnal desire to the generation of children, to maintain a

succession among us, without however forbidding us from traveling the higher road of continence; so also He hath implanted in us the love of life, forbidding us from destroying ourselves, but not hindering our despising the present life.” (*Homilies on the Gospel of St. John*, Homily LXXXV, John xix. 16-38, Ver. 24)

St. Augustine also agreed with this, teaching that the “lover of the spiritual good” hates and neglects the pleasures of the flesh: “What lover of the spiritual good, who has married only for the sake of offspring, would not prefer if he could to propagate children without it [lust] or without its very great impulsion? I think, then, we ought to attribute to that life in Paradise, which was a far better life than this, whatever saintly spouses would prefer in this life, unless we can think of something better.” (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book IV, Chapter 13, Section 71, A.D. 421) “Thus a good Christian is found to love in one and the same woman the creature of God, whom he desires to be transformed and renewed [in Heaven]; but to hate the corruptible and mortal conjugal connection and carnal intercourse: i.e. to love in her what is characteristic of a human being, to hate what belongs to her as a wife. ... It is necessary, therefore, that the disciple of Christ should hate these things which pass away, in those whom he desires along with himself to reach those things which shall for ever remain; and that he should the more hate these things in them, the more he loves themselves.” (St. Augustine, *On the Sermon on the Mount*, Book 1, Chapter 15:41, c. 394 A.D.)

Indeed, “The chaste are not bound by a necessity to depravity, for they resist lust lest it compel them to commit unseemly acts; yet not even honorable procreation can exist without lust. In this way in chaste spouses there is both the voluntary, in the procreation of offspring; and the necessary, in lust. But honesty arises from unseemliness when chaste union accepts, but does not love, lust.” (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book V, Chapter 9, Section 37)

Thus the conception of children is “the one alone worthy fruit...of the sexual intercourse.” (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 1) No other aspect of the marital act can be described as “worthy.” Therefore, when a husband engages in marital relations during those times when his wife is pregnant, nursing, or menstruating, the husband or the wife or both are seen as seeking the unworthy fruit of sexual pleasure: “There also are men incontinent to such a degree that they do not spare their wives even when pregnant.” Therefore, whatever immodest, shameful, and sordid acts the married commit with each other are the sins of the married persons themselves, not the fault of marriage.” (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 5) St. Augustine with the rest of the Church always regarded marital intercourse as sinful whenever husband and wife “indulged” in marital intimacy without the intention to conceive a child. According to Augustine, there

are two forms of marital intercourse, the necessary and the unnecessary. The only “necessary” marital intercourse is intercourse for begetting children. Such “intercourse for begetting is free from blame, and itself is alone worthy of marriage.” “Unnecessary” or blameworthy intercourse is simply lust: “But that which goes beyond this necessity, no longer follows reason, but lust.” (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 11)

Therefore, St. Augustine concluded that marital intercourse could be totally excluded from marriage without doing any harm to the marriage itself. Augustine found the three goods of marriage exemplified in the virginal marriage of Mary and Joseph: “This is why I said the full number of the three goods of marriage is found in what I declared by the Gospel was a marriage: ‘Faithfulness, because no adultery; offspring, our Lord Christ; and sacrament, because no divorce.’” (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book V, Chapter 10, Section 46)

St. Augustine taught that engaging in intercourse with one’s spouse because of sexual need or desire occupied the bottom rung of the ladder of marital morality. This was a “sin” according to him. Higher up was intercourse to generate children, exemplifying the good use of the evil of concupiscence. Here there was no sin. Then came the top rung. Couples engaging in “angelic exercise” had “freedom from all sexual intercourse.” (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 8) **It is thus clear that “contenance from all intercourse [within or without marriage] is certainly better than marital intercourse itself which takes place for the sake of begetting children.”** (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 6, in "The Fathers Of The Church – A New Translation Volume 27")

According to the teaching of the Church, the good of offspring is expendable when the greatest good of avoiding marital intercourse is chosen. This is also why the Church and *The Council of Trent* infallibly teaches in Session 24, Canon 10 that it is “**better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony**”, which, as we have seen, is a restatement of Our Lord Jesus Christ’s words in the Holy Bible (1 Corinthians 7). St. Augustine offered married couples striving for the “better and more blessed” way some suggestions for ridding the elements of sexual desire and sexual pleasure from their lives. He proposed that a person’s love of heavenly realities would develop in direct proportion to a person’s hatred of earthly realities. Since there would be no sexual intercourse in the next life, Augustine taught that the virtuous husband would do well to hate sexual union in this earthly life. Being a lover of virtue, the bishop of Hippo wanted the husband to “love” the spouse created by God while hating “the corruptible and mortal relationship and marital intercourse.” St. Augustine reiterated: “In other words, it is evident that he loves her insofar as she is a human being, but he hates her under the aspect of wifehood.” (St. Augustine, *On the Sermon on the Mount*, Book I,

Chapter 15, Section 40-42)

The idea of marriage as a partnership in which sexual tenderness played a role is totally absent from St. Augustine's or any other of the Saints' writings. This novel and heretical idea was completely unheard of in Christianity until impious and lustful heretics, like the members of Gnostic sects, tried to justify all kinds of abominable and vile sexual acts with or without a spouse. Indeed, the Church's view on sexuality has been clear from the beginning, teaching us that both **married and unmarried persons who love each other passionately or immoderately exceeds "the bounds of moderation" and heaps up "the uncleanness of a more bestial intemperance."** (St. Augustine, *On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, in "The Fathers of the Church", 19, 28, 139)

Like the rest of the fathers, Augustine wanted a strict control over the act of marital intercourse "lest there be indulgence beyond what suffices for generating offspring." St. Augustine himself had quite the experience of unlawful sexual indulgence and was well aware of the fact that sexual pleasure indulged in – and not restrained – holds us in bondage and is immensely powerful in taking over and control our soul: "Because of a perverse will was lust made; and lust indulged in became custom; and custom not resisted became necessity. By which links, as it were, joined together (whence I term it a "chain"), did a hard bondage hold me enthralled. Thus came I to understand, from my own experience, what I had read, how that 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.'... 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death' but Thy grace only, through Jesus Christ our Lord?" (*The Confessions of Augustine*, Book VIII, Chapter 5)

He added that marital chastity fights valiantly for and demanded an end to spousal intercourse when a wife was "no longer able to conceive on account of age" since nature itself teaches that it's unnecessary to perform the marital act at this time. In sum, the only time marital intercourse was good and lawful was the one instance when the married couple used their marriage bed as a place to conceive a child:

"It, [conjugal chastity] too, combats carnal concupiscence lest it exceed the proprieties of the marriage bed; it combats lest concupiscence break into the time agreed upon by the spouses for prayer. If this conjugal chastity possesses such great power and is so great gift from God that it does what the matrimonial code prescribes, it combats in even more valiant fashion in regard to the act of conjugal union, lest there be indulgence beyond what suffices for generating offspring. **Such chastity abstains during menstruation and pregnancy, nor has it union with one no longer able to conceive on account of age.** And the desire for

union does not prevail, but ceases when there is no prospect of generation.” (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book III, Chapter 21, Section 43)

It is thus clear that “Marriage is good, as long as sexual relations are for procreation and not for pleasure. ... The law of nature recognizes the act of procreation: **have relations with your wife only for the sake of procreation, and keep yourself from relations of pleasure.**” (St. Athanasius the Great, *Fragments on the Moral Life*, Section 2)

St. Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, Sermon 1:25: “It was thus [from duty] those holy men of former times, those men of God sought and wished for children. For this one end—the procreation of children—was their intercourse and union with their wives. It is for this reason that they were allowed to have a plurality of wives. For if immoderateness in these desires could be well-pleasing to God, it would have been as much allowed at that time for one woman to have many husbands, as one husband many wives. Why then had all chaste women no more than one husband, but one man had many wives, except that for one man to have many wives is a means to the multiplication of a family, whereas a woman would not give birth to more children, how many soever more husbands she might have. Wherefore, brethren, if our fathers’ union and intercourse with their wives, was for no other end but the procreation of children, it had been great matter of joy to them, if they could have had children without that intercourse, since for the sake of having them they descended to that intercourse only through duty, and did not rush into it through lust. So then was Joseph not a father because he had gotten a son without any lust of the flesh? God forbid that Christian chastity should entertain a thought, which even Jewish chastity entertained not! **Love your wives then, but love them chastely. In your intercourse with them keep yourselves within the bounds necessary for the procreation of children. And inasmuch as you cannot otherwise have them, descend to it with regret.** For this necessity is the punishment of that Adam from whom we are sprung. Let us not make a pride of our punishment. It is his punishment who because he was made mortal by sin, was condemned to bring forth only a mortal posterity. This punishment God has not withdrawn, that man might remember from what state he is called away, and to what state he is called, and might seek for that union, in which there can be no corruption.”

St. Augustine, in his work *On Marriage and Concupiscence* continues to explain the reason why all should despise and hate the concupiscence and sexual desire of the flesh:

“But what in this action does it effect [sometimes even against our own will], unless it be its evil and shameful desires? For if these [evil lusts and desires] were good and lawful, the apostle would not forbid obedience to them, saying, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey the lusts thereof." [Rom. 6:12] He does not say, that you should have the lusts thereof, but that you should not obey the lusts thereof; in order that (as these desires are greater or less in different individuals, according as each shall have progressed in the renewal of the inner man) we may maintain the fight of holiness and chastity, for the purpose of withholding obedience to these [evil and shameful] lusts [caused by original sin]. Nevertheless, our wish ought to be nothing less than the nonexistence of these very desires [which war against the Spirit], even if the accomplishment of such a wish be not possible in the body of this death. This is the reason why the same apostle, in another passage, addressing us as if in his own person, gives us this instruction: "For what I would," says he, "that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." [Rom. 7:15] In a word, "I covet." For he was unwilling to do this, that he might be perfect on every side. "If, then, I do that which I would not," he goes on to say, "I consent unto the law that it is good." [Rom. 7:16] Because the law, too, wills not that which I also would not. For it wills not that I should have concupiscence, for it says, "Thou shall not covet;" and I am no less unwilling to cherish so evil a desire. In this, therefore, there is complete accord between the will of the law and my own will. But because he was unwilling to covet, and yet did covet, and for all that did not by any means obey this concupiscence so as to yield assent to it, he immediately adds these words: "Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" [Rom. 7:17]." (*On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book I, Chapter 30.--The Evil Desires of Concupiscence; We Ought to Wish that They May Not Be, A.D. 419)

Finally, Athenagoras the Athenian in his *A Plea for the Christians* (c. 175 A.D.), writes on the elevated sexual morality of the Christians:

“Therefore, having the hope of eternal life, we [Christians] despise the things of this life, even to the pleasures of the soul, each of us reckoning her his wife whom he has married according to the laws laid down by us, and that only for the purpose of having children. For as the husbandman throwing the seed into the ground awaits the harvest, not sowing more upon it, so to us the procreation of children is the measure of our indulgence in appetite. Nay, you would find many among us, both men and women, growing old unmarried, in hope of living in closer communion with God. But if the remaining in virginity and in the state of an eunuch brings nearer to God, while the indulgence of carnal thought and desire leads away from Him, in those cases in which we shun the thoughts, much more do we reject the deeds. For we bestow our attention, not on the study of words, but on the exhibition

and teaching of actions,—that a person should either remain as he was born, or be content with one marriage...” (*A Plea for the Christians*, Chapter XXXIII)

A great and edifying example of how good and virtuous spouses should view the marital sexual act and sexual pleasure is like a man that is tied to a chair and drugged with heroin or other substances against his will. This man would not commit any sin or fault even though his body became incredibly high or intoxicated by the drug and his body enjoyed the pleasure to the fullest. This is because his will refused to accept the drug intake that was forced on him. Spouses should view the marital act in the exact same way. They should hate the pleasure that is included in the marital act with their will, while accepting that their body must experience a delight of sorts for conception to occur. Just like the man that was tied to the chair and drugged against his will, they should not be accepting of the dose of pleasure that is given them, even though their body experiences the pleasure.

Spouses should thus not accept the dose of pleasure that is given them as anything else than an evil and unwelcome product of the fall of Adam and Eve, and of original sin. Although their body will be experiencing the pleasure, their will and heart should be firmly set against it, without seeking after it.

Sexual pleasure is not love or a cause of holiness but a “tribulation of the flesh” that makes a person “divided” according to the Holy Bible

Today, there are many heretical people who argue that the marital act is holy in itself, and that it brings us closer to God. This, however, is a direct contradiction of Our Lord’s words in the Holy Scripture and the Natural Law which teaches us that ***those who are married and perform the sexual act “shall have tribulation of the flesh”*** (1 Corinthians 7:28) and that the married life makes a person ***“divided”***. Strangely enough, this heresy that extols the sexual experience as a way to achieve holiness or oneness with God is not new, since those people who teach this heresy today are in perfect agreement with a second century heretical Gnostic cult that opposed the early Christian Church by advocating participation in the sexual experience. While little is known about their liturgies, it seems that sexual orgasm was regarded as a means of revelation according to their teachings. These impious heretics were reported as making a parody of the Christian meal, the agape, which followed the celebration of the Eucharist. Deploring such activity, the holy Bishop St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215 A.D.) noted that “they have impiously called by the name of communion any common sexual intercourse.” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter IV, Section 27)

Indeed, “They [the heretics] maintain that one should gratify the lusts and passions,

teaching that one must turn from sobriety to be incontinent. They set their hope on their private parts. [Phil. 3:19] Thus they shut themselves out of God's kingdom and deprive themselves of enrollment as disciples, [Rev. 20:12, 15; 21:27] and under the name of knowledge, falsely so called, they have taken the road to outer darkness. [Matt. 8:12] "For the rest, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is holy, whatever is righteous, whatever is pure, whatever is attractive, whatever is well spoken of, whatever is virtuous, and whatever is praiseworthy, think on these things. And whatever you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, this do. And the God of peace shall be with you." [Phil. 4:8-9] And Peter in his epistle says the same: "So that your faith and hope may be in God, because you have purified your souls in obedience to the truth," [1 Peter 1:21] "as obedient children, not behaving after the fashion of the lusts in which in your ignorance you formerly indulged; but as he who has called you is holy, so also must you be holy in all your conduct; as it is written, 'Be ye holy for I am holy'" [1 Peter 1:14-16 (Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7)]." (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter XVIII, Section 109-110)

St. Epiphanius (310-403) also refers to certain Gnostic heretics who, in addition to being opposed to procreation, also loved copulation and the impure pleasure they could derive from it. He explains that in the early Church, the lustful heretics who were called Gnostics tried to excuse their unnatural and non-procreative sexual acts by deceptively lying about and perverting the Holy Scriptures. This is exactly what we see today. Many heretics, married as well as unmarried, pervert and lie about the Holy Scriptures in order to excuse their abominable sexual acts. St. Epiphanius describes them this way: "Mastered by the pleasure of fornication they invent excuses for their uncleanness, to tell themselves that their licentiousness fulfills [Paul's commandment]." He also added that "Their eager pursuit of seduction is for enjoyment, not procreation, [just like the married who perform non-procreative sexual acts] since the devil mocks people like these, and makes fun of the creature fashioned by God. They come to climax but absorb the seeds in their dirt—not by implanting them for procreation, but by eating the dirt themselves." (St. Epiphanius, *Panarion or Medicine Chest Against Heresies*, Section II, Chapter 26.--Against Gnostics or Borborites)

Because of many false and heretical teachings, almost every spouse now equates love with lust. How to enjoy sex more with your husband or wife is all over the TV, radio, music, newspapers, and magazines. If one spouse does not sexually gratify the other, then the unsatisfied spouse cries out that the other spouse does not love him or her. How perverse this is and totally destructive to true love! How in the world can a shameful momentary sexual pleasure to the flesh be compared to true love—the love that spouses are supposed to have for one another, 24 hours a day and in every thought and deed of the day, even during hard times when they must suffer. And if one spouse cannot give sexual pleasure to the other for whatever reason, the non-satisfied spouse looks elsewhere to another man or

woman or to an animal or inanimate object to get that sexual pleasure and so-called love that the inadequate spouse cannot give. How great indeed are the evils caused by spouses who indulge in sexual pleasure instead of fighting against it, instead of quieting it! Satan, indeed, has power over them to cause all kinds of trouble and sins in their life (Tobias 6:16-17, 22; 8:9). In truth, such spouses are like drug addicts that use each other to get their sexual “fix”. What a sick love they have: to equate sexual lust or concupiscence with love! Indeed, “Those who copulate not to procreate offspring but to satisfy lust seem to be not so much spouses as fornicators.” (Gratian, *Decretum* 2.32.2.1)

For instance, Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary never needed to perform the sexual act in order to foster their love for one another or in order to grow in holiness. And no married couple could ever have a greater love for one another than these two holiest Saints in Heaven! One must realize that the Holy Family was completely chaste for a purpose, to designate God’s goal for families—that is, to remain chaste as much as possible and only have relations with the intention of bearing children.

St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book I, Chapter 13, A.D. 419: “The entire good, therefore, of the nuptial institution was effected in the case of these parents of Christ [Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary]: there was offspring, there was faithfulness, there was the bond. As offspring, we recognize the Lord Jesus Himself... because He who was to be without sin, and was sent not in sinful flesh [sinful because of original sin], but in the likeness of sinful flesh, [Rom. 8:3] could not possibly have been made in sinful flesh itself without that shameful lust of the flesh which comes from [original] sin, and without which He willed to be born, in order that He might teach us, that every one who is born of sexual intercourse is in fact sinful flesh [but made pure through baptism], since that alone which was not born of such intercourse was not sinful flesh. Nevertheless conjugal intercourse is not in itself sin, when it is had with the intention of producing children; because the mind’s good-will leads the ensuing bodily pleasure, instead of following its lead [that is, the sexual act is no sin when spouses perform the normal, natural and procreative marital act while also directly desiring the procreation of children before the marital act]; and the human choice is not distracted by the yoke of [original] sin pressing upon it, inasmuch as the blow of the sin [of concupiscence] is rightly brought back to the purposes of procreation.”

St. Aquinas made some astute observations on the nature of the love of friendship. “Perfect love,” wrote Aquinas, “is that whereby a man is loved in himself, as when someone wishes a person some good for his own sake; thus a man loves his friend. Imperfect love is that whereby a man love something, not for its own sake, but that he may obtain that good for

himself; thus a man loves what he desires.” (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I:II, q. 17, art. 8) Therefore, St. Thomas divided love into two categories, the love of friendship, which was pure and the true kind of love, and the love of fleshly desire or concupiscence, which was an impure, selfish and false kind of love. And so, a good husband and wife “must love each other not as adulterers love, but as Christ loved the Church.” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, #23)

So why has sex become equated with “love”? Because it tends to pleasure and appease man’s senses. That’s why. But this is a dangerous love and not a true love for it is only an external form of love based on a pleasurable, intimate act—and one cannot truly foster a true love for one another based on one act that is often violent and bestial in nature. Many people, for example, have sex often but they don’t truly love one another because of it as one would think they should do if sex now really was an expression of love; hence that the majority of couples today are divorcing, committing adultery or fornicating or entering second sinful unions that are not marriages. They do not really love one another but rather only love the other person in so far as he or she can fulfill their pleasures in life. “*Men shall be lovers of themselves... and lovers of pleasures more than of God.*” (2 Timothy 3:4)

St. Augustine rightly points out that true love is not founded on selfishness but on a love for the person—an inherent truth about love that is found in the Natural Law—which sadly is something that most people totally lack today since almost all are selfish pleasure-seekers: “**I shall win my point that the love of the world by which a man is a friend of this world is not from God, and that the love of enjoying any creature whatsoever without love of the Creator is not from God; but the love of God which leads one to God is only from God the Father through Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit. Through this love of the Creator everyone uses even creatures well. Without this love of the Creator no one uses any creature well. This love is needed so that conjugal modesty may also be a beatific good; and that the intention in carnal union is not the pleasure of lust but the desire for offspring.**” (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book IV, Chapter 3, Section 33, A.D. 421)

In contrast to the selfish pleasure-seekers mentioned above, other people might have sex more seldom or never and yet show true love to one another in other ways, such as through appreciation, affection and self-sacrifice, and by doing things together or by being intimate and caring in other ways. This is true love because this love is not centered on self-love or self-gratification that the worldly and impure couple seek after. This true love is sadly never found amongst the worldly people who equates true love with self-gratification. That is why they can go and abort their babies as if they were trash since having children doesn’t fit their sinful lifestyle; and why they can commit adultery and be unfaithful or abusive and

dishonest etc., for their love is not centered on real love that seek to please others, but is self-centered and selfish in nature. When Pope Pius XI speaks of charity, it is not charity “founded on a mere carnal and transitory desire nor does it consist in pleasing words only, but it is a deep-seated devotion of the heart” and a love free from selfishness.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 23), Dec. 31, 1930: “This conjugal faith, however, which is most aptly called by St. Augustine the "faith of chastity" blooms more freely, more beautifully and more nobly, when it is rooted in that more excellent soil, the love of husband and wife which pervades all the duties of married life and holds pride of place in Christian marriage. For matrimonial faith demands that husband and wife be joined in an especially holy and pure love, not as adulterers love each other, but as Christ loved the Church. This precept the Apostle laid down when he said: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church," [Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19] that Church which of a truth He embraced with a boundless love not for the sake of His own advantage, but seeking only the good of His Spouse. The love, then, of which We are speaking is not that based on the passing lust of the moment nor does it consist in pleasing words only, but in the deep attachment of the heart which is expressed in action, since love is proved by deeds. This outward expression of love in the home demands not only mutual help but must go further; must have as its primary purpose that man and wife help each other day by day in forming and perfecting themselves in the interior life, so that through their partnership in life they may advance ever more and more in virtue, and above all that they may grow in true love toward God and their neighbor, on which indeed "dependeth the whole Law and the Prophets." [Matt. 22:40] For all men of every condition, in whatever honorable walk of life they may be, can and ought to imitate that most perfect example of holiness placed before man by God, namely Christ Our Lord, and by God's grace to arrive at the summit of perfection, as is proved by the example set us of many saints.”

Love is a constant theme in modern culture. Modern music, cinema, newspapers, radio, and television constantly assault our senses with stories and features about love. Unfortunately, the attributes of authentic human love, that is, the values of fidelity, exclusiveness, dependability, stability, childbearing, the establishing of a nuclear family and love of children are downgraded, while the values of sexual compatibility, amorous passion, and emotional ecstasy are given special attention. In modern parlance, the term “making love” has come to mean having sexual intercourse, and its value is measured solely in terms of erotic intensity and sexual climax. This understanding of “lovemaking” makes no attempt to characterize sexual intercourse as an expression of genuine love of God and of children. It completely ignores the fact that the only primary purpose of the marital act is the procreation of children. Contemporary society has, in essence, separated

love from sex, thus creating a chasm of moral ambiguity from which emerges a plethora of disordered sexual desires and carnal appetites.

Hence, Saint Augustine rightly remarks, “Evil [sexual] union is the work of the men operating evilly from their good members. The condition of the newborn is the work of God operating well from evil men. If you say that, even when there is adultery, the union is good in itself, since it is natural, but adulterers use it evilly, why will you not acknowledge that in the same way lust can be evil, yet the married may nevertheless use it well for the purpose of begetting children? Will you assert there can be evil use of good, but there cannot be good use of evil? We see how well the Apostle used Satan himself, when he delivered a man over to him for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord, and when he delivered others up to him that they might learn not to blaspheme [1 Cor. 5:5].” (*Against Julian*, Book III, Chapter 7, Section 16, A.D. 421)

Pope Gregory XVI, in his encyclical “*Mirari Vos*” that condemned all forms of liberalism as well as religious indifferentism, firmly rejected this kind of lustful and selfish pseudo-marriage that so many in today’s world enter into, and directed all the faithful to hold fast to the teaching of the Church:

“Recalling that matrimony is a sacrament and therefore subject to the Church, let them consider and observe the laws of the Church concerning it. Let them take care lest for any reason they permit that which is an obstruction to the teachings of the canons and the decrees of the councils. **They should be aware that those marriages will have an unhappy end which are entered upon contrary to the discipline of the Church or without God’s favor or because of concupiscence alone, with no thought of the sacrament and of the mysteries signified by it [that is, the procreation and education of children, faithfulness, and mutual love and help].**” (Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos* #12, Aug. 15, 1832)

But why does he say this? Because all those kinds of selfish, lustful and impious “marriages” devoid of God mentioned above in effect are nothing but fornication in disguise of a marriage. **It seems evident that a woman taken merely to have sex is not a wife, because God instituted marriage for propagation, not merely for satisfying lust.** For the nuptial blessing [in Gen. 1:28] is, “Increase and multiply.”... It is shameful for a woman when her marriage bears no fruit, for this alone is the reason for marrying... bearing children is the fruit of marriage and the blessing of matrimony is without doubt the reason that Mary’s virginity defeated the Prince of this World. **Thus anyone who joins himself to another, not for the sake of procreating**

offspring, but rather to satisfy lust is less a spouse than a fornicator. ... As no congregation of heretics can be called a Church of Christ because they do not have Christ as their head, so no matrimony, where one has not joined her husband according to Christ's precept, can properly be called marriage, but is better called adultery." (Gratian, *Marriage Canons From The Decretum* 32.2.1.1-2)

Most people living today, especially those in the more developed nations, have become totally perverted through the media, television, music, magazines, internet sites, billboard ads, and posters. Almost everywhere one looks today, one will see impurities along with men and women who are scantily clothed or literally naked. The world has changed much over the years. Few people consider and think about how much the world have changed in a comparatively short time, but the world was very different just a 100 years ago. Back then, there were no sexual education; neither were there (generally) any pornography or immoral movies, series and magazines; and one would never find billboards plastered with images of literally naked or semi-naked women at totally public places for everyone to see, no matter the age. Before in time, one could indeed go and shop for food or clothing in total peace of mind without having to worry about seeing half naked, sensual women and men being displayed all over the place. This doesn't exist today, at least not in the western culture. But however bad that is, it cannot be compared to the sheer horrors of the media. In the media, perverted viewers observe perverted characters and families and imitate them. This destroys their conscience as they imitate them and their sinful behavior and sexual perversions.

One can only shudder in horror over the number of people that actually have imitated what they have heard, read or seen in the media, magazines and television that they otherwise wouldn't have known about. Who among men who frequently watch media can honestly say that he hasn't learned to commit some new sin that he before didn't know about through the media? The media is indeed the devil's favorite playground in the total and complete destruction of human morality. In fact, the media has such power to normalize trends and sinful behaviors – as one frequently witness when fans starts to behave and dress as their "idols" seen on the media – that it has normalized and preconditioned peoples minds into believing that it's totally normal to act like this and that everyone commits such acts as are shown and promoted. A few examples one almost always encounters are: immodest dress (hence the reason why virtually the whole world has gone from being somewhat modestly dressed to half-naked in just 50 years or so), homosexuality, cursing, taking God's name in vain, tips or recommendations on how to increase sexual pleasure, or the constant viewing of lustful kisses, touches, and unlawful and mortally sinful sexual practices. Such depraved sexual sins were much more, if not totally uncommon before since most, if not all people, were ignorant about them, and as a result, were less likely to know even how to commit them.

St. Clement of Alexandria, *On Marriage* (c. 198 A.D.): “For the marriage of other [sinful, selfish and lustful] people is an agreement for indulgence; but that of philosophers leads to that agreement which is in accordance with reason, bidding wives adorn themselves not in outward appearance, but in character; and enjoining husbands not to treat their wedded wives as mistresses, making corporeal wantonness their aim; but to take advantage of marriage for help in the whole of life, and for the best self-restraint.” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book II, Chapter XXIII)

It is the purpose behind the marital act, the will of not wanting to live a sensual life, the thought of wanting to have children for the glory and honor of God—that produces the good fruits in parents. It is not merely a natural act or process that achieves this good fruit, but again, the intention. True love thus resides in the will or thought, and not first and foremost in an external deed. This is not to say, however, that an external act if performed with a good intention cannot be a sign of true love, because it can (examples being almsgiving or other good and charitable deeds), and in this sense intimacy can be called love, but only in so far as it is **not selfish or self-centered in nature**.

St. Robert Bellarmine, *The Art of Dying Well*, Chapter XV, On Matrimony: “There are three blessings arising from Matrimony, if it be made a good use of, viz: Children, fidelity, and the grace of the sacrament. **The generation of children, together with their proper education, must be had in view, if we would make a good use of matrimony; but on the contrary, he commits a most grievous sin, who seeks only carnal pleasure in it.** Hence Onan, one of the children of the patriarch Juda, is most severely blamed in Scripture for not remembering this, which was to abuse, not use the holy Sacrament. But if sometimes it happen that married people should be oppressed with the number of their children, whom through poverty they cannot easily support, there is a remedy pleasing to God; and this is, by mutual consent to separate from the marriage-bed, and spend their days in prayer and fasting. For if it be agreeable to Him, for married persons to grow old in virginity, after the example of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, (whose lives the Emperor Henry and his wife Chuncunda endeavoured to imitate, as well as King Edward and Egdida, Eleazor a knight, and his lady Dalphina, and several others,) why should it be displeasing to God or men, that married people should not live together as man and wife, by mutual consent, that so they may spend the rest of their days in prayer and fasting?”

In this context of speaking about selfish pleasure seekers, it is necessary to speak about the

male population, that especially today are completely consumed by the search for and gratification of their foul, sensual and carnal appetites. St. Thomas Aquinas denounces such men unequivocally, teaching that: “On the contrary, Augustine says... **thou shouldst excel thy wife in virtue, since chastity is a virtue, thou yieldest to the first onslaught of lust, while thou wishest thy wife to be victorious.**” (*Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 151, Art. 1; *De Decem Chord*, Sermon ix de Tempore)

Just as an external deed can be done for a good cause, so it can also be done for an evil cause, even if it outwardly appears to be good or devout. For example, if someone were to give alms in order to achieve human praise and glory from other men and not from God, this deed of alms-giving would be worthless before God and would in no way profit the giver for salvation, but would actually only increase his torment in Hell, since it was a sin of vanity and vainglory. Therefore, a physical deed can never be meritorious in itself, but it is the intention behind the deed that defines its goodness or badness of the action. This truth is important to make clear since so many people today erroneously seem to believe that the sexual act in itself is a source of love.

Matthew 6:1-4 “Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore when thou dost an almsdeed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honoured by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.”

Spouses who love their spouse with an adulterous love are adulterers

According to the teachings of the Doctors, Theologians and Saints of the Catholic Church, any man who is a too ardent lover of his spouse, (that is, he or she who loves his wife’s or husband’s body too much or the lust or pleasure that he or she receives from them too much or more than he loves God or his spouse’s soul,) is an adulterer of his God and of his wife.

St. Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, Book 1, Section 20, 40, A.D. 393: “Do you imagine that we approve of any sexual intercourse except for the procreation of children? . . . **He who is too ardent a lover of his own wife is an adulterer [of his God and wife].**”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 8: “And since **the man who is too ardent a lover of his wife** acts counter to the good of marriage if he use her indecently, although he be not unfaithful, he **may in a sense be called an adulterer; and even more so than he that is too ardent a lover of another woman.**”

Gratian, *Medieval Marriage Law*, Case Thirty-Two, Question IV: “Also, Jerome, [in *Against Jovinian*, I]: C. 5. Nothing is more sordid than to make love to your wife as you would to an adulteress. The origins of love are respectable, but its perversion is an enormity. §1. It gives no respectable motive for losing one’s self control. Hence, the Sentences of Sixtus says, “**He is an adulterer who is too passionate a lover of his wife.**” **Just as all passion for another’s wife is sordid, so also is excessive passion for one’s own.** The wise man should love his wife reasonably, not emotionally. The mere stimulus of lust should not dominate him, nor should he force her to have sex. Nothing is more sordid than to make love to your wife as you would to an adulteress.”

Gratian, *Medieval Marriage Law*, Case Thirty-Two, Question VI: “‘You shall not commit adultery.’ [Ex. 20:14]... You ought to excel over your wife in virtue (for chastity is indeed a virtue). Are you captive to the impulses of lust? Do you expect your wife to be victorious in this while you lie vanquished? As the head of your wife, you lead her to God. Would you be willing to follow a head like yourself? The husband is the head of the wife [Eph. 5:23]. So where the wife behaves better than the husband, the home is turned upside down on its head. If the husband is the head, the husband should behave better, and so lead his wife in all good deeds.”

People who are in a marriage should ask themselves these questions: “Whom do I love during the act of marriage: God and my spouse in all honesty and virtue, or my spouse’s body and the lust I derive from it?” “Have the thought of God or that He is present ever even entered my mind during marital relations?” “Have this absence of God’s presence in my mind also driven me into committing shameful sins by inflaming my concupiscence in unlawful ways?” In truth, those couples who doesn’t shut God out from themselves or their hearts during marital relations will undoubtedly be less likely to fall into other sins during the act of marriage. Saint Alphonsus, in his great book called the *True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, explains this crucial truth to us.

St. Alphonsus, *Doctor of the Church*, On the Presence of God: “**The Saints by the thought that God was looking at them have bravely repelled all the assaults of their enemies...** This thought also converted a wicked woman who

dared to tempt St. Ephrem; the saint told her that if she wished to sin she must meet him in the middle of the city. But, said she, how is it possible to commit sin before so many persons? And how, replied the Saint, **is it possible to sin in the presence of God, who sees us in every place?** At these words she burst into tears, and falling prostrate on the ground asked pardon of the saint, and besought him to point out to her the way of salvation.” (*True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, p. 497)

And Gratian says that: “Unbridled desire and shameful employment of marriage are licentiousness and impurity... Second [in Gal. 5:19], the works of the flesh are called "impurity," and "licentiousness," its companion, is included with it. In the Old Law, the Scriptures generally include these among those horrible crimes committed in secret, which are said to be so filthy as to pollute the mouth that speaks of them, or the ears that hear of them. It says [Lev. 15:31], "You shall teach the children of Israel to take heed of uncleanness," including in this passage all unbridled desires, **even those acts within marriage that are not performed as though God were present, with shame and modesty, for the sake of children. Such are called licentiousness and impurity.**” (Gratian, *Medieval Marriage Law*, Case Thirty-Two, Question IV, Part 4, C. 12)

If it's God we love the most, then it must naturally be Him that we are seeking to please, and not ourselves, our flesh, or our spouse. Our Lord God Jesus Christ Himself taught us this specific truth in the holy gospels, saying: “*He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.*” (Matthew 10:37)

In answering the question “Whether it is a mortal sin for a man to have knowledge of his wife, [that is, to perform the sexual act with his wife] with the intention not of a marriage good but merely of pleasure?” St. Thomas Aquinas explains that “the right answer to this question is that if pleasure be sought in such a way as to exclude the honesty [and chastity] of marriage, so that, to wit, it is not as a wife but as a woman that a man treats his wife, and that he is ready to use her in the same way if she were not his wife [and merely for fulfilling his own lust], it is a mortal sin; wherefore such a man is said to be too ardent a lover of his wife, because his ardor carries him away from the goods of marriage.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 6)

St. Clement of Alexandria, in his book “*The Instructor*” shows us very clearly how “he violates his marriage adulterously who uses” the marital sexual act in a forbidden, obscene or lewd way:

“For many think such things to be pleasures only which are against nature, such as these sins of theirs. And those who are better than they, know them to be sins, but are overcome by pleasures, and darkness is the veil of their vicious practices. For he violates his marriage adulterously who uses it in a meretricious way, and hears not the voice of the Instructor [the Lord], crying, "The man who ascends his bed, who says in his soul, Who seeth me? darkness is around me, and the walls are my covering, and no one sees my sins. Why do I fear lest the Highest will remember?" [Sirach 23:18] Most wretched is such a man, dreading men's eyes alone, and thinking that he will escape the observation of God. "For he knoweth not," says the Scripture, "that brighter ten thousand times than the sun are the eyes of the Most High, which look on all the ways of men, and cast their glance into hidden parts." [Sirach 23:27-28] Thus again the Instructor threatens them, speaking by Isaiah: "Woe be to those who take counsel in secret, and say, Who seeth us?" [Isaiah 29:15] For one may escape the light of sense, but that of the mind it is impossible to escape. For how, says Heraclitus, can one escape the notice of that which never sets? Let us by no means, then, veil our selves with the darkness; for the light dwells in us. "For the darkness," it is said, "comprehendeth it not." And the very night itself is illuminated by temperate reason. The thoughts of good men Scripture has named "sleepless lamps;" although for one to attempt even to practice concealment, with reference to what he does, is confessedly to sin. And every one who sins, directly wrongs not so much his neighbor if he commits adultery, as himself, because he has committed adultery, besides making himself worse and less thought of. For he who sins, in the degree in which he sins, becomes worse and is of less estimation than before; and he who has been overcome by base pleasures, has now licentiousness wholly attached to him. Wherefore he who commits fornication is wholly dead to God, and is abandoned by the Word as a dead body by the spirit. For what is holy, as is right, abhors to be polluted. But it is always lawful for the pure to touch the pure. Do not, I pray, put off modesty at the same time that you put off your clothes; because it is never right for the just man to divest himself of continence. For, lo, this mortal shall put on immortality; when the insatiableness of desire, which rushes into licentiousness, being trained to self-restraint, and made free from the love of corruption, shall consign the man to everlasting chastity. "For in this world they marry and are given in marriage." But having done with the works of the flesh, and having been clothed with immortality, the flesh itself being pure, we pursue after that which is according to the measure of the angels." (*The Paedagogus* or *The Instructor*, Book II, Chapter X.--On the Procreation and Education of Children, c. 198 A.D.)

Indeed, “The good of marriage remains a good, as it has always been a good among the People of God. ... Now it allows human beings to procreate children, not like animals by

merely copulating with females, but in a decent conjugal order. Nevertheless, when a Christian mind focuses on celestial things, it wins a victory beyond all praise. Yet, since, as the Lord says [Mt. 19:11-12], not all can accept this message, let those who can do so, and let those who cannot be content to marry. Let them weigh well what they have not chosen, and persevere in what they have embarked on. Let no opportunity be given to the Adversary, and let Christ be robbed of no offering. If purity is not preserved in the conjugal bond, one should fear damnation.” (Gratian, *Marriage Canons From The Decretum*, Case Twenty-Seven, Question I, Part 2, C. 41)

In a sense, one can truly say that the person who sets his heart on loving a physical pleasure with his will – whatever it may be – worships and loves a kind of idol. That is why we as humans must always do our utmost to try to escape or minimize the pleasures that are addictive to us. For the stronger a pleasure is and the more delightful it is to our senses, the more potential there is for it to become a sin and for a person to grow attached to it. St. Thomas Aquinas writes concerning this, “If the sexual pleasure is sought beyond the limits of integrity proper to marriage, in the sense that in conjugal relations the spouse sees in the partner not any more the characteristics proper to the spouse, but only a female/woman and is disposed to do with her the same things even if she were not his wife, he has sinned mortally.” (*In Sententiarum*, d.31, q.2, art, 3) Also, “It is needed to be said that a man seeks in the wife pleasure as from a prostitute when he looks at her with the same look with which he would look at a prostitute.” (*Ibid.*, d.31, q.2, art, 3) And so, “Self-restraint is to prevail over sensual pleasure; on the other hand, the prevalence of the latter is what I call licentiousness.” (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Vol. II, *Epi Ithika* or *Moral Epopees* 31, *Ori pachimereis*, PG 37, 651A)

Another good example how loving one’s spouse (like an adulterer) – in an inordinate, unreasonable and sensual manner is sinful and evil – is found in *The Revelations of St. Bridget* in a chapter about a damned person who **“was married and had no more than one wife and did not have intercourse with any other woman. However, he maintained his fidelity in marriage not because of divine charity and fear but because he loved the body of his wife so tenderly that he was not attracted by sexual union with any other body.”** This example shows us that even in the time of St. Bridget in the 14th century, men and women of bad will loved the carnal pleasure they could derive from their spouse in an unreasonable and evil manner. Indeed, even though this man only loved his wife in a sensual manner rather than other women, he was still damned, thus showing us God’s hatred of and severity in judging marital sexual sins.

“The bride [St. Bridget] had a vision of what seemed to be two demons, alike in every limb, standing before the judgment seat of God. They had mouths wide open

like wolves, glass-like eyes with burning flames inside, hanging ears like rabbits, swollen and protruding bellies, hands like those of a griffin, legs without joints, feet that looked mutilated and half cut-off. One of them said then to the judge: “Judge, sentence the soul of this knight who matches me to be united to me as my mate!”

The judge [Our Lord Jesus Christ] replied: “Tell me what rightful claim you have to his soul!”

The demon answered: “I ask you first, since you judge fairly: Is it not said, where an animal is found similar in type to another, that it belongs to the lion species or wolf species or some other such species? So now I ask to which species this soul belongs—is she like angels or demons?”

The judge said: “She does not match the angels but you and your mates, that is clear enough.”

Then, almost in mockery, the demon said: “When this soul was created from the fire of your unction, heat of union, that is, of your love, she was like you. Now, however, since she despised your sweet love, she is mine by a triple right: first, because she is like me in disposition; second, because we have the same tastes; third, because we both have a single will.” ... Her belly is swollen, because the extent of her greed had no measure. She was filled but never satisfied. ... I have a similar greed. If I alone could gain possession of all the souls in heaven and earth and purgatory, I would gladly seize them. And if only a single soul was left, I would out of my greed never let her go free from torment. Her breast is icy cold just like my own, since she never had any love for you and your commandments were never to her liking. So too, I feel no love for you. Rather, out of the envy I have toward you, I would willingly let myself be continuously killed in the bitterest of deaths and resuscitated again for the same punishment if only you were killed, if it were possible for you to be killed. ...

This person was married and had no more than one wife and did not have intercourse with any other woman. **However, he maintained his fidelity in marriage not because of divine charity and fear but because he loved the body of his wife so tenderly that he was not attracted by sexual union with any other body.** ...

Then the judge [Jesus Christ] turned to me [St. Bridget] who had seen all this and said: “Woe to this man who was worse than a robber! He had his own soul on sale; **he thirsted for the impurity of the flesh**; he cheated his neighbor. This is why voices of men cry out for vengeance on him, the angels turn away their faces from him, the saints flee his company.”

Then the demon drew close to the soul that matched him and said: “O judge, look: here am I and I again! Here am I, wicked through my own wicked will, unredeemed and unredeemable. But this one here is another me: though he was

redeemed, he made himself like me by obeying me more than you. ... So she is mine! Therefore, as they say, her flesh will be my flesh, though, of course, I have no flesh, and her blood will be my blood.” The demon seemed to be very happy about this and began to clap his hands.

The judge said to him: “Why are you so happy and what kind of happiness is that you feel in the loss of a soul? Tell me while this bride of mine stands here listening. Although I know all things, answer me, for the sake of this bride, who can only grasp spiritual matters figuratively.”

The demon said: “As this soul burns, I burn even more fiercely. When I burn her with fire, I am burned even more. Yet, because you redeemed her with your blood and loved her to such an extent that you, God, gave yourself for her, and I still was able to deceive her, I am made glad.” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 6, Chapter 31)

Sad to say, the truth of the matter is that most people in this world fits the description of this damned soul, since they love their spouse in an inordinate way. The Son of God, in a Revelation spoken to Saint Bridget, speaks of this, saying: “**But now, the redeemed soul of man has become like the most ugly and shameless frog**, jumping in its arrogance and **living in filth through its sensuality**. She has taken my gold away from me, that is, all my justice. **That is why the devil rightly can say to me: ‘The gold you bought is not gold but a frog, fostered in the chest of my lust. Separate therefore the body from the soul and you shall see that she will jump directly to the chest of my lust where it was fostered.’** ... Such is the soul of the man I am talking about to you. **She is namely like the most vile frog, full of filthiness and lust, fostered in the chest of the devil.**” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 1, Chapter 21)

Hierarchy of sexual sins, licentiousness and illicit marital relations

Thomas N. Tentler, author of *Sin and confession on the eve of the Reformation*, and who studied the topic of the hierarchy of sexual sins developed in the Catholic Church from confession manuals, have listed the rank ordering of sexual sins committed by married and unmarried people. Now this is interesting, for this is how Catholic priests (before the beginning stages of the Great Apostasy) would have viewed and judged many of the sexual acts people today commit without any shame. Many of the things you perhaps would think are acceptable, will be seen are not — and in fact to be totally sinful. This will give us an overview on what is acceptable and what is not while having marital relations. The sins are ordered in 16 categories and applies to both the married and unmarried. They are as follows:

(1) unchaste kiss, (2) unchaste touch, (3) fornication, (4) debauchery, (5) simple adultery (one partner married, one single), (6) double adultery (both partners married), (7) voluntary sacrilege (one partner under religious vows), (8) rape or abduction of virgin, (9) rape or abduction of wife, (10) rape or abduction of nun, (11) incest, (12) masturbation, (13) improper sexual position (even between spouses), (14), improper orifice or opening (most heinous crime between spouses), (15) sodomy (homosexuality), (16) bestiality.

There are obviously many other mortal sins included in the above categories that are not directly listed by name. So what other mortally sinful sexual activities or acts not listed above are commonly practiced today between married and unmarried people? The following list are only some of the most common examples of sins many people today are guilty of when they are having marital relations. It must of course be understood that if we have not listed some other sin that you might be doing that are lustful and shameful, it is still forbidden and a mortal sin to commit it. All of the following deeds are forbidden and are illicit marital relations, and must therefore be considered as the mortal sin of lust. Mortal sins always lead a soul to Hell unless one performs an *Act of Contrition* which includes *Perfect Contrition* and performs the other acts the Church requires for salvation.

- **Striptease.**
- **Dressing sensual** (both before, during or after marital relations).
- **Sex games** (or sexual role play).
- **Sex toys** (or other objects used for this purpose).
- **Sensual, foul, unchaste or dirty talking** (both before, during or after marital relations).
- **Uncontrollable or unrestrained moaning.** This is always a mortal sin if it's done intentionally or with the intention to inflame one's own or the other spouse's lust. Most women can control themselves, but many choose not to since they are promiscuous. Some women indeed are very cruel and want to hurt others when it comes to this, and one can only say that such women who act in this way are abominable and demonic since they are searching for a foul pleasure and since they are hurting and killing their husband's soul.
- **The shaving of the genital hair** (can be mortally sinful or non-sinful depending on the reason why it is done). If it's done with the intention of enhancing sexual pleasure and/or for seeing more of the spouse, it is always a mortal sin.
- **Inappropriate sexual position.** This is often a sign of passion according to St. Thomas Aquinas, and if so, it is a mortal sin. (See next section for appropriate sexual position according to the teaching of the Church.)

- **Aphrodisiacs or substances used to enhance lust.** If the intention of the spouses when using aphrodisiacs is the enhancement of their shameful and damnable lust, they are absolutely committing a mortal sin. The only exception to this that is absolutely necessary would be if a husband couldn't achieve an erection and so took a substance that helped him achieve this end. In this case it wouldn't even be a venial sin since his intention for using it is not to increase his pleasure, but rather to conceive children and fulfilling the marital duty. However, a husband must never use pills or compounds that he knows will increase his lust. There are many pills and natural herbs that can be used to achieve an erection without necessarily increasing the pleasure (such as PDE-5 inhibitors). Erection first and foremost has to do with blood-flow, and so that is what should be looked for in herbs, medicines and supplements.
- **Pausing, interrupting or prolonging the marital act** (can be mortally sinful or non-sinful depending on the intention). It is always a mortal sin if it's performed with the intention of increasing length or intensity of the sexual pleasure or for making the wife or husband reach climax outside of the natural, normal marital act. It is unnatural to interrupt the sexual act for the sake of mere pleasure. It is also a sign of passion, which is mortal (see St. Thomas in next section). For when a husband or wife engages in acts of unnatural prolonging or interrupting of the marital sexual act, they are no longer following the primary or secondary purpose of the sexual act (procreation and quenching of lust), but are rather following the motive of satisfying and inflaming their shameful and damnable lust as their (new) primary end or motive during marital relations. That's why it's a mortal sin to interrupt the act of marriage for the above mentioned reasons. Further, consider that the Catholic Church teaches that even the normal marital act *when performed for the sole sake of pleasure* is at least a venial sin, but spouses who are interrupting the marital act for the sake of lust are not even performing the normal and natural marital act, but are hindering or interrupting it. As a consequence, they are committing an action that is inherently sinful and unnatural. Resting or taking pauses however is not sinful whenever the situation demands it. For example, the intercourse could be giving the wife pain or be exhausting the husband who, in sincerity, is trying to finalize the act but cannot do it. All of these and similar examples are not sinful, because they are not performed for the sake of lust. Hence, it is the evil intention of enhancing sexual pleasure while refusing to consummate the marital act in the natural way, by unreasonably interrupting it, or by unreasonably holding on too long, that makes the deed of prolonging marital relations sinful. For everything not following reason in the marital act, as explained by St. Thomas Aquinas in the beginning of this article, is sinful.
- **Masturbation of self or spouse** (before, during or after the act of marriage). Masturbation has always been considered as a mortal sin in the Catholic Church

and it doesn't cease to be a mortal sin just because the spouses are married. Despite this ancient, constant and infallible dogmatic moral teaching of the Catholic Church on the evilness and total sinfulness of masturbation—not only the perverted, evil Vatican II “Catholics” and “do what do wilt” satanic protestants, but even many so-called “traditional Catholic” couples—actually believe that masturbation is right to do within the marriage act! Although they know and even admit that it's a mortal sin to masturbate outside of the marriage act, they nevertheless believe that it is right to do within the marriage act — and that it is an exception. But what Church teaching or saint can they cite to support this heresy? None! Only evil, perverted and heretical theologians (or other heretical modern “Catholic” laymen's private opinions) during the last 100 years or so, can they even cite to support this teaching. This fact, then, is quite telling, and it proves that this teaching is directly inspired by the Devil from the pits of Hell, since it was totally unheard of before the beginning stages of the Great Apostasy and the modern world. Those who teach that such a degraded and debauched lifestyle is “good”, “right” or “moral” are complete perverts and their opinions are utterly worthless. All masturbatory touching of the genitals of oneself or one's spouse (i.e. manipulative sexual acts), is immoral and a mortal sin. Any type of masturbatory touching is immoral (regardless of whether or when climax occurs) because it is an act that is not natural, procreative or necessary for conception to occur and is, therefore, an unreasonable act.

- **Kisses, touches, hugs, caresses** etc. (can be sinful or non-sinful). All kisses, touches, hugs, and caresses performed for the sake of lust or sensual pleasure is mortally sinful and must always be avoided at all cost by all people at all times. Natural touches, kisses, hugs, caresses, embraces and the like (such as those performed by family members and by lovers in public) are not sinful provided they are not performed for the sake of sensual or lustful reasons. Spouses must be aware though, for even though it is not sinful to embrace one another out of affection, excess or unreasonability in embracing happens easily during the heat of concupiscence, and this is certainly sinful. Also, if spouses hug or kiss each other out of affection and they perceive that their lust is aroused by this act, they must immediately cease with this deed that is arousing their lust or be guilty of the mortal sin of unlawfully inflaming their lust. The more spouses indulge in these lawful embraces and are careless therein, the more likely it will become sinful. So to be on the safe side and to become perfect, spouses should never touch, kiss or even see each other naked during intercourse. Kissing and touching before intercourse are also particularly problematic as they lead to intercourse that is not governed by a desire to procreate. Spouses should also never walk around at home undressed or partially dressed. Women especially should never walk in their underwear or naked in the presence of their husband, as this behavior without a doubt will incite his lust. This specific problem we have today of people walking around naked or dressed like

whores in public or at home was typically unheard of before in society, as most men and women in the past was much more well dressed and modest, even at home. As an example demonstrating this fact, consider how women's underwear looked like just 200 years ago. Believe it or not, but these *underwear* were in fact more modest than what many women wear as *skirt* or *dress* in public today!

- **Unnatural sexual acts** (always gravely sinful). An unnatural sexual act or touch is any type of sexual act that is not natural, reasonable, or procreative. Some examples of unnatural sexual acts include shameful acts with the mouth, sodomy, acts performed on different parts of the body not intended for this purpose, and manipulative sexual acts (i.e. masturbation of self or the spouse). All unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral because these acts lack the natural and procreative meaning, and therefore right reason, which are required by God for sexual acts to be moral. These acts are not procreative because they are not the type of act that is inherently directed at procreation. This is not the type of sexual union intended by God for human persons. Unnatural sexual acts are not justified by being done within marriage, nor by the circumstance that these acts occur in connection to or the context of natural marital relations, because the moral law requires each and every sexual act to be not only reasonable and marital, but also natural and procreative. All unnatural sexual acts and embraces are thus intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral due to the deprivation of the procreative purpose and right reason that always must accompany the marital act.

Examples of things a couple could do to inflame concupiscence accidentally (and that are bad, since it enhance lust!) but that are perhaps not sinful in every case depending on the intentions of the spouses while they're doing it, is to have marital relations in light instead of in darkness, to come together naked or partially naked instead of clothed, or to touch each other more than what is absolutely necessary during the marital act by hugs and the like. All of these things however should be avoided by the spouses as much as possible in order to cultivate a virtuous, honorable and good marriage. In truth, the inflaming of concupiscence usually starts out as a venial sin and if continued always ends in mortal sin, because all control is lost. "*Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will.*" (Ecclesiasticus 18:30)

Appropriate sexual position

Christian moralists, canonists, and theologians from the patristic period onward commonly maintained that only one posture was appropriate and natural for human sexual intercourse.

St. Albertus Magnus the Great, *Doctor of the Church*, (c. 1206-1280): “**Nature teaches that the proper manner is that the woman be on her back with the man lying on her stomach.**” (Commentarii in IV Sententiarum (Dist. XXIII-L))

Deviation from this was sanctioned only when illness or physical obesity necessitated or when there was danger of smothering the foetus in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

Many readers will undoubtedly question why the missionary position would be considered as the only appropriate form of sexual intercourse between a husband and wife. The simple answer to this question is because of the **natural order of the hierarchy so established by God**, because in marriage the *husband* is the head of the wife.

Ephesians 5:23 “Because the *husband* is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. He is the savior of his body.”

The missionary position is simply a bodily manifestation of this. If it were otherwise, the woman would be more like a man (more like the head and in control) and the man more like a woman (more submissive and receptive), which is contrary to nature.

Genesis 1:27 “And God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him: male and female he created them.”

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches the same concept in his “*Summa Theologica*”:

“These species are differentiated on the part of the woman rather than of the man, **because in the venereal act the woman is *passive*** and is by way of matter, whereas the **man is by way of agent [*in way of acting*]**...” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 1)

Thus, the Catholic Church teaches that any sexual position performed by the spouses where the woman is by way of agent, (that is, when she is more in control of the sexual act with her movements) is contrary to nature and tradition, in addition to the natural hierarchy so established by God.

But there are also other reasons why the Church commonly have recommended only the missionary position. The most obvious reason, of course, is because these other positions or “experimentations” are usually more “exciting” to people who practice them, since it enhances their lust and gives them greater levels of pleasure or enjoyment than they

otherwise would have, in addition to making the act more bestial. So that's why Church tradition holds as contrary to nature those other positions. The Church has as its main goal the preservation of morality and the salvation of souls, and not that of appeasing stiff-necked, lust-seeking couples who are searching for new ways to damn themselves. The Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, who was well aware of the sexual depravity of humankind, wonderfully refers to these most obvious reasons in his writings as well.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Libros Sententiarum*, Chapter IV, Section 31, 2, 3: "Marital relations are contrary to nature when either the right receptacle or the **proper position required by nature is avoided**. In the first case it is always a mortal sin because no offspring can result, so that the purpose of nature is completely frustrated. But in the second case [of inappropriate sexual positions] it is not always a mortal sin, as some say, **though it can be the sign of a passion which is mortal**; at times the latter can occur without sin, as when one's bodily condition does not permit any other method. ***In general, this practice is more serious the more it departs from the natural way.***"

St. Thomas Aquinas' mentor, St. Albertus Magnus the Great, also a *Doctor of the Church*, taught that to depart from the "natural position" for human intercourse, the husband on top of his wife, was to become like the "brute animals." (Albert the Great, *On the Sentences*, 4.31.24) St. Thomas Aquinas elaborated on that concept, teaching that: "by not observing the natural manner of copulation, either as to undue means, or as to other monstrous and bestial manners of copulation," the married couple commits sin by going "contrary to the natural order of the venereal act as becoming to the human race." (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I:II, q. 154, art. 11)

In truth, "Some, then, as we have shown, have tried to go beyond what is right and the concord that marks salvation which is holy and established. ... They have abandoned themselves to lust without restraint and persuade their neighbors to live licentiously; as wretches they follow the Scripture: "Cast your lot in with us; let us all have a common purse and let our moneybag be one." [Prov. 1:14] On account of them the same prophet gives us advice saying: "Go not in the way with them, withdraw thy foot from their steps. For not unjustly are nets spread out to catch birds; for they are guilty of bloodshed and treasure up evil for themselves" [Prov. 1:15-18] that is, they seek for immorality and teach their neighbors to do the same. According to the prophet they are "fighters struck with their own tails" (ourai), to which the Greeks give the name kerkoi. Those to whom the prophecy refers might well be lustful, incontinent, men who fight with their tails, children of darkness and wrath... And again in anger at such people he directs that we should "have no fellowship with any one called a brother if he is a fornicator or covetous man or idolater

or reviler or drunkard or robber; with such a man one ought not even to eat." [1 Cor. 5:11] "For I through the law am dead to the law," he says, "that I may live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I that live," meaning that I used to live according to my lusts, "but Christ lives in me," and I am pure and blessed by obeying the commandments; so that whereas at one time I lived in the flesh carnally, "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" [Gal. 2:19-20]." (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter XVIII, Section 105-106)

Kisses and touches performed for sensual motives is condemned as a mortal sin by the Catholic Church and Her Saints for both married and unmarried alike

Pope Alexander VII, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #40, September 24, 1665 and March 18, 1666: "It is a probable opinion which states that a kiss is only venial when performed for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight which arises from the kiss, if danger of further consent and *pollution* [or ejaculation] is excluded." – **Condemned statement by Pope Alexander VII.** (Denz. 1140)

The Church's moral teaching that condemns kisses "performed for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight" might come as a surprise to many married couples who thought that this was lawful to do within a marriage. Now some people will indeed be quick to suggest that this statement only applies to unmarried people. However the truth of the matter is that there is not a single indication in the decree that even remotely suggests this. This objection is also easily refuted by considering the wording and reason behind the decree, which of course applies both to the married and unmarried people. Note that "pollution" is an older term used to describe "ejaculation" or "discharge of semen" other than during lawful sex.

The Free Dictionary, *The Origin & History*, **pollution:** c.1340, "discharge of semen other than during sex," later, "desecration, defilement" (late 14c.), from L.L. pollutionem (nom. pollutio) "defilement," from L. polluere "to soil, defile, contaminate,"

Therefore, according to the above Church condemnation, even if spouses or unmarried people do not consent to do anything more than the act of kissing itself and don't commit any other sexual sin or act, **it would still be considered as a mortal sin for them to be kissing "for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight" even if "danger of further consent and pollution [or ejaculation] is excluded."** This, of course, is true both before, during, and after the marital act, **and applies both to married and**

unmarried people alike. Thus, spouses may never kiss each other in a sensual way or in this way provoke themselves into sexual lust or “pollution,” either as an act that is separated completely from the marital act or as an act that is committed in relationship to the marital act (such as foreplay), even if pollution or ejaculation is excluded.

Again, the condemned proposition specifically mentioned that kisses “for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight which arises from the kiss” is mortally sinful even though “danger of further consent and pollution [or ejaculation] is excluded” so that no one, whether married or unmarried, should get the idea that they would be allowed to kiss another person for sensual pleasure as long as they did not proceed any further than that.

This point is important to mention since many lustful couples use all kinds of unnecessary acts before, during and after sexual relations. They try to excuse these shameful acts by claiming that they cannot complete the sexual act without them. However, their sinful excuse is condemned by this decree alone.

Now, the main reason for why the act of kissing for the sake of venereal pleasure is mortally sinful according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, the Saints and the Doctors of the Church is because it’s *lust* and serves no reasonable purpose other than wickedly arousing the selfish sexual desire of the spouses while not being able to effect the conception of a child. This fact then shows us that sensual kissing is a completely selfish and unnecessary act with no other purpose than to inflame a person’s shameful lust, which is contrary to virtue and the good of marriage. Again, unless husband or wife are totally degenerated, the mere thought of having sex with their spouse should be enough to inflame their lust and make them ready—at least on the part of the husband. And if this is true with mere thoughts, how much more with kisses and touches?

There can be no doubt about the fact that many men who are ignorant about sex and women would be in danger of “pollution” by the mere thought of, or act of, sensual kissing or touching. It happens even today amongst some men, mostly in young men who are unlearned in the ways of lust—if one can call it that. That’s why the condemned proposition **that tried to excuse this mortal sin** even mentioned if “pollution is excluded,” as if wanting to argue that only ejaculation or climax (or pollution) was the mortal sin and not also the evil intention of seeking the pleasure. However, as we all could see above, whether pollution actually happens or not, sensual kisses was still condemned as a mortal sin according to God’s Holy Law.

The fact that many men today have no danger of pollution from sensual kisses or touches does not make it lawful or right either. Because it is obvious that the act is not made lawful

just because some men have hardened their hearts and become perverted. Simply said, all kisses and touches performed for the sake of sensual or fleshly pleasure is condemned as a mortal sin by the Catholic Church.

There are three main reasons for why all kisses and touches “when performed for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight which arises from the kiss” is mortally sinful and a sin against the Natural Law. *The first reason* is that they are a kind of **drug abuse** since they are **selfish, intoxicating and unnecessary just like drug abuse is**; *the second* is that they are **shameful** since the people who commit these unnecessary acts are ashamed to do them in front of other people; and *the third* is that they are **non-procreative** even though God’s law teaches that the **“the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children”** (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #54). These three reasons are also why the Church teaches that even **the normal, natural and procreative “act of marriage exercised for pleasure only” is condemned as a sin for both the married and unmarried people alike (Blessed Pope Innocent XI)** and why this truth was taught already in the Old Testament by God long before even the New Testament was revealed to us by Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Bible, Tobias 6:16-17, 22; 8:9 “Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: **Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.** ... And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, **moved rather for love of children than for lust**, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children... [Tobias said] And now, Lord, thou knowest, **that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife**, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.”

One of the three greatest reasons for why all non-procreative and unnecessary forms of sexual acts are mortally sinful is that all sexual acts (even marital, natural, lawful and procreative ones) are intoxicating and affects the person similar to the effect of a drug. In fact, the sexual pleasure is many times more intoxicating than many drugs that are unlawful to abuse. But when people are performing unnatural and non-procreative forms of sexual acts, they are abusing the marital act in a similar way that a drug user abuses drugs, or a glutton abuses food. It is an inherently selfish act that are not founded on reason, but only on their unlawful and shameful search for carnal pleasure, similar to the action of a person that uses drugs in order to get intoxicated or high. This absolutely

proves that all unnecessary and non-procreative forms of sexual acts, such as sensual kisses and touches, are sinful and unreasonable to abuse in the same way that drugs are sinful and unreasonable to abuse.

This is also why the Church teaches that even the normal, natural and ***procreative*** “***act of marriage exercised for pleasure only***” is condemned as a sin for both the married and unmarried people alike (Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters Condemned in Decree (# 8), March 4, 1679*). Since the Church and the Natural Law condemns even the normal, natural and ***procreative*** “***act of marriage exercised for pleasure only***”, even though this act is ***procreative*** in itself, it is obvious that all ***non-procreative*** and unnecessary forms of sexual acts (such as sensual kisses and touches) are condemned as even worse sins (that is, as mortal sins); since they are utterly ***unnatural, unreasonable, shameful, and selfish***. This obvious fact is also why it is patently absurd and illogical for anyone who agree with the Church’s condemnation of the normal, natural and ***procreative*** “***act of marriage exercised for pleasure only***” even though this act is directly ***procreative*** in itself, to then turn around and say that the Church and the Saints allows spouses to perform unnatural or ***non-procreative*** sexual acts, such as sensual kisses and touches! In truth, it is a marvel how anyone who accept such a contradictory, illogical and absurd position as described above is even able to justify such a stupid position in his own conscience, but free will being what it is, we can only pray that those who have fallen into this false and unreasonable position see their error, and become converted.

A sick person is allowed by God’s permission to take drugs in order to lessen his pain. But when this sick person uses more drugs than he needs in order to get intoxicated, or continues to use the drugs after he gets well, he commits the sin of drug abuse. This is a perfect example of those who perform non-procreative or unnecessary forms of sexual acts (such as sensual kisses and touches) either by themselves or in relationship to the marital act. They are gluttonous or overindulgent in the marital act, and are thus sinning against their reason and the Natural Law. For “***the sin of lust consists in seeking venereal pleasure not in accordance with right reason...***” and “***lust there signifies any kind of excess.***” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 1)

The “excess” that St. Thomas and the Church condemns as a sin are all sexual acts except for what is inherent in the normal, natural and procreative marital act itself. All other sexual acts are by their own nature inexcusable and a sin against the Natural Law, which means that even though a person has never been told or taught that they are sins, they are still committing a mortal sin, just like a person do not have to be told or taught that

murder, abortion, stealing, or getting intoxicated or drunk is a sin against the Natural Law in order for this person to be able to commit a mortal sin. As the Haydock Bible and Commentary correctly explains about The Natural Law and Romans 2:14-16: “***these men are a law to themselves, and have it written in their hearts, as to the existence of a God, and their reason tells them, that many sins are unlawful...***”

In truth, “**We may also reply that "lasciviousness" relates to certain acts circumstantial to the venereal act, for instance kisses, touches, and so forth.**” (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, Art. 1) Notice that St. Thomas even rejects as lascivious and unlawful “**acts circumstantial to the venereal act, for instance kisses, touches, and so forth**”, and so it is clear that St. Thomas taught that all non-procreative and unnecessary sexual acts are sinful and against nature. This is also why the Natural Law and the Church teaches that even sensual kisses performed “***for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight which arises from the kiss***” is condemned as a mortal sin for both the married and the unmarried people alike (Pope Alexander VII).

St. Augustine also confirms the fact that it is utterly shameful to even think that one could use “kisses and embraces” for venereal pleasure: “... and you [the Pelagian heretic Julian] do not ***blush*** to say you think: ‘It is the more to be commended because the other parts of the body serve it [the reproductive member], that it may be more ardently aroused; be it the eyes for lusting, or the other members, in kisses and embraces.’” (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book V, Chapter 5, Section 23) Indeed, the people of the modern world ***shamelessly*** do not ***blush*** to proclaim that kisses and touches for venereal pleasure is lawful and even good, just like the heretics of the early Church did! Since many of the heretics of our own times, like Julian, are Pelagians in their doctrine and rejects the Church’s teaching concerning *Original Sin*, they also fail to see the inherent evilness of unnatural or non-procreative sexual acts, (such as sensual kisses and touches) since they have chosen to call concupiscence or sexual desire “good” or a “gift from God” rather than a defect that arose from the Original Sin of Adam and Eve. In addition to all of this evidence, this quotation also shows us that even the married are forbidden to perform unnatural or non-procreative sexual acts such as sensual kisses and touches. The Pelagian heretic Julian that St. Augustine is citing in this quotation, did not teach that sexual acts (such as sensual kisses and touches) could be performed by unmarried people, but that only the married were allowed to perform them, which shows us that it is shameful to even dare to suggest that the married can perform such acts. This fact, then, directly refutes those who claim that the Church and Her Saints only condemns kisses and touches for venereal pleasure for those who are unmarried.

This is also why St. Augustine teaches that ***all*** non-procreative or unnecessary sexual acts (such as sensual kisses and touches) are sinful even for the married.

St. Augustine, *On The Good of Marriage*: “For ***necessary*** sexual intercourse for begetting [of children] is free from blame, and itself is ***alone*** worthy of marriage. **But that which goes beyond this *necessity* [of begetting children, such as sensual kisses and touches] no longer follows reason but *lust*.**” (Section 11, A.D. 401)

Thus, St. Augustine taught that the only lawful sexual act was the intercourse itself. This obviously *excludes* all other sexual acts that are not part of the normal and natural intercourse “for the begetting of children”. Notice that St. Augustine is also speaking about married people in this quotation, since he says that “***necessary*** sexual intercourse for begetting [of children] is free from blame, and itself is ***alone*** worthy ***of marriage***”, thus showing us that he is speaking about the married in this quotation, and not only the unmarried. The fact that he is speaking about the married, of course, totally refutes all who say that only the unmarried but not the married are forbidden by the Saints and the Church to perform unnatural, non-procreative or unnecessary sexual acts—such as sensual kisses and touches. Thus, “as regards ***any part of the body*** [such as the mouth] which is not meant for generative [procreative] purposes, ***should a man use even his own wife in it, it is against nature and flagitious*** [that is, atrociously wicked; vicious; outrageous].” (St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book 2, Chapter 35). Again, for those who would claim that only some non-procreative or unnecessary sexual acts, such as masturbation of self or of spouse, oral and anal sex, or foreplay, are condemned by the Church and Her Saints, but not sensual touches or kisses, St. Augustine answers that “as regards ***any part of the body*** [such as the mouth] which is not meant for generative [procreative] purposes, ***should a man use even his own wife in it, it is against nature and flagitious***” in order to show us that no sexual act without exception that is non-procreative could ever be performed by married spouses without sin, and that ***all unnecessary*** sexual acts are “against nature” and condemned and utterly detested by God: “For ***necessary*** sexual intercourse for begetting [of children] is free from blame, and itself is ***alone*** worthy of marriage. **But that which goes beyond this *necessity* [of begetting children, such as sensual kisses and touches] no longer follows reason but *lust*.**” (*On The Good of Marriage*, Section 11)

Indeed, we know that St. Augustine even teaches that spouses who perform the normal, natural and procreative sexual act itself *but without excusing it with the explicit motive of procreation, are committing a sin*; and since this is so even though this act is procreative in itself, how much more must not those acts that are non-procreative be condemned by

him?

St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book 1, Chapter 17, A.D. 419: “It is, however, one thing for married persons to have intercourse only for the wish to beget children, which is not sinful: it is another thing for them to desire carnal pleasure in cohabitation, but with the spouse only, **which involves venial sin.** *For although propagation of offspring is not the motive of the intercourse, there is still no attempt to prevent such propagation,* either by wrong desire or evil appliance.”

Therefore, it is patently absurd and illogical to claim that St. Augustine teaches that the normal, natural and procreative sexual act itself, but without excusing it with the explicit motive of procreation, is sinful to perform for the married; but then turn around and claim that he allows spouses to perform non-procreative or unnecessary sexual acts, such as sensual kisses and touches.

The fact of the matter is that every shred of evidence from the Great Saint Augustine’s writings utterly destroys the heresy against the Natural Law which teaches that sensual kisses and touches are allowed or lawful for the married: “But those who, giving the rein to lust, either wander about steeping themselves in a multitude of debaucheries, **or even in regard to one wife not only exceed the measure necessary for the procreation of children, but with the shameless license of a sort of slavish freedom heap up the filth of a still more beastly excess...**” (St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book III, Chapter 19:28) Saint Augustine makes it perfectly clear that all sexual acts that “exceed the measure necessary for the procreation of children” are acts of “beastly excess”. Are sensual kisses and touches “necessary for the procreation of children”. Of course not! Only the most dishonest person would ever dare to claim such a thing. Thus, it is a fact that St. Augustine, Doctor of the Church, condemns those who “**even in regard to one wife not only exceed the measure necessary for the procreation of children, but with the shameless license of a sort of slavish freedom heap up the filth of a still more beastly excess...**” and anyone who denies this is simply said not being honest, sad to say!

Furthermore, Pope Pius XI clearly proclaims the Magisterium’s definitive teaching in his encyclical *Casti Connubii*, which is also found in Holy Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the Natural Law, that each and every marital sexual act must include the procreative function as well as that “the intrinsic nature of the act” must be “preserved” in order for the spouses to even be able to consider the secondary ends of marriage. This teaching necessarily prohibits the married couple from engaging in any kind of unnatural, non-procreative or

unnecessary sexual act (with or without climax), because all such acts lack the procreative function. Pope Pius XI teaches that spouses are not forbidden to consider the secondary ends of marriage “**SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN]** and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.”

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 59), Dec. 31, 1930: “For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial right there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider **SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN]** and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.”

Pope Pius XI directly teaches that the married are not even allowed to “consider” the secondary ends of marriage unless they are subordinated to the primary purpose of marriage (procreation) and unless “the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved” which means that all sexual acts must be able to procreate in themselves, and that no unnatural and non-procreative form of a sexual act (such as sensual kisses and touches) can ever be performed without sin.

Notice how clearly Pope Pius XI teaches that married people are not even allowed to “consider” the secondary ends of marriage unless they are subordinated to the primary purpose of marriage and “the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved” **which means that one may never perform anything other than the normal, natural and procreative marital act itself. This, of course, totally excludes all sensual kisses and touches.** The secondary ends of marriage “such as mutual aid, the cultivation of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence” can follow after the primary end or purpose of begetting children if the spouses choose this, but the secondary ends or motives are not absolutely needed to lawfully perform the marital act in the same way as the primary purpose of begetting children, nor is the secondary motive of quieting concupiscence meritorious even though it is allowed: “**Love your wives then, but love them chastely. In your intercourse with them keep yourselves within the bounds necessary for the procreation of children. And inasmuch as you cannot otherwise have them, descend to it with regret.**” (St. Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, Sermon 1)

The Catechism of the Council of Trent: “Two lessons of instruction are then to be specially impressed on the mind of the faithful. **The first is that marriage is not to be used from motives of sensuality or pleasure**, but that its use is to be

restrained within those limits, which, as we have above shown, are prescribed by the Lord. **They should be mindful of the exhortation of the Apostle: “They that have wives, let them be as though they had them not,” (1 Cor. 7:29)** and that St. Jerome says: **“The love which a wise man cherishes towards his wife is the result of judgment, not the impulse of passion; he governs the impetuosity of desire, and is not hurried into indulgence. There is nothing more shameful than that a husband should love his wife as an adulteress.”**”

Good and virtuous spouses always remember that God is present with them, and that is also why they do not stoop to the evil and unnatural sexual sins that so plague humanity today. “The activities of marriage itself, if they are not modest and do not take place under the eyes of God as it were, so that the only intention is children, are filth and lust.” (St. Jerome, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, Book III, Chapter 5:21)

In truth, “filth” is the most suitable word that sums up the worth of every marital act that lacks a procreative purpose. Thus, “... when it [the sexual act] is from lust or for the sake of pleasure, then the coition is a mortal sin and the man sins mortally. ... **And these dicta assume that the man and his wife have sex according to the order of nature, for anyone who goes against nature always sins mortally and more seriously with his wife than with anyone else and should be punished more seriously...** Note the difference between the two cases of husband-wife sex, for incontinence and for pleasure and lust... **In the second case, he seeks to procure pleasure with hands or thought or passionate uses and incentives [such as sensual kisses] so he can do more than just have sex with his wife...** [thus sinning mortally] because he acts as an adulterer when he burns like an adulterer even with his own wife.” (Gratian, *On Marriage*, Dictum Post C. 32. 2. 2)

Footnote 359 to *The Shepherd of Hermas*: “‘To the pure, all things are pure;’ but they who presume on this great truth to indulge in kissings and like familiarities are tempting a dangerous downfall.”

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *To Pomponius* (c. A.D. 249): “Assuredly the mere lying together, the mere embracing, the very talking together, and the act of kissing, and the disgraceful and foul slumber of two persons lying together, how much of dishonour and crime does it confess!” (*The Epistles of Cyprian*, Epistle LXI)

St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, Book II, Chapter XX (c. 199 A.D.): “Socrates accordingly bids ‘people guard against enticements to eat when they are

not hungry, and to drink when not thirsty, and the glances and kisses of the fair, as fitted to inject a deadlier poison than that of scorpions and spiders.” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol 2, p. 613)

Indeed, the argument that sensual kisses and touches are sinful for both the married and unmarried alike because they are intoxicating like a drug is just one of the three main arguments against it, the other two being that they are shameful and non-procreative. If one wants to read more about these two arguments and why they refute all those who perversely claim that one may perform kisses and touches for sensual reasons (or any other unnecessary or non-procreative sexual act), one can read more about them in the beginning of Part 2 of this Book, which is named “[Sexual Pleasure, Lust, And The Various Sexual Acts In Marriage](#)”.

Lustful kisses and touches between spouses are definitely mortal sins

Master Jean Charlier de Gerson (13 December 1363 – 12 July 1429), French scholar, educator, reformer, and poet, Chancellor of the University of Paris, a guiding light of the conciliar movement and one of the most prominent theologians at the Council of Constance, **had the following interesting things to say about lustful kisses and touches in marriage between two married spouses, contraception and about sensually arousing oneself:**

Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes*: “Several doctors [of Divinity] maintain that willingly fostering wicked carnal thoughts in order to enjoy oneself is a deadly sin, even without doing the deed. Be sure, however, that kisses, gazes, and fondling, mainly caused by such wicked and lustful thoughts, without anything more, is an even greater sin. ... it is even worse if these kisses do not respect the honesty which is usually kept in public.

“... **You have committed the sin of lust:** If you have fondled and stroked yourself on your shameful member until you obtain the dirty carnal pleasure. If you initiated such sins with others, by words, kisses, fondling, or other signs, or immodest paintings. ... If you committed this sin differently from Nature ordered, or against the honesty that belongs to marriage. ... If you wanted to be desired and lusted after for your beauty, your behavior, your clothes, makeup, dancing or dissolute gazes.

“... **What a young boy should tell in confession:** I sometimes stroked myself or others, urged by disorderly pleasure; I fondled myself, in my bed and elsewhere, something I would not have dared to do if people had been there. Sometimes the priest cannot absolve such fondling. If they are not confessed and

the details given, whatever the shame, one cannot be absolved, and the confession is worthless: one is destined to be damned for ever in Hell. The action and the way it has been done must be told.

“... **Is it a sin to kiss?** I answer that kisses between spouses who maintain the same modesty as the kiss of peace at church, or who do them openly, are without sin. **If they do them so immodestly [and lustfully] that I cannot be more precise, it is an abominable deadly sin.** If kisses are made between strangers and publicly, as a sign of peace, by friendship or kinship, without wicked thought, there is no sin. They could be dangerous between clerics, or people of the same sex or lineage, or in a secret place, and in a prolonged way.

“... **Is it a mortal sin to eat and drink in order to carnally arouse oneself?** Yes, if it is out of wedlock, and even with one’s spouse, if it is to enjoy a pleasure which is not required in marriage.

“... **The fifth commandment is: thou shall not kill.** ... They commit this sin who succeed, in whatever way, in preventing the fruit which should come from carnal intercourse between man and woman [such as by NFP, contraception or abortion]. ... It is forbidden for two people, married or not, to do any kind of lustful fondling without respecting the way and the vessel Nature requires for conceiving children [that is, one cannot perform “extra” sexual acts not able to procreate in themselves or that are not intended for procreation]. It is worse when it is outside of the natural way [unnatural sexual acts], either if it is out of wedlock **or even worse, within it [that is, all unnecessary and non-procreative sexual acts within marriage are considered as worse sins than when they are committed outside of marriage].**

“**Is it permitted for spouses to prevent the conception of a child?** No: I often say that it is a sin worse than murder [hence that contraception or NFP is equivalent to murder]. It is a sin which deserves the fires of Hell. Briefly, any way of preventing conception during intercourse is dishonest and reprehensible.”

Here we see the very obvious truth of the Natural Law that spouses are committing “**an abominable deadly sin**” when they kiss each other for sensual or venereal pleasure. “**Is it a sin to kiss?** I answer that kisses between spouses who maintain the same modesty as the kiss of peace at church, or who do them openly, are without sin. **If they do them so immodestly [and lustfully] that I cannot be more precise, it is an abominable deadly sin.**” Thus, it is clear that anyone who either performs acts of kissing or touching for venereal pleasure or who thinks that these acts are moral acts are sinning against nature, which means that they are in a state of damnation, since acts or heresies against nature can never be excused since no one can be a “material heretic” or in “ignorance” in regards to such things.

Lustful kisses and touches are mortal sins against the Natural Law

It is clear from the evidence thus far covered that sensual kisses and touches are not only mortal sins, but in fact also sins against the Natural Law. That means that any person who thinks it's right to kiss or touch for the sake of carnal pleasure or lust is a heretic against the Natural Law, and as such, are therefore outside the Church of God and thus excluded from salvation. Everyone without exception who have kissed or touched someone or something for the sake of sensual pleasure proved by their deed that their primary or secondary purpose for doing this inherently evil, selfish and shameful deed was not the lawful motive to procreate or quench concupiscence, but rather the sinful and unlawful gratification and excitation of their shameful lust like brute beasts without any reason. No, it would be an insult to beasts to call these vile spouses beasts! It would be more accurate not to call them beasts, but demons, since beasts have no reason, and thus are blameless. In truth, such husbands and wives are lower in their actions than the beasts of the Earth! **“Bodies corrupted by lust are the dwelling places of devils.”** (St. Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Gospel*, Matt. 11:2-10)

Everyone without exception that kisses and touches “for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight which arises” from these acts, are committing a mortal sin against the Natural Law. How so, you might ask? Well, I answer that it is easy to prove.

First of all, acts of lust that are performed for the sake of pleasure and sensual kisses are completely selfish, shameful, intoxicating and unnecessary for conception to occur. Only a blind person could fail to see the fact that **“the sin of lust consists in seeking venereal pleasure not in accordance with right reason...”** and that **“lust there signifies any kind of excess”** (St. Thomas Aquinas) and this obvious fact totally excludes all kinds of sensual kisses and touches.

Second, consider how people will not kiss or touch their spouse in a sexual way or for carnal pleasure in front of other people (unless they are totally degenerated). And consider that they would be very ashamed if their parent, child or friend walked in on them when they were committing this shameful, selfish and unnecessary act with their spouse. It is thus clear that their conscience tells them that it is an inherently evil, shameful and unnecessary act; and yet, though they know this truth in their conscience, they nevertheless refuse to feel this very same shame when they are committing this act of lust in the presence of God and Mary and all the Saints and Angels in Heaven.

Sad to say, a little known truth known today taught by the Saints is also that pleasures of

various kinds and sexual lusts and acts blinds people from perceiving spiritual truths and facts (see [The evil of lust makes man blind to spiritual things](#)) and that is why people can sin so boldly against their natural conscience and God since they have allowed their conscience to be smothered by their evil lusts.

Some people may object that there are many other events that are shameful and that are not yet inherently sinful such as soiling one's pants or being forced to show oneself naked to other people against one's own will. This objection, however, fails to notice the obvious difference between 1) people committing acts of lust with a desire or longing; and 2) events which are shameful but who are not desired or longed for by a person in a sensual way.

Acts of lust are acts performed for the sake of a pleasure and are performed with the will and purpose of satisfying a sensual desire while the events or acts of soiling one's pants or being forced to show oneself naked to other people is not a desire or lust that is sought after. Thus, these people do not desire that these events should happen. If those people who endured the events of soiling their clothes or naked exhibition against their will would sensually desire or lust for that these shameful events would happen in the same way that a man or a woman lust for and desire that acts of lust happen, they would indeed be declared the most disgusting perverts. Who but a complete and satanic pervert would sensually desire or lust after soiling their pants or being exhibited naked?

When Our Lord was going to be crucified, He was forced to be without any covering for His private parts for a while before someone handed Him something to cover Himself with. Our Lord was obviously ashamed for having to appear naked before a lot of people, but He didn't desire that this should happen, and most importantly, He didn't lust at it when it happened! and so, there was no fault in Him. If, however, a person should lust or desire (in a sensual way) that he or she should appear naked before other people (such as nude models), he or she would commit a mortal sin and be a pervert.

Consequently, it is not a mere shameful act that is sinful, but the shameful act that is performed with the intention of pleasing oneself sensually—that is sinful. Kissing for the sake of a venereal pleasure is a completely selfish act that only serves to increase lust, and as such, is against the natural law just like gluttony is against the natural law. It is indeed very similar to the sin of gluttony. One could say that those who commit this sin are gluttonous in the marital act. It is completely self evident that no one ever needed to break God's law by kissing or touching their spouse in a sexual way in order to perform the marital act. No one ever needed to kiss or touch in a sensual way in order to be able to make a child. This is just a selfish, shameful and condemned excuse used by sexually perverted, morally depraved people in order to try to enhance or inflame their sexual

pleasure. Kisses and touches must not and cannot be used to satisfy sensual pleasure as is totally clear from the above Church condemnation and from the words of Jean Gerson (and as we will see, St. Thomas Aquinas).

Kisses, touches, hugs, caresses etc. can of course be sinful or non-sinful depending on why they are performed. All kisses, touches, hugs, and caresses performed for the sake of lust or sensual pleasure is mortally sinful and must always be avoided at all cost by all people at all times. Natural touches, kisses, hugs, caresses, embraces and the like (such as those performed by family members and by lovers in public) are not sinful provided they are not performed for the sake of sensual or lustful reasons. Spouses must be aware though, for even though it is not sinful to embrace one another out of affection, excess or unreasonability in embracing happens easily during the heat of concupiscence, and this is certainly sinful. Also, if spouses hug or kiss each other out of affection and love and they perceive that their lust is aroused by this act, they must immediately cease with this deed that is arousing their lust, or be guilty of the mortal sin of unlawfully inflaming their lust.

It is totally clear that the reason for why so many people of our times consider kisses and touches for venereal or sensual pleasure to be a moral act in marriage and between married spouses is that the satanic media from the beginning of the 20th century have bombarded them with films, series and music that promotes this unnatural and non-procreative perversity that were totally rejected by the Christian world if we just moved back in time a little. Indeed, just like all the other moral laws that have been flouted through the media in our time, such as the laws of modesty and marriage, sensual kisses have been promoted increasingly much in the media through films, music and series, and those who watch media with such kinds of perversity, rightly and justly fall into error concerning the Natural Law about how all non-procreative sexual acts are unlawful and unnatural, since they chose to put themselves into a proximate or near occasion of sinning, which the Church condemns.

A good example of how people who get married today sin by kissing each other is the kiss that the husband and wife perform after the wedding ceremony. It is obvious that those who kiss each other in a lascivious and shameful manner are following what they have learned from the world and the media by watching perverted and evil shows, series and films, and that as a consequence of watching this filth, their shame and conscience have been completely smothered due to their lust and sensuality. Only people who have had their conscience seared with a hot iron could ever dare to kiss another human being in a shameful and lascivious manner, or for the sake of venereal pleasure, and this is much more true in the case of those who do this evil deed in public and in front of other people, and by this act, maliciously tempt other people to sins of impurity and sensual thoughts

and desires. People who get married as well as anyone else who want to show affection towards someone close to them must instead learn to kiss them in a pure way as brothers and sisters kiss each other, or as modest married people in public kiss each other, for this is the only kind of kiss that God allows.

Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, Book I, Chapter 29, A.D 207: "For He [God] bestowed His blessing on matrimony also, as on an honorable estate, for the increase of the human race; as He did indeed on the whole of His creation, for wholesome and good uses. Meats and drinks are not on this account to be condemned, because, when served up with too exquisite a daintiness, they conduce to gluttony; nor is raiment to be blamed, because, when too costly adorned, it becomes inflated with vanity and pride. So, on the same principle, the estate of matrimony is not to be refused, because, when enjoyed without moderation, it is fanned into a voluptuous flame. There is a great difference between a cause and a fault, between a state and its excess. Consequently it is not an institution of this nature that is to be blamed, but the extravagant use of it; according to the judgment of its founder Himself, who not only said, "Be fruitful, and multiply," [Genesis 1:28] but also, "You shall not commit adultery," and, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife;" and who threatened with death the unchaste, sacrilegious, and monstrous abomination both of adultery and unnatural sin with man and beast."

St. Thomas Aquinas condemns lustful kisses and touches for married and unmarried people alike as mortal sins

Now we shall look at what St. Thomas Aquinas has to say about kisses and touches.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 4:

“Whether there can be mortal sin in touches and kisses?”

“**Objection 1:** It would seem that there is no mortal sin in touches and kisses. For the Apostle says (Eph. 5:3): "Fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints," then he adds: "Or obscenity" (which a gloss refers to "kissing and fondling"), "or foolish talking" (as "soft speeches"), "or scurrility" (which "fools call geniality---i.e. jocularity"), and afterwards he continues (Eph. 5:5): "For know ye this and understand that no fornicator, or unclean, or covetous person (which is the serving of idols), hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God," thus making no further mention

of obscenity, as neither of foolish talking or scurrility. Therefore these are not mortal sins.”

“[St. Thomas Aquinas’] Reply to Objection 1: The Apostle makes no further mention of these three because they [kisses and touches] are not sinful except as directed to those that he had mentioned before [i.e. fornicators, unclean and covetous people].”

As we have seen, married people can of course also be *unclean* and *covetous* according to St. Thomas’ teaching concerning the sexual acts of married people “since the man who is too ardent a lover of his wife acts counter to the good of marriage *if he use her indecently, although he be not unfaithful, he may in a sense be called an adulterer*; and even more so than he that is too ardent a lover of another woman.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 8) Notice in the quote above that St. Thomas held sexual sins within marriage to be worse than adultery, because the act occurs within marriage. Thus, it is clear that this quotation about sensual kisses and touches concerns both the married and the unmarried since it is obvious that married people also can be *unclean* and *covetous* in their actions.

The phrase ‘*if he use her indecently*’ refers to unnatural and non-procreative sexual acts—such as sensual kisses and touches within marriage. This is clear because the good of marriage emphasized by St. Thomas is the procreation of children (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, Art. 2). St. Thomas could not be referring to natural marital relations when he says ‘*if he use her indecently*’ because even natural marital relations done with some disorder of desire still retains the procreative function. But unnatural or non-procreative sexual acts (such as sensual kisses and touches) lack this meaning, and so are contrary to the good of marriage. **The use of unnatural or non-procreative sexual acts within marriage are therefore worse than adultery, according to St. Thomas Aquinas!** since such people who commit these acts “may in a sense be called an adulterer; and even more so than he that is too ardent a lover of another woman.” This of course totally destroys the thesis of those who claim that the Church allows non-procreative sexual acts in marriage.

Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 4 [continued]:

“Objection 2: Further, fornication is stated to be a mortal sin as being prejudicial to the good of the future child’s begetting and upbringing. But these are not affected by kisses and touches or blandishments. Therefore there is no mortal sin in these.”

[St. Thomas Aquinas’] Reply to Objection 2: Although kisses and touches do not by their very nature hinder the good of the human offspring, **they proceed from lust**, which is the source of this hindrance [of why kisses and touches are made sinful]: **and on this account [in so far as they are lustful] they are mortally sinful.**”

Notice that St. Thomas here said that kisses and touches was mortal sins in the general sense if “they proceed from lust”, and that he did not say that “it depends on whether they occur in the context of marriage/fornication or not” or that “this is what decides or determines whether it becomes sinful.” St. Thomas clearly says that ***the source of the hindrance*** of why sensual kisses and touches are sinful ***is because they proceed from lust***, and that these acts are sinful *not* because they “hinder the good of the human offspring” but because ***“they proceed from lust”***. Thus, it is totally clear from this definition of St. Thomas that he views the ***lustful intention*** when performing these acts as the ***source*** of the mortal sin itself, and not simply because they occur in context of marriage or not (as we shall also see further down).

That is why St. Thomas even rejects as lascivious and unlawful **“acts circumstantial to the venereal act, for instance kisses, touches, and so forth”**: **“We may also reply that “lasciviousness” relates to certain acts circumstantial to the venereal act, for instance kisses, touches, and so forth.”** (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, Art. 1)

In another part of his *Summa*, St. Thomas deals with the question of **“Whether the unnatural vice is a species of lust?”** and his answer affirms, once again, that all non-procreative sexual acts are unnatural and sinful lust. **“Objection 3:** Further, lust regards acts directed to human generation, as stated above (Q[153], A[2]): **Whereas the unnatural vice concerns acts from which generation cannot follow.** Therefore the unnatural vice is not a species of lust. **[St. Thomas' Reply:] On the contrary,** It is reckoned together with the other species of lust (2 Corinthians 12:21) where we read: "And have not done penance for the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness," where a gloss says: ***“Lasciviousness, i.e., unnatural lust.”*** **[St. Thomas’] Reply to Objection 3:** The lustful man intends not human generation but venereal pleasures. It is possible to have this [pleasure] without those acts from which human generation follows: and it is that which is sought in the unnatural vice.” (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, Art. 11) And so it is clear that St. Thomas taught that all non-procreative and unnecessary sexual acts (such as sensual kisses and touches) are sinful and against nature (unnatural). “Therefore, since in matrimony man receives by Divine institution the faculty to use his wife **for the begetting of children**, he also receives the grace without which he cannot

becomingly do so.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., Q. 42, Art. 3) Thus, according to St. Thomas, all spouses are given the grace by God to use his spouse in an appropriate or suitable way (that is, for the procreation of children), which means that any man who acts contrary to this rejects God’s grace and damns himself, since he does not use his wife “becomingly”. **“We may also reply that "lasciviousness" relates to certain acts circumstantial to the venereal act, for instance kisses, touches, and so forth.”** (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, Art. 1)

In addition, St. Thomas also affirms (as St. Augustine) that even married spouses sin in their normal, natural and procreative sexual acts if they do not excuse them; and this proves that he utterly rejects all non-procreative sexual acts as unlawful.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., Q. 49, Art. 5: “Whether the marriage act can be excused without the marriage goods? On the contrary, If the cause be removed the effect is removed. Now the marriage goods are the cause of rectitude in the marriage act. Therefore the marriage act cannot be excused without them. Further, the aforesaid act does not differ from the act of fornication except in the aforesaid goods. But the act of fornication is always evil. Therefore the marriage act also will always be evil unless it be excused by the aforesaid goods. ...

Consequently there are only two ways in which married persons can come together without any sin at all, namely in order to have offspring, and in order to pay the debt. Otherwise it is always at least a venial sin.”

Since St. Thomas condemns as sinful even the normal, natural and procreative sexual act when it is not excused (**even though this act is still procreative in itself**), how much more must he not utterly reject the notion **that non-procreative sexual acts, such as sensual kisses and touches, are allowed for spouses to perform?** To deny this obvious truth is simply said to be dishonest! However, while St. Thomas here erroneously taught that the payment of the marital debt is a sufficient motive for excusing the marital sexual act from sin, this teaching by him is nevertheless contradicted by Pope Pius XI’s authoritative encyclical *Casti Connubii*, which, as we have already shown, **teaches that the marital debt is a secondary end or purpose after the primary motive of procreation of children** (*Casti Connubii* # 59); still, the fact that this great Saint and Doctor of the Church teaches that the procreative sexual act itself is sinful unless it is excused, totally proves that St. Thomas teaches that all non-procreative sexual acts are unlawful and sinful.

Continuing on with the topic of **“Whether there can be mortal sin in touches and kisses?”**—St. Thomas Aquinas’ general refutation of, and reply to all the objections

against the Church's moral teaching that there can be mortal sins in sensual kisses and touches also for married people, utterly destroys the notion that one may perform these acts.

Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 4 [continued]:

“On the contrary, A lustful look is less than a touch, a caress or a kiss. But according to Mat. 5:28, "Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." **MUCH MORE THEREFORE ARE LUSTFUL KISSES AND OTHER LIKE THINGS MORTAL SINS.**”

This means that St. Thomas views lustful kisses “and other like things” as *worse* sins than adultery or fornication! This is probably due to the fact that St. Thomas views sexual sins that cannot serve for procreation as **worse sins** than those that can. Notice also that St. Thomas says that “A lustful look is less than a touch, a caress or a kiss” in order to show us that the main sin is in the intention when we lust against our reason and consent to committing unnecessary, intoxicating and shameful acts; but that external acts, such as “a touch, a caress or a kiss” aggravate the guilt of the act, and that these are therefore worse mortal sins than just the lustful look and thought. Thus, if even St. Thomas condemns as mortally sinful a lustful look, in addition to teaching that married people's sexual sins are worse than adultery, **“MUCH MORE THEREFORE ARE LUSTFUL KISSES AND OTHER LIKE THINGS MORTAL SINS.”**

In fact, St. Thomas abhors all non-procreative sexual acts with such a detestation and hatred that he even views the vices of fornication, rape or incest as a **lesser sexual crime** than the vice of masturbation. However, one must not think that St. Thomas teaches that fornication, rape or incest are generally lesser sins than masturbation or other non-procreative sexual acts. Fornication, rape and incest are *greater* crimes in the sense of justice, but masturbation is a greater violation of the Natural Law with respect to the sexual act since **it more grievously “transgresses that which has been determined by nature [for the procreation of children]”**. It is therefore considered, according to St. Thomas, as a greater crime in the sense of sins against human sexuality.

Here is the text itself. In the *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 154, a. 12, Aquinas says:

“In every genus, worst of all is the corruption of the principle on which the rest depend. Now the principles of reason are those things that are according to nature, because reason presupposes things as determined by nature, before disposing of

other things according as it is fitting. This may be observed both in speculative and in practical matters. Wherefore just as in speculative matters the most grievous and shameful error is that which is about things the knowledge of which is naturally bestowed on man, so in matters of action it is most grave and shameful to act against things as determined by nature. **Therefore, since by the unnatural vices man transgresses that which has been determined by nature [for the procreation of children] with regard to the use of venereal actions, it follows that in this matter this sin is gravest of all. After it comes incest,** which, as stated above (Article 9), is contrary to the natural respect which we owe persons related to us. With regard to the other species of lust they imply a transgression merely of that which is determined by right reason, on the presupposition, however, of natural principles. **Now it is more against reason to make use of the venereal act not only with prejudice to the future offspring, but also so as to injure another person besides.** Wherefore simple fornication, which is committed without injustice to another person, is the least grave among the species of lust. Then, it is a greater injustice to have intercourse with a woman who is subject to another's authority as regards the act of generation, than as regards merely her guardianship. Wherefore adultery is more grievous than seduction. And both of these are aggravated by the use of violence. Hence rape of a virgin is graver than seduction, and rape of a wife than adultery. And all these are aggravated by coming under the head of sacrilege, as stated above (10, ad 2). ... **Reply to Objection 4.** Gravity of a sin depends more on the abuse of a thing than on the omission of the right use. Wherefore among sins against nature, the lowest place belongs to the sin of uncleanness, which consists in the mere omission of copulation with another. While the most grievous is the sin of bestiality, because use of the due species is not observed. Hence a gloss on Genesis 37:2, "He accused his brethren of a most wicked crime," says that "they copulated with cattle." After this comes the sin of sodomy, because use of the right sex is not observed. **Lastly comes the sin of not observing the right manner of copulation, which is more grievous if the abuse regards the "vas" [orifice] than if it affects the manner of copulation in respect of other circumstances.**"

The first objection of the article argues that sins against nature are *not* the worst, because they are not the most contrary to charity: "The more a sin is contrary to charity the graver it is. Now adultery, seduction and rape, which are injurious to our neighbor, seem to be more contrary to the love of our neighbor, than unnatural sins, by which no other person is injured. Therefore sin against nature is not the greatest among the species of lust." St. Thomas replies to this objection: "As the order of right reason is from man, so the order of nature is from God himself. And therefore in sins against nature, in which the very order of nature is violated, injury is done to God himself, the one who ordains nature." In reply to

the second objection, St. Thomas says: “Vices against nature are also against God, as stated above (ad 1), and are so much more grievous than the depravity of sacrilege, as the order impressed on human nature is prior to and more firm than any subsequently established order.”

Aquinas is focusing on the sins precisely as a violation of the right use of sexuality, and abstracting from other aspects of them. As justice is a greater virtue than chastity, so injustice is a greater evil than unchastity, and thus all things considered, Aquinas would consider rape a greater evil than masturbation or contraception. This formal way of speaking is recognized by some more considerate authors:

“The teaching of medieval theologians that such sexual sins as masturbation, sodomy, and contraception are more perverse, as sexual sins, than fornication or adultery or even rape (the former were said to be *contra naturam* whereas the latter were said to be *praeter naturam*), angers many people today. But this teaching must be understood properly. The medieval theologians are claiming that certain kinds of sexual sins more seriously offend the virtue of chastity than do others. They are not saying that these sins are for this reason less grave as sins than adultery or rape, for instance. After all, adultery and rape are very serious violations of the virtue of justice as well as being violations of the virtue of chastity. Thus, as a sin, rape is far more serious than masturbation or homosexual sodomy because it not only offends chastity but also gravely violates justice.” (Ronald David Lawler, Joseph M. Boyle, William E. May, *Catholic sexual ethics: a summary, explanation & defense*)

St. Thomas Aquinas continues to answer the question of “**Whether there can be mortal sin in touches and kisses**” between married and unmarried people:

“Further, Cyprian says (Ad Pompon, de Virgin., Ep. lxii), “By their very intercourse, their blandishments, their converse, their embraces, those who are associated in a sleep that knows neither *honor* nor *shame*, acknowledge their disgrace and crime.” **Therefore by doing these things a man is guilty of a crime, that is, of mortal sin.**”

“**I answer that**, A thing is said to be a mortal works/sin in two ways. First, by reason of its species, and in this way a kiss, caress, or touch does not, of its very nature, imply a mortal sin, for it is possible to do such things without lustful pleasure, either as being the custom of one’s country, or on account of some obligation or reasonable cause. Secondly, a thing is said to be a mortal sin by reason

of its cause: thus he who gives an alms, in order to lead someone into heresy, sins mortally on account of his corrupt intention. Now it has been stated above [I-II, Q. 74, A. 8], that it is a mortal sin not only to consent to the act, but also to the delectation [or pleasure] of a mortal sin. Wherefore since fornication is a mortal sin, and much more so the other kinds of lust^[1] **it follows that in such like sins [that is, sins of lust] not only consent to the act but also consent to the pleasure is a mortal sin.** Consequently, when these kisses and caresses are done for this pleasure [lust] **it follows that they are mortal sins, and only in this way are they said to be lustful. Therefore in so far as they are lustful, they are mortal sins.**”

^[1]. “and much more so the other kinds of lust...” i.e., lust committed both inside and outside of marriage. And by the way, St. Thomas also views sexual sins committed **within a marriage** as worse sins than those committed outside of marriage, as we have seen and shall see further on.

And for those objecting that St. Thomas was referring only to the unmarried people here since he mentioned the word “fornication” in some instances (but not others), we will provide the following quote by him refuting this argument:

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 64. Art. 1, Reply to Objection 3: “If the **husband** [refuses to pay the marital debt without a just cause] . . . then he sins, and his **wife’s sin**, should she fall into **FORNICATION** [adultery, impure thoughts or masturbation] on this account, is somewhat imputable to him. Hence he should endeavor to do his best that his wife may remain continent.”

Hence, it is totally clear from above that when St. Thomas was mentioning the word “fornication,” “lascivious,” “unclean,” or “covetous” person, he was using it to refer to the sins of the unmarried and married people alike. And we know that this is the case, for when St. Thomas condemned lustful kisses and touches above as mortal sins – in the Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 1 & 4 – we know that he was referring to *both*, since, as he said, **all fornicators, all unclean people, all covetous and all lascivious people was included in this category of mortal sinners (see objection 1 and reply to objection 1 quoted above).**

St. Thomas Aquinas explains himself further in another part of his *Summa*, saying that acts “such as **impure** looks, kisses, and touches” regards the virtue of purity, while the virtue of “chastity regards rather sexual union.”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 151, Art. 4: “Consequently **purity regards venereal matters** properly, and especially **the signs thereof, such as impure looks, kisses, and touches**. And since the **latter are more wont to be observed**, purity regards rather these external signs [i.e., looks, kisses, and touches], while chastity regards rather sexual union.”

Here we have another great evidence that kisses and touches for venereal pleasure was known very clearly to be sinful, shameful and contrary to purity even by the lay people of St. Thomas’ time. St. Thomas tells us that the virtue of “purity regards venereal matters properly, **and especially the signs thereof, such as impure looks, kisses, and touches**.” But he adds that the virtue of purity were “**more wont to be observed**” by the people of his own time in regards to these “impure” acts, thus confirming the fact that unnecessary sexual acts, such as kisses and touches for sensual pleasure, is a completely foreign concept to the Church and Her Saints that have been foisted on the modern man and woman through the diabolical media to be a cause of or even to be “love”, “affection”, or an integral part of the marital act, when it in fact is nothing but filthy lust! “**The activities of marriage itself, if they are not modest and do not take place under the eyes of God as it were, so that the only intention is children, are filth and lust**.” (St. Jerome, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, Book III, Chapter 5:21) Thus, according to St. Thomas, in contrast to the lustful spouses of our own times, the people of the former times were lucky enough to have this good “shamefacedness” that kept them from performing unnecessary and unlawful sexual acts “**such as impure looks, kisses, and touches**.”

In addition, it is very important and of worth noting that St. Thomas, in the context of this quotation, referred to the marital sexual act, by using the words “**the conjugal act**” as well as “**of marriage**,” which directly refutes one of the principle objections of the heretical objectors to the condemnation of sensual kisses and touches by the Church and Her Saints (that is, that the quotes doesn’t apply to marriage or the marital act):

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 151, Art. 4: “**I answer that**, As stated above (Objection 2), “pudicitia” [purity] takes its name from “pudor,” which signifies shame. Hence purity must needs be properly about the things of which man is most ashamed. Now men are most ashamed of venereal acts, as Augustine remarks (De Civ. Dei xiv, 18), **so much so that even the conjugal act, which is adorned by the honesty [Cf. 145] of marriage, is not devoid of shame: and this because the movement of the organs of generation is not subject to the command of reason, as are the movements of the other external members**. Now man is ashamed not only of

this sexual union but also of all the signs thereof, as the Philosopher observes (Rhet. Ii, 6). Consequently **purity regards venereal matters** properly, and especially the signs thereof, such as impure looks, kisses, and touches. And since the latter are more wont to be observed, purity regards rather these external signs [i.e., looks, kisses, and touches], while chastity regards rather sexual union.”

In another part of his *Summa*, St. Thomas speaks about the “*shamefacedness*,” whereby one recoils from the disgrace that is contrary to temperance” – which sadly is lacking in deviant lustful spouses – and he shows that “**vices of intemperance**” that arouse the sexual desire, such as “kissing, touching, or fondling,” **are contrary to the virtue of “purity.”**

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 143, Art. 1: “... there are two integral parts of temperance, **“shamefacedness,” whereby one recoils from the disgrace that is contrary to temperance,** and “honesty,” whereby one loves the beauty of temperance. For, as stated above (Q[141], A[2], ad 3), temperance more than any other virtue lays claim to a certain comeliness, **and the vices of intemperance excel others in disgrace.** The subjective parts of a virtue are its species: and the species of a virtue have to be differentiated according to the difference of matter or object. Now temperance is about pleasures of touch, which are of two kinds. For some are directed to nourishment: and in these as regards meat, there is “abstinence,” [from gluttony] and as regards drink properly there is “sobriety.” [from drunkenness] Other pleasures are directed to the power of procreation, [that is, they arouse the sexual desire] and in these as regards the principal pleasure of the act itself of procreation, there is “chastity,” [from acts of adultery, fornication or other unlawful sexual acts] **and as to the pleasures incidental to the act, resulting, for instance, from kissing, touching, or fondling, we have “purity [from all such non-procreative sexual acts].”**”

Here St. Thomas Aquinas is discussing temperance as a virtue *as opposed to the “vices of intemperance”*, and he says that the contrary species of the matter or object of “kissing, touching, or fondling” is purity. This means that “kissing, touching, or fondling” can be a means of impurity, and a vice of intemperance, and it shows us that St. Thomas, in this context (as in the other quoted above), referred to it as impurity.

Furthermore, we here see the fact we have already spoken about that spouses who have lost their temperance of “shamefacedness” that St. Thomas speaks about are able to perform such shameful acts as kisses and touches for venereal pleasure. Sad to say, but it

is exactly their lack of shame and “shamefacedness” and their forgetfulness of God’s presence, and that God’s eyes sees them and all their unnecessary and lascivious acts, kisses and touches that are performed in connection to the marital act, or as an individual act separated from it—that are the reason for why they dare to perform these unlawful and shameful acts. **“Damascene (De Fide Orth. ii, 15) and Gregory of Nyssa [Nemesius, (De Nat. Hom. xx)] say that "shamefacedness is fear of doing a disgraceful deed or of a disgraceful deed done."**” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 144, Art. 2) And in Reply to Objection 1 of the same article, St. Thomas states: **“Shamefacedness properly regards disgrace as due to sin which is a voluntary defect [of the will]. Hence the Philosopher says (Rhet. ii, 6) that "a man is more ashamed of those things of which he is the cause [of doing]."”**

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 144, Art. 1, Reply to Objection 2: **“As stated above, shamefacedness is fear of baseness and disgrace. Now it has been stated (142, 4) that the vice of intemperance is most base and disgraceful.** Wherefore shamefacedness pertains more to temperance [from the vice of intemperance] than to any other virtue, by reason of its motive cause, which is a base action though not according to the species of the passion, namely fear [from being shamed*]. **Nevertheless in so far as the vices opposed to other virtues are base and disgraceful, shamefacedness may also pertain to other virtues.”**

* **“Now shamefacedness is inconsistent with perfection, because it is the fear of something base, namely of that which is disgraceful.** ... Therefore shamefacedness, properly speaking, is not a virtue, since it falls short of the perfection of virtue.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 144, Art. 1)

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 144, Art. 4: “I answer that, As stated above (1 and 2) shamefacedness is fear of some disgrace. **Now it may happen in two ways that an evil is not feared: first, because it is not reckoned an evil;** secondly because one reckons it impossible with regard to oneself, or as not difficult to avoid. Accordingly shame may be lacking in a person in two ways. **First, because the things that should make him ashamed are not deemed by him to be disgraceful; and in this way those who are steeped in sin are without shame, for instead of disapproving of their sins, they boast of them.** Secondly, because they apprehend disgrace as impossible to themselves, or as easy to avoid. On this way the old and the virtuous

are not shamefaced. Yet they are so disposed, that if there were anything disgraceful in them they would be ashamed of it. Wherefore the Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 9) that "shame is in the virtuous hypothetically."

Though they are not in themselves mortal sins when they are *not* performed for the sake of venereal pleasure, St. Thomas Aquinas clearly recognizes that kisses and touches come to be treated as such "ex sua causa," "because of a wicked intention," as the Blackfriars edition of the *Summa Theologica* 2a.2ae.154.4; 43: 220-21); kisses that are intended to arouse, to incite venereal pleasure, are properly called libidinous and are condemned as mortal sins.

In fact, the Angelic doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, defines lust in the following manner:

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 153, Art. 3: "I answer that, The more necessary a thing is, the more it behooves one to observe the order of reason in its regard; wherefore the more sinful it becomes **if the order of reason be forsaken**. Now the use of venereal acts, as stated in the foregoing Article, is most necessary for the common good, **namely the preservation of the human race**. Wherefore there is the greatest necessity for observing the order of reason in this matter: so that if anything be done in this connection **against the dictate of reason's ordering, it will be a sin**. **Now lust consists essentially in exceeding the order and mode of reason in the matter of venereal acts. Wherefore without any doubt lust is a sin.**"

All of this absolutely proves that all unnecessary sexual acts like sensual kisses and touches are sinful! for according to St. Thomas, whenever spouses go beyond "the order and mode of reason in the matter of venereal acts" during marital relations, they committed the sin of lust. Notice that St. Thomas says "that if **anything** be done in this connection against the dictate of reason's ordering, it will be a sin." He says that "**anything**" that is done "against the dictate of reason's ordering" is sinful, and not only *some* things, (as many heretics of our own times claim), and that "lust consists essentially in exceeding the order and mode of reason in the matter of venereal acts", that is, exceeding that which "is most necessary for the common good, **namely the preservation of the human race**." Since the venereal act "is most necessary for the common good, **namely the preservation of the human race**" it is a direct sin against nature to perform unnatural or non-procreative sexual acts. Thus, according to St. Thomas, since "the use of venereal acts" are permitted for the purpose of procreation, "there is the greatest necessity for observing the order of reason in this matter: so that if anything be done in this connection **against the dictate of reason's ordering, it will be a sin**. **Now lust consists essentially in**

exceeding the order and mode of reason in the matter of venereal acts.

Wherefore without any doubt lust is a sin.” Therefore, it is obvious from the Natural Law itself that sensual kisses and touches are “exceeding the order and mode of reason in the matter of venereal acts” since they are unnecessary and not able to procreate children, which is the purpose of the marital sexual act, according to the teaching of the Church.

St. Thomas continues to expound on this teaching in the following question:

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 1: “I answer that As stated above (Question 153, Article 3), **the sin of lust consists in seeking venereal pleasure not in accordance with right reason.** ... Reply to Objection 6. According to a gloss on this passage [Galatians 5:19] **"lust" there signifies any kind of excess.**”

What, then, is excess in the marital act? Again, let’s ask St. Thomas Aquinas.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 1: “Reply to Objection 5. As a gloss says on this passage, "uncleanness" stands for **lust against nature...** Reply to Objection 6. **We may also reply that "lasciviousness" relates to certain acts circumstantial to the venereal act, for instance kisses, touches, and so forth.**”

Notice that St. Thomas even rejects as lascivious and unlawful “**acts circumstantial to the venereal act, for instance kisses, touches, and so forth**” and so, it is clear that St. Thomas taught that all non-procreative and unnecessary sexual acts are sinful and against nature. And the infallible word of God of course agrees with this truth of nature, teaching us that: “*The works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, **uncleanness, immodesty, luxury [lust]**... Of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, **that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.**” (Galatians 5:19, 21)*

The main point we can gather from this explanation of St. Thomas that he so eloquently gives to us is that kisses and touches for sensual pleasure is completely unnecessary for procreation of children and serves nothing but a shameful, selfish, sinful and condemned lust. They are therefore mortal sins for both the married and unmarried and are unreasonable and unnatural.

Pope Alexander VII, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #40, September 24, 1665 and March 18, 1666: “It is a probable opinion which states that a kiss is only venial

when performed for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight which arises from the kiss, if danger of further consent and *pollution* [or ejaculation] is excluded.” –
Condemned statement by Pope Alexander VII. (Denz. 1140)

Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes*: “Several doctors [of Divinity] maintain that willingly fostering wicked carnal thoughts in order to enjoy oneself is a deadly sin, even without doing the deed. Be sure, however, that kisses, gazes, and fondling, mainly caused by such wicked and lustful thoughts, without anything more, is an even greater sin. ... it is even worse if these kisses do not respect the honesty which is usually kept in public.

“... **Is it a sin to kiss?** I answer that kisses between spouses who maintain the same modesty as the kiss of peace at church, or who do them openly, are without sin. If they do them so immodestly [and lustfully] that I cannot be more precise, it is an abominable deadly sin.”

Athenagoras the Athenian (c. 175 A.D.): “On behalf of those, then, to whom we apply the names of brothers and sisters, and other designations of relationship, we exercise the greatest care that their bodies should remain undefiled and uncorrupted; for the Logos again says to us, “If any one kiss a second time because it has given him pleasure, [he sins];” adding, “Therefore the kiss, or rather the salutation, should be given with the greatest care, since, if there be mixed with it the least defilement of thought, it excludes us from eternal life.”” (*A Plea for the Christians*, Chapter XXXII.--Elevated Morality of the Christians)

St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 198 A.D.): “Love and the Kiss of Charity. And if we are called to the kingdom of God, let us walk worthy of the kingdom, loving God and our neighbour. But love is not proved by a kiss, but by kindly feeling. But there are those, that do nothing but make the churches resound with a kiss, not having love itself within. For this very thing, the shameless use of a kiss, which ought to be mystic, occasions foul suspicions and evil reports. The apostle calls the kiss holy. When the kingdom is worthily tested, we dispense the affection of the soul by a chaste and closed mouth, by which chiefly gentle manners are expressed. But there is another unholy kiss, full of poison, counterfeiting sanctity. Do you not know that spiders, merely by touching the mouth, afflict men with pain? And often kisses inject the poison of licentiousness. It is then very manifest to us, that a kiss is not love. For the love meant is the love of God. "And this is the love of God," says John, "that we keep His commandments;" not that we stroke each other on the mouth. "And His commandments are not grievous." But salutations of beloved ones in the ways, full as they are of foolish boldness, are characteristic of those who wish to be

conspicuous to those without, and have not the least particle of grace. For if it is proper mystically "in the closet" to pray to God, it will follow that we are also to greet mystically our neighbour, whom we are commanded to love second similarly to God, within doors, "redeeming the time." "For we are the salt of the earth." (*The Paedagogus or Instructor*, Book III, Chapter XI)

About sexual thoughts and fantasies inside and outside of the marital act

It is of the Divine law that a person may never willfully entertain sexual thoughts in his mind, even about his wife, outside of the marital act. The only sexual act the Church allows is the normal, natural, and procreative marital act. Everything else is contrary to the only primary end or intent of the sexual act—the procreation of children. If a person willfully entertains sexual thoughts outside of the marital act or unnecessarily puts himself into sexual temptations when there is no need to, he or she commits a mortal sin.

Consequently, one may not even entertain or consent to sexual thoughts about one's own wife or husband outside of the marital act, but must resist these thoughts or temptations as one would resist the thought of adultery or fornication: "Several doctors [of Divinity] maintain that willingly fostering wicked carnal thoughts in order to enjoy oneself is a deadly sin, even without doing the deed. Be sure, however, that kisses, gazes, and fondling, mainly caused by such wicked and lustful thoughts, without anything more, is an even greater sin. ... it is even worse if these kisses do not respect the honesty which is usually kept in public." (Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes*)

Athenagoras the Athenian (c. 175 A.D.): "But we [Christians] are so far from practising promiscuous intercourse, that it is not lawful among us to indulge even a lustful look. "For," says He [Christ], "he that looks on a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery already in his heart." [Matthew 5:28] Those, then, who are forbidden to look at anything more than that for which God formed the eyes, which were intended to be a light to us, and to whom a wanton look is adultery, the eyes being made for other purposes, and who are to be called to account for their very thoughts, how can any one doubt that such persons practice self-control?" (*A Plea for the Christians*, Chapter XXXII.--Elevated Morality of the Christians)

Simply said, women or men are not toys, playthings, or "bunnies" from which to derive sexual stimulation. When women or even one's own wife are used in sexual fantasies, they are sexually abused, even if they are untouched. Many men rape many women each day and commit adultery, fornication and illicit sexual acts without laying a hand on them. Women also rape men and commit adultery, fornication and illicit sexual acts in this way. These rapes, fornications, illicit sexual acts and adulteries are not marked by physical

violence but by psychological warfare. Because a person is often unaware of being used and abused, and because the abuser often does not fathom the real extent of the severity of his crime, this makes these mental and visual rapes/abuses/sexual crimes seem less devastating. Nevertheless, grave sin with all its degradation and death is being committed.

For instance, it would be quite sick for a husband not to resist sexual thoughts about his wife or to continually entertain such thoughts while at work or while on a trip, because while at work or while on a trip there is no chance for him to lawfully quiet his concupiscence and perform the marital act for procreational purposes. That's why dwelling on such thoughts only would distract him spiritually and temporally and could even lead him into committing other sins, such as masturbation or adultery (in thought as well as in deed). All who do not wish to be damned must thus resist sexual thoughts and temptations outside of the marital act and may not entertain them in anyway.

It is of course one thing to be tempted to have sexual relations with one's own wife or someone else (which is not sinful) and a whole other thing to consent to having sex with them in one's thought or mind (which is sinful). Thus, a husband and wife may never consent to any sexual thoughts or fantasies about their spouse outside of the normal and natural marital act. However, that is not to say that it's licit to think about bad or illicit things or give consent to them during the marital act—as so many evil and heretical people and so-called theologians actually teach today—for that is not what it means. What it means is simply that a person can only fully consent to, and give way to, sexual thoughts and desires (about their spouse) during the sexual act without committing any sin, **so long as these thoughts range within what is lawful, natural, reasonable and necessary for the completion of the marital act to occur.**

St. Thomas Aquinas wonderfully explains this thought process further to us in his *Summa*:

“Accordingly a man who is thinking of fornication, may delight in either of two things: first, in the thought itself [*by merely thinking about it but not necessarily giving consent to it or the pleasure derived from it*], secondly, in the fornication thought of. Now the delectation [pleasure] in the thought itself results from the inclination of the appetite to the thought; and the thought itself is not in itself a mortal sin; sometimes indeed it is only a venial sin, as when a man thinks of such a thing for no purpose; and sometimes it is no sin at all, as when a man has a purpose in thinking of it; for instance, he may wish to preach or dispute about it. Consequently such affection or delectation [pleasure] in respect of the thought of fornication is not a mortal sin in virtue of its genus, but is sometimes a venial sin and sometimes no sin at all: wherefore neither is it a mortal sin to consent to such a

thought [*it only becomes a mortal sin if one consents to and wants to have the illicit pleasure in the thought*]. In this sense the first opinion is true. But that a man in thinking of fornication [*or other unreasonable or sinful sexual acts*] takes pleasure in the act thought of, is due to his desire being inclined to this act. Wherefore the fact that a man consents to such a delectation [pleasure], amounts to nothing less than a consent to the inclination of his appetite to fornication [*or other sinful sexual acts*]: for no man takes pleasure except in that which is in conformity with his appetite. Now it is a mortal sin, if a man deliberately chooses that his appetite be conformed to what is in itself a mortal sin. Wherefore such a consent to delectation [*or pleasure*] in a mortal sin, is itself a mortal sin, as the second opinion maintains." (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part of the Second Part, Q 74, Art. 8)

Thus, if even pleasurable sexual thoughts outside of the marital act of one's own legitimate spouse is sinful if not fought against, how much more must not the sensual thoughts of one's neighbor be? If even kisses between married spouses for the purpose of carnal pleasure is condemned as a mortal sin by the Catholic Church, how much more must not the perversions of the marital acts be that so many spouses today practice? **"For to Christians this rule of life is given**, that we should love the Lord Our God with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the mind, and our neighbor as ourselves... God alone, to find whom is the happiest life, must be worshiped **in perfect purity and chastity... in chaste and faithful obedience, not to gratify passion, but for the propagation of offspring**, and for domestic society." (St. Augustine, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, Chapter 30, Section 62, A.D. 388)

St. Alphonsus, Precepts of the Decalogue, Chapter VI, The Sixth and Ninth Commandments: "1. WHAT IS ONE OBLIGED TO CONFESS IN THE MATTER OF IMPURITY?"

"I will only observe here, in general, that it is necessary to confess not only all the acts, but also improper touches, all unchaste looks, all obscene words, especially when spoken with pleasure, or with danger of scandal to others. It is, moreover, necessary to confess all immodest thoughts.

"Some ignorant persons imagine that they are bound only to confess impure actions: they must also confess all the bad thoughts to which they have consented. Human laws forbid only external acts, because men only see what is manifested externally; but God, who sees the heart, condemns every evil thought: "*Man sees those things that appear; but the Lord beholdeth the heart.*" (I Kings, xvi. 7.) **This holds good for every species of bad thoughts to which the will consents.**

Indeed, whatever it is a sin to do, it is also in the sight of God a sin to desire.

“2. WHAT DISTINCTION IS TO BE MADE IN REGARD TO BAD THOUGHTS?

“I said, thoughts to which the will consents. Hence, it is necessary to know how to determine when a bad thought is a mortal sin, when it is venial, and when it is not sinful at all. In every sin of thought there are three things: the suggestion, the pleasure, and the consent.

“1. The *suggestion* is the first thought of doing an evil action that is presented to the mind. This is no sin; on the contrary, when the will rejects it we merit a reward. "As often," says St. Antonine, "as you resist, so often you are crowned." Even the saints have been tormented by bad thoughts. To conquer a temptation against chastity, St. Bernard threw himself among thorns, St. Peter of Alcantara cast himself into an icy pool. ... St. Catharine of Siena was once assailed by the devil for three days with impure temptations; after the third day our Lord appeared to her in order to console her. She said to him: "Ah, my Saviour, where hast Thou been these three days?" He replied: "I was in your heart to give you strength to resist the temptation by which you were attacked." He then showed her that her heart had become purer than it was before.

“2. After the suggestion comes the *pleasure*. [Generally] **When a person is not careful to banish the temptation immediately, but stops to reason with it, the thought instantly begins to delight him, and give him pleasure, and thus draws the person on to give his consent to it.** As long as the will withholds the consent, the sin is only venial, and not mortal. **But if the soul does not then turn to God, and make an effort to resist the pleasure, it will easily go on to give its consent.** "Unless," says St. Anselm, "a person repel the pleasure, it passes into consent, and kills the soul." A woman who had the reputation of a saint was tempted to sin with one of her servants; she neglected to banish the thought instantly, and so in her heart consented, and fell into sin, but only in thought. She afterwards fell into a more grievous sin, for she concealed in confession the complacency she had taken in the bad thought, and died miserably. But because she was believed to be a saint, the bishop had her buried in his own chapel. On the morning after her burial she appeared to him, enveloped in flames, and confessed, but without profit, that she was damned on account of the bad thought to which she had consented.

“3. **The soul loses the grace of God and is condemned to hell the instant a person *consents* to the desire of committing sin, or delights in thinking of the immodest action as if he were then committing it.** This is called *morose delectation*, which is different from the sin of desire.

“My dear Christians, be careful to banish these bad thoughts, by instantly turning for help to Jesus and Mary. He who contracts the habit of consenting to bad thoughts exposes himself to great danger of dying in sin, for the reason that it is very easy to commit sins of thought. In a quarter of an hour a person may entertain a thousand wicked desires, and for every evil desire to which he consents he deserves hell. At the hour of death the dying cannot commit sins of action, because they are unable to move; but they can easily indulge sins of thought, and the devil suggests every kind of wicked thought and desire to them when they are in that state. St. Eleazar, as Surius relates, was so violently and frequently tempted by bad thoughts at the hour of death, that he exclaimed: "Oh, how great is the power of the devils at the hour of death!" The saint, however, conquered his enemies, because he was in the habit of rejecting bad thoughts; but woe to those who have acquired a habit of consenting to them! Father Segneri tells us of a man who during his life had often consented to bad thoughts. At the hour of death he confessed his sins with great compunction, so that every one regarded him as a saint; but after death he appeared and said that he was damned; he stated that he made a good confession, and that God had pardoned all his sins; but before death the devil represented to him that, should he recover, it would be ingratitude to forsake the woman who loved him so much. He banished the first temptation: a second came; he then delayed for a little, but in the end he rejected it: he was assailed by a third temptation, and consented to it. Thus, he said, he had died in sin, and was damned.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 466-469)

Foreplay is intrinsically evil

The Catholic Church teaches that foreplay between spouses is intrinsically evil. Hence, any sexual activity that cannot procreate if procreation were possible is intrinsically evil and thus a mortal sin.

Tobias 8:9 “And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity [children], in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.”

Therefore, any sexual activity between spouses for any purpose outside of sexual intercourse is intrinsically evil because any such sexual activity cannot procreate even if the wife was fertile and hence the primary motive of procreation cannot be present.

“They seek a warmth and sexual lust that will perish and love flesh that

will be eaten by worms. ... When the couple comes to bed, my Spirit leaves them immediately and the spirit of impurity approaches instead because they only come together for the sake of lust and do not discuss or think about anything else with each other.... **Such a married couple will never see my face unless they repent.**” (Jesus Christ speaking to St. Bridget – Excerpt from *The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 1, Chapter 26)

Saint Augustine of Hippo, in his moral treatise ‘On the Good of Marriage,’ writes on the subject of sexual intercourse within marriage.

St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 11, A.D. 401: “... nor be changed into that use which is against nature, on which the Apostle could not be silent, when speaking of the excessive corruptions of unclean and impious men.... by changing the natural use into that which is against nature, which is more damnable when it is done in the case of husband or wife.”

The expression ‘*that use which is against nature*’ refers to unnatural sexual acts, such as oral, anal, or manual sex (masturbation). Saint Augustine condemns such acts unequivocally. He even states that such unnatural sexual acts are more damnable (i.e. even more serious mortal sins) when these take place within marriage. The reason why is that God is even more offended by a sexual mortal sin that takes place within the Sacrament of Marriage, since this offense is not only against nature, but also against a Holy Sacrament. “*So then, of all to whom much has been given, much will be required. And of those to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be asked.*” (Luke 12:48)

Gratian, *Medieval Marriage Law*: “Also, Jerome, [on Ephesians 5:25]: C. 14. The procreation of children in marriage is praiseworthy, but a prostitute’s sensuality is damnable in a wife. So, as we have said, the act is conceded in marriage for the sake of children. But the sensuality found in a prostitute’s embraces is damnable in a wife.”

St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 12, A.D. 401: “For, whereas that natural use, when it pass beyond the compact of marriage, that is, beyond the necessity of begetting, is pardonable in the case of a wife, damnable in the case of an harlot; that which is against nature is execrable when done in the case of an harlot, but more execrable in the case of a wife.... But, when the man shall wish to use the member of the wife not allowed for this purpose, the wife is more shameful, if she suffer it to take place in her own case, than if in the case of another woman.”

In this passage, St. Augustine first compares natural and normal sexual relations within marriage done out of impure desires to the same natural sexual acts outside of marriage. He teaches that having natural and normal sexual relations within marriage, when done to satisfy a somewhat impure desire, is pardonable, that is, a venial sin, but that natural sexual relations outside of marriage is damnable, which means a mortal sin. Then St. Augustine goes on to consider '*that which is against nature*,' that is, unnatural sexual acts such as oral and anal sex, foreplay, kisses and touches for sensual pleasure, and masturbation of self or of spouse. He condemns such unnatural sexual acts as '*execrable*' (utterly detestable, abominable, abhorrent). Therefore these acts are among the worst of the sexual mortal sins. He also teaches that unnatural sexual acts within marriage, far from being permitted because they take place within marriage, are even worse, calling them '*even more execrable*,' than the same unnatural sexual acts outside of marriage. Again, this is because the sin is not only against nature, but against a Holy Sacrament instituted by Christ Himself for the sake of our salvation.

Therefore, unnatural and non-procreative sexual acts do not become permissible when these take place within marriage. Instead, **unnatural sexual acts are made even more sinful when they take place within marriage because they offend against both nature and a Holy Sacrament.**

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 8: "And since the man who is too ardent a lover of his wife acts counter to the good of marriage if he use her indecently, although he be not unfaithful, he may in a sense be called an adulterer; and even more so than he that is too ardent a lover of another woman."

Notice in the quote above that St. Thomas held sexual sins within marriage to be worse than adultery, because the act occurs within marriage. He did not teach that all sexual acts between a husband and wife are moral as many perverted "Catholics" nowadays do.

The phrase '*if he use her indecently*' refers to unnatural sexual acts within marriage. This is clear because the good of marriage emphasized by St. Thomas is the procreation of children (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, Art. 2). St. Thomas could not be referring to natural marital relations when he says '*if he use her indecently*' because even natural marital relations done with some disorder of desire still retains the procreative function. But unnatural sexual acts lack this meaning, and so are contrary to the good of marriage. **The use of unnatural sexual acts within marriage is therefore worse than adultery.**

St. Thomas again condemns this same type of act later in the same question.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 12: “Lastly comes the sin of not observing the right manner of copulation, which is more grievous if the abuse regards the ‘vas’ [the woman] than if it affects the manner of copulation in respect of other circumstances.”

First, the word ‘vas’ is Latin for vessel, referring to the use of other bodily orifices for sexual acts. If a husband treats his wife lustfully or inordinately during natural marital relations, (or if he sees his wife as a mere sexual object given him to satisfy his lust) he sins. But he commits a more grievous offense, which is called “abuse” by St. Thomas, if he sins by committing unnatural sexual acts (that is, using any part of the body as a ‘vessel’ or ‘means’ for achieving sexual arousal). Here St. Thomas explicitly (but in discrete language) condemns the sin of unnatural sexual acts within marriage.

Second, it is clear (in the quote from article 8 above) that St. Thomas taught that a married couple is not justified in committing any unnatural sexual acts whatsoever within marriage. Otherwise, he would not have taught that a man who is too ardent a lover of his wife commits a sin that is like adultery and yet worse than adultery. Therefore, those who claim that there are no sins for a husband and wife having sexual relations with each other are in error.

Third, neither does St. Thomas even consider the absurd argument that acts which are intrinsically evil and gravely immoral by themselves could become good and moral when combined in some way with natural marital relations open to life. If this were the case, St. Thomas could not have compared a man who is too ardent a lover of his wife to an adulterer. For if he took the position of certain heretical modern-day commentators, he would have to say that a husband’s ardent love would be entirely justified, as long as “the semen are not misdirected.” Notice that St. Thomas takes no such position. He does not sum up the marital act as merely the proper direction of semen, as so many persons teach today.

In fact, the Angelic doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, defines lust in the following manner:

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 153, Art. 3: “I answer that, The more necessary a thing is, the more it behooves one to observe the order of reason in its regard; wherefore the more sinful it becomes if the order of reason be forsaken. Now the use of venereal acts, as stated in the foregoing Article, is most necessary for the common good, namely the preservation

of the human race. Wherefore there is the greatest necessity for observing the order of reason in this matter: so that if anything be done in this connection **against the dictate of reason's ordering, it will be a sin. Now lust consists essentially in exceeding the order and mode of reason in the matter of venereal acts. Wherefore without any doubt lust is a sin.**

According to St. Thomas, whenever spouses go beyond “the order and mode of reason in the matter of venereal acts” during marital relations, they committed the sin of lust. St. Thomas continues to expound on this teaching in the following question:

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 1: “I answer that As stated above (Question 153, Article 3), **the sin of lust consists in seeking venereal pleasure not in accordance with right reason.** ... Reply to Objection 6. According to a gloss on this passage [Galatians 5:19] **"lust" there signifies any kind of excess.**”

What, then, is excess in the marital act? Again, let's ask St. Thomas Aquinas.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 1: “Reply to Objection 5. As a gloss says on this passage, "uncleanness" stands for **lust against nature**... Reply to Objection 6. **We may also reply that "lasciviousness" relates to certain acts circumstantial to the venereal act, for instance kisses, touches, and so forth.**”

Notice that St. Thomas even rejects as lascivious and unlawful “**acts circumstantial to the venereal act, for instance kisses, touches, and so forth**” and so, it is clear that St. Thomas taught that all non-procreative and unnecessary sexual acts are sinful and against nature. And the infallible word of God of course agrees with this truth of nature, teaching us that: “*The works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, **uncleanness, immodesty, luxury [lust]**... Of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, **that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.**” (Galatians 5:19, 21)*

In order for a sexual act to be moral, each act must be natural, marital, and procreative. When considering whether or not an act is natural, marital, and procreative, each sexual act must be considered by itself. One cannot combine or string together several sexual acts, where only some are open to life, and then justify one act by combination with another act. One cannot precede, combine, or follow an act of natural marital relations with a sexual act that is unnatural or not open to life, and then justify one by the other. Indeed, “**There**

would be no adulteries, and debaucheries, and prostitution of women, if it were known to all, that whatever is sought beyond the desire of procreation is condemned by God.” (Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, Book V, Chapter VIII, A.D. 307)

Therefore the excuse that some spouses must perform sexual activities outside of normal and natural sexual intercourse as a preparation for sexual intercourse is condemned by the Church. It is a sinful excuse that allows spouses to perpetuate their sexual perversions by sexually abusing their body parts that have nothing whatsoever to do with procreation. If people practice any variation of foreplay, they will without a doubt be cast to Hell to suffer and burn for all eternity.

Ephesians 5:3-12 “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints: Or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose; but rather giving of thanks. For know you this and understand, that no fornicator, or unclean, or covetous person (which is a serving of idols), hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words. For because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the children of unbelief. Be ye not therefore partakers with them. For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light. For the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth; Proving what is well pleasing to God: And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For the things that are done by them in secret, it is a shame even to speak of.”

Oral and anal sex and stimulation is intrinsically evil and against the Natural Law

St. Barnabas, *Letter of Barnabas*, Chapter 10:8, A.D. 74: “**Moreover, he [Moses] has rightly detested the weasel [Leviticus 11:29]. For he means, ‘Thou shalt not be like to those whom we hear of as committing wickedness with the mouth through uncleanness [oral sex]; nor shalt thou be joined to those impure women who commit iniquity with the mouth with the body through uncleanness.’**” (Chapter X.--Spiritual Significance of the Precepts of Moses Respecting Different Kinds of [Forbidden] Food)

Very simply, the mouth and the anus have a purpose. Nature tells us that God made the mouth for the intake of food and drink, and the anus for the excretion of feces. Moreover, nature tells us that if we begin to use the mouth and the anus in improper ways, then

bodily infection, disease, and death may be the result.

St. Augustine, *On The Good of Marriage*, Section 11-12, A.D. 401: “For necessary sexual intercourse for begetting [of children] is free from blame, and itself is alone worthy of marriage. **But that which goes beyond this necessity [of begetting children] no longer follows reason, but lust.** ... [And] they [must] not turn away from them the mercy of God... **by changing the natural use into that which is against nature, which is more damnable when it is done in the case of husband or wife.** Of so great power is the ordinance of the Creator, and the order of creation, that... **when the man shall wish to use a body part of the wife not allowed for this purpose, the wife is more shameful, if she suffer it to take place in her own case, than if in the case of another woman.**”

Saint Alphonsus Ligouri, proclaimed *Doctor of the Church* in 1871, was the founder of the Redemptorists and one of the Church’s greatest moral theologians. St. Alphonsus, answering all those perverse persons who claim that one may perform anal sex or that this evil act is only a venial sin, writes: “[Q.] Whether a man sins mortally by beginning intercourse in the posterior receptacle (the anus), so as to consummate it afterwards in the appropriate receptacle (the vagina)?” The answer given to that question is: “... it is more generally and truly affirmed [to be a mortal sin] by [theologians], because coitus itself of this kind (even if without insemination) is true sodomy, although not consummated, just as copulation in the natural vessel of another woman is true fornication, even if insemination does not take place.” **Thus, it is clear that St. Alphonsus Liguori’s teaching correspond perfectly with the Natural Law, which teaches that any kind of anal penetration is a mortal sin and an intrinsically evil act that can never be excused.**

St. Theodore of Tarsus (A.D. 602-690), Archbishop of Canterbury, in *The Penitential of Theodore*, which is based directly on his teachings written down by his pupil, says the following concerning these evil sins: “‘He who ejaculates into the mouth of another shall do penance for seven years; this is the worst of evils.’ Elsewhere it was his judgment that both participants in the offense shall do penance to the end of life; or twelve years, or as above seven.” (*The Penitential of Theodore*, Chapter 2, Of Fornication)

And, as we have seen, St. Thomas Aquinas brands as an unnatural sin the behavior of a man and woman who “do not observe the right manner of copulation”. But he adds that such a sin “is more grievous if the abuse regards the receptacle (vas) than if it affects the manner of copulation in respect of other circumstances”. The only “fitting receptacle” was

of course the wife's vagina. Any place else was called an "unfitting receptacle" (vas indebitum). "Lastly comes the sin of not observing the right manner of copulation, which is **more grievous** if the abuse regards the 'vas' [vessel, orifice] than if it affects the manner of copulation in respect of other circumstances." (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 12)

Among other early condemnations of birth prevention and unnatural sexual acts are the first century *Letter of Barnabas*, the holy Apostle and Saint of Jesus Christ who was born in Cyprus and died in Salamis in around 61 A.D., which denounces the wicked practice of "those impure women who commit iniquity with the mouth [oral sex] with the body through uncleanness" (*Barnabas* X, 8) and of having intercourse while making conception impossible. Another important writing concerning this topic is the mid-second century *Apology* of St. Justin the Martyr (c. 100-165 A.D.) who describes the marital problems of a young Christian convert. Her evil husband tried to satisfy his sexual urges by copulating with her "against the law of nature and against what is right." Her family prevailed on her to remain with the man for a while, but finally she could not tolerate his morals and left him. Justin praises her conduct in refusing to participate in the man's "impious conduct" (*Apologia* II, 1).

In the canons of John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople, we find that:

"If someone commits sodomy upon his wife, he is penanced for eight years, eating dry foods after the ninth hour, and doing two hundred prostrations." (*The Canons of John the Faster*, Canon 35, Interpretation, A.D. 580)

Another translation reads:

"If any man perform arseneocotia upon his wife, he shall be penanced for eight years, faring the while with xerophagy after the ninth hour and doing two hundred metanies daily." (Ibid)

"Arseneocotia" is a term used quite often in the ancient canons to refer to male homosexual behavior (oral and anal sex), but here it refers specifically to such acts being performed upon a wife. Compare this to the penance for bestiality from John:

"If any man lie with a beast many times, when he has a wife, he shall be penanced eight years; but if he had no wife, and did so only once or twice or three times at the most, he shall be penanced three years, with xerophagy [or, more explicitly speaking, with only bread and water] after the ninth hour and doing three hundred

metanies.” (Ibid)

The penance for committing sodomy on the wife is greater than for an unmarried man to commit bestiality! That really tells you how the Church views this vile act. It is totally degrading to the wife, making her a beast, or even less than one.

The Interpretation (by Nikodemus) of *The Canons of John the Faster* (580 A.D.) explains this fact in further detail: “Note that in the Canons of the Faster, from a manuscript codex which was found, sodomy has the following divisions: sodomy is of two types, either committed upon women, when men fall with them into that which is against nature, or committed upon men. Another division is that, among men, one commits the act, while the other suffers the act, while another both commits and suffers the act. The worst sin is for someone to both commit and suffer the act. And for someone to commit the act upon a woman that is not his wife is worse than committing it with men. **But for someone to commit it upon his own wife is worse than committing it upon a woman who is not his wife. For these things then, we conclude that, the married couple which falls into that which is against nature, is penanced more heavily than a sodomist committing it upon another man or upon a woman who is not his wife.**”

Other testimonies of the truth that sodomitical acts are damnable and inherently sinful and even comparable to the crime of murder, is found in Canon 7 and 87 of the Canons of St. Basil the Great (c. 329-379 A.D.), and it shows us how the Church views such perverted sexual acts:

St. Basil the Great, Bishop, Confessor and Doctor of the Church: “**Sodomists and bestialists and murderers and sorcerers and adulterers and idolaters deserve the same condemnation...** for they have surrendered themselves to Satan...” (*The Canons of St. Basil the Great*, Canon 7)

St. Basil the Great, Bishop, Confessor and Doctor of the Church: “**But how many other forms of impure passions the school of demons invented, but Holy Writ does not even refer to, being averse to sullyng its fair character by naming shameful things, but merely alluding to them in general terms, as St. Paul the Apostle says: "But fornication, and all other filth, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3), comprehending under the noun "filth" the unspeakable doings of sodomy and those of females too, so that silence does not by any means afford a license to lovers of pleasures.** As for me, however, I say that the Legislator did not even remain silent

concerning these matters either, but in fact very vehemently prohibited such things.” (*The Canons of St. Basil the Great*, Canon 87)

The Interpretation of Canon 7 states: “As for adultery, sodomy [anal and oral sex], and bestiality, the Fathers canonized these sins doubly more than fornication, or, more expressly, each of them eighteen years, because the sin involved in them is also double. ... **As for sodomy, on the other hand, and bestiality (or sexual intercourse with beasts), in these too besides the unlawful pleasure they afford, there is an actual injustice done to what is strange or unnatural, or, more explicitly speaking, they violate the laws of nature, in that they are sins contrary to nature.** The number of years for each of these sinful deeds has likewise been economically fixed like those for fornication, but doubly as many: that is to say, in other words, adulterers are to spend six years in weeping outside the church, and so are those guilty of sodomy and of bestiality; they are to listen for six years, and to kneel for six years more, and then they are to commune.”

The anus or mouth is clearly not intended for procreation. Such acts are against the nature of sex itself – oral or anal sex serves no purpose of nature – it cannot lead to the begetting of a child. Its only purpose is for base, filthy, physical pleasure. Such acts do not in any way fit into the nature of the Christian who has undergone the washing of regeneration and has given himself to the natural end that God originally intended for us – to be glorified and united with Him. Such acts, as the Canons show, make us like animals and keep us mired in merely physical pleasures. They are against nature in every way.

The mouth and the anus were not made to stimulate the genital organs. Nothing could be more evident than this fact. Catholic Tradition and the Natural Law clearly teach us that oral and anal stimulation are sinful, lustful acts and deviant sexual behavior. Those who promote such perversions or believe them to be not sinful are guilty of the mortal sin of heresy for denying the Natural Law and, as such, are outside the Catholic Church.

St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book I, Chapter 20, A.D. 419: “God forbid that a man who possesses faith should, when he hears the apostle bid men love their wives, [Col. 3:19] love that carnal concupiscence in his wife which he ought not to love even in himself; as he may know, if he listens to the words of another apostle: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides for ever, even as also God abides for ever.” [1 John

2:15-17]. . . . Now this concupiscence, this law of sin which dwells in our members, to which the law of righteousness forbids allegiance, saying in the words of the apostle, "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin:" [Rom. 6:12-13]. . . . But what in this action does it effect, unless it be its evil and shameful desires? For if these were good and lawful, the apostle would not forbid obedience to them, saying, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey the lusts thereof." [Rom. 6:12] He does not say, that you should have the lusts thereof, but that you should [not] obey the lusts thereof; in order that (as these desires are greater or less in different individuals, according as each shall have progressed in the renewal of the inner man) we may maintain the fight of holiness and chastity, for the purpose of withholding obedience to these [evil and shameful] lusts."

Evil theologians say sodomy between spouses is not mortally sinful

The worst mortal sin in regard to forbidden sexual activity between spouses is sodomy (also known as the sin of Sodom), which is one of the four sins that cry out to God for vengeance.

Penny Catechism (A Catechism of Christian Doctrine), 16th century: "**Q. 327.** **Which are the four sins crying to heaven for vengeance?** A. The four sins crying to heaven for vengeance are: 1. Wilful murder (*Gen. iv*); 2. The sin of Sodom (*Gen. xviii*); 3. Oppression of the poor (*Exod. ii*); 4. Defrauding laborers of their wages (*James v*)."

Yet in spite of this dogmatic teaching on morals, Fr. Heribert Jone, in every edition of his book *Moral Theology* from 1929 onwards, teaches that a husband can sodomize his wife and his wife can allow it and neither commit mortal sin as long as he consummates his act naturally with the intention to procreate. And the pervert Jone teaches that this act is not sodomy at all because the husband does not spill his seed when sodomizing his wife. Note that the term "imperfect sodomy" used by Fr. Jone means the mortal sin of sodomy between persons of the opposite sex, and "perfect sodomy" is the mortal sin of sodomy between those of the same sex.

Moral Theology, Fr. Heribert Jone, 1951: "**I. Imperfect Sodomy**, i.e., rectal intercourse, is a grave sin when the seminal fluid is wasted: Excluding the sodomitical intention it is neither sodomy nor a grave sin if intercourse is begun in a rectal manner with the intention of consummating it naturally or if some

sodomitical action is posited without danger of pollution...” (“3. The Sins of Married People,” Section 757)

Hence the pervert Fr. Jone says that rectal intercourse between a husband and wife is not a grave sin as long as the husband does not spill his seed when sodomizing his wife. And according to the pervert Fr. Jone, this is not even sodomy! One must ask, then, “What is it?” and “What is the purpose of this filthy and perverted act?” It is sodomy, plain and simple! And the purpose is to mock God and to degrade and disgrace the wife. Not only is this sodomitical act by the spouses contrary to nature and cries out to God for vengeance, but it is also physically destructive to the health of both spouses.

However, Fr. Jone contradicts his above teaching within his same book. In Section 230 he gives the correct definition of sodomy as follows.

Moral Theology, Fr. Heribert Jone: “230. – II. Sodomy. 1. Definition. Sodomy is unnatural carnal copulation either with a person of the same sex (perfect sodomy) or of the opposite sex; the latter of heterosexual sodomy consists in rectal intercourse (imperfect sodomy). Either kind of sodomy will be consummated or non-consummated according as semination takes place or not.”

Therefore, whether the seed is spilled during sodomy or not, it is still sodomy, but one is called consummated sodomy and the other is non-consummated sodomy. Hence in Section 230 he correctly teaches that a husband who sodomizes his wife but does not consummate the sodomy is still guilty of sodomy, which he correctly classifies as non-consummated sodomy. His teaching in this section contradicts what he teaches in Section 757 when he says that the husband’s non-consummated sodomy is not sodomy at all. Nature itself tells even a pagan that any form of rectal intercourse for any reason as well as any kind of sexual activity outside what is necessary for procreation is intrinsically evil and selfish.

Since people are so degraded and consumed by sins of impurity nowadays, most of them do not know that the word “*Sodomy*” actually refers to **all non-procreative sexual acts**. *Wikipedia* explains that “Sodomy is generally anal or oral sexual activity between people or sexual activity between a person and a non-human animal (bestiality), but may also include any non-procreative sexual activity. ... Sodomy laws in many countries criminalized not only these behaviors, but other disfavored sexual activities as well. In the Western world, however, many of these laws have been overturned or are not routinely enforced.” Indeed, since the western world have become so degraded in their morals in the last 50 years, the millennial teaching of the Natural Law that non-procreative sexual acts

are banned and sinful had to go – in order to satisfy the perverts.

Contrary to many perverted “Catholics” who claim that only anal sex is sodomy and that this act alone is banned by the Church (or that this act is only forbidden if it is consummated in that way), while other sodomitical acts, such as oral sex, are lawful to perform—this definition of sodomy also proves that even the western world considered not only anal sex an evil and sodomy, but also other sexual acts that were not able to procreate in themselves. Only in this end time apostasy did God allow the formerly Christian people to fall into such a diabolical mind frame that they even dared to claim that non-procreative sexual acts are actually allowed by God and His Church!

Merriam Webster's Dictionary also confirms that Sodomy is “Noncoital carnal copulation [that is, all sexual acts apart from the normal, natural and procreative marital act]. Sodomy is a crime in some jurisdictions. ... Other sodomy laws proscribe a variety of other forms of sexual contact and apply even to married couples. No such regulations are found in the law codes of Denmark, France, Italy, Sweden, The Netherlands, or Switzerland, among other countries. The Wolfenden committee in Britain and the American Law Institute recommended abolition of criminal penalties for sodomy, except in cases involving violence, children, or public solicitation. This position was adopted in England in 1967 and has been adopted in many U.S. states as well.”

It is a sad thing that the world and so called Catholics have fallen into such a state of degradation that one is even forced to have to remark on such obvious truths from the Natural Law that all people know about. In marriage the husband and wife face the ever-present temptation to sin by seeking sexual pleasure with each other. However, as we have seen, the Catholic Church have always condemned the evil perversity of all unnatural sexual acts within or without marriage. Because the Church's members understood the evil of such acts in former times, it was more common to see holy pictures depicting the fact that those wretched people who committed “sins of lust within the holy state of Matrimony” were especially guilty of the brutal scourging and crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. A good example demonstrating this was pictures of a Roman soldier beating Jesus with a whip with the caption saying that: “Christ expiated sins of the flesh by enduring the merciless scourging at the pillar.” And that: “Sins of lust within the holy state of Matrimony play their cruel part in these sufferings of our Divine Savior.” In truth, married people are especially guilty for the torture and crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ since their sin is not only against the Natural Law, but also against the Holy Sacrament of Marriage instituted by Our Lord.

And it should come as no surprise to those who heed the words of the Blessed and Ever

Virgin Mary who said that massive immorality prevailed among most priests in 1846 and that their behavior “will put an end to faith little by little”, which we are now seeing being fulfilled before our eyes.

Our Lady of La Salette (1846), in a Revelation approved by the Church spoke, saying: “The priests, ministers of my Son, the priests, by their wicked lives, by irreverence and their impiety in the celebration of the holy mysteries, by their love of money, their love of honors and pleasures, **the priests have become cesspools of impurity**... The chiefs, the leaders of the people of God have neglected prayer and penance, and the devil has bedimmed their intelligence. They have become wandering stars which the old devil will drag along with his tail to make them perish... In the year 1864, Lucifer together with a large number of demons will be unloosed from hell; they will put an end to faith little by little, even in those dedicated to God. They will blind them in such a way, that, unless they are blessed with a special grace, these people will take on the spirit of these angels of hell; several religious institutions will lose all faith and will lose many souls... Evil books will be abundant on earth and the spirits of darkness will spread everywhere a universal slackening in all that concerns the service of God... **Rome will lose the faith and become the see of Antichrist**... **The Church will be in eclipse, the world will be in dismay**...”

To those who have attentively read the Book of Lamentations, it should come as no surprise that God’s chosen people have yet again returned to their own vomit of paganism and the sins of Sodom. “*And the iniquity of the daughter of my people is made greater than the sin of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment.*” (Lamentations 4:6) Sad to say, “But those who, giving the rein to lust, either wander about steeping themselves in a multitude of debaucheries, **or even in regard to one wife not only exceed the measure necessary for the procreation of children, but with the shameless license of a sort of slavish freedom heap up the filth of a still more beastly excess**, such men do not believe it possible that the men of ancient times used a number of wives with temperance, looking to nothing but the duty, necessary in the circumstances of the time, of propagating the race; and what they themselves, who are entangled in the meshes of lust, do not accomplish in the case of a single wife, they think utterly impossible in the case of a number of wives.” (St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book III, Chapter 19, Section 28.--Wicked Men Judge Others by Themselves, A.D. 397)

Marital relations during a woman’s infertile period should be avoided

As recorded in the Old Testament Scripture and in order to increase even more virtue and

grace in God's chosen people, God defined most exquisite laws about when and how marital relations are to be performed. For instance, He commanded that the woman shall be considered unclean at the time of her infertile monthly cycle and also seven days after it, thus prohibiting marital relations during the infertile monthly period. A woman's menstrual cycle is about 28 days long, and the menstrual phase is about 5 days. Adding 7 days after the menstrual phase in accordance with God's word would mean that a woman should remain chaste for 12 days out of 28 days during her menstrual cycle.

The Holy Bible, Leviticus 15:19-28 "The woman, who at the return of the month, hath her issue of blood, shall be separated seven days. Every one that toucheth her, shall be unclean until the evening. And every thing that she sleepeth on, or that she sitteth on in the days of her separation, shall be defiled. He that toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes: and being himself washed with water, shall be unclean until the evening. Whosoever shall touch any vessel on which she sitteth, shall wash his clothes: and himself being washed with water, shall be defiled until the evening. If a man copulateth with her in the time of her flowers, he shall be unclean seven days: and every bed on which he shall sleep shall be defiled. The woman that hath an issue of blood many days out of her ordinary time, or that ceaseth not to flow after the monthly courses, as long as she is subject to this disease, shall be unclean, in the same manner as if she were in her flowers. Every bed on which she sleepeth, and every vessel on which she sitteth, shall be defiled. Whosoever toucheth them shall wash his clothes: and himself being washed with water, shall be unclean until the evening. If the blood stop and cease to run, she shall count seven days of her purification."

This means that God commanded the man and his wife to only have marital relations on the days that are most favorable for begetting children. This was practiced and followed by the Jews many thousands of years before the medical knowledge was learned that conception do not normally occur during these time periods, thus showing us, once again, that the Christian God is the One and only true God who possess all knowledge in Heaven and on Earth. May the Holy Trinity be blessed for all eternity! By commanding such wondrous laws that inspires to perfection, God limited the time a couple could have marital relations, thus decreasing their carnal temptations. For what reason did he do this, someone might ask? The answer is very simple, for it is very obvious that a man or a woman who have sex often will be tempted either to start loving the sexual pleasure or to commit various sexual sins or to have sex with other people that they are not married with, while people who are completely chaste or who have sex very seldom will be stronger in resisting unclean temptations. Sexual pleasure is easier to get addicted to than most drugs, and so, it is very important to guard oneself from being overcome by it. This teaching from the Holy Bible clearly shows us that God does not want spouses to perform the marital act

during a woman's infertile period.

St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book III, Chapter 21, Section 43, A.D. 421: "It, [conjugal chastity] too, combats carnal concupiscence lest it exceed the proprieties of the marriage bed; it combats lest concupiscence break into the time agreed upon by the spouses for prayer. If this conjugal chastity possesses such great power and is so great gift from God that it does what the matrimonial code prescribes, it combats in even more valiant fashion in regard to the act of conjugal union, lest there be indulgence beyond what suffices for generating offspring. **Such chastity abstains during menstruation and pregnancy, nor has it union with one no longer able to conceive on account of age. And the desire for union does not prevail, but ceases when there is no prospect of generation. ...** there must be warfare against evil of concupiscence, which is so evil it must be resisted in the combat waged by chastity, lest it do damage."

If spouses wish to nurture virtue, and if there is a mutual consent for abstaining from marital relations, then both husband and wife can separate from each other any amount of time they decide in order to cultivate virtue and evangelical perfection. By God's holy inspiration, we pray and beg that all may consider to do this from time to time.

1 Corinthians 7:1-10 "Now concerning the thing whereof you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. But for fear of fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render the debt to his wife, and the wife also in like manner to the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband. And in like manner the husband also hath not power of his own body, but the wife. **Defraud not one another, except, perhaps, by consent, for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer;** and return together again, lest Satan tempt you for your incontinency. But I speak this by indulgence, not by commandment. For I would that all men were even as myself: but every one hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that. But I say to the unmarried, and to the widows: It is good for them if they so continue, even as I. But if they do not contain themselves, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to be burnt. But to them that are married, not I but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband."

Many Christian writers have written about the depth of love existing between those blessed and holy spouses who renounce marital intercourse, in order to try to help and inspire married people to seek the higher spiritual things. Stories about loving spouses in sexless or spiritual marriages appears from the beginning of the Church. In one story the bones of

a spouse who had lived in a spiritual marriage moved over to make room for her husband's recently deceased body and in another story a wife's corpse was embraced by her departed husband's arm when she was placed in the tomb. In truth, such couples perceived their lives of sexual abstinence as an anticipation of Heaven. Denying their sensual and fallen nature, they embraced a state of spiritual holiness and loved each other in a perfect and true love, rather than in an impure and selfish love that, sad to say, almost all of humanity now does. Ida of Boulogne (1040–1113) endured rather than enjoyed marital relations and Waletrude “abhorred sexual relations, though she loved her husband in a spiritual way”.

In answering the question, “Whether carnal intercourse is an integral part of this sacrament [of Matrimony]?” St. Thomas Aquinas replied: “A sacrament by its very name denotes a sanctification. But matrimony is holier without carnal intercourse... Therefore carnal intercourse is not necessary for the sacrament.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 42, Art. 4)

Gratian, *Medieval Marriage Law* 32.1.11: “Hence Augustine writes, in *Against Julian*, I: ‘True marriage does not consist in mere intercourse between a male and a female. Contrary to your raving, true marriage does not consist merely of intercourse between a male and a female, although, without that, marriages could not procreate children. Other elements are essential to marriage, and these distinguish marriage from adultery. For example, fidelity to the conjugal yoke, actions directed to the procreation of children, and (here is the greatest difference) the good use of something evil, that is, the good use of carnal desire, something which the adulterer misuses.’ Gratian: ‘The goods he commends here must be distinguished from their misuse.’”

Path to purity and perfection

An honest person should now be able to see clearly that “the devil has power” over all those who come together in the marital act for the sake of fleshly lust. St. Raphael the Archangel, one of the seven archangels that stand before God's throne, reveals what God's will is for spouses in the use of the marital act:

“Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power. ... And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that

in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children... [Tobias said]
And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but
only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.”
(Tobias 6:16-17, 22; 8:9)

According to God’s holy will, spouses are to engage in the marital act for the “love of posterity” (children), not for lust. No, contrary to what most people today say, the Holy Bible is clear that spouses are to come together “only for the love of posterity” if they want to please Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Word of God in the Bible is indeed true when it says that “the devil has power” over all spouses who come together for the purpose of gratifying their fleshly pleasures, giving “themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding”.

The goal of every true Catholic is to be a Saint. That means they must strive to be perfect and holy as God is perfect and holy. “*Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.*” (Matthew 5:48) “*It is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy.*” (1 Peter 1:16)

In this path to perfection, the lustful aspect, the love of the momentary pleasure of the flesh is fought against, conquered, and thus utterly despised. “*Flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world.*” (2 Peter 1:4) To say that this cannot be achieved is to deny the power of God and His grace. “*Being confident of this very thing: that he who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus.*” (Philippians 1:6) The weapons of the Catholic faith: grace, persevering prayer, sacrifice, mortification, and penance are more than sufficient to conquer any sin, sinful inclination, or fault and reach perfection in a short time.

Not many people, however, seek after perfection or even the beginning stages of perfection, and this is the tragic reason for that the greater number of Catholics will be eternally condemned. Sad to say, but most people give to their flesh whatever it wants, whenever it desires it, all day long. Food, media, music, sensual pleasure or what have you, and these are just some of the many reasons why they cannot control their lust. If they would start praying the Holy Rosary and doing penances like fasting and other works of abstinence and piety and cease with all deeds of sin and vanity, their fleshly lust would in many cases be smothered or decreased. But penances and mortifications are utterly despised by the natural man, and so, only a few elect souls ever reach the point where they can experience that their fleshly lusts and desires are decreased or smothered.

All sins, including sexual sins that men and women commit are controllable as long as one

choose to cut off all deliberate sin and occasions of sin, like the media, food or friends etc. But since most people do not avoid all their sinful and worldly activities totally, and especially the direct occasions of their sin—that is, the things which are the cause for their falls into sin—they do not experience an alleviation in their temptations. Many people who are living in sexual sins or fleshly desires indeed tries in some ways to end their sins, but since they do not cut off the occasions of their sins completely, they fail sooner or later. The consequence of their failure in attempting to stop sinning (and that they do not experience a decrease of their fleshly lusts and desires) is that many people fall into the abominable sin of accusing God for their sins, perversely claiming that they cannot stop sinning and extricate themselves from a life of sin. Others inspired by their father the devil tries to excuse the severity of their crimes, claiming that God is merciful to this passion. Indeed, “Our relentless enemy [the devil], the teacher of fornication, whispers that God is lenient and particularly merciful to this passion, since it is so very natural. Yet if we watch the wiles of the demons we will observe that after we have actually sinned they will affirm that God is a just and inexorable judge. They say one thing to lead us into sin, another thing to overwhelm us in despair.” (St. John Climacus, *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step Fifteen, On Chastity)

Contrary to those wretches who try to excuse or blame God for their sins and failures, the Holy Bible and the Teaching of the Church, however, teaches us that all sin is a direct product of man’s perverted will, and at the moment of death such blasphemers who question God’s goodness, or who tries to excuse their vile and unnatural sexual crimes, shall be forever damned and banished by God’s justice to the boiling kettle that is Hell.

James 1:13-15 “Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils, and he tempteth no man. **But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured. Then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.** But sin, when it is completed, begetteth death.”

Our Lord is perfectly able to help us to conquer our temptations as long as we are doing our part and perform acts of virtue. The only thing that stands in the way of our salvation is not a lack of grace from God, but rather our own sloth in prayer, spiritual reading and cutting of all the occasions of sin. For “*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly from temptation, but to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be tormented. And especially them who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government, audacious, self willed, they fear not to bring in sects, blaspheming.*” (2 Peter 2:9)

The reasons of why spouses as well as all others fall into sin of various kinds are almost innumerable today, and the reason for this is since debauchery and sensuality almost rule the whole earth as though it was built in the very law and fabric of society. In general, however, one can say that a human deed becomes more dangerous and potent to damn a person the more pleasure one seeks to derive from it. St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Doctor of the Church*, in his admirably written “*Orations of St. Gregory Nazianzen*,” gives us a thorough and almost perfect description of the causes that strengthen the power of sin in our members and mind and that weaken our resolve against our enemy, the Devil. “Let us not adorn our porches, nor arrange dances, nor decorate the streets; let us not feast the eye, nor enchant the ear with music, nor enervate the nostrils with perfume, nor prostitute the taste, nor indulge the touch, those roads that are so prone to evil and entrances for sin; let us not be effeminate in clothing soft and flowing, whose beauty consists in its uselessness, nor with the glittering of gems or the sheen of gold [Rom. 13:13] or the tricks of color, belying the beauty of nature, and invented to do despite unto the image of God; Not in rioting and drunkenness, with which are mingled, I know well, chambering and wantonness, since the lessons which evil teachers give are evil; or rather the harvests of worthless seeds are worthless. Let us not set up high beds of leaves, making tabernacles for the belly of what belongs to debauchery. Let us not appraise the bouquet of wines, the kickshaws of cooks, the great expense of unguents. Let not sea and land bring us as a gift their precious dung, for it is thus that I have learned to estimate luxury; and let us not strive to outdo each other in intemperance (for to my mind every superfluity is intemperance, and all which is beyond absolute need), and this while others are hungry and in want, who are made of the same clay and in the same manner.” (*Orations of St. Gregory Nazianzen*, Oration XXXVIII, Section 5)

St. Caesarius of Arles in his sermons also admonishes and warns us not to get controlled by our desires, and teaches us of the strong effects they have in influencing our lives for the worse, but that we are able to control and become master over it, and that it is how we live our life that determines whether we are able to gain the victory and control over them. “Now, someone says: I am young; I can in no way control myself. Perhaps you do not control yourself because you eat more than is necessary, and drink more wine than you should. Perhaps you even occupy your mind with shameful thoughts, neither fearing nor blushing to willingly and frequently utter dissolute words or to hear them from others. With God’s help begin to restrain your gluttonous desires, and to occupy your mind and your tongue with chaste thoughts and upright words. You will see that, if God assists you, you will be able to observe chastity. If no bodily infirmity hinders you, do not mind fasting rather often or rising a little earlier for church, so that you may guard your soul against the stains of lust. If in spite of your faithful obedience you see yourself exhausted by assaults of the flesh, and if several times you are persuaded [by the devil] to know your wife without any desire for children [that is, if you perform the normal, natural and procreative marital

act but without performing it for the motive of procreation which is required in order for the act to be lawful and excused from being a sin], give alms every day according to your means, for we read: ‘As water quencheth a fire, so alms destroyeth sins.’ [Eccli. 3:33] Moreover, grant full pardon to all who may have offended you, for this is a great and salutary remedy against all sins. Thus, what was defiled by incontinence may be cleansed by fasting and almsgiving, but most of all by the forgiveness of enemies.” (*Sermons of St. Caesarius of Arles*, Sermon 44, Section 4)

When and how the marital act should be performed

The way to perfection regarding the marital act is that spouses only perform the act with the sole intention and hope of conceiving children. That means spouses are to be chaste during the monthly infertile period of the woman and when she is pregnant. We read in the Old Testament that God had forbidden the marital act during the infertile monthly cycle of the woman: “*The woman, who at the return of the month, hath her issue of blood, shall be separated seven days.*” (Leviticus 15:19) Haydock commentary explains: “*Days, not only out of the camp, but from the company of men.*” As soon as a woman showed signs of infertility (menstruation), intercourse would cease until the cessation of the flow of blood and she became fertile again: “*Thou shalt not approach to a woman having her flowers: neither shalt thou uncover her nakedness.*” (Leviticus 18:19) Haydock commentary: “*Saint Augustine believes that this law is still in force. [On Lev. 20:18] This intemperance was by a positive law declared a mortal offense of the Jews.*” This clearly shows us that God does not want spouses to perform the marital act during this time.

To abstain from sexual intercourse during a woman’s menstrual period or pregnancy and subsequent restricted days has all but been ignored by most of today’s people. Observing the period of restriction for sexual activity not only diminishes sexual sins and temptations, but it also places a woman into her fertile period when it is most beneficial for conception to occur. This helps to fulfill the initial command of God to “be fruitful and multiply,” a command that is clearly not being observed today by many people.

Good husbands and wives do not have sexual relations whenever their unbridled lust desires it, but only at times prescribed for this purpose and when it is necessary. The guide of good and pious husbands and wives are thus their conscience and reason instead of their selfish and unbridled lusts. In the book of Ecclesiastes, this concept is eloquently explained to us in the following way:

“All things have their season, and in their times all things pass under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is

planted. A time to kill, and a time to heal. A time to destroy, and a time to build. A time to weep, and a time to laugh. A time to mourn, and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather. **A time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.**” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-5)

The phrase “A time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces” refers to the marital act. Haydock Commentary: “*Ver. 5. Embraces. Continenence was sometimes prescribed to married people, Leviticus xx. 18., and 1 Corinthians vii. (St. Jerome) (St. Augustine, Enchiridion 78.) (Calmet).*” This shows that the marital act must sometimes be abstained from altogether and not engaged in everyday as the evil and immoral world teaches. As said already, one of the reasons for abstaining from the marital act is in order to cultivate virtue and chastity. This is important to do from time to time, for people who have sex often are more likely to become enslaved by this pleasure and fall into sexual sin.

Indeed, *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, in the section “*Married Persons should sometimes abstain from the Marriage Debt*” explains that this is a “*holy injunction of our Fathers*”: “But as all blessings are to be obtained from God by holy prayer, the faithful are also to be taught sometimes to abstain from the marriage debt, in order to devote themselves to prayer and supplication to God. This religious continence, according to the proper and holy injunction of our Fathers, they should know is to be observed in particular for at least three days previous to receiving the holy Eucharist, and oftener during the solemn Fast of Lent; for thus will they find the blessings themselves of marriage augmented by a daily increasing accumulation of divine grace; and living in the pursuit and practice of piety, they will not only spend this life tranquilly and placidly, but will also rest on the true and firm hope, which “confoundeth not” (Romans 5:5), of attaining, through the goodness of God, life eternal.”

People who never try to control their lust and that let their temptations roam freely—indulging in it whenever it pleases them—have in fact allowed their lust to become their “fix” or “high”. People who act in this way have become worshipers of a fleeting fleshly pleasure and grown attached to it. Such people must be very careful about themselves, for whenever they die and are called before the throne of Our Lord Jesus Christ, their eternal destiny will be decided based on what they loved more in this life: Our Lord and His Love, or themselves and their unbridled, selfish lust. If they loved themselves and their lust more than they loved the Lord, they will not be saved. Only in Hell will many spouses regret that they never thought of controlling their lust or that they never had relations at proper times or at proper seasons.

We can read the following interesting points about proper marital relations in St. Bridget’s

Revelations, Book 5. This book is rightly entitled the “Book of Questions” because it proceeds by way of questions to which our Lord Jesus Christ gives wonderful answers.

St. Bridget’s Revelations, Book 5, Interrogation 5: “[A monk and theologian of high learning asked our Lord Jesus Christ in a vision:] **Fourth question.** Why did you give men and women the seed of intercourse and a sexual nature, if the seed is not to be spilled according to the carnal appetite?

“**Answer to the fourth question.** “I [Jesus] gave them the seed of intercourse so that it might germinate at the right place and in the right way and bear fruit for a just and rational cause.”

If one of the spouses is incontinent and want to gratify his lust often and unreasonably, then it is the incontinent spouse that is sinning while demanding the debt.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 64, Art. 9, Reply to Objection 1: “As far as he is concerned he does not consent, but grants unwillingly and with grief [the marital debt on a holy day] that which is exacted of him; and consequently he does not sin. For it is ordained by God, on account of the weakness of the flesh, that the debt must always be paid to the one who asks lest he be afforded an occasion of sin.”

So long as the other spouse’s intention is not to live a lustful life, he or she will be excused from any possible sin of incontinence and lust that the incontinent spouse will make himself guilty of. That is not to say, however, that the spouse should not to try to persuade the other partner from sin or from seeking to overindulge in sexual pleasure. On the contrary, Our Lord and His Church demands that good husbands and wives should do their utmost in deterring their respective partner from sin.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 59), Dec. 31, 1930: “Holy Church knows well that not infrequently one of the parties is sinned against rather than sinning, when for a grave cause he or she reluctantly allows the perversion of the right order. In such a case, there is no sin, provided that, mindful of the law of charity, he or she does not neglect to seek to dissuade and to deter the partner from sin.”

A spouse who is obstinate in sexual sins like Onanism or masturbation etc., must of course be hindered from committing this sin as far as one is able to hinder him or her. A spouse must do all in his or her power to hinder sexual sins from being committed, and must obviously end marital relations until the sinful spouse agrees to stop committing this sin. If a spouse continues to perform the marital act with a person who is obstinate in committing

sexual sin, this deed will undoubtedly make such a spouse an accomplice in this sexual sin, and as such, will make him or her lose his soul along with the one actually committing the sin, since, if the spouse was really against this sin, he or she would not allow it to happen or give an occasion for it to occur, unless the spouse beforehand had repented and promised not to commit this sin again. It also frequently happens that although one of the spouses may indeed object to the sexual sins that are committed by an evil spouse, he or she nonetheless does not resist this sin properly, or even at all, and even finds pleasure in it. One cannot of course truly be against a sin unless one fully resists it and fights against it. Otherwise it is a sign that one has an inclination to this sin.

“The union, then, of male and female for the purpose of procreation is the natural good of marriage. But he makes a bad use of this good who uses it bestially, so that his intention is on the gratification of lust, instead of the desire of offspring.” (St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book I, Chapter 5.--The Natural Good of Marriage, A.D. 419)

Not only is it more beneficial for couples to minimize the amount of sex they have, but people who reserve sex for marriage enjoy greater stability and communication in their relationships. A new scientific study published in the American Psychological Association’s *Journal of Family Psychology* found that those couples who waited until marriage rated their relationship stability 22 percent higher than those who started having sex (fornication) in the early part of their relationship. The relationship satisfaction was 20 percent higher for those who waited, and communication was 12 percent better. This evidence shows us, once again, how sexual abstinence allows people to be free from the influence of the demon Asmodeus, who have been given permission by God to cause troubles for those men and women who are not virtuous or chaste. Couples that became sexually involved later in their relationship – but prior to marriage – reported benefits that were about half as strong as those who waited for marriage.

“Most research on the topic is focused on individuals’ experiences and not the timing within a relationship,” said lead study author Dean Busby, a professor in Brigham Young University’s School of Family Life. “There’s more to a relationship than sex, but we did find that those who waited longer were happier...” Busby added. “I think it’s because they’ve learned to talk and have the skills to work with issues that come up.”

Sociologist Mark Regnerus of the University of Texas at Austin, who was not involved in the study, responded to its findings, saying that “couples who hit the honeymoon too early – that is, prioritize sex promptly at the outset of a relationship – often find their relationships underdeveloped when it comes to the qualities that make relationships stable

and spouses reliable and trustworthy.” Because religious belief often plays a role for couples who choose to wait, Busby and his co-authors controlled for the influence of religious involvement in their analysis. “Regardless of religiosity, waiting helps the relationship form better communication processes, and these help improve long-term stability and relationship satisfaction,” Busby said.

All this, of course, once again shows us the good effects and inherent goodness of a pure, virtuous, and chaste lifestyle. “Marriage, therefore, is a good in all the things which are proper to the married state. ... In respect of its ordination for generation the Scripture says, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house;" [1 Tim. 5:14]... **For, inasmuch as the wedded state is good, insomuch does it produce a very large amount of good in respect of the evil of concupiscence; for it is not lust, but reason, which makes a good use of concupiscence.** Now lust lies in that law of the "disobedient" members which the apostle notes as "warring against the law of the mind;" [Rom. 7:23] whereas reason lies in that law of the wedded state which makes good use of concupiscence [for the procreation of children].” (St. Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin*, A.D. 418)

St. Clement of Alexandria, *On Marriage* (c. 198 A.D.): “To be subjected, then, to the passions, and to yield to them, is the extremest slavery; as to keep them in subjection is the only liberty. The divine Scripture accordingly says, that those who have transgressed the commandments are sold to strangers, that is, to sins alien to nature, till they return and repent. Marriage, then, as a sacred image, must be kept pure from those things which defile it. We are to rise from our slumbers with the Lord, and retire to sleep with thanksgiving and prayer, "Both when you sleep, and when the holy light comes," confessing the Lord in our whole life; possessing piety in the soul, and extending self-control to the body. For it is pleasing to God to lead decorum from the tongue to our actions. Filthy speech is the way to effrontery; and the end of both is filthy conduct.” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book II, Chapter XXIII)

Fundamental rules for the marital act

There are some fundamental rules that all spouses need to learn in order to have a happy marriage. First, spouses should always pray the Rosary together or individually before the time they intend to have marital relations and beg God on their knees to grant them children for the honor and glory of His Holy name, if this is His will. Second, they should also pray to God for help that none of them will sin in thought or deed during the marital act. Third, they should always remember that God is present with them during the marital

act and try their best to acknowledge the presence of Our Lord during marital relations by short thoughts of mental supplication, asking Him to protect them from falling into sin. These thoughts will hinder the spouses from searching to inflame their lust in sinful ways. Fourth, in order to not inflame concupiscence, they should always have darkness in the room instead of the lights turned on. Fifth, they should always expose as little flesh as possible while they are having marital relations in order to not give the devil any chance to tempt them to commit any sexual sins. Sixth, the marital act should always be done as fast as possible and must always be performed without any fore-or-after play and without any deed or move by the spouse to inflame their lust, beyond what is permitted. Man's natural lust after the fall is, in most cases, enough to finalize the act without any further inflaming of the flesh by the spouses. But even if spouses are not inflamed naturally through old age, sickness or some other cause, they would still sin mortally if they were to inflame their own or their spouse's lust in unlawful ways.

Seventh, they must never prolong the marital act for the sake of lust. Many husbands, for instance, try to prolong the marital act as much as they are able by refusing to finalize the act it even though they are able to do so. The only reason why they commit this sin is so that they may derive more sexual pleasure out of the act for themselves or their spouse. This deed of prolonging the marital act by refusing to finish it in the natural way for the sake of inflaming and enhancing sexual pleasure goes against the primary and secondary purposes of marriage and the marriage act, that is, the procreation of children and the quieting of concupiscence (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubi*, #59) and is always sinful, since it is an act that is completely lustful, unnecessary and unreasonable. It is an unnatural act that acts counter to the inherent primary purpose of marriage, which is procreation and the Catholic education of children. It also acts directly counter to the secondary end of *quieting* of concupiscence, which is not being followed, but acted contrary against. Those who act in this lustful way are utterly detested and hated by God (Psalms 5:5-7) since they are searching for a shameful bodily gratification, and they will burn in Hell for all eternity just as they burned on earth in fleshly lusts, unless they learn to control their lust and repent by doing penance for their sins. Eight, spouses must never kiss or touch each other in order to enhance concupiscence or sensual pleasure, either before, during or after the marital act. Kisses and touches for the sake of carnal pleasure are totally condemned by the Catholic Church and Her Saints.

Pope Alexander VII, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #40, September 24, 1665 and March 18, 1666: “It is a probable opinion which states that a kiss is only venial when performed for the sake of the carnal and sensible delight which arises from the kiss, if danger of further consent and pollution is excluded.” –
Condemned statement by Pope Alexander VII. (Denz. 1140)

Nine, spouses should always remain chaste during the woman's infertile periods and perform as few marital acts as possible each month in order to nurture virtue and perfection. The virtuous fruit and glory that such spouses give to Our Lord are undoubtedly very great, for those who have access to pleasure yet mortifies themselves can in a sense truly be called martyrs. These mortifications and sacrifices will also help make the power and influence of the devil grow less powerful in their life, and as a direct consequence to this, make the power and influence of God and His Holy Spirit grow stronger in their life—in those good spouses who abstain from performing the marital except for the procreation of children for the love of Our Lord. This will also make the home of these spouses more loving and free from those troubles and demons that most worldly couples are plagued with.

A woman's menstrual cycle is about 28 days long, and the menstrual phase is about 5 days. Adding 7 days after the menstrual phase in accordance with God's word in the Bible would mean that men and women should remain chaste for 12 days out of every 28 days during the woman's natural menstrual cycle.

St. Finnian of Clonard, *The Penitential of Finnian* #46: “**We advise and exhort that there be continence in marriage, since marriage without continence is not lawful, but sin, and [marriage] is permitted by the authority of God not for lust but for the sake of children**, as it is written, ‘And the two shall be in one flesh,’ that is, in unity of the flesh for the generation of children, not for the lustful concupiscence of the flesh. Married people, then, must mutually abstain during three forty-day periods in each single year, by consent for a time, that they may be able to have time for prayer for the salvation of their souls; and after the wife has conceived he shall not have intercourse with her until she has borne her child, and they shall come together again for this purpose, as saith the Apostle. But if they shall fulfill this instruction, then they are worthy of the body of Christ... and there they shall receive the thirty-fold fruit which as the Savior relates in the Gospel, he has also plucked for married people.” (*Medieval Handbooks of Penance* by John T. McNeil and Helen Gamer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1938)

Ten, spouses should always abstain from marital relations after the woman have become pregnant since during pregnancy, the primary end or purpose of procreation is not possible to be fulfilled, and thus, it is a defective action to have marital relations during this time period. We see this distinction being made in the Church's teachings in these words: “Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, # 54). Athenagoras the Athenian (c. 133-190), an

early Christian author, explains it thus: “After throwing the seed into the ground, the farmer awaits the harvest. He does not sow more seed on top of it. Likewise, to us the procreation of children is the limit of our indulgence in appetite.” (*A Plea For the Christians*, Chapter XXXIII.--Chastity of the Christians with Respect to Marriage). In truth, it is not natural to sow one’s seed when one “awaits the harvest.”

The virtue of chastity is sexual purity according to one’s state of life. For married persons, this does not refer merely to refraining from adultery. Every kind of sexual immorality must be driven out of the holy matrimonial bond, so that not even any unchaste thoughts enter the mind of the husband or the wife. The chastity of husband and wife should extend to their entire selves, body and soul, even reaching to the inner thoughts of the heart and mind. There are no exceptions to chastity. No one is exempt from chastity according to their state of life. Even when a husband and wife have marital relations, the conjugal act cannot be lustful in heart or mind, nor can it be morally disordered in the particulars of the act itself. “Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)

St. Clement of Alexandria, *On Marriage and Self-Control* (c. 198 A.D.): “In general all the epistles of the apostle teach self-control and continence and contain numerous instructions about [virtuous] marriage, begetting children, and domestic life. But they nowhere rule out self-controlled marriage [or give license to lasciviousness]. Rather they preserve the harmony of the law and the gospel and approve both the man who with thanks to God enters upon marriage with sobriety and the man who in accordance with the Lord’s will lives as a celibate, even as each individual is called, making his choice without blemish and in perfection.” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter XII, Section 86)

The idea that unnatural sexual acts can be used in the service of natural marital relations open to life is fundamentally incompatible with the holiness and chastity required of all married couples. Unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil, and so they cannot be used as the servants of natural marital relations open to life. No good employer would knowingly choose to hire employees entirely lacking in what is good and necessary to the task at hand. No holy king and queen would choose advisers or assistants who were fundamentally opposed to every good upon which their kingdom depends. No married Christian couple can morally choose to use unnatural sexual acts, partial or completed, even if the intention is to use these acts in the service of natural marital relations open to life. Evil cannot be used in the service of good, because good and evil are fundamentally incompatible. This is also why the Church teaches “that those marriages will have an unhappy end which are entered upon... **because of concupiscence alone**, with no thought of the sacrament

and of the mysteries signified by it” since those kinds of selfish, lustful and impious “marriages” in effect are nothing but fornication in disguise of a marriage (Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos* #12). Indeed, “... [since] **men do not reap the full fruit of the Sacraments which they receive after acquiring the use of reason unless they cooperate with grace**, the grace of matrimony will remain for the most part an unused talent hidden in the field unless the parties exercise these supernatural powers and cultivate and develop the seeds of grace they have received.” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #41)

St. John Chrysostom, *Doctor of the Church*, On Marriage and Family Life: “To this end every marriage should be set up so that it may work together with us for chastity. This will be the case if we marry such brides as are able to bring great piety, chastity, and goodness to us. The beauty of the body, if it is not joined with virtue of the soul, will be able to hold the husband for twenty or thirty days, but will go no farther before it shows its wickedness and destroys all its attractiveness. As for those who radiate the beauty of the soul, the longer time goes by and tests their proper nobility, the warmer they make their husband’s love and the more they strengthen their affection for him. Since this is so, and since a warm and genuine friendship holds between them, every kind of immorality is driven out. Not even any thought of wantonness ever enters the mind of the man who truly loves his own wife, but he continues always content with her. By his chastity he attracts the good will and protection of God for his whole household.” (St. John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press: 1986, trans. Roth and Anderson, p. 100)

Ask God to eliminate or minimize sexual pleasure

Even though a husband must consummate the marital act for conception to occur, this does not mean he must have much pleasure to his flesh when doing so. He can pray to God to remove the pleasure and turn it to a strange, despised, and hated sensation or at least to a neutral sensation. To try to suppress or minimize the sensual pleasure in the marital act is surely a most pious and good thing to ask God for if one wish to become perfect. If this goal was achieved, then concupiscence would be conquered and the marital act would only occur with the intention of procreation and with no other motive, and the act itself would produce no particular pleasure to the flesh but only a strange and unwanted sensation caused by the venom of original sin in the flesh. “But continence doing this, that is, moderating, and in a certain way limiting in married persons the lust of the flesh, and ordering in a certain way within fixed limits its unquiet and inordinate motion, uses well the evil of man, whom it makes and wills to make perfect good: as God uses even evil men,

for their sake whom He perfects in goodness.” (St. Augustine, *On Contenance*, Section 27) Thus, “Our will is to be directed only towards that which is necessary. For we are children not of desire but of will. A man who marries for the sake of begetting children must practice continence so that it is not desire he feels for his wife, whom he ought to love, and so that he may beget children with a chaste and controlled will.” (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter VII, Section 58)

The Blessed Virgin Mary revealed to St. Bridget that her virtuous parents, St. Anna and St. Joachim, were united in the marital act in a perfect way and without any lust or will to please their own flesh, and the consequence of this virtuous act was that it produced the most perfect human that have ever lived after our Lord: Our Blessed Lady.

Our Lady spoke about her parents, saying: “He united my father and mother in a marriage so chaste that there could not be found a more chaste marriage at that time. **They never wanted to come together except in accordance with the Law, and only then with the intention to bring forth offspring.** When an angel revealed to them that they would give birth to the Virgin from whom the salvation of the world would come, **they would rather have died than to come together in carnal love; lust was dead in them. I assure you that when they did come together, it was because of divine love and because of the angel’s message, not out of carnal desire, but against their will and out of a holy love for God.** In this way, my flesh was put together by their seed and through divine love.” (St. Bridget’s *Revelations*, Book 1, Chapter 9)

At one time in the history of the Catholic Church, some Catholic spouses actually tried to achieve this goal of minimizing pleasure during the marital act, and to only come together for a reasonable and just cause. Empirical evidence proves this fact. When I was young and into my teenage years, it was a joke among non-Catholics, such as Protestants, that Catholics are prudes because Catholic spouses do not enjoy sex, that they only had relations with the lights out and with only as much flesh exposed as necessary to consummate the marital act, which took place as quickly as possible in order to consummate the act. Catholic women were ridiculed the most because they never had or searched for any pleasure during the marital act. The lust-filled non-Catholics did their best to tell Catholic women to enjoy sex—and then to its fullest. This started to happen in my lifetime. And now almost all men, as well as women, are lust-filled whores! Almost all so-called Catholics now looks upon pleasure during sex as normal and good instead of something strange and abnormal caused by original sin. **The majority of them also commit sexual sins of various sorts.**

St. Jerome, *Letter LXIX*, To Oceanus, A.D. 397: “He took a wife that he might have children by her; you [took a ‘wife’] by taking a harlot [for the sake of lust]... He withdrew into the privacy of his own chamber when he sought to obey nature and to win God’s blessing: “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.” [Gen. i. 28] You on the contrary outraged public decency in the hot eagerness of your lust. He covered a lawful indulgence beneath a veil of modesty; you pursued an unlawful one shamelessly... For him it is written “Marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled,” while to you the words are read, “but whoremongers and adulterers God wilt judge,” [Heb. 13:4] and “if any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy” [1 Cor. 3:17].” (*The Letters of St. Jerome*, Letter LXIX, To Oceanus, Section 4)

Contrary to these miscreants and impure spouses who use each other as though their spouse was a harlot given them to satisfy their sinful lust, the infallible word of God teaches us that true spouses are to regard each other as brothers and sisters instead of pieces of human meat that they wish to acquire in order to satisfy their sexual imaginations or perversions: “**And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.**” (Tobias 8:9) And so, living in Christ, all servants of the Almighty must seek God with a perfect and honest will, “purifying your souls in the obedience of charity, with a brotherly love, from a sincere heart love one another earnestly: Being born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God who liveth and remaineth for ever. For all flesh is as grass; and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass is withered, and the flower thereof is fallen away. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel hath been preached unto you.” (1 Peter 1:22-25)

Good spouses who wish to save their souls should not be concerned about the momentary pleasure they experience during the act of marriage or be working on enhancing it in unusual or unnecessary ways, but should rather be focusing their minds on God and to love and please Him, by feeling close to Him. “But we maintain our modesty not in appearance, but in our heart we gladly abide by the bond of a single marriage; in the desire of procreating, we know either one wife, or none at all. ... So far, in fact, are they [the modest] from indulging in incestuous desire, that with some even the (idea of a) modest intercourse of the sexes causes a blush.” (Marcus Minucius Felix, *The Octavius of Minucius Felix*, Chapter XXXI, A.D. 210)

The Patriarchs and the Prophets of the Old Testament time understood that God hated that spouses should perform the marital act for any other motive than the begetting of children, and that is also why they were honored so much by Our Lord. One finds—over

and over again in Holy Scripture—that their main concern when taking wives was the begetting of offspring, contrary to the lustful and selfish people of today. “For I pray that, being found worthy of God, I may be found at their feet in the kingdom, as at the feet of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; as of Joseph, and Isaiah, and the rest of the prophets... that were married men. For they entered into these marriages not for the sake of appetite, but out of regard for the propagation of mankind.” (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, Chapter IV, A.D. 107)

St. Augustine who similarly wrote extensively about procreation and sexuality explains in his “*Sermons on the New Testament*,” that the Patriarchs and the Prophets of old searched for and desired children and purity rather than fulfilling their own selfish and sensual interests, thus living a chaste lifestyle directly opposed to most of the lustful people of today: “Hence, my brethren, understand the sense of Scripture concerning those our ancient fathers, whose sole design in their marriage was to have children by their wives. For those even who, according to the custom of their time and nation, had a plurality of wives, lived in such chastity with them, as not to approach their bed, but for the cause I have mentioned, thus treating them indeed with honor... So then, my brethren, give heed. Those famous men who marry wives only for the procreation of children, such as we read the Patriarchs to have been, and know it, by many proofs, by the clear and unequivocal testimony of the sacred books; whoever, I say, they are who marry wives for this purpose only, if the means could be given them of having children without intercourse with their wives, would they not with joy unspeakable embrace so great a blessing? would they not with great delight accept it? For there are two carnal operations by which mankind is preserved, [eating and sex] to both of which the wise and holy descend as matter of duty, but the unwise rush headlong into them through lust; and these are very different things.” (St. Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, Sermon 1:22-23)

St. Augustine, *Against Faustus*, Book XXII, Section 47, A.D. 400: “Again, Jacob the son of Isaac is charged [by heretics] with having committed a great crime because he had four wives. But here there is no ground for a criminal accusation: for a plurality of wives was no crime when it was the custom; and it is a crime now, because it is no longer the custom. There are sins against nature, and sins against custom, and sins against the laws [of God]. In which, then, of these senses did Jacob sin in having a plurality of wives? As regards nature, he used the women not for sensual gratification, but for the procreation of children. For custom, this was the common practice at that time in those countries. And for the laws [of God], no prohibition existed. The only reason of its being a crime now to do this, is because custom and the laws [of God] forbid it. Whoever despises these restraints, even though he uses his wives only to get children, still commits sin, and does an injury to human society itself, for the sake of which it is that the procreation of children is required.”

Though marriage remains good and honorable in the New Law, believers should not “pine” after the earthly blessings of marriage and family life as though they were living in the Old Covenant. This would be to live like a Jew concerned with wealth, long life, large families, etc. This would be to ignore the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ came calling us to Heaven, and that He is now urging us to spurn this present life and all it has to offer (St. Chrysostom, *Exp. in Ps. IV*; PG 55.55). It is possible for one to live married with a great number of children and things, and still to “despise what they have.” (Chrysostom, *Hom. X in 1 Thess.*; PG 62.459; NPNF, p. 368.) The one who finds his happiness in God drives out every earthly pleasure, and shows them to be pleasures in name only. Belonging to God is true pleasure and happiness. Anyone who experiences this pleasure will care little for others (Chrysostom, *Exp. in Ps. LX*; PG 55.124). This is St. John’s maxim, “He who desires earth shall not obtain heaven and shall lose earth.” (Chrysostom, *Hom. I in Mt.*; PG 57.62.) Chrysostom thought that many Christians of his time were living as Old Covenant believers, and for this reason, they radically misinterpreted the true signs both of God’s friendship and of His enmity (*Exp. in Ps. XII*; PG 55.149). They thought that the presence of wealth, long life, and many children were the signs of God’s blessing when in fact they were often just the opposite. Such was not the case at the foundation of the Church. During those blessed days the married lived like monks, and so St. Paul called married men “saints” (Chrysostom, *Hom. I in Eph.*; PG 62.9). One ought not, however, to think that God has abandoned a person because of wealth, long life, many children, or even because of the presence of personal misfortune. On the contrary, the sure sign that God has abandoned someone is if they are living in sin and all is going swimmingly! As Hebrews 12:6 states, “For whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth; and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

In order for marital intercourse to be legitimate it must be chaste. Commenting on Proverbs 5, St. Chrysostom interprets the references to one’s fountain and stag as references to one’s wife. A husband is to enjoy his wife sexually with temperance. King Solomon uses the image of the fountain and stag because of the purity of marital intercourse (Chrysostom, *Exp. in Ps. IX*; PG 55.126). “Desire managed with moderation makes you a father, but neglected it in many cases drives you down into lewdness and adultery.” (*Ibid.*, *CXLVIII*; PG 55.491.) Again we see the essential connection in Chrysostom between sexual intercourse and procreation. Many today would say, “Desire managed with moderation makes you happy/fulfilled/satisfied”, while St. Chrysostom says, “Desire managed with moderation makes you *a father*.” And, “Use marriage with moderation, and thou shalt be first in the kingdom.” (*Hom. VIII in Heb.*; PG 63.68.) For the married to “take pleasure is not forbidden but in chastity, not with shame, and reproach and imputations.” (Chrysostom, *Hom. VII in Mt.*; PG 57.81; NPNF, p. 49.)

One of several helps to moderation in marriage is the pious practice of fasting from sexual relations. St. Ephrem the Syrian writes, “Chastity’s wings are greater and lighter than the wings of marriage. Intercourse, while [it remains] pure, is lower. Its house of refuge is modest darkness. Confidence belongs entirely to chastity, which light enfolds.” (*Hymn 28 On the Nativity*) Throughout the history of the Church certain pious couples have embraced a permanent fasting from sexual relations in their marriages. At certain periods when the ascetic strength of the Church was high the literature bears witness to the fact that the practice of marital celibacy was not at all uncommon. See Tertullian, “How many are there who from the moment of their baptism set the seal of virginity upon their flesh? How many who by equal mutual consent cancel the debt of matrimony: voluntary eunuchs for the sake of their desire after the celestial kingdom.” (*A Son Epouse*, VI.2.8-11; SC 273, p. 110; ANF, p. 42.) St. Athanasius the Great says that St. Paul taught this practice in 1st Cor. 7:29 (*First Letter to Virgins*). The Jews in the Old Covenant practiced such sexual fasting as is evident in many places in the Old Testament. We who enjoy so much grace and have received the Holy Spirit should have far more zeal in this practice than the Jews (Chrysostom, *Virg.*, XXX, 1.1-15; SC 125, pp. 188, 190). If we do not, we will find ourselves without excuse. Sexual fasting was particularly taught by the Holy Fathers for three days prior to receiving holy communion.

The asceticism involved in taming the sexual impulse is especially difficult for the married man. He has a task more difficult than the monk, for he must crucify his desires while in the actual presence of his wife, and to be deprived of gratification that appears immediately before his eyes may be considered the very definition of punishment (Chrysostom, *Hom. XIV in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.120). However, it is possible, if we only will it, to win every contest against nature (Chrysostom, *Laud. Paul.* 6.3.16-17; SC 300, p. 264). By spiritual labors in marriage one can reject the influence of society which has made “sins into an art.” Not only can married Christians, through asceticism appropriate to their station in life, nearly rival the monks, according to St. Chrysostom, but their marriage can become a “type of the presence of Christ,” and Christ and the choir of His angels will come to such a marriage. Christ will again work a wedding miracle as He did at Cana, and turn water into wine. He will turn the water, which is the unstable, dissolving, and cold desire for sex, into something truly spiritual (Chrysostom, *Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.389). Married Christians can become virgin souls by freeing themselves from worldly thoughts. “The incorrupt soul is a virgin, even if having a husband.” (Chrysostom, *Hom. XXVIII in Heb.*; PG 63.201.)

Although difficult for the married man, the expectation of the blessing of increased marital love born of marital abstinence is enough to encourage him. John Cassian, relating the words of Abbot Abraham, an aged ascetic, writes: “A hundred times greater delight is to be gotten from married abstinence, too, than that which is offered to two people in sexual

intercourse... I once used to have a wife in the wanton “passion of lust” but now I have her in the dignity of holiness and in the true love of Christ. The woman is the same, but the value of the love has grown a hundredfold.” (John Cassian, *Conlatio XXIII*, XXVI.3.27-4.1.6.22-25; CSEL XIII, pp. 705-706.) “For, in good truth, a friend is more to be longed for than the light; I speak of a genuine one. And wonder not: for it were better for us that the sun should be extinguished, than that we should be deprived of friends; better to live in darkness, than to be without friends. And I will tell you why. Because many who see the sun are in darkness, but they can never be even in tribulation, who abound in friends. I speak of spiritual friends, who prefer nothing to friendship. Such was Paul, who would willingly have given his own soul, even though not asked, nay would have plunged into hell for them. With so ardent a disposition ought we to love.” (Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Thessalonians*, Homily II)

Chastity should especially involve the control of one’s gaze (Chrysostom, *Hom. VII in Mt.*; PG 57.81). Desire grows by looking (Chrysostom, *Hom. XVII in Mt.*; PG 57.256-257). St. Ephrem writes, “Do not annul by your eyes the vows of virginity your mouth has vowed.” (*Hymn 2 On Virginity*) Tertullian encourages Christian women to do all that they can to insure that others do not look upon them lustfully: “In the eye of perfect Christian modesty, carnal desire of one’s self by others is not only not to be desired, but even execrated, by you. Why excite toward yourself that evil passion? Why invite toward yourself that which you profess yourself a stranger? ... Let a holy woman, if naturally beautiful, give none so great occasion for carnal appetite... she ought not to set off her beauty, but even to obscure it.” (*De Cultu Feminarum*, II.1.1-3, III.1.1-3; CCSL 1, pp. 354, 357; ANF, pp. 19-20.) In contrast to those who ruin their souls via improper gazing, the Virgin Mary “turned her face away from everything to gaze on one beauty alone [that is, God].” (St. Ephrem, *Hymn 24 On Virginity*) To look upon another is to touch that person with one’s eyes and to wrong both your spouse and the one being gazed upon (Chrysostom, *Hom. XVII in Mt.*; PG 57.257). If you practice chastity in marriage nothing is equal to the pleasure of wife and children (Chrysostom, *Hom. XVIII in Mt.*; PG 57.428). Chastity in marriage is ensured especially by the practice of chastity before marriage. For this reason, young men should marry early, not long after the onset of desire at about fifteen years of age (Chrysostom, *Hom. IX in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.546; NPNF. p. 437).

St. Augustine could rightly see the amount of wickedness and damnation that concupiscence was responsible for, teaching that: “Concupiscence is worse than ignorance, because to sin in ignorance without concupiscence is lesser sin; but concupiscence without ignorance makes sin more serious. Moreover, ignorance of evil is not always evil, but lust after evil is always evil. It is sometimes useful to be ignorant of a good, in order to learn of it at an opportune time; it is never possible that man’s good be lusted after by carnal concupiscence, since not even offspring itself is desired by the lust of the body, but by the

intention of the soul, even though offspring is not sowed without the lust of the body. For, indeed, we are concerned with that concupiscence by which the flesh lusts against the spirit; not with the good concupiscence by which the spirit lusts against the flesh, [Gal. 5:17] and by which is desired the continence through which concupiscence is overcome. By this concupiscence of the flesh no one ever desires any good of man, unless the pleasure of the flesh is the good of man.” (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book VI, Chapter 16, Section 50, A.D. 421)

In our day and age, many people who are incontinent and who wish to satisfy their sensual appetites at every turn, sadly pervert and lie about the Holy Scripture in order to justify and excuse their immoderate and immoral sexual lifestyle. St. Methodius, in his work “*Banquet of the Ten Virgins*” (c. 311 A.D.) wrote against and exposed such people in his own time, showing us very clearly how such people pervert certain passages of Holy Scripture to their own destruction: “Now Paul, when summoning all persons to sanctification and purity, in this way referred that which had been spoken concerning the first man and Eve in a secondary sense to Christ and the Church, in order to silence the ignorant, now deprived of all excuse. For men who are incontinent in consequence of the uncontrolled impulses of sensuality in them, dare to force the Scriptures beyond their true meaning, so as to twist into a defense of their incontinence the saying, “Increase and multiply;” and the other, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother;” and they are not ashamed to run counter to the Spirit, but, as though born for this purpose, they kindle up the smoldering and lurking passion, fanning and provoking it; and therefore he, cutting off very sharply these dishonest follies and invented excuses, and having arrived at the subject of instructing them how men should behave to their wives, showing that it should be as Christ did to the Church, “who gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word,” he referred back to Genesis, mentioning the things spoken concerning the first man, and explaining these things as bearing on the subject before him, that he might take away occasion for the abuse of these passages from those who taught the sensual gratification of the body, under the pretext of begetting children.” (Discourse III, Chapter X.--The Doctrine of the Same Apostle Concerning Purity)

Continuing to describe the lustful captives who refuse to practice virtue or abstinence, St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the words of St. Paul, writes: “[St. Paul] Again implying their weakness of character... the imperiousness... their utter slavery. And this is evident also from the advice which Paul gave. For from that lust he leads men quite away, saying... having separated them “for a season” only, and that by “consent,” he advises to ‘come together again’ (1 Cor. vii. 5.) **For he feared the billows of lust lest they should occasion a grievous shipwreck.** ... Wherefore I beseech you to do all you can, both that ye be not taken captive by it [evil desire], and that if taken, ye continue not in captivity, but

break asunder those hard bonds. For so shall we be able to secure a footing in heaven and to obtain the countless good things; whereunto may all we attain, through the grace and love towards men of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom to the Father, with the Holy Ghost, be glory, might, honor, now and for ever, and world without end. Amen.” (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Corinthians*, Homily XXII, On Evil Desire)

St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Book I, Chapter 8, A.D. 419: “The Evil of Lust Does Not Take Away the Good of Marriage - Forasmuch, then, as the good of marriage could not be lost by the addition of this evil [lust], some imprudent persons suppose that this is not an added evil, but something which appertains to the original good. A distinction, however, occurs not only to subtle reason, but even to the most ordinary natural judgment, which was both apparent in the case of the first man and woman, and also holds good still in the case of married persons today. What they afterward effected in propagation—that is the good of marriage; but what they first veiled through shame—that is the evil of concupiscence, which everywhere shuns sight, and in its shame seeks privacy.”

God wants all spouses to pray to Him before the marital act to protect them and keep them from sinning

It is clear from the Bible and the Saints that spouses who wish to be perfect should pray to God and ask Him to keep them from sinning during the marital act as well as that He may grant them offspring to the honor and glory of His Holy name, if this is His will; and that He might minimize the amount of pleasure they will feel, so that they may not grow attached to it. God might grant this prayer to a couple if they so desire, but if they are not granted this gift (the minimizing of pleasure or the begetting of children) they should still focus their pleasure and love towards God, and not on themselves. God namely demands of us to not forget about Him during the procreative act. People usually tend to forget about God when they put too much attention on themselves, their spouse, or the pleasure derived from different acts. We can read about this truth in the book of Tobias:

“For they who in such manner receive matrimony, AS TO SHUT OUT GOD FROM THEMSELVES, AND FROM THEIR MIND, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.” (Tobias 6:17)

Notice the words “from their mind”. All our thoughts and desires exist in the mind (or heart), and God wishes us to have Him there. The best thing then, and which God demands of you, is that you think about Him and love Him during all times, even during the

procreative act, and husbands and wives should not be ashamed of doing so. Is not God better or more worthy of being desired or lusted after than a husband or wife will ever be? The more a person loves God, the more will also that person desire to be close to God, during all times.

One of the greatest mistakes many couples undoubtedly commit today is that they strive to know and be close with their loved ones and their spouse rather than with God (who knows everything and sees everything), and that they rather think of pleasing their loved ones and their spouse more than pleasing God (who created them and redeemed them, yes even died for them). This is also the reason for why so many of them commit shameful sexual sins of various sorts; for they know not God nor care to please Him.

Tobias 8:4-5 “Then Tobias exhorted the virgin, and said to her: Sara, arise, **and let us pray to God** today, and tomorrow, and the next day: because for these three nights we are joined to God: and when the third night is over, we will be in our own wedlock. For we are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God.”

Some may perhaps object that praying to or thinking about God during the marital act is shameful and that one must pray to or think of God only in those circumstances when one is composed and calm, which a person normally is not during the marital act. This objection however is completely false since there is not a single instance in this life when we cannot pray to God for His help or have Him present in our thought. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself commanded “that we ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). Even when we are in mortal sin, which is infinitely more shameful and evil than the marital act, we are allowed and encouraged to pray and beseech God, since all people need God’s help in order to be saved.

Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, in his work “*The Way Of Salvation And Of Perfection*,” explains to us the necessity to pray always:

“Let us pray, then, and let us always be asking for grace, if we wish to be saved. Let prayer be our most delightful occupation; let prayer be the exercise of our whole life. **And when we are asking for particular graces, let us always pray for the grace to continue to pray for the future; because if we leave off praying we shall be lost. There is nothing easier than prayer. What does it cost us to say, Lord, stand by me! Lord, help me! give me Thy love! and the like? What can be easier than this? But if we do not do so, we cannot be saved.** Let us pray, then, and let us always shelter our selves behind the

intercession of Mary: “Let us seek for grace, and let us seek it through Mary,” says St. Bernard. And when we recommend ourselves to Mary, let us be sure that she hears us and obtains for us whatever we want. She cannot lack either the power or the will to help us, as the same saint says: “Neither means nor will can be wanting to her.” And St. Augustine addresses her: “Remember, O most pious Lady, that it has never been heard that any one who fled to thy protection was forsaken.” Remember that the case has never occurred of a person having recourse to thee, and having been abandoned. Ah, no, says St. Bonaventure, he who invokes Mary, finds salvation; and therefore he calls her “the salvation of those who invoke her.” Let us, then, in our prayers always invoke Jesus and Mary; and let us never neglect to pray.

“... But before concluding, I cannot help saying how grieved I feel when I see that though the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers so often recommend the practice of prayer, yet so few other religious writers, or confessors, or preachers, ever speak of it; or if they do speak of it, just touch upon it in a cursory way, and leave it. **But I, seeing the necessity of prayer, say, that the great lesson which all spiritual books should inculcate on their readers, all preachers on their hearers, and all confessors on their penitents, is this, to pray always; thus they should admonish them to pray; pray, and never give up praying. If you pray, you will be certainly saved; if you do not pray, you will be certainly damned.**” (St. Alphonsus, *The Way Of Salvation And Of Perfection*, The Ascetical Works. Vol. II)

All people need God’s grace in order to be saved, and it is a heresy to say otherwise. It is indeed very true that a person cannot, by his own power or without God’s help, save himself or avoid even committing a slight venial sin. This is true even with pagans, who do not know or believe in God. God helps even them and gives them strength to do good. That is why only those people who have neglected God’s presence and prayer (which is the same as talking with God everyday as with a real person, supplicating Him for help and giving Him glory) have been lost.

St. Alphonsus Liguori continues to expound on the necessity of prayer in his “*Short Treatise on Prayer*,” Chapter IV, that speaks “Of the Humility of with Which We Ought to Pray”:

“The Lord regards the prayers of His servants who are humble: ‘He hath had regard to the prayers of the humble.’ (Ps. 101:18). But to the prayers of the proud He does not attend; no, He rejects them with disdain: ‘God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.’ (St. James 4:6). The Almighty does not hear the supplications of the proud who trust in their own strength, but leaves them to their own weakness

and misery, which, when they are abandoned by divine grace, will infallibly lead them to perdition. 'Before I was humbled,' said holy David, 'I offended.' (Ps. 118:67), as if he said, I have sinned because I have not been humble. A similar misfortune befell St. Peter. When this apostle was admonished by Jesus Christ, that on the night of His passion all the disciples should abandon Him their Lord and Master, instead of acknowledging his own weakness, and asking strength from above to remain faithful, he trusted in his own power, and exclaimed, 'Although all shall be scandalized in thee, I will never be scandalized.' (St. Matt. 26:33). Jesus said to him: Amen I say to thee that in this night before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice; Peter confiding in his own courage, rejoined boastingly, 'Yea, though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee.' (ver. 35). And what was the result? Scarce had Peter entered the house of the high priest, when he three times denied the charge of being a disciple of Jesus, and to his denial added the solemnity of an oath. And again he denied with an oath, that 'I know not the man.' (Matt. 26:72). Had Peter been humble, and had asked of God the gift of constancy, he would not have denied his master.

"Each one should consider that he is, as it were, on the top of a lofty mountain, suspended over the abyss of all sins, and supported only by the thread of God's grace; if this thread give way he shall infallibly fall into the abyss, and shall perpetrate the most enormous crimes. 'Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell.' (Psalm 43:17). If God had not succoured me, I would have fallen into numberless sins, and should now be buried in hell. Such, were the sentiments of the Psalmist, and such should be the sentiments of each one of us. It was from a conviction of his own nothingness and misery, that St. Francis used to say, that he was the greatest sinner in the world. His companion, on one occasion, said to him, 'Father, what you say cannot be true, surely, there are many greater sinners than you.' 'What I have said,' replied the saint, 'is too true, for if God had not preserved me, I would have committed sins of every kind.'

"It is of faith, that without the assistance of grace we cannot perform any good work, or even have a good thought. 'Without grace,' says St. Augustine, 'men do nothing whatever either by thought or action.'--S. Augus. de Corr. et Grat. cap 2. 'As the eye cannot see without light,' said the saint, 'so we can do nothing without grace.' 'Not,' says the apostle, 'that we are sufficient to think any thing of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God.' (1 Cor 3:5). And the royal prophet says, 'Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' (Ps. 126:1). In vain does a man labor to sanctify himself unless God assist him. 'Unless,' he says in the same Psalm, 'the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it.' (Ibid). If God does not guard the soul from sin, in vain will man by his own strength endeavor to preserve her from its stain. Hence the Psalmist says, 'For I will not trust in my bow.' (Ps. 43:7). I will not confide in my own arms, but in God, who is able to

save me.

“Hence, whosoever had done good, or has abstained from great sins, should say with St. Paul, ‘By the grace of God I am what I am.’ (1 Cor 15:10), and ought to tremble, lest on the first occasion he should fall. ‘Wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.’ (1 Cor 10:12). By these words the apostle insinuates that he who considers himself secure, is in very great danger of falling. For in another place he says, ‘if any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.’ (Gal. 6:3). Hence St. Augustine wisely observes, ‘The presumption of stability renders many unstable; no one will be so strong as he who feels his own weakness.’ (Ser. 13 de verb. Dom). Whosoever says that he entertains no fear of being lost, betrays a pernicious self-confidence and security by which he deceives himself. For, confiding in his own strength, he ceases to tremble, and being free from fear, he neglects to recommend himself to God, and left to his own weakness, he infallibly falls. For the same reason, every one should be careful to abstain from indulging vain glory at not having committed the sins into which others have fallen; and should even esteem himself worse than them, saying, Lord if you had not assisted me, I would have been guilty of much more grievous transgressions. But if any one glory in his own works, and prefer himself before others, the Almighty, in chastisement of his pride, will permit him to fall into the most grievous and horrible crimes. The apostle says, ‘With fear and trembling work out your salvation.’ (Phil. 2:12). The timid distrust their own powers, and placing all their confidence in God fly to His protection in all dangers. He will enable them to overcome the temptations to which they are exposed, and they shall be saved. St. Philip Neri walking one day through Rome, was heard frequently to say, ‘I despair.’ Being corrected by a religious, he replied; ‘Father, I despair of being saved by myself, but trust in God.’ We should continually distrust ourselves, and thus we shall imitate St. Philip, who was accustomed to say every morning as soon as he awoke. ‘Lord preserve me this day, otherwise I will betray you.’

“We may then conclude with St. Augustine, that the great science of a Christian is to know that he is nothing, and that he can do nothing. ‘This is the great science, to know that man is nothing.’ A Christian who is convinced of his own nothingness will constantly seek and obtain from God by humble prayer, the strength which he does not possess, without which he cannot resist temptation or do good, and with which he can do all things. ‘The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds: and he will not depart till the most high behold.’ (Eccles. 35:21). The prayer of a humble soul penetrates the heavens, and ascending to the throne of God, will not depart till it is regarded with complacency by the Almighty: and however enormous the sins of such a soul may be, the supplications of a humble heart cannot be rejected: ‘A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.’ (Ps 50:19). ‘God resisteth the proud and gives His grace to the

humble.’ (St. James 4:6). God treats the proud with scorn and refuses their demands; but to the humble He is sweet and liberal. This is precisely the sentiment which Jesus Christ one day expressed to St. Catherine of Sienna: ‘Be assured, my child, that a soul who perseveres in humble prayer obtains every virtue.’ (Ap. Bloss. In. Con. Cap. 3)

“I shall here insert the beautiful observations addressed to those who aspire to perfection, by the learned and pious Palafox, Bishop of Osma, in a note on the 18th letter of St. Teresa. In that letter the saint gives to her confessor, a detailed account of all the degrees of supernatural prayer with which she had been favored. The bishop, in his remarks on the letter, observes that these supernatural graces which God deigned to bestow on St. Teresa and other saints, are not necessary for the attainment of sanctity; since without them, many are arrived at a high degree of perfection, and obtained eternal life, while many enjoyed them, and were afterwards damned. He says that the practice of the gospel virtues, and particularly of the love of God, being the true and only way to sanctity, it is superfluous and even presumptuous to desire and seek such extraordinary gifts. These virtues are acquired by prayer, and by corresponding with the lights and helps of God, who ardently desires our sanctification.’ (Thess. 4:3)

“Speaking of the degrees of supernatural prayer described by St. Teresa, the holy bishop wisely observes, that as to the prayer of quiet, we should only desire and beg of God, to free us from all attachment and affection to worldly goods, which, instead of giving peace to the soul, fills it with inquietude and affliction. Solomon justly called them, ‘vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit.’ (Eccl. 1:14) The heart of man can never enjoy true peace till it is divested of all that is not God, and entirely devoted to His holy love, to the exclusion of every object from the soul. But man of himself cannot arrive at this perfect consecration of his being to God; he can only obtain it by constant prayer. As to the sleep or suspension of the powers, we should entreat the Almighty to keep them in a profound sleep with regard to all temporal affairs, and awake only to meditate on His Divine goodness, and to seek divine love and eternal goods. For, all sanctity and the perfection of charity, consists in the union of our will with the holy will of God. As to the union of the powers, we should only pray that God may teach us by his grace, not to think or seek, or wish any thing but what He wills.

“As to ecstasy or rapture let us ask the Lord to eradicate from our hearts inordinate love of ourselves and of creatures and to draw us entirely to Himself to the flight of the Spirit, we will merely implore the grace of perfect detachment from the world, that, like the bird which never rests on the earth, and feeds in its flight, we may never fix the heart on any sensual enjoyment, but by attending towards heaven, employ things of this world only for the support thereof. As to the impulse of Spirit, let us ask God courage and strength to do the violence to ourselves which

may be necessary to resist the attacks of the enemy, to overcome our passions, or to embrace suffering even in the midst of spiritual dryness and desolation. Finally, as to the wound as the remembrance of a wound is constantly kept alive by the pain it inflicts, we should supplicate the Lord to fill our hearts with His holy love to such a degree, that we may be always reminded of His goodness and affection towards us and thus we may devote our lives to love, and please Him by our works and affections. These graces will not be obtained without prayer; but by humble, confident, and persevering prayer, all God's gifts may be procured." (St. Alphonsus, *A Short Treatise on Prayer*, Chapter IV, "Of the Humility of with Which We Ought to Pray")

The necessity of praying before coming together in the marital act

Jesus tells us of the necessity of praying always (Luke 18:1). We are never to cease praying (1 Thess. 5:17). Thus, Christian married couples will always have marital relations in the context of prayer. Tobias' prayer before marital relations with his wife is an example of this (Tobit 8:4-8). In prayer, we express our weakness and God's power (2 Cor. 12:9) to rectify problems in marital relations.

Praying the Rosary before, during and after marital relations is highly recommended since it is the most powerful prayer ever given to mankind. Praying the Rosary will undoubtedly give countless of graces that diminishes sinful inclinations, thoughts and temptations that constantly plague people. Granted, it might be hard to pray during or right before the marital act, at least in a worthy and proper manner, but spouses should do their best to at least silently acknowledge the presence of God Almighty and His Mother, by loving Them deeply during the act, expressing loving words towards God and His Blessed Mother, supplicating Them for Their Help to resist sinful inclinations. And husband and wife should not be ashamed of having recourse to Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin during intercourse. In contrast, what better thing can there possibly be for a couple than to always have God and the thought of loving God in their minds during all times?

Sister Lucy of Fatima, regarding the Holy Rosary, said the following words to Fr. Augustin Fuentes on December 26, 1957:

"Look, Father, the Most Holy Virgin, in these last times in which we live, has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary. She has given this efficacy to such an extent that there is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us, of our families, of the families of the world or of the

religious communities, or even of the life of peoples and nations, that cannot be solved by the Rosary. There is no problem I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary.”

We highly recommend that all 15 decades of the Rosary be prayed daily. Our Lady repeatedly emphasized the importance of praying the Rosary each day in her messages at Fatima. She even said that Francisco would have to pray ‘many rosaries’ before he could go to Heaven. You should prioritize reading the word of God (Catholic books and the Catholic Bible) and praying before other activities to grow in the spirit. Praying all 15 decades of the Rosary each day can be accomplished in a variety of ways. However, for many it is best accomplished by praying a part of the Rosary at different times of the day, for example, the joyful mysteries in the morning, sorrowful mysteries at midday, and glorious mysteries in the evening. ‘Salve Regina’ only needs to be prayed at the end of the entire day’s rosary. An essential part of the Rosary is meditation on the mysteries, episodes in the life of Our Lord and Our Lady. This means thinking about them, visualizing them, considering the graces and merits displayed in them, and using them for inspiration to better know and love God. It is also common to focus on a particular virtue with each mystery.

You can easily accomplish praying the fifteen decades of the Rosary each day by dividing it up to small sections during the day. For example, you can make a habit to go down on your knees and pray 1 to 10 Hail Marys every time you enter or exit your room. The best time for prayer is in the morning, since the mind is more clear from the thoughts and discussions of the world, so we advise you to always dedicate time in the morning for the Rosary. The Rosary is the most powerful weapon in existence against the Devil and those who neglect it will indeed be eternally sorry for refusing to honor our Lady as she deserves! Think and reflect upon what greatness it is to be able to speak with the God of the whole creation and His Mother whenever we want. It is almost impossible for a man to be able to speak with a king or queen of this world, and yet the King of kings and his beloved Mother hear your every word. In truth, I tell you, that even one good word of prayer has more worth than all gold and jewels and an infinite amount of universes, for they will all perish, but God’s words will never perish. Think about how much you would concentrate and fight against distracting thoughts if someone were to tell you that you could have 10,000 dollars or a new car if you prayed a Rosary with full concentration and without yielding to distracting thoughts. This example should shame us all since we humans are, by our very nature, wicked at heart and are inclined to search for filth rather than gold (worldly things rather than heavenly ones). Everyone should try to remember this example, and then we will all be able to pray better which will bring us an everlasting, heavenly reward! The devils concentrate exceedingly much on getting a person to despise prayer in these ways: either they try to make you bored by it, or to have a difficulty in concentrating when praying, or to

pray a little; for they know that prayer is the only way to salvation.

Indeed, St. Alphonsus, in his book *“The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection,”* in the section *“On the Necessity and Power of Prayer”*, explains that *“the devil is never more busy to distract us with the thoughts of worldly cares than when he perceives us praying and asking God for grace”*:

“On this point, then, we have to fix all our attention, namely, to pray with confidence, feeling sure that by prayer all the treasures of heaven are thrown open to us. “Let us attend to this,” says St. Chrysostom, “and we shall open heaven to ourselves.” Prayer is a treasure; he who prays most receives most. St. Bonaventure says that every time a man has recourse to God by fervent prayer, he gains good things that are of more value than the whole world: “Any day a man gains more by devout prayer than the whole world is worth.” Some devout souls spend a great deal of time in reading and in meditating, but pay but little attention to prayer. There is no doubt that spiritual reading, and meditation on the eternal truths, are very useful things; “but,” says St. Augustine, “it is of much more use to pray.” By reading and meditating we learn our duty; but by prayer we obtain the grace to do it. “It is better to pray than to read: by reading we know what we ought to do; by prayer we receive what we ask.” What is the use of knowing our duty, and then not doing it, but to make us more guilty in God’s sight? Read and meditate as we like, we shall never satisfy our obligations, unless we ask of God the grace to fulfill them.

“And, therefore, as St. Isidore observes, the devil is never more busy to distract us with the thoughts of worldly cares than when he perceives us praying and asking God for grace: “Then mostly does the devil insinuate thoughts, when he sees a man praying.” And why? Because the enemy sees that at no other time do we gain so many treasures of heavenly goods as when we pray. This is the chief fruit of mental prayer, to ask God for the graces which we need for perseverance and for eternal salvation; and chiefly for this reason it is that mental prayer is morally necessary for the soul, to enable it to preserve itself in the grace of God. For if a person does not remember in the time of meditation to ask for the help necessary for perseverance, he will not do so at any other time; for without meditation he will not think of asking for it, and will not even think of the necessity for asking it. On the other hand, he who makes his meditation every day will easily see the needs of his soul, its dangers, and the necessity of his prayer; and so he, will pray, and will obtain the graces which will enable him to persevere and save his soul. Father Segneri said of himself, that when he began to meditate, he aimed rather at exciting affections than at making prayers. But when he came to know the necessity and the immense utility of prayer, he more and more applied himself, in his long mental prayer, to making petitions.”

(St. Alphonsus, *The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection*, “On the Necessity and Power of Prayer”)

In truth, the devil knows that mental prayer and prayer from the heart is very effective in weakening and destroying his hold and power over us, and that is also why he tries to get people to leave it off completely, telling them that it’s useless when it in fact is one of the best ways, if not the best way to use in order to conquer the might of the Devil and his temptations:

“Some one may say, I do not make mental prayer [from the heart], but I say many vocal prayers [with the tongue]. But it is necessary to know, as St. Augustine remarks, that to obtain the divine grace it is not enough to pray with the tongue: it is necessary also to pray with the heart. On the words of David: “I cried to the Lord with my voice,” the holy Doctor [Augustine] says: “Many cry not with their own voice (that is, not with the interior voice of the soul), but with that of the body. Your thoughts are a cry to the Lord. Cry with in, where God hears.” This is what the Apostle inculcates. Praying at all times in the spirit. In general, vocal prayers are said distractedly [through mere habit] with the voice of the body, but not of the heart [as in mental prayer], especially when they are long, and still more especially when said by a person who does not make mental prayer [from the heart]; and therefore God seldom hears them, and seldom grants the graces asked [since they only pray by habit or custom and thus lack the real disposition of a true purpose, love, faith and desire required in order to be heard]. Many say the Rosary, the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and perform other works of devotion; **but they still continue in sin.** But it is impossible for him who perseveres in mental prayer to continue in sin; he will either give up meditation or renounce sin. A great servant of God used to say that mental prayer and sin cannot exist together. And this we see by experience: they who make mental prayer rarely incur the enmity of God; and should they ever have the misfortune of falling into sin, by persevering in mental prayer, they see their misery, and return to God. Let a soul, says St. Teresa, be ever so negligent, if she persevere in meditation, the Lord will bring her back to the haven of salvation.” (St. Alphonsus, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, CHAPTER XV: MENTAL PRAYER, Moral Necessity of Mental Prayer for Religious)

Thus, in accordance with the advice of St. Alphonsus, a person should not be afraid of also praying from the heart, preferably at all times, in addition to saying vocal prayers, since this is the most perfect, highest and unitive form of prayer with God.

It is, however, a really bad sign when a person feels an aversion or contempt to holy

prayers like the Rosary. A person should do his utmost to persevere in praying the Rosary and other vocal and mental prayers since the Devil often tempts people to stop praying them because he knows and feels how much they lessen his power over a person's soul.

St. Louis De Montfort (A.D. 1710): "Blessed Alan de la Roche who was so deeply devoted to the Blessed Virgin had many revelations from her and we know that he confirmed the truth of these revelations by a solemn oath. Three of them stand out with special emphasis: the first, that if people fail to say the 'Hail Mary' (the Angelic Salutation which has saved the world – Luke 1:28) out of carelessness, or because they are lukewarm, or because they hate it, this is a sign that they will probably and indeed shortly be condemned to eternal punishment." (*Secret of the Rosary*, p. 45)

Most people, for instance, do not frequently give themselves enough time to perform their prayers, and especially longer prayers, and the consequence of this will be that most of them will pray very little, or seldom. A good form of prayer, then, that is more easily performed by everyone, no matter how troublesome prayer may ever feel to you, or however little time you might imagine that you have to spare, is simply that you talk with God as with a real person at all times: in your car, in the toilet, in your work, when you eat... yes everywhere and at all times a man can talk with God, Our Creator and Father as with a real person in the same way as little children does towards their own Father, like when they tell Him how much they love Him, and mentioning all their troubles and worries and that He might help them and protect them, supplicating His help all the time. We should thus learn from these little Children and imitate them and behave as they do towards our own Father and Mother in Heaven, by telling Them that we love Them and that we want to love Them very much and that we need Their help to love Them even more and that we need Their help to resist sin and do good, whatever it might be. A person who prays with confidence in this way everyday will certainly not be lost or be neglecting his duty to pray well. Jesus Christ himself teaches us this very concept in the Bible.

Luke 18:1 "And he [Jesus] spoke also a parable to them, that we ought **always to pray**, and not to faint..."

Haydock Commentary: "*Always to pray*, i.e. to pray daily, and frequently; (Witham) and also to walk always in the presence of God, by a spirit of prayer, love, and sorrow for sin."

In truth, if we are like children, rejecting the vanity, shallowness, greed and lust of the world, we shall never be damned: "Then were little children presented to him, that he should impose hands upon them and pray. And the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said to them: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of

heaven is for such. And when he had imposed hands upon them, he departed from thence.”
(Matthew 19:13-15)

Haydock Commentary explains these verses: “*Jesus said... Suffer the little children... and declares that the kingdom of heaven is the portion of such as resemble these little ones, by the innocence of their lives and simplicity of their hearts. He, moreover, shews that confidence in our own strength, in our own free-will, and in our merits, is an invincible obstacle to salvation.*”

The word of God in the Holy Bible teaches spouses to practice chastity for three days while praying to God to beget offspring for the glory of His Holy Name before consummating the marriage by the marital act

The word of God and Holy Scripture further teaches that one should not consummate the marriage immediately after one has been married, but that one should wait for three days while praying earnestly to God to bless their marriage, “*because for these three nights we are joined to God: and when the third night is over, we will be in our own wedlock.*” (Tobias 8:4) The Holy Archangel Raphael, acting as God’s messenger, instructs husbands and wives to always wait three days in prayer before consummating the marriage. “*But thou when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her.*” (Tobias 6:18)

These words shows us that spouses must remember their bond with the Lord first and foremost and that the fleshly or physical part of the marriage must always come secondhand. By this highly virtuous act of abstaining from marital relations for three days, the devil’s power over married couples is undoubtedly thwarted and diminished. Holy Scripture thus advices spouses to be “joined to God” for three days in prayer before performing the marital act. Not only that, but spouses should always fervently pray to God before every marital act and ask Him to protect them from falling into sin, and also after the marital act in order to ask Our Lord to forgive them if they committed any sin during the act. This is the safe road of the fear of God that every righteous man or woman should follow if they wish to enter Heaven.

Tobias 6:18, 20-22 “[St. Raphael said to Tobias:] But thou when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her.... But the second night thou shalt be admitted into the society of the holy Patriarchs. And the third night thou shalt obtain a blessing that sound children may be born of you. And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of

children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayst obtain a blessing in children.”

Haydock Commentary explains: “Verse 18. *Days*. No morality could be more pure. The Christian Church has given similar counsels [of abstinence before marital consummation], in the Capitulars of France, and of Erard, archbishop of Tours, and in many rituals published in the 16th century. The council of Trent only advises people to approach to the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, three days at least before marriage. The Greeks, in their third council of Carthage, (canon 13) order the first night to be spent in continence.”

Notice how Our Lord and God in the biblical book of Tobias promises that those who pray and abstain from the marital act for three days before having marital relations shall receive the inestimable graces of “sound children” on the third night and that they shall be admitted “into the society of the holy Patriarchs” on the second. The honor of being “admitted into the society of the holy Patriarchs” is of course too great to even describe in human terms. The blessing on the third night of “sound children” obviously means that those couples who do not perform the marital act for the sake of lust or too often, and who are virtuous and wait for three days in accordance with the promise of Holy Scripture, will receive a child without birth deformities or defects. This may be hard for many to believe, but this is really and truly what Holy Scripture is promising and saying.

It is sad to see that none today seem to care anything about these promises or virtuous deeds that promise these remarkable and wondrous graces that Our Lord said He would bless a virtuous couple with. One could think that even a worldly or ungodly couple would appreciate the grace of not receiving a child that is deformed and that they, if they believed in God or were aware of these promises, would act in accordance to the words of the Holy Scripture; but now neither “Catholics” or so-called Christians nor any people of the world care anything about these words of our Lord that promises the inestimable grace of receiving “a blessing that sound children may be born of you.”

Tobias 8:4-10 “Then Tobias exhorted the virgin, and said to her: Sara, arise, and let us pray to God today, and tomorrow, and the next day: because for these three nights we are joined to God: and when the third night is over, we will be in our own wedlock. For we are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God. So they both arose, and prayed earnestly both together that health might be given them, And Tobias said: Lord God of our father, may the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains, and the rivers, and all thy creatures that are in them, bless thee. Thou made Adam of the slime of the earth,

and gave him Eve for a helper. And now, Lord, thou know that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever. Sara also said: Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, and let us grow old both together in health.”

St. Augustine also taught that the first man and woman were waiting for God’s order and commandment to engage in intercourse since God created Adam and Eve without sexual desire for each other. Thus, St. Augustine, with the rest of the Church, understood that sexual desire was not an aspect of God’s design for the male and the female: “For why should they not await God’s authorization for this, since there was no drive of concupiscence coming from rebellious flesh?” Augustine concluded that sexual intercourse was “fundamentally alien to the original definition of humanity.” By this we can understand that the biblical teaching (in Tobias 6:18) of chaste and humble prayer for three days (before one consummates the marriage by the marital act) comes directly from God’s original plan and will for humanity before the fall and original sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden; for before the fall, the human will was infinitely more directed to obeying and following God’s perfect will and direction in all things rather than their own reason and judgment, as it sadly is now.

This is also why St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) taught that “the first man of our race [Adam] did not await the appropriate time, desiring the favor of marriage before the proper hour and he fell into sin by not waiting the time of God’s will... they [Adam and Eve] were impelled to do it before the normal time because they were still young and were persuaded by deception.” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, On Marriage XIV:94, XVII:102-103)

It is thus certain and an established fact by both the Holy Bible and Apostolic Tradition that those spouses who do not practice chastity and prayer for a while before they perform the marital act will much more easily fall into sexual sins of various sorts since they will be more easily controlled by the devil and his demons because of their carelessness and sloth in praying to God and invoking His Holy aid in resisting sinful inclinations and temptations.

Anne Catherine Emmerich was also told in her Revelations that Adam and Eve performed penance for seven years before “Seth, the child of promise, was there conceived and brought into the world”. Our Lord and God – whom they had offended – consoled them with this child for their loss of their first son, Abel, after seven years penance, which shows us that God requires penance from spouses who behaves badly or lustfully and that penance should be done without command. “I have learned many things which took place

in ancient times in the Grotto of the Crib. I remember only that Seth, the child of promise, was there conceived and brought into the world by Eve, **after a penitence of seven years.** It was there that the angel told her that God had given her this offspring in the place of Abel.” (Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ*) Either one makes penance in this life or in the next in Hell or in purgatory. God always requires penance when people commits evil acts. That is just a fact.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself indicates in *The Revelations of St. Bridget* that after the fall and sin of Adam and Eve, the devil aroused sensuality in them, and that their first sexual act or acts after the fall were heedlessly and thoughtlessly planned. The reason for this was that they were inspired by the devil to act more in accordance to their selfish lust than their reason, and that they did not pray to Our Lord before the marital act in humility, pleading to and asking Him to guard them from sinning during the act, as Our Lord wants all spouses to do. The Revelations also shows that Adam and Eve understood their lustful error after this happened, and that they thereafter were afraid to perform the marital act, and chose to completely abstain from the marital act for a while because of their fear of God’s wrath. They thus learned that Our Lord wanted them to pray for a while before they performed the marital act, and awaited Our Lord’s commandment for them to come together in marital union again, and after a while, God directly told them that they could have marital relations again.

The Son of God speaks: “After the disobedience was enacted, my angel came over them [Adam and Eve] and they were ashamed over their nakedness, and they immediately experienced the lust and desire of the flesh and suffered hunger and thirst. ... And for the sensuality the devil had aroused in them after their disobedience, I gave and created souls in their seed through my Divinity. And all the evil the devil tempted them with, I turned to good for them entirely.

“Thereafter, I showed them how to live and worship me, and I gave them permission to have relations, because before my permission and the enunciation of my will they were stricken with fear and were afraid to unite and have relations. Likewise, when Abel was killed and they were in mourning for a long time and observing abstinence, I was moved with compassion and comforted them. And when they understood my will, they began again to have relations and to procreate children, from which family I, their Creator, promised to be born.” (*St. Bridget’s Revelations*, Book 1 Chapter 26)

It is thus clear that “he who neglects prayer in the time of temptation is like a general, who, when surrounded by the enemy, does not ask for reinforcements from his monarch. **Adam fell into sin because when he was tempted he did not look to God for help.** We

should say a Hail Mary, or at least devoutly utter the holy names of Jesus and Mary. "These holy names," St. John Chrysostom declares, "have an intrinsic power over the devil, and are a terror to hell." At the name of Mary the devils tremble with fear; when she is invoked their power forsakes them as wax melts before the fire." (Rev. Francis Spirago, *The Catechism Explained*, A.D. 1899)

St. Ephraim, On Prayer Before Intercourse: "O Blessed Fruit conceived without intercourse, bless our wombs during intercourse. Have pity on our barrenness, Miraculous Child of virginity." (*Hymns of St. Ephraim: Hymn 7 On the Nativity*)

Loving God during intercourse and at all times

We have already seen that Our Lord wants us to love and think about Him both before, during and after the marital act. There are many pious examples in Holy Scripture and the lives of the Patriarchs, Prophets and Saints that we can learn from in this regard. Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary, however, never had marital relations. So the holiest example of a marriage that includes natural marital relations is the marriage of the Blessed Virgin Mary's parents: St. Joachim and St. Anna. They were chosen by God to be the parents of our Lord's Mother.

Concerning their married life, Joachim and Anna certainly engaged in natural marital relations. But does any faithful Catholic believe that these two Saints would either make use of unnatural sexual acts or advise anyone in any situation whatsoever to do so? Certainly not! The very idea is incompatible not only with the holiness of Saints, but with the ordinary holiness required by Christ of every married couple. All married persons are of course required by God to refrain from every kind of mortal sin, including sexual sins, actual mortal sins as well as objective mortal sins. We are all called to imitate the Saints, even the least worthy among us.

In truth, The Mother of God also reveals to us in *The Revelations of St. Bridget* that Her holy parents Anna and Joachim: "*would rather have died than to come together in carnal love; lust was dead in them*. I assure you that when they did come together, it was because of divine love and because of the angel's message [that revealed that they would be the parents of the holy Mother of God], not out of carnal desire, but against their will and out of a holy love for God. In this way, my flesh was put together by their seed and through divine love." (*St. Bridget's Revelations*, Book 1, Chapter 9)

Since Anna and Joachim's marriage was so holy, pious spouses should also pray to these two holy Saints in Heaven to protect them from sinning in the marital act. When one reads

these words about these most holy parents of Our Lady, and see how they despised the carnal and sensual love of the flesh and of the world, one can clearly see the great power chastity has in drawing down blessings from God. If God would have noticed any kind of sensuality in St. Anna and St. Joachim, they would never have become the parents of Our Lady. In truth, it was not fitting that the vessel of grace and the real Arc of the Covenant in which the Word of God made flesh dwelt, should be conceived in any other way than with a perfect and pure will, and without any shameful lust, just like it would have been for all parents in the Garden of Eden before the original sin of Adam and Eve.

Although a normal couple will not be spared from feeling any lust or concupiscence as it happened to Anna and Joachim through a special and divine grace, this should in no way hinder them from loving and desiring God during the procreative act. The Love of God should thus be the primary motive of the marital act along with the love of and desire to beget children for a couple rather than desiring or lusting after their own spouse. Most couples however choose to think about themselves or their spouse in an inordinate way and consequently to love themselves or their spouse during the procreative act. Anna and Joachim, however, clearly chose the best part, that is, loving, thinking about, and desiring to please God. If we think about pleasing God during the act of marriage and in our daily life, then our love will be directed towards Him – which is the best part. God’s love never dies! so it’s clearly a great mistake to seek love from a fleshly object that will rot and be eaten by worms in the grave, rather than seeking it from God, who lives and reigns forever and ever! Husbands and wives should thus love their own, their spouse and their children’s souls, instead of their own and other peoples bodies that will rot and be eaten by worms in the grave. This is an advice to those couples who wish to be perfect, as Anna and Joachim were perfect, and for those who wish to be united with God through love.

St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part 3, Chapter 38,
Instructions For Married Persons: “Matrimony is a great Sacrament, but I speak in Christ, and in the Church... Would to God that his most beloved Son were invited to all marriages, as he was to that of Cana; then the wine of consolations and benedictions would never be wanting; for the reason why there is commonly a scarcity of it at the beginning is, because Adonis [the god of beauty and desire] is invited instead of Jesus Christ, and Venus [the goddess whose functions encompassed love, beauty, sex, fertility and prosperity] instead of his blessed Mother. He that would have his lambs fair and spotted as Jacob’s were, must, like him, set fair rods of divers colors before the sheep when they meet to couple; and he that would have a happy success in marriage ought in his espousals to represent to himself the sanctity and dignity of this sacrament. But, alas! instead of this there are a thousand disorders committed in diversions, feasting, and immodest discourse; it is not surprising, then, that the success of marriages should not correspond. Above

all things, I exhort married people to that mutual love which the Holy Ghost so much recommends in the Scripture. O you that are married! I tell you not to love each other with a natural love, for it is thus that the turtles love; nor do I say, love one another with a human love, for the heathens do this; but I say to you, after the great Apostle, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church."

[Ephesians 5:25] And you, wives, love your husbands, as the Church loveth her Saviour. It was God that brought Eve to our first father, Adam, and gave her him in marriage; it is also God, O my friends! who, with his invisible hand, has tied the knot of the holy bond of your marriage, and given you to one another; why do you not, then, cherish each other with a holy, sacred, and divine love?

"... But while I exhort you to advance more and more in this mutual love, which you owe one another, beware lest it degenerate into any kind of jealousy; for it often happens, that as the worm is bred in the apple which is the most delicate and ripe, so jealousy grows in that love of married people which is the most ardent and affectionate, of which, nevertheless, it spoils and corrupts the substance, breeding, by insensible degrees, strifes, dissensions, and divorces. But jealousy is never seen where the friendship is reciprocally grounded on solid virtue: it is, therefore, an infallible mark that the love is in some degree sensual and gross, and has met with a virtue imperfect, inconstant, and subject to distrust. Jealousy is an absurd means of proving the sincerity of friendship. It may, indeed, be a sign of the greatness of the friendship, but never of its goodness, purity, and perfection; since the perfection of friendship presupposes an assurance of the virtue of those whom we love, and jealousy presupposes a doubt of it.

"If you desire, O husbands! that your wives should be faithful to you, give them a lesson by your example. "How," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "can you exact purity of your wives, when you yourselves live in impurity? How can you require of them that which you give them not? Do you wish them to be chaste? behave yourselves chastely towards them: and, as St. Paul says, 'let every man know how to possess his vessel in sanctification.' But if, on the contrary, you yourselves teach them not to be virtuous, it is not surprising if you are disgraced by their perdition. But you, O wives! whose honor is inseparably joined with purity and modesty, be zealous to preserve this your glory, and suffer no kind of loose behavior to tarnish the whiteness of your reputation."

"... Ladies formerly, as well as now, were accustomed to wear ear-rings of pearl, for the pleasure... But for my part, as I know that the great friend of God, Isaac, sent ear-rings, as the first earnest of his love, to the chaste Rebecca, I believe that this mysterious ornament signifies that the first part which a husband should take possession of in his wife, and which his wife should faithfully keep for him, is her ears; in order that no other language or noise should enter there but only the sweet and amiable music of chaste and pure words, which are the oriental pearls of

the gospel; for we must always remember that souls are poisoned by the ear, as the body is by the mouth.”

Love is necessary for Salvation

For a person to be Saved, the word of God teaches that one must love his God with “his whole heart, and with his whole soul, and with all his strength, and with all his mind” (Luke 10:27). If any person fails to do this, that is, if he chooses to love something more than he loves God, whatever it may be or however small it may be, he will not be Saved. Consequently, it is of the greatest importance that all people who desires their salvation must do everything in their power to acquire and foster the love of God in their own hearts, soul, mind and body, by loving Him very deeply and at all times, and by praying to Him for help in loving Him worthily. Indeed, if a person can grow a deep love and attachment for their husband or wife or their children and have a fervent desire for them constantly, then, likewise, a person should have no problem in growing an even greater love and longing for God in his own heart, if he only so wish and desire: “For to Christians this rule of life is given, that we should love the Lord Our God with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the mind, and our neighbor as ourselves... God alone, to find whom is the happiest life, must be worshiped in perfect purity and chastity... in chaste and faithful obedience, not to gratify passion, but for the propagation of offspring, and for domestic society.” (St. Augustine, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, Chapter 30, Section 62, A.D. 388)

Jesus Christ in the Revelations of St. Bridget gives us a perfect description of how good spouses in the spiritual marriage are to love and desire God above all else.

The Son of God speaks to St. Bridget: “For that reason, I wish to turn to the spiritual marriage, the kind that is appropriate for God to have with a chaste soul and chaste body. There are seven good things in it opposed to the evils mentioned above: First, there is no desire for beauty of form or bodily beauty or lustful sights, but only for the sight and love of God. Second, there is no desire to possess anything else than what is needed to survive, and just the necessities with nothing in excess. Third, they avoid vain and frivolous talk. Fourth, they do not care about seeing friends or relatives, but I am their love and desire. Fifth, they desire to keep the humility inwardly in their conscience and outwardly in the way they dress. Sixth, they never have any will of leading lustful lives. Seventh, they beget sons and daughters for their God through their good behavior and good example and through the preaching of spiritual words.

“They preserve their faith undefiled when they stand outside the doors of my church where they give me their consent and I give them mine. They go up to my

altar when they enjoy the spiritual delight of my Body and Blood in which delight they wish to be of one heart and one body and one will with me, and I, true God and man, mighty in heaven and on earth, shall be as the third with them and will fill their hearts. The worldly spouses begin their marriage in lustful desires like brute beasts, and even worse than brute beasts! But these spiritual spouses begin in love and fear of God and do not bother to please anyone but me. The evil spirit fills and incites those in the worldly marriage to carnal lust where there is nothing but unclean stench, but those in the spiritual marriage are filled with my Spirit and inflamed with the fire of my love that will never fail them.” (St. Bridget’s Revelations, Book 1, Chapter 26)

In contrast to the seven good fruits of the holy marriage described by Jesus Christ above, this is how Our Lord describes the seven evil fruits of the evil and worldly marriage:

“But people in this age are joined in marriage for seven [evil] reasons: First, because of facial beauty. Second, because of wealth. Third, because of the despicable pleasure and indecent joy they get out of their impure intercourse. Fourth, because of feasts with friends and uncontrolled gluttony. Fifth, because of vanity in clothing and eating, in joking and entertainment and games and other vanities. Sixth, for the sake of procreating children but not to raise them for the honor of God or good works but for worldly riches and honor. Seventh, they come together for the sake of lust and they are like brute beasts in their lustful desires. ... **Such a married couple will never see my face unless they repent**. For there is no sin so heavy or grave that penitence and repentance does not wash it away.” (St. Bridget’s Revelations, Book 1, Chapter 26)

In truth, only the ungodly or idolatrous couple would want to join in marriage to gratify carnal pleasures and evil desires or be working so selfishly in pleasing only themselves rather than pleasing God, who created them and even died for them. God must always come first! and He is always present in Spirit in every action, deed or move we will ever make. Let’s get this saving concept imprinted on our minds: “I am one God in three Persons, and one in Divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Just as it is impossible for the Father to be separated from the Son and the Holy Spirit to be separated from them both, and as it is impossible for warmth to be separated from fire, so it is impossible for these spiritual spouses to be separated from me; I am always as the third with them. Once my body was ravaged and died in torments, but it will never more be hurt or die. Likewise, those who are incorporated into me with a true faith and a perfect will shall never die away from me; for wherever they stand or sit or walk, I am always as the third with them.” (St. Bridget’s Revelations, Book 1, Chapter 26)

Jesus infallibly over and over again demands of us that we are to love Him even more than we love ourselves, our wife or even our children.

Matthew 10:37-39 “**He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.** And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me, shall find it.”

Haydock Commentary adds: “**Ver. 39.** But if he continues moderately happy as to temporal concerns till death, and places his affections on them, he hath found life here, but shall lose it in the next world. But he that shall, for the sake of Christ, deprive himself of the pleasures of this life, shall receive the reward of a hundred fold in the next.”

And in St. Bridget’s Revelations, Our Lord spoke these words describing how Adam and Eve’s love for God was perfect before the fall, saying: “**but I alone was all their good and pleasure and perfect delight.**” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 1, Chapter 26)

The meaning of the above words, “but I alone was all their good and pleasure and perfect delight,” isn’t that a person can’t delight in or feel pleasure in/from God anymore after the fall, but rather that before the fall, God was the only delight and pleasure man ever felt and desired. Before the fall, man did all in God and for God, and no selfish love existed as it does now. After the fall, however, God had to compete for man’s love with human concupiscence and fleshly lusts. God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5), and He wants us to love and desire Him above everything else. So to love God during all times, even during intercourse, is an advice to those couples who wish to be perfect, as Adam and Eve were perfect, and for those who ardently long and desires to be united with God through love.

St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part 3, Chapter 39, **Of The Sanctity Of The Marriage Bed**: “Now, excess in eating consists not only in eating too much, but also in the time and manner of eating. It is surprising, dear Philothea [to whom the book was written], that honey, which is so proper and wholesome a food for bees, may, nevertheless, become so hurtful to them as sometimes to make them sick: for in the spring, when they eat too much of it, being overcharged with it in the forepart of their head and wings, they become sick, and frequently die. In like manner, nuptial commerce... is, nevertheless, in certain cases dangerous to those that exercise it; for it frequently debilitates the soul with venial

sin, as in cases of mere and simple excess; and sometimes it kills it effectually by mortal sin, as when the order appointed for the procreation of children is violated and perverted; in which case according as one departs more or less from it, the sins are more or less abominable, but always mortal: for the procreation of children being the principal end of marriage one may never lawfully depart from the order which that end requires; though, on account of some accident or circumstance, it cannot at that time be brought about, as it happens when barrenness, or pregnancy, prevents generation.

“In these occurrences corporal commerce may still be just... provided the rules of generation be followed: no accident whatsoever being able to prejudice the law which the principal end of marriage has imposed. Certainly the infamous and the execrable action of Onan in his marriage was detestable in the sight of God, as the holy text of the 38th chapter of Genesis testifies: for although certain heretics of our days, much more blamable than the Cynics, of whom St. Jerome speaks in his commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, have been pleased to say it was the perverse intention only of that wicked man which displeased God, the Scripture positively asserts the contrary, and assures us that the act itself which he committed was detestable and abominable in the sight of God.

“It is a certain mark of a base and abject spirit to think of eating before meal time, and, still more, to amuse ourselves afterwards with the pleasure which we took in eating, keeping it alive in our words and imagination, and delighting in the recollection of the sensual satisfaction we had in swallowing down those morsels; as men do who before dinner have their minds fixed on the spit, and after dinner on the dishes; men worthy to be "scullions" of a kitchen, "who," as St. Paul says, "make a god of their belly." Persons of honor never think of eating but at sitting down at table, and after dinner wash their hands and their mouth, that they may neither retain the taste nor the scent of what they have been eating.

“The elephant, although a gross beast, is yet the most decent and most sensible of any other upon earth. I will give you a specimen of his chastity: although he never changes his female, and hath so tender a love for her whom he hath chosen, yet he never couples with her but at the end of every three years, and then only for the space of five days, but so privately that he is never seen in the act. On the sixth day afterwards, when he makes his appearance, the first thing he does is to go directly to some river, where he washes his body entirely, being unwilling to return to the herd till he is quite purified. May not these modest dispositions in such an animal serve as lessons to married people, not to keep their affections engaged in those sensual and carnal pleasures which, according to their vocation, they have exercised; but when they are past to wash their heart and affection, and purify themselves from them as soon as possible, that afterwards, with freedom of mind, they may practice other actions more pure and elevated.

“In his advice consists the perfect practice of that excellent doctrine of St. Paul to the Corinthians. "The time is short," said he; "it remaineth that they who have wives be as though they have none." For, according to St. Gregory, that man has a wife as if he had none, who takes corporal satisfaction with her in such a manner as not to be diverted from spiritual exercises. Now, what is said of the husband is understood reciprocally of the wife. "Let those that use the world," says the same apostle, "be as though they used it not." Let every one, then, use this world according to his calling, but in such manner that, not engaging his affection in it, he may be as free and ready to serve God as if he used it not. "It is the great evil of man," says St. Augustine, "to desire to enjoy the things which he should only use." We should enjoy spiritual things, and only use corporal, of which when the use is turned into enjoyment, our rational soul is also changed into a brutish and beastly soul. I think I have said all that I would say to make myself understood, without saying that which I would not say.”

Holy children

It's a fact of history and tradition that holy parents often raise pious and holy children. The reasons behind this is that the children of holy and devout parents often imitate the good and righteous deeds of their parents as much as they are able. In contrast, according to numerous saints and spiritual revelations, sinful and lustful parents influence and affect their children by their bad life and example, inflicting sinful thoughts, impulses and temptations upon their children. Thus, every parent who love their children and their future children should do their utmost to live in holiness, knowing that every act they will ever do can have an effect on their children – for better or for worse. Only in Hell will bad parents understand how their deeds effected their children in a negative way, but then it is sadly too late for them. In *St. Bridget's Revelations*, it is described how such evil parents will be damned for their sinful lives.

The Son of God speaks: “Sometimes I let evil parents give birth to good children, but more often, evil children are born of evil parents, since these children imitate the evil and unrighteous deeds of their parents as much as they are able and would imitate it even more if my patience allowed them. **Such a married couple will never see my face unless they repent.** For there is no sin so heavy or grave that penitence and repentance does not wash it away.” (*St. Bridget's Revelations*, Book 1, Chapter 26)

St. Francis de Sales, in his book *Introduction to the Devout Life*, in the chapter *Instructions For Married Persons*, gives parents important information about how they

are to raise and care for their children: “St. Monica, being pregnant of the great St. Augustine, dedicated him by frequent oblations to the Christian religion, and to the service and glory of God, as he himself testifies, saying, that "he had already tasted the salt of God in his mother’s womb." This is a great lesson for Christian women, to offer up to his divine Majesty the fruit of their wombs, even before they come into the world; for God, who accepts the offerings of an humble and willing heart, commonly at that time seconds the affections of mothers; witness Samuel, St. Thomas of Aquinas, St. Andrew of Fiesola, and many others. The mother of St. Bernard, a mother worthy of such a son, as soon as her children were born, took them in her arms, and offered them up to Jesus Christ; and, from that moment, she loved them with respect as things consecrated to God and entrusted by him to her care. This pious custom was so pleasing to God that her seven children became afterwards eminent for sanctity. But when children begin to have the use of reason, both their fathers and mothers ought to take great care to imprint the fear of God in their hearts.

“The devout queen Blanche performed this duty most fervently with regard to St. Lewis [King St. Louis IX], her son. She often said to him, "I would much rather, my dear child, see you die before my eyes, than see you commit only one mortal sin." This caution remained so deeply engraved in his soul that, as he himself related, not one day of his life passed in which he did not remember it, and take all possible care to observe it faithfully. Families and generations are, in our language, called houses; and even the Hebrews called the generations of children the building up of a house; for, in this sense, it is said that God built houses for the midwives of Egypt. Now, this is to show that the raising of a house, or family, consists not in storing up a quantity of worldly possessions, but in the good education of children in the fear of God, and in virtue, in which no pains or labor ought to be spared; for children are the crown of their parents. Thus, St. Monica fought with so much fervor and constancy against the evil inclination of her son St. Augustine, that, having followed him by sea and land, she made him more happily the child of her tears, by the conversion of his soul, than he had been of her blood, by the generation of his body.”

The lack of fear of God is one of the greatest reasons why spouses sin sexually

The Book of Tobias of the Holy Bible describes how The Holy Archangel Raphael delivered a message from God to the youth Tobias, telling him that: “when the third night is past, **thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord,** moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children... [Tobias said] And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.” This shows us that one must have the fear of God both with regard to the marital sexual act, as well as with all other acts. One should, however, fear to offend God in the

marital act more than other acts, as it is so potent to offend God and damn and deceive a person because of its intoxicating and shameful nature.

Adam and Eve's lack of the fear of God as well as their lack of belief that the punishment of death that they were told would befall them if they disobeyed God's command and ate of the fruit "of the tree of knowledge of good and evil," shows us that the fear of God was and still is necessary both before and after the fall of man. "*And He [God] commanded him [Adam], saying: Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat: But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.*" (Genesis 2:16-17)

If Adam and Eve had feared God, they would never have dared to do anything that would have contradicted His Holy Will or angered Him. In truth, the fear of God is not only necessary on this earth and for us humans, but it was and is also necessary for the angels in Heaven. Satan and the third of the angels that he deceived to follow him in his rebellion against God all lacked a fear of God. In contrast to these fallen angels, St. Michael and the rest of the angels all feared God, and thus were confirmed in their station as the most high servants of the Eternal and Almighty. Indeed, the very definition of the name "Michael" is "Who is like God" which is the exclamation and rebuke St. Michael made in Heaven in answer to Lucifer's proud opposition to God. This defense St. Michael made for God, rebuking Satan, and saying "Who is like God", as sweet as it is sublime, is an exclamation that represents both awe and reverence for God but also fear and the knowledge of one's nothingness in the presence of Our Lord. The most common theme in the Bible is that ***The Fear of the Lord*** is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 110:10), and that *His mercy is only upon those who fear Him* (Psalm 102:17; Lk. 1:50; 2 Cor. 5:11; etc.) and thus, it is evident that only wicked spouses who refuse to fear God or Hell dare to commit sexual sins or unnatural and non-procreative sexual acts with each other.

Ecclesiasticus 1:11-40 "The fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy. The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy, and gladness, and length of days. With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed. The love of God is honourable wisdom. And they to whom she shall shew herself love her by the sight, and by the knowledge of her great works.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and was created with the faithful in the womb, it walketh with chosen women, and is known with the just and faithful. The fear of the Lord is the religiousness of knowledge. Religiousness shall keep and justify the heart, it shall give joy and gladness. It shall go well with him that feareth the Lord, and in the days of his end he shall be blessed. To fear God is

the fulness of wisdom, and fulness is from the fruits thereof.

“She shall fill all her house with her increase, and the storehouses with her treasures. The fear of the Lord is a crown of wisdom, filling up peace and the fruit of salvation: And it hath seen, and numbered her: but both are the gifts of God. Wisdom shall distribute knowledge, and understanding of prudence: and exalteth the glory of them that hold her. The root of wisdom is to fear the Lord: and the branches thereof are longlived.

“In the treasures of wisdom is understanding, and religiousness of knowledge: but to sinners wisdom is an abomination. The fear of the Lord driveth out sin: For he that is without fear, cannot be justified: for the wrath of his high spirits is his ruin. A patient man shall bear for a time, and afterwards joy shall be restored to him. A good understanding will hide his words for a time, and the lips of many shall declare his wisdom.

“In the treasures of wisdom is the signification of discipline: But the worship of God is an abomination to a sinner. Son, if thou desire wisdom, keep justice, and God will give her to thee. For the fear of the Lord is wisdom and discipline: and that which is agreeable to him, Is faith, and meekness: and he will fill up his treasures.

“Be not incredulous to the fear of the Lord: and come not to him with a double heart. Be not a hypocrite in the sight of men, and let not thy lips be a stumblingblock to thee. Watch over them, lest thou fall, and bring dishonour upon thy soul, And God discover thy secrets, and cast thee down in the midst of the congregation. Because thou camest to the Lord wickedly, and thy heart is full of guile and deceit.”

This lack of the fear for God that so rules this wicked society today also verifies the sorrowful truth told by Our Lord in the Holy Gospels that very few of all humans escape being condemned to an eternal torment in Hell. Our Blessed Lady, also echoing this truth of Our Lord, revealed to the Children at Fatima, Portugal, in the year 1917 that, “**The sins of the world are too great! The sins which lead most souls to hell are sins of the flesh! ... Many marriages are not good; they do not please Our Lord and are not of God** [since these spouses marry for carnal and lustful motives and perform unlawful and non-procreative sexual acts].”

Catholics must understand that **few are saved**. Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed that the road to Heaven is straight and narrow and few find it, while the road to Hell is wide and taken by most (Mt. 7:13).

Matthew 7:13 “**Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to**

life, and few there are that find it!

Luke 13:24 **“Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able.”**

Scripture also teaches that almost the entire world lies in darkness, so much so that Satan is even called the “prince” (John 12:31) and “god” (2 Cor. 4:3) of this world. “We know that we are of God, **and the whole world is seated in wickedness.**” (1 John 5:19) The sexual sin that so pervades society is undoubtedly one of the greatest causes of why so many are damned. Some saints even say that the sexual sin is the greatest cause in the world of why people are damned, and this is highly probable since this sin is so much more pleasurable than the other sins. Thus, if a person wants to be saved, he or she must make it their highest priority to correct or amend their sexual sins, for all other sins will in almost every case be less hard to conquer since our flesh is not as effected by them as the sexual sin is.

God must always come first

St. Paul, the chosen vessel of God, a former persecutor of Christ worthy of conversion, worthy of praise in the Lord and now one of the great apostles, teaches us in his first letter to the Corinthians how spouses should live in marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:29-35 “This therefore I say, brethren; the time is short; it remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as if they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as if they used it not: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you to be without solicitude. He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your profit: not to cast a snare upon you; but for that which is decent, and which may give you power to attend upon the Lord, without impediment.”

What St. Paul is saying here is that even those who are married should not place the love of their family or the pleasures or affections they have from them above God, but consider that all are dust and that One, and One only is to be loved above all else—Our Lord Jesus

Christ.

When St. Paul mentions “that they also who have wives, be as if they had none”, he is speaking about how spouses must not place the carnal love they have for each other above their love for the Lord. St. Paul’s words are clear: The spouses must act as though they were not married (within due limits of course) since the married man “is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided.” This division of the married man makes it a great necessity that even married people should consider themselves in their own thought processes as though they are unmarried and chaste, although their external and physical marital duties hinders them from pursuing this endeavor to the fullest. As St. Paul says: “it remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as if they had none”.

One must obviously love all people as much as one can, but one must also remember that most people, however dear or near, often reject God and hinder one’s own spiritual advancement. The only one who will always remain true to us and that we know with a certainty will never become evil, is God, and with God, His angels and Saints in Heaven. But humans, however dear or near, often fall away from the truth and this rejection of God by our family or friends requires us to exclude them from our communion. Our Lord explicitly mentions that such acts are necessary sometimes.

Luke 18:29 “Amen, I say to you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive much more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

Luke 14 gives us an even clearer example from the gospel which shows us that we must be able to renounce all association to our family or friends when necessity requires it.

Luke 14:26 “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”

Douay Rheims Commentary on Luke 14:26: “Hate not: The law of Christ does not allow us to hate even our enemies, much less our parents: but the meaning of the text is, that we must be in that disposition of soul, as to be willing to renounce, and part with every thing, how near or dear soever it may be to us, that would keep us from following Christ.”

Our Lord does not only teach us to follow this principle, but he also practiced what he taught himself. His deepest belonging was to the Father, the Father's House, the Father's concerns. This commitment would reverberate at later times, severing ultimate claims on Him of his closest family. In the presence of these and to their hearing, He would ask, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in Heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." This, in His own life, was the moral authority to demand the same of all others, "You cannot serve two masters..."

Most spouses in this world undoubtedly commit a most grievous act of faithlessness against Our Lord when they love their spouse or the carnal love they derive from them more than God. Their treasure is sadly a most vile corpse that will rot and be eaten by worms in the grave. *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* (Luke 12:34)

The Christian servant is one who, "risen with Christ, seeks the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God" and one who "minds the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, **lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols.**" (Colossians 3:1-5)

Luke chapter 18 is another excellent example in the gospels of how Our Lord wants people to think in their own thought processes.

Luke 18:15-17 "And they brought unto him also infants, that he might touch them. Which when the disciples saw, they rebuked them. But Jesus, calling them together, said: Suffer children to come to me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Amen, I say to you: Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a child, shall not enter into it."

Notice that Our Lord states that those who shall not receive the kingdom of God as a child, shall not be saved: "Amen, I say to you: Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a child, shall not enter into it." What are the good virtues or characteristics of children that Our Lord refers to in this verse that men must have in order to be saved? There are obviously many virtues that children have but two of the most notable ones are purity, and humility, among many other virtues such as strong faith and trust. The first virtue that

children are naturally endowed with is purity, and just like children, men must also be pure and chaste in their own thought processes in accordance with Our Lord's words, even though some must fulfill their marital duties. All children are also humble in a way since they know that they know nothing compared to grown ups, and that they need to learn more in order to understand different things. Men and women should also think in the same way. They should humbly think that they know nothing, and that they need to learn more in order to understand different things. Until the moment of death, all men can learn more about God, goodness or other things conducive to spiritual growth. Every day is a new day with new opportunities to practice virtues of different kinds, like patience, kindness, purity, love of neighbor and God etc. However, whoever states the contrary, that is, that he already knows all, is a proud liar who attributes to himself God's perfect knowledge.

Children also love their parents in many ways and desire their presence at all times. Children also frequently tend to express their love for their parents in different ways. For instance, it is not uncommon for children to simply walk up to their parents for no other purpose than to express their love for them, and say they love them. Children also have total childlike faith and confidence in their parents, firmly believing that they know what's best for them. It is indeed by children that God wishes to teach us how we should act towards Him, and love Him. Even though we are grown ups and not as children, we should still act in our mind towards God as do small, defenseless children towards their own parents; that is, we should have the same desire, love, longing and confidence for Our God and Father in Heaven as do children for their parents. And just like children, we should admit our own utter dependance on Him, seeking His protection and Fatherly care, having childlike trust in Him, firmly believing that He will do what's best for us and our salvation; and just like children, we are to feel a deep desire and longing for God as do small children for their parents, who simply cannot stop crying until they are embraced by them; and finally, just like children, we are by our prayers, meditations and thoughts to confidently walk up to God and tell Him how much we love Him.

Every one has two lives. The first life (which is the most important life) is the inner life of the soul, consisting for the most part of desires, thoughts and affections. The second life is the outer or external life made up of the daily actions of the visible life. The pitiful state of today's humanity however, is that most people completely lack the inner life and because of this, they lose their immortal souls. How trivial indeed must not those small trifles and things seem for those lost souls who loved and desired earthly and perishable goods and pleasures more than they loved God when after a billion years in Hell have gone by in the smoke that smothers and suffocates their whole being, while the painful and tormenting fire that will never be quenched however much they plead with Our Lord to alleviate their torment, continues to torment them mercilessly!

Romans 6:3-6; 6:12-23 “Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer.

“... **Let no sin therefore reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin;** but present yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of justice unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be of sin unto death, or of obedience unto justice.

“But thanks be to God, that you were the servants of sin, but have obeyed from the heart, unto that form of doctrine, into which you have been delivered. Being then freed from sin, we have been made servants of justice. I speak an human thing, because of the infirmity of your flesh. For as you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity, unto iniquity; so now yield your members to serve justice, unto sanctification. For when you were the servants of sin, you were free men to justice. What fruit therefore had you then in those things, of which you are now ashamed? For the end of them is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end life everlasting. For the wages of sin is death. But the grace of God, life everlasting, in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Why do you say that the marital sexual act must be excused with the motive of procreation? Eating does not need to be excused, and therefore, neither does the marital act need to be excused. This argument also shows that one can lawfully perform non-procreative forms of sexual acts, such as sensual kisses and touches, that are not able to procreate in themselves, since one does not need to excuse an act just because it is pleasurable, as in the case of eating.

Answer: St. Thomas Aquinas speaks about this question of the sexual act compared with eating in great detail in his *Summa*, and he shows, as we also have shown, that the marital

sexual act is intoxicating and oppressive on the reason, which makes it necessary for the marital act to be excused with the absolutely necessary motive of procreation. In contrast to the intoxicating power of the sexual act, however, **“in the act of eating there is not such an intense pleasure overpowering the reason”**, and so this shows us that this objection is completely false and without any merit.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 1: “[Objection 1: Eating doesn’t need to be excused. Therefore neither does the marriage act.] Reply to Objection 1: **In the act of eating there is not such an intense pleasure overpowering the reason as in the aforesaid action, both because the generative power, whereby original sin is transmitted, is infected and corrupt, whereas the nutritive power, by which original sin is not transmitted, is neither corrupt nor infected;** and again because each one feels in himself a defect [of hunger] of the individual more than a defect of the species [of mankind]. Hence, in order to entice a man to take food which supplies a defect of the individual, it is enough that he feel this defect; but in order to entice him to the act whereby a defect of the species is remedied, Divine providence attached pleasure to that act, which moves even irrational animals in which there is not the stain of original sin. Hence the comparison [between eating and having sex] fails.”

Here we see St. Thomas explaining the very evident truth of the Natural Law that the sexual act is more oppressive on the reason than eating, thus making it similar to the effect of a drug. In addition, we see that St. Thomas explains that there are two reasons why the sexual act have **“such an intense pleasure overpowering the reason... both because the generative power, whereby original sin is transmitted, is infected and corrupt, whereas the nutritive power, by which original sin is not transmitted, is neither corrupt nor infected; and again because each one feels in himself a defect [of hunger] of the individual more than a defect of the species [of mankind].”** First, St. Thomas mentions the fact that “the generative power, whereby original sin is transmitted, is infected and corrupt”, in order to show why the marital sexual act is so intoxicating and oppressive on the reason. Thus, the reason why the marital sexual act is so intoxicating is because Adam and Eve’s original sin in the Garden of Eden affected the genital organs in a great way, which in turn made all of us humans ashamed to show our private parts after the fall. As a second argument why the marital sexual act is so oppressive on the reason, St. Thomas confirms the very obvious fact that since a person suffers more personally from the defect of being hungry or fatigued from lack of food, than from a defect of the human species, or that fewer people are being born to him, “in order to entice him to the act” so that more children can be born in this world “Divine providence attached pleasure to that [sexual] act, which moves even irrational

animals in which there is not the stain of original sin.” It is therefore clear that “in order to entice a man to take food which supplies a defect of the individual, it is enough that he feel this defect; but in order to entice him to the act whereby a defect of the species is remedied, Divine providence attached pleasure to that [sexual] act, which moves even irrational animals in which there is not the stain of original sin. Hence the comparison [between eating and having sex] fails.”

In another part of his *Summa*, St. Thomas Aquinas confirms the fact that the pleasure of eating and having sex are quite different.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 153, Art. 2: “**Venereal pleasures are more impetuous, and are more oppressive on the reason than the pleasures of the palate**: and therefore they are in greater need of chastisement and restraint, since if one consent to them this increases the force of concupiscence and weakens the strength of the mind. Hence Augustine says (Soliloq. i, 10): ‘I consider that nothing so casts down the manly mind from its heights as the fondling of women, and those bodily contacts which belong to the married state.’”

St. Thomas continues to speak about the necessity for the marital sexual act to be excused:

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 1: “Whether certain blessings are necessary in order to excuse [marriage and sexual intercourse in] marriage? Wherever there is indulgence [as St. Paul states], there must needs be some reason for excuse. Now marriage is allowed in the state of infirmity "by indulgence" (1 Corinthians 7:6). Therefore it needs to be excused by certain goods. Further, the intercourse of fornication and that of marriage are of the same species as regards the species of nature. But the intercourse of fornication is wrong in itself. Therefore, in order that the marriage intercourse be not wrong, something must be added to it to make it right, and draw it to another moral species.

I answer that, No wise man should allow himself to lose a thing except for some compensation in the shape of an equal or better good. Wherefore for a thing that has a loss attached to it to be eligible, it needs to have some good connected with it, which by compensating for that loss makes that thing ordinate and right. **Now there is a loss of reason incidental to the union of man and woman, both because the reason is carried away entirely on account of the vehemence of the pleasure, so that it is unable to understand anything at the same time, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. vii, 11); and again because of the tribulation of the flesh which such persons have to suffer from**

solicitude for temporal things (1 Corinthians 7:28). Consequently the choice of this union cannot be made ordinate except by certain compensations whereby that same union is righted, and these are the goods which **excuse** marriage and make it right.”

Since all humans knows by instinct and nature that one may not get intoxicated for selfish or unnecessary reasons, it is clear that both the married as well as the unmarried who perform non-procreative or unnecessary forms of sexual acts are in a state of damnation, since they are sinning mortally against both nature and their own reason. “For **necessary** sexual intercourse for begetting [of children] is free from blame, and itself is **alone** worthy of marriage. **But that which goes beyond this necessity [of begetting children, such as sensual kisses and touches] no longer follows reason but lust.**” (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 11)

Just like in the case of the person who use drugs, one must have an absolutely necessary reason, such as an illness, for using the drugs in order for it to be without sin, and motives that aren't absolutely necessary such as “love”, “pleasure” or “fun” can never be used as an excuse to excuse the marital act from being a sin, just like one cannot use such unnecessary and evil excuses for the purpose of excusing one's drug abuse. In this context of speaking about the truth that the vehemence of the marital sexual act is “**more oppressive on the reason than the pleasures of the palate**”, St. Thomas shows us that the sexual act is intoxicating and thus oppressive on the reason, just like a drug is, which shows us that it is a fact of the Natural Law that the marital sexual act must be excused with the absolutely necessary motive of procreation, just like drug usage must be excused with the absolutely necessary motive of pain relief and health.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 5: “Whether the marriage act can be excused without the marriage goods [sacrament, fidelity, procreation]? On the contrary, If the cause be removed the effect is removed. **Now the marriage goods are the cause of rectitude in the marriage act. Therefore the marriage act cannot be excused without them.** Further, the aforesaid act does not differ from the act of fornication except in the aforesaid goods. But the act of fornication is always evil. Therefore the marriage act also will always be evil unless it be excused...”

Therefore, the natural and procreative marital act performed by two married spouses is the only sexual act that can be excused from sin since man knows by nature and instinct that one must excuse an act of intoxication with an absolutely necessary motive. Anything contrary to this is unnatural and evil.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Sententiarum*, 4.33.1.3: “I respond, it must be said to the first question that, as is clear from the things said before, that action is said to be against the law of nature which is not fitting to the due end, whether because it is not ordered to it through the action of the agent, or because of itself it is disproportionate to that end. However, the end which nature intends from lying together [in the sexual act] is the offspring to be procreated and educated; and, so that this good might be sought, nature put delight in intercourse, as Augustine says. Whoever, therefore, uses copulation for the delight which is in it, not referring the intention to the end intended by nature, [that is, procreation] acts against nature; and this is also true unless such copulation is had as can be appropriately ordered to that end [that is, one also acts against nature when one performs non-procreative sexual acts].”

In fact, sexual sins, whether between married or unmarried people are especially reprehensible and evil since they are very similar to the evil effect of a drug user abusing drugs in order to get intoxicated or high, or an alcoholic abusing alcohol in order to get drunk. In this context, St. Thomas Aquinas taught the following concerning the vice of sexual intemperance and how the “the reason is absorbed” when one performs unlawful sexual acts: “**Among the vices of intemperance, venereal sins are most deserving of reproach, both on account of the insubordination of the genital organs, and because by these sins especially, the reason is absorbed.**” (*Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 151, Art. 4, Reply to Objection 3, Whether purity belongs especially to chastity?)

When married spouses do not excuse the marital act (which is intoxicating in a way similar to a drug) with the honorable motive of begetting children by only performing the normal, natural and procreative marital act, they perform an act that is inherently sinful, selfish, unreasonable, and unnatural since “**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* # 54) and since “**the act of marriage exercised for pleasure only**” is **condemned as a sin by the Natural Law** (Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #9, March 4, 1679). And so, the marital act needs an absolutely necessary excuse to legitimize and make moral the inherently evil act of getting intoxicated just like one needs an excuse, like a grave illness, to legitimize and make moral the inherently evil act of getting intoxicated by a drug.

Since the marital act performed by two married spouses gives the spouses the same pleasure and sensual intoxication of the flesh that a fornicating unmarried couple experience in their sexual acts, St. Thomas is indeed right to say that: “The marriage act

differs not from fornication except by the marriage goods. **If therefore these [the procreative end and intent, fidelity, and faith] were not sufficient to excuse it marriage would be always unlawful;** and this is contrary to what was stated above (Question 41, Article 3). ... Therefore these goods can excuse marriage so that it is nowise a sin.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 4)

An inherently evil act must always be excused with an absolutely necessary motive or purpose. Otherwise, it will always be a sin. Two examples that clearly demonstrates this fact of “excusing” an otherwise evil act are found in the case of a man injuring another person, which is excused in the case of self-defense; or in the case of a man getting intoxicated, which is excused when a man is sick and requires this intoxication in order to get pain relief. All other inherently evil acts than what is absolutely necessary are strictly condemned as sins, since they cannot be excused by an absolutely necessary motive. For example, a man cannot hurt another man if he wants his money, or if he does not like him; and a man cannot get drunk or intoxicated just because he is sad, unhappy, or want to feel “love”, for none of these excuses are absolutely necessary. Thus, these excuses are not enough by themselves to excuse these acts from being sinful. In truth, some evil acts cannot even be excused at all, such as in the case of a man who is suffering from hunger, but who nevertheless is never allowed to kill another person in order to get food to survive. It is thus a dogmatic fact of the Natural Law that “the generative [sexual] act is a sin unless it is excused.” (St. Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Four Books of Sentences*, d. 31, a. 2, q. 1) It could not be more clear from the Natural Law as well as the teachings of the Church that “Coitus is reprehensible and evil, unless it be excused” (Peter Lombard, Archbishop of Paris, *Sententiarum*, 3, d. 37, c. 4) and that is also why all who commit the marital act without excusing it, will always commit sin. **“Therefore the marriage act also will always be evil unless it be excused...”** (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 49, Art. 5)

Question: Is it sinful to have marital relations during the menstruation of the woman?

Answer: The question of whether marital relations during the menstruation of the woman is sinful or not is hard to answer since ambiguous statements by Pope Pius XI’s encyclical *Casti Connubii* are interpreted by some to mean that it is allowed. Pope Pius XI explains that a husband and wife may use their marital rights in the proper manner, although on account of natural reasons, new life cannot be brought forth, but his teaching does not define whether it is speaking about the menstruation of the woman or some other sickness or defect of the woman, like the monthly infertility of women.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 59), Dec. 31, 1930: **“Nor are those considered**

as acting against nature who, in the married state, use their right in the proper manner, although on account of natural reasons either of time or of certain defects, new life cannot be brought forth. For in matrimony as well as in the use of matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivation of mutual love, and the **quieting of concupiscence** which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider, **SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN]** and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.”

This teaching does not directly address the question of whether it is allowed or not to perform the marital act during the menstruation period of the woman, and so there is some measure of uncertainty whether the Church allows this filthy act to be performed since the Old Testament of the Bible, as well as the Popes, Fathers, Saints and Doctors of the Church throughout the ages, condemned or opposed marital relations during this time period.

Pope St. Gregory the Great, in his “*Epistle To Augustine, Bishop of the Angli [English]*” (c. 597 A.D.) writes that all women: “are forbidden to have intercourse with their husbands while held of their accustomed sicknesses [menses]; so much so that the sacred law smites with death any man who shall go into a woman having her sickness [Leviticus 20:18].” (*Epistles of St. Gregory the Great*, Book XI, Letter 64, To Augustine, Bishop of the Angli)

As mentioned, it was forbidden and a capital offense (that is, it was an act that was punished by death and execution) for spouses to have marital relations during the wife’s infertile monthly cycle during the Old Covenant era. This clearly shows us that God does not want spouses to perform the marital act during this time.

Leviticus 20:18 “If any man lie with a woman in her flowers, and uncover her nakedness, and she open the fountain of her blood, both shall be destroyed out of the midst of their people.”

We read in the Old Testament that God had forbidden the marital act by separating the wife from her husband during the infertile monthly menstrual cycle of the woman. Leviticus 15:19: “*The woman, who at the return of the month, hath her issue of blood, shall be separated seven days.*” Haydock Commentary explains: “Days, not only out of the camp, but from the company of men.” As soon as a woman shows signs of infertility, intercourse would cease. “*Thou shalt not approach to a woman having her flowers: neither shalt thou uncover her nakedness*” (Leviticus 18:19). Haydock Commentary adds: “**Saint Augustine believes that this law is still in force.** [On Leviticus 20:18] This

intemperance was by a positive law declared a mortal offence of the Jews.”

This wondrous law from God not only diminished the time a couple could have marital relations, but it also prohibited the women from the company of men, and this certainly includes her husband. What was God’s reason for separating the woman from her man you might ask? In truth, God who knows more about human weaknesses and sins than all of humanity combined ordained this so that the temptation to violate His laws and have marital relations during this period would not happen. For most temptations work like this: as long as you take away the source of the temptation, it will always be easier to control.

Ezechiel 18:5-6,9 “And if a man be just, and do judgment and justice, And hath not eaten upon the mountains [that is, of the sacrifices there offered to idols], nor lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel: and hath not defiled his neighbour’s wife, **nor come near to a menstruous woman...** he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God.”

Another reason why God made this wondrous law was so that a couple would have marital relations less frequently, which in turn would help them get stronger in resisting and conquering sexual temptations of different kinds. For as we have seen already, those who indulge in the marital act too often commits a sin of gluttony of sorts and will fall more easily into other sins since they do not order their actions in accordance with right reason, but in accordance with their unmortified and sensual desires like animals or brute beasts.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) also did not believe that it was lawful, and taught very clearly in his *Summa Theologica* that it is a sin to knowingly demand the marital debt when a woman is menstruating. He also compared demanding the debt on such occasions with the case of a madman being dangerous to other people, both bodily and spiritually (*Summa Theologica*, Suppl., Q. 64, Art. 4, Objection 3).

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 64, Art. 3: “Whether it is allowable for a menstruous wife to ask for the marriage debt? On the contrary, “Thou shalt not approach to a woman having her flowers” (Leviticus 18:19) where Augustine observes: “Although he has already sufficiently forbidden this he repeats the prohibition here lest he seem to have spoken figuratively.” Further, “All our justices” are become “as the rag of a menstruous woman” (Isaiah 64:6) where Jerome observes: “Men ought then to keep away from their wives [at this time]... so that those parents who are not ashamed to come together in sexual intercourse have their sin made obvious to all”: and thus the same conclusion follows.

“I answer that, It was forbidden in the Law to approach to a menstruous woman, for two reasons both on account of her uncleanness, and on account of the [spiritual and bodily] harm that frequently resulted to the offspring from such intercourse. With regard to the first reason, it was a ceremonial precept, but with regard to the second it was a moral precept. For since marriage is chiefly directed to the good of the offspring, all use of marriage which is intended for the good of the offspring is in order. Consequently this precept is binding even in the New Law on account of the second reason, although not on account of the first. Now, the menstrual issue may be natural or unnatural. The natural issue is that to which women are subject at stated periods when they are in good health; and it is unnatural when they suffer from an issue of blood through some disorder resulting from sickness. Accordingly if the menstrual flow be unnatural it is not forbidden in the New Law to approach to a menstruous woman both on account of her infirmity since a woman in that state cannot conceive, and because an issue of this kind is lasting and continuous, so that the husband would have to abstain for always. When however the woman is subject to a natural issue of the menstruum, she can conceive; moreover, the said issue lasts only a short time, wherefore it is forbidden to approach to her. In like manner a woman is forbidden to ask for the debt during the period of that issue.”

We will also see many more quotations from the early Church concerning the traditional teaching against sexual relations during menstruation in the next question.

Question: Is it sinful to have marital relations during the pregnancy of the woman?

Answer: Many have thought that Pope Pius XI’s encyclical *Casti Connubii* teaches that one may lawfully have marital relations during the wife’s pregnancy, but *Casti Connubii* is highly ambiguous and it is very hard to understand whether it teaches that one may lawfully have marital relations after the woman have become pregnant. *Casti Connubii* teaches that spouses can perform the marital act during those times when “new life cannot be brought forth”, and this is interpreted by some to give permission for spouses to perform the marital act during a woman’s pregnancy, but the Pope then goes on to state that this action is only lawful “SO LONG AS THEY ARE SUBORDINATED TO THE PRIMARY END [THAT IS, PROCREATION OF CHILDREN]” and so, this last sentence seem to teach that one may not perform the marital act during the pregnancy of the woman, since the primary end and motive of procreation is already fulfilled.

There is no official and dogmatic Papal Church teaching, as far as we know, that directly teaches that marital relations during a pregnancy is a sin, but that does not mean that it is

not a sin, and especially so since the Popes, Fathers, Saints, and Doctors of the Church throughout the ages opposed marital relations without the intent to procreate. This thus seems to be the Catholic Tradition from the beginning.

In contrast to the lack of quotations from the Popes, Fathers and Saints of the Church that allows spouses to perform the marital act during pregnancy, there are, however, many quotations that address this question directly from the Fathers and early writers of the Church that rejects this act. The Holy Fathers and Church Tradition (in all the quotes we've found on the subject) unanimously teach that sexual activity during the infertile period of pregnancy as well as menstruation should be avoided at all times since it is unnatural and unreasonable to sow one's seed when one "awaits the harvest."

Athenagoras the Athenian (c. 175 A.D.): "After throwing the seed into the ground, the farmer awaits the harvest. He does not sow more seed on top of it. Likewise, to us the procreation of children is the limit of our indulgence in appetite." (*A Plea For the Christians*, Chapter XXXIII.--Chastity of the Christians with Respect to Marriage)

Nature itself tells us through our inborn instinct that it is unreasonable and unnatural to sow a seed in the same place where a seed is already growing.

In reference to the same issue, St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 195 A.D.) writes: "To...a spiritual man, after conception, his wife is as a sister and is treated as if of the same father." (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book VI, Chapter XII) St. Clement also pointed out that in all the Jewish scriptures there was not a single instance in which "one of the ancients approached a pregnant woman" and taught that the avoidance of sexual relations from the time one's wife became pregnant to the time of the child's weaning was "a law of nature given by God." (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter XI, Section 71, 72)

St. Augustine, in his book *On The Good of Marriage* (A.D. 401), likewise agreed with the Church's tradition that performing the marital act during pregnancy is unreasonable and unnatural since "**necessary** sexual intercourse for begetting [of children] is free from blame, and itself is **alone** worthy of marriage. **But that which goes beyond this necessity [of begetting children] no longer follows reason but lust...**" (Section 11) He also taught that marital relations during pregnancy "are the sins of the married persons themselves, not the fault of marriage."

St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 5, A.D. 401: "There also are men

incontinent to such a degree that they do not spare their wives even when pregnant. Therefore, whatever immodest, shameful, and sordid acts the married commit with each other are the sins of the married persons themselves, not the fault of marriage.”

In his book *Against Julian*, St. Augustine shows us that conjugal chastity: “combats [carnal concupiscence] in even more valiant fashion in regard to the act of conjugal union, lest there be indulgence beyond what suffices for generating offspring. **Such chastity abstains during menstruation and pregnancy, nor has it union with one no longer able to conceive on account of age.** And the desire for union does not prevail, but ceases when there is no prospect of generation.” (St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, Book III, Chapter 21:43) Thus the conception of children is “the one alone worthy fruit...of the sexual intercourse.” (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 1) No other aspect of the marital act can be described as “worthy.” Therefore, when a husband engages in marital relations during those times when his wife is pregnant, nursing, or menstruating, the husband or the wife or both are seen as seeking the unworthy fruit of sexual pleasure.

Two activities recommended by some heretical NFP teachers are having sex during menstruation and during pregnancy, both of which the earliest extant Church Canons, the *Apostolic Constitutions* (c. 375 A.D.), specifically reject: “When the natural purgations do appear in the wives, let not their husbands approach them, out of regard to the children to be begotten; for the law has forbidden it, for it says: "Thou shalt not come near thy wife when she is in her separation." [Lev. xviii. 19; Ezek. xviii. 6.] **Nor, indeed, let them frequent their wives' company when they are with child. For they do this not for the begetting of children, but for the sake of pleasure. Now a lover of God ought not to be a lover of pleasure.**” (*The Sacred Writings of Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions*, Book V, Chap. XXVIII.)

It is bad to touch a woman during pregnancy since it gives the child in the womb “many sinful impulses” according to Anne Catherine Emmerich

In the revelation of Anne Catherine Emmerich, entitled the “Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary”, we read the following interesting points about marital relations during pregnancy:

“It was explained to me here that the Blessed Virgin was begotten by her parents in holy obedience and complete purity of heart, and that thereafter they lived together in continence in the greatest devoutness and fear of God. **I was at the same time clearly instructed how immeasurably the holiness of children was encouraged by the purity, chastity, and continence of their parents and**

by their resistance to all unclean temptations; and how continence after conception preserves the fruit of the womb from many sinful impulses. In general, I was given an overflowing abundance of knowledge about the roots of deformity and sin.” (Anne Catherine Emmerich, *Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary*)

Despite this, many lustful people will not agree with what Anne Catherine Emmerich had to say here, and some may even be offended by it. The reason for this is because these people and others want to deceive themselves into thinking that there is nothing wrong about lust or concupiscence. Yes, they even claim this even though they know and are fully aware of that lust leads countless of souls to Hell and eternal damnation. However, whether or not they want to agree with it or not, **it’s just a fact that the sexual lusts and temptations that urges people to commit sins of the flesh is an evil product of the fall, and of original sin.** In other words, humans were not originally intended to experience concupiscence and temptations of the flesh according to God’s perfect plan for humanity, but it ended up in that way because of Adam and Eve’s transgression. If a person is honest with himself, he will understand that this is true. However, most people want to deceive themselves and therefore choose to overlook this fact.

In summary, the definition or meaning of the revelation of Anne Catherine Emmerich is that lust is evil and that a couple’s marital relations during pregnancy will effect the child in a negative way, inflicting many sinful impulses upon the child. Anne Catherine Emmerich is clear that **“continence after conception preserves the fruit of the womb from many sinful impulses.”** The sensuality and sinful impulses that thus will be aroused by many spouses’ sexual relations during pregnancy is a great evil that will affect both husband and wife, and their future child, in a negative way. Because of this, parents should do all in their power to abstain from marital relations during all pregnancies.

More quotes from the Fathers and Saints against marital relations during pregnancy and menstruation

St. Caesarius of Arles tells us that marital relations during a woman’s menstruation can result in that “the children who are then conceived... be born as lepers, or epileptics, or perhaps even demoniacs”, thus showing a necessity to abstain marital relations during these times. He also adds that married people who perform the marital act during a woman’s pregnancy are worse than beasts.

St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon 44:7*: “Above all, no one should know his wife when Sunday or other feasts come around. Similar precautions should be taken as often as women menstruate, for the Prophet says: ‘Do not come near to a menstruous woman.’ [Ezech. 18:6] If a man is aware that his wife is in this condition but refuses to control himself on a Sunday or feast, the children who are then conceived [could] ... be born as lepers, or epileptics, or perhaps even demoniacs. Lepers are commonly born, not of wise men who observe chastity on feasts and other days, but especially of farmers who do not know how to control themselves. Truly, brethren, if animals without intellect do not touch each other except at a fixed and proper time, how much more should men who have been created according to God’s image observe this? **What is worse, there are some dissolute or drunken men who sometimes do not even spare their wives when they are pregnant.** Therefore, if they do not amend their lives, we are to consider them worse than animals. Such men the Apostle addresses when he says: ‘Every one of you learn how to possess his vessel in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who have no hope.’ [1 Thess. 4:4-5]”

The biblical Book of Tobit also teaches that the virtue and abstinence of the parents will effect whether their children will be born whole or with defects of different kinds. Thus, we read that “**the third night [of praying and observing chastity before having sexual relations] thou shalt obtain a blessing that sound children may be born of you.**” The blessing on the third night of “sound children” obviously means that those couples who do not perform the marital act for the sake of lust or too often, and who are virtuous and wait for three days in accordance with the promise of Holy Scripture, will receive a child without birth deformities or defects. This may be hard for many to believe, but this is really and truly what Holy Scripture is promising and saying.

Tobias 6:18, 20-22 “[St. Raphael said to Tobias:] But thou when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her. ... But the second night thou shalt be admitted into the society of the holy Patriarchs. **And the third night thou shalt obtain a blessing that sound children may be born of you.** And when the third night is past, [of praying and observing chastity] thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayst obtain a blessing in children.”

It is sad to see that none today seem to care anything about these promises or virtuous deeds that promise these remarkable and wondrous graces that Our Lord said he would bless a virtuous couple with. One could think that even a worldly or ungodly couple would

appreciate the grace of not receiving a child that is deformed and that they, if they believed in God or were aware of these promises, would act in accordance to the words of the Holy Scripture; but now neither “Catholics” or so-called Christians nor any people of the world care anything about these words of our Lord that promises the inestimable grace of receiving “a blessing that sound children may be born of you.”

St. Bridget was also revealed the truth of the spiritual danger of having marital relations during pregnancy in a spiritual revelation. In it she saw a man that was tormented in purgatory. St. Bridget was allowed to communicate with this tormented soul. She asked the man about the specific reasons why he escaped Eternal Hell. He answered saying: “The third [reason I escaped being eternally condemned to burn in Hell] is that I obeyed my teacher who advised me to abstain from my wife’s bed when I understood that she was pregnant.” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 9 or Appendix)

In addition to the above facts, it is also evident that many spouses may be more inclined to commit some form or another of sexual sin during this time period and that they might put too much heart or affection in the sexual act at this time due to the fact that conception cannot occur again, and so they might indulge a little too often or unreasonably and love the act a little too much, and more than what is suitable. “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*” (Luke 12:34) “*Men shall be... lovers of pleasure more than of God.*” (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Thus, it is totally clear that those who are having marital relations during pregnancy and who do not practice virtue are endangering their own and their child’s spiritual welfare. During pregnancy, the primary purpose of procreation that the Church teaches that spouses always must perform the marital act for is not possible to be fulfilled and thus, it is a defective action to have marital relations during this time. We see this distinction being made in the Church’s teachings in these words: “Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children” (Pope Pius XI *Casti Connubii* # 54).

Marital relations during pregnancy can also sometimes be dangerous to the child, and lead to a premature birth or a stillborn child. Many times there also exist a high risk for preterm labor or a medical condition or any other valid reason that makes it absolutely necessary to abstain from the marital act. If the doctor has said that it can cause further complications to the pregnancy – or if there is any risk to engage in marital intercourse during this time period – it is a mortal sin to deliberately engage in marital intercourse at this time. And the husband has no right to ask for the debt during this period. No masturbation, oral sex or other sinful acts are allowed as a substitute during this time period either.

St. Clement of Alexandria, *On Marriage and Procreation* (c. 198-203 A.D.): “Right from the beginning the law, as we have already said, lays down the command, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife,” [Ex. 20:17] long before the Lord’s closely similar utterance in the New Testament, where the same idea is expressed in his own mouth: “You have heard that the law commanded, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say, Thou shalt not lust.” [Matt. 5:27-28] **That the law intended husbands to cohabit with their wives with self-control and only for the purpose of begetting children is evident... For this reason you could not point to any place in Scripture where one of the ancients approached a pregnant woman; later, after the child is born and weaned, you might find that marriage relations of husbands and wives were resumed.** You will find that Moses’ father kept this principle in mind. After Aaron’s birth three years passed before Moses was born. [Ex. 7:7] Again, the tribe of Levi observed this law of nature given by God, although they were fewer in number than any others which came into the promised land. [Num. 3:39] For a tribe does not easily grow to great numbers if their men have intercourse only within the legal marriage relationship and then wait until the end not only of pregnancy but also of breast-feeding.” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter XI, Section 71, 72)

Doctors usually recommend some abstinence after labor, usually four to six weeks before resuming intercourse. This allows time for the woman to heal after birth. Total abstinence, if needed, is required during this time period according to the doctor’s recommendation.

The Old Testament also confirms that Our Lord wants spouses to practice chastity for a while after the birth of the child.

Leviticus 12:1-5 “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say to them: If a woman having received seed shall bear a man child, she shall be unclean seven days, according to the days of the separation of her flowers. And on the eighth day the infant shall be circumcised: But she shall remain three and thirty days in the blood of her purification. She shall touch no holy thing, neither shall she enter into the sanctuary, until the days of her purification be fulfilled. But if she shall bear a maid child, she shall be unclean two weeks, according to the custom of her monthly courses, and she shall remain in the blood of her purification sixty-six days.’”

Since the Old Testament teaches that a person who becomes defiled cannot touch other people during the time that they are unclean, this shows us that God wants the spouses to

abstain from the marital act for a while after they have received the child.

One must really marvel over how the members of the Christian Church, (who should be more virtuous than the people of the Jewish Old Testament religion) have fallen into this degraded and filthy custom of having marital relations during a woman's pregnancy or menstrual period. The Old Law was only a shell and a sign of the future things in the New Law, and even the Old Law forbade marital relations on many more occasions than the New Law does. The reason of why the Old Law forbade things that now are not sinful is because in the New Law, Our Lord wants us to do many good things, not because we are forced to do it, but only because we know that they are good in themselves, which is a more virtuous and meritorious act. Christian spouses should obviously act and live more virtuously and holy than did those people in the Old Law, since all Christians have received more graces and knowledge of Our Lord than those in the Old Law, and it is really a blemish on the Christian community that this is not happening. The amount of graces that are be lost because of these filthy and unnecessary acts of lustful spouses is, sad to say, immeasurable and inestimable. "*Men shall be... lovers of pleasure more than of God.*" (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Thus, St. Ambrose (c. 340-397) could rightly declare that it is shameful to continue to have sexual relations after pregnancy, and that those people who do this act "contaminate the former [the child] and exasperate the latter [God]": "Youths generally assert the desire of having children and think to excuse the heat of their age by the desire for generation. How much more shameful for the old to do what is shameful for the young to confess. For even the young who temper their hearts to prudence by divine fear, generally renounce the works of youth when progeny [offspring] have been received. And is this remarkable for man, if beasts mutely speak a zeal for generating, not a desire for copulating? Indeed, once they know the womb is filled, and the seed received by the generative soil, they no longer indulge in intercourse or the wantonness of love, but they take up parental care. Yet men spare neither the embryo nor God. They contaminate the former and exasperate the latter. "Before I formed you in the womb," He says, "I knew you and sanctified you in your mother's womb." [Jer. 1:5] To control your impatience, note the hands of your Author forming a man in the womb. He is at work, and you stain with lust the secret of the sacred womb? Imitate the beast or fear God. Why do I speak of beasts? The land itself often rests from the work of generating, and if it is often filled with the seeds thrown by the impatient eagerness of men, it repays the shamelessness of the farmer and changes fertility to sterility. So even in the elements and the beasts it is a shame to nature not to cease from generating." (St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, *Exposition of the Gospel According to St. Luke* 1:43-45)

St. Clement of Alexandria, *On Marriage and Procreation* (c. 198-203 A.D.): “Far more excellent, in my opinion, than the seeds of wheat and barley that are sown at appropriate seasons, is man that is sown, for whom all things grow; and those seeds temperate husbandmen ever sow. Every foul and polluting practice must therefore be purged away from marriage; that the intercourse of the irrational animals may not be cast in our teeth, as more accordant with nature than human conjunction in procreation. Some of these, it must be granted, desist at the time in which they are directed, leaving creation to the working of Providence.” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book II, Chapter XXIII)

Origen (c. 184-254), *Homilies on Genesis*, Homily V, Section 4, On Lot And His Daughters: “Let the married women examine themselves and seek if they approach their husbands for this reason alone [for having children], that they might receive children, and after conception desist. For those women... when they have attained conception, [rightly] do not later assent to copulation with a man. But some women, for we do not censure all equally, but there are some who serve passion incessantly, like animals without any distinction, whom I would not even compare to the dumb beasts. For even the beasts themselves know, when they have conceived, not to further grant opportunity to their males. The divine Scriptures also censures such when it says: “Do not become like the [sterile] horse and the mule who have no understanding,” [Ps. 31:9] and again, “They have become stallions.” [Jer. 5:8] But, O people of God, “who love Christ in incorruption,” [Eph. 6:24] understand the word of the Apostle in which he says: “Whether you eat or drink or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God.” [1 Cor. 10:31] For his remark after eating and drinking, “whatever else you do,” has designated with a modest word the immodest affairs of marriage, showing that even these acts themselves are performed to the glory of God if they are attended to with a view to posterity [offspring] alone.”

“In fact, a good Christian should not only observe chastity for a few days before he communicates, [that is, before he receives the Holy Eucharist] but he should never know his wife except from the desire for children. A man takes a wife for the procreation of children, not for the sake of lust. Even the marriage rite mentions this: ‘For the procreation of children,’ it says. Notice that it does not say for the sake of lust, but ‘for the procreation of children.’ I would like to know, dearly beloved, what kind of a harvest a man could gather if he sowed his field in one year as often as he is overcome by dissipation and abuses his wife without any desire for children. If those who are unwilling to control themselves plowed and sowed repeatedly their land which was already sown, let us see in what kind of fruit they would rejoice. As you well know, no land can produce proper fruit if it is sown frequently in one year. Why, then, does a man do with his body what he does not want done with his field?” (St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon* 44:3)

It must also be made perfectly clear that natural infertility during pregnancy on the part of the woman is *not* a reward for the spouses to have “great sex” because they were “good” in fulfilling the marital duty (the procreation and education of children), as so many people today nowadays actually (and falsely) seem to believe.

It is reasonable to conclude that if women were not infertile during pregnancy, many bad husbands would be endangering the life of their wives by exposing them to too many childbirths at too short time intervals. Consequently, if women were not infertile during pregnancy, many more mortal sins would be committed by married and unmarried men since they then would be inclined to seek relief of their fleshly lusts in other ways or by other women, so as not to endanger the life of their own wife or mistresses.

Indeed, to St. Jerome and the rest of the Saints and Fathers of the Church, the indulgences granted to the marital act was not something good or praiseworthy because it only acts as a relief valve to avoid a greater evil: **“Thus it must be bad to touch a woman. If indulgences is nonetheless granted to the marital act, this is only to avoid something worse. But what value can be recognized in a good that is allowed only with a view of preventing something worse?”**

Question: Does the Church allow the married to demand the marital debt on holy days?

Response: St. Thomas answers this question in great detail in his *Summa* for us.

“Article 7. Whether it is forbidden to demand the debt on holy days?”

“Objection 1. It would seem that a person ought not to be forbidden to ask for the debt on holy days. For the remedy should be applied when the disease gains strength. Now concupiscence may possibly gain strength on a feast day. Therefore the remedy should be applied then by asking for the debt.

“Objection 2. Further, the only reason why the debt should not be demanded on feast days is because they are devoted to prayer. Yet on those days certain hours are appointed for prayer. Therefore one may ask for the debt at some other time.

“[St. Thomas response:] On the contrary, Just as certain places are holy because they are devoted to holy things, so are certain times holy for the same reason. But it is not lawful to demand the debt in a holy place. Therefore neither is it lawful at a holy time.

“I answer that, Although the marriage act is void of sin, nevertheless since it oppresses the reason on account of the carnal pleasure, it renders man unfit for spiritual things. Therefore, on those days when one ought especially to give one’s

time to spiritual things, it is not lawful to ask for the debt.

“Reply to Objection 1. At such a time other means may be employed for the repression of concupiscence; for instance, prayer and many similar things, to which even those who observe perpetual continence have recourse.

“Reply to Objection 2. Although one is not bound to pray at all hours, one is bound throughout the day to keep oneself fit for prayer.”

In another part of his *Summa*, St. Thomas speaks about how weddings must not be celebrated on holy days, adding more reasons why one must abstain from the marital sexual act on certain holy days.

“Article 10. Whether weddings should be forbidden at certain times?”

“Objection 1. It would seem that weddings ought not to be forbidden at certain times. For marriage is a sacrament: and the celebration of the others sacraments is not forbidden at those times. Therefore neither should the celebration of marriage be forbidden then.

“... Objection 3. Further, marriages that are contracted in despite of the law of the Church ought to be dissolved. Yet marriages are not dissolved if they be contracted at those times. Therefore it should not be forbidden by a commandment of the Church.

“[St. Thomas’ response:] On the contrary, It is written (Ecclesiastes 3:5): "A time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces."

“I answer that, When the newly married spouse is given to her husband, the minds of husband and wife are taken up with carnal preoccupations by reason of the very newness of things, wherefore weddings are wont to be signalized by much unrestrained rejoicing. On this account it is forbidden to celebrate marriages at those times when men ought especially to arise to spiritual things. Those times are from Advent until the Epiphany because of the Communion which, according to the ancient Canons, is wont to be made at Christmas (as was observed in its proper place, III, 30), from Septuagesima until the octave day of Easter, on account of the Easter Communion, and from the three days before the Ascension until the octave day of Pentecost, on account of the preparation for Communion to be received at that time.

“Reply to Objection 1. The celebration of marriage has a certain worldly and carnal rejoicing connected with it, which does not apply to the other sacraments. Hence the comparison fails.

“... Reply to Objection 3. Since time is not essential to a marriage contracted within the forbidden seasons, the marriage is nevertheless a true sacrament. Nor is the marriage dissolved absolutely, but for a time, that they may

do penance for having disobeyed the commandment of the Church. It is thus that we are to understand the statement of the Master (Sent. iv, D, 33), namely that should a marriage have been contracted or a wedding celebrated at the aforesaid times, those who have done so "ought to be separated." Nor does he say this on his own authority, but in reference to some canonical ordinance, such as that of the Council of Lerida, which decision is quoted by the Decretals."

Question: How can you teach that sensual touches, kisses and various lustful acts are sinful when the Bible allows it? The biblical books called "*The Song of Songs*" and "*Proverbs*" directly teaches that sensual touches, kisses and acts are allowed, so you are not right in condemning these acts.

Answer: It is not coincidental that in this day and age when almost all are heretics, many people are falsely interpreting King Solomon's *Song of Songs* and *Proverbs* in a literal way instead of a figurative way (as the Holy Fathers did) that signify the spiritual relationship between God and the soul, Christ and the Church, and Christ and Our Lady. The Fathers never interpreted the *Song of Songs* or any other book of the Bible as a glorification of sex, and they unanimously rejected and condemned those wicked and lustful people who tried to excuse their sensuality by perverting the Holy Scripture for the sake of their own selfishness, as we have shown.

As said already, a Catholic is bound under pain of mortal sin to obey, consent to and follow the unanimous teaching of the Fathers on everything, as the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council teaches.

A doctrine of faith or morals that is taught by the *unanimous* consent of the Fathers is part of the Ordinary Magisterium. The Catholic Church infallibly teaches that all biblical doctrines that have been held by the *unanimous* consensus of the Church Fathers are true and hence, binds all Catholics to believe them also.

Pope Pius IX, *First Vatican Council*, Session 2, January 6th, 1870, *ex cathedra*: "I, Pius, bishop of the Catholic Church, with firm faith... **accept Sacred Scripture according to that sense which Holy mother Church held and holds**, since it is her right to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures; **nor will I ever receive and interpret them except according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.**"

The Council of Trent in the 16th century was the first to infallibly define that a consensus can indeed make a doctrine part of the Ordinary Magisterium. And it was the first to

infallibly define that the only kind of consensus that can do this is the *unanimous* consensus of the Church Fathers.

Pope Paul III, *Council of Trent*, Session 4, AD 1546, *ex cathedra*: “Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall, in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, **presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary** to that sense which holy mother Church, whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures, hath held and doth hold; **or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers**; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. Contraveners [that is, those who oppose or contradict this] shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established.”

The Church Fathers, well aware of the seemingly fleshly words and sexuality present in the Song of Songs, generally cautioned against reading it until a ‘mature spirituality’ had been obtained, lest the Song be misunderstood and lead the reader into temptation. Origen says, “I advise and counsel everyone who is not yet rid of the vexations of flesh and blood and has not ceased to feel the passion of his bodily nature, to refrain completely from reading this little book.” (Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, cited in *Anchor Bible Commentary Song of Songs* 117)

When asked for advice about what scriptural books a young girl should read, Jerome recommended the Psalms, Proverbs, Gospels, Acts and the Epistles, followed by the rest of the Old Testament. Of the *Song* however, Jerome counsels caution, saying “... she would fail to perceive that, though it is written in fleshly words, **it is a marriage song of a spiritual bridal**. And not understanding this, she would suffer from it.” (St. Jerome, *Letter cvii, To Laeta*, cited in *Anchor Bible Commentary Song of Songs* 119)

Indeed, “If you wish to understand... for what reason the body was made, then listen: it was made that it should be a temple to the Lord; that the soul, being holy and blessed, should act in it as if it were a priest serving before the Holy Spirit that dwells in you.” (Origen, *Exegesis on 1 Corinthians 7:29*)

Concerning the *Book of Proverbs*, St. Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170-236 A.D.), *From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs*, writes:

““To know wisdom and instruction.” (Prov. 1:2) **He who knows the wisdom of God, receives from Him also instruction, and learns by it the mysteries**

of the Word; and they who know the true heavenly wisdom will easily understand the words of these mysteries. Wherefore he says: “To understand the difficulties of words;” (Prov. 1:3) for things spoken in strange language by the Holy Spirit become intelligible to those who have their hearts right with God.”

St. Hippolytus of Rome goes on to explain that many things mentioned in the *Book of Proverbs* has a symbolical meaning:

“**[On Proverbs 4:25]** He “looks right on” who has thoughts free of passion; and he has true judgments, who is not in a state of excitement about external appearances. When he says, “Let thine eyes look right on,” he means the vision of the soul; and when he gives the exhortation, “Eat honey, my son, that it may be sweet to thy palate,” he uses “honey” figuratively, meaning divine doctrine, which restores the spiritual knowledge of the soul. But wisdom embraces the soul also; for, says he, “love her, that she may embrace thee.” And the soul, by her embrace being made one with wisdom, is filled with holiness and purity. Yea more, the fragrant ointments of Christ are laid hold of by the soul’s sense of smell.”

Hence that the Book of Proverbs is to be interpreted spiritually, with “thoughts free of passion” and “with holiness and purity”, just as with the *Song of Solomon*, and not for the purpose any licentiousness.

St. Hippolytus of Rome goes on to explain Proverbs 5:19 in a spiritual sense—which, to the contrary, is the very verse lustful people interprets in a fleshly sense—and explains that it refers to spiritual wisdom and understanding; and that the *hind* and following words mentioned in Proverbs 5:19 is to be understood by “the purity of that pleasure”, and in the end he equates all of this with *wisdom*, that, “like a stag, can repel and crush the snaky doctrines of the heterodox [i.e., those holding unorthodox or heretical doctrines or opinions].”

“**[Proverbs 5:19 “Let her be thy dearest hind, and most agreeable fawn: let her breasts [or affection or love] inebriate thee at all times; be thou delighted continually with her love.”]** He shows also, by the mention of the creature (the hind), the purity of that pleasure; and by the roe he intimates the quick responsive affection of the wife. And whereas he knows many things to excite, he secures them against these, and puts upon them the indissoluble bond of affection, setting constancy before them. And as for the rest, wisdom, figuratively speaking, like a stag, can repel and crush the snaky doctrines of the heterodox. ... The heterodox are the “wicked,” and the transgressors of the law are “evil men,”

whose “ways”—that is to say, their deeds—he bids us not enter. ... Let her therefore, says he, be with thee, like a roe, to keep all virtue fresh. (Prov. 5:19) And whereas a wife and wisdom are not in this respect the same, let her [that is, wisdom] rather lead thee; for thus thou shalt conceive good thoughts.” (The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus, "On Proverbs," by St. Hippolytus of Rome, 170-236 A.D., vol. 5, Ante-Nicene Fathers)

Concerning this biblical passage, *Benson Bible Commentary* notes that: “*Let her be as the loving hind* — Hebrew, *as the hind of loves*; as amiable and delightful as the hinds are to princes and great men, who used to make them tame and familiar, and to take great delight in them, as has been observed by many writers. ... *Let her breasts* — Rather, *her loves*, as Houbigant renders $\eta\iota\tau\tau$, at all times, in all ages and conditions; not only love her when she is young and beautiful, but when she is old, or even deformed; *and be thou always ravished with her love* — Love her fervently. It is a hyperbolical expression.”

The Hebrew noun for “affection” is *dad* and has three other biblical references (the basic meaning of *dad* is breast or pap), all in Ezekiel.

Since affection (*dad*) which is synonymous with *love*, can mean *breast*, and has correctly been translated as breast in other instances in the bible, that is also probably why most Bible translators have rendered it as *breasts* in Proverbs 5:19.

However, even some protestant bible versions do translate “breast” in this Bible verse as “love” or “affection”, which we believe is more accurate.

Proverbs 5:19, *Revised Standard Version* (RSV): “a lovely hind, a graceful doe. Let her affection fill you at all times with delight, be infatuated always with her love.”

Proverbs 5:19, *Young’s Literal Translation* (YLT): “A hind of loves, and a roe of grace! Let her loves satisfy thee at all times, In her love magnify thyself continually.”

Proverbs 5:19, *New Century Version* (NCV): “She is as lovely and graceful as a deer. Let her love always make you happy; let her love always hold you captive.”

Proverbs 5:19, *Good News Translation* (GNT): “pretty and graceful as a deer. Let her charms keep you happy; let her surround you with her love.”

It is of note that the approved *Knox’s Catholic Translation* of the Vulgate, Proverbs 5:19, reads:

“Thy own bride, gentle as a hind, graceful as a doe; be it her bosom that steals away thy senses with the delight of a lover that loves still.”

This differences in interpreting the Hebrew or Greek may also explain why we have seen different translations of this passage cited by early Church writers but without them mentioning the word “breasts”. The reason for this may be because they have interpreted this passage differently, and hence translated it in another sense. That may also explain why St. Hippolytus never mentioned the words “breasts” when commenting on this passage, and why he instead spoke of “*affection* of the wife.”

Whatever the case, none of the Fathers has ever interpreted breasts or kisses in a sensual way in scripture. According to St. Ambrose, the *Breast* mentioned in Song of Songs 8:1 is **Baptism**, and the *Kiss* is a **kiss of mystical peace**: “What are the breasts of the church except the sacrament of **baptism**? And well does he say “sucking,” as if the baptized were seeking him as a draught of snowy milk. “Finding you without,” he says, “I shall kiss you,” that is, finding you outside the body, I embrace you with the **kiss of mystical peace**. No one shall despise you; no one shall shut you out. I will introduce you into the inner sanctuary and the hidden places of Mother Church, and into all the secrets of mystery, so that you may drink the cup of spiritual grace.” (*Consolation on the Death of Emperor Valentinian 75*, in *The Fathers Of The Church: A New Translation*, vol. 22, p. 296)

St. Methodius, **On The Abuse of Biblical Passages for the Purpose of Sensual Gratification** (c. 311 A.D.): “Now Paul, when summoning all persons to sanctification and purity... in order to silence the ignorant, now deprived of all excuse... that he might take away occasion for the abuse of these passages from those who taught the sensual gratification of the body, under the pretext of begetting children... For men who are incontinent in consequence of the uncontrolled impulses of sensuality in them, dare to force the Scriptures beyond their true meaning, so as to twist into a defence of their incontinence... and they are not ashamed to run counter to the Spirit, but, as though born for this purpose, they kindle up the smouldering and lurking passion, fanning and provoking it; and therefore he, cutting off very sharply these dishonest follies and invented excuses, and having arrived at the subject of instructing them how men should behave to their wives, showing that it should be as Christ did to the Church, “*who gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word,*” (Ephesians 5:25-26)...” (*Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, Discourse III, Chapter X.--The Doctrine of the Same Apostle Concerning Purity)

The kisses, breasts, hair, lips, neck, belly, navel, etc. has a spiritual meaning according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers

According to Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory the Great and the rest of the Fathers and early Christian writers, the breasts, hair, lips, neck, belly, navel, etc. in *Song of Songs*, *Song of Solomon* or *Canticles of Canticles* and related bible passages are the “powers” or “representations” of the soul or of the Church and Christ, or even wisdom itself. According to St. Ambrose (4th century bishop of Milan), commenting on Song of Songs 8:1, “What are the breasts of the church except the sacrament of baptism?” For St. Gregory the Great, the fawns feeding among the lilies in Song of Songs 4:5 are saints who “are unto God a sweet savor of Christ” (quoting 2 Cor. 2:15). Again from St. Ambrose, on the Song of Songs 7:2: “Small, too, are the navel and belly of the soul that ascends to Christ.” (From *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament*, vol. IX)

Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Father and Doctor of the Church* (died 604): “To create allegories, the divine thoughts are cloaked with what we know; by examining exterior language, we attain an interior understanding. For this reason the Song of Songs employs language characteristic of sensual love to reheat the soul using familiar expressions to revive it from sluggishness and to spur it onto the love that is above using language typical of the love here below. This book mentions kisses and breasts and cheeks and thighs. We must not ridicule the sacred description of these terms but reflect upon the mercy of God. For this book goes so far as to extend the meaning of the language characteristic of our shameful love in such a way that our heart is set on fire with yearning for that sacred love. By discussing the parts of the body, this book summons us to love. Therefore we ought to note how wonderfully and mercifully this book is working within us. However, from where God lowers himself by speaking, he lifts us up there by understanding. We are instructed by the conversations proper to sensual love when their power causes us to enthusiastically burn with love for the Divinity.” (*An Exposition on the Songs of Songs*, Section 1 & 2; Translated from *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, vol. CXLIV)

Pope St. Gregory the Great: “The Gentiles who were called did not cease kissing their Redeemer’s feet, because they longed for him with uninterrupted love. Hence the bride in the Song of Songs said of this same Redeemer: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.” (Song of Songs 1:2) It is fitting that she desire her Creator’s kiss, as she makes herself ready throughout her love to obey him.” (*Forty Gospel Homilies* 33, Quoted in *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon* by J. Robert Wright, Thomas C. Oden, p. 292)

“The song of Songs introduces the bride saying, “Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth.” (Song of Songs 1:2) Now, by “kiss” we understand not the joining of mouths but the communion of pious soul and divine Word. It is like the bride saying something of this kind, I experienced your words in writing, but I long to hear your very voice as well, I wish to receive the sacred teaching directly from your mouth and to caress it with the lips of my mind.” (*Commentary on the Song of Songs* 1, Quoted in *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon* by J. Robert Wright, Thomas C. Oden, p. 292)

Pope St. Gregory the Great: “Let us set this before our eyes: due to its unceasing desire, a soul of any of the chosen ones is set on fire in love for the sight of the bridegroom. Since such a soul lacks the power to perfectly perceive such a sight in this life, it contemplates his eminence and is deeply pierced because of this love. Now a deep piercing—which is born of charity and set on fire by desire—resembles a kiss, for as often as the soul kisses God, it is deeply pierced with love for him. At the present time there are many who really fear the Lord and have received [the grace of] good works but they still do not kiss God because they are not deeply pierced by a love for him at all.” (*An Exposition on the Songs of Songs*, Section 18; Translated from *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, vol. CXLIV)

Pope St. Gregory the Great: “And of course the kiss of his mouth is the very fullness of interior peace; when we have attained it, there will no longer be anything to seek. This is why it is fittingly added, “FOR YOUR BREASTS ARE BETTER THAN WINE.” (Song of Songs 1:1) Wine is the knowledge of God received by those of us who reside in this life. But we embrace the breasts of the bridegroom when we contemplate him in the eternal fatherland by an embrace of his presence. Therefore let the soul say, “Your breasts are better than wine.” It is as if the soul says, “Great indeed is the knowledge about yourself that you have bestowed on me in this life; great is the wine of your intimate knowledge by which you make me very drunk; but your breasts are better than wine since whatever is presently known about you through faith is transcended by the beauty and loftiness of contemplation.” (*An Exposition on the Songs of Songs*, Section 19; Translated from *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, vol. CXLIV)

St. Ambrose of Milan, *Archbishop, Confessor, Father and Doctor of the Church* (died 397): “But the church does not cease to kiss Christ’s feet, and she demands not one but many kisses in the Song of Solomon, since like blessed Mary, she listens to his every saying, she receives his every word, when the gospel or prophets are read, and she keeps all these words in her heart.” (*Letter 62, To His Sister*, in *The Fathers*)

Of The Church: A New Translation, vol. 26, p. 392)

St. Ambrose: “Therefore such a soul also desires many kisses of the Word, so that she may be enlightened with the light of the knowledge of God. For this is the kiss of the Word, I mean the light of holy knowledge. God the Word kisses us, when he enlightens our heart and governing faculty with the spirit of the knowledge of God. The soul that has received this gift exults and rejoices in the pledge of wedded love and says, “I opened my mouth and panted.” (Ps. 119:131; 118:131 in Douay-Rheims Version.) For it is with the kiss that lovers cleave to each other and gain possession of the sweetness of grace that is within, so to speak. Through such a kiss the soul cleaves to God the Word, and through the kiss the spirit of him who kisses is poured into the soul, just as those who kiss are not satisfied to touch lightly with their lips but appear to be pouring their spirit into each other. Showing that she loves not only the appearance of the Word and his face, as it were, but all his inner parts, she adds to the favor of the kisses: “Your breasts are better than wine, and the fragrance of your ointments is above all perfumes.” (Song of Solomon 4:10) She sought the kiss, God the Word poured himself into her wholly and laid bare his breasts to her, that is, his teachings and the laws of the wisdom that is within, and was fragrant with the sweet fragrance of his ointment. Captive to these, the soul is saying that the enjoyment of the knowledge of God is richer than the joy of any bodily pleasure.” (*Isaac, or the Soul* 3.8-9, in *The Fathers Of The Church: A New Translation*, vol. 65, p. 16-17)

St. Ambrose: “The church beautiful in [those recently baptized]. So that God the Word says to her: “You are all fair, my love, and there is no blemish in you,” for guilt has been washed away. “Come here from Lebanon, from the beginning of faith, you will pass through and pass on,” (Song of Songs 4:7-8) because, renouncing the world, she passed through things temporal and passed on to Christ. And again, God the Word says to her, “How beautiful and sweet are you made, I love, in your delights! Your stature is become like that of a palm tree, and your breasts like bunches of grapes” (Song of Songs 7:6-8).” (*On the Mysteries* 7.39, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2.10:322)

St. Ambrose: ““Your navel is like a round bowl, not wanting tempered wine. Your belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies. Your neck is like a tower of ivory. Your eyes are a pool in Heshbon.” (cf. Song of Songs 7:2-4) The good navel of the soul, capable of receiving all virtues, is like a bowl, fashioned by the author of faith himself (Heb. 12:2). For in a bowl wisdom has mixed her wine, saying, “Come, eat my bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you.” (Prov. 9:5) This navel,

therefore, fashioned with all the beauty of the virtues, does not lack mixed wine. His belly also was filled not only with the wheaten food of justice, as it were, but also with that of grace, and it bloomed with sweetness like a lily (Isaiah 31:5).”

(*Consolation on the Death of Emperor Valentinian* 96, in *The Fathers Of The Church: A New Translation*, vol. 22, pp. 293-94)

Bishop Theodoret of Cyrus (died c. 457): “She is admitted to the inner chamber, the quarters and rooms of the bridegroom, and boastfully says to her own retinue, “The king introduced me into his chamber,” (Song of Solomon 1:4) that is, he revealed to me his hidden purposes, the plan concealed from ages and generations he made known to me, the treasuries obscure, hidden, and unseen he opened to me, in keeping with the prophecy of Isaiah.” (*Commentary on the Song of Songs* 1, Quoted in *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon* by J. Robert Wright, Thomas C. Oden, p. 295)

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Archbishop, Confessor, Father and Doctor of the Church* (died 386): “You wish to know the place? He says in the Canticles, “I came down to the nut garden” (Song of Solomon 6:11: A Type of the Passion of Christ); for it was a garden where he was crucified.” (*Catechetical Lectures* 14.5, in *The Fathers Of The Church: A New Translation*, vol. 65, p. 16-17)

St. Caesarius of Arles, Archbishop of Arles (died 542): “It is said concerning the church of the Gentiles, “I am dark and beautiful, O daughter of Jerusalem.” (Song of Solomon 1:5) Why is the church dark and beautiful? She is dark by nature, beautiful by grace. Why dark? “Indeed, in guilt was I born, and in sin my mother conceived me.” (Ps. 51:5; 50:7 in Douay-Rheims Version.) Why beautiful? “Cleanse me of sin with hyssop, that I may be purified; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” (Ps. 51:7; 50:9 in Douay-Rheims Version.)” (*Sermon* 12.4.1, in *The Fathers Of The Church: A New Translation*, vol. 47, p. 209)

St. Jerome, *Hermit, Priest, Confessor, Bible Translator, Theologian, Father and Doctor of the Church* (died 420): “Born, in the first instance, of such parentage we are naturally black, and even when we have repented, so long as we have not scaled the heights of virtue, we may still say: “I am black but comely, O you daughters of Jerusalem.” (Song of Solomon 1:5) But you will say to me, “I have left the home of my childhood; I have forgotten my father, I am born anew in Christ. What reward do I receive for this?” The context shows—“The king shall desire your beauty.” This, then, is the great mystery. “For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be” not as is there said,

“of one flesh,” (Ephesians 5:31-32) but “of one spirit.” Your bridegroom is not haughty or disdainful; He has “married an Ethiopian woman.” (Numbers 12:1) When once you desire the wisdom of the true Solomon and come to Him, He will avow all His knowledge to you; He will lead you into His chamber with His royal hand; (Song of Solomon 1:4) He will miraculously change your complexion so that it shall be said of you, “Who is this that goes up and has been made white?”” (*Letter 22.1, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 2.6:22-23*)

St. Hippolytus of Rome, Priest and Martyr (died 235): “[**On Song of Solomon 1:4**]“The king introduced me to his treasures.” Who is this king, if not Christ himself? And what are these treasures, if not his chambers? This is the people who say, “We will rejoice and delight in you,” for he calls everyone. First, it tells us about the past, then it reveals a time of penance in the future: “We will rejoice and delight in you.” “I loved your breasts more than wine,” not the wine that was mixed by Christ, surely, but the wine whereby Noah previously languished in drunkenness, the wine that deceived Lot. “We loved your fountains of milk more than this wine” because breasts were the commandments given by Christ [in the law]; they delight but certainly do not inebriate. For this reason, indeed, the apostles said, “Do not drink so much wine that you become drunk.” (Eph. 5:18) Therefore the beloved says, “I loved your breasts more than wine; righteousness loves you,” because those who follow the way of righteousness are those who love you, whereas unbelievers hate you and deserve retribution from the judge.” (*Treatise on the Song of Songs 3.1.4, Quoted in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon by J. Robert Wright, Thomas C. Oden, p. 295*)

Bishop Gregory of Elvira (died c. 392): “For thus is it called the Canticle of Canticles, inasmuch as it is above every canticle that Moses and Mary in Exodus and Isaiah and Habakkuk and others sang. These are better canticles because they give praise to the Lord with joyful mind and soul for the liberation of the people, or for their conversion, or in gratitude for the divine works. Here they are superior also because the voice of the singing church and of God is heard. Because the divine and human are united with one another, therefore, it is called the Canticle of Canticles, that is, the best of the best.” (*Explanation of the Song of Songs 1.2, in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon by J. Robert Wright, Thomas C. Oden, p. 289*)

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Bishop, Philosopher, Theologian, Father and Doctor of the Church* (died 430): “The Canticle of Canticles sings a sort of spiritual rapture experienced by holy souls contemplating the nuptial relationship between Christ the King and his queen-city, the church. But it is a rapture veiled in allegory to make us

yearn for it more ardently and rejoice in the unveiling as the bridegroom comes into view—the bridegroom to whom the canticles sings, “The righteous love you,” and the hearkening bride replies, “There is love in your delights.”” (City of God 17.20, in *The Fathers Of The Church: A New Translation*, vol. 24, p. 77)

Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (died c. 340): “And as we are examining His Name, the seal of all we have said may be found in the oracle of Solomon the wisest of the wise, where he says in the Song of Songs: “Thy name is as ointment poured forth.” (Song of Songs 1:3) Yea, he being supplied with divine wisdom, and thought worthy of more mystic revelations about Christ and His Church, and speaking of Him as Heavenly Bridegroom, and her as Bride...” (*Proof of the Gospel* 4.16, Quoted in *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon* by J. Robert Wright, Thomas C. Oden, p. 293)

Cassiodorus, Roman statesman and writer (died c. 585): “In short, you deserve Christ’s kiss and the continuance of your virginal glory forever, for these words are spoken to you: “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth, for your breasts are better than wine, smelling sweet of the best ointments,” (Songs of Solomon 1:1) and the other verses which that divine book includes with its mystical proclamation.” (*Exposition of the Psalms, Preface*, in *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation* 51:42)

Origen, biblical scholar and theologian (died c. 254): “We must not, however, overlook the fact that in certain versions we find written “for your sayings are better than wine,” where we read “for your breasts are better than wine.” (Song of Solomon 1:4) But although it may seem that this gives a plainer meaning in regard to the things about which we have discoursed in the spiritual interpretation, we ourselves keep to what the Seventy interpreters wrote in every case. For we are certain that the Holy Spirit willed that the figures of the mysteries should be roofed over in the Divine Scriptures, and should not be displayed publicly, and in the open air.” (*Commentary on the Song of Songs* 1.3, in *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation* 26:74)

St. Dionysius the Areopagite, Bishop of Athens (1st century): “And in the Songs there are those passionate longings fit only for prostitutes. There are too those other sacred pictures boldly used to represent God, so that what is hidden may be brought out into the open and multiplied, what is unique and undivided may be divided up, and multiple shapes and forms be given to what has neither shape nor form. All this is to enable the one capable of seeing the beauty hidden within these images to find

that they are truly mysterious, appropriate to God, and filled with a great theological light. But let us not suppose that the outward face of these contrived symbols exists for its own sake. Rather, it is the protective garb of the understanding of what is ineffable and invisible to the common multitude. This is so in order that the most sacred things are not easily handled by the profane but are revealed instead to the real lovers of holiness. Only these latter know how to pack away the workings of childish imagination regarding the sacred symbols. They alone have the simplicity of mind and the receptive, contemplative power to cross over to the simple, marvelous, transcendent truth of the symbols.” (*Letter IX, in Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, pp. 282-83)

Question: Can a man or a woman morally perform a medical examination involving the whole naked body, parts of the body, the genital, or the breasts?

Answer: Yes. So long as it is a necessary medical performance, it is permissible. St. Thomas Aquinas refers to this.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 58, Art. 1, Reply to Objection 5: “... if he [a husband] cannot fulfill the carnal act with a virgin, while he can with one who is not a virgin, the hymeneal membrane may be broken by a medical instrument, and thus he may have connection with her. Nor would this be contrary to nature, for it would be done not for pleasure but for a remedy.”

A woman, of course, must do everything in her power not to allow a male doctor examine her body undressed or partly undressed (unless it is an area that is not problematic), and she must not let a male doctor examine her breasts or genital area. It is definitely very bad for a woman to expose herself to a man in this way and so put herself to shame and the doctor to possible temptation.

However, this rule may not be expedient in all cases, especially in grave and urgent medical necessities. Grave danger where medical help is needed promptly can excuse a person from showing problematic body parts to a doctor which is not of the same sex, but generally patients must do all in their power to try to get a doctor that is of the same gender if problematic parts of the body must be examined or shown in the doctor’s examination.

A man should always choose a male doctor for physical examinations, especially if it involves the private parts. Moreover, it is not fitting that the hands of a woman should be touching and be physically close to a man’s body and so expose him to possible temptations — and that is even more true if the woman is young and beautiful.

Question: Is gluttony a sin and does gluttony affect sexual temptation?

Answer: Yes, gluttony is a sin and on top of this, it is also one of the seven deadly sins. Furthermore, the sin of gluttony indeed increases sexual desire or temptations. The sin of gluttony is special in this regard, which makes it really necessary to resist this temptation.

Many people are completely unaware of the fact that gluttony actually provokes the flesh into sexual sin. They think that they can eat however much they want of good tasting food or candy and snacks all the time without this actually effecting their spiritual welfare. The fact of the matter, however, is that gluttony is a mortal sin just like lust is. And not only that, but gluttony or superfluity in food actually provokes the flesh into sexual temptations and sin.

St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, *Doctor of the Church* (1696-1787): "It is also necessary to abstain from superfluity of food. St. Jerome asserts that satiety of the stomach provokes incontinence. And St. Bonaventure says: "Impurity is nourished by eating to excess." But on the other hand, fasting, as the holy Church teaches, represses vice and produces virtue: "O God, who by corporal fasting dost suppress vice, dost elevate the mind, and dost confer virtues and rewards." St. Thomas has written that when the devil is conquered by those whom he tempts to gluttony, he ceases to tempt them to impurity." (*The Dignities and Duties of the Priest*, Instruction III)

Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Father and Doctor of the Church* (540-604): "As long as the vice of gluttony has a hold on a man, all that he has done valiantly is forfeited by him: and as long as the belly is unrestrained, all virtue comes to naught." (Quoted in *Summa Theologica*, by St. Thomas Aquinas)

The Holy Saints, Popes and Doctors of the Church are all clear that it's imperative for one's salvation to not allow the search of pleasing one's palate to gain control over one's soul, and this means that one must fast sometimes in order to chasten one's body and senses. As long as a person really considers how small and trifling this penance is compared to an eternal torment in Hell, they will not refuse to follow the Church's words or prescribed days of fasting and abstinence in this respect.

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #8, March 4, 1679: "Eating and drinking even to satiety for pleasure only, are not sinful, provided this does not stand in the way of health, since any natural appetite can licitly enjoy its own

actions.” – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote the following when explaining what gluttony is: “Pope Innocent XI Odescalchi has condemned the proposition which asserts that it is not a sin to eat or to drink from the sole motive of satisfying the palate. However, it is not a fault to feel pleasure in eating: for it is, generally speaking, impossible to eat without experiencing the delight which food naturally produces. But it is a defect to eat, like beasts, through the sole motive of sensual gratification, and without any reasonable object. Hence, the most delicious meats may be eaten without sin, if the motive be good and worthy of a rational creature; and, in taking the coarsest food through attachment to pleasure, there may be a fault.” (*The True Spouse of Jesus Christ, The Mortification of the Appetite, "The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus"* (1887), vol. 1, p. 241)

Pope St. Gregory the Great described five ways by which one can commit the sin of gluttony, and showed biblical examples for each of them:

1. Eating before the time of meals in order to satisfy the palate.

Biblical example: Jonathan eating a little honey, when his father Saul commanded no food to be taken before the evening (1 Samuel 14:29).

2. Seeking delicacies and better quality of food to gratify the “vile sense of taste.”

Biblical example: When Israelites escaping from Egypt complained, “Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks and the onions and the garlic,” God rained fowls for them to eat but punished them later (Numbers 11:4).

3. Seeking after sauces and seasonings for the enjoyment of the palate.

Biblical example: Two sons of Eli the high priest made the sacrificial meat to be cooked in one manner rather than another. They were met with death (1 Samuel 4:11).

4. Exceeding the necessary amount of food.

Biblical example: One of the sins of Sodom was “fullness of bread” (Ezekiel 16:49).

5. Taking food with too much eagerness, even when eating the proper amount, and even if

the food is not luxurious.

Biblical example: Esau selling his birthright for ordinary food of bread and pottage of lentils. His punishment was that the “profane person. . . who, for a morsel of meat sold his birthright,” we learn that “he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully, with tears” (Genesis 25:30).

The fifth way is worse than all others, said St. Gregory, because it shows attachment to pleasure most clearly.

To recapitulate, St. Gregory the Great said that one may succumb to the sin of gluttony by: 1. Time; 2. Quality; 3. Stimulants; 4. Quantity; 5. Eagerness.

In his *Summa Theologica* (Part 2-2, Question 148, Article 4), St. Thomas Aquinas reiterated the list of five ways to commit gluttony:

- *Laute* - eating food that is too luxurious, exotic, or costly
- *Nimis* - eating food that is excessive in quantity
- *Studiosae* - eating food that is too daintily or elaborately prepared
- *Praepropere* - eating too soon, or at an inappropriate time
- *Ardenter* - eating too eagerly.

Aquinas notes that the first three ways are related to the nature of the food itself, while the last two have to do with the time or manner in which it is consumed. Thus, one can commit the sin of gluttony by eating too much food, by eating too early and eagerly, or by eating food that tastes very good.

Children must be kept away from gluttony

When we consider the fact that gluttony is a sin and that this sin is especially powerful in inflaming sins of sensuality, it is no wonder that most teenagers fall into sins of impurity almost immediately when they reach the age of puberty. While they cannot be excused for their mortal sins, the parents who allow them to eat all kinds of dainties whenever they desire should of course also be castigated, since they are in a great part responsible for their child's fall into moral ruin.

Young as well as old do not need to eat especially good or luxurious food, and pampering one's child can only lead to moral ruin in the end. For just a few hundred years ago, most children would have been more than satisfied if they received a fruit as a dessert, since

almost all were poor, and there is in truth no need for any cookies, coffee, candy, chips, sodas etc., which only harms the child in every possible way, both spiritually and physically. Indeed, so harmful are all of these dainties just mentioned, that the obesity problem in the western countries have reached alarming proportions because almost everyone consumes so much unnecessary desserts or candy etc.

St. Alphonsus: “As regards the food, it must be observed that nothing edifies the people so much as the mortification and the frugality of the missionaries, while on the contrary nothing scandalizes them more than when they see men treating themselves well in regard to eating and drinking. ... Hence in our missions it is an established rule, that at dinner on days on which flesh-meat is allowed there is to be given only soup with boiled meat, and on fasting-days soup with another frugal portion; at supper, salad and other similar food, with a little cheese and fruit. Only on the last day, the day of the blessing, there may be more food, but never fowl, game, choice fish, pastry, or other sweetmeats.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 293)

If a parent wants his child to be saved, he needs to be firm and teach his child about the necessity of detachment from earthly things and mortification of his senses, keeping unnecessary pleasure and dainties away from him. In addition, he should tell his child the reason for this, that is, that eating all these things very often ends in evil attachments and “gives rise to blindness of mind, which excludes almost entirely the knowledge of spiritual things”, and that for many such a life ends in eternal damnation and torment in hell, as we can read of the rich glutton and Lazarus in the gospel (Luke 16:19-31). If he explains in detail the horrors of hell and how he must avoid it, the child will have an easier time accepting the change.

The Gospel of Barnabas explains Luke 16:19-31 thus:

The Gospel of Barnabas, Chapter 24: “**Notable example how one ought to flee from banqueting and feasting.** Having said this, Jesus wept, saying: “Woe to those who are servants to their flesh, for they are sure not to have any good in the other life, but only torments for their sins. I tell you that there was a rich glutton who paid no heed to aught but gluttony, and so every day held a splendid feast. There stood at his gate a poor man by name Lazarus, who was full of wounds, and was fain to have those crumbs that fell from the glutton’s table. But no one gave them to him; nay, all mocked him. Only the dogs had pity on him, for they licked his wounds. It came to pass that the poor man died, and the angels carried him to the arms of Abraham our father. The rich man also died, and the devils carried him to

the arms of Satan; whereupon, undergoing the greatest torment, he lifted up his eyes and from afar saw Lazarus in the arms of Abraham. Then cried the rich man: "O father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, who upon his fingers may bring me a drop of water to cool my tongue, which is tormented in this flame." Abraham answered: "Son, remember that thou receivedst thy good in the other life and Lazarus his evil: wherefore now thou shalt be in torment, and Lazarus in consolation." ... "See then whether the poor are blessed," said Jesus, "who have patience, and only desire that which is necessary, hating the flesh. O wretched they, who bear others to the burial, to give their flesh for food of worms, and do not learn the truth. So far from it that they live here like immortals, for they build great houses and purchase great revenues and live in pride."

The Gospel of Barnabas, Chapter 25 "**How one ought to despise the flesh, and how one ought to live in the world.** Then said he who writeth: "O master, true are thy words and therefore have we forsaken all to follow thee. Tell us then, how we ought to hate our flesh: for to kill oneself is not lawful, and living we needs must give it its livelihood." Jesus answered: "Keep thy flesh like a horse, and thou shalt live securely. For unto a horse food is given by measure and labour without measure, and the bridle is put on him that he may walk at thy will, he is tied up that he may not annoy anyone, he is kept in a poor place, and beaten when he is not obedient: so do thou, then, O Barnabas, and thou shalt live always with God. And be not offended at my words, for David the prophet did the same thing, as he confesseth, saying: "I am as an horse before thee: and am always by thee." Now tell me, whether is poorer he who is content with little, or he who desireth much? Verily I say unto you, that if the world had but a sound mind no one would amass anything for himself, but all would be in common. But in this is known its madness, that the more it amasseth the more it desireth. And as much as it amasseth, for the fleshly repose of others doth it amass the same. Therefore let one single robe suffice for you, cast away your purse, carry no wallet, no sandals on your feet; and do not think, saying: "What shall happen to us?" but have thought to do the will of God, and he will provide for your need, insomuch that nothing shall be lacking unto you. "Verily I say unto you, that the amassing much in this life giveth sure witness of not having anything to receive in the other. For he that hath Jerusalem for his native country buildeth not houses in Samaria, for that there is enmity between these cities. Understand ye?" "Yea," answered the disciples."

Since we know that Our Lady revealed the horrors of Hell in a Revelation to the children of Fatima that were 7, 8, and 9 years old at the time, we can also know that Our Lord and Our Lady wants us to tell our young ones about hell and its horrors. Nothing could be imagined that will help a parent's education and upbringing of a child more than over and over

explaining to one's child the horrible end in Hell of all disobedient and sinful children. "Tremble, yes, tremble, ye sinners; perhaps this very night, if you do not resolve to amend your life, God may permit death to surprise you, and you may die and be condemned to hell! . . . Continue, O obstinate sinner! continue to offend God. But remember: In the valley of Josaphat I await you; there you will hear the sentence which Jesus Christ will pass upon you: Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire! . . . Who can tell? perhaps, my brother, Death this night will come to thee." (St. Alphonsus, Exhortations, *The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 100)

St. Alphonsus, On the Manner of Preaching: "**I recommend you for the most part, in your sermons to speak of the last things *death, judgment, hell, eternity, and the like; because the eternal truths make the deepest impression, and incline the heart to the love of virtue.*** I beg of you, repeatedly in your discourses to explain to the people the peace enjoyed by the soul that is in favor with God. ... I entreat you also to speak often of the love that Jesus Christ has shown us in his Passion, in the institution of the most Holy Sacrament, and of the love we should bear in turn towards our most blessed Redeemer, by often calling to mind those two great mysteries of love. I say this because few preachers, or at least too few, speak of the love of Jesus Christ; and it is certain that what is done solely through fear of punishment and not through love will be of short duration." (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 59)

Mortification of the senses is obviously crucial for one's spiritual advancement according to the unanimous teaching of the Fathers and the Saints, and subjugating and becoming a master over one's own palate is certainly one of the most important things to strive for in this regard, in addition to chastity and humility. Hence, "The first thing you are to observe at table, is not to make known what you would like, accepting for the love of God the meats which you do not relish, and depriving yourself of those which would be agreeable to your palate; you will observe besides a great modesty, recalling to your mind incessantly the presence of God, Whose service ought alone to occupy you. If you want anything, you will try to do without it, rejoicing interiorly at this privation; you will never be the first to commence eating; you will add nothing to season the meats which will be presented to you, and eating without eagerness, you will occupy yourself with God." (St. Alphonsus Rodriguez (1532-1617), *The Life of Blessed Alphonsus Rodriguez, Lay-Brother of the Society of Jesus*, p. 26)

"Gluttony is an inordinate love of eating and drinking. We are not forbidden to feel pleasure in either the one or the other; for it is by a wise foresight that God has seasoned with a feeling of gratification the use of the food necessary for preserving our health and

life. But we abuse this blessing when we seek only the pleasure alone; we must eat and drink in order to live, and not to flatter sensuality. Our sole end should be to satisfy the wants of nature, that we may be enabled to fulfill our duties and serve God, according to the words of the Apostle: "Whether you eat, or drink, do all for the glory of God." If we wish to observe this precept of St. Paul, we must, in our repasts, think not of gratifying the body, but of following the order of God, who wills that we should preserve life. To seek only the gratification of the senses is gluttony, a vice unworthy of man: it weighs down the soul, brutalizes the mind, ruins the health and shortens life." (St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (1651-1719), *A new treatise on the duty of a Christian towards God*, Article 5)

The evil of lust makes man blind to spiritual things “while dulness of sense arises from gluttony”

Most men and women of the world do not recognize or know about the fact that sensual lusts (both for the married and the unmarried people alike) actually **“gives rise to blindness of mind, which excludes almost entirely the knowledge of spiritual things, while dulness of sense arises from gluttony, which makes a man weak in regard to the same [spiritual] intelligible things.”** (St. Thomas Aquinas) This fact also requires married people from not indulging too often in the marital act. For all who overindulge in the marital act will always experience a **“blindness of mind”** of spiritual things. So young as well as old must be kept away from impurity and gluttony, since both of these sins are very powerful in getting a person to abandon the faith and the moral life since the “blindness of mind” and “dulness of sense” undoubtedly will effect the minds of both young and old in a very detrimental way.

St. Thomas Aquinas explains: “Different causes produce different effects. **Now Gregory says (Moral. xxxi, 45) that dulness of sense arises from gluttony, and that blindness of mind arises from lust...** Now carnal vices, namely gluttony and lust, are concerned with pleasures of touch in matters of food and sex; and these are the most impetuous of all pleasures of the body. For this reason these vices cause man’s attention to be very firmly fixed on corporeal things, **so that in consequence man’s operation in regard to intelligible things is weakened**, more, however, by lust than by gluttony, forasmuch as sexual pleasures are more vehement than those of the table. **Wherefore lust gives rise to blindness of mind, which excludes almost entirely the knowledge of spiritual things**, while dulness of sense arises from gluttony, which makes a man weak in regard to the same [spiritual] intelligible things.” (*Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 15, Art. 3, Second and Third Articles)

The Catholic Encyclopedia wrote the following when explaining what gluttony and

spiritual gluttony is:

“The moral deformity discernible in this vice lies in its defiance of the order postulated by reason, which prescribes necessity as the measure of indulgence in eating and drinking. This deordination, according to the teaching of the Angelic Doctor, may happen in five ways which are set forth in the scholastic verse: "Prae-propere, laute, nimis, ardentem, studiose" or, according to the apt rendering of Father Joseph Rickaby: too soon, too expensively, too much, too eagerly, too daintily. Clearly one who uses food or drink in such a way as to injure his health or impair the mental equipment needed for the discharge of his duties, is guilty of the sin of gluttony... Such a temper of soul is equivalently the direct and positive shutting out of that reference to our last end [God and Salvation] which must be found, at least implicitly, in all our actions... St. John of the Cross, in his work "The Dark Night of the Soul" (I, vi), dissects what he calls spiritual gluttony. He explains that it is the disposition of those who, in prayer and other acts of religion, are always in search of sensible sweetness; they are those who "will feel and taste God, as if he were palpable and accessible to them not only in Communion but in all their other acts of devotion." This he declares is a very great imperfection and productive of great evils." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Gluttony," vol. 6, 1919)

In the Life of Saint Francis of Assisi, by Julian of Speyer, "His Keeping of Poverty, His Abstinence, and the Admirable Rigor of His Life; And How He Fled People's Praise and Wished To Be Thought Of No Account," it says:

“What shall we say about delicate foods or the drinking of wine, or even the abundance of other cheap foods, since, on the very rare occasions he ate cooked foods, he mixed them with ashes or cold water and did not even drink enough water? For he claimed it was most difficult to satisfy need and not become a slave to pleasure. Quite often, when he was going around preaching penance, he took refreshment at the homes of secular people who invited him. On account of the words of the gospel about *eating and drinking what was set before them*, he would put his hand to his mouth, appearing to be eating the meat, but rarely tasting even a little bit of it, he would unobtrusively put the rest in his lap.

“It once happened that, because of an illness, he ate some chicken, but after his strength returned, he strictly ordered one of the brothers to lead him through the center of the city of Assisi with a rope tied around his neck like a robber, and to cry out like the town cries: "Behold, Look at the glutton who has fattened himself with the flesh of poultry which he has, unknown to you, eaten in secret." It so happened that many, struck by this spectacle of remorse, lamented with tearful voice and

proclaimed themselves most worthless for having given themselves to daily pleasures.” (*Saint*, 392-3 – *The Life of Saint Francis*, reprinted in *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: The Saint* (New York, New City Press: 1999).

Question: Which are the most dangerous foods, substances or drinks that inflames lust that one should abstain from if one wants to quench sexual temptations or desire?

Answer: Along with the world’s change in the last couple of hundred years, the foods and substances that men partake of has also changed drastically. However, there are some specific substances that have been proven to increase lust or sexual desire, and that are therefore more important to abstain from than other things. These substances obviously doesn’t work on all people in the same way, but as a general rule, scientific studies have verified that some substances are indeed more powerful to increase lust or sexual desire than others. Consequently, people who are having a hard time controlling their sexual lusts should try to study about those foods and substances that they partake of, so that they may be able to exclude those foods that may be the cause of their temptations or sexual sins.

1) Caffeine is a commonplace stimulant drug, occurring both in nature as part of the coffee, tea, cacao and yerba mate plants, and as an additive in many consumer products, most notably beverages advertised as energy drinks (such as Red Bull). However, caffeine is also added to many sodas such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi; on the ingredients listing, it is designated as a flavoring agent.

Researchers say that caffeine is both addictive as well as that it enhances sexual arousal. Scientific studies have concluded that caffeine works by stimulating a person’s nerve endings, increasing blood flow, and thus as a result of this, increasing concupiscence and sexual desire. Sexual erection and blood flow is actually the same thing, and thus, it is common that a person who consumes caffeine feels more sexually tempted. A recent study found that female rats that got a shot of caffeine were more motivated to seek out sex than uncaffeinated animals. The researchers concluded caffeine enhances sexual arousal.

As if this was not enough, physical and psychological addiction can also result from caffeine intake. In an interview, Roland Griffiths, a professor in the departments of psychiatry and neuroscience at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, said that the studies had demonstrated that people who take in a minimum of one hundred milligrams of caffeine per day (about the amount in half a cup of coffee) can acquire a physical dependence that would trigger withdrawal symptoms that include headaches, muscle pain and stiffness, lethargy, nausea, vomiting, depressed mood, and marked irritability. Through his research, withdrawals occurred within 12 to 24 hours after stopping caffeine

intake, but could last as long as nine days and caffeine consumers are more apt to consume to waive off the withdrawal symptoms instead of to enjoy the product. Although its mechanism of action is somewhat different to that of cocaine or the amphetamines, for example, it nonetheless creates a similar pattern of dependence. When the drug wears off, the brain will release less than the usual level of neurotransmitters, in order to compensate for depletion. Due to this effect, users of caffeine will often be tempted to re-dose in order to avoid the “crash”.

With repetitive use, physical dependence or addiction are likely to occur. Also, the stimulatory effects of caffeine are substantially reduced over time, a phenomenon known as a tolerance. Tolerance develops quickly to some (but not all) effects of caffeine, especially among heavy coffee and energy drink consumers. Some coffee drinkers develop tolerance to its sleep-disrupting effects, but others apparently do not.

Withdrawal symptoms – including headache, irritability, inability to concentrate, drowsiness, insomnia, and pain in the stomach, upper body, and joints – may appear within 12 to 24 hours after discontinuation of caffeine intake, peak at roughly 48 hours, and usually last from 2 to 9 days. In prolonged caffeine drinkers, symptoms such as increased depression and anxiety, nausea, vomiting, physical pains and intense desire for caffeine containing beverages are also reported. Peer knowledge, support and interaction may aid withdrawal; prayer, and especially the [Rosary](#), definitely aid against withdrawal symptoms.

The most common foods or substances that people use to consume caffeine are: coffee, tea, carbonated beverages like Coca-Cola and Power Drinks etc., and chocolate or cacao.

2) Chocolate or Cacao also contains caffeine as an active substance, as well as many other substances that increase sexual arousal. While Cacao contains less caffeine than coffee or tea, the caffeine consumed can still many times be greater than in coffee or tea since the amount that people normally use of cacao is greater. Italian scientists found that women who had a daily chocolate treat reported higher sexual desire than those who did without. Chocolate contains phenylethylamine (PEA), which triggers the release of feel-good dopamine in the brain and is released naturally during sex. **Chocolate or Cacao** also contains the stimulant called Theobromine. Theobromine poisoning may result from the chronic or acute consumption of large quantities, especially in the elderly.

While theobromine and caffeine are similar in that they are related alkaloids, theobromine has a lesser impact on the human central nervous system than caffeine. However, theobromine stimulates the heart to a greater degree. While theobromine is not as

addictive as caffeine, it has been cited as possibly causing addiction to chocolate. Theobromine has also been identified as one of the compounds contributing to chocolate's reputed role as an aphrodisiac. As with caffeine, theobromine can cause sleeplessness, tremors, restlessness, anxiety, as well as contribute to increased production of urine, causing dehydration. Additional side effects include loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting **and even problems during pregnancy.**

3) Alcohol or Wine: A recent study in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* found that women who drank 1 to 2 glasses of red wine had increased sexual desire and functioning than people who do not drink at all. There was no additional benefit to drinking more than two glasses. Compounds in red wine like flavonoids may improve sexual functioning by increasing blood flow to key areas of the body.

Speaking on the inherent dangers of a "body heated with drink", St. Jerome writes: "When the body is heated with drink it soon boils over with lust. Wine drinking means self-indulgence, self-indulgence means sensual gratification, sensual gratification means a breach of chastity. He that lives in pleasure is dead while he lives, [1 Tim. 5:6] and he that drinks himself drunk is not only dead but buried. One hour's debauch makes Noah uncover his nakedness which through sixty years of sobriety he had kept covered. [Gen. 9:20-21] Lot in a fit of intoxication unwittingly adds incest to incontinence, and wine overcomes the man whom Sodom failed to conquer [Gen. 19:30-38]." (*Letters of St. Jerome*, Letter LXIX, To Oceanus, A.D. 397)

4) Tobacco or Nicotine: While tobacco does not directly increase sexual desire, dependence on or addiction to this drug creates a pleasure seeking mindset in an individual, and this mindset of always seeking after pleasures is the exact cause of why so many people commits sexual sins of various sorts. Smoking in very small amounts once in a while is probably not a sin, but smoking habitually or regularly in such a way that one gets addicted to cigarettes is a sin, and it definitely cuts out graces from people's lives. We don't see how those who smoke habitually, for example throughout the day, would be any different from people who eat candy all day and thus try to constantly gratify themselves in that way. The only thing different with smoking compared to candy is that the effect and addictive properties of the cigarette is much stronger than candy, thus making it a very strong drug in comparison to candy. This is not even to get into the issue that we now know it's horrible for health and leads to death. People who are smokers are giving a horrible example to other people, tempting them to start smoking cigarettes which is highly addictive and lethal. Smoking is so addictive that medical scientists have compared the addiction to heroin addiction. Most people who get addicted to cigarettes will never be able to stop and will be life long slaves under a most filthy, evil and grace diminishing

habit.

St. Francis of Assisi was well aware of the truth that seeking pleasure corrupts the soul. St. Francis used to put ashes in his food in order to make it taste bad, since he understood that the five senses and the search to gratify them made the soul weaker. Someone might ask: “Does that mean that eating good things is a sin?” The answer is of course that eating good things in itself is no sin. However, one should definitely try to avoid all things that are tasty and addictive, such as superfluous and tasty foods, meats, beverages, cigarettes, candy, chips, cakes, spices, sauces, dressings, etc. The reason why man should do his utmost to avoid pleasurable things is because the five senses of man, after the fall, was corrupted by self-love and self-gratification. That’s precisely why countless of saints have refused to eat foods that are superfluous or that tastes good. However, no one should get the idea that it’s sinful to eat good foods, but understand that people who always want to eat these foods will fall into sin, for gluttony and lack of moderation is certainly sinful.

Hell is too long and life is too short to pander to your five senses, that’s for sure! The fight or battle we humans have to endure in this life is this: either we choose to gratify our senses in this life, and endure an eternal torment in Hell, or we chose to wait in patience for the brief second of this earthly life to end, and then enter into an eternal bliss and joy in Heaven.

In conclusion, there are probably countless kinds of foods, drinks or substances that increases lust and sexual desire that have not been mentioned here. Eating too much food and spicy and fatty food will also many times lead to sexual temptations. So it is imperative to always be thoughtful when eating and resist the inclination to overeat. Thus, if a person suffers from temptations or have fallen into sexual sins and they realize that their lust is increased by consumption of certain foods or drinks, they should then abstain from them. They should also study and research the foods they eat if they suspect that what they eat are contributing to their falls or temptations. This could either be done through trying to abstain from some of the suspected substances, or through reading articles and books about the foods one eat.

As a general rule, abstinence from foods that are not necessary for our survival or fasting by eating simple food like bread, rice or vegetables two times a day along with praying the Rosary and reading spiritual books will many times help to alleviate the temptations of a person.

The practice of fasting is essential to learn to conquer the sin of gluttony as well as other sins, principally the sin of lust. St. Jerome taught that fasting is a tool for preventing the

commission of sexual sins:

“When Elijah, in his flight from Jezebel, lay weary and desolate beneath the oak, there came an angel who raised him up and said, "Arise and eat." And he looked, and behold there was a cake and a cruse of water at his head. [1 Kings xix. 4-6] Had God willed it, might He not have sent His prophet spiced wines and dainty dishes and flesh basted into tenderness? When Elisha invited the sons of the prophets to dinner, he only gave them field-herbs to eat; and when all cried out with one voice: "There is death in the pot," the man of God did not storm at the cooks (for he was not used to very sumptuous fare), but caused meal to be brought, and casting it in, sweetened the bitter mess [2 Kings iv. 38-41] with spiritual strength as Moses had once sweetened the waters of Mara. [Exod. xv. 23-25] Again, when men were sent to arrest the prophet, and were smitten with physical and mental blindness, that he might bring them without their own knowledge to Samaria, notice the food with which Elisha ordered them to be refreshed. "Set bread and water," he said, "before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." [2 Kings vi. 18-23] And Daniel, who might have had rich food from the king's table, [Dan. i. 8] preferred the mower's breakfast, brought to him by Habakkuk, [Bel. 33-39] which must have been but country fare. He was called "a man of desires," [Dan. ix. 23] because he would not eat the bread of desire or drink the wine of concupiscence.

“There are, in the Scriptures, countless divine answers condemning gluttony and approving simple food. But as fasting is not my present theme and an adequate discussion of it would require a treatise to itself, these few observations must suffice of the many which the subject suggests. By them you will understand why the first man, obeying his belly and not God, was cast down from paradise into this vale of tears; [Ps. lxxxiv. 6] and why Satan used hunger to tempt the Lord Himself in the wilderness; [Matt. iv. 2, 3] and why the apostle cries: "Meats for the belly and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them;" [1 Cor. vi. 13] and why he speaks of the self-indulgent as men "whose God is their belly." [Phil. iii. 19] For men invariably worship what they like best. Care must be taken, therefore, that abstinence may bring back to Paradise those whom satiety once drove out.

“You will tell me, perhaps, that, high-born as you are, reared in luxury and used to lie softly, you cannot do without wine and dainties, and would find a stricter rule of life unendurable. If so, I can only say: "Live, then, by your own rule, since God's rule is too hard for you." Not that the Creator and Lord of all takes pleasure in a rumbling and empty stomach, or in fevered lungs; but that these are indispensable as means to the preservation of chastity. Job was dear to God, perfect and upright before Him; [Job ii. 3] yet hear what he says of the devil: "His strength is in the loins [sexual desire], and his force is in the navel [desire for food]" [Job xl. 16]." (St. Jerome, *Letter XXII*, To Eustochium, Section 9-11, A.D. 384)

St. Jerome further adds: “And yet after the Saviour had fasted forty days, it was through food that the old enemy laid a snare for Him, saying, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” (St. Matt. 4:3) Under the Law, in the seventh month after the blowing of trumpets and on the tenth day of the month, a fast was proclaimed for the whole Jewish people, and that soul was cut off from among his people which on that day preferred self-indulgence to self-denial. (Lev. 23:27-29) In Job it is written of behemoth that “his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly.” (Job 40:16) Our foe uses the heat of youthful passion to tempt young men and maidens and “sets on fire the wheel of our birth.” (James 3:6) He thus fulfills the words of Hosea, “they are all adulterers, their heart is like an oven” (Hosea 7:4); an oven which only God’s mercy and severe fasting can extinguish.” (*The Letters of St. Jerome*, Letter CXXX, Section 10, vol. 6, pp. 266-267, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series)

St. John Climacus calls gluttony “the prince of the passions.” He said that when one sits down to eat, one should think about death and the last judgment: “The fallen Lucifer is the prince of demons, and gluttony is the prince of the passions. So when you sit at a well-laden table, remember death and remember judgment, and even then you will manage to restrain yourself a little.” Like St. Jerome, St. John Climacus encouraged the use of fasting as a tool for overcoming lust: “To fast is to do violence to nature. It is to do away what whatever pleases the palate. Fasting ends lust, roots out bad thoughts, frees one from evil dreams.” (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, "Step 14: On Gluttony," by St. John Climacus, p. 169)

Overeating leads to lust which, in turn, leads to other sexual sins, such as fornication and adultery. St. Maximos the Confessor called gluttony “greed. . . because this is the mother and nurse of unchastity.” (*First Century on Love*, Section 84, by St. Maximos the Confessor, *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 63)

St. Augustine also knew very well how food could effect our sensuality, which is why he taught that one should be very careful what or in what measure one eat. “You have taught me to approach the consumption of food as I would medicine.” (St. Augustine, 354-430 A.D., Quoted in *De Malo* by St. Thomas Aquinas) Why should one eat food as though it is medicine? There are two main reasons for this. The first is that one takes the medicine in very well measured portions, thus always being sure that there is not too little or too much of medicine to injure the body. In the same way, we should also carefully measure our portions of food in order to never eat more than what is necessary for our life and well being. Following this first advice is crucial in the war against the devil, for the devil fears resolute souls who adopt rules to chasten their flesh, and he knows that such a person, if he

perseveres to the end, will be able to bring many other souls with him to heaven. That is why the devil in a special way wars against beginners in the spiritual life who have chosen to take up the fight against him through self-restraint, penances and mortifications. Since most spiritual practices are harder to perform in the beginning (since one is unaccustomed to performing them and untaught in the way on how to deal with them), the devil also uses this opportunity to try to persuade and talk the soul out of doing this or that penance or mortification, whispering in his or her ear that it is all in vain, that we have no strength to carry it out, and that no amount of penance or mortification will effect our spiritual welfare in the end. But if we wish to be perfect, we must realize that: “Temperance requires that people should only eat at regular hours, if it be at all possible.” (Blessed Peter Julian Eymard, 1811-1868 A.D.)

The second reason why we should always eat food as though it is medicine, is because one does not eat medicine because of its taste, but only because of its effects in sustaining the health of the body. In the same way, we should never eat food for the purpose of satisfying our palate, but should view every portion of food we partake of as medicine, while ignoring the promptings of the flesh and of the devil who tempts us to indulge ourselves, sharply rebuking our flesh when it tries to allure and tempt us with all the different delicacies that one has now left behind for the perfect and pure love of God.

St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (1651-1719): “If it be the duty of a Christian to pray to God before meals, he is not less bound to thank him after having made use of the gifts which came from his bountiful hand. It is, therefore, necessary to make, after every meal, a short but fervent act of thanksgiving.” (*Duty of a Christian towards God*, Chapter 7)

Question: Are vanity and sexual desire connected to each other in any way?

Answer: Yes, vanity and sexual desire are two disorders that are directly and heavily connected to one another. This is because vain practices such as the use of makeup and immodest clothing inflame the flesh to sexual desire. Not only the user will be inflamed to sensuality by these vain practices, but also those people who observe them, will be inflamed to sensuality through their immoral and disgusting behavior.

Our Lady of Fatima: “The sins of the world are too great! The sins which lead most souls to hell are sins of the flesh! **Certain fashions are going to be introduced which will offend Our Lord very much. Those who serve God should not follow these fashions. The Church has no fashions; Our Lord is always the same.** Many marriages are not good; they do not please Our Lord and are not

of God.”

According to modern-day “Catholics” who know nothing about the Catholic faith and the teachings of the saints, current modern-day fashion in which women dress like men or with revealing and tight clothing showing off their womanly form (even if modestly) is not offensive to God. Well, they are completely wrong.

St. Clement of Alexandria, *Father of the Church*, On Clothes (c. 198 A.D.):

“Luxurious clothing that cannot conceal the shape of the body is no more a covering. For such clothing, falling close to the body, takes its form more easily, and adhering as it were to the flesh, receives its shape, and marks out the woman’s figure. As a result, the whole make of the body is visible to spectators, although they cannot see the body itself.” (*The Instructor* or *The Paedagogus*, Book II, Chapter XI)

How did most Catholic women, and even pagans and infidels, dress before our time? The answer is that they all dressed more like how nuns are dressed, that is, they were using a long dress ***totally*** covering their behind, front and legs down to the ankle and up to the waist with no tight fitting, visible parts shown ***whatsoever*** below the waist. And above the waist were usually worn – not some insignificant, small, thin shirt or “covering” as most women use today, showing of their whole womanly form, even if not revealing any flesh – but rather a significant, thick, long shirt that covers the womanly figure, the arms down to the wrist, shoulders and neck. Neither did these dresses or shirts end visibly at the waist, thus inviting curious, immodest thoughts or revealing any flesh or worse as modern day shirts, dresses, skirts and pants do, but these skirts or dresses were usually one part of the whole dress, or worn in such a way as to invite no thoughts. Such dresses are totally without guilt. Everything else will at least have some fault. In general, the more the clothing reveals flesh and the bodily form, the more sinful it becomes. Not only did most women dress in such a good way before our modern time, but all women also wore a head covering in the Church, and a large portion of the women also wore it in everyday occasions.

Considering how most western woman dress today, it’s safe to say that many of them in fact dress in a mortally sinful fashion. A woman that does not desire to be lusted after by others and who do not want to give others an occasion of falling into sin, will of course never dress in a sensual or immodest way. Indeed, very few people today dress without any guilt at all. But amongst the few who do, most of them are definitely found amongst the pagans, infidels and idolaters, and especially in the poorer countries.

In St. Bridget’s Revelations, Jesus Christ gives us a perfect description of how sensual and

vain people are handed over to the devil for their sins. The following revelation is very revealing. In it one will see Jesus complaining about the bad will and sinful lifestyle of obstinate, evil sinners that are lustful and vain; and how He threatens them with eternal punishments; and how he lovingly encourages them to repentance. One will notice from the introduction of this Revelation that these things mentioned by Jesus Christ are serious matters and not just some trifling scruples as most people indeed look upon these sins today. That is also why Our Lord appears in the revelation as if revealing a “hidden” truth lost to mankind—a truth that was fervently prayed for by God’s servants to be shown to the sinful people for their amendment.

To a person who was wide awake at prayer and absorbed in contemplation – and while she was in a rapture of mental elevation – Jesus Christ appeared; and He said to her this: “Hear, O you to whom it has been given to hear and see spiritual things; and be diligently attentive; and in your mind beware in regard to those things that you now will hear and that in my behalf you will announce to the nations... for these things that you are now going to hear are being shown to you not only for your own sake, but also because of the prayers of my friends.

“For some of my chosen friends in the Neapolitan citizenry have for many years asked me with their whole heart – in their prayers and in their labors on behalf of my enemies living in the same city – to show them some grace through which they could be withdrawn and savingly recalled from their sins and abuses. Swayed by their prayers, I give to you now these words of mine; and therefore diligently hear the things that I speak.

“I am the Creator of all and Lord over the devils as well as over the angels, and no one will escape my judgment. ... But what are those human beings who are my enemies doing to me now? In truth, they have contempt for my precepts; they cast me out of their hearts like a loathsome poison; indeed, they spit me out of their mouths like something rotten; and they abhor the sight of me as if I were a leper with the worst of stench. But the devil and his works they embrace in their every affection and deed. For they bring him into their hearts, doing his will with delight and gladness and following his evil suggestions. Therefore, by my just judgment they shall have their reward in hell with the devil eternally without end. And for the lust with which they burn like senseless animals, they will never be admitted to the sight of my face but will be separated from me and deprived of their inordinate will.

“Moreover, know that just as all mortal sins are very serious, so too a venial sin is made mortal if a human being delights in it with the intention of persevering. Wherefore, know that two sins, which I now name to you, are being practiced and that they draw after them other sins that all seem as if venial. **But because the people delight in them with the intention of persevering, they are**

therefore made mortal.

“... The first of the two sins is that the faces of rational human creatures are being painted with the various colors with which insensible images and statues of idols are colored so that to others, these faces may seem more beautiful than I made them. The second sin is that the bodies of men and women are being deformed from their natural state by the unseemly forms of clothing that the people are using. And the people are doing this because of pride and so that in their bodies they may seem more beautiful and more lascivious than I, God, created them. And indeed they do this so that those who thus see them may be more quickly provoked and inflamed toward carnal desire.

“Therefore, know for very certain that as often as they daub their faces with antimony and other extraneous coloring [makeup], some of the infusion of the Holy Spirit is diminished in them and the devil draws nearer to them. In fact, as often as they adorn themselves in disorderly and indecent clothing and so deform their bodies, the adornment of their souls is diminished and the devil’s power is increased.

“O my enemies, who do such things and with effrontery commit other sins contrary to my will, why have you neglected my passion; and why do you not attend in your hearts to how I stood naked at the pillar, bound and cruelly scourged with hard whips, and to how I stood naked on the cross and cried out, full of wounds and clothed in blood? And when you paint and anoint your faces, why do you not look at my face and see how it was full of blood? You are not even attentive to my eyes and how they grew dark and were covered with blood and tears, and how my eyelids turned blue.

“Why too do you, not look at my mouth or gaze at my ears and my beard and see how they were aggrieved and were stained with blood? You do not look at the rest of my limbs, monstrously wounded by various punishments, and see how I hung black and blue on the cross and dead for your sake. And there, derided and rejected, I was despised by all in order that, by recalling these things and attentively remembering them, you might love me, your God, and thus escape the devil’s snares, in which you have been horribly bound.

“However, in your eyes and hearts, all these things have been forgotten and neglected. And so you behave like prostitutes, who love the pleasure and delight of the flesh, but not its offspring... so that without losing their fleshly pleasure and further wicked delight [by bearing children and living chastely], they may thus be always absorbed in their lust and their foul carnal intercourse. This is how you behave.

“... But when you feel, in your hearts, any knock of an inpouring – namely of

my Spirit – or any compunction; or when, through hearing my words, you conceive any good intention, at once you procure spiritually, as it were, an abortion, namely, by excusing your sins and by delighting in them and even by damnably willing to persevere in them. For that reason, you do the devil’s will, enclosing him in your hearts and expelling me in this contemptible way. Therefore, you are without me, and I am not with you. And you are not in me but in the devil, for it is his will and his suggestions that you obey.

“And so, because I have just spoken my judgment, I shall also now speak my mercy. My mercy, however, is this: namely, that none of my very enemies is so thorough or so great a sinner that my mercy would be denied him if he were to ask for it humbly and wholeheartedly. Wherefore, my enemies must do three things if they wish reconcile themselves to my grace and friendship. The first is that with all their heart they repent and have contrition because they have offended me, their Creator and Redeemer. The second thing is confession – clean, frequent, and humble – which they must make before their confessor.

“And thus let them amend all their sins by doing penance and making satisfaction in accord with that same confessor’s council and discretion. For then I shall draw close to them, and the devil will be kept far away from them. The third thing is that after they have thus performed these things with devotion and perfect charity, they are to go to communion and receive and consume my Body with the intention of never falling back into former sins but of persevering in good even to the end.

“If anyone, therefore, amends his life in this manner, at once I will run out to meet him as a loving father runs to meet his wayward son; and I will receive him into my grace more gladly than he himself could have asked or thought. And then I will be in him, and he in me; and he shall live with me and rejoice forever. But upon him who perseveres in his sins and malice my justice shall indubitably come. For when the fisherman sees the fish in the water playing in their delight and merriment, even then he drops his hook into the sea and draws it out, catching the fish in turn and then putting them to death – not all at once, but a few at a time – until he has taken them all.

“This is indeed what I shall do to my enemies who persevere in sin. For I shall bring them a few at a time to the consummation of the worldly life of this age in which they take temporal and carnal delight. And at an hour that they do not believe and are living in even greater delight, I shall then snatch them away from earthly life and put them to eternal death in a place where they will nevermore see my face because they loved to do and accomplish their inordinate and corrupted will rather than perform my will and my commandments.” (St. Bridget’s Revelations, Book 7, Chapter 27)

The Holy Bible, of course, confirms that all vanity such as the use of makeup and extravagant adornment must be avoided.

1 Peter 3:1-5 “In like manner also let wives be subject to their husbands: that if any believe not the word, they may be won without the word, by the conversation of the wives. Considering your chaste conversation with fear. **Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel:** But the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and a meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God. For after this manner heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands.”

1 Timothy 2:9-10 “In like manner women also in decent apparel: adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety, not with plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly attire, But as it becometh women professing godliness, with good works.”

Haydock Commentary explains 1 Peter 3:1-5: “Ver. 1. *Let wives, &c.* In the first six verses he gives instructions to married women. 1. By their modest and submissive dispositions to endeavour to gain and convert their husbands, shewing them such a respect as Sara did, (whose daughters they ought to esteem themselves) who called Abraham her lord, or master; (Gen. xviii. 12.) 2. To be modest in their dress, without vanity; 3. That women take the greatest care of the *hidden man*, i.e. of the interior disposition of their heart, which he calls *the incorruptibility of a quiet and a meek spirit*; 4. *Not fearing any trouble*, when God’s service or the duty to their husbands require it (Witham).”

Haydock Commentary explains 1 Timothy 2:8-10: “How beautifully does St. Paul teach that modesty and chastity are the greatest ornaments of the female sex, not only in the sight of God and of Angels, but also of men, who although by their own neglect they have not always grace and courage sufficient to be virtuous themselves, cannot help admiring virtue wherever they see it in others. Even the pagan fully acknowledges the native attractions of virtue. *Virtus per se placet: Virtue pleases with unborrowed charms.*”

Most couples who sin in the marital act undoubtedly also fall for the sins of vanity, immodest clothing and use of makeup condemned by Jesus Christ, the Saints and the Holy Bible shown above because these people are really lovers of the flesh, and not of God. Furthermore, we could also clearly see in the above Revelation how those people who commit sins of vanity in fact are diminishing in their love of God, and beauty of soul, and that they in fact are handed over to the devil for their sins: “*some of the infusion of the*

Holy Spirit is diminished in them and the devil draws nearer to them.” This is important to consider, for as often as people commit any sin, such as when married spouses go further than what is permitted (non-sinful) in the procreative act, they always commit sin, and will thus, as a consequence, always be drawing closer to the Devil.

Our Lord Jesus Christ further teaches us that all people who vainly use makeup or immodest, vain and tight clothing will be especially tormented for every single person that have seen them or followed their example in their entire life, unless they amend before the moment of their death, which is, sad to say, impossible to know when it will be. That can be thousands and thousands of people executing vengeance on you in Hell for all eternity!

St. Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373), **on a revelation of a soul suffering in purgatory**: “Happily, before death I confessed my sins in such dispositions as to escape Hell, but now I suffer here [in purgatory] to expiate the worldly life that my mother did not prevent me from leading! ...this head, which loved to be adorned, and which sought to draw the attention of others, is now devoured with flames within and without, and these flames are so violent that every moment it seems to me that I must die. These shoulders, these arms, which I loved to see admired, are cruelly bound in chains of red-hot iron. These feet, formerly trained for the dance, are now surrounded with vipers that tear them with their fangs and soil them with their filthy slime; **all these members which I have adorned with jewels, flowers, and diverse of other ornaments, are now a prey to the most terrible torture.**” (*Immodesty Satan’s Virtue*, p.78 quoting Purgatory, Thomas W. Petrisko)

And in another frightful revelation of a vain soul in *St. Bridget’s Revelations*, we read that Lady Bridget:

“... saw a soul being led to the Judge [Jesus Christ]... and she [the soul] said: ‘I had almost no love for God: That is why I did so little good.’ An immediate reply was made to her from the book: ‘That is why it is just for you to approach closer to the devil than to God, because the devil lured and enticed you to himself with his temptations.’

“The soul replied: ‘I understand now that everything I did was done on the promptings of the devil.’ A reply was made from the book: ‘Justice dictates that it is the devil’s right to repay your accomplishments with pain and punishment.’ The soul said: ‘From head to heel there was nothing I did not dress with pride. Some of my vain and proud manners I invented myself, others I just followed according to the custom of my native land. I washed my hands and face not only in order to be

clean but also to be called beautiful by men.’ A reply was made from the book: ‘Justice says that it is the devil’s right to repay you for what you have earned, since you dressed and adorned yourself as he inspired and told you to do.’

“... The soul said: ‘I enjoyed it immensely when many people took after my example and noticed what I did and copied my manners.’ A reply was made from the book: ‘Hence, it is just that everyone caught in the sin for which you are about to be punished should also suffer the same punishment and be brought to you. Then your pain will be increased each time someone comes who copied your fashions.’

“After these words, it seemed to me as though a chain was wound about her head like a crown and then tightened so hard that the front and back of her head were joined together. Her eyes fell out of their sockets and dangled by their roots at her cheeks. Her hair looked like it had been scorched by flames, and her brains were shattered and flowed out through her nostrils and ears.

“Her tongue was stretched out and her teeth pressed in. Her arms were twisted like ropes and their bones broke. Her hands, with their skin peeled off, were fastened to her throat. Her breast and belly were bound so hard with her back that her ribs were broken and her heart spilled out together with all her entrails; her thighs dangled at her flanks, and their broken bones were being pulled out just like a thin thread is used to thread a needle.” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget of Sweden*, Book 4, Chapter 51)

What a horror! People need to let this fact sink through their heads before they put on makeup and lascivious clothing the next time, for it might in fact be the last time they are allowed to deceive and tempt others through their vanity before their vain and ungodly life ends in an accident or some other horrible event. It is imperative for all to understand and recognize that vanity is a sin and that God will judge all who are vain—like people who use makeup or revealing or tight clothing. “Either we must speak as we dress, or dress as we speak. Why do we profess one thing and display another? The tongue talks of chastity, but the whole body reveals impurity.” (St. Jerome, *Father and Doctor of the Church*)

St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, *Father of the Church* (De Habit. Virg.): “I hold that not only virgins and widows, but also wives and all women without exception, should be admonished that nowise should they deface God’s work and fabric, the clay that He has fashioned, with the aid of yellow pigments, black powders or rouge, or by applying any dye that alters the natural features. . . They lay hands on God, when they strive to reform what He has formed. This is an assault on the Divine handiwork, a distortion of the truth. Thou shalt not be able to see God, having no longer the eyes that God made, but those the devil has unmade; with him shalt thou

burn on whose account thou art bedecked.” (Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas, *Doctor of the Church*, in the *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 169, Art. 2)

St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, *Father and Doctor of the Church*: “Is anything so conducive to lust as with unseemly movements thus to expose in nakedness those parts of the body which either nature has hidden or custom has veiled, to sport with the looks, to turn the neck, to loosen the hair? Fitly was the next step an offense against God. For what modesty can there be?” (*Concerning Virgins*, Book III, CHAPTER VI.)

Other people being consumed by and spurred to vanity by the Devil also color their hair or their nails, but this is a lying counterfeit and is always unlawful to do. “*Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel...*” (1 Peter 3:3)

St. Anthony Mary Claret, Archbishop of Santiago and Missionary: “Now, observe, my daughter, the contrast between the luxurious dress of many women, and the raiment and adornments of Jesus... Tell me: what relation do their fine shoes bear to the spikes in Jesus’ Feet? The rings on their hands to the nails which perforated His? The fashionable coiffure to the Crown of Thorns? The painted face to That covered with bruises? Shoulders exposed by the low-cut gown to His, all striped with Blood? Ah, but there is a marked likeness between these worldly women and the Jews who, incited by the Devil, scourged Our Lord! At the hour of such a woman’s death, I think Jesus will be heard saying: ‘*Cujus est imago haec...* of whom is she the image?’ And the reply will be: ‘*Demonii...* of the Devil!’ Then He will say: ‘Let her who has followed the Devil’s fashions be handed over to him; and to God, those who have imitated the modesty of Jesus and Mary.’”

St. Anthony Mary Claret relates in his own autobiography that Our Lord told him he is the Eagle of Apocalypse 8:13, flying in mid-heaven, crying in a loud voice of the chastisements to come; he mentioned the scourge and spread of three things 1.) Protestantism and Communism, 2.) the four archdemons that will make fearful inroads – love of pleasure, love of money, independence of mind, independence of the will, 3.) the great wars and their consequences. He died at the First Vatican Council of a heart attack because of the heresies people tried to introduce.

The divine authority of God’s word demands that you always dress humbly by not wearing tight clothes that show your breasts or your behind or by showing too much skin that leads

to temptation; and that you also abstain from using any kind of makeup, jewelry, and accessories (except for Rosaries or Brown Scapulars and the like which is a very great way to protect oneself against the Devil) in order not to give a bad example or tempt your neighbor into carnal lust and sin: “If you desire to be one of the faithful and to please the Lord, O wife, do not add adornments to your beauty, in order to please other men. Do not wear fine embroidery, garments, or shoes, to entice those who are allured by such things. It may be that you do not do these wicked things for the purpose of sinning yourself — but only for the sake of adornment and beauty. Nevertheless, you still will not escape future punishment for having compelled another to look so close at you as to lust after you.” (*Apostolic Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 375 A.D.)

Again, as we saw above, every single person you have ever deceived and tempted with your immodest appearance, will demand that God executes his righteous vengeance on you, since you tempted them into vanity and lustful thoughts.

That of course means you cannot go and bathe in public since that would be even more immodest and immoral! The world has indeed changed very much the last 100-200 years; yet, no one should think that he could do these things just because they are universally accepted. Do you want to go with the majority? Then, sadly, Hell awaits you for all eternity!

St. Clement of Alexandria, *Father of the Church*, On Public Modesty: “But by no manner of means are women to be allotted to uncover and exhibit any part of their person, lest both fall -- the men by being excited to look, the women by drawing on themselves the eyes of the men. But always must we conduct ourselves as in the Lord’s presence... [Again] On no account must a woman be permitted to show a man **any** portion of her body naked, for fear lest both fall: the one by gazing eagerly, the other by delighting to attract those eager glances.” (*The Paedagogus* or *The Instructor*, Book II, Chapter II)

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Father of the Church*, On Public Bathing: “But what of those who frequent promiscuous baths; who prostitute to eyes that are curious to lust, bodies that are dedicated to chastity and modesty? They who disgracefully behold naked men, and are seen naked by men, do they not themselves afford enticement to vice, do they not solicit and invite the desires of those present to their own corruption and wrong? “Let every one,” say you, “look to the disposition with which he comes thither: my care is only that of refreshing and washing my poor body.” That is the kind of defense that does not clear you, nor does it excuse the crime of lasciviousness and wantonness.

“Such a washing defiles; it does not purify nor cleanse the limbs, but stains

them. You behold no one immodestly, but you yourself are gazed upon immodestly. You do not pollute your eyes with disgraceful delight, but in delighting others you yourself are polluted. You make a show of the bathing-place; the places where you assemble are fouler than a theater. There all modesty is put off together with the clothing of garments, the honor and modesty of the body is laid aside; virginity is exposed, to be pointed at and to be handled. And now then consider whether when you are clothed you are modest among men, when the boldness of nakedness has conduced to immodesty.

“... Be such as God the Creator made you; be such as the hand of your Father ordained you. Let your countenance remain in you incorrupt, your neck unadorned, your figure simple; let not wounds be made in your ears, nor let the precious chain of bracelets and necklaces circle your arms or your neck; let your feet be free from golden bands, your hair stained with no dye, your eyes worthy of beholding God.

“Let your baths be performed with women, among whom your bathing is modest.” (*Treatise II, On the Dress of Virgins, Section 19, 21*)

St. Clement of Alexandria, *Father of the Church*, On Bathhouse Manners: “Women will scarce strip naked before their own husbands, affecting a plausible pretense of modesty but any others who wish may see them at home, shut up in their own baths, for they are not ashamed to strip before spectators, as if exposing their persons for sale. The baths are opened promiscuously to men and women; and there they strip for licentious indulgence (for from looking, men get to loving), as if their modesty had been washed away in the bath. Those who have not become utterly destitute of modesty shut out strangers, but bathe with their own servants, and strip naked before their slaves... but these women, divesting themselves of their modesty along with their chemise, wish to appear beautiful, but, contrary to their wish, are simply proved to be wicked...

“Men, therefore, affording to women a noble example of truth, ought to be ashamed at their stripping before them, and guard against these dangerous sights; “for he who has looked curiously,” it is said, “hath sinned already.” [Matt. 5:28] At home, therefore, they ought to regard with modesty parents and domestics; in the ways, those they meet; in the baths, women; in solitude, themselves; and everywhere the Word, who is everywhere, “and without Him was not anything.” [John 1:3] For so only shall one remain without falling, if he regard God as ever present with him.” (*The Paedagogus or The Instructor, Book III, Chapter V*)

The immodest have in truth a special place in Hell waiting for them since they are the source of the most abominable sins of the flesh, as St. Paul teaches us in First Corinthians: “*Fly fornication. Every sin that a man doth, is without the body; but he that committeth*

fornication, sinneth against his own body!” (1 Corinthians 6:18)

This should of course be understood in the sense of literal fornication as well as fornication in the mind which also is a mortal and damnable sin! You will be held accountable for every eye that have seen you if you use makeup or immodest clothing. That can account for thousands and thousands of people executing vengeance on you in Hell for all eternity! Even if you don't use any makeup or dress vainly, God will still judge you to Hell if you encourage others to become vain or take delight in vain thoughts or have vain opinions of yourself. If a single thought can damn a person, how much more should tempters with immodest clothing and makeup be damned! How abominable to want to be accepted for your appearance rather than for your opinions! Oh vanity, you shall soon wither away and die like grass in the fall season and be forgotten. *“In the morning man shall grow up like grass; in the morning he shall flourish and pass away: in the evening he shall fall, grow dry, and wither.”* (Psalms 89:6) In truth, o vain one, you shall soon rot in the grave, but your soul shall burn for ever more in Hell since you thought to make your exterior beautiful, and, in so doing, perverted your interior:

“But there is perhaps nothing more striking than what is reported by St. Jerome, one of the four great Doctors of Holy Church, and which took place during his lifetime, in a house which he knew perfectly and in regard to a Roman lady of high condition, named Praetextate. She was sister-in-law of St. Paula, the spiritual daughter of this great Saint. St. Paula wishing to quit the city of Rome, to visit the holy places in Judea which the Savior had hallowed by His presence, left her daughter Eustochium, who also wished to consecrate herself to God, in the care of her aunt, Praetextate. This latter wished to frustrate the designs of the pious Paula upon her daughter, and by the advice of her husband, obliged the young girl to lay aside her simple, modest dress and assume a more sumptuous one, at the same time compelling her to wear her hair according to the latest fashion and to paint her cheeks. A fearful chastisement overtook the worldly woman; for, on the night following, an Angel sent by God spoke to her thus: "Thou hast dared to prefer the command of thy husband to that of Jesus Christ, and with sacrilegious hands to adorn after a worldly fashion the head of this virgin of God. Behold the punishment of thy crime! Thy hands which have done this deed shall become withered, so that they will never more serve thee, and in five months from now thou shalt be cast into hell. And if thou shalt continue in thy wickedness, thy husband and all thy children shall likewise die." All of which, says St. Jerome, was accomplished to the letter, and, at the end of five months, the unhappy woman died suddenly, without giving any sign of repentance.” (Related by St. Jean Eudes, Priest and Missionary and Founder of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary)

“One day Don Bosco noticed that two ladies were dressed immodestly but he did not wish to insult them, so he began to speak to the young girl that was with them. “I should like you to explain something to me” he began. He asked her why she had so much contempt for her arms. She answered to him that she did not and when he insisted the mother said, “On the contrary, often I must scold her for her vanity. Besides washing them she even perfumes them with eau de Cologne.” He continued to talk to the girl saying this is exactly why he said that she had contempt for her arms. “Because when you die, your arms shall be burned in the fires of Hell.” She became alarmed and he went on to say that she would probably end up in purgatory and only the Lord knew for what length of time. He told her the flames would creep up her arms and burn her neck. After this the mother understood her duty to instruct her daughter better and when Don Bosco saw them on other visits they were always modestly dressed.” (Quoted in "Smiling Don Bosco. Anecdotes and Episodes of St John Bosco", Publisher: Society Of St Paul (1946))

“We read also in Father Nieremberg that a noble lady, who was exceedingly pious, asked God to make known to her what displeased His Divine Majesty most in persons of her sex. The Lord vouchsafed in a miraculous manner to hear her. He opened under her eyes the Eternal Abyss. There she saw a woman a prey to cruel torments and in her recognized one of her friends, a short time before deceased. This sight caused her as much astonishment as grief: the person whom she saw damned did not seem to her to have lived badly. Then that unhappy soul said to her: “**It is true that I practiced religion, but I was a slave of vanity. Ruled by the passion to please, I was *not* afraid to adopt indecent fashions to attract attention, and I kindled the fire of impurity in more than one heart. Ah! If Christian women knew how much immodesty in dress displeases God!**” At the same moment, this unhappy soul was pierced by two fiery lances, and plunged into a caldron of liquid lead.” (Rev. F.X. Schouppe, S.J., *The Dogma of Hell*, Chapter VIII)

“Now look at those little doors all round the walls of hell. They are little rooms or dungeons where sinners are shut up. We will go and look at some of them. The First Dungeon - A Dress of Fire. Job xxxvii. Are not thy garments hot? Come into this room. You see it is very small. But see, in the midst of it there is a girl, perhaps about eighteen years old. What a terrible dress she has on -- her dress is made of fire. On her head she wears a bonnet of fire. It is pressed down close all over her head; it burns her head; it burns into the skin; it scorches the bone of the skull and makes it smoke. The red hot fiery heat goes into the brain and melts it. Ezech. xxii. I will burn you in the fire of my wrath; you shall be melted in the midst thereof as silver is melted in the fire. You do not, perhaps, like a headache. Think what a headache that girl must have. But see more. She is wrapped up in flames, for

her frock is fire. If she were on earth she would be burnt to a cinder in a moment. But she is in hell, where fire burns everything, but burns nothing away. There she stands burning and scorched; there she will stand for ever burning and scorched! She counts with her fingers the moments as they pass away slowly, for each moment seems to her like a hundred years. As she counts the moments she remembers that she will have to count them for ever and ever.” (*The Sight of Hell* by Rev. John Furniss, C.S.S.R., Chapter XXIV)

St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop, Father and Doctor of the Church instructed women of all times about dress when in the fourth century he declared: “You carry your snare everywhere and spread your nets in all places. You allege that you never invited others to sin. You did not, indeed, by your words, but you have done so by your dress and your deportment. ... When you have made another sin in his heart, how can you be innocent? **Tell me, whom does this world condemn? Whom do judges punish? Those who drink poison or those who prepare it and administer the fatal potion? You have prepared the abominable cup, you have given the death dealing drink, and you are more criminal than are those who poison the body; you murder not the body but the soul. And it is not to enemies you do this, nor are you urged on by any imaginary necessity, nor provoked by injury, but out of foolish vanity and pride.**” (Quoted in *Immodesty: Satan’s Virtue*, by Rita Davidson, p.12)

Most people in the world do not understand or know about the fact that their vanity actually murders people’s souls in this world, but there is also another little known evil – that is an even greater evil than this – and that is the fact that vain people also are guilty of the murder and crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ by their acts of vanity and lasciviousness. Blessed Angela of Foligno (1248-1309) was revealed this sad and horrifying truth in a spiritual revelation which is documented in her work “*The Book of Divine Consolations*”, and Our Lord showed her how all her acts of vanity and lasciviousness were instrumental in tormenting him in his suffering for our sins an especial manner:

“Then were all my sins shown unto my soul, and I perceived that each member had its special spiritual infirmity. Wherefore, hearing what had been said, the soul did instantly endeavour to show forth all the sins which it had committed with the different members of the body and with all its own strength and powers, saying: "Oh Lord, Master and Physician of eternal health! Oh my God, forasmuch as by only showing forth unto Thee my infirmities and diseases Thou hast consented to heal me, and because, oh Lord, I am very sick and have no part in me that is not corrupt and defiled, I, wretched that I am, will show Thee, oh Lord, all mine infirmities and all the sins of all my members and of all the parts of my soul and body!"

“Then did I begin and point them all out, saying, "Oh Lord, most merciful Physician, **look upon mine head and see how oftentimes I have adorned it with the emblems of pride, how I have many times deformed it by curling and braiding my hair, and have committed numerous other sins. Look, Oh Lord, upon my wretched eyes, full of uncleanness and envy!" In like manner I strove to number and show forth all the sins of mine other members.**

“And when He had hearkened thereunto with great patience, the Lord Jesus Christ did gladly and joyfully make answer that He had healed these things one after another and then, taking pity upon my soul, He said: "Fear not, My daughter, neither do thou despair; for even wert thou tainted with a thousand deadly diseases, wert thou dead a thousand times, yet could I give thee a medicine whereby thou mightest be healed of everything if thou wouldst only apply it unto thy heart and soul. For the infirmities of thine head which thou hast told and shown unto Me, and for which thou art displeasing unto God and grievous unto thyself, **which infirmities thou hast incurred by washing, combing, anointing, colouring, adorning, and braiding thy hair, by setting thyself up in pride and seeking vainglory, for which things thou dost deserve to be cast into the uttermost parts of hell,** to be humbled in all eternity and reputed as one most vile, for these infirmities have I given satisfaction [through the crucifixion] and done penance. I suffered the most grievous pain [for your sins] inasmuch as My hair was plucked out and my head pierced by sharp thorns; with a rod was it smitten and covered with blood, it endured all manner of mockery and scorn, and with the vilest of crowns was it crowned.

“**For the infirmity of thy face, which thou hast contracted likewise by washing and anointing it, by showing it unto miserable men and seeking their favour,** I have made and ordained a medicine. For these sins have I also given satisfaction, for wicked men did spit in My Face, making it all filthy and stained; it was swollen and deformed by rude and heavy blows and a vile cloth was hung before it.

“**Moreover, for thine eyes, with which thou hast looked at vain and hurtful things and hast delighted in gazing at many things which were opposed unto God,** have I given satisfaction, shedding copious and bitter tears from My eyes which were veiled and filled with blood.

“**For the ears wherewith thou hast offended God by hearkening unto vain and hurtful things and taking delight therein,** I have done great penance, hearkening unto many grievous things, such as false accusations, slanders, insults, curses, mockings, lies and blasphemies, and finally the wicked judgment spoken against Myself but above all I did penance in hearkening unto the weeping of My most loving and lowly mother, who grieved for Me with exceeding great grief.

“Because of the sins of thy mouth and throat, where with thou didst take delight in feasting and drunkenness and in the sweetness of delicate meats, My mouth hath been dry and empty, hungry and thirsty, it hath fasted and been made bitter with vinegar mingled with gall.

“For the sins of thy tongue, which thou hast let loose in slanders, calumnies, derisions, blasphemies, lies, perjuries, and other sins, I did shut My mouth in the presence of judges and false witnesses, no excuses issued from My mouth, and with all Mine heart did I pray unto God for those who did Me evil, and I always preached the truth.

“Because of the sins of thy power of smell, whereby thou didst delight in flowers, I did smell the abominable spittle which I endured upon My face and eyes and nostrils.

“For the sins committed with thy neck, by shaking it in anger, pride, and lasciviousness, and against the Supreme God, I suffered many and divers blows upon My neck.

“For the sins of thy shoulders and back, whereby thou hast offended in bearing many things which were opposed unto God, I did penance by bearing upon My shoulders the Cross whereon I was to hang.

“For the sins of thy hands and arms, with which thou hast done much wickedness, in embraces, touches, and other evil deeds, My hands were driven into the wood of the Cross by large nails and torn through bearing the weight of My body in Mine agony.

“For the sins of thy heart, with which thou hast sinned through anger, envy, sadness, evil love, and base covetousness, My side and heart were pierced with a sharp spear, and from the wound issued there forth a most potent medicine, sufficient to heal all the passions and sins of the heart that is to say, water to cool evil desires and loves, and blood for the remission of anger, sadness, and enmity.

“For the sins of thy feet, wherewith thou hast sinned through vain running and dancing and loose walking about for thy pleasure, My feet were not only twisted and bound, but were nailed upon the wood of the Cross; in place of shoes laced and adorned with cut leather, I had feet all bleeding and covered with the blood which flowed from My whole body.

“For the sins of thy whole body, wherewith thou hast sinned by giving it up to delights, repose, and dreams, taking pleasure therein in divers ways, My body was fastened upon the Cross, terribly scourged, and stretched out thereon after the manner of a skin; I was closely fastened upon the hard wood until I was bathed in a bloody sweat which ran down even upon the ground; and finally I suffered here the most dreadful torments, crying aloud,

sighing, weeping and lamenting **until I died, slain by cruel men for the sins of thine ornaments and thy needless, vain, and curious raiment.** I was hung naked upon the Cross, and vile men stripped off My tunic and My vest and cast dice for them before Mine eyes. And, naked as when I was born of the Virgin, in the cold, the wind, and the air, I was exposed and stretched out on high in the sight of all men and women, in order that I might be the more easily seen and mocked at and might suffer the greater shame.” (*The book of divine consolation of the Blessed Angela of Foligno, Sixth Consolation Of The Passion Of Our Lord Jesus Christ, pp. 214-218*)

“O goodness of God, how great art thou! O justice of God, how terrible art thou! O cursed sin, how cruel art thou! Raise your eyes, my Brethren; see the image of the man hanging on the cross, after having been scourged, crowned with thorns, and all covered with wounds from head to foot. Could you tell me who is this man, and what he has done? It is the august Son of God, innocent and holy. Why did his eternal Father condemn him to so painful a death? Hear what his Father answers: “For the wickedness of My people have I struck him.” (Isaiah 53:8) It was for the crimes of my people that I have struck him.

Consider then the humiliation and the pain inflicted by your sins upon this innocent Lamb: it was because of your impurities that his flesh was torn; it was because of your bad thoughts that he was crowned with thorns; his feet and his hands were nailed to the cross because of your sinful steps and impure touches; his heart was pierced on account of your obstinacy. But, O my Jesus! be consoled; for these poor sinners are no longer obstinate; Thou already knowest that during these days of the mission they have tried to repair the evil that they have done: Thy painful wounds they have tried to heal by the scourges that they inflicted upon themselves; the spittle that covered Thy eyes they have tried to wipe off by tears; the pain of Thy feet pierced with nails they have tried to alleviate by coming to the church; the wounds made by the thorns they have tried to lessen by holy resolutions. Yes my Brethren, all this is true; but this divine mouth of Jesus Christ I see still tormented by the gall of your blasphemies, of your lies, of your immodest language. Well, this evening you should sweeten all the bitterness that you have caused our Lord in the past. And what must you do to accomplish this? At first, you should weep over the displeasure that you have given to so good a God, who died for you; and then you should chastise yourselves by trailing a little on the ground that tongue that has put so much gall into the mouth of Jesus Christ. Come, then, let us this evening offer him this consolation. My Fathers, be ye the first to give the example; and you, my Brethren, follow the priests. Weep, then, etc.” (St. Alphonsus, Exhortations, *The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 122)

In truth, the prideful sin of vanity is the cause of so much sin in this world that it is almost impossible to recount it all. Sadly, as we have seen, all those women and men who seek to

please the world and its lust and vanity, will be damned. In regard to the sin of vanity, women are much more vain than men, and that is why more women will also be damned for this sin, while on the other hand, more men are damned for the sin of lust. In truth, and strangely enough, these two sins of vanity and lust are working together as if in a relationship from hell, both being the cause of the other person's damnation—vanity being the cause of the lust, and the lust of the man being the cause and reason why the woman is vain and want to please the man.

Tertullian, *To His Wife*, Book II, Chapter 3 (c. 207 A.D.): “Let us now recount the other dangers or wounds (as I have said) to faith, foreseen by the apostle; most grievous not to the flesh merely, but likewise to the spirit too. For who would doubt that faith undergoes a daily process of obliteration by unbelieving intercourse? "Evil confabulations corrupt good morals;" how much more fellowship of life, and indivisible intimacy! **Any and every believing woman must of necessity obey God. And how can she serve two lords—the Lord, and her husband—a Gentile to boot? For in obeying a Gentile she will carry out Gentile practices—personal attractiveness, dressing of the head, worldly elegancies, baser blandishments, the very secrets even of matrimony tainted:** not, as among the saints, where the duties of the sex are discharged with honour (shown) to the very necessity (which makes them incumbent), with modesty and temperance, as beneath the eyes of God.”

Thus, St. Cyprian of Carthage, (c. 200-258) in his book *“Of the Discipline and Advantage of Chastity”* rightly condemns those “who strives to stir up the fancy of another, [through vanity] even though her bodily chastity be preserved. Away with such as do not adorn, but prostitute their beauty.” This shows us that we commit sin if we are vain even though we do not sin sexually ourselves:

“For what is chastity but a virtuous mind added to watchfulness over the body; so that modesty observed in respect of the sexual relations, attested by strictness (of demeanour), should maintain honourable faith by an uncorrupted offspring? Moreover, to chastity, brethren, are suited and are known first of all divine modesty, and the sacred meditation of the divine precepts, and a soul inclined to faith, and a mind attuned to the sacredness of religion: then carefulness that nothing in itself should be elaborated beyond measure, or extended beyond propriety; that nothing should be made a show of, nothing artfully coloured; that there should be nothing to pander to the excitement or the renewal of wiles. She is not a modest woman who strives to stir up the fancy of another, even though her bodily chastity be preserved. Away with such as do not adorn, but prostitute their beauty. For anxiety about

beauty is not only the wisdom of an evil mind, but belongs to deformity. Let the bodily nature be free, nor let any sort of force be intruded upon God's works. She is always wretched who is not satisfied to be such as she is. Wherefore is the colour of hair changed? Why are the edges of the eyes darkened? Why is the face moulded by art into a different form? Finally, why is the looking-glass [mirror] consulted, unless from fear lest a woman should be herself? Moreover, the dress of a modest woman should be modest; a believer should not be conscious of adultery even in the mixture of colours. To wear gold in one's garments is as if it were desirable to corrupt one's garments. What do rigid metals do among the delicate threads of the woven textures, except to press upon the enervated shoulders, and unhappily to show the extravagance of a boastful soul? Why are the necks oppressed and hidden by outlandish stones, the prices of which, without workmanship, exceed the entire fortune of many a one? It is not the woman that is adorned, but the woman's vices that are manifested. What, when the fingers laden with so much gold can neither close nor open, is there any advantage sought for, or is it merely to show the empty parade of one's estate? It is a marvellous thing that women, tender in all things else, in bearing the burden of their vices are stronger than men." (St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Of the Discipline and Advantage of Chastity*, Section 12)

The Apostolic Constitutions (Didascalia Apostolorum) echoes the teaching of the Holy Bible and the Saints in the chapter "*Concerning the adornment of ourselves, and the sin which arises from thence*" and explains very clearly that we will be guilty of sin if we tempt other people by using makeup, or lascivious and revealing clothing that very easily tempt people:

"Let the husband not be insolent nor arrogant towards his wife; but compassionate, bountiful, willing to please his own wife alone, and treat her honourably and obligingly, endeavouring to be agreeable to her; **not adorning thyself in such a manner as may entice another woman to thee**. For if thou art overcome by her, and sinnest with her, eternal death will overtake thee from God; and thou wilt be punished with sensible and bitter torments. Or if thou dost not perpetrate such a wicked act, but shakest her off, and refuseth her, in this case thou art not wholly innocent, even though thou art not guilty of the crime itself, but only in so far as **through thy adorning thou didst entice the woman to desire thee**. For thou art the cause that the woman was so affected, and by her lusting after thee was guilty of adultery with thee: yet art thou not so guilty, because thou didst not send to her, who was ensnared by thee; nor didst thou desire her. Since, therefore, thou didst not deliver up thyself to her, thou shalt find mercy with the Lord thy God, who hath said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and, "Thou shalt not covet." (Ex. 22:14, 17) For if such a woman, upon sight of thee, or unseasonable meeting with thee, was

smitten in her mind, and sent to thee, but thou as a religious person didst refuse her, if she was wounded in her heart by thy beauty, and youth, and adorning, and fell in love with thee, thou wilt be found guilty of her transgressions, as having been the occasion of scandal to her, (Matt. 18:7) and shalt inherit a woe. Wherefore pray thou to the Lord God that no mischief may befall thee upon this account: for thou art not to please men, so as to commit sin; but God, so as to attain holiness of life, and be partaker of everlasting rest. **That beauty which God and nature has bestowed on thee, do not further beautify; but modestly diminish it before men.**”

The Apostolic Constitutions also explains in the next chapter, “Concerning the subjection of a wife to her husband, and that she must be loving and modest” that all women need to adopt a modest and humble way of dressing in order to not tempt others into sinful thoughts: **“And when thou art in the streets, cover thy head; for by such a covering thou wilt avoid being viewed of idle persons. Do not paint thy face, which is God’s workmanship; for there is no part of thee which wants ornament, inasmuch as all things which God has made are very good. But the lascivious additional adorning of what is already good is an affront to the bounty of the Creator. Look downward when thou walkest abroad, veiling thyself as becomes women.”**

In truth, it is a fact of common sense that vain people “**prostitute their modesty in nakedness, as if they were ready to sacrifice that modesty... so wanton eyes are excited, and lust after those naked limbs, which were they not made bare they would not desire. ... Lasciviousness of mind is often hidden under sad clothing, and the unseemly rudeness of dress is used as a covering to hide the secrets of wanton spirits.**” (St. Ambrose of Milan, *On Immodest Clothing, On the Death of His Brother Satyrus*, Book 2, Section 12, A.D. 379)

So important is the Church’s view on how a person must be modest in public, that even the icons – who are far less able to incite lascivious thoughts than real and physical human beings – are required to also be modest, pure and chaste.

The Council of Trent, *On Immodest Images*: “Moreover, in the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics, and the sacred use of images, every superstition shall be removed, all filthy lucre be abolished; **finally, all lasciviousness be avoided; in such wise that figures shall not be painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust;** nor the celebration of the saints, and the visitation of relics be by any perverted into revellings and drunkenness; as if festivals are celebrated to the

honour of the saints by luxury and wantonness.” (Session XXV, December 3rd and 4th, 1563)

Since the Church infallibly teaches that modesty must be upheld, it is a mortal sin to dress in an immodest fashion.

In another revelation of Christ to St. Bridget, Our Lord gives her instructions on how the queen of Cyprus must ban and “**put down the shameful custom of women involving tight clothing, display of the breasts, unguents, and many other vanities; for these are things entirely hateful to God.**” (*The Revelations of Saint Bridget*, Book 7, Chapter 16) This shows us that immodest clothing must be punished and repressed by the state, and that those who act against the law of modesty must be punished in order to hinder them from deceiving, hurting and killing souls by their lasciviousness and vanity.

While the world and her citizens love the emptiness and so called beauty of the world, God Himself revealed to St. Bridget that a human need to despise the pleasures and so called beauty of the world, and “pursue the ugliness of the world rather than its beauty” in order to be saved.

The Revelations of Saint Bridget, Book 5, Interrogation 7: “First question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: “O Judge, I ask you: Why are the words ugly and beautiful used in the world?” Answer to the first question. The Judge [Our Lord Jesus Christ] answered: “Friend, ugly and beautiful in the world are like bitter and sweet. Ugliness of the world, which is adversity and contempt of the world, is like a kind of bitterness conducive to the health of the righteous. Beautiful to the world is its prosperity, which is like a kind of ingratiating sweetness, false and seductive. **Whoever, therefore, flees the beauty of the world and spits out its sweetness will not come to the ugliness of hell or taste its bitterness but will instead ascend to my joy. Thus, in order to escape the ugliness of hell and attain the sweetness of heaven, it is necessary to pursue the ugliness of the world rather than its beauty.** Although I made all things well, and all created things are very good, great caution should be used toward the things that could present an occasion of damage to the soul for those who make irrational use of my gifts.”

PADRE PIO ON MODERN-DAY FASHIONS

1 Timothy 2:9: “In like manner I wish women also in decent apparel: adorning

themselves with modesty and sobriety..."

Galatians 5:19: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty..."

Padre Pio had strong views on female fashions in dress. When the mini-skirt craze started, no one dared to come to Padre Pio's monastery dressed in such an inappropriate fashion. Other women came not in mini skirts, but in skirts that were shortish. Padre Pio got very upset about this as well.

Padre Pio tolerated neither tight skirts nor short or low-necked dresses. He also forbade his spiritual daughters to wear transparent stockings. He would dismiss women from the confessional, even before they got inside, if he discerned their dress to be inappropriate. Many mornings he drove one out after another – ending up hearing only very few confessions. He also had a sign fastened to the church door, declaring: "By Padre Pio's explicit wish, women must enter his confessional wearing skirts at least eight inches (20 cm) below the knees. It is forbidden to borrow longer dresses in church and to wear them for the confessional."

Padre Pio would rebuke some women with the words, "Go and get dressed." He would at times add: "Clowns!" He wouldn't give anyone a pass, whether they were people he met or saw the first time, or long-time spiritual daughters. In many cases, the skirts were many inches below the knees, but still weren't long enough for Padre Pio! Boys and men also had to wear long trousers, if they didn't want to be kicked out of the church.

Padre Pio also confirms the point the Bible makes concerning idolatry and its many facets: **"A woman who is frivolous as regards dress can never be clothed in the life of Jesus Christ and she loses adornment of soul once this idol enters into her heart**. Let these women adorn themselves, as St. Paul would have it (1 Tim. 2:9), modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel..." (*Letter to Padre Agostino, 8/2/1913*)

Padre Pio used to refuse to hear the confession of women who were wearing pants or an immodest dress because women should not dress or act like men, for this is an abomination in God's eyes according to God's Holy Word.

"A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God." (Deuteronomy 22:5)

God created the human race with two genders, intending each to have his and her proper place in Creation. Men and women are not meant to behave or dress in the same manner. Part of the beauty of the human race is found in the differences between men and women. We each live within a larger society. We are each influenced by the culture around us. Yet society and culture often teach us false things, which lead us away from God. Most women (at least in Western society and culture) dress and act very much like men. They seek the same roles in society, the family, and the church. They are following a popular teaching of our culture today, that women and men are meant to have the same roles, and especially that women are meant to take up roles formerly held only or mainly by men. They are displaying their adherence to this teaching by dressing like men. This teaching of our culture is contrary to the teaching of Christ.

1 Timothy 2:11-15 “Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to use authority over the man: but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed; then Eve. And Adam was not seduced; but the woman being seduced, was in the transgression. Yet she shall be saved through childbearing; if she continue in faith, and love, and sanctification, with sobriety.”

God wants men and women to act and dress according to their gender and the place God has given each one in Creation. Clothing and hairstyles are expressions of one’s thoughts, behavior, and attitude. Women are not meant to behave like men, nor to have the same roles as men, therefore they should not dress or groom themselves like men. And vice versa. “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:17-19)

A clear sign that most women today are rebelling against God’s commandment that women must be subject to men is that almost all women who claim to be Christians refuse to follow Our Lord’s commandment in the Holy Bible which teaches that all women must cover their hair when they worship or pray to Our Lord in the Church.

1 Corinthians 11:1-16 “Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that in all things you are mindful of me: and keep my ordinances as I have delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying with his head covered, disgraceth his head. **But every**

woman praying or prophesying with her head not covered, disgraceth her head: for it is all one as if she were shaven. For if a woman be not covered, let her be shorn. But if it be a shame to a woman to be shorn or made bald, let her cover her head. The man indeed ought not to cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. For the man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man. Therefore ought the woman to have a power over her head, because of the angels. But yet neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so also is the man by the woman: but all things of God. **You yourselves judge: doth it become a woman, to pray unto God uncovered?** Doth not even nature itself teach you, that a man indeed, if he nourish his hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman nourish her hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering. **But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the church of God.**”

Douay Rheims Bible Commentary on 1 Corinthians 11:10 explains the words “A power: that is, a veil or covering, as a sign that she is under the power of her husband: and this, the apostle adds, because of the angels, who are present in the assemblies of the faithful.” *Haydock Bible Commentary* on 1 Corinthians 11:16 adds: “*If any man seem to be contentious about this matter, or any other, we have no such custom, nor hath the Church; that is... we have no such custom for women to be in the Church uncovered. (Witham)*”

The Magisterium of the Church – and thus Church teaching about the role of women in society that all must accept and adhere to – includes the teaching of Pope Leo XIII in his 1880 encyclical *Arcanum*, which teaches that: “The husband is the chief of the family and the head of the wife. The woman, because she is flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, must be subject to her husband and obey him; not, indeed, as a servant, but as a companion, so that her obedience shall be wanting in neither honor nor dignity. Since the husband represents Christ, and since the wife represents the Church, let there always be, both in him who commands and in her who obeys, a heaven-born love guiding both in their respective duties.” (*Arcanum*, #11) This truth of the Natural Order of the Hierarchy established by God was also affirmed by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Casti Connubii*, which invokes Ephesians 5:22, saying: “Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, and Christ is the head of the Church.” (*Casti Connubii*, #26)

The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles: “How wives ought to be subject to their own

husbands, and husbands ought to love their own wives. Ye wives, be subject to your own husbands, and have them in esteem, and serve them with fear and love, as holy Sarah honoured Abraham. For she could not endure to call him by his name, but called him lord, when she said, "My lord is old." (1 Pet. 3:6) In like manner, ye husbands, love your own wives as your own members, as partners in life, and fellow-helpers for the procreation of children. For says He, "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her conversation be to thee as a loving hind, and a pleasant foal; let her alone guide thee, and be with thee at all times: for if thou beest every way encompassed with her friendship, thou wilt be happy in her society." (Prov. 5:18 etc) Love them therefore as your own members, as your very bodies; for so it is written, "The Lord has testified between thee and between the wife of thy youth; and she is thy partner, and another has not made her: and she is the remains of thy spirit;" and, "Take heed to your spirit, and do not forsake the wife of thy youth." (Mal. 2:14, 15, 16)"

The duty of the man is to love the woman, and the duty of the woman is to love and obey the man: "For nothing is more bitter than the battle that occurs between people that love one another, and this shows that when one is estranged from his own member, as it is said, this must be caused by a severe bitterness. The role of the husband is to love and the role of the wife is to give way. If each one plays their part, everything will be firm. And the wife will become amicable and loving." (St. Chrysostom, *On the Letter to the Colossians*, Homily 10, PG 62, 365-366)

Few people understand that the devil through his evil servants has tried to directly change and corrupt this divine commandment for all women to be subject to men. In December 1917, Pope Benedict XV exposed the fact that: "*since the French Revolution* men have worked hard to confine within ever narrower limits the Church's influence for good, in the hope that finally this influence would no longer make itself felt in society. And from the very first, everything possible was done [by these revolutionaries] to snatch the woman from the maternal solicitude and vigilance of the Church. It is in fact amazing what the woman can do for the *good* of the human race, or for its *ruin*; if she should leave the common [that is, the traditional Catholic] road, both the civil and domestic orders are *easily* upset. With the decline in religion, cultured women have lost their piety, also their sense of shame; many, in order to take up occupations ill-befitting their sex, took to imitating men; others *abandoned the duties* of the house-wife, for which they were fashioned, to cast themselves recklessly into the current of life. And this is the source of that deplorable perversion of morals, which the disorder *bred of the war* [World War I] has multiplied and propagated beyond all belief." (Pope Benedict XV, Letter *Natalis trecentesimi*, 27 December 1917, *Woman in the Modern World*) Pope Pius XII similarly indicted the Second World War. In 1947 he referred to "the devastating work done during

the war, and after the war, toward the ruin of woman and of the family.” (*Allocution*, 11 September 1947)

The so-called “women’s liberation movement” is an abomination in the eyes of God. Rather than liberate, it is a debasing of the womanly character and the dignity of motherhood, and indeed of the whole family. This false liberty and unnatural equality with the husband is to the detriment of the woman herself, for if the woman descends from her truly regal throne to which she has been raised by means of the Gospel, she will soon be reduced to the old state of slavery and become as she was among the pagans, the mere instrument of man.

Now, for feminists, the bottom line is **power**. Jobs, careers or even “ordination” are not satisfactory enough. They want to *control the world*, making it the sinful matriarchal utopia that allegedly once existed. Recall that the *Communist Manifesto* called for the proletariat to become the ruling class. Ironically, seeking power has made feminists the useful idiots of Communist *men*!

Communism is particularly characterized by the rejection of any link that binds the woman to the family and the home, and her emancipation, her “liberation,” is proclaimed as a basic principle. She is withdrawn from the family and the care of her children, to be thrust, instead, into public life and collective production under the same conditions as man. The care of home and children is relegated to the collectivity. The right of education is denied to the parents, for it is conceived as the exclusive prerogative of the community.

It is easy to see the disastrous results the feminist movement has caused in society very thoroughly. Frederic Engels, who was Karl Marx’ partner in crime, is considered by many to be the founder of feminism. Feminism is not only a major cause of the breakdown of the traditional family, but it is a burden on the nation’s economy as well. Women who work unnecessarily take jobs away from men who would otherwise have them. Many of them have husbands who make enough money to support the family. But in spite of this they continue to work because they have been brainwashed by the lie that being a housewife is slavery and women have been oppressed by a male-dominated society for thousands of years. In many cases it does not even make sense for them to work and put their children in daycare centers. They spend hundreds of dollars per week in child care. With this huge expense they might as well quit working and care for their children themselves because the cost of daycare nearly equals their salary.

Feminism is also the reason why women don’t wear dresses or skirts anymore. It was Engels’ idea to do away with any differences between the sexes. One way was to have women dress like men and to hold jobs that are traditionally held by men.

Feminism is also the cause of the dying populations of Western nations. The birth rate is lower than the death rate which is why the native population is slowly diminishing.

Feminism plays a major role in abortion. Feminist ideas causes women to have an abortion (and use contraception) because their minds are conditioned to be in the workforce with men. So when a pregnancy occurs they opt to abort because they don't want to care for a baby and work at the same time.

The mass murder of millions and millions of unborn infants in the womb, in the name of "women's liberation" or "choice" is an unspeakable crime crying out to Heaven for divine vengeance! It is a sorrow and a tragedy and a shame that is inexpressible in words. Let it suffice to say that there is only one true liberation and that is the liberation from sin brought about through the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ (see Rom. VI, 18).

All people that dress immodestly or tempt others into lasciviousness, whether by their dress, paintings, or by providing or recommending to others bad movies with unacceptable, bad scenes in them, or by linking to websites (such as news articles) that contains immoral and lascivious images, or worse, by posting such images on their own website or forum posts, even if they are posted for a so-called "religious motive", are guilty of the mortal sin of scandal

The Catholic Church based on Sacred Scripture and the Natural Law infallibly condemns all immorality and the exposing of it to both young and old alike.

Matthew 18:6 "But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea."

Luke 17:1-2 "And he said to his disciples: It is impossible that scandals [that is, temptations or encouragements to sin] should not come: **but woe to him through whom they come. It were better for him, that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones.**"

As we can see here, Jesus says that it's better to be drowned in the depths of the sea than to give "scandal" to anyone. Yet many people do the exact opposite to this infallible precept of the Gospel and gives to all people visiting their website or forum post a direct cause for

“scandal” and an occasion of falling into sin through the immoral, evil and sensual images or videos that they promote or link too (such as those frequently contained in news articles).

St. Alphonsus, On the Sin of Scandal: “A mortal sin of scandal is committed by women who go about with their bosom immodestly exposed, or who expose their limbs improperly. Also by actors in immodest comedies, and still more by the persons who compose such comedies; also by painters who paint obscene pictures [or who posts such pictures on the internet for others to behold], and by the heads of families who keep such pictures in their houses. The father who speaks obscenely, or blasphemes the saints, in presence of his children, and the mother who brings into her house to live among her daughters young men who are in love with them, or betrothed to them, or other suspected persons, are guilty of a still more grievous sin of scandal. Some mothers say: “I do not suspect any evil.” I answer, that it is their duty to suspect; otherwise they will have to render to God an account of all the sins which may follow.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 399-400)

Therefore, it is clearly a mortal sin and against God’s law to knowingly post and lead others to lascivious images; and this is true even if these images are posted for a so-called “religious motive” or for exposing “corruption”. For who in his right mind would knowingly put himself or others into possible mortal sin (or even venial sin) of impurity and adultery against their own soul and the all good God for any reason?

The Council of Trent, On Immodest Images: “**Moreover, in the... use of images... all lasciviousness be avoided; in such wise that figures shall not be painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust...**” (Session XXV, December 3rd and 4th, 1563)

St. Alphonsus, On the Sin of Scandal: “When speaking of the sixth commandment [against sexual immorality], we should avoid scandalizing the innocent by awakening their curiosity [such as by exposing them to lascivious or immoral images]... it is sufficient, on this point, to condemn in general what offends chastity, without explaining the species or the circumstances [or by posting the immoral image itself]...” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 176)

A person who *obstinately* posts such images, links to them or search for them definitely commits a mortal sin, **not only for putting himself in totally unnecessary**

temptations *and for beholding what is not lawful for him to behold*, but also for tempting his neighbor and for exposing him *to behold what is not lawful for him to behold*. “It is not lawful,’ says [Pope] St. Gregory, ‘to behold what it is not lawful to covet.’ The evil thought which proceeds from looks, though it should be rejected, never fails to leave a stain upon the soul.” (St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, Mortification of the Eyes, p. 221)

St. Alphonsus: **“With regard to removing evil.** 1. A father must prevent his children from associating with bad company, or with ill-conducted servants, or with a master who does not give a good example. 2. He must remove from his house any male or female servant that may be a source of temptation to his daughters or sons. Virtuous parents do not admit into their house young female servants when their sons are grown up. 3. He should banish from his house all books that treat on obscene subjects, or on profane love, romances, and all similar works; such books are the ruin of innocent young persons. Videumaun tells us of a young man who was an example to all his fellow-citizens. He accidentally read an obscene book, and fell into such horrid crimes that he became the scandal of the entire people. His conduct was so scandalous that the magistrates were obliged to banish him from the city. Another young man, who had failed in his efforts to seduce a woman, put a book in her way that treated on love, and thus he made her lose her honor and her soul. A parent is still more strictly bound to remove the class of books that has now become so common, which, besides the other poison, contains also errors against faith or against the Church. **4. He is bound to remove from his house immodest pictures, particularly if they are obscene. Father Rho tells us that Cardinal Bellarmine went into a private gentleman’s house, where he happened to see some immodest pictures; so he said to him: “My friend, I am come to entreat you for God’s sake to do a work of charity in clothing the naked.” The gentleman promised to do so; so the Cardinal pointed to the picture, saying: “There are the naked people I mean.” Oh, how delighted is the devil when he sees in any house an immodest picture! It is related in the life of Father John Baptist Vitelli that a troop of devils was once seen in the hall of a certain nobleman offering incense to an immodest picture that hung there, in return for the souls which they gained by it.** 5. A parent should forbid his children to frequent masquerades or public dancing-houses, or to act a part in comedies. He should not allow his daughters to be taught by any strange man. Oh, how dangerous is it for young women to receive instructions from men! Instead of learning to read, they learn to commit mortal sins. A parent should get his daughters instructed by a woman, or by a little brother; I say *little*, for even in a brother, when he is grown up, there is some danger. Parents must be very particular never to allow their sons and

daughters to sleep in the same bed [or in the same room], and much less in the same bed with their father and mother. They should also take care not to permit their daughters to converse alone and familiarly with any man, though he be the first saint in the world. The saints in heaven only are incapable of falling; but the saints on earth are flesh like others, and if they do not avoid the occasions of sin, may become devils. Hence, a father will do well to recommend the most virtuous and steady of his daughters to let him know secretly whenever she sees any of her sisters keep up such familiarity, or when she sees any other disorder in the family. ”
(*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 451-453)

While many people would never post the more outrageous images or videos on their own website or forum posts themselves, they nevertheless would have no scruple about linking to those images or videos if they are contained on other peoples websites (such as news websites or youtube), just as if they thought that they will be without guilt in leading people to behold those images or videos because someone else has posted them. Well, they will not!

Many of them would also have no problem or scruple about posting “less” immodest forms of pictures or videos of both women and men immodestly dressed after the world’s fashion on their own website or forum posts, or even link to such articles where such images or videos are contained. This is not acceptable behavior.

Pope Leo XIII, *Exeunte iam anno* (# 10), Dec. 25, 1888: “**Now the whole essence of a Christian life is to reject the corruption of the world and to oppose constantly any indulgence in it...**”

In truth, if anyone obstinately posts any kind of immodesty at their website or forum posts or links to them – such as by posting or linking to pictures or videos that shows the so-called modern day women’s fashion that reveals the womanly figure by the wearing of pants and tight clothing in a revealing, sensual or immodest way – this would not only be immodest and immoral, but also completely evil and a mortal sin since such clothing has the direct and potential cause to incite a man’s lust and hence cause him, and all the visitors or viewers of that page, to commit the mortal sin of lust and adultery in their hearts (Matthew 5:28).

This means that it is absolutely forbidden to post links to many news website/articles by default since they contain totally immoral and immodest pictures all over the place. Yet many evil people—and not infrequently so—even traditional so-called “Catholics”, on various forums and websites links to

such websites containing such immodesty all the time, *even though they are perfectly aware of that they contain such immodesty*, to the destruction of their own soul (since they must not put themselves in temptations or enter such websites with images on, if they have images on) and the souls of others (whom gets scandalized and led into sin by their example) and the offense of God (whom they grieve by their bad life and example)—whom they claim to worship.

St. Alphonsus: **“4. But let us return to the necessity of avoiding the occasions of sin. It is necessary, also, to abstain from looking at immodest pictures. St. Charles Borromeo forbids all fathers of families to keep such pictures in their houses.** It is necessary, also, to abstain from reading bad books, and not only from those that are positively obscene, but also from those that treat of profane love, such as Ariosto’s poems, the "Pastor Fido," and all such works. Fathers should not allow their children to read romances. These sometimes do more harm than even obscene books; they put fantastical notions and affections into young persons heads, which destroy all devotion, and afterwards impel them to give themselves up to sin. "Vain reading," says St. Bonaventure, "begets vain thoughts and extinguishes devotion." Make your children read spiritual books, ecclesiastical histories, and the lives of the saints. And here I repeat: Do not allow your daughters to be taught their lessons by a man, though he be a St. Paul or a St. Francis of Assisi. The saints are in heaven.

“5. Be careful, also, not to permit your sons to act plays, nor even to be present at an immodest comedy. St. Cyprian says: "Who went chaste to the play, returned unchaste." A young man or woman goes to the play full of modesty and in the grace of God, and returns home without modesty and at enmity with God. Do not allow your children to go to those feasts of the devil where there is dancing, courting, immodest singing, and sinful amusements. "Where there is dancing," says St. Ephrem, "there a feast of the devil is celebrated." But you will say: "What harm is there in a little relaxation and amusement?" St. Peter Chrysologus says: "They are not amusements, but grievous offences against God." A certain companion of the servant of God, Father John Baptist Vitelli, wished, against the will of the father, to go to a festivity of this kind which was celebrated at Norcia; the consequence was, first, he lost the grace of God, then he abandoned himself to a wicked life, and in the end was killed by the hand of his own brother.

“6. Finally, some one may ask whether it is a mortal sin to make love [he is referring to courtship]. What can I say? Ordinarily speaking, I say that persons who give themselves up to lovemaking [or courtship] are scarcely free from the proximate occasion of sinning mortally. Experience shows that few of them are exempt from grievous sins. If they do not commit mortal sin in the beginning of

their courtship, they will in the course of time very easily fall into it: for at first they speak together through a predilection for each other's conversation; this predilection afterwards grows into a passion; when the passion has taken root, it blinds the mind, and precipitates the soul into a thousand sins of bad thoughts, of immodest words, and, in the end of sinful acts. Cardinal Pico de la Mirandola, bishop of Albano, forbade the confessors of his diocese to absolve those lovers who, after being duly admonished, continued to hold long conversations together, particularly if they should be alone, or if the conversations should be of great length, or clandestine, or by night. "But, Father," some of them will say, "I have no bad intention. I have not even bad thoughts." Young men and young girls, avoid these amatory conversations with persons of a different sex. In the beginning the devil does not suggest bad thoughts, but when the affection has taken root it will not allow you to see the evil you do; and almost without knowing how, you will find that you have lost your soul, your God, and your honor. Oh! how many innocent young persons does the devil gain in this way!" (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 480-482)

Also, since immodest website or forum posts frequently appears on the internet and search engines and any one at any site can link to these articles, pictures or videos that a website owner or forum user were responsible for uploading: this means that many people unknowingly can be exposed to these pictures or articles without knowing their graphic content. And that is another reason why it is forbidden to post immodest images or videos for any reason.

Rev. F.X. Schouppe, S.J., *The Dogma of Purgatory*, Chapter XXXI: "A painter of great skill and otherwise exemplary life had once made a painting not at all conformable to the strict rules of Christian modesty. It was one of those paintings which, under the pretext of being works of art, are found in the best families, and the sight of which causes the loss of so many souls. True art is an inspiration from Heaven, which elevates the soul to God; profane art, which appeals to the senses only, which presents to the eye nothing but the beauties of flesh and blood, is but an inspiration of the evil spirit; his works, brilliant though they may be, are not works of art, and the name is falsely attributed to them. They are the infamous productions of a corrupt imagination. The artist of whom we speak had allowed himself to be misled in this point by bad example. Soon, however, renouncing this pernicious style, he confined himself to the production of religious pictures, or at least of those which were perfectly irreproachable. Finally, he was painting a large picture in the convent of the discalced Carmelites, when he was attacked by a mortal malady, Feeling that he was about to die, he asked the Prior to allow him to be interred in the church of the monastery, and bequeathed to the community his

earnings, which amounted to a considerable sum of money, charging them to have Masses said for the repose of his soul. He died in pious sentiments, and a few days passed, when a Religious who had stayed in the choir after Matins **saw him appear in the midst of flames and sighing piteously. "What!" said the Religious, "have you to endure such pain, after leading so good a life and dying so holy a death?" "Alas!" replied he, "it is on account of the immodest picture that I painted some years ago. When I appeared before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge, a crowd of accusers came to give evidence against me. They declared that they had been excited to improper thoughts and evil desires by a picture, the work of my hand. In consequence of those bad thoughts some were in Purgatory, others in Hell. The latter cried for vengeance, saying that, having been the cause of their eternal perdition, I deserved, at least, the same punishment. Then the Blessed Virgin and the saints whom I had glorified by my pictures took up my defence. They represented to the Judge that that unfortunate painting had been the work of youth, and of which I had repented; that I had repaired it afterwards by religious objects which had been a source of edification to souls."** In consideration of these and other reasons, **the Sovereign Judge declared that, on account of my repentance and my good works, I should be exempt from damnation; but at the same time, He condemned me to these flames until that picture should be burned, so that it could no longer scandalise any one."** Then the poor sufferer implored the Religious to take measures to have the painting destroyed. "I beg of you," he added, "go in my name to such a person, proprietor of the picture; tell him in what a condition I am for having yielded to his entreaties to paint it, and conjure him to make a sacrifice of it. If he refuses, woe to him! To prove that this is not an illusion, and to punish him for his own fault, tell him that before long he will lose his two children. Should he refuse to obey Him who has created us both, he will pay for it by a premature death." The Religious delayed not to do what the poor soul asked of him, and went to the owner of the picture. The latter, on hearing these things, seized the painting and cast it into the fire. Nevertheless, according to the words of the deceased, he lost his two children in less than a month. The remainder of his days he passed in penance, for having ordered and kept that immodest picture in his house. **If such are the consequences of an immodest picture, what, then, will be the punishment of the still more disastrous scandals resulting from bad books, bad papers, bad schools, and bad conversations?"**

This shows us, once again, that if we allow a single picture, video, article, book or song to tempt either ourselves or others, we will be damned not only on account of the sins in

others we are responsible for, but also on account of our own sins – unless we repent. Concerning the great evil of giving to others a cause of “scandal”, St. Alphonsus Liguori preached the following terrifying words in a sermon to his congregation:

St. Alphonsus Liguori, **On the Sin of Scandal**: “The wolf catches and scatters the sheep.” (John 10.12) The wolves that catch and scatter the sheep of Jesus Christ are the authors of scandal, who, not content with their own destruction, labor to destroy others. But the Lord says: “Woe to that man by whom the scandal comes.” (Matt. 18.7) Woe to him who gives scandal, and causes others to lose the grace of God. Origen says that **“a person who impels another to sin, sins more grievously than the other.”** If, brethren, there be any among you who has given scandal, I will endeavor this day to convince him of the evil he has done, that he may bewail it and guard against it for the future. **I will show, in the first point, the great displeasure which the sin of scandal gives to God; and, in the second, the great punishment which God threatens to inflict on the authors of scandal.**

“First Point. On the great displeasure which the sin of scandal gives to God.

“1. It is, in the first place, necessary to explain what is meant by scandal. Behold how St. Thomas defines it: “Scandal is a word or act which gives occasion to the ruin of one’s neighbor.” (S. Theol. 2-2, q. 45, art. 1) **Scandal, then, is a word or act by which you are to your neighbor the cause or occasion of losing his soul [such as by posting or linking to soul slaying material that will induce others to sin]. It may be direct or indirect. It is direct when you directly tempt or induce another to commit sin. It is indirect when, although you foresee that sinful words or actions will be the cause of sin to another, you do not abstain from them. But scandal, whether it be direct or indirect, if it be in a matter of great importance, is always a mortal sin.**

“2. Let us now see the great displeasure which the destruction of a neighbor’s soul gives to God. To understand it, we must consider how dear every soul is to God. He has created the souls of all men in his own image. “Let us make man in our image and likeness.” (Gen. 1.26) Other creatures God has made by a fiat -- by an act of his will; but the soul of man he has created by his own breath. “And the Lord breathed into his face the breath of life.” (Gen. 2.7) The soul of your neighbor God has loved for eternity. “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” (Jer. 31.3) He has, moreover, created every soul to be crowned in Paradise, and to be a partner in his glory. “That by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature.” (2 Peter 2.4) In heaven he will make the souls of the saints partakers of his own joy. “Enter into the joy of your Lord.” (Matt. 25.21) To them he shall give himself as their reward. “I

am your reward exceedingly great." (Gen. 15.1)

"3. But nothing can show the value which God sets on the souls of men more clearly than what the Incarnate Word has done for their redemption from sin and hell. "If," says St. Eucharis, "you do not believe your Creator, ask your Redeemer, how precious you are." Speaking of the care which we ought to have of our brethren, St. Ambrose says: "The great value of the salvation of a brother is known from the death of Christ." We judge of the value of everything by the price paid for it by an intelligent purchaser. Now, Jesus Christ has, according to the Apostle, purchased the souls of men with his own blood. "You are bought with a great price." (1 Cor. 6.20). . . **Hence, the Savior tells us that whatever good or evil we do to the least of his brethren, we do to himself. "So long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. 25.40)**

"4. **From all this we may infer how great is the displeasure given to God by scandalizing a brother, and destroying his soul. It is enough to say that they who give scandal rob God of a child, and murder a soul, for whose salvation he has spent his blood and his life. Hence, St. Leo calls the authors of scandals murderers.** "Quisquis scandalizat, mortem infert animae proximi." They are the most impious of murderers; because they kill not the body, but the soul of a brother, and rob Jesus Christ of all his tears, of his sorrows, and of all that he has done and suffered to gain that soul. Hence the Apostle says: "Now, when you sin thus against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ." (1 Cor. 8.12) **They who scandalize a brother, sin against Christ; because, as St. Ambrose says, they deprive him of a soul for which he has spent so many years, and submitted to so many toils and labors.** It is related that St. Albert the Great spent thirty years in making a head, which resembled the human head, and uttered words: and that St. Thomas, fearing that it was done by the agency of the devil, took the head and broke it. St. Albert complained of the act of St. Thomas, saying: "You have broken of mine the work of thirty years." I do not assert that this is true; but it is certain that, when Jesus Christ sees a soul destroyed by scandal, he can reprove the author of it, and say to him: Wicked wretch, what have you done? You have deprived me of this soul, for which I have labored thirty-three years.

"5. We read in the Scriptures that the sons of Jacob, after having sold their brother Joseph to certain merchants, told his father that wild beasts had devoured him. "Fera pessima devoravit eum." (Gen. 37.20) To convince their father of the truth of what they said, they dipped the coat of Joseph in the blood of a goat, and presented it to him, saying: "See whether this be your son's coat or not" (v. 32). In reply, the afflicted father said with tears: "It is my son's coat: an evil wild beast has eaten him" (v. 33). Thus, we may imagine that, when a soul is brought into sin by scandal, the devils present to God the garment of that soul dipped in the blood of

the Immaculate Lamb, Jesus Christ -- that is, the grace lost by that scandalized soul, which Jesus Christ had purchased with his blood and that they say to the Lord: "See whether this be your son's coat or not." If God were capable of shedding tears, he would weep more bitterly than Jacob did, at the sight of that lost soul -- his murdered child -- and would say: "It is my son's coat: an evil wild beast has eaten him." **The Lord will go in search of this wild beast, saying: "Where is the beast? where is the beast that has devoured my child?" When he finds the wild beast, what shall he do with him?**

"6. "I will," says the Lord by his prophet Hosea, "meet them as a bear that is robbed of her whelps." (Hosea 13.8) When the bear comes to her den, and finds not her whelps, she goes about the wood in search of the person who took them away. When she discovers the person, oh! with what fury does she rush upon him! It is thus the Lord shall rush upon the authors of scandal, who have robbed him of his children. Those who have given scandal will say: My neighbor is already damned; how can I repair the evil that has been done? **The Lord shall answer: Since you have been the cause of his perdition, you must pay me for the loss of his soul. "I will require his blood at your hands." (Ezek. 3.20)** It is written in Deuteronomy, "You shall not pity him, but shall require life for life" (19.21). You have destroyed a soul; you must suffer the loss of your own. Let us pass to the second point.

"Second Point. The great punishment which God threatens to those who give scandal.

"7. "Woe to that man by whom the scandal comes." (Matt. 18.7) **If the displeasure given to God by scandal be great, the chastisement which awaits the authors of it must be frightful.** Behold how Jesus Christ speaks of this chastisement: "But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt. 18.6) If a malefactor dies on the scaffold, he excites the compassion of the spectators, who at least pray for him, if they cannot deliver him from death. But, were he cast into the depths of the sea, there would be no one present to pity his fate. **A certain author says that Jesus Christ threatens the person who scandalizes a brother with this sort of punishment, to signify that he is so hateful to the angels and saints, that they do not wish to recommend to God the man who has brought a soul to perdition. "He is declared unworthy not only to be assisted, but even to be seen." (Mansi. ch. 3, no. 4)**

"8. **St. John Chrysostom says that scandal is so abominable in the eyes of God, that though he overlooks very grievous sins, he cannot allow the sin of scandal to pass without adequate punishment.** "Tam Deo horribile est scandalum, ut peccata graviora dissimulet non autem peccata ubi frater

scandalizatur." God himself says the same by the prophet Ezekiel: "Every man of the house of Israel, if he... set up the stumbling block of his iniquity... I will make him an example and a proverb, and will cut him off from the midst of my people." (Ezek. 14.7, 8) And, in reality, **scandal is one of the sins which we find in the sacred Scriptures punished by God with the greatest rigor.** Of Eli, because he did not correct his sons, who gave scandal by stealing the flesh offered in sacrifice (for parents give scandal, not only by giving bad example, but also by not correcting their children as they ought), the Lord said: "Behold, I do a thing in Israel: and whosoever shall hear it, both his ears shall tingle." (1 Sam. 3.11) And speaking of the scandal given by the sons of Eli, the inspired writer says: "Wherefore the sin of the young men was exceedingly great before the Lord." (Ibid. 2.17) **What was this exceedingly great sin? It was, says St. Gregory, in explaining this passage, drawing others to sin.** "Quia ad peccandum alios pertrahebant." Why was Jeroboam chastised? Because he scandalized the people: he "has sinned, and made Israel sin." (1 Kings 14.16) In the family of Ahab, all the members of which were the enemies of God, Jezebel was the most severely chastised. She was thrown down from a window, and devoured by dogs, so that nothing remained but her "skull, and the feet, and the extremities of her hands." And why was she so severely punished? Because "she set Ahab on to every evil."

"9. For the sin of scandal hell was created. "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." (Gen. 1.1) But, when did he create hell? It was when Lucifer began to seduce the angels into rebellion against God. Lest he should continue to pervert those who remained faithful to God, he was banished from heaven immediately after his sin. Hence Jesus Christ said to the Pharisees, **who by their bad example scandalized the people, that they were children of the devil, who was from the beginning a murderer of souls.** "You are of your father, the devil: he was a murderer from the beginning." (John 8.44) And when St. Peter gave scandal to Jesus Christ, by suggesting to him not to allow his life to be taken away by the Jews, and thus endeavoring to prevent the accomplishment of redemption, the Redeemer called him a devil. "Go behind me, Satan; you are a scandal to me." (Matt. 16.23) **And, in reality, what other office do the authors of scandal perform, than that of a minister of the devil? If he were not assisted by such impious ministers, he certainly would not succeed in gaining so many souls. A scandalous companion does more injury than a hundred devils.**

"10. On the words of Hezekiah, "Behold, in peace is my bitterness most bitter" (Isa. 38.17), St. Bernard, in the name of the Church, says: "Peace from pagans, peace from heretics, but no peace from children." At present the Church is not persecuted by idolaters, or by heretics, **but she is persecuted by scandalous Christians,** who are her own children. In catching birds, we employ decoys, that is, certain birds

that are blinded, and tied in such manner that they cannot fly away. It is thus the devil acts. "When," says St. Ephrem, "a soul has been taken, it becomes a snare to deceive others." **After having made a young man fall into sin, the enemy first blinds him as his own slave, and then makes him his decoy to deceive others; and to draw them into the net of sin, he not only impels, but even forces him to deceive others.** "The enemy," says St. Leo, "has many whom he compels to deceive others." (Serm. de Nativ.)

"11. Miserable wretches! **the authors of scandal must suffer in hell the punishment of all the sins they have made others commit.** Cesarius relates (Bk. 2, ch. 6) that, after the death of a certain person who had given scandal, a holy man witnessed his judgment and condemnation, and saw that, at his arrival at the gate of hell, **all the souls whom he had scandalized came to meet him, and said to him: Come, accursed wretch, and atone for all the sins which you have made us commit [by your deeds and actions, such as by immodest forum posts, images and links that contains such images etc]. They then rushed in upon him, and like so many wild beasts, began to tear him in pieces.** St. Bernard says that, in speaking of other sinners, the Scriptures hold out hopes of amendment and pardon; **but they speak of those who give scandal as persons separated from God, of whose salvation there is very little hope.** "Loquitur tanquam a Deo separati, unde hisce nulla spes vitae esse poterit."

"12. **Behold, then, the miserable state of those who give scandal by their bad example, who utter immodest words before their companions [or post immodest images or videos, or promotes them, or links to them], in the presence of young females, and even of innocent children, who, in consequence of hearing those words [or seeing those images in the news article or video clip], commit a thousand sins.** Considering how the angel-guardians of those little ones weep at seeing them in the state of sin, **and how they call for vengeance from God against the sacrilegious tongues [and actions] that have scandalized them.** A great chastisement awaits all who ridicule those who practice virtue. **For many, through fear of the contempt and ridicule of others, abandon virtue, and give themselves up to a wicked life. What shall be the punishment of those who send messages to induce others to sin? or of those who boast of their own wicked actions? God! instead of weeping and repenting for having offended the Lord, they rejoice and glory in their iniquities! Some advise others to commit sin; others induce them to it; and some, worse than the devils, teach others how to sin. What shall we say of fathers and mothers, who, though it is in their power to prevent the sins of their children, allow them to associate with bad companions, or to frequent certain dangerous houses [or internet sites, or allow them watching the**

television or listening to secular sinful music], and permit their daughters to hold conversations with young men? Oh! with what scourges shall we see such persons chastised on the day of judgment!

“13. Perhaps some father of a family among you will say: Then, I am lost because I have given scandal? Is there no hope of salvation for me? No: I will not say that you are past hope -- the mercy of God is great. **He has promised pardon to all who repent. But, if you wish to save your soul, you must repair the scandal you have given.** "Let him," says Eusebius Emmissenus, "who has destroyed himself by the destruction of many, redeem himself by the edification of many." (Hom. 10 ad Mon.) You have lost your soul, and have destroyed the souls of many by your scandals. You are now bound to repair the evil. **As you have until now drawn others to sin, so you are bound to draw them to virtue by words of edification, by good example, by avoiding sinful occasions, by frequenting the sacraments, by going often to the church to pray, and by attending sermons. And from this day forward avoid, as you would death, every act and word which could scandalize others.** "Let their own ruin," says St. Cyprian, "suffice for those who have fallen." (Bk. 1, L. 3) And St. Thomas of Villanova says: "Let your own sins be sufficient for you." **What evil has Jesus Christ done to you that it is not enough for you to have offended him yourselves, but you wish to make others offend him? This is an excess of cruelty.**

“14. **Be careful, then, never again to give the smallest scandal. And if you wish to save your soul, avoid as much as possible those who give scandal. These incarnate devils shall be damned; but, if you do not avoid them, you will bring yourself to perdition.** "Woe to the world because of scandals," says the Lord (Matt. 18.7), that is, many are lost because they do not fly from occasions of scandal. But you may say: Such a person is my friend; I am under obligations to him; I expect many favors from him. But Jesus Christ says: "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you, having one eye, to enter into life, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire." (Matt. 18.9) **Although a certain person was your right eye, you must withdraw for ever from her; it is better for you to lose an eye and save your soul, than to preserve it and be cast into hell.**" (St. Alphonsus Liguori, Sermons (nn. 2-4) taken from *Ascetical Works, Volume XVI: Sermons for all Sundays in the Year* (1882) pp. 152-173)

Question: Is it a sin to willfully look at persons or things that one are sexually attracted to and that arouse one's sexual desire? Is it permitted to seek directly the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor?

Answer: Yes, it is a sin to willfully look at, and to continue to look at, things that arouse one's sexual desire. In addition, the Church also condemns even putting oneself in "the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor" (Pope Innocent XI) which shows us that one is not even allowed to watch or listen to things like dangerous and worldly media or remain in situations where one can become tempted to commit a sin. This, of course, proves that the Church abhors every act of the will where we unnecessarily allow ourselves to be tempted, or to be in a place or situation where we know that there is a great chance that something will tempt us, or be against God.

Custody of the eyes is always necessary for obtaining salvation, and so it is clearly sinful to fix one's eyes on a person or an object that one knows will arouse sinful thoughts and desires. "Brother Roger, a Franciscan of singular purity, being once asked why he was so reserved in his intercourse with women, replied, that **when men avoid the occasions of sin, God preserves them; but when they expose themselves to danger, they are justly abandoned by the Lord**, and easily fall into some grievous transgressions." (St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, Mortification of the Eyes, p. 221)

Our enemy, the Devil, first and foremost comes to us and enter our hearts through our eyes. No other sense is more potent in tempting man. Learning to control what you look at is absolutely crucial in order to be saved, for every time you look willfully with lust in your heart at an unchaste, enticing or unsuitable object, or any object at all for that matter, even if modest, you have most assuredly committed a mortal sin! Therefore, whenever you come across something sinful with your eyes (or even something licit but which is very beautiful) you must make a habit to look down or away – for the sin of lust will not be far away – making the sign of the cross and saying 1 or 3 Hail Mary's, which is highly recommended since it helps against impurities.

Countless of Saints have rebuked people for the great error of failing to control their eyes. St. Ignatius of Loyola for example rebuked a brother for looking at his face for more than a brief moment. St. Bridget made a specific confession for every single face she saw during each day! This is true wisdom, but the world and current custom and habit tells you to always watch the person you are with, or looking at, in the face, **even if they are on the Television!** This is a bad custom or habit to say the least. This will many times lead to sins and impure thoughts and temptations of the Devil. Modesty and purity requires us to not stare people in the face, and especially the eyes, even at all, or only for a very short moment, even when we talk to them directly. In former times, this was common knowledge.

St. Alphonsus Liguori writes the following concerning this: **“But I do not see how looks at young persons of a different sex can be excused from the guilt of a venial fault, or even from mortal sin, when there is proximate danger of criminal consent. "It is not lawful," says [Pope] St. Gregory, "to behold what it is not lawful to covet." The evil thought which proceeds from looks, though it should be rejected, never fails to leave a stain upon the soul.”** (*The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, Mortification of the Eyes, p. 221)

This virtue may indeed be hard to put into practice for many in the beginning, but overtime and with practice, it will become easier.

The above quote from St. Alphonsus also shows why most of the things broadcasted on the media are totally unsuitable to watch or read. News in itself isn't evil or contrary to God or morals but most newspapers or news-channels today have totally unacceptable pictures or immodestly dressed or very beautiful tv-hosts, which make them extremely unsuitable to read or watch, or at least to fix one's eye on. Remember, "It is not lawful," says St. Gregory, "to behold what it is not lawful to covet." To read newspapers which you know will contain many unchaste, immodest and sexual pictures and useless stories about sex, etc., is complete idiocy and will lead to sins of the flesh if you cannot guard yourself. Therefore, if you care for your salvation, you must not read any newspaper or magazine or watch any show or film that contains immodesty of people tempting you.

St. Alphonsus, On Avoiding the Occasion of Sin: **“Now, no one can receive absolution unless he purpose firmly to avoid the occasion of sin; because to expose himself to such occasions, though sometimes he should not fall into sin, is for him a grievous sin. And when the occasion is voluntary and is actually existing at the present time, the penitent cannot be absolved until he has actually removed the occasion of sin. For penitents find it very difficult to remove the occasion; and if they do not take it away before they receive absolution they will scarcely remove it after they have been absolved.”** (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 543)

For example, in the past I have gone to numerous mainstream news websites just to read news, and it has become so bad that I never go to them unless I first have all the images blocked (on my web-browser). In fact, I have even made a habit of surfing the web without any images or JavaScript enabled at all, or at least without images on depending on the browser and the work I do. Almost all sites works perfectly fine without images and JavaScript enabled anyway. And on the few sites that don't work without JavaScript or

images enabled, one can always allow an exception for that site.

It is highly important for one's salvation to block and not allow images to be shown when surfing the internet because without a doubt, almost all sites without exception will have some form or another of immodestly dressed women displayed; and, in the cases they are not immodest, they are still very beautiful or sensual looking. It's unavoidable, even if the article may seem sound. In truth, I have seen and learned that from personal experience too many times.

Adblock or Adblock Plus extension for Firefox or Google Chrome web-browsers are also good tools to **get rid of all internet ads, immoral or otherwise**. And so if people don't use a web-browser that can use extensions (or if they don't have an Adblock installed) they must change internet browser and install an Adblock by virtue of obedience to God's law that demands modesty and the avoidance of occasions of falling into sin when it is possible to do so.

That one must avoid the proximate occasion of sin in order to be *Saved* and receive *Forgiveness of one's sins* from God is a certain fact of the Natural and Divine law that has always been taught by the Church and Her Saints. For instance, Blessed Pope Innocent XI during his papacy, condemned three propositions that denied this truth:

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #61, March 4, 1679: "**He can sometimes be absolved**, who remains in a proximate occasion of sinning, which he can and does not wish to omit, but rather directly and professedly seeks or enters into." – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #62, March 4, 1679: "The proximate occasion for sinning is not to be shunned when some useful and honorable cause for not shunning it occurs." – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #63, March 4, 1679: "It is permitted to seek directly the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor." – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

Here we see that the Church confirms that the opinion that "It is permitted to seek directly the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor" **is directly condemned**. And this condemnation is about those who "seek

directly the proximate occasion for sinning” for a good cause, rather than for a selfish cause. But most people in this world do not even watch or listen to evil and ungodly media for a good cause but rather for the sake of pleasure or for other unnecessary reasons, and it is certainly *not* necessary “for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor.” This shows us that the Church and the Natural Law absolutely abhors and condemns the opinion that one can watch or listen to media that can tempt a person to sin. Indeed, not only the occasions of sin, like evil, worldly and ungodly media, but also the “the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor” must be totally rejected and shunned if one wants to attain salvation.

People who reject this advice and continue to put themselves in a proximate or near occasion of sin will undoubtedly lose their souls, since God will allow the devil to fool them in some way since they rejected the Word of God, and chose to put themselves in the way of temptation. Many there are, indeed, who presumptuously claim that they won’t get tempted by watching or listening to worldly media, or that they will be able to control it, but here we see in the condemnations of Blessed Pope Innocent XI that one may not even put oneself in “the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor”. God will undoubtedly leave a person who is presumptuous and prideful, and the Church and Her Saints have always condemned such individuals that trusts in their own strength. As a matter of fact, one can even understand from the light of natural reason that one is not allowed to put oneself in the occasion of sin, so those who do this act will have no excuse whatsoever on the day of judgment. In addition, a person who watches bad, worldly or ungodly media, tempts his fellow man to watch these evil things also, and thus, by his bad example, puts both himself and others in the way of damnation by his selfishness and presumption. So in addition to damning himself *if he obstinately continues in such a course of life*, such a person also actually tries to damn others by his bad example, trying to drag others with him into the eternal darkness and fire of hell. This is a kind of evil that is breathtaking to behold! It is thus a fact “**that when men avoid the occasions of sin, God preserves them; but when they expose themselves to danger, they are justly abandoned by the Lord, and easily fall into some grievous transgressions.**” (St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, Mortification of the Eyes, p. 221)

The pitiful and unreasonable addiction to media by so many “Catholics” or “Christians” today is something new, and almost no one before the 20th century was so miserably addicted to it as the weak and bad willed population of our own times! The amount of pitiful and pathetic excuses that we have had to hear from bad willed people who try to excuse their act of putting themselves in the proximate or near occasion of sin is, simply said, almost endless. Even though they understand that they are not allowed to endanger their souls, they just couldn’t care since they are hooked on the media, just like a drug

addict, who need his daily “fix” to endure the day. For about a hundred years ago, almost no media existed as compared to today, and people thrived and the crime rates was as nothing when compared to today. So the unreasonable addiction to media cannot be excused, for man does not need media at all to survive, and putting oneself in the near or “the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor” is directly condemned by the Church.

Concerning music, it is just a fact that all kinds of popular music are mortally sinful trash that is made by the Devil for the sole reason to drag your soul to an eternal hell fire. There will be countless of impure suggestions toward sin along with a rejection of any kind of morality and decency. Popular music praises sin, and oftentimes speak against God and morality. In short, it contains the same errors and sins that worldly media have, such as: immodest clothing, adultery, blasphemy, foul language and cursing, greed, fornication, make-up, vanity, gloating, magic, occultism, acceptance of false religions, idol-making of mortal humans etc... and are many times even worse. Popular songs that doesn't praise the idolatry and worship of man is hard to find today, and it's even harder today to find popular songs which does not praise or worship sin and worldliness as norm. But worse still are the music-videos. A person cannot even listen to these songs without grave sin, but how much more then does a person sin when watching these sinful music-videos with half naked women/men worshiping sin and the occult by deed and example? This is sadly what many of your children are watching daily on the TV you have given them! You must reject this evil music entirely and not accept this to be played in your home.

Not all music are bad or sinful, you can, for example, listen to religious music, instrumental music, classical music or other music in line with decency and morals. But the highest good is of course not to listen to music at all. Giving up one's own will is always the highest good.

The best music which one may listen to is of course religious music, since it draws your mind and heart toward our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary, the joy of Heaven, etc.

The next best music which one may listen to is classical music and instrumental music where no singing is involved, for this will not affect your mind toward worldly things as worldly songs always otherwise do.

The worst kind of music one could listen to is music which sings about worldly affairs. A person that listens much to music should avoid listening to worldly songs, otherwise he or she will be drawn toward these worldly things and affairs which are sung about. It is also very necessary to test yourself if you are addicted to music in any way, even totally

acceptable music. This is easily done by going a few days without music so that you can test if some withdrawal symptoms effect you. All addictions of earthly things are evil and effect the soul in a harmful way. Just because you don't see or understand the effect doesn't mean that it isn't happening. Spiritual sloth and depression among other things are common attributes of an addiction to media or music.

The effects from the wrong kind of music, and secular songs are very dangerous. There are numerous quotes from the secular world that can be brought forth to prove this point.

"Music directly represents the passions of states of the soul-gentleness, anger, courage, temperance... if one listens to the wrong kind of music he will become the wrong kind of person..." (Quote from Aristotle)

Brain specialists, Dr. Richard Pellegrino declared that music has the uncanny power to "...trigger a flood of human emotions and images that have the ability to instantaneously produce very powerful changes in emotional states." He went on to say: "Take it from a brain guy. In 25 years of working with the brain, I still cannot affect a person's state of mind the way that one simple song can."

Dr. Allan Bloom is quite correct when he asserts that "popular music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to sexual desire... but sexual desire undeveloped and untutored... popular music gives children, on a silver plate, with all the public authority of the entertainment industry, everything their parents always used to tell them they had to wait for until they grew up... Young people know that rock and popular music has the beat of sexual intercourse... Never was there such an art form directed so exclusively to children... [Every Catholic must of course understand that masturbation is a clear mortal sin!] The words implicitly and explicitly describe bodily acts that satisfy sexual desire and treat them as its only natural and routine culmination for children who do not yet have the slightest imagination of marriage or family." (Dr. Allan Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, pp. 73-74).

Dr. Allan Bloom: "Today, a very large proportion of young people between the ages of 10 and 20 live for music. It is their passion; nothing else excites them as it does; they cannot take seriously anything alien to music. When they are in school and with their families, they are longing to plug themselves back into their music. Nothing surrounding them - school, family, church - has anything to do with their musical world. At best that ordinary life is neutral, but mostly it is an impediment, drained of vital..."

Dr. Paul King, medical director of the adolescent program at Charter Lakeside Hospital, in

Memphis, TN, says more than 80% of his teen patients are there because of rock music. Dr. King says, "the lyrics become a philosophy of life, a religion."

To allow yourself or your children to have any kind of evil or ungodly music like rock, pop, rap, techno, trance, or any kind of music that is even remotely similar to this is mortally sinful and really idiotic when presented with these facts. Billions of souls are burning now as we speak in the excruciating fire of hell since they refused to stop listening to bad and sinful music! You will have your children eating your heart out for all eternity in hell because of the violent hatred they will have against you, since you could have hindered them in their sin, but refused to do so. In short, just like with all bad or worldly media, God will abandon a person who listens to such worldly music since they chose to put themselves in the proximate occasion for sinning.

In conclusion: We advice all people to use the internet in this safe way as described above, and always have images blocked. And we want to warn people not be deceived by the Devil or their **evil attachment to images on this point.** Again, remember what St.

Alphonsus says: "when men avoid the occasions of sin, God preserves them; but when they expose themselves to danger, they are justly abandoned by the Lord, and easily fall into some grievous transgressions."

Attachment to images made me delay using the internet in this safe way for way too long. If there are images you want to view, then you can always open another web-browser (with an ad-block installed!) where images are enabled, or enable them quickly on the web-browser you're currently on. (Or you can just right click on the image and press "view image" on Firefox so that the image can be seen.) Most of the time there are no **real reason or necessity to see any images anyway.** Only curiosity makes us want to see them. Of course, when images are necessary or needed, then it is lawful to surf with them on for as long as it is necessary, provided it is not a danger to one's soul and the site is not bad. But how often do we need to see images at all times? Never. Only at a particular time or occasion, such as for a work, or for curiosity when reading some article, but other than that we have no reason or necessity to have them on, and therefore, they must be off.

The best and easiest user experience in using the internet in this safe way is using Google Chrome or Firefox web-browser with an add-on or extension installed that manually blocks and unblocks all images easily with just one click of a button, which means that you will not have to enter settings all the time to do this. By using extension to block images, you can just click on the icon visible on the top-right side of the web-browser, thus manually blocking and unblocking all images.

For an ad-block for Google Chrome web-browser, visit these links:

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/adblock/gighmmpiobklfepjocnamgkkbiglidom?hl=en>

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/adblock-plus/cfhdojbkjhnklbpkdaibdccddilifddb>

For an ad-block for Firefox web-browser, visit these links:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/adblock-plus/>

(The above adblock is the most popular for Firefox. However, this adblock allows non-intrusive ads (usually text ads only) by default but this option can be disabled in settings.)

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/adblock-edge/>

(Adblock Edge is a fork of the Adblock Plus extension for blocking advertisements on the web, without sponsored ads whitelist or showing non-intrusive ads.)

For an image blocker for Google Chrome web-browser, visit this link:

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/block-image/pehaalcefcjfccdpbckoablngfkfgfj>

For an image blocker for Firefox web-browser, visit this link:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/image-block/>

For a flash block (it blocks videos and other flash related objects from automatically playing or showing themselves without your authorization) for Google Chrome web-browser, visit these links:

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/flashblock/gofhjkjmkpinhpoiabjplobcainabnl>

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/flashcontrol/mfidmkgngfnkihnjeklbekckimkipmoe>

For a flash block (java block; image block etc.) for Firefox web-browser, visit these links:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/flashblock/>

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/noscript/>

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/image-and-flash-blocker/>

If you don't use an add-on (which you should be doing) the best browser to use is the Google Chrome web-browser since it allows you the option to disable both images and JavaScript on all specific internet sites (Firefox doesn't allow this option with Java or Images at all unless one first download extensions); and it is best since it allows you (after you have disabled images and Java in settings) an option to enable the images or java on the site you're currently on—without having to enter settings all the time to do this. The bad thing with this option, however, is that it perpetually enables and allows all images to be shown on that domain and not just temporarily. So do not allow images to be shown in this way on all sites or bad sites but only on trustworthy sites you go to often. **It is idiocy to perpetually allow images on various websites just because you are curious of the pictures in one article.** (You can also remove sites manually from “allow images” exceptions in settings afterwards if you made a mistake.)

Also, on Firefox, the images displayed by Google is not blocked by image blockers. I don't know why this is. On Chrome however all images get's blocked. (That is why we recommend users to use Google chrome instead of Firefox.) So when you search for something on this browser, you will not risk seeing something bad being displayed by Google against your will. The only option for Firefox is to block these images manually through adblock filters. If anyone want help with this, just contact us and we can give you the information and code needed.

Always surf without images on. Don't be a fool by rejecting this advice of the Popes and Saints of the Church concerning the unlawfulness of putting oneself in the proximate occasion for sinning and of looking on things that are unlawful to covet or behold and that are a danger to one's salvation. If you want to see images on some site, then allow the images only temporarily and afterwards block it again so that you do not continue surfing the internet with images on.

And yes, it is a sin to refuse to follow this advice since it's virtually impossible to escape bad and immodest images and commercials of men or women

tempting you every day when surfing the internet (and the same of course applies to watching most media too, which is why we recommend people never to watch movable images and that they only listen to the audio). Only a *condemned person* not fearing God or sin at all would refuse to follow this good advice that helps him avoid falling into sexual temptations and sins everyday.

St. Alphonus, **On Avoiding the Occasions of Sin**: "We find in this day's gospel that after his resurrection Jesus Christ entered, though the doors were closed, into the house in which the apostles were assembled, and stood in the midst of them. St. Thomas says that the mystical meaning of this miracle is that the Lord does not enter into our souls unless we keep the door of the senses shut. (On John, 20, 4) If, then, we wish Jesus Christ to dwell within us, we must keep the doors of our senses closed against dangerous occasions, otherwise the devil will make us his slaves. I will show today the great danger of perdition to which they who do not avoid the occasions of sin expose themselves.

"1. We read in the Scriptures that Christ and Lazarus arose from the dead. Christ rose to die no more: "Christ rising from the dead, dies no more." (Rom. 6. 9); but Lazarus arose and died again. The Abbot Gueric remarks that Christ arose free and unbound; "but Lazarus came forth bound feet and hands." (John 11.44) Miserable the man, adds this author, who rises from sin bound by any dangerous occasion: he will die again by losing the divine grace. He, then, who wishes to save his soul, must not only abandon sin, but also the occasions of sin: that is, he must renounce such an intimacy, such a house; he must renounce those wicked companions, and all similar occasions that incite him to sin.

"2. In consequence of original sin, we all have an inclination to do what is forbidden. Hence St. Paul complained that he experienced in himself a law opposed to reason: "But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin." (Rom. 7.23) Now, when a dangerous occasion is present, it violently excites our corrupt desires, **so that it is then very difficult to resist them: because God withholds efficacious helps from those who voluntarily expose themselves to the occasion of sin.** "He that loves danger shall perish in it." (Ecclus. 3.27) "When," says St. Thomas, in his comment on this passage, "we expose ourselves to danger, God abandons us in it." St. Bernardine of Siena teaches that the counsel of avoiding the occasions of sin is the best of all counsel, and as it were the foundation of religion.

"3. St. Peter says that "the devil goes about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5.8) He is constantly going about our souls, endeavoring to enter and take possession of them. Hence, he seeks to place before us the occasions of sin, by which

he enters the soul. "Explorat," says St. Cyprian, "an sit pars cujus aditu penetret." When the soul yields to the suggestions of the devil, and exposes itself to the occasions of sin, he easily enters and devours it. The ruin of our first parents arose from their not flying from the occasions of sin. God had prohibited them not only to eat, but even to touch the forbidden apple. In answer to the serpent tempting her, Eve said: "God has commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it." (Gen. 3.3) But "she saw, took, and ate" the forbidden fruit: she first looked at it, she then took it into her hands, and afterwards ate it. This is what ordinarily happens to all who expose themselves to the occasions of sin. **Hence, being once compelled by exorcisms to tell the sermon which displeased him most, the devil confessed that it was the sermon on avoiding the occasions of sin.** As long as we expose ourselves to the occasions of sin, the devil laughs at all our good purposes and promises made to God. **The greatest care of the enemy is to induce us not to avoid evil occasions; for these occasions, like a veil placed before the eyes, prevent us from seeing either the lights received from God, or the eternal truths, or the resolutions we have made: in a word, they make us forget all, and as it were force us into sin.**

"4. "Know it to be a communication with death; for you are going in the midst of snares." (Ecclus. 9.20) Everyone born in this world enters into the midst of snares. Hence, the Wise Man advises those who wish to be secure to guard themselves against the snares of the world, and to withdraw from them. "He that is aware of the snares shall be secure." (Prov. 11.15) But if, instead of withdrawing from them, a Christian approaches them, how can he avoid being caught by them? Hence, after having with so much loss learned the danger of exposing himself to the danger of sin, David said that, to continue faithful to God, he kept at a distance from every occasion which could lead him to relapse. "I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep your words." (Ps. 118.101) He does not say from every sin, but from every evil way which conducts to sin. The devil is careful to find pretexts to make us believe that certain occasions to which we expose ourselves are not voluntary, but necessary. When the occasion in which we are placed is really necessary, the Lord always helps us to avoid sin; but we sometimes imagine certain necessities which are not sufficient to excuse us. "A treasure is never safe," says St. Cyprian, "as long as a robber is harbored within; nor is a lamb secure while it dwells in the same den with a wolf." (Lib. de Sing. Cler.) The saint speaks against those who do not wish to remove the occasions of sin, and still say: "I am not afraid that I shall fall." As no one can be secure of his treasure if he keeps a thief in his house, and as a lamb cannot be sure of its life if it remain in the den of a wolf, so likewise no one can be secure of the treasure of divine grace if he is resolved to continue in the occasion of sin. St. James teaches that every man has within himself a powerful enemy, that is, his own evil inclinations, which tempt him to sin. "Every man is tempted by his

own concupiscence, drawn away, and allured." (James 1.14) **If, then, we do not fly from the external occasions, how can we resist temptation and avoid sin?** Let us, therefore, place before our eyes the general remedy which Jesus has prescribed for conquering temptations and saving our souls. "If your right eye scandalize you, pluck it out and cast it from you." (Matt. 5.29) If you find that your right eye is to you a cause of damnation, you must pull it out and cast it far from you; that is, when there is danger of losing your soul, you must fly from all evil occasions. St. Francis of Assisi used to say, as I have stated in another sermon, that the devil does not seek, in the beginning, to bind timorous souls with the chain of mortal sin; because they would be alarmed at the thought of committing mortal sin, and would fly from it with horror: **he endeavors to bind them by a single hair, which does not excite much fear; because by this means he will succeed more easily in strengthening their bonds, till he makes them his slaves. Hence he who wishes to be free from the danger of being the slave of hell must break all the hairs by which the enemy attempts to bind him; that is, he must avoid all occasions of sin,** such as certain manners of speech, places, little presents, and words of affection. With regard to those who have had a habit of impurity, it will not be sufficient to avoid proximate (near) occasions; if they do not fly from remote occasions, they will very easily relapse into their former sins.

"5. Impurity, says St. Augustine, is a vice which makes war on all, and which few conquer. "The fight is common, but the victory rare." How many miserable souls have entered the contest with this vice, and have been defeated! But to induce you to expose yourselves to occasions of this sin, the devil will tell you not to be afraid of being overcome by the temptation. "I do not wish," says St. Jerome, "to fight with the hope of victory, lest I should sometimes lose the victory." I will not expose myself to the combat with the hope of conquering; because, by voluntarily engaging in the fight, I shall lose my soul and my God. **To escape defeat in this struggle, a great grace of God is necessary; and to render ourselves worthy of this grace, we must, on our part, avoid the occasions of sin.** To practice the virtue of chastity, it is necessary to recommend ourselves continually to God: we have not strength to preserve it; that strength must be the gift of God. "And as I knew," says the Wise Man, "that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, ... I went to the Lord, and besought him." (Wis. 8.21) But if we expose ourselves to the occasions of sin, we ourselves shall provide our rebellious flesh with arms to make war against the soul. "Neither," says the Apostle, "yield your members as instruments of sin unto iniquity." (Rom. 6.13) In explaining this passage, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "You stimulate the flesh; you arm it, and make it powerful against the spirit." St. Philip Neri used to say that in the war against the vice of impurity, the victory is gained by cowards -- that is, by those who fly from the occasions of this sin. But the man who exposes himself to it, arms his flesh, and renders it so

powerful, that it will be morally impossible for him to resist its attacks.

“6. "Cry out," says the Lord to Isaiah, "all flesh is grass." (Isa. 40.6) Now, says St. John Chrysostom, **if all flesh is grass, it is as foolish for a man who exposes himself to the occasion of sin to hope to preserve the virtue of purity, as to expect that hay, into which a torch has been thrown, will not catch fire.** "Put a torch into hay, and then dare to deny that the hay will burn." No, says St. Cyprian; it is impossible to stand in the midst of flames, and not to burn. "Impossibile est flammis circumdari et non ardere." (De Sing. Cler.) "Can a man," says the Holy Spirit, "hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn? or can he walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" (Prov. 6.27, 28) Not to be burnt in such circumstances would be a miracle. St. Bernard teaches that **to preserve chastity, and, at the same time, to expose oneself to the proximate occasion of sin, "is a greater miracle than to raise a dead man to life."**

“7. In explaining the fifth Psalm, **St. Augustine says that "he who is unwilling to fly from danger, wishes to perish in it."** Hence, in another place, he exhorts those who wish to conquer, and not to perish, to avoid dangerous occasions. "In the occasion of falling into sin, take flight, if you desire to gain the victory." (Serm. 250 de temp.) Some foolishly trust in their own strength, and do not see that their strength is like that of flax placed in the fire. "And your strength shall be as the ashes of tow." (Isa. 1.31) Others, trusting in the change which has taken place in their life, in their confessions, and in the promises they have made to God, say: Through the grace of the Lord, I have now no bad motive in seeking the company of such a person; her presence is not even an occasion of temptations: Listen, all you who speak in this manner. In Mauritania there are bears that go in quest of the apes, to feed upon them: as soon as a bear appears, the apes run up the trees, and thus save themselves. But what does the bear do? He stretches himself on the ground as if dead, and waits till the apes descend from the trees. The moment he sees that they have descended, he springs up, seizes on them, and devours them. **It is thus the devil acts: he makes the temptation appear to be dead; but when a soul descends, and exposes itself to the occasion of sin, he stirs up temptation, and devours it. Oh! how many miserable souls, devoted to spiritual things, to mental prayer, to frequent communion, and to a life of holiness have, by exposing themselves to the occasion of sin, become the slaves of the devil!** We find in ecclesiastical history that a holy woman, who employed herself in the pious office of burying the martyrs, once found among them one who was not as yet dead. She brought him into her own house, and procured a physician and medicine for him, till he recovered. But, what happened? These two saints (as they might be called -- one of them on the point of being a martyr, the other devoting her time to works of mercy with so much risk of being

persecuted by the tyrants) first fell into sin and lost the grace of God, and, becoming weaker by sin, afterwards denied the faith. St. Macarius relates a similar fact regarding an old man who suffered to be half-burned in defense of the faith; but, being brought back into prison he, unfortunately for himself, formed an intimacy with a devout woman who served the martyrs, and fell into sin.

“8. The Holy Spirit tells us that we must fly from sin as from a serpent. "Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent." (Ecclus. 21.2) Hence, as we not only avoid the bite of a serpent, but are careful neither to touch nor approach it, **so we must fly not only from sin, but also from the occasion of sin -- that is, from the house, the conversation, the person that would lead us to sin.** St. Isidore says that he who wishes to remain near a serpent, will not remain long unhurt. "Juxta serpentem positus non erit sin illaesus." (Solit., Bk. 2) Hence, if any person is likely to prove an occasion of your ruin, the admonition of the Wise Man is, "Remove your way far from her, and come not near the doors of her house." (Prov. 5.8) He not only tells you not to enter the house which has been to you a road to hell ("Her house is the way to hell." Prov. 7.27); but he also cautions you not to approach it, and even to keep at a distance from it. "Remove your way far from her." But, you will say, if I abandon that house, my temporal affairs shall suffer. It is better that you should suffer a temporal loss, than that you should lose your soul and your God. **You must be persuaded that, in whatever regards chastity, there cannot be too great caution. If we wish to save our souls from sin and hell, we must always fear and tremble. "With fear and trembling work out your salvation." (Phil. 2.12) He who is not fearful, but exposes himself to occasions of sin, shall scarcely be saved.** Hence, in our prayers we ought to say every day, and several times in the day, that petition of the Our Father, "and lead us not into temptation." Lord, do not permit me to be attacked by those temptations which would deprive me of your grace. We cannot merit the grace of perseverance; but, according to St. Augustine, God grants it to every one that asks it, because he has promised to hear all who pray to him. Hence, the holy doctor says that the Lord, "by his promises has made himself a debtor" (cf. Romans 4:25)." (*Hell's Widest Gate: Impurity*, by St. Alphonsus Liguori, Sermons (nn. 2-4) taken from *Ascetical Works, Volume XVI: Sermons for all Sundays in the Year* (1882) pp. 152-173)

We also advice you to never watch news on television or the like since it is so filled with sins that it's almost impossible to watch without seeing things that will injure your virtue like immodesty, make-up, sensuality, blasphemy, gloating, useless and unnecessary stories, lust, adultery, fornication... continuing in infinity. However, to watch news daily is hardly necessary and St. Alphonsus clearly rebukes people for this in his most excellent work, *The True Spouse of Christ*.

We ourselves do not watch any videos anymore except exclusively when for the sake of making videos. Now we only listen to audio, having all the movable images blocked. On YouTube, when we still watched YouTube (we now have it blocked), we did not watch the videos but only listened to them by downloading them as audio (or video) and listened to them only in audio, or at least, by avoiding watching at the screen if we were watching it on youtube, or on other video sites. Anyone who cares about virtue and about their eternal salvation and for those who fear not to offend God by viewing or seeing bad scenes or images, will of course do the same thing, since it's almost impossible to watch anything today that does not contain immodesty or that will harm one's virtue. Even purely Christian films, whether on tv or youtube, have many bad and unacceptable scenes, statues or images in them. What then could be said about more secular media, documentaries, or series?

That so much naked religious images have been made, spread and depicted even in churches! during the last 700 years or so is undoubtedly a sign of the gradual falling away from God and the corruption of morals within and without the Church by the people, and indicates why God ultimately abandoned the Church to what it is has become today.

Also consider that it is very easy to sin in one's thought. In fact, **one consent to an evil thought is enough to damn a person to burn in Hell for all eternity!** and all the bad scenes one sees in all the films, television, movies, series etc. tempts one to commit exactly this sin against God.

St. Alphonsus: "**Listen to this example:** A boy used often to go to confession; and every one took him to be a saint. One night he had a hemorrhage, and he was found dead. His parents went at once to his confessor, and crying begged him to recommend him to God; and he said to them: "Rejoice; your son, I know, was a little angel; God wished to take him from this world, and he must now be in heaven; should he, however, be still in purgatory, I will go to say Mass for him." He put on his vestments to go to the altar; but before leaving the sacristy, he saw himself in the presence of a frightful spectre, whom he asked in the name of God who he was. The phantom answered that he was the soul of him that had just died. Oh! is it you? exclaimed the priest; if you are in need of prayers, I am just going to say Mass for you. Alas! Mass! I am damned, I am in hell! And why? "Hear," said the soul: "**I had never yet committed a mortal sin; but last night a bad thought came to my mind; I gave consent to it, and God made me die at once, and condemned me to hell as I have deserved to be. Do not say Mass for me; it would only increase my sufferings.**" Having spoken thus, the phantom disappeared." (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 167)

“O eternity, eternity! The saints tremble at the mere thought of eternity; and ye sinners, who are in disgrace with God, you do not fear? You do not tremble? It is of faith that he who dies in the state of sin goes to burn in the fire of hell for all eternity!” (Ibid, p. 108)

Scripture teaches that few are saved (Mt. 7:13) and that almost the entire world lies in darkness, so much so that Satan is even called the “prince” (John 12:31) and “god” (2 Cor. 4:3) of this world. “We know that we are of God, and the whole world is seated in wickedness.” (1 John 5:19)

Why are most people damned? Most people are damned because they don’t care enough about God nor fear Him enough **to avoid all sin and the occasions of falling into obvious sin**, nor do they love Him more than they love their own perverse will or self-love —*which is the direct reason for their indifferent lifestyle*; neither do they care enough about God so as to avoid even what they obviously know will lead them into possible sin. The great St. Ambrose said concerning this: “**True repentance [and thus love of God] is to cease to sin [all sin, however small].**”

That of course means that one must do all in one’s power to avoid not only mortal sin, but also venial sin. It also means to in fact never even have a will to commit even the slightest sin that one knows to be a sin culpably or with full consent against the all good God — **and now we may deduce already why most people in fact are damned.**

Hence that most people are damned and always have been. So the only reason it would be hard for someone to be forgiven his sins and be saved is if he don’t love God enough, fear God enough, nor trust God enough with his whole heart—trust and love, such as believing in Him and that He will forgive you if you do what you must—and that He hears all your prayers and grants all your prayers that are good for you, such as all prayers for the grace of attaining forgiveness and salvation. Therefore, it is only hard to be saved for the bad — and not for the good souls.

Also see: [About the sacrament of penance and contrition and about receiving forgiveness without an absolution](#)

Generally, one of course cannot know whether a film, documentary or show that one watches or desires to watch will have any bad images or scenes in them—*before having already watched it*. (There are some sites that offers warnings of immodesty, bad language, nudity etc., but their warnings probably are not enough, nor will they, in all likelihood, include a warning against the so-called modern day women’s fashion in which

women show of their womanly figure by pants or revealing and tight clothing since this is how every one dress today (which in itself would be bad enough to forbid watching these shows entirely), and of course, the modern day “Catholic” or “Christian” standard of modesty is not enough and is even evil in many cases.) Therefore, it is playing with fire to watch movable images and risk one’s soul; and as we have seen, God will ultimately abandon a person that willfully put himself in danger of falling. Again, remember what St. Alphonsus said: “WHEN MEN AVOID THE OCCASIONS OF SIN, GOD PRESERVES THEM; BUT WHEN THEY EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO DANGER, THEY ARE JUSTLY ABANDONED BY THE LORD, AND EASILY FALL INTO SOME GRIEVOUS TRANSGRESSIONS.”

We recommend that no one watch videos or even audios at all (unless perhaps strictly religious things), but if you want to watch more secular things (such as news clips, documentaries or whatever else, even religious films) then listen to audio only. This means that you should turn the television around or put something over the screen. If on the internet, it means that you should avoid watching the video that is playing; or download vlc player and disable video in preferences, and download the videos instead of watching them on the internet, and listen to them only as audio through vlc player or some other video player. You can also download videos and convert them to mp3 or download an extension or program that does it automatically for you. This is a good youtube video downloader that we recommend:

<http://www.imtoo.com/download-youtube-video.html>

You can set settings 360P and mp4 for easiest configuration that takes not too much space and yet is good quality, and just download the video you want to hear instead of watching it on youtube. If you enter youtube videos, you should disable auto play so that videos do not play automatically for the same reason (the flashblock addons linked to above does the trick). You can also disable youtube comments in channel settings. Many of them are pure evil, filthy and spiritually distracting anyway. But the comments vary in badness depending on the video you are watching or entering. But just so you know, it is possible to disable seeing them.

Images must also be blocked when surfing on youtube! The number of bad, immodest and mortally sinful inducing images I myself have seen on youtube, and especially in the related videos while watching a video, or after it ended, is almost innumerable! (and no, I don’t watch sensual material and anyone who has spent any time on youtube will know from experience that related thumbnails can be pure evil and filthy regardless of what videos you are watching, be it a news clip or a religious video, and the

latter example is especially true if it concerns a moral subject). Having images blocked goes for all websites that have any bad images in them, even wikipedia, unless the article is deemed safe. (For the same reason, it is evil and a sin to link to articles that one knows contains any bad images. Yet many people, even traditional so-called Catholics, frequently, and without any scruple, link to such articles all the time just as if they thought they will not receive a judgment for every person that has become affected or aroused sensually by what they posted, linked to or were personally responsible for.) Also, on Firefox, **never watch a youtube video to the end**, or, if you do, scroll down before the film ends, **since the related video images on Firefox—that are shown in the video screen—sadly doesn't get blocked by having images disabled**. I have seen not a few evil images because of that, sadly. Now I know better, and that one must avoid seeing this and falling into this devilish trap (but happily, we don't even watch videos anymore and we encourage all to follow this same advice).

St. Alphonsus, **On avoiding the occasions of sin**: “Some also believe that it is only a venial sin to expose themselves to the proximate occasion of sin. **The catechist must explain that those who do not abstain from voluntary proximate occasions of grievous sin are guilty of a mortal sin**, even though they have the intention of not committing the bad act, to the danger of which they expose themselves. ... It is necessary to inculcate frequently the necessity of avoiding dangerous occasions; for, if proximate occasions, especially of carnal sins, are not avoided, all other means will be useless for our salvation.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 351-355)

Considering the quotes of St. Alphonsus on avoiding occasions of sin and about how God demands more of certain souls that He has given more graces: it is highly important for one's salvation to not watch media or expose oneself to dangerous occasions (such as by surfing the internet with images on).

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #61, March 4, 1679: “**He can sometimes be absolved**, who remains in a proximate occasion of sinning, which he can and does not wish to omit, but rather directly and professedly seeks or enters into.” – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI**.

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #62, March 4, 1679: “The proximate occasion for sinning is not to be shunned when some useful and honorable cause for not shunning it occurs.” – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI**.

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* #63, March 4, 1679: "It is permitted to seek directly the proximate occasion for sinning for a spiritual or temporal good of our own or of a neighbor." – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.**

St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori describes in his masterpiece book "*The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*" how *Modesty of the Eyes* is absolutely crucial for all people to have in order to save their souls:

St. Alphonsus: "**On the mortification of the eyes, and on modesty in general.** Almost all our rebellious passions spring from unguarded looks; for, generally speaking, it is by the sight that all inordinate affections and desires are excited. Hence, holy Job "made a covenant with his eyes, that he would not so much as think upon a virgin." (Job xxxi. 1) Why did he say that he would not so much as think upon a virgin? Should he not have said that he made a covenant with his eyes not to look at a virgin? **No; he very properly said that he would not think upon a virgin; because thoughts are so connected with looks, that the former cannot be separated from the latter, and therefore, to escape the molestation of evil imaginations, he resolved never to fix his eyes on a woman.**

"St. Augustine says: "The thought follows the look; delight comes after the thought; and consent after delight." From the look proceeds the thought; from the thought the desire; for, as St. Francis de Sales says, what is not seen is not desired, and to the desire succeeds the consent.

"If Eve had not looked at the forbidden apple, she should not have fallen; but because "she saw that it was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and beautiful to behold, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." (Gen. iii. 6) The devil first tempts us to look, then to desire, and afterwards to consent.

"St. Jerome says that Satan requires "only a beginning on our part." If we begin, he will complete our destruction. **A deliberate glance at a person of a different sex often enkindles an infernal spark, which consumes the soul.** "Through the eyes," says St. Bernard, "the deadly arrows of love enters." The first dart that wounds and frequently robs chaste souls of life finds admission through the eyes. By them David, the beloved of God, fell. By them was Solomon, once the inspired of the Holy Ghost, drawn into the greatest abominations. Oh! how many are lost by indulging their sight!

"The eyes must be carefully guarded by all who expect not to be obliged to join in the lamentation of Jeremiah: "My eye hath wasted my soul." (Jer. iii. 51) By the introduction of sinful affections my eyes have destroyed my soul. Hence St. Gregory

says, that **"the eyes, because they draw us to sin, must be depressed." If not restrained, they will become instruments of hell, to force the soul to sin almost against its will. "He that looks at a dangerous object," continues the saint, "begins to will what he wills not."** It was this the inspired writer intended to express when he said of Holofernes, that "the beauty of Judith made his soul captive." (Jud. xvi 11)

"Seneca says that "blindness is a part of innocence;" and Tertullian relates that a certain pagan philosopher, to free himself from impurity, plucked out his eyes. Such an act would be unlawful in us: but he that desires to preserve chastity must avoid the sight of objects that are apt to excite unchaste thoughts. "Gaze not about," says the Holy Ghost, "upon another's beauty; . . . hereby lust is enkindled as a fire." (Ecc. ix. 8, 9) Gaze not upon another's beauty; for from looks arise evil imaginations, by which an impure fire is lighted up. Hence St. Francis de Sales used to say, that "they who wish to exclude an enemy from the city must keep the gates locked."

"Hence, to avoid the sight of dangerous objects, the saints were accustomed to keep their eyes almost continually fixed on the earth, and to abstain even from looking at innocent objects. After being a novice for a year, St. Bernard could not tell whether his cell was vaulted. In consequence of never raising his eyes from the ground, he never knew that there were but three windows to the church of the monastery, in which he spent his novitiate. He once, without perceiving a lake, walked along its banks for nearly an entire day; and hearing his companions speak about it, he asked when they had seen it. St. Peter of Alcantara kept his eyes constantly cast down, so that he did not know the brothers with whom he conversed. It was by the voice, and not by the countenance, that he was able to recognize them.

"The saints were particularly cautious not to look at persons of a different sex. St. Hugh, bishop, when compelled to speak with women, never looked at them in the face. St. Clare would never fix her eyes on the face of a man. She was greatly afflicted because, when raising her eyes at the elevation to see the consecrated host, she once involuntarily saw the countenance of the priest. St. Aloysius never looked at his own mother in the face. It is related of St. Arsenius, that a noble lady went to visit him in the desert, to beg of him to recommend her to God. When the saint perceived that his visitor was a woman, he turned away from her. She then said to him: "Arsenius, since you will neither see nor hear me, at least remember me in your prayers." "No," replied the saint, "but I will beg of God to make me forget you, and never more to think of you."

"From these examples may be seen the folly and temerity of some religious who, though they have not the sanctity of a St. Clare, still gaze

around from the terrace, in the parlour, and in the church, upon every object that presents itself, even on persons of a different sex. And notwithstanding their unguarded looks, they expect to be free from temptations and from the danger of sin. For having once looked deliberately at a woman who was gathering ears of corn, the Abbot Pastor was tormented for forty years by temptations against chastity. St. Gregory states that the temptation, to conquer which St. Benedict rolled himself in thorns, arose from one incautious glance at a woman. St. Jerome, though living in a cave at Bethlehem, in continual prayer and macerations of the flesh, was terribly molested by the remembrance of ladies whom he had long before seen in Rome. Why should not similar molestations be the lot of the religious who willfully and without reserve fixes her eyes on persons of a different sex? "It is not," says St. Francis de Sales, "the seeing of objects so much as the fixing of our eyes upon them that proves most pernicious."

"If," says St. Augustine, "our eyes should by chance fall upon others, let us take care never to fix them upon any one." Father Manareo, when taking leave of St. Ignatius for a distant place, looked steadfastly in his face: for this look he was corrected by the saint. **From the conduct of St. Ignatius on this occasion, we learn that it was not becoming in religious to fix their eyes on the countenance of a person even of the same sex, particularly if the person is young. But I do not see how looks at young persons of a different sex can be excused from the guilt of a venial fault, or even from mortal sin, when there is proximate danger of criminal consent. "It is not lawful," says St. Gregory, "to behold what it is not lawful to covet." The evil thought that proceeds from looks, though it should be rejected, never fails to leave a stain upon the soul. Brother Roger, a Franciscan of singular purity, being once asked why he was so reserved in his intercourse with women, replied, that when men avoid the occasions of sin, God preserves them; but when they expose themselves to danger, they are justly abandoned by the Lord, and easily fall into some grievous transgressions.**

"The indulgence of the eyes, if not productive of any other evil, at least destroys recollection during the time of prayer. For, the images and impressions caused by the objects seen before, or by the wandering of the eyes, during prayer, will occasion a thousand distractions, and banish all recollection from the soul. It is certain that without recollection a religious can pay but little attention to the practice of humility, patience, mortification, or of the other virtues. Hence it is her duty to abstain from all looks of curiosity, which distract her mind from holy thoughts. Let her eyes be directed only to objects which raise the soul to God.

"St. Bernard used to say, that to fix the eyes upon the earth contributes to keep

the heart in heaven. "Where," says St. Gregory, "Christ is, there modesty is found." Wherever Jesus Christ dwells by love, there modesty is practiced. However, I do not mean to say that the eyes should never be raised or never fixed on any object. No; but they ought to be directed only to what inspires devotion, to sacred images, and to the beauty of creation, which elevate the soul to the contemplation of the divinity. Except in looking at such objects, a religious should in general keep the eyes cast down, and particularly in places where they may fall upon dangerous objects. In conversing with men, she should never roll the eyes about to look at them, and much less to look at them a second time.

"To practice modesty of the eyes is the duty of a religious, not only because it is necessary for her own improvement in virtue, but also because it is necessary for the edification of others. God only knows the human heart: man sees only the exterior actions, and by them he is edified or scandalized. "A man," says the Holy Ghost, "is known by his look." (Ecc. xix. 26) By the countenance the interior is known. Hence, like St. John the Baptist, a religious should be "a burning and shining light." (John, v. 35) She ought to be a torch burning with charity, and shining resplendent by her modesty, to all who behold her. To religious the following words of the Apostle are particularly applicable: "We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men." (1 Cor. iv. 9) And again: "Let your modesty be known to all men: the Lord is nigh." (Phil. iv. 5)

"Religious are attentively observed by the angels and by men; and therefore their modesty should be made manifest before all; **if they do not practice modesty, terrible shall be the account which they must render to God on the day of judgment. Oh! what devotion does a modest religious inspire, what edification does she give, by keeping her eyes always cast down!** St. Francis of Assisi once said to his companion, that he was going out to preach. After walking through the town, with his eyes fixed on the ground, he returned to the convent. His companion asked him when he would preach the sermon. We have, replied the saint, by the modesty of our looks, given an excellent instruction to all who saw us. It is related of St. Aloysius, that when he walked through Rome the students would stand in the streets to observe and admire his great modesty.

"St. Ambrose says, that to men of the world the modesty of the saints is a powerful exhortation to amendment of life. "The look of a just man is an admonition to many." The saint adds: "How delightful it is to do good to others by your appearance!" It is related of St. Bernardine of Sienna, that even when a secular, his presence was sufficient to restrain the licentiousness of his young companions, who, as soon as they saw him, were accustomed to give to one another notice that he was coming. On his arrival they became silent or changed the subject of their conversation. It is also related of St. Gregory of Nyssa, and of St. Ephrem, that their very appearance inspired piety, and that the sanctity and modesty of their exterior

edified and improved all that beheld them. When Innocent II visited St. Bernard at Clairvaux, such was the exterior modesty of the saint and of his monks, that the Pope and his cardinals were moved to tears of devotion. Surius relates a very extraordinary fact of St. Lucian, a monk and martyr. By his modesty he induced so many pagans to embrace the faith, that the Emperor Maximian, fearing that he should be converted to Christianity by the appearance of the saint, would not allow the holy man to be brought within his view, but spoke to him from behind a screen.

“That our Redeemer was the first who taught, by his example, modesty of the eyes, may, as a learned author remarks, be inferred from the holy evangelists, who say that on some occasion he raised his eyes. "And he, lifting up his eyes on his disciples." (Luke, vi. 20) "When Jesus therefore had lifted up his eyes." (John, vi. 5.) From these passages we may conclude that the Redeemer ordinarily kept his eyes cast down. Hence the Apostle, praising the modesty of the Saviour, says: "I beseech you, by the mildness and modesty of Christ." (2 Cor. x. 1)

“I shall conclude this subject with what St. Basil said to his monks: "If, my children, we desire to raise the soul towards heaven, let us direct the eyes towards the earth." From the moment we awake in the morning, let us pray continually in the words of holy David: "Turn away my eyes, that they may not behold vanity" (Ps. cxviii. 37).” (St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, Modesty of the Eyes, pp. 252-261)

St. Francis of Assisi used to exhort his brethren frequently to guard and mortify their senses with the utmost care. He especially insisted on the custody of the eyes, and he used this parable of a King’s two messengers to demonstrate how the purity of the eyes reveals the chastity of the soul:

“A certain pious King sent two messengers successively to the Queen with a communication from himself. The first messenger returned and brought an answer from the Queen, which he delivered exactly. But of the Queen herself he said nothing because he had always kept his eyes modestly cast down and had not raised them to look at her.

The second messenger also returned. But after delivering in a few words the answer of the Queen, he began to speak warmly of her beauty. “Truly, my lord,” he said, “the Queen is the most fair and lovely woman I have ever seen, and thou art indeed happy and blessed to have her for thy spouse.”

At this the King was angry and said: “Wicked servant, how did you dare to cast your eyes upon my royal spouse? I believe that you may covet what you have so curiously gazed

upon.”

Then he commanded the other messenger to be recalled, and said to him: “What do you think of the Queen?”

He replied, “She listened very willingly and humbly to the message of the King and replied most prudently.”

But the Monarch again asked him, “But what do you think of her countenance? Did she not seem to you very fair and beautiful, more so than any other woman?”

The servant replied, “My lord, I know nothing of the Queen’s beauty. Whether she be fair or not, it is for thee alone to know and judge. My duty was only to convey thy message to her.”

The King rejoined, “You have answered well and wisely. You who have such chaste and modest eyes shall be my chamberlain. From the purity of your eyes I see the chastity of your soul. You are worthy to have the care of the royal apartments confided to you.”

Then, turning to the other messenger, he said: “But you, who have such unmortified eyes, depart from the palace. You shall not remain in my house, for I have no confidence in your virtue.” (*The Works of the Seraphic Father St. Francis of Assisi*, London: R. Washbourne, 1882, pp. 254-255)

Concerning modesty of the eyes and related virtues, St. Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170-236 A.D.), *From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs*, writes:

“[Proverbs 4:25 “Let thy eyes look straight on, and let thy eyelids go before thy steps.”] He “looks right on” who has thoughts free of passion; and he has true judgments, who is not in a state of excitement about external appearances.

....

“[Proverbs 6:27 “Can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn?”] That thou mayest not say, What harm is there in the eyes, when there is no necessity that he should be perverted who looks? he shows thee that desire is a fire, and the flesh is like a garment. The latter is an easy prey, and the former is a tyrant. And when anything harmful is not only taken within, but also held fast, it will not go forth again until it has made an exit for itself. For he who looks upon a woman, even though he escape the temptation, does not come away pure of all lust. And why should one have trouble, if he can be chaste and free of

trouble? ... And, figuratively speaking, he keeps a fire in his breast who permits an impure thought to dwell in his heart. And he walks upon coals who, by sinning in act, destroys his own soul.

“[Proverbs 7:21-25 “[21] She entangled him with many words, and drew him away with the flattery of her lips. [22] Immediately he followeth her as an ox led to be a victim, and as a lamb playing the wanton, and not knowing that he is drawn like a fool to bonds, [23] Till the arrow pierce his liver: as if a bird should make haste to the snare, and knoweth not that his life is in danger. [24] Now therefore, my son, hear me, and attend to the words of my mouth. [25] Let not thy mind be drawn away in her ways: neither be thou deceived with her paths.”] The “cemphus” [the fool] is a kind of wild sea-bird, which has so immoderate an impulse to sexual enjoyment, that its eyes seem to fill with blood in coition; and it often blindly falls into snares, or into the hands of men [Footnote: “The cemphus is said to be a sea-bird “driven about by every wind,” so that it is equal to a fool.” [Proverbs 7:22]]. To this, therefore, he [Solomon] compares the man who gives himself up to the harlot on account of his immoderate lust; or else on account of the insensate folly of the creature, for he, too, pursues his object like one senseless. And they say that this bird is so much pleased with foam, that if one should hold foam in his hand as he sails, it will sit upon his hand. And it also brings forth with pain.

“[Proverbs 7:26 “For she hath cast down many wounded, and the strongest have been slain by her.”] You have seen her mischief. Wait not to admit the rising of lust; for her death is everlasting. And for the rest, by her words, her arguments in sooth, she wounds, and by her sins she kills those who yield to her. For many are the forms of wickedness that lead the foolish down to hell. And the chambers of death mean either its depths or its treasure. How, then, is escape possible?” (The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus, "On Proverbs," by St. Hippolytus of Rome, 170-236 A.D., vol. 5, Ante-Nicene Fathers)

Question: Is masturbation a sin?

Answer: There are four reasons why everyone automatically knows by instinct and by nature that masturbation is a mortal sin against both nature and God. The first reason is that all people know in their conscience that masturbation is **a kind of rape of another person.** The second reason is that it is **a kind of drug abuse,** since the **sexual pleasure is an intoxicating pleasure** that affects the person in a way similar to a strong drug. People who masturbate “look on a woman to lust after her” in order to become sensually aroused and thus, they commit “adultery with her” in their hearts (Matthew 5:28) and a kind of drug abuse that makes them guilty of a mortal sin

against nature and God that will cause them to be damned forever in Hell by having their “whole body be cast into hell” and eternal torments, according to Our Lord Jesus Christ’s words in The Holy Bible (cf. Matthew 5:29). The third reason is that all people know that the **sexual pleasure is a shameful pleasure**, which is why all people who masturbate hide in shame when they are committing this vile and shameful deed. And the fourth reason is that **masturbation is non-procreative and unnatural**, and the Church’s teaching is clear that “**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**” (Pope Pius XI) and that is why the procreation of children is the only primary end or purpose that God allows the sexual act to be used for, which makes all other sexual acts (like masturbation) unnatural and mortally sinful.

Thus, these four reasons absolutely prove why masturbation is always inherently evil and mortally sinful since this vile act is totally unreasonable, unnatural and selfish; **and that is why everyone without exception who commit this act can never be excused from sin through claiming ignorance of the fact that masturbation is a sin, and why they will be damned to burn forever in Hell** since they all know by instinct and by nature that it is a sin just like they know that getting drunk or intoxicated is a sin against the Natural Law, God and reason.

First, masturbation is rape. Women are not toys, playthings, or “bunnies” from which to derive sexual stimulation. When women are used in sexual fantasies, they are sexually abused, even if they are untouched. Many men rape many women each day and commit adultery and fornication without laying a hand on them. Women also rape men and commit adultery and fornication in this way. These rapes, fornications and adulteries are not marked by physical violence but by psychological warfare. Because a person is often unaware of being used and abused, and because the abuser often does not fathom the real extent of the severity of his crime, this makes these mental and visual rapes/abuses seem less devastating. Nevertheless, grave sin with all its degradation and death is being committed.

Second, masturbation is a kind of drug abuse. The vehemence of the sexual pleasure is extremely strong and similar to a strong drug. All people of course knows that getting intoxicated or drunk for pleasure only is against the Natural Law. When a person uses a drug to get intoxicated, he or she knows that they commit a sin. Similarly, when a person is abusing sexual pleasure, and since his intention for the sexual act is purely selfish, he knows that he is committing a kind of drug abuse. In fact, the pleasure that is derived from the sexual pleasure is many times stronger than many drugs, and as such, are of course more sinful to abuse than these drugs. For “**the sin of lust consists in seeking venereal pleasure not in accordance with right reason...**” and “**lust**

there signifies any kind of excess.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II:II, Q. 154, Art. 1)

This can be proven by an example. Consider how a man that is sick and who suffers much pain is allowed by divine permission and justice to take morphine or other strong painkillers since he is in need of them. His reason when taking these drugs is not self-gratification but the alleviation of the pain that he experiences. This example could be likened with normal, natural, lawful and procreative marital relations between two married spouses, which is permitted and non-sinful as long as the spouses have “intercourse so that it [the seed] might germinate at the right place and in the right way and bear fruit [that is, bear children] for a just and rational cause.” (Jesus Christ speaking to St. Bridget, in *St. Bridget’s Revelations*, Book 5, Interrogation 5)

However, whenever the sick person mentioned above would become well and yet continued to use morphine or other painkillers without any need to do so – and for the mere sake of getting high and for pleasure – **he would have committed the sin of drug abuse**. His just reason for using the painkiller became unjust the very moment he became well and did not need to use it anymore.

The sexual pleasure is always an evil pleasure to experience in itself since it is a **shameful and intoxicating pleasure** that is very similar to the evil pleasure people experience when they abuse alcohol or drugs, and this pleasure is evil to experience also for married couples, even though married spouses do not sin during their lawful and normal procreative marital acts. St. Augustine in his book *On Marriage and Concupiscence* explains this evil thus: “Wherefore the devil holds infants guilty [through original sin] who are born, not of the good by which marriage is good, but of the **evil of concupiscence [lust]**, which, indeed, marriage uses aright, but at which even marriage has occasion to feel shame.” (Book 1, Chapter 27.--Through Lust Original Sin is Transmitted; Concupiscence of the Flesh, the Daughter and Mother of [Original] Sin)

Third, masturbation is shameful. Consider the fact that a person would be very ashamed if their parent, child or friend walked in on them when they were committing this shameful, selfish and evil act of masturbation. **It is thus clear that their conscience tells them that it is an inherently shameful and evil act.** Everyone (but complete perverts who have willfully destroyed their conscience over a period of time) knows that masturbation is a selfish, shameful, intoxicating and evil pleasure and that is why they are ashamed of it and why they hide themselves when committing this shameful deed.

For instance, consider how utterly stupid and unreasonable it is for a person

to be ashamed of committing acts of sensuality and masturbation in front of other people while at the same time he refuses to feel this very same shame when masturbating in the presence of God and Mary and all the trillions of angels in Heaven... all the while hoping to not get noticed by anyone! The whole spiritual world sees his disgusting behavior – yet he doesn't care. This person knows in his conscience that he justly deserves to be punished by God who sees him commit this evil and shameful act, and he also knows that he is committing an inherently evil, shameful and selfish act since he would be ashamed to commit it before other people. Yet his perverse lust quenches his perverse conscience in this case in order to satisfy his unnatural lusts.

Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes*: “**What a young boy [or anyone who have sinned through sensual touches or masturbation] should tell in confession:** "I sometimes stroked myself or others, urged by disorderly pleasure; I fondled myself, in my bed and elsewhere, something I would not have dared to do if people had been there." Sometimes the priest cannot absolve such fondling. If they are not confessed and the details given, whatever the shame, one cannot be absolved, and the confession is worthless: one is destined to be damned for ever in Hell. The action and the way it has been done must be told.”

Some people may object that there are many other events that are shameful and that are not yet inherently sinful such as soiling one's pants or being forced to show oneself naked to other people against one's own will. This objection, however, fails to notice the obvious difference between people committing acts of lust and events which are shameful but that are not desired or longed for by a person in a sensual way. Acts of lust are acts performed for the sake of a pleasure and are therefore performed with the will and purpose of satisfying a sensual desire while the events or acts of soiling one's pants or being forced to show oneself naked to other people is not a desire or lust that is sought after. Thus, these people do not desire that these events should happen. If those people who endured the events of soiling their clothes or naked exhibition against their own will would sensually desire or lust for that these shameful events would happen in the same way that a man or a woman lust for and desire that sexual acts or acts of lust happen, they would indeed be declared the most disgusting perverts. Who but a complete and satanic pervert would sensually desire or lust after soiling their pants or being exhibited naked?

Someone might say that it is the sexual member that is shameful or evil to expose to others, and not concupiscence or the sexual lust. But this argument is false and easily refuted since no one who is not a complete pervert would have sex or masturbate in front of other people even though their whole body was covered by sheets or blankets. This

proves to us that it is the sexual pleasure that is shameful and evil, and not only the exhibition of the sexual organ. For “man is ashamed not only of this sexual union but also of all the signs thereof,” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II:II, Q. 151, Art. 4) and this proves to us that not only the sensual desire is a shameful desire, but also the very sexual act and “also of all the signs thereof.”

Who would like to have their children or parents be a part of a porn movie? No one but a complete and satanic pervert. Who would want their child to be lusted at by other people? Only a son of Satan. This shows us that people know instinctively and by nature that the sexual pleasure is a shameful, evil and inherently disordered pleasure, since it plucks the innocence of people.

All people thus know in their hearts that masturbation is inherently evil and shameful. But since they have allowed their lust to reach such a level in their hearts that they do not want to resist it, they try to forget the obvious fact that this act is against their conscience and nature. They can only try to forget it, however, for they all know that it is an evil act since they are ashamed to do it in front of other people. Thus, their conscience convicts them and testifies against them on this point.

Matthew 5:27-30, *Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke, saying*: “You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. **But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.** And if thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body be cast into hell.”

Mark 9:42-47 “And if thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life, maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting, than having two feet, to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee with one eye to enter into the kingdom of God, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished.”

People who masturbate “look on a woman to lust after her” in order to become sensually aroused, and thus, they commit “adultery with her” in their hearts and a mortal sin against nature and God. **But masturbation is also a mortal sin and against the Natural Law even without thinking about women, which means that no one can be excused who commits this sin.**

These verses from Our Lord Jesus Christ above also proves to us that the mere consent to lustful thoughts (without any physical activity) is enough to damn a person for ever in Hell — and that is why we must always control our eyes and keep them away from persons or objects that may arouse sensual or sinful thoughts.

Fourth, masturbation is non-procreative. The Church and the Natural Law teaches that “**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #54) and that even the normal, natural and procreative “**act of marriage exercised for pleasure only**” is condemned as a sin for both the married and unmarried people alike (Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Subjects Condemned in Decree* (# 9), March 4, 1679).

The Natural Law is rooted in design. God, the Supreme Designer, has imprinted a design on all created things – including the human person, both in his spiritual and physical being – a purpose for which each has been created. Thus, with regard to the human person, the Creator has designed speech for communicating the truth and the mouth to swallow food etc. Likewise, the Creator has designed the sexual organs for something noble, namely, for procreating children. Thus, the Church’s teaching is clear that “**the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children**” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #54)

Any action of the sexual organisms (the private parts) or other acts that are intended to arouse sensuality that is lacking the procreative function, is thus always mortally sinful and against the Natural Law. An action of the sexual faculties outside of the normal and natural marital act are lacking the procreative dimension and consequently, it would be sexual pleasure sought for itself, isolated from its procreative function – and that is an unreasonable, unlawful and unnatural lust.

What does the Bible Say about Masturbation?

“Is masturbation a sin?” Many have found it difficult to answer this question according to the Bible because the Bible never mentions the word “masturbation” specifically. To understand how God feels about this topic, we only need to examine other verses that deal

with issues such as lust, self-control, and purity.

It has been the constant and clear teaching of the Church from principles found in Holy Scripture that masturbation is a serious mortal sin that will keep one from Heaven (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:10). This is also clear from the teaching of the Church as well as from natural reason. In assigning a reason for such a serious prohibition, the Church teaches that the sexual function is meant by God to serve primarily for the begetting of children. Therefore, any deliberate activation of it is seriously inordinate and sinful.

The Lord has said: “Look not round about thee in the ways of the city, nor wander up and down in the streets thereof. Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not about upon another’s beauty. For many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire.” (Ecclesiasticus or Sirach 9:7-9) “Young men, in like manner, exhort that they be sober.” (Titus 2:6) “You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that **whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.**” (Matthew 5:27-28)

Jesus feels the best thing to do about sexual sins is to gouge out our eyes (Matthew 5:29) and cut off our hands (Matthew 5:30). This is a very serious and extreme remedy. He does not literally mean for us to mutilate ourselves, but that we must cut off all occasions of sin. However, it is clear that sexual sins, and also the sexual fantasies that are so easily overlooked and neglected by so many people, are serious enough to be a part of the highway to Hell. If we let ourselves commit sin with the hand or be hit in the eye by the Devil, we are sure to lose our souls. Let us therefore guard our eyes, the lamps of our bodies, the way to our hearts and mind, and protect our other members from committing or falling into sin.

So we are to control our actions with others and also our actions when alone. We are not to let sin take root in our hearts. Romans 6:12-14 tells us, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof. **Neither yield ye your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin; but present yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.** For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Your “members” in this verse is referring to the different parts of your body: your hands, feet, fingers, etc. Are you using your body in masturbation in a way that you think would make God proud?

Many times we have the attitude of “If God gave me this body, shouldn’t I be able to enjoy

it?” First of all, we have to remember that sex is God’s invention. He is the mastermind behind it. God Himself has declared that it is only in marriage that any form of sexual stimulation, that is, natural sexual intercourse open to procreation of children, is lawful.

Masturbation is a selfish act where we take advantage of and abuse our procreative power. God cares about what we do with our bodies, in public or in private, and He doesn’t want us to abuse ourselves in any way. Did you know that in older dictionaries the definition of the word masturbation is “self-abuse”? And if you were to look in a current dictionary under the word self-abuse, the word “masturbation” would be the second definition given. To this day, the two words of “masturbation” and “self-abuse” are linked together, masturbation/self-abuse.

You might be thinking, “How am I abusing myself by doing this?” You are abusing yourself by masturbating because you are improperly handling something that God entrusted to your care. You are taking something that God gave us (our bodies and minds) and using it in a perverse manner. When masturbating, you are defiling your mind with obscene thoughts and then defiling your body by using it to act out those thoughts. To “defile” something means “to make unclean, to make impure.” Matthew 15:19-20 reads, “For out of the heart proceed **evil thoughts**, murders, **adulteries**, **fornications**... these are the things which defile a man.”

And it is of faith that we all already know in our hearts that masturbating is wrong. When you engage in this activity, you know that you are committing a shameful and evil act.

This activity does not lift you up spiritually. It brings you down. God did not create our sexual organs so that we could fantasize and have sex by ourselves. Now, you might be thinking, “Well, isn’t it still better to masturbate than to commit fornication?” The only answer to this question is no, for you are still committing a mortal sin and it doesn’t really matter what form of mortal sin you are committing. You will still be sent Hell for it, whether it be by fornication or self-abuse. Maybe in your mind you feel that it is better to masturbate because at least you are the only one involved. Maybe you believe that it is the “lesser” of two evils.

In reality, masturbation is a mortal sin just like fornication **and is considered as even a worse sin than fornication according to St. Thomas Aquinas.**

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154, Art. 12: “**Whether the unnatural vice is the greatest sin among the species of lust?** I answer that, In every genus, worst of all is the corruption of the principle

on which the rest depend. Now the principles of reason are those things that are according to nature, because reason presupposes things as determined by nature, before disposing of other things according as it is fitting. ... Therefore, since by the unnatural vices [masturbation, homosexuality, sodomy, bestiality, etc.] man transgresses that [purpose] which has been determined by nature [procreation] with regard to the use of venereal actions, it follows that in this matter [species of lust] this sin [the unnatural vice] is gravest of all.”

First of all, and we mentioned this before, when women are used in sexual fantasies, they are sexually abused, even if they are untouched. **So many men rape many women each day and commit adultery and fornication without laying a hand on them. Women also rape men and commit adultery and fornication in this way.** Second, masturbation will not truly relieve the sexual pressure that you may feel. It may for a short moment, but in the long run it only creates a deeper desire and capacity for sex, which will lead to more masturbation and, ultimately, the desire for sexual intercourse and pornography. Third, everyone must also be absolutely aware of that even if a person doesn't think of women or men while masturbating, this sin is still one of those unnatural vices **that are amongst the worst sins that one can commit against God and nature.**

St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *The Four Principal Gates of Hell*, On Impurity: “Some will say that it is a trifling sin. Is it a trifling sin? **It is a mortal sin.** St. Antoninus writes that such is the nauseousness of this sin that the devils themselves cannot endure it. Moreover, the Doctors of the Church say that certain demons, who have been superior to the rest, remembering their ancient dignity, disdain tempting to so loathsome a sin. Consider then how disgusting he must be to God, who, like a dog, is ever returning to his vomit, or wallowing like a pig in the stinking mire of this accursed vice (2 Pet. 2:22). The impure say, moreover, “God has compassion on us who are subject to this vice, because He knows that we are flesh.” What do you say? God has compassion on this vice? But you must know that the most horrible chastisements with which God has ever visited the earth have been drawn down by this vice. St. Jerome says that this is the only sin of which we read that it caused God to repent of having made man, for all flesh had become corrupted (Gen. 6:6-12). And so it is, St. Jerome says, that there is no sin which God punishes so rigorously, even upon earth, as this. ... Principally on account of this sin did God destroy mankind, with the exception of eight persons, by the flood. It is a sin which God punishes, not only in the other life, but in this also. “Because,” says God, “you have forgotten Me and turned your back upon Me, for a miserable pleasure of the flesh, I am resolved that even in this life you shall pay the price of your wickedness” (Ezek. 23:35).”

St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *The Four Principal Gates of Hell*, On Impurity: “You say, “God has compassion upon men subject to this sin.” But it is this sin that sends most men to Hell. St. Remigius says that the greater number of the damned are in Hell through this vice [of impurity]. Father Segneri writes that as this vice fills the world with sinners, so it fills Hell with damned souls; and before him St. Bernardine of Siena wrote: “This sin draws the whole world, as it were, into sin.” And before him St. Bernard and St. Isidore said that “the human race is brought under the power of the devil more by lust than by all the other vices.” The reason is because this vice proceeds from the natural inclination of the flesh. Hence St. Thomas Aquinas says that the devil does not take such complacency in securing the commission of any other sin as of this, because the person who is plunged in this infernal mire remains lodged therein, and almost wholly unable to free himself again.”

James 1:14-15 tells us that “every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” This verse is telling us that all sin begins with a thought, but that when we give in to the thought and act out the sin in deed or thought, we will sink deeper and deeper into sin. Sin always takes you farther than you wanted to go and keeps you longer than you wanted to stay. And with masturbation, there is a vicious circle. You are only temporarily satisfied. And the more you indulge in this activity, the more addicted you become to it. Then if you let yourself become enslaved to a sexual high, you will find that you need to go to increasingly extreme acts to maintain the same degree of excitement. I think the many daily perversions committed by sex and masturbation addicts proves this case quite clearly. In John 8:34, Jesus warns us, “Verily, verily I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”

So, again, masturbation is a dangerous activity to engage in for this reason: All sexual immorality, including masturbation, begins with a thought. Then a lustful thought not taken captive will eventually lead to other perversions, including deviant sexual practices, demonic obsession or possession and homosexuality, and other perversions like pedophilia, because sin reproduces itself if left unchecked. All sexual perverts proves that this is the case. For they all started out as masturbators just like ordinary people at some point in time. When we fantasize and masturbate, we open our hearts and minds up to demonic forces and strange and perverse thoughts and possibilities. We are giving the Devil an open invitation to take residence in our beings. If we do not deal with our evil thoughts, they will take root in our heart. It is for this reason that God is so concerned with our thought life. Jesus came not only to deliver us from our “outward” sins, but also from wickedness that begins in the heart.

Now, you may be thinking “It is unfair for God to demand sexual purity from us after giving us sexual drives that seem to overwhelm us.” First of all, and this is important to remember, Adam and Eve was not created by God with sexual temptations or desires. In other words, God did not create the human race with any of the sexual temptations or desires that we are now plagued with. These temptations are only the tragic and evil effect of the Fall and Original sin of Adam and Eve, and is something which God permits us to be tempted with as a punishment for the original sin.

Had Adam and Eve chosen not to sin, we would not now have had any sexual temptations tempting us. St. Augustine explains it thus: “...lust, which only afterwards sprung up as the penal consequence of [original] sin, the iniquity of violating it was all the greater in proportion to the ease with which it might have been kept.” (*City of God*, Book XIV, Chapter 12; also see [The Origin of Fleshly Lust.](#))

Second, God never demands from us something that would be impossible for us to do. And even if it’s hard for us, “nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37). True, you may feel weak within yourself, but He will equip you with His holy power to overcome any sin if only you ask in faith.

Hence St. Augustine wisely observes, “The presumption of stability renders many unstable; no one will be so strong as he who feels his own weakness.” St. Alphonsus commenting on these words wisely adds, “Whosoever says that he entertains no fear of being lost, betrays a pernicious self-confidence and security by which he deceives himself. For, confiding in his own strength, he ceases to tremble, and being free from fear [of falling into sin], he neglects to recommend himself to God, and left to his own weakness, he infallibly falls.” (*Treatise on Prayer*, Chapter IV)

Some of you are probably saying, “Well, I agree with all of this in my head, but living it out on a day-to-day basis is another story.” Perhaps you sometimes feel overwhelmed by the temptations that you face. But never underestimate the power that you have over sin. On your own you are not that strong, but with God’s power, you can overcome. Second Corinthians 10:3-5 reads, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

These verses are telling us that we are not helpless. We can fight and be victorious against

our sexual thoughts and desires—with the help of God. If you want to stop masturbating and you realize that this is what your Heavenly Father desires of you, you can. Confess this sin to a Catholic priest and to God and ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen you so that you can have control over your lustful thoughts and actions, and remember always to recommend yourself to Jesus and Mary in time of temptations, and you will never fall. And if you have a Catholic friend whom you trust, ask that person to pray for you in this area, also. And if you slip occasionally or even a lot, don't give up. Self-control takes effort. If you truly want to stop masturbating, one thing that you must consider doing is to flee from and reject those things that will cause you to stumble, whether it be the internet or sexually-themed movies, music, books, videos, in other words, anything that fills your mind with images and words that will make you weak and vulnerable.

What you need to do, first of all, is avoid the occasions of sin that are causing you to fall into mortal sin. Take drastic action in that regard, if it is necessary. For example, if someone commits mortal sins on a computer, he or she should get rid of the computer. If people are stuck in such a state, Jesus says they must “cut off” the occasion lest they perish forever (Matthew 5:30).

Second, you need to pray the Rosary each day, and pray it well. Cultivate the habit of praying the Hail Mary as much as you can. There are many ways one can go about doing so. For example, each time you leave your room, you could go to your knees and pray one to three Hail Mary's. Praying the Rosary and the Hail Mary is actually the most important point, for without those graces you will not come out of mortal sin or begin to avoid the occasions that are causing you to fall into sin. (See [How to Pray the Rosary](#); See also [The Revelations of St. Bridget](#) which is a MUST READ book that is especially effective in helping a person to conquer his or her sensual temptations and faults.)

Sister Lucy of Fatima, regarding the Holy Rosary, said the following words to Fr. Augustin Fuentes on December 26, 1957:

“Look, Father, the Most Holy Virgin, in these last times in which we live, has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary. She has given this efficacy to such an extent that there is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us, of our families, of the families of the world or of the religious communities, or even of the life of peoples and nations, that cannot be solved by the Rosary. **There is no problem I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary.**”

Third, we would recommend these videos on Hell: <http://www.doomsdaytube.com/scary-hell.php>

Finally, the first degree of humility is to fear God enough to avoid clear mortal sins. Mortal sinners don't respect that God will cast them into Hell for their actions. If they did, they would alter their conduct. Thus, people who commit mortal sins lack humility. In their pride, they don't fear or respect God; and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 110:10). A person who commits mortal sins needs to begin to respect and fear God for who He is and what He will do to them.

As far as confession goes, you may make it to a non-heretical and fully Catholic priest ordained in the traditional Catholic rite, as described in this article: "[About Sacraments From Heretics and Prayer in Communion with Heretics](#)". You should focus on ceasing to commit the mortal sins that you are doing, acquiring a firm resolve not to commit them anymore, and making a proper confession. (See [this file for help with ceasing to commit mortal and venial sins](#)). (Also see [The Steps to convert to the traditional Catholic faith and for those leaving the New Mass - Baptism and Conditional Baptism - the Council of Trent's Profession of Faith for Converts](#)).

St. Augustine of Hippo in his "*Confessions*" (written 397-398 A.D.) relates to us his own struggle with the evil of lust and how he was bound down by his own perverse iron will.

St. Augustine, *The Confessions of Augustine*, Book VIII, Chapter V, Of the Causes Which Alienate Us from God: "... thus [I was] bound, not with the irons of another, but my own iron will [chaining me in lust]. My will was the enemy master of, and thence had made a chain for me and bound me. Because of a perverse will was lust made; and lust indulged in became custom; and custom not resisted became necessity. By which links, as it were, joined together (whence I term it a chain), did a hard bondage hold me enthralled. But that new will which had begun to develop in me, freely to worship You, and to wish to enjoy You, O God, the only sure enjoyment, was not able as yet to overcome my former wilfulness, made strong by long indulgence. Thus did my two wills, one old and the other new, one carnal, the other spiritual, contend within me; and by their discord they unstrung my soul. Thus came I to understand, from my own experience, what I had read, how that the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. (Galatians 5:17) I verily lusted both ways; yet more in that which I approved in myself, than in that which I disapproved in myself. For in this last it was now rather not I, (Romans 7:20) because in much I rather suffered against my will than did it willingly. And yet it was through me that custom became more combative against me, because I had

come willingly whither I willed not. And who, then, can with any justice speak against it, when just punishment follows the sinner? Nor had I now any longer my wonted excuse, that as yet I hesitated to be above the world and serve You, because my perception of the truth was uncertain; for now it was certain. But I, still bound to the earth, refused to be Your soldier; and was as much afraid of being freed from all embarrassments, as we ought to fear to be embarrassed.”

“I’ve broken every commandment. I’m trying to stay away from sin but I still find myself suffering with the same sins”

Tragically, many persons deluded by the Devil falsely claim that sexual sins and masturbation is no sin at all, while some try to minimize the wickedness of their actions; others still try to blame God for their failings. Here follows an email exchange with a certain person that probably many people can associate directly with.

“I watched [the] video on "[death and the journey into hell](#)". Based on the video it almost seems like one little false move by whomever and you will be damned. We’ll never be perfect. We are all sinners until death. Based on how this world is now, I can see the thought of more going to hell than heaven. I’ve broken every commandment. I’m trying to stay away from sin but I still find myself suffering with the same sins. I pray to Jesus and Mary all the time. I pray the rosary and many other prayers. I try to make a point of doing good acts in the name of Jesus whether great or small. This video made me feel as though no matter what I do I will be damned. Jesus be with you and your family.

Ace...”

Answer: You say that it’s as if one little false move will send you to Hell. A mortal sin is not a false move, neither is it “little”; it’s a willful commission of an act that’s gravely offensive to God. It is a huge thing, **a mortal sin**. You clearly have a desire to downplay mortally sinful activity, and your problem is that you won’t exercise your will and resist sin, by doing the necessary sacrifices that is required of you in order to be saved and avoid sin. You claim that you pray; yet you persist in grave sins.

There are seven main reasons for why you persist in grave sin: First, you don’t pray with true faith and sincerity, or you pray too little of the Rosary and other mental and vocal prayers. Second, you spend too little time on reading God’s Word and other good, spiritual Catholic writings. Third, you don’t recommend yourself to God nor seek after God’s protection in time of temptation, for if you did recommend yourself to God and if you did

ask for His help when assailed by the enemy, you would infallibly not have fallen into sin. Fourth, you have not cut off all the occasions of sin like evil and worldly friends, media, music, magazines, video games and the like that are opposed to Our Lord Jesus Christ's words and a holy life. Fifth, you have not made enough penance for your sins by fasting, mortification and self-denial of your own will.

The Canons of John the Faster teaches that "Anyone having committed masturbation is penanced forty days, during which he must keep himself alive by xerophagy and must do one hundred metanies every day." (Canon 8) The Interpretation of this canon explains that: "The present Canon decrees that anyone who is guilty of masturbating at any time is obliged to refrain from communing for forty days straight, passing these with xerophagy, [the practice of eating dry food, especially food cooked without oil] or, more explicitly speaking, with only bread and water, and doing every day metanies to the number of one hundred each time. As concerning masturbators and fornicators, St. Meletius the Confessor asserts that they are making a sacrifice of their semen to the Devil, which semen is the most precious part of their body."

The word *Metanie* means "A reverent physical movement indicating repentance (Greek: metanoia), made by making the sign of the cross with the right hand and either bowing at the waist and knees until the hand on its downward final stroke touches the ground (small metanie), or lowering the whole body onto the knees and bowing down fully until the forehead touches the ground (great metanie). Metanies are prescribed at specific liturgical times, particularly during the Lenten prayer of Ephrem the Syrian, but are proscribed from Pascha through Pentecost. They are a part of personal prayer and are an integral element of monastic training. Metanies are distinct from the still kneeling position, and also from the bowing of clergy to one another known as the schema."

Sixth, (as to the question why one falls back into sin), you do not use your time, money and effort to save other people from the eternal fire of hell or care enough for their spiritual welfare to lead them to a better lifestyle, and because of this, you are lacking in or are devoid of charity and love for your fellow human beings. You refuse to speak about God with your family and friends, refusing to help or convert them from sin and infidelity and you refuse to take an active part in trying to help souls in general by whatever means are necessary to you, and in so doing, choose to become God's enemy according to Our Lord Jesus Christ's words in the Holy Bible, which states that: "He that is not with me, is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth" (Matthew 12:30). All who can help their family or friends or themselves but refuse to do so will be damned for their lack of charity. Thus, "Those words of our Lord, *He that is not with Me is against Me*, will make you understand how destitute we here are of any friends to aid us in bringing this people to

Jesus Christ. But we must not despond, for God at the end will render unto each one according to his deserts... **And how severe are the punishments which God at last inflicts on His enemies, we see well enough, as often as we turn our mind's eye to the inextinguishable furnace of hell, whose fires are to rage throughout all eternity for so many miserable sinners.**" (St. Francis Xavier, A.D. 1544, In *The Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier*, p. 223)

Our Lord Jesus Christ in *The Revelations of St. Bridget* shows us that a person who does not use his possessions for His sake "*will incur a judgment*" and "*that every person who does not hearken to others will himself cry out and not be heard*", which means that he who does not have charity with others, using his time, money and effort to help and save them from hell "*will himself cry out [to God] and not be heard*" both in this life when he seeks to be relieved from his sins and sinful desires, and in the eternal fire of hell, which is the eternal abode of all who lack charity and love for their fellow human beings. Our Lord said to St. Bridget: "Reply firmly to him with the four things I tell you now. The first is that many people lay up treasure but do not know for whom. The second is that every person entrusted with the Lord's talent who does not spend it cheerfully will incur a judgment. The third is that a person who loves land and flesh more than God will not join the company of those who hunger and thirst for justice. The fourth is that every person who does not hearken to others will himself cry out and not be heard." (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 4, Chapter 81)

In truth, Catholic teaching teaches that a person is bound to give a tenth of his earnings to God, (usually to one's local priest) and this teaching comes directly from the Old Testament which commands all God's servants to give a tenth of their profits as a sacrifice to God. Today, however, there are no Catholic priests available to give one's money to, and so, one must instead find a completely Catholic cause to give a tenth of one's earnings to. When one understands that this is a law of charity that God requires all to follow, one can understand why so many are allowed to fall into sin and be unable to extricate themselves out of their sins. Their own greed and lack of charity for other souls who labor in darkness and infidelity directly causes them to be unable to defend themselves against the attacks of the devil. Thus, **Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke rightly saying "that every person who does not hearken to others will himself cry out and not be heard."** In truth, those who wish to please God in all but who have not fulfilled this Law of God of tithing, should find a good and perfectly Catholic cause and then donate a tenth of all they own to it, asking God to forgive them for their many years of forgetfulness and disobedience. However, donating to heretics, schismatics or other non-Catholic religious organizations is condemned by the Church as a mortal sin, and so, this makes it necessary to find out thoroughly whether a person or an organization that one wants to donate to is affiliated in anyway with the propagation of a false, non-Catholic belief. If a person is unsure about

whether a person or an organization is acceptable or not to donate to, you can always send us an email and ask us for help.

Pope Innocent III, *Fourth Lateran Council*, 1215: **“Moreover, we determine to subject to excommunication believers who receive, defend, or support heretics.”**

The Catholic Encyclopedia states concerning tithing that: “The payment of tithes was adopted from the Old Law, and early writers speak of it as a divine ordinance and an obligation of conscience. The earliest positive legislation on the subject seems to be contained in the letter of the bishops assembled at Tours in 567 and the canons of the Council of Maçon in 585. In course of time, we find the payment of tithes made obligatory by ecclesiastical enactments in all the countries of christendom. The Church looked on this payment as “*of divine law, since tithes were instituted not by man but by the Lord Himself*” (C. 14, X de decim. III, 30).”

The following example on the importance of charity can be seen clearer from St. Bridget’s revelations, in the book rightly entitled the “Book of Questions.” It is composed of questions which Our Lord and Judge gives wonderful answers to:

“Third question. Again the monk appeared on his ladder as before saying: “Why should I not exalt myself over others, seeing that I am rich?”

“Answer to the third question. The Judge answered: “As to why you must not take pride in riches, I answer: The riches of the world only belong to you insofar as you need them for food and clothing. The world was made for this: that man, having sustenance for his body, might through work and humility return to me, his God, whom he scorned in his disobedience and neglected in his pride. However, if you claim that the temporal goods belong to you, I assure you that you are in effect forcibly usurping for yourself all that you possess beyond your needs. All temporal goods ought to belong to the community and be equally accessible to the needy out of charity.

“You usurp for your own superfluous possession things that should be given to others out of compassion. However, many people do own much more than others but in a rational way, and they distribute it in discreet fashion. Therefore, in order not to be accused more severely at the judgment because you received more than others, it is advisable for you not to put yourself ahead of others by acting haughtily and hoarding possessions. As pleasant as it is in the world to have more temporal goods than others and to have them in abundance, it will likewise be terrible and painful beyond measure at the judgment not to have administered in reasonable

fashion even licitly held goods.” (*St. Bridget’s Revelations*, Book 5, Interrogation 7)

Seventh (as to the question why one falls back into sin), you don’t have the first degree of humility: a fear of God that compels one to avoid mortal sin. Hence, your problem is pride. You think God’s law is a joke – not serious enough to warrant a change in your lifestyle – and you are mistaken.

St. Benedict (c. 520): “The first degree of humility, then, is that a man always have the fear of God before his eyes, shunning all forgetfulness and that he be ever mindful of all that God hath commanded, that he always considereth in his mind how those who despise God will burn in hell for their sins, and that life everlasting is prepared for those who fear God.” (*The Holy Rule of St. Benedict*, Chapter VII, Of Humility)

St. Alphonsus: “Hear, my Brethren: the Lord pardons the sins of him who repents of them; but he does not pardon him who has the will to commit sin. See for how many years God has borne with you, and is saying to your heart: Cease, my child; amend your life; offend me no more! And what have you done? Always the same thing: you have confessed, you have promised; yet you have always begun again to sin, you always continue to offend God! For what are you waiting? That God may take you from this world and cast you into hell? Do you not see that God cannot bear with you any longer?” (Exhortations, *The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 101)

Rev. Francis Spirago, *The Catechism Explained*, Chapter VI, On Temptation (1899): “When we are tempted we ought to betake ourselves immediately to prayer, or think of our last end, or of the evil consequences of sin. If the enemy dares to attack the fortress in spite of the ramparts raised about it, it behooves us to defend it manfully. When assailed we must instantly assume the defensive; for of all things it is most important to repulse the first onslaught. The greater our determination, the sooner will our adversary be discouraged. If we falter, he will force an entrance, and gain the mastery over our imagination. He acts like soldiers, who when they have taken the enemy’s guns, instantly turn them upon him. St. Jerome says that he who does not resist immediately is already half conquered. A conflagration can be extinguished at the outset, but not later on. A young tree is easily bent, not an old one. But since we can do nothing in our own strength, we must strive to obtain divine grace. Wherefore let him who is tempted have recourse to prayer; let him imitate the apostles when a storm arose on the sea of Genesareth; or the child who, when he sees a large dog coming, runs to his mother. He who neglects prayer in the

time of temptation is like a general, who, when surrounded by the enemy, does not ask for reinforcements from his monarch. Adam fell into sin because when he was tempted he did not look to God for help. We should say a Hail Mary, or at least devoutly utter the holy names of Jesus and Mary. “These holy names,” St. John Chrysostom declares, “have an intrinsic power over the devil, and are a terror to hell.” At the name of Mary the devils tremble with fear; when she is invoked their power forsakes them as wax melts before the fire. Prayer is the weapon wherewith to ward off the assaults of our spiritual foe; it is more potent than all the efforts of the demons because by prayer we procure the assistance of God, and nothing can withstand His might. Prayer is exactly opposed to temptation for it enlightens the understanding and fortifies the will. The sign of the cross and holy water have also great efficacy against the spirit of evil. He flies from the cross as a dog flies at the sight of the whip. Holy water derives its efficacy from the prayers of the Church. St. Thomas Aquinas and many other saints frequently made use of the sign of the cross with excellent results. St. Teresa on the other hand constantly employed holy water. It is well to sprinkle the sick and dying with holy water, and we should never omit to take it on entering a church.”

St. Alphonsus, *Prayer: The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection*, Chapter 1, The Necessity Of Prayer: “Without prayer it is impossible to resist temptations and to keep the commandments. Moreover, prayer is the most necessary weapon of defense against our enemies; he who does not avail himself of it, says St. Thomas, is lost. He does not doubt that Adam fell because he did not recommend himself to God when he was tempted: ‘He sinned because he had not recourse to the divine assistance.’ St. Gelasius says the same of the rebel angels: ‘Receiving the grace of God in vain, they could not persevere, because they did not pray.’ St. Charles Borromeo, in a pastoral letter, observes, that among all the means of salvation recommended by Jesus Christ in the Gospel, the first place is given to prayer; and he has determined that this should distinguish his Church from all false religions, when he calls her ‘the house of prayer.’ *My house is a house of prayer* (Mt. 21,13). St. Charles concludes that prayer is ‘the beginning and progress and the completion of all virtues.’ So that in darkness, distress, and danger; we have no other hope than to raise our eyes to God, and with fervent prayers to beseech his mercy to save us: ‘As we know not,’ said king Josaphat, ‘what to do, we can only turn our eyes to you’ (2 Par. 20,12). This also was David’s practice, who could find no other means of safety from his enemies, than continual prayer to God to deliver him from their snares: ‘My eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare’ (Ps. 24,15). So he did nothing but pray: ‘Look upon me, and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor’ (Ibid. 16). ‘I cried to you, O Lord; save me that I may keep your commandments’ (Ps. 118,146). Lord, turn your eyes to me, have pity on me, and

save me; for I can do nothing, and beside you there is none that can help me.

“... St. Bernard’s teaching is the same: ‘What are we, or what is our strength, that we should be able to resist so many temptations? This certainly it was that God intended; that we, seeing our deficiencies, and that we have no other help, should with all humility have recourse to his mercy.’ God knows how useful it is to us to be obliged to pray, in order to keep us humble, and to exercise our confidence; and he therefore permits us to be assaulted by enemies too mighty to be overcome by our own strength, that by prayer we may obtain from his mercy aid to resist them; **and it is especially to be remarked that no one can resist the impure temptations of the flesh without recommending himself to God when he is tempted.** This foe is so terrible that, when he fights with us, he, as it were, takes away all light; he makes us forget all our meditations, all our good resolutions; he makes us also disregard the truths of faith, and even almost lose the fear of the divine punishments. For he conspires with our natural inclinations, which drive us with the greatest violence to the indulgence of sensual pleasures. He who in such a moment does not have recourse to God is lost. The only defense against this temptation is prayer, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says: ‘Prayer is the bulwark of chastity’; and before him Solomon: ‘And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it, I went to the Lord and besought him’ (Wis. 8,21). **Chastity is a virtue which we have no strength to practice, unless God gives us; and God does not give this strength except to him who asks for it. But whoever prays for it will certainly obtain it.**

“... Wrongly, therefore, do those sinners excuse themselves who say that they have no strength to resist temptation. But if you have not this strength, why do you not ask for it? is the reproof which St. James gives them: ‘You have it not, because you ask it not’ (James 4:2). There is no doubt that we are too weak to resist the attacks of our enemies. But, on the other hand, it is certain that God is faithful, as the Apostle says, and will not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength: ‘God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with the temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it’ (1 Cor. 10,13). ‘He will provide an issue for it,’ says Primasius, ‘by the protection of his grace, that you may be able to withstand the temptation.’ We are weak, but God is strong; when we ask him for aid, he communicates his strength to us, and we shall be able to do all things, as the Apostle reasonably assured himself: ‘I can do all things in him who strengthens me’ (Phil. 4, 13). He, therefore, who falls has no excuse (says St. Chrysostom), because he has neglected to pray; for if he had prayed, he would not have been overcome by his enemies: ‘Nor can anyone be excused who, by ceasing to pray, has shown that he did not wish to overcome his enemy.’”

Masturbation is definitely a mortal sin

Since so many are coming out of mortal sin and are convincing themselves that certain things are not sins, **we must preach against those sins with some specificity lest people perish in their ignorance.**

Masturbation is definitely a mortal sin. There are about three places where St. Paul gives a list of some of the main mortal sins which exclude people from Heaven. These lists do not comprise every mortal sin, of course, but some of the main ones. Well, it always puzzled many people exactly what is being referred to in the following passages by the sin of “uncleanness” and “effeminacy.” St. Paul says that these sins exclude people from Heaven. Does “effeminacy” refer to acting like and being a homosexual? What does “uncleanness” refer to?

Galatians 5:19-21 “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, **uncleanness**, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that **they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**”

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, **nor effeminate**, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, **shall inherit the kingdom of God.** And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Ephesians 5:5-8 “For this ye know, that no fornicator, **nor unclean person**, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, **hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.** Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of unbelief. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:”

St. Thomas Aquinas identifies masturbation as the biblical “uncleanness” and “effeminacy.”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 154,

Art. 11: "I answer that, As stated above (A6,9) wherever there occurs a special kind of deformity whereby the venereal act is rendered unbecoming, there is a determinate species of lust. This may occur in two ways: First, through being contrary to right reason, and this is common to all lustful vices; secondly, because, in addition, it is contrary to the natural order of the venereal act as becoming to the human race: and this is called "the unnatural vice." This may happen in several ways. **First, by procuring pollution, without any copulation, for the sake of venereal pleasure: this pertains to the sin of "uncleanness" which some call "effeminacy."** Secondly, by copulation with a thing of undue species, and this is called "bestiality." Thirdly, by copulation with an undue sex, male with male, or female with female, as the Apostle states (Romans 1:27): and this is called the "vice of sodomy." Fourthly, by not observing the natural manner of copulation, either as to undue means, or as to other monstrous and bestial manners of copulation."

Thus, not only is masturbation a mortal sin, but it's a mortal sin which is identified in three different places in Holy Scripture as one which excludes people from the Kingdom of God. It's also classified by St. Thomas as one of the sins against nature, for it corrupts the order intended by God. That's probably why it's called "effeminacy." Though it's not the same as the abomination of Sodomy (Homosexuality), it's still inherently disordered and unnatural. We believe that this sin – since it's contrary to nature and is classified as "effeminacy" and "the unnatural vice" – is the cause of some people being given over to unnatural lusts such as homosexuality, as well as acts of pedophilia and bestiality and other perverse and evil lusts.

The truth of the fact that all homosexuals are spiritually possessed by a demonic spirit is also corroborated by the fact that society has recently seen an incredible increase in the number of people who consider themselves homosexuals. This is easily explained by the fact that, with the advent and explosion of the internet and other technological means which make access to pornography and impurity easy, millions more people are committing sins of impurity, millions more people are becoming possessed, and countless more are becoming homosexuals. (And, of course, not all who commit mortal sins of impurity become homosexuals, so those who somehow think they are okay because they are not homosexuals, even though they are committing sins of impurity, are sorely deceived and are also on the road to Hell and in bondage to the Devil.)

St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon* 43:6 (c. 470-543 A.D.): "If they had faith and believed in God they would dread the coming judgment with fear and trembling. It is evident that they trust men but not God, for publicly where men see them they

shun adultery, but in secret where God sees they are entirely without fear. If they had just a spark of faith they would not dare to commit adultery in the sight of their Lord, just as they do not allow their servants to offend in their presence. Of such men the Holy Spirit exclaims through the Prophet: ‘The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God.’ [Ps. 13.1] **It is certain that a man does not believe in God if he fears to do publicly in the presence of men what he does secretly in darkness before the face of God.**”

Therefore, people who are committing this sin need to cease the evil immediately and, when prepared, make a good confession. If people are really struggling in this area, then they are not near the spiritual level where they need to be. God’s grace is there for them; but they need to pray more, pray better, avoid the occasions of sin ([bad media](#) being one of them) and exercise their wills. They need to consistently pray the 15-decade [Rosary](#) (i.e. daily). They need to put out more effort spiritually and then it shouldn’t be a problem.

“What do you say? What do you resolve to do? Yes or no; do you desire no more to offend God? Who knows whether it is not the last appeal that the Lord addresses to you? Hasten to take a resolution. Do you wish to wait until God puts an end to your disorders by casting you into hell without the least hope of ever remedying your misfortune? Go, my dear Brethren, enter your homes, and reflect on what you have heard this evening; recommend yourselves to the Blessed Virgin, and ask her to enlighten you.

“Sinner, thou art foe of heaven, And thou tremblest not with fear? Cease those sins, my child, ah! leave them, Death advances, hell is near. ... Listen to me this evening: you are now the enemies of God, it is true, since you have offended him much; but he is ready to pardon you if you wish to amend your life. Courage, then, my dear Christians come to the mission, go to confession, and renounce sin; hasten to give yourselves to God, who is still waiting for you, who is still calling for you; do not anger him any more.

“... O sinners! what more do you wish God to do? Do not, therefore, lose confidence, hope; but hope and tremble: if you wish to amend your life, hope; if you wish to continue to have God as your enemy, tremble yes, tremble that the present appeal may not be the last one for you; if you do not resolve to give yourselves to God, perhaps this very evening God will abandon you, and you will be damned!

“... The Lord could make you die and send you to hell the moment that you offend him; yet, see the great mercy which he now shows you: instead of punishing you, you see him coming to you with this holy mission, in order to pardon you; he comes himself to seek you, to make peace with you; it will suffice if you repent of having offended him, and if you promise not to offend him any more.

“He saith: “Poor child, from sin depart; Rest thee within thy Father’s heart; Turn to thy Shepherd, wandering sheep.” Now what do you say? how do you respond to the appeal that the Lord addresses to you? Ah! do not delay any longer, cast yourselves at his feet; come to the church, and make a good confession.” (St. Alphonsus, Exhortations, *The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 102-105)

Masturbation is not made moral or lawful within marriage or the marriage act

Masturbation, in fact, has always been considered as a grave mortal sin in the Catholic Church and even by most protestant so-called churches until very recently, and this sin, obviously, doesn’t cease to be a mortal sin just because the spouses are married! Yet, many married “Catholic” and other so-called “Christian” couples actually believe that this sin is right to do within a marriage and the marriage act; and although most of them know or even admit that it’s wrong or a mortal sin to masturbate outside of marriage or the marriage act, they nevertheless believe that it’s right to do it within a marriage or marriage act; and that it is an exception. But what **Church teaching, Bible passage or Saint** can they cite to support this demonic teaching? None! Only evil, perverted, ignorant and heretical modern “theologians” or other heretical modern-day “Catholic” or “Christian” laymen’s private opinions during the last 100 years or so, can they cite to support this teaching! This fact, then, is quite telling, for it proves that this teaching was totally unheard of in the Christian world before the beginning stages of the Great Apostasy and the modern world. Their heretical and modernistic opinions or teachings are utterly worthless! All masturbatory touching of the genitals of oneself or one’s spouse in the same or similar manner as would be done in masturbation (i.e. manipulative sexual acts), is immoral and a mortal sin. Any type of masturbatory touching is immoral (regardless of whether or when climax occurs) because it is an act that is non-procreative, unnatural and shameful.

Also see Foreplay is intrinsically evil and a mortal sin against the natural law

Additional quotes on the vice of impurity; and how to overcome it

St. Alphonsus Liguori, *Sermons for all the Sundays in the Year*, Sermon 45, On Impurity: ““And behold, there was a certain man before him, who had the dropsy.” (Luke 14:2) The man who indulges in impurity is like a person laboring under the dropsy. The latter is so much tormented by thirst, that the more he drinks the more thirsty he becomes. Such, too, is the nature of the accursed vice of impurity; it is never satiated. “As,” says St. Thomas of Villanova, “the more the dropsical man

abounds in moisture, the more he thirsts; so, too, is it with the waves of carnal pleasures.”

“I will speak today of the vice of impurity, and will show, in the first point, the delusion of those who say that this vice is but a small evil: and, in the second, the delusion of those who say that God takes pity on this sin, and that he does not punish it.

“1. Delusion of those who say that sins against purity are not a great evil.

“The unchaste, then, say that sins contrary to purity are but a small evil. “Like the sow wallowing in the mire,” (2 Peter 2:22) they are immersed in their own filth, so that they do not see the malice of their actions; and therefore they neither feel nor abhor the stench of their impurities, which excite disgust and horror in all others. Can you, who say that the vice of impurity is but a small evil—can you, I ask, deny that it is a mortal sin? If you deny it, you are a heretic; for as St. Paul says: “Do not err. Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, etc., shall possess the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9) It is a mortal sin; it cannot be a small evil. It is more sinful than theft, or detraction, or the violation of the fast. How then can you say that it is not a great evil? Perhaps mortal sin appears to you to be a small evil? Is it a small evil to despise the grace of God, to turn your back upon Him, and to lose His friendship, for a transitory, beastly pleasure?

“St. Thomas teaches, that mortal sin, because it is an insult offered to an infinite God, contains a certain infinitude of malice. “A sin committed against God has a certain infinitude, on account of the infinitude of the Divine Majesty.” Is mortal sin a small evil? It is so great an evil, that if all the angels and all the saints, the apostles, martyrs, and even the Mother of God, offered all their merits to atone for a single mortal sin, the oblation would not be sufficient. No; for that atonement or satisfaction would be finite; but the debt contracted by mortal sin is infinite, on account of the infinite Majesty of God which has been offended. The hatred which God bears to sins against purity is great beyond measure. If a lady find her plate soiled she is disgusted, and cannot eat. Now, with what disgust and indignation must God, who is purity itself, behold the filthy impurities by which his law is violated? He loves purity with an infinite love; and consequently he has an infinite hatred for the sensuality which the lewd, voluptuous man calls a small evil. Even the devils who held a high rank in heaven before their fall disdain to tempt men to sins of the flesh.

“St. Thomas says that Lucifer, who is supposed to have been the devil that tempted Jesus Christ in the desert, tempted him to commit other sins, but scorned to tempt Him to offend against chastity. Is this sin a small evil? Is it, then, a small evil to see a man endowed with a rational soul, and enriched with so many divine graces, bring himself by the sin of impurity to the level of a brute? “Fornication and

pleasure,” says St. Jerome, “pervert the understanding, and change men into beasts.” In the voluptuous and unchaste are literally verified the words of David: “And man, when he was in honor, did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them.” (Psalm 48:13) St. Jerome says, that there is nothing more vile or degrading than to allow one’s self to be conquered by the flesh. Is it a small evil to forget God, and to banish him from the soul, for the sake of giving the body a vile satisfaction, of which, when it is over, you feel ashamed? Of this the Lord complains by the Prophet Ezechiel: “Thus saith the Lord God: Because thou hast forgotten Me, and hast cast Me off behind thy back.” (Ezechiel 23:35) St. Thomas says, that by every vice, but particularly by the vice of impurity, men are removed far from God.

“Moreover, sins of impurity on account of their great number, are an immense evil. A blasphemer does not always blaspheme, but only when he is drunk or provoked to anger. The assassin, whose trade is to murder others, does not, at the most, commit more than eight or ten homicides. But the unchaste are guilty of an unceasing torrent of sins, by thoughts, by words, by looks, by complacencies, and by touches; so that when they go to confession they find it impossible to tell the number of the sins they have committed against purity. Even in their sleep the devil represents to them obscene objects, that, on awakening, they may take delight in them; and because they are made the slaves of the enemy, they obey and consent to his suggestions; for it is easy to contract a habit of this sin. To other sins, such as blasphemy, detraction, and murder, men are not prone; but to this vice nature inclines them. Hence St. Thomas says, that there is no sinner so ready to offend God as the votary of lust is, on every occasion that occurs to him. The sin of impurity brings in its train the sins of defamation, of theft, hatred, and of boasting of its own filthy abominations. Besides, it ordinarily involves the malice of scandal. Other sins, such as blasphemy, perjury, and murder, excite horror in those who witness them; but this sin excites and draws others, who are flesh, to commit it, or, at least, to commit it with less horror.

“St. Cyprian says that the devil through impurity triumphs over the whole of man. By lust the evil triumphs over the entire man, over his body and over his soul; over his memory, filling it with the remembrance of unchaste delights, in order to make him take complacency in them; over his intellect, to make him desire occasions of committing sin; over the will, by making it love its impurities as his last end, and as if there were no God. “I made,” said Job, “a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin. For what part should God from above have in me?” (Job 31:1-2) Job was afraid to look at a virgin, because he knew that if he consented to a bad thought God should have no part in him. According to St. Gregory, from impurity arises blindness of understanding, destruction, hatred of God, and despair of eternal life. St. Augustine says, though the unchaste may grow

old, the vice of impurity does not grow old in them. Hence St. Thomas says, that there is no sin in which the devil delights so much as in this sin; because there is no other sin to which nature clings with so much tenacity. To the vice of impurity it adheres so firmly, that the appetite for carnal pleasures becomes insatiable. Go now, and say that the sin of impurity is but a small evil. At the hour of death you shall not say so; every sin of that kind shall then appear to you a monster of hell. Much less shall you say so before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ, who will tell you what the Apostle has already told you: "No fornicator, or unclean, hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and God." (Ephesians 5:5) The man who has lived like a brute does not deserve to sit with the angels.

"Most beloved brethren, let us continue to pray to God to deliver us from this vice; if we do not, we shall lose our souls. The sin of impurity brings with it blindness and obstinacy. Every vice produces darkness of understanding; but impurity produces it in a greater decree than all other sins. "Fornication, and wine, and drunkenness take away the understanding." (Osee 4:2) Wine deprives us of understanding and reason; so does impurity. Hence St. Thomas says, that the man who indulges in unchaste pleasures, does not live according to reason. Now, if the unchaste are deprived of light, and no longer see the evil which they do, how can they abhor it and amend their lives? The Prophet Osee says, that blinded by their own mire, they do not even think of returning to God; because their impurities take away from them all knowledge of God. "They will not set their thought to return to their God: for the spirit of fornication is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord." (Osee 5:4) Hence St. Laurence Justinian writes, that this sin makes men forget God. "Delights of the flesh induced forgetfulness of God." And St. John Damascene teaches that "the carnal man cannot look at the light of truth." Thus, the lewd and voluptuous no longer understand what is meant by the grace of God, by judgment, hell, and eternity. "Fire hath fallen upon them, and they shall not see the sun." (Psalm 57:9) Some of these blind miscreants go so far as to say, that fornication is not in itself sinful. They say, that it was not forbidden in the Old Law; and in support of this execrable doctrine they adduce the words of the Lord to Osee: "Go, take thee a wife of fornication, and have of her children of fornication." (Osee 1:2) In answer I say, that God did not permit Osee to commit fornication; but wished him to take for his wife a woman who had been guilty of fornication: and the children of this marriage were called children of fornication, because the mother had been guilty of that crime. This is, according to St. Jerome, the meaning of the words of the Lord to Osee. "Therefore," says the holy Doctor, "they are to be called children of fornication, because born of a harlot." But fornication was always forbidden, under pain of mortal sin, in the Old, as well as in the New Law. St. Paul says: "No fornicator or unclean hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Ephesians 5:5) Behold the impiety to which the blindness of such sinners

carry them! From this blindness it arises, that though they go to the sacraments, their confessions are null for want of true contrition; for how is it possible for them to have true sorrow, when they neither know nor abhor their sins?

“The vice of impurity also brings with it obstinacy. To conquer temptations, particularly against chastity, continual prayer is necessary. “Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” (Mark 14:38) But how will the unchaste, who are always seeking to be tempted, pray to God to deliver them from temptation? They sometimes, as St. Augustine confessed of himself, even abstain from prayer, through fear of being heard and cured of the disease, which they wish to continue. “I feared,” said the saint, “that Thou wouldst soon hear and heal the disease of concupiscence, which I wished to be satiated, rather than extinguished.” St. Peter calls this vice an unceasing sin. “Having eyes full of adultery and sin that ceasest not.” (2 Peter 2:14) Impurity is called an unceasing sin on account of the obstinacy which it induces.

“Some person addicted to this vice says: “I always confess the sin.” So much the worse; for since you always relapse into sin, these confessions serve to make you persevere in the sin. The fear of punishment is diminished by saying: “I always confess the sin.” If you felt that this sin certainly merits hell, you would scarcely say: “I will not give it up; I do not care if I am damned.” But the devil deceives you. “Commit this sin,” he says, “for you afterwards confess it.” But, to make a good confession of your sins, you must have true sorrow of the heart, and a firm purpose to sin no more. Where are this sorrow and this firm purpose of amendment, when you always return to the vomit? If you had had these dispositions, and had received sanctifying grace at your confessions, you should not have relapsed, or at least you should have abstained for a considerable time from relapsing. You have always fallen back into sin in eight or ten days, and perhaps in a shorter time, after confession. What sign is this? It is a sign that you were always at enmity with God. If a sick man instantly vomits the medicine which he takes, it is a sign that his disease is incurable.

“St. Jerome says that the vice of impurity, when habitual, will cease when the unhappy man who indulges in it is cast into the fire of hell. “O infernal fire, lust, whose fuel is gluttony, whose sparks are brief conversations, whose end is hell.” The unchaste become like the vulture that waits to be killed by the fowler, rather than abandon the rottenness of the dead bodies on which it feeds. This is what happened to a young woman, who, after having lived in the habit of sin with a young man, fell sick, and appeared to be converted. At the hour of death she asked leave of her confessor to send for the young man, in order to exhort him to change his life at the sight of her death. The confessor very imprudently gave the permission, and taught her what she should say to her accomplice in sin. But listen to what happened. As soon as she saw him, she forgot her promise to the confessor and the exhortation she was to give to the young man. And what did she do? She raised herself up, sat in

bed, stretched her arms to him, and said: "Friend, I have always loved you, and even now, at the end of my life, I love you: I see that, on your account, I shall go to hell: but I do not care: I am willing, for the love of you, to be damned." After these words she fell back on the bed and expired. These facts are related by Father Segneri. Oh! how difficult is it for a person who has contracted a habit of this vice, to amend his life and return sincerely to God! how difficult is it for him not to terminate this habit in hell, like the unfortunate young woman of whom I have just spoken.

"2. Illusion of those who say that God takes pity on this sin.

"The votaries of lust say that God takes pity on this sin; but such is not the language of St. Thomas of Villanova. He says, that in the sacred Scriptures we do not read of any sin so severely chastised as the sin of impurity. We find in the Scriptures, that in punishment of this sin a deluge of fire descended from heaven on four cities, and in an instant, consumed not only the inhabitants, but even the very stones. "And the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And He destroyed these cities, and all things that spring from the earth." (Genesis 19:24) St. Peter Damian relates, that a man and a woman who had sinned against purity were found burnt and black as a cinder.

"Salvian writes that it was in punishment of the sin of impurity that God sent on the earth the universal deluge, which was caused by continued rain for forty days and forty nights. In this deluge the waters rose fifteen cubits above the tops of the highest mountains; and only eight persons along with Noah were saved in the ark. The rest of the inhabitants of the earth, who were more numerous then that at present, were punished with death in chastisement of the vice of impurity. Mark the words of the Lord in speaking of this chastisement which he inflicted on that sin: "My spirit shall not remain in man forever: because he is flesh." (Genesis 6:3) "That is," says Liranus, "too deeply involved in carnal sins." The Lord added: "For it repenteth Me that I made man." (Genesis 6:7) The indignation of God is not like ours, which clouds the mind, and drives us into excesses: his wrath is a judgment perfectly just and tranquil, by which God punishes and repairs the disorder of sin. But to make us understand the intensity of his hatred for the sin of impurity, he represents himself as if sorry for having created man, who offended him so grievously by this vice. We, at the present day, see more severe temporal punishment inflicted on this than on any other sin.

"Go into the hospitals, and listen to the shrieks of so many young men, who, in punishment of their impurities, are obliged to submit to the severest treatment and to the most painful operations, and who, if they escape death, are, according to the divine threat, feeble, and subject to the most excruciating pain for the remainder of their lives. "Thou hast cast Me off behind thy back; bear thou also thy wickedness and thy fornications." (Ezechiel 23:35)

“St. Remigius writes that, if children be excepted, the number of adults that are saved is few on account of the sins of the flesh. In conformity with this doctrine, it was revealed to a holy soul that as pride has filled hell with devils, so impurity fills it with men. St. Isidore assigns the reason. He says that there is no vice which so much enslaves men to the devil as impurity. Hence St. Augustine says that with regard to this sin, “the combat is common and the victory rare.” Hence it is that on account of this sin hell is filled with souls.

“All that I have said on this subject has been said, not that any one present, who has been addicted to the vice of impurity, may be driven to despair, but that such persons may be cured. Let us, then, come to the remedies. These are two great remedies—prayer, and the flight of dangerous occasions.

“1. Prayer, says St. Gregory of Nyssa, is the safeguard of chastity. And before him, Solomon, speaking of himself, said the same. “And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave, it . . . I went to the Lord, and besought Him.” (Wisdom 8:21) Thus it is impossible for us to conquer this vice without God’s assistance. Hence as soon as temptation against chastity presents itself, the remedy is to turn instantly to God for help, and to repeat several times the most holy names of Jesus and Mary, which have a special virtue to banish bad thoughts of that kind. **I have said *immediately* [to turn instantly to God for help, and to repeat several times the most holy names of Jesus and Mary], without listening to, or beginning to argue with, the temptation. When a bad thought occurs to the mind, it is necessary to shake it off *instantly*, as you would a spark that flies from the fire, and *instantly* to invoke aid from Jesus and Mary.**

“2. As to the flight of dangerous occasions, St. Philip Neri used to say that cowards that is, they who fly from the occasions gain the victory. **Hence you must, in the first place, keep a restraint on the eyes, and must abstain from looking at young women. Otherwise, says St. Thomas, you can scarcely avoid the sin.** Hence Job said: “I made a covenant with my eyes that I would not so much as think upon a virgin.” (Job 31:1) He was afraid to look at a virgin; because from looks it is easy to pass to desires, and from desires to acts. St. Francis de Sales used to say that to look at a woman does not do so much evil as to repeatedly look at her a second time. If the devil has not gained a victory the first, he will gain the second time. **And if it be necessary to abstain from looking at women, it is much more necessary to avoid conversation with them.** “Tarry not among women.” (Ecclesiasticus 42:12) we should be persuaded that, in avoiding occasions of this sin, no caution can be too great. Hence we must be always fearful, and fly from them. A wise man feareth and declineth from evil; a fool is confident.” (Proverbs 14:16) A wise man is timid, and flies away: a fool is confident, and falls.”

Question: Why are sexual sins harder to confess and less likely to be repented of than many other sins?

Answer: There are three reasons for this. First, because the sense of injustice committed, which is the primary stimulus to repent of one's sins, is not strongly felt by many when they engage in such unlawful sexual acts. Second, there is a greater sense of shame when committing certain impure acts and hence greater difficulty confessing them in the sacrament of confession, or even repenting of them in one's heart. Our Lady of Fatima revealed to us that "*More souls go to Hell because of sins of the flesh than for any other reason.*" Sr. Lucia of Fatima said this refers primarily to sins against chastity, also called sins of impurity. The reason for this statement is not because sins against chastity are the most grievous sins, but the most common and because of conscience. Why? "Because of conscience," sins of impurity are less likely to be repented of than other sins.

St. Alphonsus: "He who has offended God by mortal sin has no other remedy to prevent his damnation but the confession of his sin. "But, if I am sorry for sin from my heart? If I do penance for it during my whole life? If I go into the desert and live on wild herbs, and sleep on the ground?" You may do as much as you please; **but if you do not confess every mortal sin that you remember, you cannot obtain pardon.** ... Accursed shame: how many poor souls does it send to hell! St. Teresa used to say over and over again to preachers: "Preach, O my priests, preach against bad confessions; for it is on account of bad confessions that the greater part of Christians are damned." (The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus, vol 15, p. 546)

Third, sexual activity of all kinds is presented by our post-Christian or even anti-Christian popular culture as natural and good, and sexual abstinence is even taught to be unhealthy.

The sixth commandment, relating to chastity and purity, has always been referred to as "the difficult commandment" by many people. Today, with pornography everywhere and women and girls dressing more immodestly than ever before, for many it may indeed seem as "the impossible commandment." However, Jesus assures us: "What is impossible with men is possible with God." (Luke 18:27) We may add that all who invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary for help in overcoming sins of impurity will receive the grace to do so, as she herself has revealed to St. Bridget of Sweden and various other saints. But those who strive to live chaste lives know from experience, when sins of impurity are humbly repented of and confessed, that a great burden is removed from our consciences, and we experience that peace of soul that the world and carnal indulgence cannot give.

All who through shame hide or omit their sins in confession are damned

St. Alphonsus speaks in great detail concerning the shame that is inherent in confessing and how this shame makes many people commit sacrilegious confessions, and he shows quite clearly how all those who fall for this sin of omission are damned.

St. Alphonsus, **On the Ruin of Souls who through Shame omit to Confess their Sins**: "In the missions we should moreover strongly and often inculcate the necessity of overcoming the shame that one feels in confessing one's sins. Those who are experienced missionaries know that this cursed shame has been the cause of the loss of many souls. It follows that as the principal fruit of the missions consists in the remedy that they apply to this evil, they are not only useful but even necessary for country places; for as there is only a small number of confessors, who are very often the relatives or friends of their penitents, false shame has more force in making the people conceal sins in confession.

"V. False Shame in Confession.

"It is a pity to see how many souls the devil gains by this means, especially in matters concerning impure sins; for he makes them lose shame at the moment of committing them, and gives this shame back to them when there is question of mentioning them in confession. St. Antonine, speaking of this matter, relates that a holy hermit, seeing one day the devil in the church going among those that wished to confess, asked him what he was doing there; the evil spirit answered: "To induce these people to commit sin. I have taken shame from them; now I return it to them in order that they may not confess it." St. John Chrysostom also says: "God has given shame to the commission of sin, and confidence to the confession of it. The devil inverts this: he inspires him who sins with confidence, and him who confesses with shame."

"Alas! Christian soul, you have sinned; if you do not confess your sins you will certainly be damned. Why then do you not confess your sin? You answer: I am ashamed. Hence rather than overcome this shame you wish to be condemned for all eternity to the fire of hell? It is a shame to offend so good a God who has created us; it is not a shame to confess to have offended him. But since you do not wish to manifest your sin, refrain at least from going to confession. To the sin that you have committed do you wish to add the sacrilege of a bad confession? Do you know what you are doing when you commit a sacrilege? For the sins on account of which you have deserved hell there is no other remedy than the blood of Jesus Christ, who will purify you if you confess it well; but by concealing your sin, you even tread under foot the blood of Jesus Christ.

"The present mission is for you a good occasion for making your confession to

a priest who does not know you, whom afterwards you will see no more, and who will no more see you; if you do not wish to profit by this occasion, God will perhaps not grant it to you again, and you will be damned. Remember that if you do not confess now, the devil will gain absolute sway over you, and then perhaps God will abandon you, and there will be no more hope for you. Courage, then! go to confession immediately.

“What do you fear? Ah! here are no doubt the pretexts that the devil will suggest to you:

“1. What will my confessor say when he hears that I have fallen in such a way? Well! he will say that you have been weak, as happens to so many others who live in this world; he will say that you did wrong to sin, but that you afterwards performed a noble deed in overcoming shame to confess your sins.

“2. At least he will not fail to give me a scolding. Oh no, why should he scold you? Know that confessors cannot have greater consolation than when they hear a person accusing himself of a sin that he has committed; for then he can securely absolve him and thus deliver him from hell.

“3. I have not enough confidence to manifest this sin to my spiritual Father. Well! go to confession to an other priest of the place or to a stranger. But if my confessor hears that I have gone to confession to an other, he will be offended, and will no more hear my confession. And you, in order not to displease your confessor wish to commit a sacrilege and to damn your soul? If you go to hell, will your confessor be able to talk you out of it?

“4. Who knows whether the confessor will not make known my sin to others? What folly to think that a confessor could wish to commit so great a crime as to break the seal of confession by manifesting your sin to others! To how many confessors are you to declare your sin? It suffices that you tell it once to one priest only, who hears your sin as he hears a thousand others in other confessions. But why have you so many unreasonable fears, and have not the fear of damning yourself by not confessing your sin? This should deprive you of all consolation and all peace; for, if you do not confess your sin, there will remain in your conscience a viper that will gnaw your heart during your whole life in this world, and after death, during all eternity in hell.

“Well now, let us take courage, and make known to the confessor the recesses of your conscience; immediately after confession you will find the peace that you have lost, and you will ever thank God for having given you the strength to overcome the devil. Hasten, therefore, to be delivered from this viper that causes you so much pain, and become reconciled with God. ... Speak thus [asking the confessor for help in confessing your sins that you are ashamed of mentioning], and then it will be the confessor’s duty to deliver you from the serpent that torments you

as if you were one of the damned, although you are not yet in hell.

“I have wished to mention here in a practical manner those pretexts which induce so many poor souls to conceal their sins and are the cause of their damnation. As this cursed shame is everywhere prevalent, especially among women, we must make them understand the answers given above to the false pretexts which the devil puts before them in order to make them conceal their sins.

“It is true, I am well aware that, in the missions, usually a special sermon is preached to move the hearers not to hide any sin through shame; but I say that this point is so important that even an entire sermon is not sufficient: first, because it may happen that souls needing it most are not present; secondly, because for persons who have concealed their sins for a long time, it is not enough to hear the remedy spoken of but once; the preacher should often insist upon this matter, which I regard as the most important that one has to treat in the missions; for even in the missions many persons, although they have been present at the sermons, have continued to hide their sins. This is particularly necessary when one preaches in conservatories in which many girls and women are living together. As the occasions of sin are more frequent there, sins are also more frequent; and for persons that live in these establishments it is more difficult to have a confessor to whom they would confess with less repugnance; hence we should oftener speak to them about false shame, which causes them to conceal sins in confession, and it is very useful to make a deep impression upon their minds by relating to them melancholy examples.

“In all the missions given by our Congregation it is customary for him who explains the catechism to relate every day one of the terrible examples of persons damned for having concealed sins in confession. Many of these examples are found in good authors, and I have given some of them in my treatise INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PEOPLE ON THE COMMANDMENTS. I think the preacher would do well to put to a profitable use similar examples. They may be of benefit not only to him who preaches the sermon, but also to him who gives the instruction or meditation, and even to him who gives the exercises to priests; for among them are often found parish priests, preachers of Lenten sermons, and other ecclesiastics who are anxious to preach in a profitable manner.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 316-320)

Sacrilegious confessions leads to Hell

In another part of the same work, St. Alphonsus gives us some very horrifying examples of the death and damnation of those people who hide or omit their sins from the priest and God in the sacrament of confession.

St. Alphonsus, **Of Persons Who Have Made Sacrilegious Confessions:** "I. IN the chronicles of St. Benedict it is related that a solitary named Pelagius, who kept sheep for his poor parents, led a life so exemplary that all called him a saint. He lived in this manner many years. After the death of his parents he sold the little property that they had left him and retired into a hermitage. He, unfortunately, consented once to an unchaste thought. After this sin he fell into a state of great melancholy because he would not confess it, lest he should lose the good opinion of his confessor. While he was in this state of melancholy a pilgrim who passed by said to him: "Pelagius, confess your sin: God will pardon you, and your peace shall be restored." The pilgrim then disappeared. After this Pelagius resolved to do penance for his sin, but not to confess it, flattering himself that God would perhaps pardon him without confession. He entered into a monastery, in which he was immediately received on account of his reputation for sanctity, and there led an austere life, crucifying himself with fasts and penances. At last the hour of death came: he made his last confession; as he had always through shame concealed the sin during life, so he also concealed it at death; he received the viaticum, died, and was buried, with the reputation of a saint. On the following night the sacristan found the body of Pelagius out of its grave. He buried it again; but on the second and third nights he found the body out of the grave. He called the abbot, who, in the presence of the other monks, said: "Pelagius, you were always obedient during life; be obedient now also in death. Tell me, on the part of God, if it be the divine will that your body be kept in a particular place?" The deceased, howling, said: "Alas! I am damned for having concealed one sin in confession. O Abbot, look at my body!" And behold! his body appeared like red-hot iron sending forth sparks of fire. All fled away; but Pelagius called back the abbot, that he might remove the consecrated particle that still remained in his mouth. The abbot removed the sacred host. Pelagius then told them to take his body out of the church and to throw it on a dunghill like a dog. It was done as he desired.

"II. In the annals of the Capuchins we read of one who was esteemed a saint, but made bad confessions. Being seized with a grievous illness, he was told to go to confession. He sent for a certain Father, to whom he said, "My Father, you tell me to go to confession; but I will not make any confession." "And why?" said the Father. "Because," replied the sick man, "I am damned; for I have never confessed all my sins; and now God deprives me of the power of making a good confession." After this he began to howl, and to tear his tongue, saying, "Accursed tongue, that would not confess sins when you were able." And thus, gnawing his tongue to pieces, and howling, he breathed forth his soul into the hands of the devil. After death he became black as a cinder, a terrible noise was heard, and the room filled with an intolerable stench.

“III. Father Seraphine Razzi relates that in a city in Italy there was a married lady of noble rank who was reputed a saint. On her deathbed she received all the sacraments, and died with a high reputation for sanctity. After death her daughter, who always recommended to God the soul of her mother, heard one day, while she was at prayer, a great noise at the door. She turned round, and saw a horrible figure all on fire, and exhaling a great stench. At this sight she was so much terrified, that she was on the point of throwing herself out of the window; but she heard a voice saying: "Stop, stop, my daughter: I am your unhappy mother, who was considered a saint; but for some sins committed with your father, which I was ashamed ever to confess, God has condemned me to hell. Do not pray to God for me any more; for you only increase my pains." She then began to howl, and disappeared.

“IV. The celebrated Doctor John Ragusino relates that a certain very spiritual woman practised meditation and frequented the sacraments, so that she was considered by her Bishop to be a saint. The unhappy woman looked one day at a servant, and consented to an unchaste thought; but because the sin was only one of thought, she flattered herself that she was not bound to confess it. However, she was always tortured with remorse of conscience, and particularly in her last illness. But even at death she concealed the sin through shame, and died without confessing it. The bishop who was her confessor, and believed her to be a saint, caused her body to be carried in procession through the whole city, and through devotion got her buried in his own chapel. But on the following morning on entering the chapel he saw a body above the grave, laid on a great fire. He commanded it in the name of God to tell what it was. A voice answered that it was his penitent, and that she was damned for a bad thought. She then began to howl and to curse her shame, which had been the cause of her eternal ruin.

“V. Father Martin del Rio relates that in the province of Peru there was a young Indian called Catharine, who was a servant to a respectable lady. Her mistress induced her to receive baptism, and to frequent the sacraments. She often went to confession, but concealed some of her sins. Just before her death she made nine confessions; but they were all sacrilegious. After her confession she said to her fellow-servants that she concealed her sins. They told her mistress, who, on questioning her, found out that these sins were certain acts of impurity. She therefore told the confessor, who returned, and exhorted his penitent to confess all her sins. But Catharine obstinately refused, and got into such a state of desperation, that she turned and said to her confessor, "Father, leave me; take no more trouble: you are only losing your time;" and then she turned her face to him and began to sing some profane songs. When she was near her end her companions exhorted her to take the crucifix. She answered: "What crucifix? I know not Christ crucified, and I do not wish to know him." And thus she died. So great were the noise and stench during the night, that the mistress was obliged to leave the house. The deceased

afterwards appeared to one of her companions, and said that she was damned on account of her bad confessions.

“VI. Father Francis Rodriguez relates that in England, when the Catholic religion flourished in that country, King Augubert had a daughter, who, on account of her rare beauty, was sought by many princes. Being asked by her father whether she wished to marry, she answered that she had made a vow of perpetual chastity. The father obtained a dispensation from the Holy See, but she resolutely refused to accept it, saying that she wished for no other spouse than Jesus Christ. She only asked of her father permission to live a solitary life in his house. The father, because he loved her, complied with her request, and assigned to her a suitable maintenance. In her retirement she began to lead a saintly life in meditation, fasting, and works of penance, frequenting the sacraments, and frequently going to the hospitals to attend the sick. While she lived in this manner she fell sick in her youth and died. A certain lady who had been in her governess, while at prayer one night, heard a great noise, and saw a soul in the form of a woman in a strong fire, and bound in chains, in the midst of a multitude of devils. The soul said, "Know that I am the unhappy daughter of Augubert." "What!" replied the governess; "are you damned after a life so holy?" "Yes," replied the soul; "I am justly damned through my own fault. "And why?" "You must know that in my youth I took pleasure in listening to one of my pages, for whom I had an affection, reading a certain book. Once, after reading the book for me, the page kissed me; the devil began to tempt me, till in the end I committed sin with the page. I went to confession, and began to tell my sin; my indiscreet confessor instantly reproved me, saying, "What! has a queen been guilty of such a sin?" I then, through shame, said it was a dream. I afterwards began to perform penitential works and give alms, that God might pardon me without confessing the sin. At death I said to the confessor that I was a great sinner; he told me to banish the thought as a temptation. After this I expired, and am now damned for all eternity." She then disappeared amid such noise, that the whole world appeared to be falling in pieces, and left in the chamber an intolerable stench, which lasted for many days.

“VII. Father John Baptist Manni, of the Society of Jesus relates that a certain lady had for several years concealed in confession a sin of impurity. Two religious of the Order of St. Dominic passed by the place. The lady, who was always waiting for a strange confessor, entreated one of them to hear her confession. When the Fathers departed, his companion said to the confessor of the lady that while she was confessing her sins he saw many serpents coming from her mouth, but that there was a large, horrible-looking serpent, whose head only came out, but afterwards went back entirely into the lady's mouth. He then saw all the serpents that came out return again. The confessor went back to the house of the lady, and on entering heard that she had died suddenly. Afterwards, when he was at prayer, the unhappy

woman appeared and said to him, "I am the unfortunate person that made my confession to you; I committed one sin, which I voluntarily concealed from the confessors of the place. God sent you to me; but even then I could not conquer the shame of telling it. He therefore struck me suddenly dead when you entered the house, and has justly condemned me to hell." After these words the earth opened, and she fell into the chasm and instantly disappeared.

“VIII. Saint Antony relates that there was a widow who began to lead a holy life, but afterwards, by familiarity with a young man, was led into sin with him. After her fall she performed penitential works, gave alms, and even entered into a monastery, but never confessed her sin. She became abbess. She died, and died with the reputation of a saint. But one night a nun who was in the choir heard a great noise, and saw a spectre encompassed with flames. She asked what it was. The spectre answered, "I am the soul of the abbess, and am in hell." "And why?" "Because in this world I committed a sin, and have never confessed it. Go, and tell this to the other nuns, and pray no more for me." She then disappeared amid great noise.

“IX. In the annals of the Capuchins it is related that a certain mother, on account of having made sacrilegious confessions, began at death to cry out that she was damned for her grievous sins and for her bad confessions. Among other things, she said that she was bound to make restitution to certain persons, and that she had always neglected to do so. Her daughter then said to her, "My mother, let what you owe be restored;

I am satisfied to sell all, provided your soul be saved." The mother answered: "Ah, accursed child! I am damned also on your account; for I have scandalized you by my bad example." Thus she continued to howl like one in despair. They sent for one of the Capuchin Fathers. When he arrived he exhorted her to trust in the mercy of God; but the unhappy woman said: "What mercy! I am damned: sentence is already passed upon me, and I have already begun to feel the pains of hell." While she spoke thus, her body was raised to the ceiling of the chamber, and dashed with violence against the floor, and she instantly expired.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 571-578)

“A similar misfortune befell a sinner who was damned on account of having deferred his confession. Venerable Bede relates that this man, who had been fervent, fell into tepidity and mortal sin, and deferred confession from day to day. He was seized with a dangerous illness; and even then put off his confession saying that he would afterwards go to confession with better dispositions. But the hour of vengeance had arrived: he fell into a deadly swoon in which he thought that he saw hell open under his feet. After he had come to his senses again, the persons who stood round his bed begged him to make his

confession, but he answered: "There is no more time; I am damned." They continued to encourage him. "You are losing time," said he; "I am damned, I see hell opened; I there see Judas, Caiphas, and the murderers of Jesus Christ; and near them I see my place, because, like them, I have despised the blood of Jesus Christ by deferring confession for so long a time." Thus the unhappy man died in despair without confession, and was buried like a dog outside the church without having a prayer offered for his soul." (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 528)

"In the life of Father John Ramirez, of the Society of Jesus, it is related that, while preaching in a certain city, he was called to hear the confession of a girl who was dying. She was of noble birth, and had apparently led a holy life; she went frequently to Communion, fasted, and performed other mortifications. At death she confessed her sins to Father Ramirez with many tears, so that he was greatly consoled. But, after returning to the college, his companion said that while the young lady was making her confession he saw a black hand squeezing her throat. The Father immediately returned to the house of the sick lady, but before entering he heard that she was dead. He then returned to his college, and while he was at prayer the deceased appeared to him in a horrible form, surrounded by flames, and bound in chains, and said that she was damned on account of a sin committed with a young man, which she voluntarily concealed in confession through shame, and that at death she wished to confess it, but the devil induced her, through the same shame, to conceal it. After these words she disappeared, amid the most frightful howling and terrific clanking of chains." (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 548)

"Tell me, my sister, if, in punishment of not confessing a certain sin, you were to be burnt alive in a caldron of boiling pitch, and if, after that, your sin were to be revealed to all your relatives and neighbors, would you conceal it? No, indeed, if you knew that by confessing it your sin would remain secret, and that you would escape being burnt alive. Now, it is more than certain that, unless you confess that sin, you will have to burn in hell for all eternity, and that on the day of judgment it will be made known to the whole human race. **"We must all," says the Apostle, "be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ" (i. Cor. v. 10). "If," says the Lord, "you do not confess the evil you have done, I will proclaim your ignominy to all nations; I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will show. . . thy shame to kingdoms"** (Nah. iii. 5)." (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 549-550)

"The following fact is related by Father Martin del Rio, from the Annals of the Company of Jesus. It is an apparition that occurred in 1590 and was vouched for by trustworthy witnesses: Not far from Lima, dwelt a Christian lady who had three maid-servants, one of whom, called Martha, was a young Indian of about sixteen years. Martha was a Christian,

but little by little she grew cool in the devotion she had at first displayed, became negligent in her prayers, and light, coquettish, and wanton in her conversations. Having fallen dangerously ill, she received the Last Sacraments. After this serious ceremony, during which she had evinced very little piety, she said, smiling to her two fellow servants, that in the confession she had just made she had taken good care not to tell all her sins to the priest. Frightened by this language, the girls reported it to their mistress, who by dint of exhortations and threats, obtained from the sick girl a sign of repentance and the promise to make a sincere and Christian confession. Martha confessed then, over again, and died shortly afterward.

“Scarcely had she breathed her last, when her corpse emitted an extraordinary and intolerable stench. They were obliged to remove it from the house to a shed. The dog in the courtyard, usually a quiet animal, howled piteously, as if he were undergoing torture. After the interment, the lady, according to custom, was dining in the garden in the open air, when a heavy stone fell suddenly onto the centre of the table with a horrible crash and caused all the table settings to bounce, but without breaking any article. One of the servants, having occupied the room in which Martha had died, was awakened by frightful noises; all the furniture seemed to be moved by an invisible force and thrown to the floor.

“We understand how the servant did not continue to occupy that room; her companion ventured to take her place, but the same scenes were renewed. Then they agreed to spend the night together there. This time they distinctly heard Martha’s voice, and soon that wretched girl appeared before them in the most horrible state, and all on fire. She said that by God’s command she had come to reveal her condition to them, that she was damned for her sins of impurity and for the sacrilegious confessions she had continued to make until death. She added, “Tell what I have just revealed to you, that others may profit by my misfortune.” At these words she uttered a despairing cry and disappeared.

The fire of Hell is a real fire, a fire that burns like this world’s fire, although it is infinitely more active. Must not there be a real fire in Hell, seeing that there is a real fire in Purgatory? “It is the same fire,” says St. Augustine, “that tortures the damned and purifies the elect.”” (Rev. F.X. Schouppe, S.J. *The Dogma of Hell*, Chapter VII, The Pains of Hell)

Question: In what detail must one confess to a priest the sins of impurity or other sins that one have committed? When you quote Jean Gerson, you say that one must confess every single detail, but I don’t agree with this.

Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes*: “**What a young boy should tell in confession:** I sometimes stroked myself or others, urged by disorderly pleasure; I fondled myself, in my bed and elsewhere, something I would not have dared to do if people had been there. Sometimes the priest cannot absolve such fondling. **If they are not**

confessed and the details given, whatever the shame, one cannot be absolved, and the confession is worthless: one is destined to be damned for ever in Hell. The action and the way it has been done must be told.

This is not justice and the Church does not teach this, and God does not require such details to be given, since the one confessing could think that his confession will tempt the priest, or that this priest is a pedophile, or that the priest will tell the sin to others, or he could forget his sins, or many other reasons, and so, one is not obligated under pain of sin to confess all the details.

Answer: Apart from the legitimate excuse of a person honestly forgetting some of his sins, excuses when confessing one's sins will never be lawful or permitted, and all those who tries to excuse themselves from providing the necessary details, will be damned. Here are some condemnations that shows that details in confession must be given.

Pope Alexander VII, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* (# 24), Sept. 24, 1665: "Voluptuousness, sodomy, and bestiality are sins of the same ultimate species, and so it is enough to say in confession that one has procured a pollution." –

Condemned statement by Pope Alexander VII. (Denz. 1124)

Pope Alexander VII, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* (# 25), Sept. 24, 1665: "He who has had intercourse with an unmarried woman satisfies the precept of confession by saying: "I committed a grievous sin against chastity with an unmarried woman," without mentioning the intercourse." – **Condemned statement by Pope Alexander VII.** (Denz. 1125)

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* (# 50), Mar. 4, 1679: "Intercourse with a married woman, with the consent of her husband, is not adultery, and so it is enough to say in confession that one had committed fornication." – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.** (Denz. 1200)

Pope Innocent XI, *Various Errors on Moral Matters* (# 58), Mar. 4, 1679: "We are not bound to confess to a confessor who asks us about the habit of some sin." – **Condemned statement by Pope Innocent XI.** (Denz. 1208)

And the Council of Trent teaches the following concerning confession and the details which must be given in confession:

The Council of Trent, Session 14, Chapter V, On Confession: "But, whereas all

mortal sins, even those of thought, render men children of wrath, and enemies of God, it is necessary to seek also for the pardon of them all from God, with an open and modest confession. Wherefore, while the faithful of Christ are careful to confess all the sins which occur to their memory, they without doubt lay them all bare before the mercy of God to be pardoned: whereas they who act otherwise, and knowingly keep back certain sins, such set nothing before the divine bounty to be forgiven through the priest: for if the sick be ashamed to show his wound to the physician, his medical art cures not that which it knows not of. **We gather furthermore, that those circumstances which change the species of the sin are also to be explained in confession, because that, without them, the sins themselves are neither entirely set forth by the penitents, nor are they known clearly to the judges; and it cannot be that they can estimate rightly the grievousness of the crimes, and impose on the penitents, the punishment which ought to be inflicted, on account of them.**”

Concerning the confession, one must confess every single sin one remembers as well as in what way they were done, and one should have thought on the shame of confessing it when one committed the act. The church teaches that all must be confessed, and thus, no detail can be left out. It is the priest’s job to hear it, so it is mortally sinful to leave it out or minimize the severity of the sin. The Church has taught that all sins must be confessed, and in the priest’s job, he must hear in what sinful and shameful way the sin has been performed in order to judge the severity of the crime. The priest is a judge according to the Church’s teaching, and hiding a mortal sin will always end in damnation and eternal fire.

The Catholic Church teaches that Our Lord Jesus Christ through the apostles established a human priesthood with divine authority to forgive sins and to absolve men from guilt and bring them into a state of forgiveness and reconciliation with God. The Catholic Church teaches that this is no mere formality, but that the priest stands in the place of God as judge and performs a judicial act.

The Council of Trent, Session 14, Chapter V, On Confession: “From the institution of the sacrament of Penance as already explained, the universal Church has always understood, that the entire confession of sins was also instituted by the Lord, and is of divine right necessary for all who have fallen after baptism; because that **our Lord Jesus Christ, when about to ascend from earth to heaven, left priests His own vicars, as presidents and judges, unto whom all the mortal crimes, into which the faithful of Christ may have fallen, should be carried, in order that, in accordance with the power of the keys, they**

may pronounce the sentence of forgiveness or retention of sins. For it is manifest, that priests could not have exercised this judgment without knowledge of the cause; neither indeed could they have observed equity in enjoining punishments, if the said faithful should have declared their sins in general only, and not rather specifically, and one by one.”

The Council of Trent, Session 14, Chapter VI, On the ministry of this Sacrament, and on Absolution: “But although the absolution of the priest is the dispensation of another’s bounty, yet is it not a bare ministry only, whether of announcing the Gospel, or of declaring that sins are forgiven, **but is after the manner of a judicial act, whereby sentence is pronounced by the priest as by a judge:** and therefore the penitent ought not so to confide in his own personal faith, as to think that,--even though there be no contrition on his part, or no intention on the part of the priest of acting seriously and absolving truly,--he is nevertheless truly and in God’s sight absolved, on account of his faith alone. For neither would faith without penance bestow any remission of sins; nor would he be otherwise than most careless of his own salvation, who, knowing that a priest but absolved him in jest, should not carefully seek for another who would act in earnest.”

The Church further teaches that, apart from confessing sins to an authorized Catholic priest (when one is available) and doing the penance required, there can be no forgiveness of sins. When a Catholic priest is not available, however, a person can be restored to grace by an act of perfect contrition according to the Council of Trent, but this person must also desire to go to Confession when the opportunity arrives. Confession and penance are therefore seen as necessary for salvation. The Catholic Church further teaches that by good works, prayers, fastings, participation in the sacraments, indulgences, the enduring of suffering and by acts of charity, an individual can atone for his guilt, merit God’s grace, and remove the temporal punishment his sin deserves. In other words, an individual can make satisfaction for his own sins through his own works.

Excuses can be thought on in hell for all eternity when one wakes up and starts to realize that one must have humility in order to be saved. The people who sinned should have thought about the shame of confessing before they sinned in a shameful way before God and all the Angels and Saints in Heaven. All the excuses mentioned above can never be used except for one, but the other excuses will never be allowed. The excuse of forgetfulness is valid, but one must confess it in the next confession when one remembers it. One cannot have perfect contrition when one deliberately hides the truth and its severity, for this is a sin of omission and disobedience. There’s nothing that can be cited in the Church’s teaching that justifies a person hiding the severity and details of his sins. One

must realize that hiding or minimizing one's sin is a sin first and foremost of disobedience, but secondly, a sin of pride, since one cares more about what a puny and insignificant human creature will think about you and your sins, rather than what God will think of you. Thus, such a person who hides or minimizes his sins is sinning because of vanity and vainglory, and by wanting others to have a better opinion of himself than what he knows he deserves because of his sins. A person who hides the details of his sins is thus sinning by wanting others to think better of him than he deserves, and this, of course, is not just or right.

In truth, if a person easily want to find God in confession, he must first and foremost consider in his mind how it is true justice that all men on earth should despise him for his sins, and that all should condemn him and reject him; and then confessing to a single priest will be much easier. Either one confesses one's sins now, or the Justice of God requires that all one's unconfessed sins will be displayed before every single person that has ever lived as well as the gaze of God, Our Lady and all the Angels, Saints and devils in the Day of Judgment; so one can either choose to confess one's sins in this life to a single priest, or choose to have the whole world see one's sins for all eternity, enduring a greater shame for one's sins forever in the torment of the sulfurous fire of Hell than what a human can ever experience in this life however long he or she lives.

Fr. Martin von Cochem, O.S.F.C., *The Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven*, On the Last Judgment: "**On that day all His enemies will be beneath His feet; on that day all His foes will be forced to confess their offences against Him, the Divine Arbiter.** They will then and there be compelled to own His divinity, His infinite charity, the countless benefits He has bestowed on them, in return for which they persecuted Him, blasphemed Him, put Him to a cruel death. ... **on that day the reprobate will be put to the greatest ignominy and anguish. For the Judge will reveal all the shameful, the abominable character of their misdeeds: He will reveal in the sight of Angels and Saints, of the devils and the damned, the infamous deeds they performed under cover of darkness.** Yes, He will pour out the full chalice of His indignation upon those wretched beings, who under the mask of their hypocrisy dared to desecrate His very sanctuary. He will cause those who have been corrupters of innocence to be seized and placed among the evil spirits, whose diabolical, thrice accursed work they carried on earth.

"On that day the Divine Judge will give all the impenitent sinners to drink deeply of the cup of shame and ignominy, as St. Basil tells us, when he says: "The confusion that will overtake the godless sinner in the Day of Judgment will be more cruel torture to him than if he were cast into a flaming fire." **This is in fact the**

reason why God has appointed the final judgment, that sinners may not only be punished by the pain which will be their portion, but that they may also be put to public shame. St. Thomas Aquinas says: "The sinner does not only deserve pain, he deserves disgrace and ignominy, for this is a punishment to which human beings only can be subjected. The lower animals can be chastised and put to death, but they cannot know what it is to suffer shame and contempt." This accounts for the fact that any one who has a single spark of self-respect would rather suffer the heaviest punishment in secret, than be exposed to public disgrace.

“On all these grounds it will be surmised that the final judgment will stretch over a considerable period of time, and hence we have all the more reason to tremble at the prospect of it, and earnestly pray God that on that great day He will not overwhelm us with shame and confusion, but will grant us a share in His joy and glory.” (*The Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven*, Part II, The Last Judgment, Chapter X, On the Length of Time that the Final Judgment will Last)

As long as one meditates on how it is justice that others despise us because of our sins—since a single mortal sin deserves an infinite punishment in hell—confessing to a priest or even to more people, will go as a dance!

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 8, Art. 5: “If, however, he were bound to confess again, **his first confession would not be useless, because the more priests one confesses to, the more is the punishment remitted, both by reason of the shame in confessing, which is reckoned as a satisfactory punishment**, and by reason of the power of the keys: so that one might confess so often as to be delivered from all punishment.”

Indeed, so beneficial is speaking about one’s sins to a person that is not a priest that St. Thomas says that confessing one’s sins even to a layman will benefit one’s soul and gain God’s friendship; but that one must also confess it to a Catholic priest when one is able to do so.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 8, Art. 6, Reply to Objection 3: “... the sacramental power of Penance consists in a sanctification pronounced by the minister, so that if a man confess to a layman, although he fulfills his own part of the sacramental confession, he does not receive sacramental absolution. Wherefore his confession avails him somewhat, as to the lessening of his punishment, owing to the merit derived from his

confession and to his repentance, but he does not receive that diminution of his punishment which results from the power of the keys; and consequently he must confess again to a priest [whenever he can do so].”

Confessing one’s sins to anyone will always be a good act of humility, and those who do this, whether much or little, will always gain some amount of grace. In addition, confessing one’s sins and humiliating oneself will also give the humble penitent “so many and so great advantages and consolations, which are most assuredly bestowed by absolution upon all who worthily approach to this sacrament.”

The Council of Trent, Session 14, Chapter V, On Confession: “Now, the very difficulty of a confession like this, and the shame of making known one’s sins, might indeed seem a grievous thing, were it not alleviated by the so many and so great advantages and consolations, which are most assuredly bestowed by absolution upon all who worthily approach to this sacrament.”

A great example which shows us that unconfessed sins will be punished eternally in hell is found in *The Revelations of St. Bridget*, which speaks about a certain woman who performed unlawful and impure sexual acts but abhorred to confess her sins. The Revelation confirms the truth about that a person who do not confess their sins in this life (to a valid Catholic priest if one is available) will have their sins displayed before the whole world. The foreword for this Chapter explains its contents, saying that: “A saint tells the bride that even if a person were to die once each day for God’s sake, it would not be enough to give thanks to God for his eternal glory. He also describes the terrible punishments endured by a deceased woman in her every limb because of the carnal pleasure in which she spent her life.”

The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 6, Chapter 16: “One of the saints spoke to the bride [St. Bridget], saying: “If, for God’s sake, I endured death for every hour I spent in the world and were to keep coming back to life, still with all that I would never be able to thank God fully for his love. Indeed, his praise is ever on my lips and joy is ever in my soul, glory and honor are never withheld from my sight nor the sounds of exultation taken from my hearing.”

“Then the Lord said to the same saint: “Tell my bride here what those persons deserve who care more about the world than about God, who love the creature more than the Creator. Tell her what kind of punishment that woman is now undergoing who spent her entire lifetime in the world in sinful pleasure.” The saint replied: “Her punishment is most severe. For the pride she had in her every limb, [through vanity] her head and hands, arms and legs burn horribly in a blazing fire. Her

bosom is being pricked as though by the hide of a hedgehog whose quills fasten to her flesh and mercilessly press into her. **The arms and other limbs with which she used to lasciviously embrace the loved one so tenderly are now stretched out like two snakes that coil themselves around her, mercilessly devouring and tearing her to pieces without rest.** Her belly is terribly twisted, as though a sharp pole were being driven into her private parts and thrust violently inward so as to penetrate ever more deeply. Her thighs and knees are like ice, hard and stiff, with no warmth nor rest. The feet that used to carry her to her pleasures and lead others along with her now stand atop sharp razors slicing them incessantly.”

The Explanation in *St. Bridget's Revelations* of this hair raising example of the miserable end of all who perform unlawful, non-procreative and lascivious sexual acts and touches, like this woman did, tells us that “This woman pursued her selfish will and completely abhorred going to confession. A tumor developed in her throat, and she died unconfessed. She was shown standing before God’s judgment with the devils accusing her and shouting: “Here is the woman who tried to hide herself from you, Lord! But we know her well enough!” The judge answered: “Confession is like an excellent washing-woman. Therefore, because she did not want to wash when she had the opportunity, she is now soiled with your impurities. Because she was unwilling to expose her shame to the few, it is only right that she should be shamed by everyone before the many.” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 6, Chapter 16) Thus, it is clear that if a person refuses to confess his sins in this life, “it is only right that she should be shamed by everyone before the many.”

Question: How great must one’s purpose of amendment in confession be in order for a person to be forgiven his sins? Many times, I confess thinking that it is certain that I will fall again.

Answer: St. Alphonsus, answers this question in a section “**On the Purpose of Sinning no More**” in great detail: “Sorrow and a purpose of amendment necessarily go together. “A sorrow of the soul and a detestation of sin,” says the Council of Trent, “along with the purpose of sinning no more.” The soul cannot have a true sorrow for sin without a sincere purpose never more to offend God. Now, in order to be a true purpose, it must have three conditions: it must be firm, universal, and efficacious.

“I. It must be firm, so that the penitent resolutely purposes to suffer every evil rather than offend God.

“Some say: “Father, I do not wish ever more to offend God; but the occasions of sin and my own weakness will make me relapse: I wish, but shall scarcely be able, to persevere.” My son, you have not a true purpose, and therefore you say: I wish, I wish.

Know that hell is full of such wishes. It is a mere empty wish, not a true resolute will or purpose; a true purpose is a firm and resolute will to suffer every evil rather than to relapse into sin. It is true that there are occasions of sin; that we are weak, particularly if we have contracted a habit of any sin; and that the devil is strong; but God is stronger than the devil, and with his aid we can conquer all the temptations of hell. *I can do all things*, says St. Paul, *in Him who strengtheneth me*. It is true that we ought to tremble at our weakness, and distrust our own strength; but we ought to have confidence in God that by his grace we shall overcome all the assaults of our tempters. *Praising, I will call upon the Lord*, said David, *and I shall be saved from my enemies*. I will invoke the Lord, and he will save me from my enemies. He who recommends himself to God in temptations shall never fall.

“But, Father, I have recommended myself to God, and the temptation continues.” Do you, then, also continue to ask help from God as long as the temptation lasts, and you will never fall. God is faithful; he will not permit us to be tempted above our strength. *God*, says the Apostle, *is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able*. He has promised to give aid to all who pray for it. For every one that asketh receiveth. And this promise is made to all to sinners, as well as to the just: “For every one that asketh receiveth.” So there is no excuse for those who consent to sin; for if they recommend themselves to God, he will stretch out his hand, and support them, and they will not fall. He, then, who falls into sin falls through his own fault, either because he will not ask aid from God, or because he will not avail himself of the aid which the Lord offers to him.

“II. The purpose must be universal; that is, it must be a purpose of avoiding every mortal sin. Saul was commanded by God to put to death all the Amalecites, and all their cattle, and to burn all their goods. What did he do? He slew a great multitude of men and of cattle, and burnt a large quantity of their goods; but he saved the life of the king, and preserved what was most valuable of the property; and on account of this contempt of God’s commandment he merited his malediction. Many penitents imitate Saul; they purpose to avoid some sins, but they cannot give up some dangerous familiarity, or some goods that they have a scruple about retaining, or some cherished feelings of anger and ill-will against a neighbor, or some hankering after revenge. Such persons wish to divide their heart, giving one half to God, and the other to the devil. The devil is content with his portion, but God is not satisfied with a part of their heart. Every one knows the history of Solomon how two women came to him, each claiming to be the mother of the child who was still left alive. He ordered the infant to be divided, and one half to be given to each of them. *Divide the living child in two*. The woman who was not the mother of the child remained silent and was satisfied with the order of the king; but the true mother said: *I beseech thee, my lord, give her the child alive, and do not kill it*. “No, my lord, if my child must die, I prefer that she should have it entire.” Solomon concluded that she was the true mother of the child, and gave it to her. Thus, the devil because he is our enemy, and not our father, is content to have a part of our heart; but God, who is our true Father, is not

satisfied unless he has the whole of it. *No man, says Jesus Christ, can serve two masters.* God does not accept for his servants those who wish to serve two masters; he wishes to be our only Lord, and he justly refuses to be the companion of the devil in the possession of our hearts. Our purpose, then, must be universal: it must be a purpose of avoiding all mortal sins. ...

“III. The purpose must be efficacious that is, it must make us practise all the means necessary to avoid sin; and one of the most necessary of these means, is to avoid the occasions of relapsing into sin. This is a most important point; for were men careful to fly from evil occasions, from how many sins would they abstain, and thus how many souls would escape damnation! The devil does not gain much without an occasion. But when a person voluntarily exposes himself to the occasion of sin, particularly of sins against chastity, it is morally impossible for him not to fall.

“It is necessary to distinguish proximate from remote occasions. The remote occasion is that to which all are exposed, or in which men seldom fall into sin. The proximate occasion is that which by itself ordinarily induces to sin, such as unnecessary familiarity of young men with women of bad reputation. An occasion in which a person has frequently fallen is also called a proximate occasion. But occasions which are not proximate for others may be proximate for a particular person, who on account of his bad disposition or on account of a bad habit has frequently fallen into sin. They are in the proximate occasion of sin: 1. Who keep in their house a woman with whom they have committed sin. 2. They who go to taverns, or to any particular house in which they have frequently fallen into sin by quarrelling, or drunkenness, or immodest words or actions. 3. They who in gaming have been frequently guilty of fraud, or quarrels, or of blasphemies. Now, no one can receive absolution unless he purpose firmly to avoid the occasion of sin; because to expose himself to such occasions, though sometimes he should not fall into sin, is for him a grievous sin. And when the occasion is voluntary and is actually existing at the present time, the penitent cannot be absolved until he has actually removed the occasion of sin. For penitents find it very difficult to remove the occasion; and if they do not take it away before they receive absolution they will scarcely remove it after they have been absolved.

“Much less is he fit for absolution who refuses to remove the occasions, and only promises that in them he will not commit sin for the future. Tell me, my brother, do you expect that tow thrown into the fire will not burn? And how ran you expecting that if you expose yourself to the occasion of sin you will not fall? *And your strength, says the prophet, shall be as the ashes of tow, . . . and both shall burn together, and there shall be none to quench it.* Our strength is like the strength of tow to resist fire. A devil was once compelled to tell what sermon was most annoying to him. He answered: "The sermon on the occasions of sin." As long as we do not remove the occasions of sin, the devil is satisfied: he cares not about our purposes, promises, or oaths; for as long as the occasion is not removed the sin will not cease. The occasion (particularly of sins against chastity) is like a veil placed before the eyes, and does not allow us to see God, or hell, or heaven. In a

word, the occasion blinds the sinner; and how can the blind keep himself in the straight way to heaven? He will wander into the road to hell without knowing where he is going; and why? Because he does not see. For all, then, who are in the occasion of sin, it is necessary to do violence to themselves in order to remove the occasion; otherwise they will remain always in sin.

“Here it is necessary to remark that for some who are more strongly inclined to evil, and who have contracted a habit of any vice, particularly the vice of impurity, certain occasions are proximate or nearly proximate which for others would be remote. Hence, if they do not avoid them they will be always relapsing into the same crimes like a dog returning to his vomit. ...

“What are these means [of making the occasions of sin remote]? There are three means: the frequentation of the sacraments, prayer, and avoiding familiarity with the person with whom you have sinned.

“The frequentation of the sacraments of penance and Eucharist would be in one respect the best means; but it ought to be known that in necessary proximate occasions of incontinence it is a great remedy to withhold absolution in order to make the penitent more diligent in adopting the other two means, namely, to recommend himself frequently to God, and to avoid familiarity. When you rise in the morning, you must renew the resolution of not yielding to sin all that day; and you must pray for help, not only in the morning, but also several times during the day before the Most Holy Sacrament, or before the Crucifix; and must beg of the Most Holy Mary to obtain for you grace not to relapse. The other means to which it is absolutely necessary to attend is to avoid all familiarity with the accomplice by not remaining with her alone, by not looking at her face, not conversing with her, and by speaking to her (when strictly necessary) in such a manner as to show a dislike for her society. This is the most important means of making proximate occasions become remote, but he who has already received absolution will scarcely practise this means; and, therefore, in such cases, it is expedient to defer absolution until the proximate occasion becomes remote. But to render such occasions remote, eight or ten days are not sufficient; a long time is necessary.

“But should the penitent after adopting all these means always relapse, what is the last remedy? It is that which the Gospel recommends: *If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee.* Although it were your right eye, you must pull it out, and cast it to a distance from you. “It is better,” says our Lord, “to lose thy eye than having it to be cast into hell.” In such a case, then, you must remove the occasion, or you must certainly go to hell.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 539-546)

St. Alphonsus, On Confession: “Confession, in order to be good, must be entire, humble, and sincere.

“I. THE CONFESSION MUST BE ENTIRE.

“He who has offended God by mortal sin has no other remedy to prevent his damnation but the confession of his sin. ...

“Have you committed sin? If you do not confess it you shall be damned. Therefore, if you wish to be saved, you must confess it some time or other. And if at some time or other, why not now? as St. Augustine says. What do you wait for? Is it for death, after which you will not be able to make a confession? And know that the longer you conceal your sin and multiply sacrileges, the greater your shame and obstinacy in concealing it will become. "Obstinacy proceeds from the keeping back of sin," says St. Peter de Blois. How many miserable souls, who have formed a habit of concealing their sins, saying, "When death is near, then I will confess it," have not confessed it even at the hour of death! ...

“II. THE CONFESSION MUST BE HUMBLE.

“A penitent at confession should imagine himself to be a criminal condemned to death, bound by as many chains as he has sins to confess; he presents himself before the confessor, who holds the place of God and who alone can loose his bonds and deliver him from hell. Therefore he must speak to the confessor with great humility. The Emperor Ferdinand, wishing to go to confession in his chamber, handed a chair to the confessor. When those who were in the room appeared surprised at so great an act of humility, the emperor said: "Father, I am now a subject, and you are my Superior."

“Some argue with the confessor, and speak to him with as much haughtiness as if they were his Superiors; what fruit can they derive from such confessions? It is necessary then, to treat your confessor with respect. Speak to him always with humility, and with humility obey all his commands. When he reproves you, be silent, and receive his admonitions with humility; accept with humility the remedy that he prescribes for your amendment.

“Do not get into a passion with him nor think him unjust and uncharitable. What would you say if you saw a sick man, who, while the surgeon opens the imposthume, treats him as a cruel and uncharitable man? Would you not say that he was mad? "But he tortures me." Yes; but it is by this torture that you are cured: without it you would die.

“If the confessor tells you that he cannot absolve you until you have restored certain goods belonging to an other, obey him, and do not be importunate for absolution: do you not know that he who has received absolution does not afterwards make restitution?

“Does the confessor order you to return for absolution in a week or a fortnight, and in the mean time to remove the occasion of sin, to pray to God, to be firm in resisting all temptations to relapse into sin, and to practise all the other means that he recommends to you? Obey, and you shall thus free yourself from sin; do you not see that hitherto, when you were absolved immediately, you have, after the lapse of a few days, fallen again into the same crimes? "But if in the mean time death comes upon me?" But God has not hitherto taken away your life, when you continued so long a time in sin, and never thought of returning to him; will he, now that you desire to amend your life, send you a sudden

death? "But it may be that death will come upon me during the time for which absolution is deferred." And if this may happen during that time, make acts of contrition continually. I have already said that he who has the intention of going to confession and makes an act of contrition instantly receives pardon from God.

"Of what use is it to receive absolution as often as you go to confession when you do not renounce sin? All these absolutions shall add to the fire that will torment you in hell. Listen to this fact. A gentleman contracted a habit of sin; he found a confessor who always absolved him, though he always relapsed. He died, and was seen in hell carried on the shoulders of an other person who was also damned. Being asked who it was that carried him, he answered: "He is my confessor, who, by absolving me as often as I went to confession, has brought me to hell. I am damned, and he who brought me to hell is also damned."

"Do not then, O my brother, be angry when the confessor defers absolution, and wishes to see how you conduct yourself in the mean time. If you always relapse into the same sin, although you have confessed it, the confessor cannot absolve you unless you give some extraordinary and manifest sign that you have the necessary dispositions. And, if he gives you absolution, you and he are condemned to hell. Be obedient, then; do what he bids you; for, when you return, after having done what he prescribed, he will certainly absolve you, and thus you shall be delivered from the sin that you have been in the habit of committing.

"III. THE CONFESSION MUST BE SINCERE.

"The confession must be sincere, that is, without lies or excuses.

"1. Without lies... For example, it would be a mortal sin for a penitent to accuse himself of a mortal sin that he has not committed or to deny a mortal sin that he has committed and has never confessed, or to deny that he had a habit of a certain sin; for in all these he would be guilty of grievously deceiving the minister of God.

"2. Without lies, and without excuses. In the tribunal of penance the criminal must be his own accuser; he must be an accuser, not an advocate to excuse his guilt. The more sincerely a man accuses himself, without extenuating his fault, the more readily shall he obtain absolution and mercy from God. It is related that the Duke of Ossuna, being one day in a galley, went about among the slaves, asking for what crime they had been condemned. All answered that they were innocent; only one acknowledged that he deserved severer punishment. The viceroy said: "Then it is not right to have you here among so many innocents;" and therefore ordered him to be released. Now, how much more will God pardon him who confesses his sins, without excuses, in the tribunal of penance.

"How many are there who make their confession badly! Some tell their confessor the few good actions that they perform, but do not speak of their sins. "Father," they say, "I hear Mass every day; I say the beads; I do not blaspheme; I do not swear; I do not take my neighbor's property." Well, what then? Do you want to be praised by the confessor?

Confess your sins; examine your conscience, and you will find a thousand things to be corrected: detractions, unclean expressions, lies, imprecations, unclean thoughts, hatred.

“Others, instead of accusing themselves, begin to defend their sins, and to dispute with the confessor. "Father," they say, "I blaspheme because I have a master that cannot be borne; I have indulged myself in hatred to a neighbor, because she has spoken ill of me; I have committed sin with men, because I had nothing to eat." What benefit do you expect from such confessions? What is your object? Is it that the confessor may approve of your sins? Listen to what St. Gregory says: "If you excuse yourself, God will accuse you; if you accuse yourself, God will excuse you." Our Lord complained bitterly to St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi of those who excuse their sins in confession, and throw the blame of their own faults upon others, saying: "Such a person has been the occasion of my sin: such another has tempted me." Thus they come to confession to commit new sins; for, in order to excuse their own sins, they injure a neighbor's reputation without necessity. Such persons should be treated as a confessor treated a woman who, in order to excuse her own sins, told all the bad actions of her husband. "For your own sins," said the confessor, "you will say the 'Hail Holy Queen!' once; and for the sins of your husband, you will fast every day for an entire month." But must I do penance for the sins of my husband? Yes, if you confess all the sins of your husband in order to excuse your own sins. Thus, my sisters, confess henceforth your own sins, and not the sins of others, and say: "Father, it was not my companion, nor the occasion of sin, nor the devil, but my own malice, that made me voluntarily offend God."

“It is, indeed true, that you must sometimes make known to the confessor the sin of another, either in order to explain the species of some sin, or to make the confessor understand the danger to which you were exposed, that he may be able to give you useful advice for the regulation of your conduct. But when you can go to another confessor, to whom the person is unknown, go to him. If, in changing your confessor, you should suffer a notable inconvenience; or if you think that your ordinary confessor, because he is better acquainted with the state of your conscience, can give you more useful counsel, you are not obliged to go to another confessor. However, you should endeavor to conceal the accomplice as well as you can; for example, it is sufficient to tell the state of the person, if she is a young girl, if she is married, or if she has made a vow of chastity, without mentioning her name.

“St. Francis de Sales warns penitents not to make useless accusations in confession, nor to mention circumstances through habit. "I have not loved God with all my strength; I have not received the sacraments as I ought; I have had but little sorrow for my sins." All these are useless words; they are a loss of time. "I accuse myself of the seven deadly sins, of the five senses of the body, and of the ten commandments of God." Give up these useless accusations; it is better to tell the confessor some defect into which you are for a long time accustomed to fall, without any amendment. Confess, then, the faults that you wish to correct. Of what use is it to say: "I accuse myself of all the lies I have told, of all my

detractions, of all the imprecations I have uttered? When you do not give up these vices, and when you say that you cannot avoid them, of what use is it to confess them? It is only a mockery of Jesus Christ, and of the confessor. When, then, my children, you accuse yourselves of such faults, even though they should be only venial sins, confess them with a purpose of not relapsing into them.

“V. The Penance Imposed by the Confessor.

“Satisfaction, which we call the penance, is a necessary part of the sacrament of penance. It is not precisely essential, because without it the confession may be valid, as would be the case if a penitent were dying and unable to perform suitable penance. But it is an integral part; so that, should a person at confession not have the intention of performing the penance enjoined the confession is null; for the penitent is obliged, in confessing his sins, to have the intention of complying with the penance imposed by the confessor. But if he has the intention of performing the penance, and afterwards neglects to fulfil it, the confession is valid; but he is guilty of a mortal sin...

“It is necessary to know that, when a person commits a sin, he contracts the guilt, and renders himself liable to the punishment due to the guilt of sin. By the absolution of the confessor the guilt and the eternal punishment are remitted, and when the penitent has intense contrition, all the temporal punishment is also remitted. But when the contrition is not so great the temporal penalties remain to be suffered either in this life or in purgatory, as the Council of Trent teaches where it says, that the sacramental penance is not only a payment of the penalty that we have deserved, but also a means of cure for the base affections left in us by sin, our passions, bad habits, and hardness of heart; and that, moreover, it strengthens us against a relapse into the same sin. Therefore, my children, go to confession every week, or at least every fortnight, but never allow a month to pass without approaching the tribunal of penance. ...

“How soon after confession must the penance be performed? It must be performed within the time fixed by the confessor; and should he not fix a time, it ought to be performed within a short time; for when the penance is great, and particularly when it is medicinal, to defer the performance of it for a long time would be a mortal sin.

“Should a penitent have the misfortune of falling into mortal sin after confession, is he still bound to fulfill the penance? Yes; he is obliged to fulfill it. And does he satisfy his obligation by performing the penance in the state of sin? Yes: he also complies with his obligation.

“But, alas! many go to confession, accept the penance enjoined, but afterwards do not comply with it. "But, Father, I am not able to do all that my confessor has imposed upon me." And why did you accept a penance that you knew you could not perform? I recommend you to speak plainly, and to say to the confessor: "Father, I am afraid that I shall not do all that you have imposed on me; give me a lighter penance." Of what use is it to say: Father, I will do it; Father, I will do it; and afterwards to do nothing?

“But know that, if you omit your penance in this life, you will have to perform far greater penance in purgatory. Turlot relates that a sick man, who was confined to bed, and afflicted with many pains for a year, prayed to God to release him from life. God sent an angel to tell him to choose either to go to purgatory for three days, or to submit to his pains for another year. The sick man chose the three days in purgatory, where after his death, he was visited by the angel. He complained that the angel had deceived him, and that he was suffering there, not for three days, but for several years. The angel said to him, "What! a day has scarcely passed; your body is not yet buried; and you say that you are suffering here for several years!" The deceased then besought the angel to bring him back again to life, that he might suffer his former infirmities for another year. His prayer was heard; and after having returned to life, he encouraged all that came to visit him, to suffer with cheerfulness all the pains of the present rather than wait for the pains of the next life.

“Would to God the penitents performed all the penance due to their sins! Ordinarily speaking, almost all have to suffer some of the temporal punishment that awaits them. Of several persons who led a holy life, we read that they have been for some time in purgatory. Let us, then, endeavor, in addition to our sacramental penance, to perform other good works, alms, deeds, prayers, fasts, and mortifications. Let us also endeavor to gain as many indulgences as we can. Holy indulgences diminish the pains that we must suffer in purgatory.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 546-560)

Question: What is the best prayer to use in order to be able to conquer temptations, and especially sexual temptations?

Answer: The Holy Rosary is undoubtedly the most powerful prayer of all the prayers against the temptations of the flesh as well as any other temptation that may befall a person. The reason behind the fact that the Holy Rosary is especially powerful in conquering sexual temptations of the flesh is that Our Lord and Our Lady – the Blessed Virgin Mary – loves the virtue of chastity with such a great love that they especially honor and help all those who honestly salute Our Blessed Mother in the Angelic salutation with the intention of gaining Her help to conquer their sensual or sinful temptations.

Even though the Holy Rosary is the best weapon against temptations of the flesh, it is also necessary that it be joined with mental prayers and prayers from the heart as well as fasting and other penances with a complete avoidance of all occasions of sin in order to smother the might of the Devil and his temptations. Countless of people have reported that their fleshly temptations diminished or vanished the moment that they started to pray the Rosary. The authors of this text can also testify that this have happened for themselves and for people close to them. Simply said, there’s no prayer that is more powerful than the Rosary.

St. Louis De Montfort: “Our Lady revealed to Blessed Alan De la Roche that no sooner had St. Dominic begun preaching the Rosary than hardened sinners were touched and wept bitterly over their grievous sins... everywhere that he preached the Holy Rosary such fervor arose that sinners changed their lives and edified everyone by their penances and change of heart.” (*The Secret of the Rosary*, p. 66.)

And Sister Lucy of Fatima, regarding the Holy Rosary, said the following words to Fr. Augustin Fuentes on December 26, 1957:

“Look, Father, the Most Holy Virgin, in these last times in which we live, has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary. She has given this efficacy to such an extent that there is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us, of our families, of the families of the world or of the religious communities, or even of the life of peoples and nations, that cannot be solved by the Rosary. There is no problem I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary.”

Pope Pius XI truly loved the Rosary, as did many other Popes before him, and he published an Encyclical called *Ingravescentibus Malis* that explained the Rosary’s special and miraculous power to help us achieve victory in our life.

Pope Pius XI, *Ingravescentibus Malis* (# 3), On the Rosary, 1937: “Thus the Faithful of every age, both in public misfortune and in private need, turn in supplication to Mary, the benignant, so that she may come to their aid and grant help and remedy against sorrows of body and soul. And never was her most powerful aid hoped for in vain by those who besought it with pious and trustful prayer... We beseech God through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin, so acceptable to Him, since, to use the words of St. Bernard: “Such is the will of God, who has wished that we should have all things through Mary.” (Sermon on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary)... From it, the young will draw fresh energy with which to control the rebellious tendencies to evil and to preserve intact the stainless purity of the soul; also in it, the old will again find repose, relief and peace from their anxious cares. To those who devote themselves to Catholic Action may it be a spur to impel them to a more fervent and active work of apostolate; and to all those who suffer in any way, especially the dying, may it bring comfort and increase the hope of eternal happiness. The fathers and mothers of families particularly must give an example to their children, especially when, at sunset, they gather together after the day’s work, within the domestic walls, and recite the Holy Rosary on bended knees before the

image of the Virgin, together fusing voice, faith and sentiment. This is a beautiful and salutary custom, from which certainly there cannot but be derived tranquility and abundance of heavenly gifts for the household. When very frequently We receive newly married couples in audience and address paternal words to them, We give them rosaries, We recommend these to them earnestly, and We exhort them, citing Our own example, not to let even one day pass without saying the Rosary, no matter how burdened they may be with many cares and labors.”

Confession and Prayer

If no non-heretical priest is available for confession, then one must confess one’s sins directly to God. It’s also important to pray to the Holy Ghost for forgiveness, contrition and guidance in this regard. This short prayer – or a variation of it – is recommended:

“O, Holy Ghost, source of all light, come to my assistance and enable me to make a good confession. Bring to my mind the evil which I have done and the good which I have neglected. Grant me, moreover, heartfelt sorrow for my sins and the grace of a sincere confession. Mary, my Mother, help me to make a good confession.”

It is very good to pray three Our Father and three Hail Mary prayers before confession, asking the Blessed Mother specifically for the assistance to make a good confession. The Act of Contrition prayer should of course be prayed as well daily and often. This short prayer – or a variation of it – is highly recommended:

“O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of Heaven, and the pains of Hell; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.”

PART 3. CHASTITY: THE ANGELIC VIRTUE

In this day and age, there are very few who speak or write about chastity since the world have become so lustful and sensual, but chastity is in fact one of the virtues that is most taught in the Holy Scripture. While most of the verses about chastity are found in the New Testament (which we will examine after the Old Testament passages on chastity), there are also some very noteworthy ones in the Old Testament Scripture which shows us that both the married and the unmarried Jews of the Old Law also were commanded by God to practice the virtue of chastity.

CHASTITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE OLD LAW

Chastity is a virtue above other virtues according to the biblical Book of Exodus and Jewish traditional teaching and history

It is described in *The Book of Exodus* how God, when He spoke to Moses and told him to tell the Jewish people that He wanted them to “be to Me a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation”, that God wanted all of the Jews (married as well as unmarried) to practice one specific virtue for three days before they were able to meet Him and enter into a covenant and union with Him and receive the Ten Commandments, and that virtue was chastity: “*He [Moses] said to them: Be ready against the third day, and come not near your wives.*” (Exodus 19:15)

Exodus 19:9-11,14-15 “The Lord said to him [Moses]: Lo, now will I come to thee in the darkness of a cloud, that the people may hear me speaking to thee, and may believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people to the Lord. And he [God] said to him [Moses]: Go to the people, and sanctify them today, and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments. And let them be ready against the third day: for on the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. ... **And Moses came down from the mount to the people, and sanctified them. And when they had washed their garments, He said to them: Be ready against the third day, and come not near your wives.**”

Unless the people had practiced chastity for three days, they would not have received the grace to appear before God and receive His Laws. The remarkable thing about this is that God first chose to tell the people to practice chastity before He told them about the Ten Commandments. The reason why Our Lord did this was to show us how much He values and wants us to practice the angelic virtue of chastity, thus showing us all that we must be very pure and holy when serving God.

The Haydock Bible Commentary explains the verses of Exodus 19 in the following way: “**Ver. 10.** [*and let them wash their garments*], with their bodies, as the Jews understand by this expression. They were also to abstain from their wives, &c. By which exterior practices, they were admonished of the interior purity which God required. All nations seem to have adopted similar observances of continence, washing themselves, and putting on their best attire, when they appeared before God. See Herodotus, &c. (Calmet) --- **Ver. 15.** [*come not near your wives*]. St. Paul recommends continence when people have to pray, 1 Corinthians 7. [Even] On the pagan temple of Epidaurus, this inscription was placed, “Let those be chaste who enter here” (St. Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 5)”, and so, it is not strange that, if even pagans who do not know God observe the virtue of chastity at some times for the sake of serving their false god or gods, that Christians who are reborn through Christ’s Blood should adopt an even greater and more virtuous and chaste lifestyle than the pagans did, adding many more periods of chastity since this is only right, even by those who are married, as St. Paul suggests.

It is of course not a coincidence that the virtue that God commanded the Jewish people to practice in order to become sanctified and be worthy to appear before Him and enter into a covenant with Him, was chastity. This moment when the Jewish people were to first meet Our Lord and enter into a Covenant with Him and receive the Ten Commandments was one of the greatest moments in the history of the Salvation of mankind and a once in a lifetime event. God solemnly bound Himself to the Jewish people through this spectacular event, and yet, God only asked that one specific virtue was to be practiced before meeting with Him, and that was chastity.

From this biblical example alone it is easy to see for an honest person who does not love his flesh and the sensuality of the world just how much God loves and appreciates that men and women practice the virtue of chastity. This example from Holy Scripture also shows us that God wants even married people to practice chastity. In truth, we see that God Himself classifies the act of observing chastity for a while for even the married as a part of becoming “*sanctified*” and worthy to appear before Him according to the words in the Holy Bible, contrary to what many lustful people now teach. Chastity is simply in a class of its own when compared to most of the other virtues, but too few people in the world care for or appreciate the inestimable graces that are received by people who practice chastity. It is undoubtedly so that a refusal to practice chastity, whether inside or outside of marriage, is one of the greatest causes of why most people are damned to burn in Hell for all eternity. This truth was also revealed to us by Our Lady of Fatima, who said: “*The sins which lead most souls to hell are sins of the flesh... Many marriages are not good; they do not please Our Lord and are not of God!*”

One of the major problems that plagues Protestants and other heretics of today is that they have little or no understanding of the ancient custom of taking a permanent or temporal vow of chastity, even in marriage. This has occurred since in their short 475 year history, they have no examples of good and virtuous people doing such things in their inherently fleshly, impure and lustful religion. When a Protestant thinks of marriage, he automatically thinks that sex must occur and that he is allowed to perform all kinds of lascivious, perverse, unnatural or lustful sexual deeds while married, but that is obviously not the way Jewish or even early Christian people thought of or viewed marriage.

Living a celibate life within marriage was not unknown in Jewish tradition. It was told that Moses, who was married, remained continent the rest of his life after the command to abstain from sexual intercourse (Exodus 19:15) given in preparation for receiving the Ten Commandments, and that the seventy elders also abstained thereafter from their wives after their call, and so did Eldad and Medad when the spirit of prophecy came upon them. Indeed it was said that the prophets became celibate after the Word of the Lord communicated with them (*Midrash Exodus Rabbah* 19; 46.3; *Sifre to Numbers* 99 sect. 11; *Sifre Zutta* 81-82, 203-204; *Aboth Rabbi Nathan* 9, 39; *Tanchuman* 111, 46; *Tanchumah Zaw* 13; 3 *Petirot Moshe* 72; *Shabbath* 87a; *Pesachim* 87b, Babylonian Talmud).

Jewish tradition mentions that, although the people had to abstain from sexual relations with their wives for only three days prior to the revelation at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:15), Moses chose to remain continent the rest of his life with the full approval of God. The rabbis explained that this was so because Moses knew that he was appointed to personally commune with God, not only at Mount Sinai but in general throughout the forty years of sojourning in the wilderness. For this reason Moses kept himself “apart from woman”, remaining in the sanctity of separation to be at the beck and call of God at all times; they cited God’s command to Moses in Deuteronomy 5:28 (*Midrash Exodus Rabbah* 19:3 and 46.3).

Moses understood how he was called by God to a more perfect and pure service than the rest of the Jewish people, and thus spoke accordingly, saying:

“If the Israelites, with whom the Shechinah spoke only on one occasion and He appointed them a time [thereof], yet the Torah said, Be ready against the third day, come not near a woman: I, with whom the Shechinah speaks at all times and does not appoint me a [definite] time, how much more so!’ And how do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave His approval? Because it is written, Go say to them, Return to your tents, which is followed by, But as for thee, stand thou here by me.

(*The Babylonian Talmud Seder Mo'ed, Shabbath*, Vol. II, tr. Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman, Rebecca Bennet Publications, 1959, p. 411-412)

“Thus, Moses said: ‘If in connection with Mount Sinai, which was hallowed only for the occasion [of Revelation], we were told: *Come not near a woman* (ib. XIX, 15), then how much more must I, to whom He [God] speaks at all times, separate myself from my wife?’”

We also have information from the Jewish traditional teachings on Moses and his chaste and pure marriage after Sinai. In truth,

“it was God Himself who told him [to separate himself from his wife], for it says, "With him do I speak mouth to mouth" (Num. XII, 8). R. Judah also said that it was told him directly by God. For Moses too was included in the injunction, "Come not near a woman", thus all were forbidden; and when He afterwards said: "Return ye to your tents" (Deut. 5:30) He permitted them [to their husbands]. Moses then asked: "Am I included in them?" and God replied: "No; but As for thee, stand thou here by Me" (Deut. 5:31).” (*Midrash Rabbah Exodus*, XLVI. 3, tr. Rabbi Dr. S.M. Lehrman, Soncino Press, NY, 1983, p. 529)

The Holy Prophets Elijah and Elisha were also celibate all their lives (*Zohar Hadash* 2:1; *Midrash Mishlei* 30, 105, *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer* 33). Carmelite tradition teaches that a community of Jewish hermits had lived at the Mount of Carmel from the time of Elijah until the Catholic *Order of the Carmelites* were founded there. The Carmelite Constitution of 1281 teaches that from the time when Elijah and Elisha had dwelt devoutly on Mount Carmel, Priests and Prophets, Jewish and Christian, had lived praiseworthy lives in holy penitence and purity adjacent to the site of the fountain of Elisha, in an uninterrupted succession.

There is quite much about chastity in the Jewish tradition and writings, but the Jews of today, however, speak nothing or near to nothing about this. When for the sake of the Torah (i.e., intense study in it), a rabbi would abstain from relations with his wife, it was deemed permissible, for he was then cohabiting with the Shekinah (the Divine Presence) in the Torah (*Zohar re Gn* 1:27; 13:3 and Psalm 85:14 in the *Discourse of Rabbi Phineas to Rabbis Jose, Judah, and Hiya*).

Jewish tradition also mentions the celibate Zenu'im (Chaste ones) to whom the secret of the Name of God was entrusted, for they were able to preserve the Holy Name in “perfect purity” (*Kiddushin* 71a; *Midash Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 3:11; *Yer. yoma* 39a, 40a). Those in hope of a divine revelation consequently refrained from sexual intercourse and were strict

in matters of purity (Enoch 83:2; Revelation 14:2-5). Indeed, Philo (*Apol. pro Judaeis* 1X, 14-17), Josephus, (*Antiq.* XVIII. 21) and St. Hippolytus (*Philosophumena* IX, IV, 28a) wrote on the celibacy of the Jewish Essenes hundreds of years before the discovery of their settlements in Qumran by the Dead Sea.

Philo Judaeus (c. 20 B.C.-50 A.D.), a Jewish philosopher, described Jewish women who were virgins who have kept their chastity not under compulsion, like some Greek priestesses, but of their own free will in their ardent yearning for Wisdom: “Eager to have Wisdom for their life-mate, they have spurned the pleasures of the body and desire no mortal offspring but those immortal children which only the soul that is dear to God can bring forth to birth” (Philo, *Cont.* 68; see also Philo, *Abr.* 100). For “the chaste are rewarded by receiving illumination from the concealed heavenly light” (*Zohar* 11. 229b-230a). Because “if the understanding is safe and unimpaired, free from the oppression of the iniquities or passions... it will gaze clearly on all that is worthy of contemplation” (Philo, *Sob.* 1.5). Conversely, “the understanding of the pleasure-loving man is blind and unable to see those things that are worth seeing... the sight of which is wonderful to behold and desirable” (Philo, *Q. Gen.* IV.245)

St. John Damascene (c. 676-749 A.D.), a Christian theologian, describes of Moses and the Israelites concerning purity, “Did not God, when He wished the Israelites to see Him, bid them purify the body? [Ex. 19:15; Num. 6:2] Did not the priests purify themselves and so approach the temple’s shrine and offer victims? And did not the law call chastity the great vow?” (*An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book IV, Chapter XXIV.--Concerning Virginity). Why so few people today speak or write about chastity and purity is not hard to guess since almost all men and women, whether married or not, are filled with impurity, lust-fulness and sensuality. This is also the reason why God performs less miracles and why He reveals Himself to less people nowadays. Indeed, since almost all are entrenched in the flesh, this greatly hinders their spirituality and conversation with God. God, however, is never far away from those who seek and love purity and chastity. Thus, “If you long for God to manifest Himself to you, why do you not hear Moses, when he commands the people to be pure from the stains of marriage, that they may take in the vision of God [Ex. 19:15].” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, Chapter XXIV, ca. 335-395 A.D.)

There is “a time to be far from embraces” for those who are married according to God’s Holy Word in the Book of Ecclesiastes

In truth, contrary to what many lustful people nowadays teach, Our Lord and God teaches us in *The Book of Ecclesiastes* that there is “***A time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces***” (Ecclesiastes 3:5) and this teaching of Our Lord in Holy Scripture

directly applies to the married since He wishes them to practice chastity from time to time in order to grow in holiness and purity. The phrase “*A time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces*” refers to the marital act. Haydock Catholic Bible Commentary explains this verse: “*Verse 5. **Embraces**. Continence was sometimes prescribed to married people, Leviticus xx. 18., and 1 Corinthians 7. (St. Jerome) (St. Augustine, Enchiridion 78.) (Calmet).*” This clearly shows us not only that Our Lord *wants* all the married to sometimes abstain from the marital act, but also that the marital act sometimes *must* be abstained from altogether instead of being performed every day as the world and human sensuality predicates.

There are two main reasons for why the Holy Bible instructs married spouses to abstain from the marital act, teaching them that there is “***a time to be far from embraces***”. The first reason is that spouses who perform the marital act often will more easily fall into sexual sins either with his own spouse or with himself or with some other person, since he who indulges his flesh often is much more apt to fall into sexual sins of various sorts just like a person who drinks wine often is much more apt to fall into the sin of drunkenness than a person who rarely or never drinks wine at all. The second reason is that chastity helps a person’s prayer to become better and stronger and “*give[s] you power to attend upon the Lord, without impediment*” (1 Cor. 7:35) according to God’s Holy Word in the Bible.

The majority of the Jews in the Old Testament Religion awaited the coming and birth of the Messiah, and because of this, they also extolled the procreation of the Jewish race since they understood that the Messiah would be born from their race. The majority of them did not understand, however, that God would bring forth the Messiah from a pure virgin and without any sexual intercourse. The reason God chose to become man through a virgin, and without any human sexual relations is because Our Lord values chastity and purity above the marital life. It was not fitting that God who is purity Himself, should become man through an act that had become wounded and lustful through concupiscence after the fall and original sin of Adam and Eve. Thus, Our Lord decreed that He would become Man both since His dignity required this, but also because He wanted His people to understand that the meritorious action of observing chastity is a great virtue that showers humanity with blessings of different kinds.

St. Methodius, *Banquet of the Ten Virgins* (c. 311 A.D.): “For consider, O virgins, how he [St. Paul, in Holy Scripture], desiring with all his might that believers in Christ should be chaste, endeavors by many arguments to show them the dignity of chastity, as when he says, “Now, concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman,” thence showing already very clearly that it

is good not to touch a woman, laying it down, and setting it forth unconditionally. But afterwards, being aware of the weakness of the less continent, and their passion for intercourse, he permitted those who are unable to govern the flesh to use their own wives, rather than, shamefully transgressing, to give themselves up to fornication. Then, after having given this permission, he immediately added these words, "that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency;" which means, "if you, such as you are, cannot, on account of the incontinence and softness of your bodies, be perfectly continent, I will rather permit you to have intercourse with your own wives, lest, professing perfect continence, ye be constantly tempted by the evil one, and be inflamed with lust after other men's wives." (Discourse III, Chapter XI)

Speaking about the greatness and practice of purity and chastity of the men and women of the Old Law, St. Jerome (347-420) confirms the historical truth that chastity was practiced even then, as well as that Moses laid off the earthly garments of marriage in order to arraign himself in the pure and spotless garment of heaven and eternity, since he knew very well that "The truth is that, in view of the purity of the body of Christ, all sexual intercourse is unclean" and that sex is only tolerated and excused for the procreation of children: "Does he imagine that we approve of any sexual intercourse except for the procreation of children?"

St. Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, Book 1, Section 20, A.D. 393: "But I wonder why he [Jovinianus] set Judah and Tamar before us for an example [Gen. xxxviii], unless perchance even harlots give him pleasure; or Onan who was slain because he grudged his brother seed [Gen. xxxviii. 9]. Does he imagine that we approve of any sexual intercourse except for the procreation of children? As regards Moses, it is clear that he would have been in peril at the inn, if Sephora which is by interpretation a bird, had not circumcised her son, and cut off the foreskin of marriage with the knife which prefigured the Gospel [Ex. iv. 24-26]. This is that Moses who when he saw a great vision and heard an angel, or the Lord speaking in the bush [Ex. iii. 5], could not by any means approach to him without first loosing the latchet of his shoe, that is, putting off the bonds of marriage. And we need not be surprised at this in the case of one who was a prophet, lawgiver, and the friend of God, seeing that all the people when about to draw nigh to Mount Sinai, and to hear the voice speaking to them, were commanded to sanctify themselves in three days, and keep themselves from their wives. I am out of order in violating historical sequence, but I may point out that the same thing was said by Ahimelech [1 Sam. xxi. 4] the priest to David when he fled to Nob: "If only the young men have kept themselves from women." And David answered, "of a truth about these three days." For the shew-bread, like the body of Christ, might not be eaten by those who rose from the marriage bed. And in passing we ought to consider the words "if only the

young men have kept themselves from women.” The truth is that, in view of the purity of the body of Christ, all sexual intercourse is unclean. In the law also it is enjoined that the high priest must not marry any but a virgin, nor must he take to wife a widow [Levit. xxi. 13, 14]. If a virgin and a widow are on the same level, how is it that one is taken, the other rejected? And the widow of a priest is bidden abide in the house of her father, and not to contract a second marriage [Levit. xxi. 3]. If the sister of a priest dies in virginity, just as the priest is commanded to go to the funeral of his father and mother, so must he go to hers. But if she be married, she is despised as though she belonged not to him. He who has married a wife, and he who has planted a vineyard, an image of the propagation of children, is forbidden to go to the battle. For he who is the slave of his wife cannot be the Lord’s soldier. And the laver in the tabernacle was cast from the mirrors of the women who fasted, signifying the bodies of pure virgins: And within, in the sanctuary, both cherubim, and mercy-seat, and the ark of the covenant, and the table of shew-bread, and the candle-stick, and the censer, were made of the purest gold. For silver might not be brought into the holy of holies [Ex. xxxvii].”

The figure of the Eucharist in the Holy Bible requires people to be chaste in order to receive it, teaching us to be chaste for three days before receiving the Eucharist

Another example of chastity in the Old Testament is found in *The First Book of Kings* (also called *First Samuel*) where the future King David, being on the run from King Saul, asks the priest Achimelech for some food to alleviate his and his friends’ hunger.

1 Kings 21:2-5: “And David said to Achimelech the priest: ‘...Now therefore if thou have any thing at hand, though it were but five loaves, give me, or whatsoever thou canst find.’ And the priest answered David, saying: ‘I have no common bread at hand, but only holy bread, *if the young men be clean*, especially from women?’ And David answered the priest, and said to him: “Truly, as to what concerneth women, we have refrained ourselves from yesterday and the day before, when we came out, and *the vessels* of the young men were *holy*. Now this way *is defiled*, but it shall also *be sanctified* this day in the vessels.”

Haydock Commentary explains some very noteworthy and interesting things about these remarkable verses: “**Verse 4.** *If the young men be clean*, &c. If this cleanness was required of them that were to eat that bread, which was but a figure of the bread of life which we receive in the blessed sacrament [the Eucharist]; how clean ought Christians be when they approach to our tremendous mysteries? And what reason hath the Church of God to admit

none to be her ministers, to consecrate and daily receive this most pure sacrament, but such as devote themselves to a life of perpetual purity. (Challoner) --- **Verse 5. *Vessels***, i.e., the bodies, have been *holy*; that is, have been kept from impurity (Challoner)... Septuagint, "my men are all purified." (Calmet) --- *Defiled*. Is liable to expose us to dangers of uncleanness, (Challoner) as we shall perhaps have to fight. (Haydock) --- *Sanctified*. That is, we shall take care, notwithstanding these dangerous circumstances, to keep our *vessels holy*; that is, keep our bodies from every thing that may defile us. (Challoner)"

Just like in the case of *The Book of Exodus* where God demanded the people to be chaste for three days before receiving His Holy Word, so the figure and sign of the most Holy Eucharist in the Old Testament time also refers to the three days of chastity before receiving it. We see the three day standard of practicing chastity before receiving the Holy Eucharist in these words: "Truly, as to what concerneth women, we have refrained ourselves from yesterday and the day before, when we came out, and the vessels of the young men were holy." (1 Kings 21:5)

Likewise, the reception of the Word of God by the people of Israel in *The Book of Exodus* after three days of chastity signifies that there is a necessity for all to be chaste for three days in order to receive the Word of God (Our Lord Jesus Christ) made flesh in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The Old Testament could not be more clear on the beneficial nature of chastity, and that it is necessary for a person to practice it for three days before receiving the Most Holy Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Old Law and the Old Testament, every time God commanded the people to "sanctify" themselves this meant that they were to be chaste for a period of time as evidenced from *The Book of Exodus*, as we saw above. The commandment to the people to "sanctify" themselves that were given by God and His Prophets and Priests in the Old Testament are quite often used in the Old Testament, but most people who read the Old Testament do not understand that the Jewish sanctification actually meant to practice the virtue of chastity for a certain amount of time. Thus, the Church of the Old Testament just like the Church of the New Covenant practiced chastity, and drew down a shower of grace and mercy from the Lord: "*The Lord knoweth the days of undefiled; and their inheritance shall be for ever.*" (Psalms 36:18)

The Jews of the Old Testament time also understood how the practice of chastity would benefit them both spiritually and physically and that is also why the common practice of many of the Jews who entered into military life (as we saw in the case of King David and his men) were to remain chaste and sanctify their life in order to receive the grace of God to become victorious in battle. Indeed, God Himself directly commanded the Jews to

always be pure and chaste when they were to engage in a war or a battle: “*When thou goest out to war against thy enemies, thou shalt keep thyself from every evil thing. If there be among you any man, that is defiled in a dream by night, he shall go forth out of the camp. And shall not return, before he be washed with water in the evening: and after sunset he shall return into the camp.*” (Deuteronomy 23:9-11)

When one remembers that God commanded the Jews to always practice chastity in both war and peace time, it is not hard to understand why in the cases when they lost their wars, their lack of chastity was a main reason (if not the greatest reason) why they lost their battles and their independence.

The Christian Crusaders also practiced chastity like the Jews and did penance in order to become victorious in battles against the heathen. Many times God also revealed through supernatural revelations to the Christian combatants just like He did to the Jews that unless they were virtuous and pure, they would lose future battles. The order of the Knights Templar was one of these virtuous orders who solemnly took vows of chastity and perfect purity, constantly warring against the Devil, the flesh and the world on one side, and the Heretic, Saracen, Muslim or Infidel on the other. They were a kind of warrior monk; a new breed indeed in the Christian world; and because of their spectacular purity, a few numbers of the Crusaders could miraculously defeat a multitude of infidels, who were much more numerous and stronger than they were themselves. These pure servants of Christ also wore a white dress which signified their inner purity. In *The History of the Knights Templar*, by Charles G. Addison, we read the following words concerning this: “To all the professed **knights**, both in winter and summer, we give, if they can be procured, white garments, that those who have cast behind them a dark life may know that they are to commend themselves to their Creator by a pure and white life. For what is whiteness but perfect chastity, and chastity is the security of the soul and the health of the body. And unless every knight shall continue chaste, he shall not come to perpetual rest, nor see God, as the apostle Paul witnesseth: Follow after peace with all men, and chastity, *without which no man shall see God...*”

Indeed, the necessity for us all to “sanctify” ourselves is crucially important, and especially so when we are to receive Our Lord’s Holy Body and Blood. Speaking about the reception of the Holy Eucharist, St. Jerome expresses himself in the following terms in his *Commentary on The Gospel of Matthew*: “If the loaves of Proposition might not be eaten by them who had known their wives carnally, how much less may this Bread [the Eucharist] which has come down from heaven be defiled and touched by them who shortly before have been in conjugal embraces? It is not that we condemn marriages, but that at the time when we are going to eat the flesh of the Lamb, we ought not to indulge in carnal

acts.” (Epist. xxviii, among St. Jerome’s works)

For the same reason, in the year 1679 A.D., Pope Innocent XI addressed all priests in an encyclical, teaching them how married people are to be instructed and disposed in order to be able to receive the Most Holy Body, Blood and Divinity of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist: “In the case of married persons, however, let them seriously consider this, since the blessed Apostle does not wish them to "defraud one another, except perhaps by consent for a time, that they may give themselves to prayer" [cf. 1 Cor. 7:5], let them advise these seriously that they should give themselves more to continence because of reverence for the most holy Eucharist, and that they should come together for Communion in the heavenly banquet with a purer mind.” (Pope Innocent XI (1676-1689), *From the Decree C. S. Conc.*, Feb. 12. 1679, Denzinger #1147)

Pope Innocent XI also added additional instructions on how both the married as well as all others are to be instructed and disposed for the reception of Our Lord’s Body and Blood in the following words: “It will be of benefit, too, besides the diligence of priests and confessors, to make use also of the services of preachers and to have an agreement with them, that, when the faithful have become used to frequenting the most holy Sacrament (which they should do), they preach a sermon on the great preparation for undertaking that, and show in general that those who by devout zeal are stirred to a more frequent or daily partaking of the health bringing Food, whether lay tradesmen, or married people, or any others, ought to understand their own weakness, so that because of the dignity of the Sacrament and the fear of the divine judgment they may learn to revere the celestial table on which is Christ; and if at any time they should feel themselves not prepared, to abstain from it and to gird themselves for a greater preparation. ... Furthermore, let bishops and priests or confessors refute those who hold that daily communion is of divine right...” (Pope Innocent XI (1676-1689), *From the Decree C. S. Conc.*, Feb. 12. 1679, Denzinger #1149-1150)

So a good advice to pious persons is that they remain chaste for three days before receiving the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist in the same way as the Jewish people were commanded by God to practice chastity for three days before they received the Word of God in the Old Covenant; and just like David and his men had to be chaste and pure for three days before they received the figure and sign of the Body of Christ in the Old Law. The honor that a chaste and virtuous person gives to Christ and the Holy Eucharist by practicing the virtue of chastity for three days before receiving the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist is, simply said, inestimable. The biblical Commentary of First Kings also teaches us this fact, mentioning that “If this cleanness was required of them that were to eat that bread, which was but a figure of the bread of life

which we receive in the blessed sacrament [the Eucharist]; how clean ought Christians be when they approach to our tremendous mysteries?”

In fact, the Catholic Church has always admonished and taught spouses that there is a necessity to abstain from the marriage debt for at least three days before receiving the Most Holy Eucharist of the Mass in order to obtain blessings from God, while also recognizing and admonishing spouses that **“The dignity of so great a Sacrament [of the Eucharist] also demands that married persons abstain from the marriage debt for some days previous to Communion”**.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent speaks much of the necessity of purity and preparation before receiving the Holy Eucharist. In the section ***“On the Sacrament of Matrimony”*** it teaches that the three days standard of observing chastity before receiving Communion was taught by their predecessors, thus indicating that the Tradition of the Church always taught this truth: “But as every blessing is to be obtained from God by holy prayer, the faithful are also to be taught sometimes to abstain from the marriage debt, in order to devote themselves to prayer. **Let the faithful understand that (this religious continence), according to the proper and holy injunction of our predecessors, is particularly to be observed for at least three days before Communion, and oftener during the solemn fast of Lent.** Thus will they find the blessings of marriage to be daily increased by an abundance of divine grace; and living in the pursuit of piety, they will not only spend this life in peace and tranquility, but will also repose in the true and firm hope, which confoundeth not, of arriving, through the divine goodness, at the possession of that life which is eternal.”

In the section ***“On the sacrament of the Eucharist, Preparation Of Body”*** *The Catechism of Trent* corroborates the fact that the story of David in the Bible shows us that we must both fast and be chaste before receiving the Holy Eucharist: “Our preparation should not, however, be confined [only] to the soul; it should also extend to the body. We are to approach the Holy Table fasting, having neither eaten nor drunk anything at least from the preceding midnight until the moment of Communion. **The dignity of so great a Sacrament also demands that married persons abstain from the marriage debt for some days previous to Communion.** This observance is recommended by the example of David, who, when about to receive the showbread from the hands of the priest, declared that he and his servants had been clean from women for three days. The above are the principal things to be done by the faithful preparatory to receiving the sacred mysteries with profit; and to these heads may be reduced whatever other things may seem desirable by way of preparation.”

Indeed, there is a “*great necessity of this previous preparation*” for all who presume to receive the Most Holy Body of Our Lord: “We now come to point out the manner in which the faithful should be previously prepared for sacramental Communion. To demonstrate the great necessity of this previous preparation, the example of the Savior should be adduced. Before He gave to His Apostles the Sacrament of His precious Body and Blood, although they were already clean, He washed their feet to show that we must use extreme diligence before Holy Communion in order to approach it with the greatest purity and innocence of soul.” (*The Catechism of Trent, On the sacrament of the Eucharist, Necessity Of Previous Preparation For Communion*)

Considering all of the above, it is clear why The Catechism of Trent, in the Chapter about the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and the *Necessity Of Previous Preparation For Communion*, rightly declared that he who dares to approach the Holy Eucharist “**without this preparation [of purity] not only derives from it no advantage, but even incurs the greatest misfortune and loss,**” which directly contradicts the lustful and depraved world who teaches that God does not require any kind of special purity in order to receive Him: “In the next place, the faithful are to understand that as he who approaches thus prepared and disposed is adorned with the most ample gifts of heavenly grace; so, on the contrary, he who approaches without this preparation not only derives from it no advantage, but even incurs the greatest misfortune and loss. It is characteristic of the best and most salutary things that, if seasonably made use of, they are productive of the greatest benefit; but if employed out of time, they prove most pernicious and destructive. It cannot, therefore, excite out surprise that the great and exalted gifts of God; when received into a soul properly disposed, are of the greatest assistance towards the attainment of salvation; while to those who receive them unworthily, they bring with them eternal death. Of this the Ark of the Lord affords a convincing illustration. The people of Israel possessed nothing more precious and it was to them the source of innumerable blessings from God; but when the Philistines carried it away, it brought on them a most destructive plague and the heaviest calamities, together with eternal disgrace. Thus also food when received from the mouth into a healthy stomach nourishes and supports the body; but when received into an indisposed stomach, causes grave disorders.” (*The Catechism of Trent, On the Sacrament of the Eucharist; and the Necessity Of Previous Preparation For Communion*)

Indeed, in *The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Jesus also tells us that we will be punished if we receive Him in the Eucharist with a wicked or impure heart. *Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to St. Bridget, saying, “When the words ‘This is my body’ are spoken, the bread becomes the Body of Christ that people receive, both the good and the wicked, one person as much as one thousand, according to the same truth but not with the same effect, for the good receive it unto life, while the wicked receive it unto judgment.”* (*The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 4, Chapter 61*) And so, “**as the sacred feasts approach, observe**

chastity with your wives for several days preceding, so that you may approach the Lord's altar with a peaceful conscience.” (St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon* 19:3)

Before the apostasy of the 20th and the 21st century, it was commonly known by the faithful of the Church that the Church taught married spouses to abstain for at least three days from marital relations as well as that all people (except the sick or weak) were to fast from the preceding midnight until the moment of Communion in order for the servants of Christ to be pure and better disposed to receive the Holy Eucharist. Nowadays, however, since people are worldly and lustful, they either reject or ignore this ancient Church teaching. It is indeed obvious that Christians who receive the true Body of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist rather than just a figure or shell of it as the Jews did in the Old Law, should minimally practice as much chastity or even more purity than those in the Old Law did, since this is only reasonable and just. The true Body of Christ is of infinitely more value and deserving of honor than the figure of it, and yet most so-called Christians of today do not even practice as much virtue as the Jews in the Old Law did.

Already in the 6th century, Pope St. Gregory the Great, in his *Epistle to Augustine, Bishop of the English*, rightly declared that God demands from us purity and chastity when we are to receive Him in the Most Holy Eucharist of the Mass, since this was even required in the Old Law which was only a sign of the Eucharist. He said,

“Furthermore it is to be attentively considered that the Lord in mount Sinai, when about to speak to the people, first charged the same people to abstain from women. And if there, where the Lord spoke to men through a subject creature, purity of body was required with such careful provision that they who were to hear the words of God might not have intercourse with women, how much more ought those who receive the Body of the Almighty Lord to keep purity of the flesh in themselves, lest they be weighed down by the greatness of the inestimable mystery! Hence also it is said through the priest to David concerning his servants, that if they were pure from women they might eat the shew bread; which they might not receive at all unless David first declared them to be pure from women.” (Selected Epistles of St. Gregory, in "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers", Volume XIII, Book XII, Epistle LXIV)

It is a sad fact to have to relate, but carnal Christians who reject purity and holiness before receiving the Most Holy Eucharist of the Mass show a lack of estimation and appreciation for the Body of Christ by their worldly and pleasure seeking lifestyle, showing themselves to be lovers of the flesh and of the world rather than of Our Lord. It is an utter disgrace and blemish on every Christian (who have received countless of more graces than the Jews of the Old Law) to practice less virtue than the Jews in the Old Law did. This lack of virtue is

undoubtedly also one of the main reasons of why the Church's members have been decreased drastically during the 20th century and why so many of them were allowed to fall into immorality and apostasy from God. The Holy Bible is crystal clear when it says that: "*whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord. Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep.*" (1 Corinthians 11:27-30)

Our Lord Himself tells us in *The Revelations of St. Bridget* that there is an absolute necessity for all to receive Him in purity and chastity. *Our Lord spoke to St. Bridget in a revelation, saying:* "I am like a ruler who fought faithfully in the land of his pilgrimage, and returned with joy to the land of his birth. This ruler had a very precious treasure [the most Holy Eucharist]. At its sight, the bleary-eyed became clear-sighted, the sad were consoled, the sick regained their strength, the dead were raised. For the purpose of the safe and honest protection of this treasure, a splendid and magnificent house of suitable height was built and finished with seven steps leading up to it and the treasure. The ruler entrusted the treasure to his servants for them to watch over, manage, and protect faithfully and purely. This was in order that the ruler's love for his servants might be shown and that the servants' faithfulness toward the ruler might be seen.

"As time went on, the treasure began to be despised and its house rarely visited, while the guardians grew lukewarm, and the love of the ruler was neglected. Then the ruler consulted his intimate advisers concerning what was to be done about such ingratitude, and one of them said in answer: 'It is written that the neglectful judges and guardians of the people were ordered to be hanged in the sun. However, mercy and judgment are your nature; you are lenient toward all, for all things are yours and you are merciful toward all.'

"I am the ruler in the parable. I appeared like a pilgrim on earth by virtue of my humanity, although I was mighty in heaven and on earth by virtue of my divinity. I fought so hard on earth that all the muscles of my hands and feet were ruptured out of zeal for the salvation of souls. As I was about to leave the world and ascend into heaven, I left it a most worthy memorial, my most Holy Body, in order that, in the same way that the Old Law could glory in the ark, the manna, and the tablets of the covenant, and in other ceremonies, so the new man could rejoice in the New Law—not, as before, in a shadow but in the truth, indeed, in my crucified body that had been foreshadowed in the law. In order that my body might be given honor and glory, I established the house of the Holy Church, where it was to be kept and preserved, as well as priests to be its special guardians, who in a certain way are above the angels by reason of their ministry. The one whom angels fear to touch due to a reverent fear, priests handle with their hands and mouth.

“I honored the priests with a sevenfold honor, as it were, on seven steps. On the first step, they should be my standard-bearers and special friends by reason of the purity of their mind and body, for purity is the first position near to God, whom nothing foul can touch nor adorn. It was not strange that marital relation was permitted to the priests of the law during the time in which they were not offering sacrifice, for they were carrying the shell, not the nut itself. Now, however, with the coming of the truth and the disappearance of the figure, one must strive all the more fully for purity by as much as the nut is sweeter than the shell. As a sign of this kind of continence, first the hair is tonsured, so that desire for pleasure does not rule over spirit or flesh.

“... My grievance now, however, is that these steps have fallen apart. Pride is loved more than humility, impurity is practiced instead of purity, the divine lessons are not read but the book of the world, negligence is to be seen at the altars, God’s wisdom is regarded as foolishness, the salvation of souls is not a concern. As if this were not enough, they even throw away my vestments and scorn my weapons. On the mountain, I showed Moses the vestments that the priests of the law were to use. It is not as though there were anything material in God’s heavenly dwelling, but it is because spiritual things cannot be understood except by means of physical symbols. Thus, I revealed a spiritual truth by means of something physical in order that people might realize how much reverence and purity are needful for those who have the truth itself—my Body—given that those who were wearing but a shadow and a figure had so much purity and reverence.

“Why did I reveal such magnificence in material vestments to Moses? It was, of course, in order to use them to teach and symbolize the magnificence and beauty of the soul. **As the vestments of the priests were seven in number, so too the soul that approaches the Body of God shall have seven virtues without which there is no salvation. The first vestment of the soul, then, is contrition and confession. These cover the head. The second is desire for God and desire for chastity. The third is work in honor of God as well as patience in adversity. The fourth is caring neither for human praise nor reproach but for the honor of God alone. The fifth is abstinence of the flesh along with true humility. The sixth is consideration of the favors of God as well as fear of his judgments. The seventh is love of God above all things and perseverance in good undertakings.**

“These vestments, however, have been changed and are now despised. People love to make excuses and smooth over their guilt instead of going to confession. **They love constant lasciviousness instead of chastity.** They love work for the benefit of the body instead of work for the salvation of the soul. They love worldly ambition and pride instead of the honor and love of God. They love all kinds of redundancy instead of praiseworthy thrift, presumption and criticizing God’s judgments instead of the fear of God, and the clergy’s thanklessness toward everyone instead of God’s love toward all. Therefore, as I said through the prophet, I shall come in indignation, and tribulation shall

give them understanding... My mercy shows pardon to them all and endures them all. However, my justice calls for retribution, for I cry out each day and you see well enough how many answer me. Nevertheless, I will still send out the words of my mouth. Those who listen will complete the days of their lives in that joy that can neither be expressed nor imagined because of its sweetness. To those, however, who do not listen, there will come, as it is written, seven plagues in the soul and seven plagues in the body. They will find this out, if they think and read about what has been done. Otherwise, they will quake and quail when they do experience it.” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 4, Chapter 58)

Again, God’s holy word is clear that there is “***A time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.***” (Ecclesiastes 3:5) But most people, however, refuse to obey these words of Our Lord which says that one must practice chastity from time to time. Instead, they choose to act in a gluttonous way in the marital act by overindulging in it even though it is contrary to reason to have more marital relations than what is necessary.

The infinite value of the many and great graces and special friendship of God that lustful people lose because of their inordinate love of this fleshly act is, simply said, impossible to estimate, since a single Grace is truly of more worth than the whole of the universe combined. “*He that loveth cleanness of heart, for the grace of his lips shall have the King [of Heaven] for his friend.*” (Proverbs 22:11)

Many Popes and Saints, as we have seen, tried to get all Christians to practice chastity before they received the Eucharist. It is clear that this is an Apostolic Tradition, since the Church, from the beginning, tried to admonish and teach Her children to always abstain from the sexual act before receiving the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. For example, in the year 866, Pope St. Nicholas the Great wrote a letter to Boris, prince of Bulgaria, and explained the reason for abstaining from marital relations on Sundays and holy days, saying that: “If we must abstain from worldly labor on Sundays, how much the more must we be on our guard against fleshly lust and every bodily defilement.” And so, it is certain that the Church always have taught that Christians are to remain chaste before receiving the Eucharist. St. Caesarius of Arles (c. 470-543 A.D.), who was a fierce promoter of chastity before receiving the Most Holy Eucharist, wrote concerning “a good Christian” in the following way: “That man is a good Christian who, as often as the sacred feasts come around, in order that he may receive Holy Communion more serenely, observes chastity with his wife during the few preceding days, that he may presume to approach the Lord’s altar with a free and serene conscience because of his chaste body and pure heart.” (*Sermon 16:2*)

Jonas, Bishop of Orleans from 818 to 843, scolded married folk for “irreverently coming”

to church after engaging in marital relations. Not only were these married folk “so indiscreet as to come up as far as the altar,” lamented Jonas, but they also received “the Body and Blood of Christ.” Jonas warned those soiled with the “uncleanness” of their marital activity: “Let them understand that they should only enter Christ’s Church and receive His Body and Blood with a clean body and a pure heart.” (Jonas of Orleans, *De Institutione Laicorum*) St. Caesarius of Arles adds: “Who is unable to advise that, as often as the sacred solemnities approach, chastity with one’s own wife should be observed several days preceding, so that the altar of the Lord may be approached with an upright and pure conscience. Indeed, if a man communicated without chastity, he will receive judgment where he might have had a remedy.” (*Sermon 1:12*)

Origen (c. 182-254 A.D.) in his *Treatise on the Passover*, Exegesis of Exodus 12, explains that the Holy Bible teaches us that we must receive the Holy Eucharist with: “Your loins girded.” He then goes on to explain what this means: “We are ordered, when we eat the Passover [the Eucharist], to be pure of bodily sexual union, for this is what the girding of the loins means [in the Holy Scripture]. Thus Scripture teaches us to bind up the bodily source of seed and to repress inclinations to sexual relations when we partake of the flesh of Christ.”

The amount of Popes, Fathers and Saints that could be quoted concerning the absolute necessity to be chaste before the reception of the Holy Eucharist and the Body and Blood of Christ is almost endless. Gratian, in his *Marriage Canons From “The Decretum”*, which is based largely on the authority of the Church Fathers (written in the 12th century), clearly shows us how this Apostolic Tradition of observing a period of chastity before receiving the Holy Eucharist was firmly established and believed by the faithful in the Early Church. **However, these quotations and Early Church Canons also clearly shows us the necessity of abstaining from marital relations *not only* before Receiving the Sacraments of the Holy Mass, but also on all Holy Days. Gratian writes concerning this,**

“That spouses may not lawfully render each other the debt during times of prayer, St. Jerome writes in a certain sermon, saying: “A man should abstain from the Flesh of the Lamb when he renders the debt to his wife. You know, most dear brothers, that one who renders the debt to his wife cannot devote himself to prayer, nor can he eat the Flesh of the Lamb.” Also: “If those who touched women could not eat the Showbread [that was the mere sign of the future Eucharist described in the biblical book of 1st Sam. 21:4], how much more should those who have not refrained from matrimonial embrace refrain from touching and violating the Bread Come Down from Heaven? Now, we do not condemn marriage, but when we are to eat the Flesh

of the Lamb, we ought to forego carnal works."

"Also, [Saint] Augustine, [in Sermon ii of the Temporal Cycle, that is, for the Second Sunday of Advent]: "One should abstain from conjugal union on the solemnities of the saints. On Christmas and other festivals we ought to abstain, not only from the company of unbelieving concubines, but also from our own wives." Also, [Saint] Ambrose, in his sermon on the Lord's Coming: "On fast days one ought also to abstain from one's wife. Brethren, you should abstain, not only from every impurity, but you should also carefully hold yourself back from your own wives. Let no one have relations with his wife. The same, on the First Letter to the Corinthians [Chapter 7]: If a wife is taken for procreating children, not much attention needs to be dedicated to that. What is necessary for conception and childbirth shows that one can abstain from works of the flesh on feast days and rogation days, as the law demands at those times."

"Also, Augustine, in his book Questions on the Old and New Testaments, [Question cxxvii], says: "One must refrain from one's wife on certain days. Sometimes a Christian may lawfully approach his wife, at other times he may not. On the rogation days and fast days, one may not lawfully approach her, because one should then abstain even from lawful things, in order to entreat and pray more easily. Hence the Apostle [1 Cor. 7:5] says that spouses should abstain for a time by mutual consent, to devote time to prayer. For according to the law [cf. Is. 58:4], one may not sue and fight during fasts, although one might afterwards." Also, [Saint] John Chrysostom: "Without continence, one does not truly do penance. One who claims to do penance and master himself by self-denial speaks in vain if he does not abandon the bed-chamber [cf. Joel 2:16] and add continence to his fasting."

"Also, [Pope Saint] Gregory, [to the Questions of Augustine, Bishop of the English, Reply 10]: "A man should refrain from entering a church after sleeping with his wife... We do not suggest that marriage is wrong, but because lawful conjugal relations cannot occur without lust, one should abstain from entering a sacred place... Lawful union of the flesh must be for the sake of offspring, not for lust, and fleshly intercourse for having children, not for satisfying vice... But since, in the act of union, men are dominated, not by desire to procreate offspring, but by lust, spouses do have something to regret in their union."

"Gratian: The following forbid the celebration of marriage on days of abstinence. Hence in the Council of Laodicea, [A.D. 363-364, canon 52]: "Marriages or feasts may not be celebrated during lent." Also, from the Council [Lateran Council of 649] of Pope [Saint] Martin, [canon 48]: "The feasts of the martyrs may not be celebrated during Lent, but the offering may be made in their memory on Saturdays and Sundays. Neither feasts nor weddings may be celebrated during Lent." Also, from the Council of Lerida [A.D. 546]: "Weddings may not be celebrated from Septuagesima until the Octave of Easter, during the three weeks

before the feast of St. John, and from Advent until Epiphany. If any do so, let them be separated [excommunicated]." Also, [Pope Saint] Nicholas, to the questions of the Bulgarians, [A.D. 866, Letter 99]: "I think it no way possible to take a wife or have any celebrations during the season of Lent." (Gratian, Marriage Canons From *The Decretum* (Vulgate Edition), Case Thirty-Three, Question IV, Part 1 and 2)

Thus, "As often as you come to church and wish to receive the sacraments of Christ on a feast, observe chastity several days before it, so that you may be able to approach the Lord's altar with a peaceful conscience. Devoutly practice this also throughout Lent, even to the end of the Pasch, so that the Easter solemnity may find you pure and chaste. In fact, a good Christian should not only observe chastity for a few days before he communicates, [that is, before he receives the Holy Eucharist] but he should never know his wife except from the desire for children. A man takes a wife for the procreation of children, not for the sake of lust. Even the marriage rite mentions this: 'For the procreation of children,' it says. Notice that it does not say for the sake of lust, but 'for the procreation of children.'

"... So, too, we read in the Old Testament that, when the Jewish people were about to approach Mount Sinai, it was said to them in the Lord's teaching: 'Be sanctified, and be ready against the third day, and come not near your wives,' [Exodus 19:15] and: 'if any man be defiled in a dream by night, let him not eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of salvation, lest his soul be cut off from his people.' [Deut. 23:10; Lev. 7:20] If after defilement which happens to us even unwillingly we may not communicate [receive the Eucharist] unless compunction and almsgiving come first, and fasting, too, if infirmity does not prevent it, who can say that there is no sin if we do such things intentionally when we are wide awake?

"... Since no man wants to come to church with his tunic covered with dirt, I do not know with what kind of a conscience he dares to approach the altar with his soul defiled by dissipation. Evidently, he does not fear what the Apostle said: 'Whoever partakes of the Body and Blood of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the Body and the Blood of the Lord.' [1 Cor. 11:27] If we blush and fear to touch the Eucharist with dirty hands, we should fear much more to receive the same Eucharist within a polluted soul. As I mentioned, we have been created in our soul according to God's image. Now, if you put your image on a tablet of wood or stone, and someone impudently wanted to shatter that image with stones or to stain it with dirt, I wonder whether you would not take up arms against him, I ask you, if you are so jealous of your image that was painted on a lifeless tablet, what kind of an injury do you suppose God suffers when His living image in us is defiled by dissipation? Therefore, if we do not restrain ourselves for our own sake, let us do so for the sake of God's image according to which we have been made.

"Above all, no one should know his wife when Sunday or other feasts come around. Similar precautions should be taken as often as women menstruate, for the Prophet says: 'Do not come near to a menstruous woman.' [Ezech. 18:6] If a man is aware that his wife is

in this condition but refuses to control himself on a Sunday or feast, the children who are then conceived will be born as lepers, or epileptics, or perhaps even demoniacs. Lepers are commonly born, not of wise men who observe chastity on feasts and other days, but especially of farmers who do not know how to control themselves. Truly, brethren, if animals without intellect do not touch each other except at a fixed and proper time, how much more should men who have been created according to God's image observe this? What is worse, there are some dissolute or drunken men who sometimes do not even spare their wives when they are pregnant. Therefore, if they do not amend their lives, we are to consider them worse than animals. Such men the Apostle addresses when he says: 'Every one of you learn how to possess his vessel in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who have no hope.' [1 Thess. 4:4,5] Because what is worse, many do not observe proper chastity with their own wives, they should give abundant alms, as I said above, and forgive all their enemies. Thus, as we mentioned, what has become defiled by dissipation may be cleansed by constant alms giving." (St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon 44*)

Now, then, when exactly must one start to observe chastity and purity if one wants to receive the Eucharist in accordance to the ordinances of the Church? The Bible is clear on this point in *The First Book of Kings*: "**And the priest answered David, saying: 'I have no common bread at hand, but only holy bread, if the young men be clean, especially from women?' And David answered the priest, and said to him: 'Truly, as to what concerneth women, we have refrained ourselves from yesterday and the day before [that is, three days in total when adding the same day he received the bread], when we came out, and the vessels of the young men were holy. Now this way is defiled, but it shall also be sanctified this [third] day in the vessels.'"** (1 Kings 21:3-5) This biblical text shows us that spouses must be chaste on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, if they are to receive the Most Holy Eucharist on a Sunday. This means that they must be chaste for two whole days before the reception of the Eucharist, as well as completely chaste on the whole day they also received the Holy Eucharist.

These three days also correspond perfectly to Our Lord's suffering, death and resurrection, which is the mold that all Christians must conform to and form themselves after if they want to be saved. "Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer. For he that is dead is justified from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live also together with Christ: Knowing that Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death

shall no more have dominion over him. For in that he died to sin, he died once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God: So do you also reckon, that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Let no sin therefore reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin; but present yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of justice unto God.** For sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be of sin unto death, or of obedience unto justice. But thanks be to God, that you were the servants of sin, but have obeyed from the heart, unto that form of doctrine, into which you have been delivered.” (Romans 6:3-17) Douay Rheims Bible Commentary explains the verses in Romans 6:6 in this way: “*Our old man: Our corrupt state, subject to sin and concupiscence, coming to us from Adam, is called our old man, as our state, reformed in and by Christ, is called the new man. --- Body of sin: The vices and sins, which then ruled in us, are named the body of sin.*”

In truth, if we are dead to the world, we shall live forever with Christ. Therefore, every time we will receive the Holy Eucharist, we must be chaste for two days before we receive it, as well as on the day we receive it. For example, if we want to also receive it on a Friday apart from the normal time on the Sunday, we must be chaste on the days of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Then, if we also decide to receive it on the Sunday, we must continue to be chaste on Saturday and Sunday. Those, however, who choose to perform the marital act on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday, are obliged to abstain from the Eucharist that Sunday so that the next week, they may receive it in a state of perfect purity.

It must be said, however, that no one that is married should perform the marital act on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday, since these days signify Our Lord’s suffering, death, and resurrection which is what we all must conform to if we wish to be saved, by putting to death our old sinful, fleshly and sensual nature and man, and by being resurrected in Christ, rising to heaven in purity and chastity as a new spiritual man that has been freed from our former Body of sin: “**Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth.** For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, **which is the service of idols.**” (Colossians 3:1-5)

The virtue of Chastity helps people become victorious in battles or war according to the Book of Judith

As we have already seen from the example of the Holy Scripture, God commanded those who are engaged in war to always remain chaste during their war in order to become victorious. *The Book of Judith* in the Holy Bible is another great example of how the Jewish people was saved from death and triumphed over their enemies through the holy fear, virtue and chastity of a holy woman named Judith.

The book describes how Judith and the Jewish people was being occupied by a heathen army and that all seemed as though they were going to either starve to death or be butchered by the enemy army. God, however, had other plans and choose a virtuous and chaste woman to single-handedly save the Jewish people from certain death.

Judith 15:11 “For thou [Judith] hast done manfully, and thy heart has been strengthened, **because thou hast loved chastity**, and after thy husband hast not known any other: therefore also the hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and therefore thou shalt be blessed for ever.”

Judith 16:26 “And chastity was joined to her virtue, so that she knew no man all the days of her life, after the death of Manasses her husband.”

As we can see from these verses, the love and practice of the virtue of chastity is not a vain or useless practice, but it is in fact a virtue so dearly loved by God that He showers humanity with countless of graces and helps of different sorts because of it.

Our Lord also teaches us in the New Testament Holy Scripture that a widow will become more blessed if she do not remarry, just like in the case of the holy widow Judith who stayed unmarried after the death of her husband. “*But more blessed shall she be, if she so remain, [that is, a widow] according to my counsel; and I think that I also have the spirit of God.*” (1 Cor. 7:40) This passage clearly shows us that God desires both men and women to stay chaste and unmarried after their spouse have died, and that the virtuous and chaste life of all who stay chaste are “more blessed” and beloved by God when compared to those who remarry and have children for the love of God. In truth, God is infinitely more honored by those souls who, for His sake, offers up their purity and chastity as a holocaust to Him, since the marital life is more sensual with many cares and worries that draws us away from God and perfection.

The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her Chastity and Purity is undoubtedly a direct

proof that God loves the chaste and pure with a special love, since God has never loved nor will ever love anyone (whether angel or saint) more than Her. In *The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Our Lord explicitly revealed this truth about Our Lady in the following words, **“The angels and other saints bear witness that your love for me was more ardent and your chastity more pure than that of any other, and that it was more pleasing to me than all else. Your head was like gleaming gold and your hair like sunbeams, because your most pure virginity, which is like the head of all your virtues, as well as your control over every illicit desire pleased me and shone in my sight with all humility.** You are rightly called the crowned queen over all creation - “queen” for the sake of your purity, “crowned” for your excellent worth.” (*The Revelations of Saint Bridget*, Book 5, Revelation 4)

In truth, the love and practice of the virtue of chastity draws down many great blessings on mankind, and victory in war is just one of them, as we have just seen. Too few today, however, are able to see or appreciate the great worth of this angelic virtue.

The Book of Wisdom teaches that chastity is very beneficial for salvation

The Book of Wisdom clearly describes the difference that the Holy Scripture makes between virtuous and chaste people on the one hand, and carnal, sensual and worldly people on the other. The memory of the chaste generation is indeed immortal and “it triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts.”

Wisdom 4:1-5 “O how beautiful is the chaste generation with *glory*: for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present, they imitate it: and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts [in the cause of continence]. But the multiplied brood of the wicked shall not thrive, and bastard slips shall not take deep root, nor any fast foundation. And if they flourish in branches for a time, yet standing not fast, they shall be shaken with the wind, and through the force of winds they shall be rooted out. For the branches not being perfect, shall be broken, and their fruits shall be unprofitable, and sour to eat, and fit for nothing.”

Haydock Commentary adds the following words about verse 1: “*Glory*. The offspring of the chaste is happy, (Calmet) and honorable: (Haydock) very different from that of adulterers. (Calmet) --- Bodily chastity is a great virtue. (Worthington)”

The Book of Tobias teaches spouses to practice chastity

Another great story of virtue and chastity found in the Old Testament Scripture is the story of the holy youth Tobias in *The Book of Tobias* or *Tobit*. Not surprisingly, this book is sadly missing from most protestant “bible” versions. Sad to say, being controlled by the devil and impurity, it is not hard to understand why the devil was allowed to fool the protestants to reject this biblical book since they are such fierce enemies of all sexual purity and morality.

The Book of Tobias describes how the holy youth Tobias was commanded by almighty God through the Archangel Raphael to never perform the marital act for the sake of lust and that he shall be “*moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham*” he “*mayest obtain a blessing in children*”. Tobias, who was a holy, chaste and virtuous person of course consented to this admonishment by the Holy Angel Raphael and answered God in his prayer, saying to Him that: “*not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity [children], in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever*”, thus showing us a great and edifying example of marital purity, and the necessity for all to perform the marital act for the sole purpose of procreation of children and the love of God, if they want to perfectly please Our Lord rather than their own fleshly lusts and desires.

Tobias 6:22; 8:9 “And when the third night is past, [after praying to God for three days in chastity] thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, **moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children...** [Tobias said:] And now, Lord, thou knowest, that **not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity**, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.”

Tobias 6:16-17 “Then the angel Raphael said to him [Tobias]: Hear me, and I will show thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. **For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.**”

The holy youth Tobias approached his bride Sara after three days of prayer and chastity, **not for fleshly lust but only for the love of posterity**, having been instructed by the Archangel Raphael that to engage in the marital act he shall “be moved rather for love of children than for lust” so “that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children”. Our Lord’s words about “the seed of Abraham” refers to those who are going to be saved from Hell by Christ’s redemptive blood since God solemnly revealed in the New Testament Scripture that “if you be Christ’s, then are you the seed of Abraham, heirs

according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:29) The “blessing in children” obviously refers to an abundant blessing of offspring blessed by God for those who perform the marital act for the sole motive of procreation rather than the satisfaction of their sexual lust.

The practice of observing chastity for three days after one gets married as the Holy Bible and the Church have always told us to follow, is something that God’s Holy Word considers to be vitally important, and that is why every couple should follow this biblical advice of praying together or individually in chastity, purity and holiness for three days before consummating their marriage. In truth, after they have consummated their marriage, they should also continue this practice of prayer for three days before they perform every marital act since Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself commanded “that we ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). Our Lord’s words in the Bible are not to be followed only once, but should be practiced every day even until death in order to increase grace and virtuous living.

*Our Lord spoke to Tobias through the Archangel Raphael, saying: “But thou [Tobias] when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, **and for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her.** ... But the second night thou shalt be admitted into the society of the holy Patriarchs. And the third night thou shalt obtain a blessing that sound children may be born of you. **And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayst obtain a blessing in children.**” (Tobias 6:18, 20-22)*

Notice how Our Lord and God in the biblical *Book of Tobias* clearly promises that all those who pray and abstain from the marital act for three days before having marital relations shall receive the inestimable graces of receiving “*sound children*” on the third night and that they shall be admitted “*into the society of the holy Patriarchs*” on the second. The honor of being “*admitted into the society of the holy Patriarchs*” is of course too great to even describe in human terms since the Holy Patriarchs were the most beloved friends of God because of their purity. The blessing on the third night of “*sound children may be born of you*” obviously means that those couples who do not perform the marital act for the sake of lust or too often and who are virtuous and wait for three days in accordance with the promise of Holy Scripture, will give birth to a child without birth deformities or defects. This may be hard for many to believe, but this is really and truly what Holy Scripture is promising and saying.

This is not to say, however, that personal sins of the parents are the only reasons for why

children are born with defects or deformities. There are also other causes for a child's defects described in *The Gospel of John*, where the apostles asks Our Lord the reason for why a man was born blind: "And Jesus passing by, saw a man, who was blind from his birth: And his disciples asked him: Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered: Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (John 9:1-3)

Our Lord also tells us in *The Revelations of St. Bridget* that sin and the disorder of nature produce the defects that we all have to endure: "I am the Creator of all things, and all things are foreknown to me. I know and see all that has been and all that will be. But, although I know and can do all things, still, for reasons of justice, I no more interfere with the natural constitution of the body than I do with the inclination of the soul. Each human being continues in existence according to the natural constitution of the body such as it is and was from all eternity in my foreknowledge. The fact that one person has a longer life and another a shorter has to do with natural strength or weakness and is related to a person's physical constitution. It is not due to my foreknowledge that one person loses his sight or another becomes lame or something like that, since my foreknowledge of all things is such that no one is the worse for it, nor is it harmful to anyone. Moreover, these things do not occur because of the course and position of the heavenly elements, but due to some hidden principle of justice in the constitution and conservation of nature. For sin and natural disorder bring about the deformity of the body in many ways. This does not happen because I will it directly, but because I permit it to happen for the sake of justice. Even though I can do all things, still I do not obstruct justice. Accordingly, the length or brevity of a person's life is related to the weakness or strength of his physical constitution such as it was in my foreknowledge that no one can contravene." (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 2, Chapter 1)

It is indeed very sad to see that no one today, whether married or unmarried seem to care anything about these promises and wonderful, virtuous deeds of chastity and purity in Holy Scripture and that so few people actually try to practice any of these virtuous deeds we have just seen and read about, that will produce these remarkable and wondrous graces from Our Lord and which He promised He would bless a virtuous couple and their offspring with. One would think that even a worldly or ungodly couple would appreciate the grace of receiving a child that is sound and without deformity and that they—if they believed in God or were aware of these promises—would act in accordance to the words of the Holy Scripture; but now neither "Catholics" or so-called Christians nor any else of the world seem to care anything about these words of our Lord that promises the inestimable grace and blessing of receiving a sound child free from all birth deformities or defects, and the honor of being admitted "into the society of the holy Patriarchs".

The words in the Book of Tobit also shows us that spouses must remember their bond with the Lord first and foremost and that the fleshly or physical part of the marriage must always come secondhand. In truth, “married women who have observed mutual fidelity and have neither known anything outside of themselves not even themselves except the desire for children, if they continually give alms and observe God’s precepts as well as they can, will merit happily to be associated with holy Job, Sara, and Susanna, along with the Patriarchs and Prophets.” (St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon 6:7*, 6th century)

By practicing this highly and virtuous act of abstaining from marital relations for three days, the devil’s might and power over married couples is undoubtedly thwarted and diminished. Holy Scripture thus advice spouses to be “joined to God” for three days in prayer before performing the marital act. Not only that, but spouses should always fervently pray to God before every marital act in the future and ask Him to protect them from falling into sin, and also after the marital act in order to ask Our Lord to forgive them if they committed any sin during the act of marriage. This is the safe road of the fear of God that every righteous man or woman should follow if they wish to enter Heaven.

St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, A.D. 419: “Whosoever possesses his vessel (that is, his wife) with this intention of heart, [that is, for the procreation of children] certainly does not possess her in the "disease of desire," as the Gentiles which know not God, but in sanctification and honor, as believers who hope in God. A man turns to use the evil of concupiscence, and is not overcome by it, when he bridles and restrains its rage, as it works in inordinate and indecorous motions; and never relaxes his hold upon it except when intent on offspring, and then controls and applies it to the carnal generation of children to be spiritually regenerated, not to the subjection of the spirit to the flesh in a sordid servitude. That the holy fathers of olden times after Abraham, and before him, to whom God gave His testimony that "they pleased Him," thus used their wives, no one who is a Christian ought to doubt, since it was permitted to certain individuals among them to have a plurality of wives, where the reason was for the multiplication of their offspring, not the desire of varying gratification.” (Book 1, Chapter 9 - This Disease of Concupiscence in Marriage is Not to Be a Matter of Will, But of Necessity [for the Procreation of Children])

God’s Holy Word is clear. Spouses are to engage in the marital act moved rather for love of children than for lust. They are also to practice chastity from time to time (Ecclesiastes 3:5; 1 Corinthians 7:5).

By the grace of God, let us not live like pagans or heathens anymore who only searches for ways to please their flesh and the world and others, but let us rather strive to please God our heavenly Father and our spiritual nature; and that is also why we all, (whether married or unmarried) who have resurrected with Christ from the dead, and from our old sinful nature, must leave every form of carnality and impurity behind, instead looking up and embrace Our Lord in the purity of the heart and of the body, longing for what is above, and for high and spiritual things. “This then I say and testify in the Lord: That henceforward you walk not as also the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, **having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. Who despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness, unto covetousness. But you have not so learned Christ.**” (Ephesians 4:17-20)

Contrary to the world today, Saint Augustine, writing *On the Good of Widowhood* in about A.D. 414, describes the pure mindset of the Holy Jews and Patriarchs during the Old Testament era, telling us how they would willingly have chosen a life of perpetual chastity rather than the marital life had it been known to them that children could be had in another way than through sexual intercourse: “Forsooth different in the times of the Prophets was the dispensation of holy females, whom obedience, not lust, forced to marry, for the propagation of the people of God, that in them Prophets of Christ might be sent beforehand; whereas the People itself also, by those things which in figure happened among them, whether in the case of those who knew, or in the case of those who knew not those things, was nothing else than a Prophet of Christ, of whom should be born the Flesh also of Christ... Whence also holy women were kindled, not by lust of sensual intercourse, but by piety of bearing; so that we most rightly believe of them that they would not have sought sensual intercourse, in case a family could have come by any other means. And to the husbands was allowed the use of several wives living; and that the cause of this was not lust of the flesh, but forethought of begetting, is shown by the fact, that, as it was lawful for holy men to have several wives living, it was not likewise lawful for holy women to have intercourse with several husbands living; in that they would be by so much the baser, by how much the more they sought what would not add to their fruitfulness.” (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Widowhood*, Section 10)

The Book of Leviticus commands spouses to practice chastity during the woman’s menstruation and infertile period under pain of death, thus showing us that God wants married persons to practice chastity during this time period

The way to perfection regarding the marital act is that spouses only perform the act with the sole intention and hope of conceiving children. That means spouses are to be chaste during the monthly infertile period of the woman and when she is pregnant.

We read in the Old Testament that God had forbidden the marital act during the infertile monthly cycle of the woman: *“The woman, who at the return of the month, hath her issue of blood, shall be separated seven days.”* (Leviticus 15:19) Haydock Commentary explains: *“Days, not only out of the camp, but from the company of men.”* As soon as a woman showed signs of infertility (menstruation), intercourse would cease until the cessation of the flow of blood and she became fertile again: *“Thou shalt not approach to a woman having her flowers: neither shalt thou uncover her nakedness.”* (Leviticus 18:19) Haydock Commentary adds: *“Saint Augustine believes that this law is still in force. [On Lev. 20:18] This intemperance was by a positive law declared a mortal offense of the Jews.”* This clearly shows us that God does not want spouses to perform the marital act during this time.

To abstain from sexual intercourse during a woman’s menstrual period or pregnancy and subsequent restricted days has all but been ignored by most of today’s people. Observing the period of restriction for sexual activity not only diminishes sexual sins and temptations, but it also places a woman into her fertile period when it is most beneficial for conception to occur. This helps to fulfill the initial command of God to “be fruitful and multiply,” a command that is clearly not being observed by many people today.

A woman’s menstrual cycle is about 28 days long, and the menstrual phase is about 5 days. Adding 7 days after the menstrual phase in accordance with God’s word in the Bible would mean that men and women should remain chaste for at least 12 days out of every 28 days during the woman’s natural menstrual cycle.

Good husbands and wives do not have sexual relations whenever their unbridled lust desires it, but only at times prescribed for this purpose and when it is necessary. The guide of good and pious husbands and wives are thus their conscience and reason instead of their selfish, unbridled lust. “All things have their season, and in their times all things pass under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted. A time to kill, and a time to heal. A time to destroy, and a time to build. A time to weep, and a time to laugh. A time to mourn, and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather. **A time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.**” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-5)

The phrase “A time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces” refers to the marital

act. Haydock Commentary explains: “Ver. 5. *Embraces*. *Continence was sometimes prescribed to married people, Leviticus xx. 18., and 1 Corinthians vii. (St. Jerome) (St. Augustine, Enchiridion 78.) (Calmet).*” This shows us that the marital act must sometimes be abstained from altogether and not engaged in everyday as the evil and immoral world teaches. As said already, one of the reasons for abstaining from the marital act is in order to cultivate virtue and chastity. This is important to do from time to time, for people who have sex often are more likely to become enslaved by this pleasure and fall into sexual sin. “The task of the law is to deliver us from a dissolute life and all disorderly ways. Its purpose is to lead us from unrighteousness to righteousness, so that it would have us self-controlled in marriage, in begetting children, and in general behavior.” (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter VI, Section 46, written about 198-203 A.D.)

People who never try to control their lust and that let their temptations roam freely—indulging in it whenever it pleases them—have allowed their lust to become their “fix” or “high”. People who act in this way have become worshipers of this fleeting fleshly pleasure and have grown attached to it. Such people must be very careful about themselves, for whenever they die and are called before the throne of Our Lord Jesus Christ, their eternal destiny will be decided based on what they loved more in this life: Our Lord and His Love, or themselves and their unbridled, selfish lust. If they loved themselves and their lust more than they loved the Lord, they will not be saved. Only in Hell will many spouses regret that they never thought of controlling their lust or that they never had relations at proper times or at proper seasons. In truth, “there are others who have become absorbed by marriage and fulfill their desires... and, as the prophet says, “have become like beasts” [Ps. 48:13].” (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Section 67)

If we claim that we are not pagans anymore, but yet act in the same way as them, satisfying our flesh and the world at every turn, how shall we not stand condemned before Our Lord in the frightful day of Judgment? “And you, when you were dead in your offenses, and sins, Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief: In which also we all conversed in time past, in the desires of our flesh, fulfilling the will of the flesh and of our thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest: But God, (who is rich in mercy,) for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ, (by whose grace you are saved,) And hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus. That he might shew in the ages to come the abundant riches of his grace, in his bounty towards us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:1-7)

CHASTITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE NEW LAW

The Holy Bible is clear that “It is good for a man not to touch a woman”, and that married people should abstain from the sexual act from time to time “that you may give yourselves to prayer”

St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians is one of the most clear examples in Scripture of how God places the virtue of virginity, chastity and purity above the marital state. Our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking through the mouth of St. Paul in First Corinthians, is crystal clear that: “*It is good for a man not to touch a woman*” and that “*he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband.*”

St. Paul is also clear that every married couple should practice chastity from time to time, in order to give time to prayer: “*But for fear of fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render the debt to his wife, and the wife also in like manner to the husband... Defraud not one another, [of the marital debt] except, perhaps, by consent, for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer; and return together again, lest Satan tempt you for your incontinency.*” (1 Cor. 7:2,5)

Haydock Commentary explains *First Corinthians 7:2,5*: “**Verse 2. &c.** *But because of fornication, let every man have, and live with his own wife, and not leave her, nor dismiss her. Take notice, that St. Paul speaks these words to those that are already married, and speaks not of the unmarried till the 8th verse. He does not then here exhort every one to marry, but admonishes married persons to live together, and not to refuse the marriage duty, which neither the husband nor the wife can do without mutual consent, because of the marriage engagement. Yet he advises them to abstain sometimes from what they may lawfully do, that they may give themselves to prayer, and as it is added in the common Greek copies, to fasting. St. Chrysostom observes, that the words of St. Paul, are not only, that they may pray, (which no day must be omitted) but that they may give themselves to prayer, that is, may be better disposed and prepared for prayer, contemplation, and for receiving the holy Sacrament, as we find the priests even of the ancient law, were to abstain from their wives, when they were employed in the functions of their ministry. But such kind of advice is not relished by all that pretend to be reformers. And return together again....yet I speak this by way of indulgence, of what is allowed to married persons, and not commanded them, unless when one of the married couple is not willing to abstain.*

(Witham)”

St. Paul could not be more clear in *First Corinthians*, 7:1, 7-10, of the perfection of chastity and how this pure life is preferable and better than a marital life. He says, “Now concerning the thing whereof you wrote to me: **It is good for a man not to touch a woman... For I would that all men were even as myself [that is, chaste]**: but every one hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that. **But I say to the unmarried, and to the widows: It is good for them if they so continue, even as I.** But if they do not contain themselves, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to be burnt. But to them that are married, not I but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband.”

Haydock Commentary on the same verses of *First Corinthians* 7:7-10 quoted above says: “**Verse 7-9.** *I would*, or I could wish you *all were even as myself*, and as it is said in the next verse, to *continue* unmarried *as I do*. From hence it is evident, that St. Paul was not then married, who according to the opinion of the ancient fathers, was never married. --- *But every one hath his proper gift from God*, so that some prudently embrace a single life, and also make a religious vow of always living so, as it has been practiced by a great number both of men and women in all ages, ever since Christ’s time. Others have not this more perfect gift: they find themselves not disposed to lead, or vow a single life, they marry lawfully: *it is better to marry than to burn*, or be burnt by violent temptations of concupiscence [or to be burnt in Hell], by which they *do not contain themselves* from disorders of that kind. It is against both the Latin and Greek text to translate, *they cannot contain themselves*, as in the Protestant [translation]... But let it be observed, that when St. Paul allows of marriage, he speaks not of those who have already made a vow of living always a single life. Vows made to God must be kept. (Psalm lxxv. 12.; Ecclesiastes v. 3.) And St. Paul expressly says of such persons, who have made a vow of perpetual continency, and afterwards marry, *that they incur damnation, because they violate their first faith*, or vow made to God. See 1 Timothy v. 12. This saying, therefore, *it is better to marry than to burn*, cannot justify the sacrilegious marriages of priests, or of any others who were under such vows. **There are other remedies which they are bound to make use of, and by which they may obtain the gift of continency and chastity. They must ask this gift by fervent prayers to God, who gives a good spirit to them that ask it.** (Luke xi. [13.]) They must join fasting, alms, and the practice of self-denials, so often recommended in the gospel. See the annotations on Matthew xix. The like remedies, and no others, must they use, who being already in wedlock, are under such violent temptations, that they are continually in danger of violating, or do violate the chastity of the marriage-bed. For example, when married persons are divorced from bed and board, when long absent from one another, when sick and disabled, when one has an inveterate aversion to the other: they cannot marry another, but they can, and must use other

remedies. (Witham) --- *If they do not contain [let them marry]. . . God will never refuse the gift of continency. Some translators have corrupted this text, by rendering it, if they cannot contain. (Challoner)*”

St. Paul continues in his discourse on *First Corinthians* 7:25-35, saying: “... Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord, to be faithful. **I think therefore that this is good for the present necessity, that it is good for a man so to be [that is, to be chaste].** Art thou bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But if thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned: nevertheless, *such shall have tribulation of the flesh*. But I spare you. This therefore I say, brethren; the time is short; it remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as if they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as if they used it not: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you to be without solicitude. **He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband.** And this I speak for your profit: not to cast a snare upon you; but for that which is decent, and which may give you power to attend upon the Lord, without impediment.”

Haydock Commentary explains *First Corinthians* 7:25-35: “**Verses 25-28.** *Now concerning virgins, &c.* He turns his discourse again to the unmarried, who (if they have made no vow) may lawfully marry, though he is far from commanding every one to marry, as when he says, *seek not a wife*. And *such shall have tribulation of the flesh*, cares, troubles, vexations [and sexual temptations] in the state of marriage, *but I spare you*, I leave you to your liberty of marrying, or not marrying, and will not discourage you by setting forth the crosses of a married life. (Witham) --- **Ver. 30.** *And they who weep*. In this passage the apostle teaches us, in the midst of our greatest afflictions not to suffer ourselves to be overwhelmed with grief, but to recollect that the time of this life is short, and that temporary pains will be recompensed with the never-fading joys of eternity. (Estius) --- **Ver. 33.** [*But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided*]. It is far easier to give our whole heart and application without any the least reserve to *God*, than to divide them without injustice.”

In *First Corinthians* 7:38-40, Our Lord through St. Paul continues to admonish his chaste

servants to adopt the angelic life of chastity and purity, teaching us that the chaste life is better than the marital life: “Therefore, both he that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well; and he that giveth her not, doth better. A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband die, she is at liberty: let her marry to whom she will; only in the Lord. **But more blessed shall she be, if she so remain [in chastity], according to my counsel; and I think that I also have the spirit of God.**”

Haydock Commentary explains *First Corinthians* 7:38-40: “**Verse 38. &c.** He that giveth her not, doth better. And more blessed shall she be, if she so remains, according to my counsel. It is very strange if any one, who reads this chapter without prejudices, does not clearly see, that St. Paul advises, and prefers the state of virginity to that of a married life. --- *I think that I also have the spirit of God*. He puts them in mind, by this modest way of speaking, of what they cannot doubt of, as to so great an apostle. (Witham)”

In truth, the level of dishonesty that a Protestant or a heretic must sink to in order to deny that Holy Scripture places chastity or virginity above the marital life is simply said satanic and inexcusable. It cannot be doubted that they must have had their conscience thoroughly seared by a hot iron of Satan in order to be able to pervert such clear and unambiguous words of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

God could not be clearer than when He said that “*It is good for a man not to touch a woman*” (1 Corinthians 7:1), thus directly contradicting the heretical viewpoint that marriage is the same as the chaste life; showing us very clearly that the marital life is below the chaste and pure life of the angels and saints in Heaven that those virtuous men and women imitates. And if still someone could misunderstand Our Lord’s words, St. Paul adds that he wishes “*that all men were even as myself*” that is, chaste (1 Corinthians 7:7) and He further teaches both the unmarried and widowed to continue to live a single and chaste life, saying: “*But I say to the unmarried, and to the widows: It is good for them if they so continue, [that is, it is good for them to continue to live a single and chaste life] even as I.*” (1 Corinthians 7:8) And if that was not clear enough, Our Lord Jesus Christ through St. Paul continues to urge all unmarried to stay chaste and pure as they are, saying that, “*I think therefore that this is good for the present necessity, that it is good for a man so to be [that is, chaste]. Art thou bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.*” (1 Corinthians 7:26-27)

In addition, St. Paul also teaches in Holy Scripture that a widow will become “more blessed” if she do not remarry and stay continent: “*But more blessed shall she be, if she so remain, [that is, a widow] according to my counsel; and I think that I also have the spirit of God.*” (1 Corinthians 7:40) If one becomes “more blessed” by not marrying, then it

obviously means that one becomes less blessed by embracing the marital life. St. Ephrem the Syrian writes, “Chastity’s wings are greater and lighter than the wings of marriage. Intercourse... is lower. Its house of refuge is modest darkness. Confidence belongs entirely to chastity, which light enfolds.” (Hymn 28, On the Nativity)

St. Paul also warns those who would marry as opposed to those who would remain virgins that spouses “shall have tribulation of the flesh”: “*But if thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned: nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh. But I spare you.*” (1 Corinthians 7:28). It is certain that St. Paul does not refer to the desire to procreate as a tribulation of the flesh. Consequently, he can be referring only to one thing—sexual pleasure. Indeed, sexual pleasure is a tribulation of the flesh that must hence be fought against in thought and deed in some way or the Devil will succeed in tempting a spouse to fall into mortal sins of impurity either with their spouse, with himself or with someone other than his spouse.

The reason why St. Paul specifically warns those who choose to get married of the dangers inherent in the marital life is because those people who choose *not* to get married, by choosing to remain in the angelic state of chastity, will not get sexually tempted to commit sin in the same way or in the same measure as the married man or woman will, either with their spouse, their self, or some other person, since the sexual pleasure that has never been indulged in, will always remain more of an abstract or theoretical pleasure for those who remain chaste and unmarried, and thus, will always be easier to control for them. Indeed, since the temptation to indulge the flesh and the sensuality is not physically present tempting them all the time, as in the case of those who are married and who can perform the marital act every day with their spouse, their sensual temptations are also much smaller than the others who indulge their flesh more often.

When St. Paul mentions “that they also who have wives, be as if they had none” (1 Corinthians 7:29), he is speaking about how spouses must not place the carnal love they have for each other above their love for Our Lord. St. Paul’s words are clear: The spouses must act as though they were not married (within due limits of course) since the married man “is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided.” (1 Corinthians 7:33). This division of the married man and woman makes it a great necessity that even married people consider themselves in their own thought processes as though they are unmarried and chaste, although their external and physical marital duties hinders them from pursuing this endeavor to the fullest. As St. Paul says: “it remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as if they had none”.

St. Paul also explains how married men and women thinks more on the world and of

carnal things, while the chaste and pure people thinks more on the things of the Lord, of Heaven, and of spiritual things. Again, the Holy Bible is clear that: *“He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband.”* (1 Corinthians 7:32-34)

And so, it is perfectly clear that the Holy Scripture infallibly and unambiguously teaches that marriage and the marital life is an impediment to the spiritual life, while the life of chastity and purity “give you power to attend upon the Lord, without impediment” (1 Cor. 7:35). Thus, “if a man wishes to be uninstructed, and prefers to avoid begetting children because of the business it involves, “let him remain unmarried,” says the apostle, “even as I am.” [1 Cor. 7:8]” (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata* or *Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter X, Section 68)

It is also remarkable and noteworthy that St. Paul calls those who are married “bondmen”, which means “slaves” or “serfs”, thus indicating the inherent spiritual danger and enslavement of worldly, fleshly and sensual cares, troubles and worries that constantly will plague all those who choose to enter into the married state. *“Wast thou called, being a bondman? care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a bondman, is the freeman of the Lord. Likewise he that is called, being free, is the bondman of Christ. You are bought with a price; be not made the bondslaves of men.”* (1 Cor. 7:21-23) In truth, those who are called to a higher and more pure life and who wish to save their souls should meditate often on these words of St. Paul in order to discern the height and greater security from sin that the chaste and unmarried life offers when compared to the marital life.

All those who choose to get married are in truth slaves and enchained by the marriage bond, and what is worse—if they have a weak will—enslaved and bound with the cruel fetters of an addiction to the sexual pleasure that is very hard to get free from! Indeed, married people do not even have the power to command over their own body and remain in chastity against the other spouse’s will, but must give the marital debt to the other spouse whenever he or she asks for it (the only exception being in the case of sickness or other lawful necessities) while also having to fulfill all other duties of the marital life that constantly disturbs and distracts us from our spiritual life, and the thought of God. This is the exact reason why “The same Paul also in the same chapter, when discussing the subjects of virginity and marriage, calls those who are married slaves of the flesh, but those not under the yoke of wedlock freemen who serve the Lord in all freedom [1 Cor. 7:21-23].”

(St. Jerome, *Letter CXXVIII, To Gaudentius*, Section 3, written in A.D. 413)

One must obviously love all of one's family, friends as well as all others in the world as much as one can, but one must also remember that most people, whether wife, family or friends, however dear or near, often reject God and hinder one's own spiritual advancement. The only one who will always remain true to us and that we know with a certainty will never become evil is God, and with God, His Angels and Saints in Heaven. But humans, however dear or near, often fall away or makes us fall away from the truth, or tries to tempt us to commit sins of various kinds, and this rejection of God by our family, wife, children or friends requires us to exclude them from our communion and familiarity in order for us to save our souls. Our Lord Jesus Christ explicitly mentions that such acts are necessary sometimes: "*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*" (Luke 14:26)

Douay Rheims Commentary explains Luke 14:26: "*Hate not*: The law of Christ does not allow us to hate even our enemies, much less our parents: but the meaning of the text is, that **we must be in that disposition of soul, as to be willing to renounce, and part with every thing, how near or dear soever it may be to us, that would keep us from following Christ.**"

If there ever arises a time that we become aware of the fact that our family or friends are trying to tempt or lead us into sin, we are obliged by the direct command of Our Lord to abstain from their company and unnecessary familiarity in order to save our eternal souls—lest we fall and tumble into sin and lose our souls. For "you are bought with a price; be not made the bondslaves of men." (1 Cor. 7:23) In truth, "To be subjected, then, to the passions, and to yield to them, is the extremest slavery; as to keep them in subjection is the only liberty. The divine Scripture accordingly says, that those who have transgressed the commandments are sold to strangers, that is, to sins alien to nature, till they return and repent. Marriage, then, as a sacred image, must be kept pure from those things which defile it." (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, Book II, Chapter XXIII, On Marriage)

Can a married Christian be saved? Yes, says St. Chrysostom, "But they must expend greater effort if they wished to be saved, because of the constraint imposed on them. For the person who is free of bonds will run more easily than the one who is enchained [by marriage]. Will the latter [the married] then receive a greater reward and more glorious crown [for his struggle than the unmarried and chaste]? Not at all! For he placed this constraint upon himself when he was free not to." (*Oppugn.*, III; PG 47.376.) Again St.

John asks, "Cannot the person who lives in the city and has a house and wife be saved?" He answers that certainly there are many ways to salvation. This is evident from our Savior saying that in Heaven there are many mansions (John 14:2). St. Paul affirms the same when he suggests that in the Resurrection there will be many types and degrees of glory, one of the sun, another of the moon, and another of the stars (1 Cor. 15:41). Certainly the monk and the married Christian can both be saved, but they will not possess the same eternal glory. As the sun is brighter than the moon, and as one star is brighter than another, so shall it be at the general resurrection. But all the bodies of the elect shall be happily changed to a state of incorruption (*Oppugn., III*; PG 47.356). "There are choirs of virgins, there are assemblies of widows, there are fraternities of those who shine in chaste wedlock; in short, many are the degrees of virtue." (*Hom. XXX in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.254; NPNF, p. 178-179.)

In truth, "Marriage is honorable; but I cannot say that it is more lofty than virginity; for virginity were no great thing if it were not better than a good thing. Do not however be angry, ye women that are subject to the yoke. We must obey God rather than man. But be ye bound together, both virgins and wives, and be one in the Lord, and each others adornment. There would be no celibate if there were no marriage. For whence would the virgin have passed into this life? Marriage would not have been venerable unless it had borne virgin fruit to God and to life. ... Hast thou chosen the life of Angels? Art thou ranked among the unyoked? Sink not down to the flesh; sink not down to matter; be not wedded to matter, while otherwise thou remainest unwedded." (St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations of St. Gregory Nazianzen*, Oration XXXVII, Section X)

St. Methodius, *Banquet of the Ten Virgins* (c. 311 A.D.): "Come, now, and let us examine more carefully the very words which are before us, [1 Cor. 7] and observe that the apostle did not grant these things unconditionally to all, but first laid down the reason on account of which he was led to this. For, having set forth that "it is good for a man not to touch a woman," he added immediately, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife", that is, "on account of the fornication which would arise from your being unable to restrain your voluptuousness" -- "and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." And this is very carefully considered. "By permission" he says, showing that he was giving counsel, "not of command;" for he receives command respecting chastity and the not touching of a woman, but

permission respecting those who are unable, as I said, to chasten their appetites. These things, then, he lays down concerning men and women who are married to one spouse, or who shall hereafter be so..." (Discourse III, Chapter XII.--Paul an Example to Widows, and to Those Who Do Not Live with Their Wives)

St. Francis de Sales classic *"Introduction to the Devout Life"*, confirms this teaching of St. Paul in the Holy Bible: "Married people ought not to keep their affections fixed on the sensual pleasures of their vocation, but ought afterwards to wash their hearts to purify them as soon as possible, so that they may then with a calm mind devote themselves to other purer and higher activities. In this way they will perfectly carry out St. Paul's excellent teaching that they who have wives should be as though they had none [1 Cor. 7:29]. St. Gregory the Great says that a husband or wife carries out this instruction by taking bodily consolation with the spouse in such a way as not to be turned aside from spiritual demands. St. Paul also says, "Let those who use the world be as though they used it not" [1 Cor. 7:31]. Everyone should use the things of this world according to his calling, but in such manner that he does not engage his affection in it, but rather remains as free and ready to serve God as if he did not use it. We should place our joy in spiritual things, but only *use* corporal ones. When we make bodily pleasures our joy, our rational soul becomes debased and brutish." (St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, pg. 266)

Indeed, contrary to what many lustful people nowadays impiously claim, St. Augustine's Commentary on Matthew 22:30 explains that a good Christian spouse ought to *hate* conjugal connection and carnal intercourse with his wife: "And the Lord Himself says: "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." Hence it is necessary that whoever wishes here and now to aim after the life of that kingdom, should hate not the persons themselves, but those temporal relationships by which this life of ours, which is transitory and is comprised in being born and dying, is upheld; because he who does not hate them, does not yet love that life where there is no condition of being born and dying, which unites parties in earthly wedlock. Therefore, if I were to ask any good Christian who has a wife, and even though he may still be having children by her, whether he would like to have his wife in that kingdom; mindful in any case of the promises of God, and of that life where this incorruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; though at present hesitating from the greatness, or at least from a certain degree of love, he would reply with execration that he is strongly averse to it. Were I to ask him again, whether he would like his wife to live with him there, after the resurrection, when she had undergone that angelic change which is promised to the saints, he would reply that he desired this as strongly as he reprobated the other. Thus a good Christian is found to love in one and the same woman the creature of God, whom he desires to be transformed and renewed; but to hate the corruptible and

mortal conjugal connection and carnal intercourse: i.e. to love in her what is characteristic of a human being, to hate what belongs to her as a wife. ... It is necessary, therefore, that the disciple of Christ should hate these things which pass away, in those whom he desires along with himself to reach those things which shall for ever remain; and that he should the more hate these things in them, the more he loves themselves.” (St. Augustine, *On the Sermon on the Mount*, Book I, Chapter 15, Section 40-41, c. 394 A.D.)

What is the life of the perfect Christian couple? St. Augustine answers that their life consists in living together as a brother and sister, having his wife as though he had her not, except for when they come together for the procreation of children: “A Christian may therefore live in concord with his wife... providing for the procreation of children, which may be at present in some degree praiseworthy; or providing for a brotherly and sisterly fellowship, without any corporeal connection, having his wife as though he had her not, as is most excellent and sublime in the marriage of Christians: yet so that in her he hates the name of temporal relationship, and loves the hope of everlasting blessedness.” (St. Augustine, *On the Sermon on the Mount*, Book I, Chapter 15, Section 42, c. 394 A.D.)

Chastity is above other virtues according to God’s Holy Word in the Book of James

The Book of James in the Holy Bible tells us that “*the wisdom, that is from above, first indeed is chaste,*” again showing us how the Holy Bible sets the virtue of chastity above other virtues.

James 3:17-18 “But the wisdom, that is from above [Heaven], ***first indeed is chaste,*** then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation. And the fruit of justice is sown in peace, to them that make peace.”

The fact that chastity is especially valued among the different virtues in the Bible, as well as that it is described as a more perfect and blessed life is completely rejected or ignored by almost all Protestants and other heretics. Since their life is sensual and directed to pleasing their own flesh, sensuality and selfishness, they reject the inherent value and goodness of practicing chastity inside or outside of marriage and refuse to speak about its value since they themselves have decided to live a life for their flesh, rather than for the spirit. Not only that, but a lot of these heretics actually tries to get people to have as much sex and sexual pleasure as they can, thus directly contradicting the chaste words of the Holy Bible with their foul and unchaste teachings.

St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon 6:7*: “Now, there are three professions in the holy Catholic Church: there are virgins, widows, and the married. Virgins produce the hundred-fold, widows the sixty-fold, and the married thirty-fold. One bears more, another less, but they are all kept in the heavenly barn and happily enjoy eternal bliss. Therefore, while the virgins think of Mary, the widows consider Anne, and married women reflect upon Susanna, they should imitate the chastity of those women in this life so that they may merit to be united and associated with them in eternity. Good virgins, who want to be such not only in body but also in heart and tongue, are united to holy Mary with the rest of the army of Virgins. Good widows, not voluptuous, loquacious, inquisitive, envious, haughty ones, serve God as blessed Anne did by fasting, almsgiving, and prayers, and together with St. Anne are united with the many thousands of widows. Moreover, married women who have observed mutual fidelity and have neither known anything outside of themselves nor even themselves except with the desire for children, if they continually give alms and observe God’s precepts as well as they can, will merit happily to be associated with holy Job, Sara, and Susanna, along with the patriarchs and prophets.”

Marriage hinders many from being saved according to the Gospel of Luke

Indeed, it is a little known truth today, but marriage and the marital life can be so dangerous to our own spiritual welfare that Our Lord in *The Gospel of Luke* even warned about that some people who enter marriages are hindered from being Saved and enter Heaven due to their marital life, thus showing to us that virginity and chastity is very necessary and beneficial for salvation.

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke in a parable, saying: “A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him: ‘I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it: I pray thee, hold me excused.’ And another said: ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them: I pray thee, hold me excused.’ And another said: **‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’** And the servant returning, told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant: ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame.’ And the servant said: ‘Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.’ And the Lord said to the servant: ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. **But I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited, shall taste of my supper.**’ And there went great

multitudes with him. And turning, he said to them: ‘If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.’” (Luke 14:16-27)

Haydock Bible Commentary explains Luke 14:16, saying: “By this man [who was inviting the people to the supper in Heaven] we are to understand Christ Jesus, the great mediator between God and man. He sent his servants, at supper-time, to say to them that were invited, that they should come... We may remark, that the three different excuses exactly agree with what St. John says: *All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life* [1 John 2:16]. The one says, ***I have married a wife, by which may be understood the concupiscence of the flesh;*** another says, *I have bought five yoke of oxen*, by which is denoted the concupiscence of the eyes; and the pride of life is signified by the purchase of the *farm*, which the third alleges in his justification. (St. Augustine, de verb. Dei.)”

Those people who thus will be hindered from entering the Great Supper (Heaven) and be cast into Hell for all eternity, are all those people who put something or someone before God, or who loved God less than He was worthy to be loved. The things that this parable enumerated as hindrances to salvation, that is, earthly pleasures and possessions and earthly wives or acquaintances, are the most common causes of why people are damned in this life. Thus, “he who said, “I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come” [Luke 14:20] to the divine supper was **an example to convict those who for pleasure’s sake were abandoning the divine command [of loving God and that which is above above everything else]**; for if this saying is taken otherwise, neither the righteous before the coming of Christ nor those who have married since his coming, even if they be apostles, will be saved.” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter XII, Section 90)

Our Lady of Fatima (1917): “The sins of the world are too great! The sins which lead most souls to hell are sins of the flesh! Certain fashions are going to be introduced which will offend Our Lord very much. Those who serve God should not follow these fashions. The Church has no fashions; Our Lord is always the same. **Many marriages are not good; they do not please Our Lord and are not of God....** Oh! Men must do penance! If they amend their lives Our Lord will still pardon the world; but if they do not, the chastisement will come! Priests should occupy themselves only with the affairs of the Church! They must be pure, very pure.” Mother Godinho asked her (Jacinta): “Do you know what it means to be pure?” “Yes, Yes. I know to be pure in body means to be chaste, to be pure in mind

means not to commit sins; not to look at what one should not see, not to steal or lie, and always to speak the truth, even if it is hard.”

In the case of the wife or a spouse, many couples perversely love the sexual pleasure they derive from the marital act, and this happens since the vehemence and force of the sexual pleasure is so strong and acts just like a drug which places the person into a state of bliss of pleasure, thus making it very hard to control without actually starting to love the physical fleshly pleasure, just like drug addicts love their pleasure, which is a kind of idolatry of the flesh. All acts which hold great pleasure is extremely easy to become addicted to, and sexual pleasure of course works in the exact same way too. That is why we see so many use pornography or commit adultery, masturbation or fornication. When one has chosen to become addicted to the sexual pleasure or high, whether it be by masturbation, pornography, or by indulging in the marital act with one's spouse too often or in an inordinate or unlawful way, it will always become extremely difficult to get free from. The sexual pleasure is so addictive that sexual addicts who are also drug abusers have testified that while their drug abuse was comparatively easy to quit, their sexual thoughts and desires remains and tempts them every day. Thus, it is obvious that it would have been much better for these people if they had remained chaste and thus viewed the sexual pleasure as more of an abstract pleasure rather than to be guilty of, and commit sexual idolatry. St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians correctly explains that those who become subject and controlled by their covetousness (as in the case of those who are lustful) are serving idols, their idol being the sensual pleasure: *“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints: or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose; but rather giving of thanks. **For know you this and understand, that no fornicator, or unclean, or covetous person (which is a serving of idols), hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.**”* (Ephesians 5:3-5)

Haydock Commentary wisely explains Ephesians 5:3-5 thus: **“Verse 3. *Covetousness*.** The Latin word is generally taken for a coveting or immoderate desire of money and riches. St. Jerome and others observe, that the Greek word in this and divers other places in the New Testament may signify **any unsatiable desire, or the lusts of sensual pleasures; and on this account, St. Jerome thinks that it is here joined with fornication and uncleanness** [i.e., sexual sins]. --- **Verse 5. *Nor covetous person, which is a serving of idols*.** It is clear enough by the Greek that the **covetous man is called an idolater**, whose idol is mammon; though it may be also said of other sinners, **that the vices they are addicted to are their idols**. (Witham)”

If these people would have only subdued their flesh a little through small penances, their

sins, bad marriages and eternal damnation could have easily been corrected or averted. “Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. **And every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things**: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty: I so fight, not as one beating the air: But I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Haydock Commentary explains First Corinthians 9:24-27: “**Verse 25.** He refraineth himself [from all things], &c. [If the athlete] Curbs his inclinations, abstains from debauchery, or any thing that may weaken him, or hinder him from gaining this corruptible crown [of human glory], how much more ought we to practice self-denials for an eternal crown? --- **Verse 27.** I chastise [my body], &c. Here St. Paul shews the necessity of self-denial and mortification to subdue the flesh, and its inordinate desires. (Challoner) --- Not even the labors of an apostle are exemptions from voluntary mortification and penance.”

Indeed, Our Lord Himself in the Holy Gospel shows us the necessity to never place our love for family or friends above our love for God since they are many times opposed to virtue or the faith: “Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. **And a man’s enemies shall be they of his own household.** He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me, shall find it. He that receiveth you, receiveth me: and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.” (Matthew 10:34-40)

Haydock Commentary explains Matthew 10:32-40: “**Verse 34.** I came not to send [peace, but the sword], &c. That is, dissension and war, in order that the false peace of sinners may be destroyed, and that those who follow me, may differ in morals and affections from the followers of this world. The sword, therefore, is the gospel, which separates those parents who remain in infidelity. (Menochius) It must be observed, that the gospel does not necessarily of itself produce dissensions amongst men, but that Christ foresaw, from the depravity of man’s heart, that dissensions would follow the propagation of the gospel. (Haydock) --- Indeed before Christ became man, there was no sword upon the earth; that is, the spirit had not to fight with so much violence against the flesh; but when he became

man, he shewed us what things were of the flesh, and what of the spirit, and taught us to set these two at variance, by renouncing always those of the flesh, which constantly endeavor to get master over us, and follow the dictates of the spirit. (Origen)”

“**Verse 35.** *I am come to set a man at variance [with his family], &c.* Not that this was the end or design of the coming of our Savior; but that his coming, and his doctrine would have this effect, by reason of the obstinate resistance that many would make, and of their persecuting all such as should adhere to him. (Challoner) No one can be connected with the earth and joined to heaven. Those who wish to enjoy the peace of heaven, must not be united to the lovers of this world by any connection. (Baradius)”

“**Verse 37.** *[He that loveth father or mother more than me] Is not worthy of me, &c.* That is, is not worthy to be my disciple, and to enjoy my kingdom. (Menochius)”

“**Verse 38.** *[And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me], &c.* There are two kinds of crosses which our Savior here commands us to take up: one corporal, and the other spiritual. By the former, he commands us to restrain the unruly appetites of the touch, taste, sight, &c. By the other, which is far more worthy our notice, he teaches us to govern the affections of the mind, and restrain all its irregular motions, by humility, tranquility, modesty, peace, &c. Precious indeed in the sight of God, and glorious is that cross, which governs and brings under proper rule the lawless passions of the mind. (St. Augustine)”

“**Verse 39.** *He that findeth [his life, shall lose it], &c.* That is, he that findeth in this life pleasures and comforts, and places his affections upon them, will certainly soon lose them. For Isaiah says, (Chap. xl, ver. 6) *All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen....* (St. Ambrose) But if he continues moderately happy as to temporal concerns till death, and places his affections on them, he hath found life here, but shall lose it in the next world. But he that shall, for the sake of Christ, deprive himself of the pleasures of this life, shall receive the reward of a hundred fold in the next. (Haydock)”

“It is not expedient to marry” for many people in this world according to the Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew gives us a good account of the superiority of chastity over marriage, and explains how many men refuse to accept to see the biblical truth that “*it is not expedient to marry*” for many in this world.

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to the Apostles, saying: “And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication [or adultery], and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.’ His disciples say unto him: ‘If the case of a man with his

wife be so, it is not expedient to marry.’ [And Jesus] said to them: ‘All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs, who were born so from their mother’s womb: and there are eunuchs, who were made so by men: and there are eunuchs, who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. He that can take, let him take it.’ Then were little children presented to him, that he should impose hands upon them and pray. And the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said to them: ‘Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such.’ And when he had imposed hands upon them, he departed from thence.” (Matthew 19:9-15)

Douay Rheims Bible Commentary explains Matthew 19: “**Verse 9.** [*whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication*]. In the case of fornication, that is, of adultery, the wife may be put away: but even then the husband cannot marry another as long as the wife is living. --- **Verse 11.** *All men take not this word*. That is, all receive or accept not the gift of living singly and chastely, unless they pray for the grace of God to enable them to live so, and for many it may be necessary to that end to fast as well as pray: and to those it is given from above.”

Haydock Bible Commentary goes on to explain Our Lord’s words about chastity in Matthew, Chapter 19 thus: “**Verse 11.** *All receive not this word*, To translate all cannot take, or cannot receive this word, is neither conformable to the Latin nor Greek text. To be able to live singly, and chastely, is given to every one that asketh, and prayeth for the grace of God to enable him to live so. (Witham) *All cannot receive it*, because *all do not wish it*. The reward is held out to all. Let him who seeks for glory, not think of the labor. None would overcome, if all were afraid of engaging in the conflict. If some fail, are we to be less careful in our pursuit of virtue? Is the soldier terrified, because his comrade fights and falls by his side? (St. Chrysostom) *He that can receive it, let him receive it. He that can fight, let him fight, overcome and triumph*. It is the voice of the Lord animating his soldiers to victory. (St. Jerome) --- **Verse 12.** *There are eunuchs, who have made themselves eunuchs, for the kingdom of heaven*. This text is not to be taken in the literal sense; but means, that there are such, who have taken a firm and commendable resolution of leading a single and chaste life, in order to serve God in a more perfect state than those who marry: as St. Paul clearly shews. 1 Cor. 7. 37, 38. (Challoner) Thus St. Jerome on this place, and St. Chrysostom where they both expressly take notice, that this grace is granted to every one that asketh and beggeth for it by prayer. (Witham) To the crown and glory of which state, let those aspire who feel themselves called by heaven.”

The infallible word of God is clear that “*it is not expedient to marry*” for many people in this world and that “*all men take not this word*”. Our Lord then goes on to inspire and urge

all to try to become chaste by teaching us that: **“there are eunuchs, who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. He that can take, let him take it.”** The reason why Our Lord teaches that “it is not expedient to marry” for many people in this world is that most people who marry in this life fall into grievous habitual sins of the flesh with their spouse by performing mortally sinful, non-procreative or unnecessary sexual acts (such as masturbation of self or of spouse, foreplay, oral and anal sex, and sensual touches and kisses) which they would not have done if they would have remained single.

Sexual pleasure works very much the same as any pleasure in this world, but some good examples of pleasures that can be compared to it is the pleasure that people get from alcohol or drugs. Now, if a man has never taken drugs or alcohol he cannot know anything about their effects, and thus, he cannot desire these pleasures at all. The consequence of this lack of desire is that there is no desire to abuse either alcohol or drugs at all. Sexual pleasure affects a man in a similar way. If a man have not had a venue to act on his sexual desire, nor looked longingly and with desire on a woman, always choosing to turn his eyes down in humility every time a woman came near him, his sexual desire will remain more of an abstract or theoretical pleasure. But a man who marries a woman and starts having sexual relations with her (allowing his eyes to fixate on a woman with sensual desire) does not have this advantage of having sexual pleasure remain an abstract or theoretical pleasure, and consequently, the possibility of him getting tempted to commit sins of impurity with either his own wife or with some other woman, is immediately increased. And as always, the sensual fire almost always begins through the eyes when a person is not careful enough to control or consider where he or she is looking.

A person who drinks wine will always be more tempted to drink more than what is lawful than a person who does not drink at all. This example absolutely proves that it is not good for all men and women to marry, for most people in this world abuse the God given power of procreation in their genital parts by committing unlawful sexual acts with their spouse or with another person than their spouse. If they would have remained unschooled in the ways of sexual pleasure, or chosen to remain in the angelic state of chastity, their way to Heaven would have been infinitely more easy, but since their desire was to please their own flesh: the door to Heaven was closed and the door to Hell and eternal torment and suffering was opened. **“For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.... No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will sustain the one, and despise the other.” (Matthew 6:21, 24)**

Indeed, today there is a virtual blackout of Our Lord’s teaching in the Holy Bible about the inherent dangers of marriage and the potential that the sexual act has to damn a person,

and almost no one seem to even know or acknowledge this fact about the marital life even though it is clearly taught in the same Bible that millions or billions of people read during their life.

But this is not something new, since lustful and blind people have always existed. The main difference from before, however, is that today, this ignorance seem to rule almost the whole society, whereas before, a considerable part of the world cherished and extolled chastity, purity and virginity as a more blessed and pure lifestyle, which is also why many married spouses vowed chastity with each other in order to prepare to meet the Lord in chastity and purity. This is also proven by the fact that sins of impurity, such as masturbation, was generally considered bad, filthy or evil by almost all people before in time, and not like today, as something good or normal.

In this context, St. Jerome explains the holy Bible's words about the inherent danger of marriage and the marital sexual act, showing quite clearly from the Holy Scripture that the marital act can endanger the salvation of our souls, unless we are really careful.

"I have said in my book, [Ag. Jov. 1:7] "If it is good for a man not to touch a woman, then it is bad for him to touch one, for bad, and bad only, is the opposite of good. But, if though bad it is made venial, then it is allowed to prevent something which would be worse than bad," and so on down to the commencement of the next chapter. The above is my comment upon the apostle's words: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." [1 Cor. 7:1-2]... "Notice the apostle's carefulness. He does not say: 'It is good for a man not to have a wife,' but, 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman'; as if there is danger in the very touching of one – danger which he who touches cannot escape." You see, therefore, that I am not expounding the law as to husbands and wives, but simply discussing the general question of sexual intercourse – how in comparison with chastity and virginity, the life of angels, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman" [1 Cor. 7:1]." (St. Jerome, *Letter XLVIII, To Pammachius*, c. 394 A.D.)

When one actually sees how many of the books of the Bible and the Saints there are that actually teaches about the inherent dangers of marriage and the marriage act, as well as the doctrine of the necessity of chastity and sexual purity for both the married and the unmarried, and that even the married must practice chastity from time to time, one can understand that it is a spiritual problem behind the reason for why so many people can read the same biblical books and texts as others without actually understanding a whiff of the words they read. It is sad, but their filthy and sensual life blinds them from seeing and

understanding what the words they read actually mean. In truth, it is a biblical fact, "...as Paul also says of those who are absorbed in marriage that they aim to "please the world." [1 Cor. 7:33] Again the Lord says, "Let not the married person seek a divorce, nor the unmarried person marriage," [1 Cor. 7:27, 32-36] that is, he who has confessed his intention of being celibate, let him remain unmarried." (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter XV, Section 97)

In contrast to virginity or chastity, "Conjugalitv, on the other hand, runs completely away from Christ by reason of the surging of corruptible flesh and worldly cares of every kind; or it only slightly approaches God." (St. Gregory of Nazianzen, *In Praise of Virginity*, PG 37, 563A) St. John Chrysostom, the inspired interpreter of the Apostle Paul, writes in the same spirit concerning the admission of marriage: "So, do not prefer over virginity that which was admitted because of your weakness. Rather, do not even put them on the same level." (St. John Chrysostom, "On Virginity" 15, PG 48, 545)

St. John Chrysostom comments on this passage (in Matthew 19) from the Bible and explains Our Lord's words about the greatness and perfection of a life of total and perpetual chastity:

"But what is, "If such be the case of a man with his wife?" That is, if to this end he is joined with her, that they should be one, or, on the other hand, if the man shall get to himself blame for these things, and always transgresses by putting away, it were easier to fight against natural desire and against one's self, than against a wicked woman.

"What then saith Christ? He said not, "yea, it is easier, and so do," lest they should suppose that the thing is a law; but He subjoined, "Not all men receive it, but they to whom it is given," [Matt. 19:11] raising the thing, and showing that it is great, and in this way drawing them on, and urging them.

"But see herein a contradiction. For He indeed saith this is a great thing; but they, that it is easier. For it was meet that both these things should be done, and that it should be at once acknowledged a great thing by Him, that it might render them more forward, and by the things said by themselves it should be shown to be easier, that on this ground too they might the rather choose virginity and continence. For since to speak of virginity seemed to be grievous, by the constraint of this law He drove them to this desire. Then to show the possibility of it, He saith, "There are some eunuchs, who were so born from their mother's womb, there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men, and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of Heaven's sake," [Matt. 19:12] by these words secretly leading them to choose the thing, and establishing the possibility of this

virtue, and all but saying, Consider if thou wert in such case by nature, or hadst endured this selfsame thing at the hands of those who inflict such wanton injuries, what wouldest thou have done, being deprived indeed of the enjoyment, yet not having a reward? Thank God therefore now, for that with rewards and crowns thou undergoest this, which those men endure without crowns; or rather not even this, but what is much lighter, being supported both by hope, and by the consciousness of the good work, and not having the desire so raging like waves within thee.

“For the excision of a member is not able to quell such waves, and to make a calm, like the curb of reason; or rather, reason only can do this.

“For this intent therefore He brought in those others, even that He might encourage these, since if this was not what He was establishing, what means His saying concerning the other eunuchs? But when He saith, that they made themselves eunuchs, He means not the excision of the members, far from it, but the putting away of wicked thoughts. Since the man who hath mutilated himself, in fact, is subject even to a curse, as Paul saith, “I would they were even cut off which trouble you.” [Gal. 5:12] And very reasonably. For such a one is venturing on the deeds of murderers, and giving occasion to them that slander God’s creation, and opens the mouths of the Manichæans, and is guilty of the same unlawful acts as they that mutilate themselves amongst the Greeks. For to cut off our members hath been from the beginning a work of demoniacal agency, and satanic device, that they may bring up a bad report upon the work of God, that they may mar this living creature, that imputing all not to the choice, but to the nature of our members, the more part of them may sin in security, as being irresponsible; and doubly harm this living creature, both by mutilating the members, and by impeding the forwardness of the free choice in behalf of good deeds.

“These are the ordinances of the devil, bringing in, besides the things which we have mentioned, another wicked doctrine also, and making way beforehand for the arguments concerning destiny and necessity even from hence, and everywhere marring the freedom given to us of God, and persuading us that evil deeds are of nature, and hence secretly implanting many other wicked doctrines, although not openly. For such are the devil’s poisons.

“Therefore I beseech you to flee from such lawlessness. For together with the things I have mentioned, neither doth the force of lust become milder hereby, but even more fierce. For from another origin hath the seed that is in us its sources, and from another cause do its waves swell. And some say from the brain, some from the loins, this violent impulse hath its birth; but I should say from nothing else than from an ungoverned will and a neglected mind: if this be temperate, there is no evil result from the motions of nature.

“Having spoken then of the eunuchs that are eunuchs for nought and

fruitlessly, unless with the mind they too practise temperance, and of those that are virgins for Heaven's sake, He proceeds again to say, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it," at once making them more earnest by showing that the good work is exceeding in greatness, and not suffering the thing to be shut up in the compulsion of a law, because of His unspeakable gentleness. And this He said, when He showed it to be most possible, in order that the emulation of the free choice might be greater.

"And if it is of free choice, one may say, how doth He say, at the beginning, "All men do not receive it, but they to whom it is given?" That thou mightest learn that the conflict is great, not that thou shouldst suspect any compulsory allotments. For it is given to those, even to the willing.

"But He spake thus to show that much influence from above is needed by him who entereth these lists, whereof He that is willing shall surely partake. For it is customary for Him to use this form of speech when the good work done is great, as when He saith, "To you it is given to know the mysteries."

"And that this is true, is manifest even from the present instance. For if it be of the gift from above only, and they that live as virgins contribute nothing themselves, for nought did He promise them the kingdom of Heaven, and distinguish them from the other eunuchs.

"But mark thou, I pray, how from some men's wicked doings, other men gain. I mean, that the Jews went away having learnt nothing, for neither did they ask with the intent of learning, but the disciples gained even from hence." (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 62 on Matthew, Chapter 19, Section 3*)

Just like in the days of St. Jerome, Noah or Lot, people talk about the joys of marriage and the world, but totally ignore its dangers, since their sensuality controls their life: "You set before me the joys of wedlock. I for my part will remind you of Dido's sword and pyre and funeral flames. In marriage there is not so much good to be hoped for as there is evil which may happen and must be feared. Passion when indulged always brings repentance with it; it is never satisfied, and once quenched it is soon kindled anew. Its growth or decay is a matter of habit; led like a captive by impulse it refuses to obey reason." (St. Jerome, *Letter CXXIII, To Ageruchia, Section 14, A.D. 409*)

Our Lord's and Lady's warning in the Bible and to the children at Fatima in 1917 confirms this point in great detail, clearly placing emphasis on the fact that marriages in the final days of the earth will be oriented towards pleasing sensuality and selfishness: "**The sins of the world are too great! The sins which lead most souls to hell are sins of the flesh!...Many marriages are not good; they do not please Our Lord and are not of God.**" Indeed, almost no one today seem to care that this is a fact and that this is

happening even though it is clearly warned about in the Bible that “***IN THE LAST DAYS, shall come dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves... incontinent... lovers of pleasure more than of God: Having an appearance indeed of godliness but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid.***” (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Consider this fact: Did Jesus say that few are saved? Yes He did (Luke 13:23-24, 28). In today’s world, what sin does most, if not all people fall into? **It is sexual sins!** Just look at the perverted protestants, the evil Vatican II “Catholics”, or even the deceived traditionalists, who all of them practice some form or another of sexual foreplay or unlawful inflaming of lust, as well as all kinds of other perversions too disgusting even to mention. It is thus clear why Our Lady of Fatima revealed to us that “*More souls go to Hell because of sins of the flesh than for any other reason*” and why this message was especially emphasized in Her revelations; for Our Lady, the Queen of Prophets, knew what the second part of the 20th century had in store for humanity after the introduction of the TV and other evil media, which in a large part is responsible for all of this impurity.

It is almost impossible to watch media or live in the modern society today and not be perverted by their evil influence that teaches us perverse sexual heresies. That is why the world has become so evil and why the apostasy is so universal. In truth, Our Lord Jesus Christ warned about the world’s delusion of our time when He said: “And as it came to pass in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat and drink, they married wives, and were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark: and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it came to pass, in the days of Lot: they did eat and drink, they bought and sold, they planted and built. And in the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed.” (Luke 17:26-30)

Haydock Bible Commentary explains Luke 17: “**Ver. 27.** After having compared his second coming to lightning, in order to shew how sudden it will be, he next compares it to the days of Noe [Noah] and Lot, to shew that it will come when men least expect it; **when, entirely forgetting his coming, they are solely occupied in the affairs of this world,** in buying and selling, &c. He only mentions those faults which appear trivial, or rather none at all, (passing over the crimes of murder, theft, &c.) purposely to shew, that if God thus punishes merely the immoderate use of what is lawful, **how will his vengeance fall upon what is in itself unlawful.** (Ven. Bede) --- **Ver. 32.** As Lot only escaped destruction by leaving all things, and flying immediately to the mountain, whereas his wife, by shewing an affection for the things she had left, and looking back, perished; **so those**

who, in the time of tribulation, forgetting the reward that awaits them in heaven, look back to the pleasures of this world, which the wicked enjoy, are sure to perish. (St. Ambrose)”

The amount of fools in this world who commit sexual sins inside and outside of marriage are innumerable. Sad to say, they could all have increased their chances of reaching Heaven by refusing to marry and indulging in their sinful sexual pleasure. But since their heart was set on earthly and perishable things, and they did not marry for an honorable and pure cause, God’s justice also demands that they shall perish with the dead and rotting bodies that they loved more than they loved Him; which was the filth and stinking treasure of their vile hearts. “Moreover, the Paedagogue [Instructor] warns us most distinctly: "Go not after thy lusts, and abstain from thine appetites [Sir. 18:30]; for wine and women will remove the wise; and he that cleaves to harlots will become more daring. Corruption and the worm shall inherit him [Sir. 19:2-3], and he shall be held up as public example to greater shame." And again—for he wearies not of doing good—"He who averts his eyes from pleasure crowns his life."” (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, Book II, Chapter X)

Thus, Our Lord Jesus Christ’s teaching in *The Gospel of Matthew* shows us all that it’s impossible to love Him at the same time as a physical and temporal thing or pleasure without actually hating or despising Him in the process. (Matthew 6:21,24)

St. Alphonsus, **on the damnation of the impure:** “Continue, O fool, says St. Peter Damian (speaking to the unchaste), continue to gratify the flesh; **for the day will come in which thy impurities will become as pitch in thy entrails, to increase and aggravate the torments of the flame which will burn thee in hell: ‘The day will come, yea rather the night, when thy lust shall be turned into pitch, to feed in thy bowels the everlasting fire.’**” (*Preparation for Death*, p. 117)

Our Lord Jesus Christ is perfectly right when He said in Matthew 19:14 that “*the kingdom of heaven is for such [children],*” and one of the most distinguishing traits of children is that they are chaste and pure and free from all sexual temptations, until they reach the age of puberty. Whether married or unmarried, if one wants to enter “the Kingdom of Heaven,” one must do all in one’s power to try to imitate the virtue and chastity that is inherent in children. Not only children can reach this stage of chastity or purity (where one is not bothered by the stings and temptations of the flesh), but also those who manfully labor in fasts and prayers, taking care to avoid mortal and venial sins and to not commit any act that will tempt or incite their sexual desire, always refusing to see or look at anything that

might disturb their chastity. “Brother Roger, a Franciscan of singular purity, being once asked why he was so reserved in his intercourse with women, replied, that when men avoid the occasions of sin, God preserves them; but when they expose themselves to danger, they are justly abandoned by the Lord, and easily fall into some grievous transgressions.” (St. Alphonsus, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, Mortification of the Eyes, p. 221)

In truth, “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.” (Matthew 11:12) The words *suffereth violence* means that it is not to be obtained but by main force by using violence upon oneself by mortifications and penances, and by resisting our perverse inclinations. Too few, however, care anything about mortifications and penances, and that is also why the world and most of the members of the Church have been allowed to fall into such great immorality, apostasy and heresy that was unheard of before the twentieth century.

St. Alphonsus de Liguori, in his masterpiece “*The Glories Of Mary*” describes how we are to achieve Purity Of Heart, and how The Blessed Virgin Mary is a powerful helper for those who are struggling with sexual sin, and also On How to Avoid Sexual Sins: “St. Ambrose says, that “whoever has preserved chastity is an angel, and that he who has lost it is a devil.” Our Lord assures us that those who are chaste become angels, “*They shall be as the angels of God in heaven*” (Matthew 22:30). But the impure, becomes as devils, hateful in the sight of God. St. Remigius used to say that the greater part of adults are lost by this vice. Seldom, as we have already said with St. Augustine, is a victory gained over this vice. But why? It is because **the means by which it may be gained are seldom made use of.**

“**These means are** three, according to Bellarmine and the masters of a spiritual life: **fasting, the avoidance of dangerous occasions, and prayer.**

“1. By fasting, is to be understood especially mortification of the eyes and of the appetite. Although our Blessed Lady was full of divine grace, yet she was so mortified in her eyes, that, according to St. Epiphanius and St. John Damascene, she always kept them cast down, and never fixed them on any one; and they say that from her very childhood her modesty was such, that it filled every one who saw her with astonishment. Hence St. Luke remarks, that, in going to visit St. Elizabeth, “*she went with haste,*” (Luke 1:39) that she might be less seen in public. Philibert relates, that, as to her food, it was revealed to a hermit named Felix, that when a baby she only took milk once a day. St. Gregory of Tours affirms that throughout her life she fasted; and St. Bonaventure adds, “that Mary would never have found so much grace, had she not been most moderate in her food; for grace and gluttony cannot subsist together.” In fine, Mary was mortified in all, so that of her it was said “*my hands dropped with myrrh*” (Canticle 5:5).

“2. The second means is to fly the occasions of sin: *“He that is aware of the snares shall be secure”* (Proverbs 11:15). Hence St. Philip Neri says, that, “in the war of the senses, cowards conquer:” that is to say those who fly from dangerous occasions. Mary fled as much as possible from the sight of men and therefore St. Luke remarks, that in going to visit St. Elizabeth, she went with haste into the hill country. An author observes that the Blessed Virgin left St. Elizabeth before St. John was born, as we learn from the same Gospel where it is said, *“that Mary abode with her about three months, and she returned to her own house. Now Elizabeth’s full time of being delivered was come, and she brought forth a son”* (Luke 1:56). And why did she not wait for this event? It was that she might avoid the conversations and visits which would accompany it.

“3. The third means is prayer. *“And as I knew,”* said the wise man, *“that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it . . . I went to the Lord and besought Him”* (Wisdom 8:21). The Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Elizabeth of Hungary, that she acquired no virtue without effort and continual prayer. St. John Damascene says, that Mary “is pure, a lover of purity.” Hence she cannot endure those who are unchaste. But whoever has recourse to Her will certainly be delivered from this vice, if he only pronounces her name with confidence. The Venerable [Saint] John of Avila used to say, “that many have conquered more temptations by only having devotion to her Immaculate Conception.”

“O Mary, O most pure dove, how many are now in hell on account of this vice! Sovereign Lady, obtain us the grace always to have recourse to thee in our temptations, and always to invoke thee, saying, “Mary, Mary, help us.” Amen.” (From *The Glories Of Mary*, by St. Alphonsus de Liguori)

There is no marriage in Heaven according to the Gospel of Matthew

In the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 22, Jesus explains *“that in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married; but shall be as the angels of God in heaven”*. Through these words, He is telling us that perpetual chastity is an inherent part in the Angelic and Heavenly Life, thus showing us once again that chastity is morally superior to marriage and the marital life.

And Jesus answering, said to them: “You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married; but shall be as the angels of God in heaven. And concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken by God, saying to you: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And the multitudes hearing it, were in admiration at his doctrine.” (Matthew 22:29-33)

Marriage and those acts which specifically pertain to it only endure for a short moment in this temporal life, while the virtue of chastity begins in this life, to continue through all eternity in Heaven in indescribable bliss and happiness. Haydock Commentary, “**Ver. 30.** *If not to marry, nor to be married*, be like unto angels, the state of religious persons, and of priests, is justly styled by the Fathers an angelic life. (St. Cyprian, lib. ii. de discip. et hab. Virg. sub finem.) (Bristow)”

Marriage did not even exist until after the fall and original sin of Adam and Eve, but chastity always existed and will always exist – whether in Heaven or on Earth – as long as the latter continues to exist. Marriage was instituted by God for procreation of children, but He also allows it to be used as a relief from concupiscence and the sin of uncleanness, adultery and fornication by giving the marital act an indulgence so long as the marital act is always subordinated to the primary end or purpose of the marital act—the procreation of children (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* #54). But this state of alleviation from temptation to sin that married people enter into when getting married is a defective state not originally intended by the Creator from the beginning—before the fall and original sin of Adam and Eve. Chastity and purity however is not a defective state, but the original and desired state that God wanted all humans to live in from the beginning. “Thus,” says St. Jerome, “it must be bad to touch a woman. If indulgences is nonetheless granted to the marital act, this is only to avoid something worse. But what value can be recognized in a good that is allowed only with a view of preventing something worse?”

Before the fall, people would have been able to procreate children without the evil of lust. “*In Eden, it would have been possible to beget offspring without foul lust. The sexual organs would have been stimulated into necessary activity by will-power alone, just as the will controls other organs.*” (St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book 14, Chapter 26.) Our Lord Jesus Christ never intended for us to be plagued by sexual desire. And because this defective desire brings with it so many sins and temptations of the flesh, it is perfectly true to say that marriage is a defective state compared to what the Creator had in mind from the beginning. If Adam and Eve had never sinned, all humans had now been chaste and pure just as God intended it to be from the beginning.

The church historian, Venerable Bede (673-735 A.D.), stated that in the first age of the world humankind was propagated by the union of men and women. However, in “the last age of history” God has “taken manhood from the flesh of the Virgin.... to prove that He loves the glory of virginity more than marriage.” (Venerable Bede, *Hexaemeron*, Book I, *PL 91:31*) Just like all the other Fathers and Saints of the Church, Venerable Bede saw First Corinthians, Chapter 7, as a reminder “that prayer is hindered by the marital duty, because as often as one renders the debt to his wife he is unable to pray” which in turn teaches us

that marriage became “wounded and sick” after the fall and original sin of Adam and Eve. (Venerable Bede, *Super Epistolas Catholicas Exposito: In Primam Epistolam Petri*)

St. John Chrysostom, *On Virginity*, Chapter 14: “Someone would object perhaps: if it is better to have no relations with a woman, why has marriage been introduced into life? What use, then, will woman be to us, if she is of help neither in marriage nor in the procreation of children? What will prevent the complete disappearance of the human race since each day death encroaches upon it and strikes man down, and if one follows this programme, there is no reproduction of others to replace the stricken? If all of us should strive after this virtue and have no relations with a woman, everything -- cities, households, cultivated fields, crafts, animals, plants -- everything would vanish. For just as when a general dies, the discipline of the army inevitably is thrown entirely into confusion, so if the ruler of all the earth, if mankind disappears because of not marrying (carnal coupling), nothing left behind will preserve the security and good order of the world, and this fine precept will fill the world with a thousand woes.

“If these words had been merely those of our enemies and of the unbelievers, I would have hardly considered them. However, many of those who appear to belong to the Church say this. They fail to make an effort on behalf of virginity because of their weakness of purpose. By denigrating it and representing it as superfluous, they want to conceal their own apathy, so that they seem to fail in these contests not through their own neglect of duty but rather through their correct estimation of the matter [he means that they delude themselves by their false view of thinking that they are correct]. Come then, having dismissed our enemies -- for “The natural man does not accept what is taught by the spirit of God. For him that is absurdity.” [1 Cor 2:14] -- let us teach two lessons to those who claim to be with us: that virginity is not superfluous but extremely useful and necessary; and that such a charge is not made with impunity but will endanger the detractors in the same way that right actions will earn wages and praise for the virtuous.

“When the whole world had been completed and all had been readied for our repose and use, God fashioned man for whom he made the world. After being fashioned, man remained in paradise and there was no reason for marriage. Man did need a helper, and she came into being; not even then did marriage seem necessary. It did not yet appear anywhere but they remained as they were without it. They lived in paradise as in heaven and they enjoyed God’s company. Desire for carnal intercourse, conception, labor, childbirth and every form of corruption had been banished from their souls. As a clear river shooting forth from a pure source, so were they in that place adorned by virginity.

“And all the earth was without humanity. This is what is now feared by those

who are anxious about the world. They are very anxious about the affairs of others but they cannot tolerate considering their own. They fear the eclipse of mankind but individually neglect their own souls as though they were another's. They do this when they will have demanded of them an exact accounting for this and the smallest of sins, yet for the scarcity of mankind they will not have to furnish even the slightest excuse.

“At that time there were no cities, crafts, or houses -- since you care so very much for these things -- they did not exist. Nevertheless, nothing either thwarted or hindered that happy life, which was far better than this. But when they did not obey God and became earth and dust, they destroyed along with that blessed way of life the beauty of virginity, which together with God abandoned them and withdrew. As long as they were uncorrupted by the devil and stood in awe of their master, virginity abided with them. It adorned them more than the diadem and golden raiments do kings. However, when they shed the princely raiment of virginity and laid aside their heavenly attire, they accepted the decay of death, ruin, pain and a toilsome life. In their wake came marriage: marriage, a garment befitting mortals and slaves.

“But the married man is busy with the world's demands” [1 Cor 7:33]. Do you perceive the origin of marriage? It springs from disobedience, from a curse, from death. For where death is, there is marriage. When one does not exist, the other is not about. But virginity does not have this companion. It is always useful, always beautiful and blessed, both before and after death, before and after marriage. Tell me, what sort of marriage produced Adam? What kind of birth pains produced Eve? You could not say. Therefore why have groundless fears? Why tremble at the thought of the end of marriage, and thus the end of the human race? An infinite number of angels are at the service of God, thousands upon thousands of archangels are beside him, and none of them have come into being from the succession of generations, none from childbirth, labor pains and conception. Could he not, then, have created many more men without marriage? Just as he created the first two from whom all men descended.”

In this context, St. Jerome adds, “Marriage replenishes the earth, virginity fills Paradise.” (*Ag. Jovinianus* 1:16) After all, humans can be married only during this life. They will be virgins, however, for eternity. He summarized, “For marriage ends at death; virginity thereafter begins to wear the crown.” (*Ibid.*, 1:22) Thus, after the fall, marriage and especially the marital act became wounded and highly potent to damn and bring a person under its control, similarly how a drug acts against a drug addict: “Now, [after the fall] Adam had intercourse with his wife Eve.’ Consider when this happened. After their disobedience, after their loss of the Garden, then it was that the practice of intercourse had its beginning. You see, before their disobedience they followed a life like that of the angels,

and there was no mention of intercourse. ... How could there be, when they were not subject to the needs of the body?" (*Homilies on Genesis*, Homily XVIII; PG 53.153)

According to St. Chrysostom, marriage was allowed in case one should exceed proper limits in admiring the bloom of youth and thus exciting passion (*Exp. in Ps. XLIII*; PG 55.181). Thus marriage was established following the Fall of man. It possessed a certain honor for what it was, but it in no way actually produced sanctity. This it was not able to do. Marriage was a solemn thing, that through which God "recruits our race" and which is the source of numberless blessings, not the least of which is its serving as a "barrier against uncleanness." St. John Chrysostom states, "Marriage is not holiness, but marriage preserves the holiness which proceeds from Faith... marriage is honorable, not holy. Marriage is pure: it does not however give holiness, except by forbidding the defilement of that, holiness which has been given by our Faith." (*Hom. XXX in Heb.*; PG 63.210; NPNF, p. 504). This is an important text in discerning Chrysostom's teaching about marriage since it was preached at the end of his life and only published posthumously. It is popular in modern Chrysostom scholarship to suggest that Chrysostom experienced a radical change in his thinking on marriage, and came to embrace a more modern notion of marriage as holiness and sex as love. This text, among others, refutes this position. Note also here that Chrysostom roots the holiness of the individual believer in the faith itself. In Homily 10 he is more explicit saying, "Every believer is a saint in that he is a believer. Though he live in the world he is a saint... the faith makes the holiness" (*Ibid.*, Hom. X; PG 63.87).

Sexual intercourse is not necessarily or directly sinful. However, Chrysostom nowhere suggests that intercourse is "holy", "sacred", or even primarily "an expression of love". These romantic notions are really quite modern, and lack any substantive Patristic source. At the same time Chrysostom is prepared to emphasize the mysterious nature of human sexuality and to associate it very closely with love in his *Homilies on Colossians*. For Chrysostom, however, the mystery of love is that between the spouses and the child which results from their union, not primarily between the spouses themselves.

St. John Damascene, speaking on virginity, says: "Virginity is the rule of life among the angels, the property of all incorporeal nature. ... Virginity is better than marriage, however good. ... But celibacy is, as we said, an imitation of the angels. Wherefore, virginity is as much more honorable than marriage, as the angel is higher than man. But why do I say angel? Christ, Himself, is the glory of virginity." (*An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book IV, Chapter XXIV) And so, "**flee thou youthful desires, and pursue justice, faith, charity, and peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**" (2 Timothy 2:22)

Now, “Tell me, will someone still dare to compare marriage with virginity? Or look marriage in the face at all? Saint Paul does not permit it. He puts much distance between each of these states. “The virgin is concerned with things of the Lord,” he says, but “the married woman has the cares of this world to absorb her.” [1 Cor 7:34] Moreover, after gathering married people together and having done this favor for them, hear how he reproaches them again for he says: “Return to one another, that Satan may not tempt you.” [1 Cor 7:5] And since he wishes to indicate that not all sins stem from the devil’s temptations but from our own idleness, he has added the more valid reason: because of “your lack of self-control.” [1 Cor 7:5]

“Who would not blush hearing this? Who would not earnestly try to escape blame for incontinence? For this exhortation is not for everyone but for those extremely prone to vice. If you are enslaved by pleasures, he says, if you are so weak as to have always given way to coitus and to gape in eager expectation at it, he joined to a woman. The consent therefore comes not from one approving or praising this action but from one scoffing at it with derision. If it had not been his desire to assail the souls of pleasure-seekers, he would not have set down this term, “incontinence,” which quite emphatically conveys the idea of censure. Why did he not say “because of your weakness”? Because that phrase is one of indulgence but to say incontinence denotes excessive moral laxity. Thus, the inability to refrain from fornication unless you always have a wife and enjoy sexual relations is an indication of incontinence.

What would those people who consider virginity superfluous say at this point? For the more virginity is practiced the more praise it receives, whereas marriage is deprived of all praise especially when someone has used it immoderately. “I say this,” Paul declares, “by way of concession, not as a command.” [1 Cor 7:6] But where there is a concession there is no place for praise.” (St. John Chrysostom, *On Virginity*, Chapter XXXIV)

In this dogmatic light, it is evident that none of the holy Fathers speaks of marriage (much less of “sexual relations” themselves) as the way to spiritual enlightenment and knowledge of God, as do some “theologians” of more recent times. St. Gregory the Theologian lists in great detail the achievements of marriage, all mostly relating to culture and civilization, that is, the earthly goods. (St. Gregory the Theologian, “Parthenias epenos” (“In Praise of Virginity”), PG. 37, 563A). Such praises of marriage are woven by “those who are of one mind with their ribs,” that is, happily married. But nowhere among these “achievements” do they mention the matters of spiritual ascent, that is, knowledge of God and theosis. On the contrary, the Fathers say that, on the one hand, marriage and the things belonging to it constitute an obstacle to ascent; while on the other hand, the road upward is the road of purity, of self-control or, in a word, virginity.

And even this simple drawing near to God within marriage is possible only through exercising self-restraint. Whereas, “to be sure, marriage is deprived of all praise whatsoever, when one indulges in it to the point of satiety.” (St. John Chrysostom, “Peri Parthenias” (“On Virginitv”), 48, PG 48, 557.) Then the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa hold true: “. . . lest through such passionate attachments (as in I Cor. 7:5) he become wholly flesh and blood, in whom the Spirit of God does not remain.” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, “Peri Parthenias” (“On Virginitv”), 8, PG 46, 356D). Elsewhere the same Father says: “So, it seems that these examples are instructing us, through the remembrance of those great Prophets [that is, Elias and John], to become entangled in none of those things that are pursued in the world. Marriage is one of these things pursued; rather it is the beginning and root of the pursuit of things vain.” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, “Peri Parthenias” (“On Virginitv”), 7, PG 46, 352D).

Whereas the Holy Father views marriage (and honorable marriage at that) in this way, he praises virginitv, writing: “If one wishes carefully to examine the difference between this way of life (that is, marriage) and virginitv, he will find it almost as great as the difference between earth and heaven.” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, “Peri Parthenias” (“On Virginitv”), 3, PG 46, 355).

St. Gregory the Theologian is more specific in comparing the two life-styles. On virginitv since the time of Christ, he writes: “Precisely then [that is, with Christ’s birth from the Virgin] did virginitv shine brightly to mortals; free of the world, and freeing the feeble world. It so surpasses marriage and the fetters of the world even as the soul is apt to be more excellent than the flesh and the wide heaven than the earth; as the stable life of the blessed is more excellent than transitory life; as God is superior to man.” (St. Gregory the Theologian, “In Praise of Virginitv”, PG 37, 538A)

This is precisely why virginitv, and not marriage, has such power: “through itself it brought God down for participation in human life, while in itself it enables man to soar to the longing for the things of heaven.” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, “Peri Parthenias” (“On Virginitv”), 2, PG 46, 324B)

Marriage does not attain such heights, for “even though marriage be honorable (Heb. 13:4), yet it can only go so far as not to defile those who engage in it. But to produce Saints is not within the power of marriage but of virginitv.” (St. John Chrysostom, “Peri Parthenias” (“On Virginitv”), 30, PG 48, 554). In response to those who ask how Abraham, being married, attained perfection, while so many virgins lost the kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 25:1-13), Saint John Chrysostom answers: “It was not marriage that made Abraham a Saint, nor virginitv that destroyed those miserable maidens. But rather, what made the

Patriarch illustrious was his soul's other virtues, and likewise what handed the maidens over to the fire was their life's other vices." (St. John Chrysostom, "Peri Parthenias" ("On Virginity"), 382, PG 48, 593)

The correctness of this Patristic view on marriage and virginity, and the unfoundedness of the views of the new so called theologians, is confirmed by the Church's life itself. The greatest Saints and servants of the divine mysteries were not the greatest lovers (and I am referring to human sexual love, about which the new "theologians" speak about), but the greatest practitioners of self-control.

The Church Fathers, well aware of the physical sexuality present in the Song of Songs, generally cautioned against reading it until a 'mature spirituality' had been obtained, lest the Song be misunderstood and lead the reader into temptation. Origen says, "I advise and counsel everyone who is not yet rid of the vexations of flesh and blood and has not ceased to feel the passion of his bodily nature, to refrain completely from reading this little book." (Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, cited in *Anchor Bible Commentary Song of Songs* 117)

When asked for advice about what scriptural books a young girl should read, Jerome recommended the Psalms, Proverbs, Gospels, Acts and the Epistles, followed by the rest of the Old Testament. Of the *Song* however, Jerome counsels caution, saying "... she would fail to perceive that, though it is written in fleshly words, **it is a marriage song of a spiritual bridal**. And not understanding this, she would suffer from it." (St. Jerome, *Letter cvii, To Laeta*, cited in *Anchor Bible Commentary Song of Songs* 119)

Indeed, "Do not think... that the body is made for intercourse. If you wish to understand... for what reason the body was made, then listen: it was made that it should be a temple to the Lord; that the soul, being holy and blessed, should act in it as if it were a priest serving before the Holy Spirit that dwells in you." (Origen, *Exegesis on 1 Corinthians 7:29*)

It is not coincidental that in this day and age when almost all are heretics, many people are falsely interpreting King Solomon's *Song of Songs* in a literal way instead of a figurative way that signify the spiritual relationship between God and the soul, and Christ and Our Lady, that the Holy Fathers did. The Fathers never interpreted the *Song of Songs* as a glorification of sex, and they unanimously rejected those impious and lustful people who tried to excuse their sensuality by perverting the Bible for the sake of their own lustful selfishness.

Bad parents will be tormented in a far greater fire for their bad example than

those who remained chaste

Most people who beget children in this world do not carefully consider the ramifications of raising children. Their only concern is to please their selfish interests and unlawful sensual desires. But the moment after they have died and entered into the eternal spiritual reality, they shall all see the evil fruit of their ways. *“For behold, the days shall come, wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck.”*

Luke 23:27-31 “And there followed him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them, said: Daughters of Jerusalem, **weep not over me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days shall come, wherein they will say: ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck.’ Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: ‘Fall upon us’; and to the hills: ‘Cover us.’** For *if in the green wood* they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?”

Haydock Bible Commentary adds, “**Verse 31.** *In the green wood:* by which are signified persons of virtue and sanctity; as by the *dry wood*, the wicked, who bring forth no fruit, and who, like dry wood, are fit to be cast into the fire. (Witham) --- If they be thus cruel with me [Jesus], how will they treat you!”

Simply said, those parents who beget and raise worldly and ungodly children for the sake of worldly and ungodly purposes will be tormented for an eternity in a far greater and more excruciating fire than a person who did not have children and remained chaste. Since they took upon themselves the great and heavy burden of raising children, they shall also have to answer to Our Lord for every moment of their life that they raised their children. By living a worldly, selfish and sensual lifestyle, most parents give the most abominable and sad example to their children, and this results in the child taking after the sins of the parents in almost every way. That is why an evil parent and child who will both be damned will torment each other for an eternity in Hell, since they were one of the greatest causes of their own damnation.

The Son of God spoke, saying: “Sometimes I let evil parents give birth to good children, **but more often, evil children are born of evil parents, since these children imitate the evil and unrighteous deeds of their parents as much as they are able** and would imitate it even more if my patience allowed them. **Such a married couple will never see my face unless they repent.**

For there is no sin so heavy or grave that penitence and repentance does not wash it away.” (*St. Bridget’s Revelations*, Book 1, Chapter 26)

It is hard to imagine the rage and hatred that children will have against their parents, but if we consider that their hatred will be eternal and with a perfect knowledge of the fact that their parents greatly influenced them to be eternally damned, one can understand how great this hate will be. That is why every person should carefully consider the cost and labor of marrying and becoming a parent. Unless a person is ready to take responsibility for their children, they must remain chaste and pure, and as we have seen, this chastity will also greatly increase their chances of reaching Heaven.

And concerning the education and upbringing of one’s children, The Blessed Virgin Mary revealed the following words to Sister Mary of Agreda: “It is an act of justice due to the eternal God that the creature coming to the use of reason, direct its very first movement toward God. By knowing, it should begin to love Him, reverence Him and adore Him as its Creator and only true Lord. The parents are naturally bound to instruct their children from their infancy in this knowledge of God and to direct them with solicitous care, so that they may at once see their ultimate end and seek it in their first acts of the intellect and will. They should with great watchfulness withdraw them from the childishness and puerile trickishness to which depraved nature will incline them if left without direction. If the fathers and mothers would be solicitous to prevent these vanities and perverted habits of their children and would instruct them from their infancy in the knowledge of their God and Creator, then they would afterwards easily accustom them to know and adore Him. My holy mother [St. Anne], who knew not of my wisdom and real condition, was most solicitously beforehand in this matter, for when she bore me in her womb, she adored in my name the Creator and offered worship and thanks for his having created me, beseeching Him to defend me and bring me forth to the light of day from the condition in which I then was. So also parents should pray with fervor to God, that the souls of their children, through his Providence, may obtain Baptism and be freed from the servitude of original sin. And if the rational creature has not known and adored the Creator from the first dawn of reason, it should do this as soon as it obtains knowledge of the essential God by the light of faith. From that very moment the soul must exert itself never to lose Him from her sight, always fearing Him, loving Him, and reverencing Him.” (From *The Mystical City of God*, The Divine History and Life of The Virgin Mother of God, Book 1, Chapter 6)

Pope Pius XI, in *Casti Connubii*, adds that: “If a true Christian mother weigh well these things, she will indeed understand with a sense of deep consolation that of her the words of Our Savior were spoken: “A woman . . . when she hath brought forth the child

remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world"; [John 16:21] and proving herself superior to all the pains and cares and solitudes of her maternal office with a more just and holy joy than that of the Roman matron, the mother of the Gracchi, she will rejoice in the Lord crowned as it were with the glory of her offspring. Both husband and wife, however, receiving these children with joy and gratitude from the hand of God, will regard them as a talent committed to their charge by God, not only to be employed for their own advantage or for that of an earthly commonwealth, but to be restored to God with interest on the day of reckoning.

"The blessing of offspring, however, is not completed by the mere begetting of them, but something else must be added, namely the proper education of the offspring. For the most wise God would have failed to make sufficient provision for children that had been born, and so for the whole human race, if He had not given to those to whom He had entrusted the power and right to beget them, the power also and the right to educate them. For no one can fail to see that children are incapable of providing wholly for themselves, even in matters pertaining to their natural life, and much less in those pertaining to the supernatural, but require for many years to be helped, instructed, and educated by others. Now it is certain that both by the law of nature and of God this right and duty of educating their offspring belongs in the first place to those who began the work of nature by giving them birth, and they are indeed forbidden to leave unfinished this work and so expose it to certain ruin. But in matrimony provision has been made in the best possible way for this education of children that is so necessary, for, since the parents are bound together by an indissoluble bond, the care and mutual help of each is always at hand.

"Since, however, We have spoken fully elsewhere on the Christian education of youth, [in the encyclical *Divini illius Magistri*, 31 Dec. 1929] let Us sum it all up by quoting once more the words of St. Augustine: "As regards the offspring it is provided that they should be begotten lovingly and educated religiously," [St. Augustine, *De Gen. ad litt., lib. IX*] -- and this is also expressed succinctly in the [1917] *Code of Canon Law*: "The primary end of marriage is the procreation and the education of children." [*Cod. iur. can., c. 1013 & 7*]" (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (#'s 15-17), Dec. 31, 1930)

Our Lord Jesus Christ must come before our family and friends according the Gospel of Mark

Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us in *The Gospel of Mark* that we must be able to leave behind even our own family members for the sake of God and the Kingdom of Heaven when necessity requires it.

"And Peter began to say unto him [Jesus]: 'Behold, we have left all things, and have followed thee.' Jesus answering, said: 'Amen I say to you, there is no man who hath

left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, Who shall not receive an hundred times as much, now in this time; houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions: and in the world to come life everlasting. But many that are first, shall be last: and the last, first.” (Mark 10:28-31)

Most people do not realize that in most cases, the very ones we hold the most dear and near are in fact also those who are the most dangerous to our eternal salvation. St. Alphonsus, speaking on detachment from relatives, says: “If attachment to relatives were not productive of great mischief Jesus Christ would not have so strenuously exhorted us to estrangement from them... a man’s enemies shall be they of his own household (Mt. 10:36) ... Relatives are the worst enemies of the sanctification of Christians...” (*The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, p. 96) That is why a person who intends to marry must be extremely careful to choose a pious and virtuous husband or wife. Only choosing a spouse based on physical beauty or money or any other worldly motive is completely insane since this person (for better or for worse) will greatly influence not only the souls of the children, but also that of the spouse.

Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (# 115), December 31, 1930: “To the proximate preparation of a good married life belongs very specially the care in choosing a partner; on that depends a great deal whether the forthcoming marriage will be happy or not, since one may be to the other either a great help in leading a Christian life, or, a great danger and hindrance. And so that they may not deplore for the rest of their lives the sorrows arising from an indiscreet marriage, those about to enter into wedlock should carefully deliberate in choosing the person with whom henceforward they must live continually: they should, in so deliberating, keep before their minds the thought first of God and of the true religion of Christ, then of themselves, of their partner, of the children to come, as also of human and civil society, for which wedlock is a fountain head. Let them diligently pray for divine help, so that they make their choice in accordance with Christian prudence, not indeed led by the blind and unrestrained impulse of lust, nor by any desire of riches or other base influence, but by a true and noble love and by a sincere affection for the future partner; and then let them strive in their married life for those ends for which the State [of Matrimony] was constituted by God. Lastly, let them not omit to ask the prudent advice of their parents with regard to the partner, and let them regard this advice in no light manner, in order that by their mature knowledge and experience of human affairs, they may guard against a disastrous choice, and, on the threshold of matrimony, may receive more abundantly the divine blessing of the fourth commandment: ‘Honor thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with a promise) that it may be well with thee and thou mayest be

long-lived upon the earth.' (*Eph.*, VI, 2-3; *Exod.*, XX, 12)."

A person who intends to marry must first ask themselves the question whether they would stay with the person they intend to marry if that person became poor or invalid or suffered some serious illness or accident that made him or her grotesque and ugly. Unless a person stays with their spouse in such a situation, they have committed a mortal sin and have broken the sacramental bond of Holy Matrimony which they promised to each other until death. "The happiness of marriage ought never to be estimated either by wealth or beauty, but by virtue. "Beauty," says the tragedy, "helps no wife with her husband; But virtue has helped many; for every good wife who is attached to her husband knows how to practice sobriety." Then, as giving admonitions, he says: "First, then, this is incumbent on her who is endowed with mind, That even if her husband be ugly, he must appear good looking; For it is for the mind, not the eye, to judge." And so forth." (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata* or *Miscellanies*, Book IV, Chapter XX.--Of A Good Wife.)

St. John Chrysostom, in addressing the daily family problems of his age, argues that they are due to the absence of correct criteria in the choice of one's spouse. He addresses himself to the parents who in that period played an important role in the choice, and he says to the father: "When you consider and look for a possible groom, pray and tell God, please send whomever you'd like, leave the situation up to Him, and since you have honored Him in this way, He will reward you. Always ask God to be a mediator in all of your works. For, if we dealt with all of our affairs in this way, there would never be a divorce, nor suspicion of adultery, nor cause for envy, nor battles and disputes, but we would enjoy great peace and harmony, and when there is harmony, other virtues will follow." (*To Maximus*, EIIIE, vol. 27, p. 208) This humble prayer and supplication to God for help in finding a suitable and pure spouse that will benefit ourselves and our children can of course be made by every person who desires to marry.

A successful marriage is one that regards success in terms of virtue rather than wealth. The husband must have a virtuous soul, goodness, prudence, and fear of God. Chrysostom says, "A young woman who is prudent, independent, and cultivates piety, is as valuable as the whole world." (*On the Letter to the Hebrews*, Homily 20, EIIIE, vol. 21, p. 236) "Many people who had amassed a great fortune lost it all, for they didn't have a sensible wife capable of preserving it." (*On the Second Letter to the Thessalonians*, Homily 5, EIIIE, vol. 23, p. 112)

God wants us to enter marriage for pious and pure motives and not for selfish and impure motives. Concerning this, St. John Chrysostom explains that one should marry a woman for the sake of having a helpmate and a partner in our life, instead of for money or other

evil and selfish reasons. “The very benefit God has given thee by nature, do not thou mar the help it was meant to be. So that it is not for her wealth that we ought to seek a wife: it is that we may receive a partner of our life, for the appointed order of the procreation of children. It was not that she should bring money, that God gave the woman; it was that she might be an helpmate.” (*Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, Homily XLIX, Acts XXIII. 6-30, Ver. 17)

Many men seek after a beautiful wife. Is this enough for a marriage to succeed? St. Chrysostom emphasizes that “the beauty of the body, when it is not accompanied by virtue of the soul, can imprison the husband for twenty or thirty days, it won’t last longer though, for when she shows her bad side, the love will be destroyed. When, however, women shine from the beauty of their souls, as time passes and increasingly reveals the nobility of their souls, their husbands are drawn ever closer to them.” (*Sermon in Kalendais*, EHE, vol. 31, p. 490)

The Catholic Church from the very beginning of its foundation by Our Lord Jesus Christ has always taught and admonished future spouses that they should not enter marriages for lustful or worldly motives, and that is also why, in about the year 110, the Holy Bishop Saint Ignatius of Antioch (who were taught by the Apostles) taught that “those who are married should be united with the consent of their bishop, to be sure that they are marrying according to the Lord and not to satisfy their lust.” (*Ignatius To Polycarp* 5)

The love of good spouses are thus concentrated on the things that are eternal and heavenly, rather than the things that are perishable, fleshly and of a sensual nature. Indeed, this truth of loving one’s spouse with a heavenly love was so perfectly mirrored in the life of St. Peter that “They say that the blessed Peter, on seeing his wife led to death, rejoiced on account of her call and conveyance home [to Heaven], and called very encouragingly and comfortingly, addressing her by name, "Remember thou the Lord." Such was the marriage of the blessed, and their perfect disposition towards those dearest to them. Thus also the apostle says, "that he who marries should be as though he married not," and deem his marriage free of inordinate affection, and inseparable from love to the Lord; to which the true husband exhorted his wife to cling on her departure out of this life to the Lord.” (St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book VII, Chapter XI)

St. Gregory Nazianzen says that marriage indeed is good, as long as those who enter it have motives that are honorable and pure: “It is good to marry; I too admit it, for marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled. [Heb. 13:4] It is good for the temperate, not for those who are insatiable, and who desire to give more than due honor to the flesh. When marriage is only marriage and conjunction and the desire for a succession of children,

marriage is honorable, for it brings into the world more to please God. But when it kindles matter, and surrounds us with thorns, and as it were discovers the way of vice, then I too say, It is not good to marry.” (*Orations of St. Gregory Nazianzen, Oration XXXVII, Section IX*)

Thus, it is evident that one should not concentrate on physical characteristics or riches and similar things if one intends to enter marriage. Rather, if one wants to please Our Lord and really desires what’s best for oneself and one’s children, bodily and spiritually, one must concentrate first-and-foremost on how the other spouse one intends to marry is spiritually disposed. For troubles, contradictions, accidents and illnesses will always be a normal part in marriage and every day life for all people, and there is no real way to protect oneself from such things.

The chaste and mortified servants of Christ saves more souls

Today, the fact that the two virtues of chastity and mortification of the senses are special in helping to save one’s own and other peoples souls, has been almost completely forgotten. Our Lady of Fatima testified to this truth, when, after appearing to the Children of Fatima, She said, “*Sacrifice yourselves for sinners and say often, especially when you make some sacrifice, ‘O my Jesus, this is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the offenses committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.’*” Our Lady further said, “*Pray, pray a great deal and make many sacrifices, for many souls go to Hell because they have no one to make sacrifices and to pray for them.*”

In truth, because the sensual attraction and desire in human beings is so strong and hard to resist, all those people who manfully labor in interior mortifications and sacrifices, rejecting their carnal nature for the Love of God and of Souls, shall also be rewarded for their sacrifices by God in the same measure as they were able to resist their sensuality: “Amen, I [Jesus] say to you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, ***or wife***, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive much more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” (Luke 18:29) Not only will the chaste be rewarded with a greater reward in Heaven but they will also help to draw down abundant blessings from Heaven by their prayers which has a greater power to shower humanity with the dew of grace, helping and spurring on carnal people to admire and respect the wonderful, pure and simple lifestyle of those who actually decide to live in the angelic life of chastity and self-denial for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

For most people it is very hard to remain chaste or deny themselves their sensual appetites since they are worldly and the fallen nature of the flesh draws them to a fleshly and sensual

lifestyle. And that is precisely the reason for why a person who renounces the world and its fleeting pleasures is more effective in attracting and saving souls, and in drawing down abundant blessings from God. St. Paul, in fact, seems to allude to this in his letter to the Galatians, when he says: *“But that Jerusalem, which is above, is free: which is our mother. For it is written: Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not: break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: **for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband.**”* (Galatians 4:26-27)

St. Paul here tells us that those who are barren and have not given birth to children beget many children and even “more than of her that hath a husband.” But how can a barren person have more children than those who are married? In truth, many times spiritual children are brought into Heaven and the arms of Our Heavenly Lord by those chosen vessels of Our Lord who have renounced the small and fleeting pleasures of the world by practicing mortifications and penances and the virtue of chastity. Simply said, a person who renounces the world and its pleasures sets a great example to others, encouraging them to not live for their own selfish fleshly pleasures. One can accurately say that a person’s reward in Heaven will correspond perfectly to the amount of virtue that he practiced during this short life. The more one practices virtue, the greater one will be rewarded in Heaven, and conversely, the less one practices virtue, the less will also one’s reward in Heaven be. Many men can indeed preach about holiness and good deeds, but there are few who actually put their words into practice. Mere words are as nothing compared to a person that actually lives a life of holiness and virtue. For instance, one single person like St. Francis of Assisi would do much more good by his mere example to others than what 100 other men would do by simply preaching about it.

Indeed, since the common knowledge of the labor and hardship of living in chastity and self-denial makes both God and men value and appreciate those who take upon themselves a pure, mortified and chaste lifestyle for the love of God, the direct effect on the sinner of the example of a virtuous and chaste man is that the sinner reflects on his own life and considers the fact that he is living a very degrading and sensual life filled with a selfish agenda. This shame for his sensual life then makes him try to amend in order to become more like a true servant of Christ. When holy and pure servants of Christ shows a good example to others, like the great St. Francis of Assisi, sinners feel ashamed over their sensual, worldly lifestyle, thinking that since this holy and pure person can reach such a level of purity and simplicity, they at least should be able to reach a level of virtue that it is in accordance to the law of Christ. But this is not all that the holy and chaste servants of Christ does, for they also inspire people who are already good to become even better, and to increase their virtue, spurring them on to adopt a life of chastity and self-sacrifice for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In truth, chaste and holy servants of Our Lord draws down abundant blessings from God, and gives birth to many spiritual children by their holy and

good example and life and, in fact, “*more than of her that hath a husband.*”

If all of these blessings that we have now seen that the chaste life provides was all this life could provide, it would undoubtedly be enough and more than enough, but chastity or virginity not only helps oneself and others become saved, but it also helps a person stay away from mortal or venial sins in this life, which in truth is one of the most important things we all must strive for if we want to be saved: “This doctrine of the excellence of virginity and of celibacy and of their superiority over the married state was, as we have already said, revealed by our Divine Redeemer [Our Lord Jesus Christ] and by the Apostle of the Gentiles [St. Paul]; so too, it was solemnly defined as a dogma of divine faith by the Holy Council of Trent [in Session 24, Canon 10], and explained in the same way by all the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church.” (Pope Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas* (# 32), March 25th, 1954)

The devil and his servants on this earth as well as a person’s sensual desires hinder weak-willed souls from adopting a more virtuous and chaste life

St. Augustine, in his famous work “*The Confessions of Saint Augustine*,” explains to us how the Devil and our own fleshly lusts and desires many times deceives us, and tries to get us to refuse or delay a good, chaste and holy life: “Why, therefore, do we delay to abandon our hopes of this world, and give ourselves wholly to seek after God and the blessed life? But stay! Even those things are enjoyable; and they possess some and no little sweetness. We must not abandon them lightly, for it would be a shame to return to them again. Behold, now is it a great matter to obtain some post of honor! And what more could we desire? We have crowds of influential friends, though we have nothing else, and if we make haste a presidentship may be offered us; and a wife with some money, that she increase not our expenses; and this shall be the height of desire. Many men, who are great and worthy of imitation, have applied themselves to the study of wisdom in the marriage state. Whilst I talked of these things, and these winds veered about and tossed my heart hither and there, the time passed on; but I was slow to turn to the Lord, and from day to day deferred to live in You, and deferred not daily to die in myself. Being enamored of a happy life, I yet feared it in its own abode, and, fleeing from it, sought after it. I conceived that I should be too unhappy were I deprived of the embracements of a woman; and of Your merciful medicine to cure that infirmity I thought not, not having tried it. As regards continency, I imagined it to be under the control of our own strength (though in myself I found it not), being so foolish as not to know what is written, that none can be continent unless Thou give it; and that You would give it, if with heartfelt groaning I should knock at Your ears, and should with firm faith cast my care upon You.” (St. Augustine, *The Confessions of Augustine*, Book VI, Chapter XI, A.D. 398)

Indeed, one will often see when reading the lives of the saints how their worldly family and friends (inspired by the devil or the world) tried in every way possible to dissuade them from adopting the heavenly and angelic lifestyle of chastity, and in some cases, their family or friends even tried to physically hinder them from dedicating their lives to the perpetual service of Our Lord Jesus Christ. For instance, when St. Thomas Aquinas chose to become a Dominican friar (c. 1245) he met with: “severe opposition from his family... St. Thomas was literally captured by his brothers and imprisoned in the family castle... The most dramatic episode of his imprisonment, came when his brothers sent a temptress to his quarters. As soon as St. Thomas saw that the girl’s intention was to seduce him, he ran to the fireplace, seized a burning stick and, brandishing it, chased her from the room with it. Then he traced a cross on the wall with the charred wood. When he fell asleep soon afterward, he dreamed that two Angels came and girded him about the waist with a cord, saying: ‘On God’s behalf we gird you with the girdle of chastity, a girdle which no attack will ever destroy.’” (*33 Doctors of the Church*, p. 367)

St. John the Apostle was loved by Our Lord with a special love because of his great love for chastity and purity

It is related by the Holy Abbot Joseph, in *The Conferences of John Cassian* (c. 420) how Our Lord Jesus Christ loved the Blessed Apostle St. John with a special love above the other Apostles because of his virginity and great purity: “This also, we read, was very clearly shown in the case of John the Evangelist, where these words are used of him: "that disciple whom Jesus loved," [John 13:23] though certainly He embraced all the other eleven, whom He had chosen in the same way, with His special love, as this He shows also by the witness of the gospel, where He says: "As I have loved you, so do ye also love one another;" of whom elsewhere also it is said: "Loving His own who were in the world, He loved them even to the end." [John 13:34,1] But this love of one in particular did not indicate any coldness in love for the rest of the disciples, but only a fuller and more abundant love towards the one, **which his prerogative of virginity and the purity of his flesh bestowed upon him.**” (Conference 16, Chapter XIV, On Friendship)

Referring to one of the legends associated with the wedding feast at Cana, Alcuin, an eminent educator, scholar, and theologian born about 735; died 19 May, 804, reported that the bridegroom at that wedding feast was none other than St. John the beloved apostle. Having seen the miraculous power of Jesus in his changing water into wine, John left his bride in order to follow Jesus. Of course, St. John did so before consummating his marriage, thus preserving his virginity. (Alcuin, *Commentarium in Joannem*, Book 1, chapter 2, verse 8, PL 100:771-772)

Indeed, as we can see, the purity of the most beloved Apostle of Our Lord and his renunciation of this world is clearly put forth in his writings: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof: but he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17) Thus, from the beginning, Our Lord Jesus Christ taught St. John and the Holy Apostles those wondrous words of chastity and purity that are found in Holy Scripture, inspiring them to not love the world or its empty and fleeting pleasures, telling them to leave the marital life and sexual relations behind in order to be able to perfectly embrace Our Lord and their priestly duty.

"The Life and Revelations of St. Gertrude the Great" (1256-1302) reveals the following interesting and marvelous information about chastity and the virginity of St. John the Apostle, and how all those who faithfully persevere in chastity until their death are especially loved and honored by Our Lord in Heaven: "On another occasion during the same feast [of St. John], as the Saint took great satisfaction in the frequent praises which were given to the [same] Apostle for his perfect virginity, she asked this special friend of God to obtain by his prayers that we might preserve our chastity with such care as to merit a share in his praises. St John replied: "He who would participate in the beatitude which my victories have won, must run as I ran when on earth." Then he added: "I frequently reflected on the sweet familiarity and friendship with which I was favored by Jesus, my most Loving Lord and Master, in reward for my chastity, and for having watched so carefully over my words and actions that I never tarnished this virtue in the slightest degree. The Apostles separated themselves from such company as they considered doubtful, but mixed freely with what was not (as it is remembered in the Acts, that they were with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus); I never avoided women when there was an opportunity of rendering them any service, either of body or soul; but I still watched over myself with extreme vigilance, and always implored the assistance of God when charity obliged me to assist them in any way. Therefore these words are chanted of me: *In tribulatione invocasti me et exaudivi te [Thou calledst upon me in affliction, and I delivered thee]*(Psalm 80:8).

"For God never permitted my affection to render anyone less pure; wherefore I received this recompense from My beloved Master, that my chastity is more praised than any other Saint [after Our Lord and Our Lady]; and I have obtained a more eminent rank in Heaven, where, by a special privilege, I receive with extreme pleasure the rays of this love, which is as a mirror without spot and the brightness of eternal light. So that, being placed before this Divine love, whose brightness I receive each time that my chastity is commemorated in the Church, my loving Master salutes me in a most sweet and affable

manner, filling my inmost soul with such joy, that it penetrates into all its powers and sentiments like a delicious beverage. And thus the words, *Ponan te sicut signaculum in conspectu meo [I will make thee as a signet in my sight, for I have chosen thee]* (Haggai 2:24), are sung of me; that is, I am placed as a receptacle for the effusions of the sweetest and most ardent charity."

"Then St. Gertrude, being raised to a higher degree of knowledge, understood by these words of Our Lord in the Gospel, "In My Father's house there are many mansions" (John 14:2); that there are three mansions in the heavenly kingdom, which correspond with three classes of persons who have preserved their virginity.

"... At Communion, as she [St. Gertrude] prayed for the Church, but felt a want of fervor, she prayed to Our Lord to give her fervor, if her petitions were agreeable to Him; and immediately she beheld a variety of colors: white, which indicated the purity of the virgins; violet, which symbolized confessors and religious; red, which typified the martyrs; and other colors, according to the merits of the Saints. Then, as she feared to approach Our Lord because she was not adorned with any of these colors, she was inspired by the Holy Ghost, "who teaches man wisdom," **to return thanks to God for all those who had been elevated to the grace and state of virginity; beseeching Him, by the love which made Him be born of a Virgin for us, to preserve all in the Church to whom He had vouchsafed this favor in most perfect purity of body and soul, for His own honor and glory;** and immediately she beheld her soul adorned with the same shining whiteness as the souls of the virgins." (*The Life and Revelations of Saint Gertrude*, Book 4, Chapter 4 & 56)

St. Chrysostom explains that the only profitable thing for us to do while on this earth is to shun the perishable and carnal, instead searching for the heavenly and eternal, and this glorious path of shunning the earthly and carnal that reaches all the way into Heaven is most perfectly walked on by all those who have adopted the pure life of chastity like the Apostles and the other chaste servants of Christ, thus freeing themselves from many earthly and carnal troubles: "Is it a fine thing to build one's self splendid houses, to have servants, to lie and gaze at a gilded roof? Why then, assuredly, it is superfluous and unprofitable. For other buildings there are, far brighter and more majestic than these: on such we must gladden our eyes, for there is none to hinder us. Wilt thou see the fairest of roofs? At eventide look upon the starred heaven. 'But,' saith some one, 'this roof is not mine.' Yet in truth this is more thine than that other. For thee it was made, and is common to thee and to thy brethren: the other is not thine, but theirs who after thy death inherit it. The one may do thee the greatest service, guiding thee by its beauty to its Creator; the other the greatest harm, becoming thy greatest accuser on the Day of Judgment, inasmuch as it is covered with gold, while Christ hath not even needful raiment. Let us not, I entreat you, be subject to such folly, let us not pursue things which flee away, and flee those which endure: let us not betray our own salvation, but hold fast to our hope of what

shall be hereafter: the aged, as certainly knowing that but a little space of life is left us; the young, as well persuaded that what is left is not much. For that day cometh so as a thief in the night. Knowing this, let wives exhort their husbands, and husbands admonish their wives; let us teach youths and maidens, and all instruct one another, to care not for present things, but to desire those which are to come.” (St. Chrysostom, *Hom. XLVII in Jn.*; PG 59.268-270)

The Holy Bible teaches that those who do not remarry after their spouse have died become “more blessed” through their chastity, and that the ministers of the Lord cannot remarry after their wife have died as well as that all of them must be totally “chaste”

The Holy Ghost and the Church from its foundation insisted on the inherent goodness and virtue of chastity, and of abstaining from remarriage after the death of one’s spouse by requiring that the men who wanted to become ministers of the Lord had been married only once in order for them even to be able to become bishops, priests or deacons: “*A faithful saying: if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. It behoveth therefore a bishop to be blameless, **the husband of one wife**, sober, prudent, of good behavior, **chaste**, given to hospitality, a teacher... Let deacons be the husbands of **one wife**... ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee: If any be without crime, **the husband of one wife**...*” (1 Timothy 3:1-2,12; Titus 1:5-6)

Douay Rheims Bible Commentary explains that the meaning of the words of *one wife* “**is not that every bishop should have a wife (for St. Paul himself had none), but that no one should be admitted to the holy orders of bishop, priest, or deacon, who had been married more than once.**” Indeed, Holy Scripture itself teaches that a widow will become more blessed if she do not remarry, which confirms this teaching of God and His Church: “*But more blessed shall she be, if she so remain, [that is, a widow] according to my counsel; and I think that I also have the spirit of God.*” (1 Cor. 7:40) This proves to us, once and for all, that God wants both men and women to stay unmarried after their spouse have died and that their virtuous life is “more blessed” when compared to those who get married again.

While there is no sin in remarrying after the death of one’s spouse for those who are not ministers of the Lord, the Church’s insistence on the inherent spiritual goodness for both men and women to turn to chastity and purity after one’s spouse has died is quite obvious, and only the most desperate liars and deceivers (like protestants and other heretics who wants to flout this infallible biblical rule in order to remarry while calling themselves priests or ministers of God) can even dare to deny this obvious biblical truth.

Tertullian (160-220 A.D.), although married, perceived marriage as a state in which carnal desire could easily lead people away from God. His teaching about sexuality can be read in his work called "*Exhortation to Chastity*." There he lists three forms of virginity. The ideal form was "virginity from one's birth." Next there was "renunciation of sexual connection," a form of virginity undertaken after a man and a woman contracted marriage which the Church extols as the highest form of heroic virtue married couples can practice. The third form of virginity consisted in "marrying no more after the disjunction of matrimony by death." (Tertullian, *Exhortation to Chastity*, in Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. IV)

This final form of virginity was to be accomplished in two stages. In the first stage the husband would try to cut down marital activity to a minimum. Then, when his wife died, he would refrain from remarriage. Tertullian's work called "*To His Wife*" advised widows "to love the opportunity of continence" and he viewed a second marriage as "repeating the servitude of matrimony," a rejection of "the liberty offered by the death of one's spouse." Married couples had to live in a state of life where marital relations were expected. After the death of a spouse the survivor was spiritually better off because he or she was no longer subject to the Pauline requirement of rendering the "marriage debt." Since second marriages were "detrimental to faith" and "obstructive to holiness," it is safe to say that Tertullian saw scant spiritual goodness in remarriage when he compared this state of life with the angelic life of chastity.

St. Methodius, *Banquet of the Ten Virgins* (c. 311 A.D.): "But we must now examine carefully the apostle's language respecting men who have lost their wives, and women who have lost their husbands, and what he declares on this subject. "I say therefore," he goes on, "to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." Here also he persisted in giving the preference to continence. For, taking himself as a notable example, in order to stir them up to emulation, he challenged his hearers to this state of life, teaching that it was better that a man who had been bound to one wife should henceforth remain single, as he also did. But if, on the other hand, this should be a matter of difficulty to any one, on account of the strength of animal passion, he allows that one who is in such a condition may, "by permission," contract a second marriage; not as though he expressed the opinion that a second marriage was in itself good, but judging it better than burning. ... Thus also the apostle speaks here, first saying that he wished all were healthy and continent, as he also was, but afterwards allowing a second marriage to those who are burdened with the disease of the passions, lest they should be wholly defiled by fornication, goaded on by the itchings of the organs of generation to promiscuous

intercourse, considering such a second marriage far preferable to burning and indecency.”

People living in chastity are “the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” according to the Book of Revelation or the Apocalypse

The Book of Revelation or The Apocalypse is remarkable in its description of future tribulations that await humanity. It does, however, also describe how a select few who are “*the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb... [who] were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.*”

Apocalypse 14:1-5 “And I beheld, and lo a lamb stood upon mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty-four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the noise of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder; and the voice which I heard, was as the voice of harpers, harping on their harps. And they sung as it were a new canticle, before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the ancients; and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. **These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins.** These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb: And in their mouth there was found no lie; for they are without spot before the throne of God.”

These words are remarkable and an outstanding and irrefutable proof of the greatness of the virtue of chastity. The honor God gives to those who practice chastity or virginity is especially described in these words: “*And they sung as it were a new canticle, before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the ancients; **and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth.***” Notice how no one “could say the canticle” but those who practiced the virtue of chastity or virginity. This, of course, totally rejects and demolishes the heretical position that living in chastity is nothing special compared with marriage, thus showing us once again that chastity is an especially holy and good deed.

St. Jerome writes, “These are they who sing a new song [Rev. 14:3] which no man can sing except he be a virgin. These are the first fruits unto God and unto the Lamb,’ [Rev. 14:4] and they are without spot. If virgins are the first fruits unto God, then widows and wives who live in continence must come after the first fruits—that is to say, in the second place and in the third. ... It is in your power, if you will, to mount the second step of chastity. [2

Tim. 2:20, 21] Why are you angry if, standing on the third and lowest step, you will not make haste to go up higher?" (*The Letters of St. Jerome*, Letter XLVIII, To Pammachius, Section 10, 11, A.D. 394)

Following Our Lord in perfection, purity and holiness, "Out of each tribe, except the tribe of Dan, the place of which is taken by the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand virgins who have been sealed are spoken of as future believers, who have not defiled themselves with women. And that we may not suppose the reference to be to those who have not had relations with harlots, he immediately added, "for they continued virgins." Whereby he shows that all who have not preserved their virginity, **in comparison with the pure and angelic chastity and of our Lord Jesus Christ himself**, are defiled." (St. Jerome, *Against Jovinian* 1:40, A.D. 420) Simply said, those who choose to live in chastity greatly increases their chance of reaching Heaven, which is also why the Holy Scripture teaches us not indulge our sensual appetites: "Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will." (Ecclesiasticus 18:30) And so, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul." (1 Peter 2:11)

Widows and all those who have vowed their chastity to Our Lord must remain pure and chaste until their death, or else they will have "damnation" according to the Holy Bible

In *St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy*, St. Paul gives Timothy great and edifying lessons concerning widows, and also explains to him that those who have vowed their chastity and whole self to Christ as his or her eternal Spouse must continue in this state until their death, or else they will have "damnation".

1 Timothy 5:1-3, 5-6, 9-13, 15: "[Entreat] Old women, as mothers: young women, as sisters, in all chastity. Honor widows, that are widows indeed... But she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, let her trust in God, and continue in supplications and prayers night and day. For she that liveth in pleasures, is dead while she is living... Let a widow be chosen of no less than threescore years of age, who hath been the wife of one husband. Having testimony for her good works, if she have brought up children, if she have received to harbor, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have ministered to them that suffer tribulation, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows avoid. For when they have grown wanton in Christ, they will marry: **Having damnation**, because they have made void their first faith. And withal being idle they learn to go about from house to house: and are not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought

not. *I will therefore that the younger should marry*, bear children, be mistresses of families, give no occasion to the adversary to speak evil. *For some are already turned aside after Satan.*”

Haydock Commentary explains these verses: “**Ver. 2.** *All chastity* refers to the heart, eyes, ears, words, looks, with the precautions of times and places. --- **Ver. 5.** *She that is a widow indeed, and desolate*, (destitute of help, as the Greek word implieth) may be maintained; and then let her be constant in prayers and devotions night and day. (Witham) --- Every Christian soul is a widow of Jesus Christ, who has been forcibly torn from her: and in her communications with heaven she ought to offer up an afflicted and humbled heart—the heart of a widow. It is thus she will avoid the dangers of the world, and secure true life in unchangeable felicity. (Haydock) --- **Ver. 6.** *For she that liveth in pleasure*, (i.e. that seeks to live in ease and plenty) *is dead while she is living*, by the spiritual death of her soul in sin. (Witham) --- **Ver. 11.** As for the *younger widows*, admit them not into that number; *for when they have grown wanton in Christ*, which may signify in the Church of Christ, or as others translate, *against Christ*; when they have been nourished in plenty, indulging their appetite in eating and drinking, in company and conversation, in private familiarities, and even sometimes in sacrilegious fornications against Christ and their vows, they are for marrying again. See St. Jerome. (Witham)”

“**Ver. 12.** *Having*, or incurring and making themselves liable to *damnation*, by a breach of their *first faith*, their vow or promise, (Witham) by which they had engaged themselves to Christ. (Challoner) --- **Ver. 13.** *Idle*, &c. He shews by what steps they fall. Neglecting their prayers, they give themselves to idleness; they go about visiting from house to house; they are carried away with curiosity to hear what passes, and speak what they ought not of their neighbor’s faults. (Witham) --- **Ver. 14.** *The younger (widows) should marry*. They who understand this of a command or exhortation to all widows to marry, make St. Paul contradict himself, and the advice he gave to widows [in] 1 Corinthians vii. where he says, (ver. 40.) *She (the widow) will be more happy if she so remain according to my counsel*; [i.e., in chastity] and when it is there said, *I would have all to be as myself* [that is, in a chaste and unmarried state]. He can therefore only mean such young widows, of whom he is speaking, that are like to do worse. Thus it is expounded by St. Jerome to Sabina: "Let her rather take a husband than the devil." And in another epistle, to Ageruchia: "It is better to take a second husband than many adulterers." St. Chrysostom on this verse: "I will, or would have such to marry, because they themselves will do it." See also St. Augustine, de Bono viduitatis, chap. viii. (Witham)”

“**Ver. 15.** *For some are already turned aside after Satan*, by breaking the vows they had made. "Yet it does not follow, (says St. Augustine in the same place [de Bono viduitatis,

chap. viii.]) that they who abstain not from such sins may marry after their vows. They might indeed marry before they vowed; but this being done, unless they keep them they justly incur damnation." "Why is it, (says he again, on Psalm lxxv.) they made void their first faith? but that they made vows, and kept them not. **But let not this (says he) make you abstain from such vows [of virginity or chastity], for you are not to comply with them by your own strength; you will fall, if you presume on yourselves; but if you confide in him to whom you made these vows, you will securely comply with them.**" How different was the doctrine and practice of the first and chief of the late pretended reformers, who were many of them apostates after such vows? (Witham)"

Those blessed men and women of Our Lord who enter into a Heavenly Marriage with Our Bridegroom, Our Lord Jesus Christ, commit literal adultery if they at some point in time should change their mind and "marry" another person, or have sexual relations with anyone. In former times, adultery was heavily punished, and even today, most people recognize that adultery is an especially evil deed. But if committing adultery against a human and mortal person is so shameful and evil, how much more evil must it not to be unfaithful, to reject or defile one's eternal marriage to Our Lord Jesus Christ, Our Heavenly Spouse, and commit adultery with a mortal man or woman like a filthy adulterer? That is why all those who have vowed their chastity to Christ, and then breaks it, are damned.

St. Philip the Apostle had four daughters, virgins, whom Eusebius, a roman historian, testifies to have always remained such. St. Paul kept virginity or celibacy all his life; so did St. John and St. James; and when St. Paul (1 Timothy 5:12) reproveth, as having damnation, certain young widows who, *after they have grown wanton in Christ will marry, having damnation because they have left their first faith*, – the fourth Council of Carthage (at which St. Augustine assisted) St. Epiphanius, St. Jerome, with all the rest of antiquity, understand it of widows who, being vowed to God and to the observance of chastity, broke their vows, entering into the ties of "marriage" against the first faith which previously they had given to Christ, their Spouse.

Gratian, *Medieval Marriage Law*: "But a more excellent reward is proposed for virgins and widows who practice continence. When this course is considered, elected, and promised by the required vow, not only marrying, but even wishing to marry, is damnable. The Apostle proves then when he says, not of those marrying for sensuality, but of those marrying in Christ [1 Tim. 5:11-12], "they will wish to marry, and are to be condemned because they have broken their first promise." They are here condemned not for marrying, but for wishing to marry. It is not

marriage in general, or even these marriages in particular, that are condemned. He condemns the denial of their dedication, and condemns the broken faith of their vow. It is not choosing a lower good that is condemned, but falling from a higher good. They are condemned, not because they later embrace conjugal fidelity, but because they brake their earlier pledge of continence... So, when he said, "they will wish to marry," and adds immediately "and are to be condemned," he then explains why, "because they have broken their first promise." This shows that their desire to abandon their dedication is condemned, whether they later marry or not."

(Marriage Canons From *The Decretum*, Case Twenty-Seven, Question I, Part 2., C. 41. §1)

These verses from the Bible also proves that Martin Luther committed a most grievous sacrilege and unfaithfulness against Our Lord when he rejected his vow of chastity and spiritual marriage to Jesus Christ. **Martin Luther professed himself to be a Catholic monk once in his life before he apostatized and rejected the one and only biblical faith—Catholicism.** The Devil indeed needed a servant who would publicly reject purity and indulge in the marital life against his vow of chastity, and he found a perfect candidate in the apostate and heretic Martin Luther.

In light of his mortal sin of adultery, it is not hard to understand why Martin Luther dared to teach, amongst his other countless heresies, that Christ Our Lord sinned mortally by committing adultery with three women. Luther said:

“Christ committed adultery first of all with the women at the well about whom St. John tells us. Was not everybody about Him saying: ‘Whatever has He been doing with her?’ Secondly, with Mary Magdalene, and thirdly with the woman taken in adultery whom He dismissed so lightly. **Thus even, Christ who was so righteous, must have been guilty of fornication before He died.**”

(Trishreden, Weimer Edition, Vol. 2, Pg. 107)

What an accursed and intolerable blasphemy from a man who is regarded as a “great reformer” by his duped followers! Luther also said that **“No sin can separate us from Him [God], even if we were to kill or commit adultery thousands of times each day.”** (‘Let Your Sins Be Strong,’ from ‘The Wittenberg Project,’ ‘The Wartburg Segment’, translated by Erika Flores, from Dr. Martin Luther’s Saemmtliche Schriften, Letter No. 99, 1 Aug. 1521)

One can understand why Luther also took the position that God was the author of evil and that man has no free will, for Luther’s sins needed to be excused: “... **with regard to God,**

and in all that bears on salvation or damnation, (man) has no ‘free-will’, but is a captive, prisoner and bond slave, either to the will of God, or to the will of Satan.” (From the essay, ‘Bondage of the Will,’ ‘Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings,’ ed. by Dillenberger, Anchor Books, 1962 p. 190) **“God,” Luther says, “excites us to sin, and produces sin in us.”** (De Servo Arbitrio, Opp. Jenae, tom. iii., p. 170.) **“God damns some,” he adds, “who have not merited this lot, and others, before they were born.”** (Opp. Jena;, iii., 199; and Wittemb., torn, vi., fol. 522-23)

Luther also told his dupes to **“be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly... No sin will separate us from the Lamb, even though we commit fornication and murder a thousand times a day.”** (Martin Luther, *Letter to Melancthon*, August 1, 1521)

It is indeed true that those who impiously claim (like Luther, Calvin and other protestants) that we humans have no free will, also agree that God is the cause of our sins, for if we have no free will, God created those who are damned only in order to be damned without any chance for them of repenting or being saved. According to this satanic view, God created those who are going to be damned with the explicit intention that they were going to be damned. It is safe to say that this false conception of God is pure evil, conceived by the devil himself. According to this evil and perverse worldview, we could not even do good with the grace of God if we wanted to since we have no free will! ([Please read this article about Martin Luther which reveals over 100 quotations of Martin Luther’s words and teachings which are so horrifying and disgusting that it’s almost beyond words to describe](#))

Only the most desperate liars, fools and dupes (that is, protestants) could delude themselves into believing that the impure and demonic spawn from hell, Martin Luther, was anything but a deceiver and apostate. Martin Luther rejected the Bible, the Church, and his marriage and vow of Chastity to Jesus Christ and “married” a woman and had children before he died, and as a consequence, was cast into the Eternal Fire of Hell for his heresies, apostasies, infidelities, adulteries, and other mortal sins.

Romans 13:12-14 “Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy: But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.”

The Bible and the Fathers, Popes, Saints and Doctors of the Church unanimously teach that chastity and virginity is above the marital life

It is the unanimous opinion of the Fathers and Saints of the Church that no one, without exception, can reach the highest kind of union with God without the wonderful virtue of chastity; and that “virgins consecrated to God are most pleasing and dear to Him”. In addition to this, the Catholic Church and *The Council of Trent* also teaches infallibly that it is “**better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony**” which, as we have seen, is a restatement of Our Lord Jesus Christ’s words in the Holy Bible – 1 Corinthians 7.

This, of course, means both inner and outer chastity; for there is no point in being chaste outwardly if the will or intent is unchaste and consents to impure thoughts. Chastity is first-and-foremost found in the heart of man, and that is why even a married man who performs his marital duty can be said to be chaste in a way, that is, in his thoughts, as long as his intention is not to live a lustful life. Thus, “The incorrupt soul is a virgin, even if having a husband.” (Chrysostom, *Hom. XXVIII in Heb.*; PG 63.201.) But chastity in deeds as well as in thoughts and at all times is of course always superior to this state of marital relations. “**Virginity is better than marriage, however good.**” (St. John Damascene, *Expo. IV.24.*) “**That virginity is good I do agree. But that it is even better than marriage, this I do confess.**” (St. John Chrysostom, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 2: 1116)

Indeed, “As firstfruits are the most delicious, so virgins consecrated to God are most pleasing and dear to him. The spouse in the canticles feedeth among the lilies? One of the sacred interpreters, explaining these words, says, that ‘as the devil revels in the uncleanness of lust, so Christ feeds on the lilies of chastity.’ Venerable Bede asserts that the hymn of the virgins is more agreeable to the Lamb than that of all the other saints.” (St. Alphonsus, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, p. 7)

Since the countless protestant sects (from the very beginning of their creation in the 16th century by the devil) were especially hostile to the infallible biblical doctrine which teaches that chastity or virginity is much better and a more meritorious and blessed life than the marital life, *The Council of Trent* also had to specifically condemn and anathematize all who dared to oppose this biblical doctrine. Thus, the Church made clear to all this biblical teaching, which means that all who obstinately assert that marriage is above or equal to the state of chastity or virginity are damned and in a state of mortal sin, awaiting the moment of their death when they will enter the eternal Hell where they will be tormented and burn for their wicked, obstinate, impure heresy and false opinion.

Pope Pius IV, *Council of Trent*, *ex cathedra*: “If any one saith, that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity, or of celibacy, and that it is not

better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony, **(Matt. 19:11; 1 Cor. 7:25) let him be anathema.**” (Session 14, Canon X, Nov. 11, 1563, on Matrimony; Denzinger #980)

The wicked heresy which states that, “there is no spiritual superiority in celibacy vs. conjugal chastity (sex within marriage)” is utterly false and refuted by the Holy Bible itself as well as the infallible teachings of the Popes. This is what the Church teaches infallibly as it’s dogma.

Pope Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas* (# 32), March 25, 1954: **“This doctrine of the excellence of virginity and of celibacy and of their superiority over the married state** was, as We have already said, revealed by our Divine Redeemer and by the Apostle of the Gentiles; so too, **it was solemnly defined as a dogma of divine faith by the holy council of Trent**, and explained in the same way by all the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Finally, We and Our Predecessors have often expounded it and earnestly advocated it whenever occasion offered. **But recent attacks on this traditional doctrine of the Church, the danger they constitute, and the harm they do to the souls of the faithful** lead Us, in fulfillment of the duties of Our charge, to take up the matter once again in this Encyclical Letter, and to reprove these errors which are so often propounded under a specious appearance of truth.”

St. Jerome writes concerning the greatness of chastity and virginity: “I praise wedlock, I praise marriage, but it is because they give me virgins. I gather the rose from the thorns, the gold from the earth, the pearl from the shell. “Doth the plowman plow all day to sow?” Shall he not also enjoy the fruit of his labor? Wedlock is the more honored, the more what is born of it is loved. Why, mother, do you grudge your daughter her virginity? She has been reared on your milk, she has come from your womb, she has grown up in your bosom. Your watchful affection has kept her a virgin. Are you angry with her because she chooses to be a king’s wife and not a soldier’s? She has conferred on you a high privilege; you are now the mother-in-law of God. “Concerning virgins,” says the apostle, “I have no commandment of the Lord.” Why was this? Because his own virginity was due, not to a command, but to his free choice. For they are not to be heard who feign him to have had a wife; for, when he is discussing continence and commending perpetual chastity, he uses the words, “I would that all men were even as I myself.” And farther on, “I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I.” And in another place, “have we not power to lead about wives even as the rest of the apostles?” Why then has he no commandment from the Lord concerning virginity? Because what is freely offered is worth more than what is extorted by force, and to command virginity would have

been to abrogate wedlock. It would have been a hard enactment to compel opposition to nature and to extort from men the angelic life; and not only so, it would have been to condemn what is a divine ordinance.” (St. Jerome, *Letters of St. Jerome*, Letter 22:20, To Eustochium, A.D. 420) Thus, “... the virtue of chastity... St. Ambrose says that ‘whoever preserves this virtue is an angel, and that whoever violates it is a demon.’” (St. Alphonsus, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, p. 17, A.D. 1755) Therefore, “in comparison with chastity and virginity, the life of angels, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman" [1 Cor. 7:1].” (St. Jerome, *Letter XLVIII, To Pammachius*, c. 393 or 394 A.D.)

St. Gregory Nazianzen (c. 329-390): “Hast thou chosen the life of Angels? Art thou ranked among the unyoked? Sink not down to the flesh; sink not down to matter; be not wedded to matter, while otherwise thou remainest unwedded.” (*Orations of St. Gregory Nazianzen*, Oration XXXVII, Section X)

In the immoral ambiance of our days, it is important for Catholics to read the praises St. John Chrysostom makes in his work “*On Virginity*” of those who choose virginity as a state of life. **He compares virginity with the state of matrimony, to conclude that the former is higher.**

“As you do, I also think that virginity is a good thing, better than the nuptial life. I add that it is as superior to the nuptial life as Heaven is superior to earth, or as Angels to men. Since the Angels are not made of flesh and blood, for them there is no conjugal life. Since they do not live on earth, they are not subject to the disorders of passions and pleasures; they do not need to eat or drink; they are not attracted by a melodious music, a captivating song or a remarkable beauty, finally, they cannot be conquered by any type of softness.

“Man, however, even though he is inferior to the angelic spirits, zealously and carefully seeks to be as much like them as he can. How does he do so? Angels do not marry, neither does the virgin man. Angels live before God always at His service; so does the virgin man. Human nature, which bears the weight of the body, cannot ascend to Heaven as the Angels do; however, to compensate such deficiency, man has the greatest possible consolation, that is, by living pure of body and soul, he can receive and possess in the Eucharist the King of Heaven.

“Can’t you see all the excellence of virginity? Can’t you see how it transforms those who still live clothed in this flesh and makes them equal to Angels? Tell me in what point are those great lovers of virginity, Elias, Eliseus and St. John, different from Angels? In almost nothing. Only in this, that they are Angels in a mortal nature. Regarding the rest, anyone who analyzes them carefully sees that they deserve the same esteem as the angelic spirits. Further, because their condition is far inferior to the Angels, their merit is the greater. For because of their mortal nature, only with much violence and great effort could

they attain such an eminent degree of virtue. See how much courage they had and the type of life they lived.” (St. John Chrysostom, Book of Virginity, In the Writings of the Roman Breviary, Lesson 3 of the feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga)

The Bible and the Saints teach that most people will be damned to burn for all eternity in Hell, but chastity greatly increases a person’s chance to reach Heaven

Today, one almost never hears anyone speaking about the biblical truth that very few people actually escape eternal damnation in Hell. All virtues that we humans practice increases the chance for us to reach Heaven, but the virtue of chastity is special in helping to save a person’s immortal soul since it is very hard to gain for most people; since they are weak, worldly and lustful; and because of this, very few people in this world try to gain it because of their sloth, weakness or bad will. Chastity undoubtedly greatly increases one’s chances of reaching Heaven, and it is undoubtedly more effective in helping people escape eternal hell than almost any virtue in the world, but too few in this world seem to care about this fact which, in truth, is one of the most important truths that ever have been revealed to mankind.

Our Lady of Fatima, Portugal, 1917: **“The sins of the world are too great! The sins which lead most souls to hell are sins of the flesh! ... Many marriages are not good; they do not please Our Lord and are not of God... [since these spouses marry for carnal and lustful motives or perform unlawful, non-procreative or unnecessary sexual acts with each other.]”**

Catholics must understand that **few are saved**. Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed that the road to Heaven is straight and narrow and few find it, while the road to Hell is wide and taken by most (Mt. 7:13).

Matthew 7:13 **“Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!”**

Luke 13:24 **“Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able.”**

Scripture also teaches that almost the entire world lies in darkness, so much so that Satan is even called the “prince” (John 12:31) and “god” (2 Cor. 4:3) of this world. “We know that

we are of God, **and the whole world is seated in wickedness.**” (1 John 5:19)

When one reads these infallible and true words of Our Lord that explains to us how few people there are that actually escape the eternal torments in Hell, one can only marvel at the fact that so few people in this world actually desires to become chaste or embrace the monastic life. Chastity greatly increases a person’s chance of reaching Heaven, yet almost everyone, and especially the protestants, resists or denies this saving truth with every fiber of their sensual beings. In the former times, the Catholic Church and its members upheld the greatness of the virtue of chastity, and people of every class in society resolved to practice chastity and purity for the sake of saving their immortal souls from the fires of hell. Thus, there was always a considerable portion of humanity that lived as an example of evangelical perfection and virtue to everyone else, and this in turn helped even more people to adopt a more virtuous and chaste lifestyle.

Nowadays, however, the fear of Hell has vanished completely, and that is why no one cares anything for the great virtue of chastity. But the time will come when both married and unmarried shall lift up their voices in lamentation and weeping and curse themselves for refusing to practice the virtue of chastity and purity, but then, it is sadly too late for them. *“And the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever: neither have they rest day nor night...”* (Apocalypse 14:11)

St. Leonard of Port Maurice (A.D. 1676-1751), when speaking **on the fewness of the saved, shows us how the Church and Her Fathers and Saints is unanimous in teaching this biblical doctrine:** “After consulting all the theologians and making a diligent study of the matter, he [Suarez] wrote, **‘The most common sentiment which is held is that, among Christians [Catholics], there are more damned souls than predestined souls.’** Add the authority of the Greek and Latin Fathers to that of the theologians, and you will find that almost all of them say the same thing. This is the sentiment of Saint Theodore, Saint Basil, Saint Ephrem, Saint John Chrysostom. What is more, according to Baronius it was a common opinion among the Greek Fathers that this truth was expressly revealed to Saint Simeon Stylites and that after this revelation, it was to secure his salvation that he decided to live standing on top of a pillar for forty years, exposed to the weather, a model of penance and holiness for everyone. Now let us consult the Latin Fathers. You will hear Saint Gregory saying clearly, *‘Many attain to faith, but few to the heavenly kingdom.’* Saint Anselm declares, *‘There are few who are saved.’* Saint Augustine states even more clearly, *‘Therefore, few are saved in comparison to those who are damned.’* The most terrifying, however, is Saint Jerome. At the end of his life, in the presence of his disciples, he spoke these dreadful words: *‘Out of one hundred thousand people whose lives have always been bad, you will find barely one who is worthy of*

indulgence.' (On *The Little Number of Those Who Are Saved*, by St. Leonard of Port Maurice)

What would not the billions of suffering souls in Hell do, who fell into the most horrifying torments imaginable for the sake of carnal impurities and temptations of the flesh, if they had a second chance to escape their eternal torment? In truth, they would gladly walk on the surface of the Sun, which is millions of degrees hot for a billion times billion years if God enabled them to do so. To choose a single second of sinful pleasure (which is how short this life is compared to eternity) for an **infinite time of excruciating torments and tortures in hell** is unfathomable, and yet, literally the whole world consents to this devilish trap!

Take heed that you, the reader, do not reject this admonishment, for it might be the last time you will hear such words before death suddenly strikes you and the Devil takes you and devours you for all eternity to come! "... Take all states, both sexes, every condition: husbands, wives, widows, young women, young men, soldiers, merchants, craftsmen, rich and poor, noble and plebian. What are we to say about all these people who are living so badly? The following narrative from Saint Vincent Ferrer will show you what you may think about it. He relates that an archdeacon in Lyons gave up his charge and retreated into a desert place to do penance, and that he died the same day and hour as Saint Bernard. After his death, he appeared to his bishop and said to him, '*Know, Monsignor, that at the very hour I passed away, **thirty-three thousand** people also died. Out of this number, **Bernard and myself** went up to Heaven without delay, **three** went to purgatory, and **all the others fell into Hell.***' Our chronicles relate an even more dreadful happening. One of our brothers, well-known for his doctrine and holiness, was preaching in Germany. He represented the ugliness of the sin of impurity so forceful that a woman fell dead of sorrow in front of everyone. Then, coming back to life, she said, '*When I was presented before the Tribunal of God, **sixty thousand** people arrived at the same time from all parts of the world; out of that number, **three** were saved by going to Purgatory, and **all the rest were damned.***' O abyss of the judgments of God! Out of thirty thousand, only five were saved! And out of sixty thousand, only three went to Heaven! **You sinners who are listening to me, in what category will you be numbered?... What do you say?... What do you think?...**' (On *The Little Number of Those Who Are Saved*, by St. Leonard of Port Maurice)

Fr. Martin Von Cochem's masterpiece book "*The Four Last Things*" (that deals specifically with the topics of Hell, the fear of God, death and judgment), explains the frightful truth of Our Lord's words in the Gospel **of how few people there actually are on this earth that even find the path to Heaven even once while living on this earth**, and

much less persevere on it until their death:

“Let me ask thee, O reader, what proportion thinkest thou of all who live upon this earth will be saved? Half? or a third part? or perhaps a quarter? Alas, I fear, and not without good reason, that the number will not be nearly so large. Jesus Christ, who is eternal Truth, His holy apostles, and the Fathers of the Church, all tell us that so it will be.

“What does Christ say about the number of the elect? His words are these: "Many are called, but few are chosen." He repeats these words when He speaks of the guest who had not on a wedding garment: "Bind his hands and his feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness. For many are called, but few chosen." Were nothing more to be found to this intent in the whole of the Scriptures, this passage could not fail to alarm us. But there are many other similar ones, of which I will quote one or two. In the Gospel of St. Matthew we read that Our Lord said: "Enter ye in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction, and many there are that go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there are that find it." (Matt. 7:13) Are not these words calculated to inspire us with anxiety and apprehension? May not we be amongst those who go in at the wide gate, who walk on the broad road that ends in everlasting perdition? In order that thou mayst better appreciate the meaning of Our Lord's words, and perceive more clearly how few are the elect, observe that Christ did not say that those were few in number who walked in the path to heaven, but that there were but few who found that narrow way. "How strait is the gate that leadeth unto life, and few there are that find it." It is as if the Savior intended to say: The path leading to heaven is so narrow and so rough, it is so overgrown, so dark and difficult to discern, that there are many who, their whole life long, never find it. And those who do find it are exposed constantly to the danger of deviating from it, of mistaking their way and unwittingly wandering away from it, because it is so irregular and overgrown. This St. Jerome says, in his commentary on the passage in question. Again, there are some who when they are on the right road, hasten to leave it, because it is so steep and toilsome. There are also many who are enticed to leave the narrow way by the wiles and deceits of the devil, and thus, almost imperceptibly to themselves, are led downwards to hell.” (Fr. Martin Von Cochem, *The Four Last Things*, pp. 212-213)

If people could only open their fleshly eyes and start seeing with their spiritual eyes how short this life and the lust of the flesh is, everyone would immediately become chaste and pure, but no one today wants to contemplate or meditate on the end of all flesh, which is death and decay in the grave. They behave as mentally ill people who willfully forgets that

they must die and be judged by our Lord Jesus Christ. The thought of death is indeed powerful to conquer every sin and sinful occasion, but while people know that they must die, they willfully choose to forget this fact, since the very thought of death and change is repugnant to their fleshly beings, and directly associated with the thought of being judged by God for their sins. And so, they choose to forget that they must die and be judged by God in order to not have to feel any distress, fear or remorse from their evil conscience every time they sin.

But the time will come when they – standing in shame and ignominy in front of the whole world at the day of judgment – will be forced against their will to remember and confess every single sinful and lustful act that they have ever committed from the moment they reached the age of reason to their very last breath, and then, after their just condemnation, their eternal punishment will begin. Their soul shall be separated from their sinful and fleshly rotting body for the sake of their vile and shameful affections and lusts and be cast into the eternal fire “*in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*” (Apocalypse 21:8)

Indeed, Our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking through an angel, teaches that: “Hell is so hot inside that if the whole world and everything in it were on fire, it could not compare to that vast furnace. The various voices heard in the furnace all speak against God. They begin and end their speech with laments. The souls look like people whose limbs are forever being stretched without relief or pause.” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 4, Chapter 7) Hence, “Nicholas of Nice, speaking of the fire of Hell, says that nothing on earth could give an idea of it. He adds that if all the trees of the forests were cut down, piled into a vast heap and set on fire, this terrible pile would not be a spark of Hell.” (“The Dogma of Hell, Illustrated by Facts Taken from Profane and Sacred History” by Rev. Father Francois Xavier Schouppe, S.J.)

And so, “When you see anything good and great in the present life, think of the kingdom [of Heaven], and you will consider it as nothing. When you see anything terrible, think of hell, and you will deride it. When you are possessed by carnal desire, think of the fire, think also of the pleasure of sin itself, that it is nothing worth, that it has not even pleasure in it. For if the fear of the laws that are enacted here has so great power as to withdraw us from wicked actions, how much more should the remembrance of things future, the vengeance that is immortal, the punishment that is everlasting? If the fear of an earthly king withdraws us from so many evils, how much more the fear of the King Eternal? Whence then can we constantly have this fear? If we continually hearken to the Scriptures. For if the sight only of a dead body so depresses the mind, how much more must hell and the fire unquenchable, how much more the worm that never dies. If we always think of hell, we

shall not soon fall into it. ... Let it be continually spoken of, that you may never fall into it. It is not possible that a soul anxious about hell should readily sin. For hear the most excellent advice, "Remember," it says, "your latter end" [Sirach 28:6], and you will not sin for ever. A soul that is fearful of giving account cannot but be slow to transgression. For fear being vigorous in the soul does not permit anything worldly to exist in it. For if discourse raised concerning hell so humbles and brings it low, does not the reflection constantly dwelling upon the soul purify it more than any fire? Let us not remember the kingdom so much as hell. For fear has more power than the promise. And I know that many would despise ten thousand blessings, if they were rid of the punishment, inasmuch as it is even now sufficient for me to escape vengeance, and not to be punished. No one of those who have hell before their eyes will fall into hell. No one of those who despise hell will escape hell. For as among us those who fear the judgment-seats will not be apprehended by them, but those who despise them are chiefly those who fall under them, so it is also in this case. ... Nothing is so profitable as to converse concerning hell. It renders our souls purer than any silver. For hear the prophet saying, "Your judgments are always before me." [From Psalm 17:22, Septuagint] For although it pains the hearer, it benefits him very much." (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 2 on Second Thessalonians*, On the Fear of Hell)

There is no better way to crush the power of the serpent and his wretched lusts and desires than to constantly, day and night, meditate on Hell and its frightful, eternal, indescribable darkness and torments that will befall all those miserable wretches who refuse to live a virtuous, pure and non-lustful life: "How shall we tie down this wild beast? What shall we contrive? How shall we place a bridle on it? I know none, save only the restraint of hell-fire." (St. John Chrysostom, *De Inani Gloria* or *On Vainglory*, Section 76)

Sad to say, "Unto many this seemeth an hard saying, Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Jesus" (Matt. 16:24). But much harder will it be to hear that last word, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. 25:41). For they who now willingly hear and follow the word of the Cross, shall not then fear (Psalm 112:7) to hear the sentence of everlasting damnation. This sign of the Cross shall be in the heaven, when the Lord shall come to judgment (Matt. 24:30). Then all the servants of the Cross, who in their lifetime conformed themselves unto Christ crucified, shall draw near unto Christ the Judge with great confidence. Why therefore fearest thou to take up the Cross, which leadeth thee to a kingdom? In the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection against our enemies, in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the Cross is strength of mind, in the Cross joy of spirit, in the Cross the height of virtue, in the Cross the perfection of holiness. Take up therefore thy Cross and follow Jesus (Luke 14:27), and thou shalt go into life everlasting." (Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, Book 2, Chapter 12 - Of the King's High Way of the Holy Cross)

St. Teresa of Avila, *The Life of the Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus*, (Written by Herself): “I came to understand the truth I had heard in my childhood, that all things are as nothing, the world vanity, and passing rapidly away. I also began to be afraid that, if I were then to die, I should go down to hell. Though I could not bend my will to be a nun, I saw that the religious state was the best and the safest. And thus, by little and little, I resolved to force myself into it. The struggle lasted three months. I used to press this reason against myself: The trials and sufferings of living as a nun cannot be greater than those of purgatory, and I have well deserved to be in hell. It is not much to spend the rest of my life as if I were in purgatory, and then go straight to Heaven--which was what I desired. I was more influenced by servile fear, I think, than by love, to enter religion.

“The devil put before me that I could not endure the trials of the religious life, because of my delicate nurture. I defended myself against him by alleging the trials which Christ endured, and that it was not much for me to suffer something for His sake; besides, He would help me to bear it. I must have thought so, but I do not remember this consideration. I endured many temptations during these days. I was subject to fainting-fits, attended with fever,--for my health was always weak. I had become by this time fond of good books, and that gave me life. I read the Epistles of St. Jerome, which filled me with so much courage, that I resolved to tell my father of my purpose,--which was almost like taking the habit; for I was so jealous of my word, that I would never, for any consideration, recede from a promise when once my word had been given.”

In truth, when one compare an eternity in Hell with the small act of giving up sexual intercourse and marriage, the sacrifice seems infinitely small and almost as though it was nothing. If we consider that chastity not only will increase our chances of reaching Heaven and that our eternal glory in Heaven will be greater because of it, but that it also will increase our effectiveness in helping other souls to be saved, this sacrifice seems to be no sacrifice at all. Thus, rising with Christ in perfection, “I have decided that there is nothing I should avoid so much as marriage. I know nothing which brings the manly mind down from the height [of spiritual things] more than a woman’s caresses and that joining of bodies without which one cannot have a wife.” (St. Augustine, *Soliloquia* I, x, 17)

Holy Monasteries of chaste servants of Christ are especially effective in helping humanity, according to Our Lady and the Fathers

Of all the prayers offered up to God, the prayers of His holy and chaste servants in holy monasteries and convents are the most effective of all the prayers in the world in drawing

down blessings from Heaven – but not too many people actually understand this saving fact. Heretics, especially, scoff at the notion that those who marry Our Lord and renounce the world are actually doing anything good at all. Some of these heretics even say that it is evil or contrary to the missionary spirit of the gospel to live secluded in a monastery and avoid the world. They also frequently claim it’s against the scripture to require perpetual chastity for priests and religious. The fact of the matter, however, is that the Holy Bible condemns their worldly and sensual worldview and lifestyle, as we have seen.

The Catholic Church always (and especially now during this time of apostasy) needs holy religious who will continue in the virtuous example set by the Holy Saints of the former times. This fact was confirmed when in A.D. 1634 The Blessed Virgin under the title of *Our Lady of Good Success* appeared to the Franciscan Nun, Venerable Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, in Quito, Ecuador. (This event is approved by Holy Mother Church).

Our Lady solemnly spoke these words regarding the importance of holy monasteries and convents: **“Woe to the world should it lack monasteries and convents! Men do not comprehend their importance, for, if they understood, they would do all in their power to multiply them, because in them can be found the remedy for all physical and moral evils...** No one on the face of the earth is aware whence comes the salvation of souls, the conversion of great sinners, the end of great scourges, the fertility of the land, the end of pestilence and wars, and the harmony between nations. **All this is due to the prayers that rise up from monasteries and convents.”** (Words of *Our Lady of Good Success* to Venerable Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres)

In truth, not only are all monasteries vitally important for the spiritual and physical well-being of all Christians, but “In every house of Christians, it is needful that there be a virgin, for the salvation of the whole house is that one virgin. When wrath comes upon the whole city, it shall not come upon the house wherein a virgin is.” (St. Athanasius, Canons, *On Virginity*, Canon 98)

St. John Chrysostom posits, “What else is commanded of us but that we live like those intellectual and incorporeal powers [in Heaven]?” (Cf. *Virg.*, XXVII. 2; SC 125,180.) Christ has led New Covenant man to the angelic life (*Hom. XI in Rom.*; PG 60.489). The monastic way of life is the angelic way of life. St. Ephrem calls virginity the “dear friend” of the “Watchers.” “Watchers” is St. Ephrem’s word for the angels (*Hymn I On Virginity*). St. Athanasius the Great says the virgins presented on the earth a “picture of the holiness of the angels.” (*Apol. Const.* 33, PG 25.640; NPNF, p. 252.) Monasticism is essentially pure Christianity, and as such serves as a constant example to married Christians. To St. Chrysostom there is only one purpose for the present life. The present life is designed

simply as a groundwork and “starting point” for the life to come. The one who is a foreigner here will be a citizen up there. The one who considers himself a citizen here will be a stranger in heaven, and the one who considers himself a citizen in heaven will be a stranger here (*Exp. in Ps. CXIX*; PG 55.341). If Christians do not learn this lesson this life becomes “worse than a thousand deaths!” (*Stat. Hom. VI*; PG 49.86; NPNF, p. 384.) As such we ought groan for this life as creation does, and not for death (*Stat. Hom. V*; PG 49.71). The present life is a type of school in which men are “under instruction by means of disease, tribulation, temptations, and poverty, and the other apparent evils, with a view to our becoming fit for the reception of the blessings of the world to come.” (*Hom. X in Rom.*; PG 60.473; NPNF, p. 404.) Monastics are the world’s chief instructors concerning this all important lesson. Chrysostom in very many places emphasizes that the monastic way of life is simply the authentic Christian life.

The monastic way is the way of the Cross. The crucified virgin lives free from troubles of this present life and reveling in happiness (*Exp. in Ps. XLIV*; PG 55.202). The crucified life is best modeled by the monk (*Philogn., VI*; PG 48.752). There are not two standards of Christian conduct, one for the monk and one for the married man (*Hom. VII in Heb.*; PG 63.67; NPNF, p. 402). St. John Chrysostom writes, “You certainly deceive yourself and are greatly mistaken if you think that there is one set of requirements for the person in the world and another for the monk. The difference between them is that one is married and the other is not: in all other respects they will have to render the same account.” (*Oppugn., III*; PG 47.372.) The Holy Scriptures do not know two standards, but one single Christian ethic. Chrysostom writes, “Therefore, when Paul orders us to imitate not only the monks, not only the disciples of Christ, but Christ Himself, when he decrees the greatest punishment for those who do not imitate them, how can you say that this way of life is a greater height? For all people must reach the same point! And this is what overturns the whole world, the idea that only the monk is required to show a greater perfection, while the rest are allowed to live in laxity. But this is not true! It is not! ... the same philosophy is demanded of all.” (*Oppugn., III*; PG 47.374.) The laws governing monks and married Christians are common to both groups, except for those dealing with marriage, and even here St. Paul calls upon the married to imitate the monks (*Hom. VII in Mt.*; PG 57.81-82). All humanity is called upon to return to the original state of purity of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden and to go beyond it. The Holy Scriptures want all to live the life of the monks, even if they should happen to have wives (*Oppugn., III*; PG 47.373). Christ asks (not commands) men to lay aside the childish garments of earthly marriage and to put on more fitting and perfect clothes, the clothes of virginity (*Virg., XV. 1.5-7*; SC 125, p. 146). Parents should do everything they can to raise monastic children. This doesn’t mean that all children must become monks, but they must be trained as “athletes of Christ,” and if they become monks that is a blessing, but it is not insisted upon (*Educ. Lib., 19.282-287*; SC 188, pp. 102, 104). To oppose monasticism is ignorance so great, that a greater

ignorance could not be (*Oppugn., III*; PG 47.366).

St. Gregory of Nyssa says, "It has been shown that it is not possible for the soul to be united with the incorruptible God in any other way except that it become nearly pure through incorruptness, so that it may attain like by like, setting itself as a mirror looking up at the purity of God, so that the beauty in the soul be formed by participation in and reflection of the original beauty." (*On Virginit*y, Chapter XI) In contrast to the pure and angelic sons and daughters of Our Lord Jesus Christ, "the grosser mind looks down; it bends its energies to bodily pleasures as surely as the sheep stoop to their pasture; it lives for gorging and still lower pleasures; it is alienated from the life of God, and a stranger to the promise of the Covenants; it recognizes no good but the gratification of the body. It is a mind such as this that "walks in darkness," (1 John 1:6) and invents all the evil in this life of ours; avarice, passions unchecked, unbounded luxury, lust of power, vain-glory, the whole mob of moral diseases that invade men's homes." (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginit*y, Chapter IV)

The Blessed Virgin Mary Herself reveals to us in "*The Mystical City of God*," the many benefits that adopting a life of obedience, celibacy and chastity will produce in our souls. *Our Lady spoke to by Sister Mary of Agreda, saying*: "My dear daughter, I will not deny thee the instruction thou askest of me with the desire of putting it into practice; but do thou receive it with an appreciative and devout mind, ready to follow it in deed. The wise man says "My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, thou hast engaged fast thy hand to a stranger, thou art ensnared with the words of thy mouth, and caught with thy own words" (Prov. 6, 12). Accordingly he who has made vows to God has bound his own will; so that he has no freedom of acting except according to the will and direction of Him to whom he has bound himself; for he is chained down by the words of his own mouth uttered in the profession of his vows. Before taking his vows, the choice of his ways was in his own hands; but having once bound and obliged himself, let him know that he has entirely lost his liberty and had delivered himself up to God in his superiors. The whole ruin or salvation of souls depends upon the use of their free will; but since most men use it ill and damn themselves, the Most High has established religious life under the sacred vows. Thus the creature, by once using its liberty to make a perfect and prudent choice, can deliver up to his Majesty that very liberty, which so many pervert, if it remains free and unhampered in its choice.

"By these vows the liberty to do evil is happily lost, and the liberty for doing good is assured. It is like a bridle, which leads away from danger and directs into the smooth and sure road. The soul is freed from the slavery and subjection of the passions, and acquires a new power over them, resuming her place as mistress and queen in the government of her kingdom and remaining subject only to the law of grace and the inspirations of the Holy

Ghost. If she thus applies her whole will solely to the fulfillment of all that she has promised to God, the Holy Spirit will govern and direct all her operations. The creature thereby passes from the condition and state of a slave to that of a child of the Most High, from an earthly to an angelic life, while the corruption and evil effects of sin cannot exert their full power. It is impossible that thou ever be able in this earthly life to calculate or comprehend, what and how many are the blessings and treasures those souls gather for themselves, who with all their powers and affection strive to fulfill perfectly the vows or their profession. For I assure thee, my dearest, that those who are perfect and punctual in their religious obligations can equal and even surpass the martyrs in merit.

“The order which religious souls should maintain in their desires should be: that they strive to be punctual in fulfilling the obligations of their vows and all the virtues, which are connected with them. Afterwards and secondarily they may engage in voluntary practices, such as are called supererogatory. This order some of the souls, who are misled by the devil to entertain an indiscreet zeal for perfection are wont to invert; thus, while they fail seriously in the obligations of their state, they are eager to add other voluntary exercises and practices, which are usually of small use or benefit, or arise from a spirit of presumption and singularity. They secretly desire to be looked upon as distinguished in zeal and perfection, while in truth they are very far even from the beginning of perfection. I do not wish to see in thee a fault so reprehensible: but first fulfill all the duties of thy vows and of community life, and then thou mayest add what thou canst, according to thy ability and the inspiration of divine grace. This together will beautify thy soul and will make it perfect and agreeable in the eyes of God.” (*The Mystical City of God*, Book 2, Chapter 2)

For many people, the obedience of monastic life seems utterly detestable, but after death, in truth, there will not be a single soul who will regret having adopted the higher and more blessed life of chastity. In contrast, there are undoubtedly billions of souls burning right now in hell who wishes that they had lived a celibate and chaste life.

Blessed Edmund Campion who was a martyr for the faith speaks about this topic in a letter of his: “For I know what liberty there is in obedience, what pleasure in labour, what sweetness in prayer, what dignity in humility, what peace in conflicts, what nobleness in patience, what perfection in infirmity. But the difficulty is to reduce these virtues to practice. And this is your work, to run over a portion of your earthly course in the chariot of Paradise. I, as the poet says, will follow as I can, *non passibus equis*. My dearest brethren, our life is not long enough to thank Christ for revealing these mysteries to us. Which of us would have believed, unless He had called him and instructed him in this school, that such thorns, such filth, such misery, such tragedies, were concealed in the world under the feigned names of goods and pleasures? Which of us would have thought your kitchen better than a royal palace? your crusts better than any banquet? your troubles

than others' contentment? your conflicts than their quiet? your crumbs than their abundance? your vileness than their triumphs and victories? For I ask you whether, if you could all your lives, as they would like, feed your eyes on spectacles, and changes of scene and of company, your eyes would be the stronger? If you fed your ears with news, would they be the fuller? If you gave your mind its lusts, would it be richer? If you fed your body with dainties, could you make it immortal? This is their blunder who are deceived by vanities, and know not what a happy life means. For while they hope and expect great things, they fancy they are making vast progress, and not one in a hundred obtains what he dreamed; and if perchance one obtains it, yet after making allowance for his pains, and his loads of care, the slipperiness of fortune, his disgraceful servility, his fears, plots, troubles, annoyances, quarrels, crimes, which must always accompany and vex the lovers of the world, he will doubtless find himself to be a very base and needy slave. One sigh of yours for heaven is better than all their clamours for this dirt; one colloquy of yours, where the angels are present, is better than all their parties and debauched drinking-bouts, where the devils fill the bowls. One day of yours consecrated to God is worth more than all their life, which they spend in luxury. My brethren, run as you have begun; acknowledge God's goodness to you, and the dignity of your state. Can any pomp of kings or emperors, any grandeur, any pleasure, I will not say equal, but even shadow forth your honour and consolation? They (I speak of the good among them) fight under Christ their king, with their baggage on their back; you are eased of your burdens, and are called with the beloved disciple to be familiar followers of your Lord. They are admitted to the palace, you to the presence chamber; they to the common pasture, you to the choicest banquets; they to friendship, you to love; they to the treasury, you to the special rewards.

“Think what difficulties they have who even live as they ought in this naughty world; then you will more easily see what you owe to His mercy in calling you out of infinite dangers into His society. How hard it is for them to follow Christ when He marches forth in haste against His enemies, who have wives in their bosoms, children on their shoulders, lands on their backs, cares on their heads, whose feet are bound with cords, whose spirits are well-nigh smothered. Is not your happiness great, whom the King marshals by His side, covers with His cloak, clothes and honours with His own livery? What great thing is it for me to have left friends for Him who left heaven for me? What great thing for me to be a servant to my brethren, when He washed the feet of the traitor Judas? What wonder if I obey my fathers, when He honoured Pilate? What mighty thing for me to bear labours for Him who bore His cross for me? What disgrace if I a sinner bear to be rebuked, when He an Innocent was curst, spit upon, scourged, wounded, and put to death?” (Edmund Campion, *Letters to the Novices*, Prague, Feb. 19th 1577)

In this context of despising the world and its pleasures, Thomas á Kempis, in one of the greatest books ever written called *The Imitation of Christ*, explains to us “Of the Love of Jesus above All Things”: “Blessed is he that understandeth (Psalm 119:1,2) what it is to love

Jesus, and to despise himself for Jesus' sake. Thou oughtest to leave thy beloved, for thy beloved (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37; Cant. 2:16); for that Jesus will be loved alone above all things. The love of things created is deceitful and inconstant; the love of Jesus is faithful and persevering. He that cleaveth unto a creature, shall fall with that which is subject to fall; he that embraceth Jesus shall be made strong for ever. Love Him, and keep Him for thy friend, who, when all go away, will not forsake thee, nor suffer thee to perish in the end. Some time or other thou must be separated from all, whether thou wilt or no. Keep close to Jesus both in life and in death, and commit thyself unto His faithfulness, who, when all fail, can alone help thee. Thy Beloved is of that nature, that He will admit of no rival; but will have thy heart alone, and sit on His throne as King. If thou couldest empty thyself perfectly from all creatures, Jesus would willingly dwell with thee." (Readings and Prayers for St. Louis-Marie de Montfort's *Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary*, Day 32 of 33 from *Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas á Kempis, Book 2, Chapter 7, Of the Love of Jesus above All Things)

The Son of God speaks on how a man should reason: "Pride is meaningless, since it is not the recipient who should be praised for goods given him, but the giver. Greed is meaningless, since all the things of earth will be left behind. **Lust is nothing but filth.** Therefore I do not desire these things but want to follow the will of my God whose reward will never come to an end, whose good gifts never grow old..." (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 2, Chapter 25)

Holy communities of men and women that was both married and unmarried practiced the evangelical, monastic lifestyle of chastity and purity both before and after the promulgation of the Gospel

Many holy communities, both before and after the promulgation of the Gospel, followed God's wondrous and splendid instruction on virtue and purity by choosing to live lives of piety, virtue, mortification and chastity, limiting their marital relations to a bare minimum or necessity in order to nurture and increase graces for themselves, their children and the whole world. The men and the women lived separated in holy communities, but met when the time of conception was most advantageous. They did not, however, have marital relations every time conception was most advantageous, but generally tried to have as little marital relations as possible, while also producing holy offspring for Our Lord. Thus, most of their life was spent in chastity, holiness and purity, and they also produced offspring for the love of our Lord and Creator while living such a good life. By the grace of God, many spouses also resolved to practice complete abstinence and chastity and thus acquired a greater crown in Heaven for their wonderful purity: "More blessed indeed are those marriages to be reckoned, where the parties concerned, whether after the procreation of

children, or even through contempt of such an earthly progeny, have been able with common consent to practice self-restraint toward each other: both because nothing is done contrary to that precept whereby the Lord forbids a spouse to be put away (for he does not put her away who lives with her not carnally, but spiritually), and because that principle is observed to which the apostle gives expression, "It remaineth, that they that have wives be as though they had none" [1 Cor. 7:29]." (St. Augustine, *On the Sermon on the Mount*, Book I, Chapter 14, Section 39, c. 394 A.D.)

Anne Catherine Emmerich wrote the following interesting information when explaining how some of these virtuous people lived before the promulgation of the Gospel. She said, speaking concerning "The Ancestors Of St. Anne – The Essenes":

"Until Isaiah assembled these people together and gave them a more regular organization, they were scattered about the land of Israel, leading lives of piety and intent on mortification. They wore their clothes without mending them till they fell off their bodies. They fought particularly against sexual immorality, and often by mutual consent lived in continence for long periods, living in huts far removed from their wives. When they lived together as husband and wife, it was only with the intention of producing a holy offspring which might bring nearer the coming of the Savior. I saw them eating apart from their wives; the wife came to take her meal after the husband had left the table. There were ancestors of St. Anne and of other holy people among these early Essenes." (*The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary* by Anne Catherine Emmerich)

According to Wikipedia: "The Essenes were a sect of Second Temple Judaism that flourished from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD which some scholars claim seceded from the Zadokite priests. Being much fewer in number than the Pharisees and the Sadducees (the other two major sects at the time), the Essenes lived in various cities but congregated in communal life dedicated to asceticism, voluntary poverty, daily immersion, and abstinence from worldly pleasures, including (for some groups) celibacy. Many separate but related religious groups of that era shared similar mystic, eschatological, messianic, and ascetic beliefs. These groups are collectively referred to by various scholars as the "Essenes." Josephus records that Essenes existed in large numbers, and thousands lived throughout Roman Judæa."

Josephus describes this pious collection of pure and chaste men and women that lived in a similar way that monks and nuns now live in his work *The Jewish War*.

Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book II, Chapter 8: "For three forms of philosophy are

pursued among the Judeans: the members of one are Pharisees, of another Sadducees, and the third [school], who certainly are reputed to cultivate seriousness, are called Essenes; although Judeans by ancestry, they are even more mutually affectionate than the others. Whereas these men shun the pleasures as vice, they consider self-control and not succumbing to the passions virtue. And although there is among them a disdain for marriage, adopting the children of outsiders while they are still malleable enough for the lessons they regard them as family and instill in them their principles of character: without doing away with marriage or the succession resulting from it, they nevertheless protect themselves from the wanton ways of women, having been persuaded that none of them preserves her faithfulness to one man.

“Since [they are] despisers of wealth—their communal stock is astonishing—, one cannot find a person among them who has more in terms of possessions. For by a law, those coming into the school must yield up their funds to the order, with the result that in all [their ranks] neither the humiliation of poverty nor the superiority of wealth is detectable, but the assets of each one have been mixed in together, as if they were brothers, to create one fund for all. They consider olive oil a stain, and should anyone be accidentally smeared with it he scrubs his body, for they make it a point of honor to remain hard and dry, and to wear white always. Hand-elected are the curators of the communal affairs, and indivisible are they, each and every one, [in pursuing] their functions to the advantage of all.

“No one city is theirs, but they settle amply in each. And for those school-members who arrive from elsewhere, all that the community has is laid out for them in the same way as if they were their own things, and they go in and stay with those they have never even seen before as if they were the most intimate friends. For this reason they make trips without carrying any baggage at all—though armed on account of the bandits. In each city a steward of the order appointed specially for the visitors is designated quartermaster for clothing and the other amenities. Dress and also deportment of body: like children being educated with fear. They replace neither clothes nor footwear until the old set is ripped all over or worn through with age. Among themselves, they neither shop for nor sell anything; but each one, after giving the things that he has to the one in need, takes in exchange anything useful that the other has. And even without this reciprocal giving, the transfer to them [of goods] from whomever they wish is unimpeded.

“Toward the Deity, at least: pious observances uniquely [expressed]. Before the sun rises, they utter nothing of the mundane things, but only certain ancestral prayers to him, as if begging him to come up. After these things, they are dismissed by the curators to the various crafts that they have each come to know, and after they have worked strenuously until the fifth hour they are again assembled in one area, where they belt on linen covers and wash their bodies in frigid water. After this purification they gather in a private hall, into which none of those who hold different views may enter: now pure themselves, they approach the dining room as if it were some [kind of] sanctuary. After they have seated

themselves in silence, the baker serves the loaves in order, whereas the cook serves each person one dish of one food. The priest offers a prayer before the food, and it is forbidden to taste anything before the prayer; when he has had his breakfast he offers another concluding prayer. While starting and also while finishing, then, they honor God as the sponsor of life. At that, laying aside their clothes as if they were holy, they apply themselves to their labors again until evening. They dine in a similar way: when they have returned, they sit down with the visitors, if any happen to be present with them, and neither yelling nor disorder pollutes the house at any time, but they yield conversation to one another in order. And to those from outside, the silence of those inside appears as a kind of shiver-inducing mystery. The reason for this is their continuous sobriety and the rationing of food and drink among them—to the point of fullness.

“As for other areas: although there is nothing that they do without the curators’ having ordered it, these two things are matters of personal prerogative among them: [rendering] assistance and mercy. For helping those who are worthy, whenever they might need it, and also extending food to those who are in want are indeed left up to the individual; but in the case of the relatives, such distribution is not allowed to be done without [permission from] the managers. Of anger, just controllers; as for temper, able to contain it; of fidelity, masters; of peace, servants. And whereas everything spoken by them is more forceful than an oath, swearing itself they avoid, considering it worse than the false oath; for they declare to be already degraded one who is unworthy of belief without God. They are extraordinarily keen about the compositions of the ancients, selecting especially those [oriented] toward the benefit of soul and body. On the basis of these and for the treatment of diseases, roots, apotropaic materials, and the special properties of stones are investigated.

“To those who are eager for their school, the entry-way is not a direct one, but they prescribe a regimen for the person who remains outside for a year, giving him a little hatchet as well as the aforementioned waist-covering and white clothing. Whenever he should give proof of his self-control during this period, he approaches nearer to the regimen and indeed shares in the purer waters for purification, though he is not yet received into the functions of communal life. For after this demonstration of endurance, the character is tested for two further years, and after he has thus been shown worthy he is reckoned into the group. Before he may touch the communal food, however, he swears dreadful oaths to them: first, that he will observe piety toward the deity; then, that he will maintain just actions toward humanity; that he will harm no one, whether by his own deliberation or under order; that he will hate the unjust and contend together with the just; that he will always maintain faithfulness to all, especially to those in control, for without God it does not fall to anyone to hold office, and that, should he hold office, he will never abuse his authority—outshining his subordinates, whether by dress or by some form of extravagant appearance; always to love the truth and expose the liars; that he will keep his hands pure from theft and his soul from unholy gain; that he will neither conceal anything

from the school-members nor disclose anything of theirs to others, even if one should apply force to the point of death. In addition to these, he swears that he will impart the precepts to no one otherwise than as he received them, that he will keep away from banditry, and that he will preserve intact their school's books and the names of the angels. With such oaths as these they completely secure those who join them.

“Those they have convicted of sufficiently serious errors they expel from the order. ... Now with respect to trials, [they are] just and extremely precise: they render judgment after having assembled no fewer than a hundred, and something that has been determined by them is non-negotiable. There is a great reverence among them for—next to God—the name of the lawgiver, and if anyone insults him he is punished by death. They make it point of honor to submit to the elders and to a majority. So if ten were seated together, one person would not speak if the nine were unwilling. They guard against spitting into [their] middles or to the right side and against applying themselves to labors on the seventh days, even more than all other Judeans: for not only do they prepare their own food one day before, so that they might not kindle a fire on that day, but they do not even dare to transport a container...

“They are divided into four classes, according to their duration in the training, and the later-joiners are so inferior to the earlier-joiners that if they should touch them, the latter wash themselves off as if they have mingled with a foreigner. [They are] long-lived, most of them passing 100 years—as a result, it seems to me at least, of the simplicity of their regimen and their orderliness. Despisers of terrors, triumphing over agonies by their wills, considering death—if it arrives with glory—better than deathlessness. The war against the Romans proved their souls in every way: during it, while being twisted and also bent, burned and also broken, and passing through all the torture-chamber instruments, with the aim that they might insult the lawgiver or eat something not customary, they did not put up with suffering either one: not once gratifying those who were tormenting [them], or crying. But smiling in their agonies and making fun of those who were inflicting the tortures, they would cheerfully dismiss their souls, [knowing] that they would get them back again.

“For the view has become tenaciously held among them that whereas our bodies are perishable and their matter impermanent, our souls endure forever, deathless: they get entangled, having emanated from the most refined ether, as if drawn down by a certain charm into the prisons that are bodies. But when they are released from the restraints of the flesh, as if freed from a long period of slavery, then they rejoice and are carried upwards in suspension. ... For the base, on the other hand, they separate off a murky, stormy recess filled with unending retributions. ... For the good become even better in the hope of a reward also after death, whereas the impulses of the bad are impeded by anxiety, as they expect that even if they escape detection while living, after their demise they will be subject to deathless retribution. These matters, then, the Essenes theologize with respect to the soul, laying down an irresistible bait for those who have once tasted of their wisdom.

“There are also among them those who profess to foretell what is to come, being thoroughly trained in holy books, various purifications, and concise sayings of prophets. Rarely if ever do they fail in their predictions.

“There is also a different order of Essenes. Though agreeing with the others about regimen and customs and legal matters, it has separated in its opinion about marriage. For they hold that those who do not marry cut off the greatest part of life, the succession, and more: if all were to think the same way, the line would very quickly die out. To be sure, testing the brides in a three-year interval, once they have been purified three times as a test of their being able to bear children, they take them in this manner; but they do not continue having intercourse with those who are pregnant, demonstrating that the need for marrying is not because of pleasure, but for children. Baths [are taken] by the women wrapping clothes around themselves, just as by the men in a waist-covering. Such are the customs of this order.” (This deliberately literal translation of the Greek is from Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus: translation and commentary*, vol. 1b: *Judean War*)

We are not, however, still living in the Old Covenant. Today, after the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the standard of “perfection” and spiritual maturation is much higher (St. John Chrysostom, *Virg.*, *XLIV*. 1.12-13; SC 125. p. 252). Thus, “Since we have been vouchsafed a larger and more perfect teaching, God having no longer spoken by the prophets, but ‘having in these last days spoken to us by His Son,’ let us show forth a conversation far higher than theirs, and suitable to the honor bestowed on us. Strange would it be that He should have so far lowered Himself, as to choose to speak to us no longer by His servants, but by His own mouth, and yet we should show forth nothing more than those of old. They had Moses for their teacher, we, Moses’ Lord. Let us then exhibit a heavenly wisdom worthy of this honor, and let us have nothing to do with the earth” (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. XV in Jn.*; PG 59.100-101).

God, who knows us better than ourselves, knows that man is weak and that man will fall into temptation when the chance to gratify the temptation is present. Thus, He ordained through the Holy Spirit that holy communities of men and women should be formed that lived a most exemplary and pure life. Sadly, these kinds of communities of true Catholics does not exist anymore, but by the grace of God and in accordance to prophecies that prophesy a renewal of things and of the Church, people will resolve to imitate these holy people. These people are, as it were, the life-blood of the whole human civilization and their prayers rise up to God as a perfect offering, and thus, the effect of such communities are always spiritually fruitful and advantageous for the world. Spouses should seriously consider practicing chastity unto the end of their lives for the sake of begetting spiritual children instead of fleshly or carnal children; because the spiritual is so much higher than the carnal as much as Heaven is above the Earth or the angels above men. “**That virginity**

is good I do agree. But that it is even better than marriage, this I do confess.

And if you wish, I will add that it is as much better than marriage as Heaven is better than Earth, as much better as angels are better than men.” (St. John Chrysostom, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 2: 1116, 392 A.D.)

Thus, the spouses who promise to be chaste until death beget eternal and spiritual children instead of fleshly and perishable children. St. Caesarius of Arles says, “You do not want to have a [fleshly] child? Settle a pious agreement with your husband; let him agree to an end of childbearing in accord with the virtue of chastity. The only sterility of a very pious wife is chastity.” (*Sermon 52:4*)

The Church from the very beginning has always taught and encouraged married and unmarried people to adopt a life of perfect chastity and virginity, and this teaching, as we have seen, is based on the teaching of the Apostles and the Holy Scripture. It is for this reason that *The Catechism of the Council of Trent* and the bishops and theologians of the Council who were instrumental in writing the Catechism recommended virginity and chastity to all in human society, whether old or young, teaching that: “For, now that the human race is increased, not only is there no law rendering marriage obligatory on any one, but, on the contrary, virginity is highly extolled and strongly recommended in the Sacred Scriptures to every one, as superior to the marriage state.”

Tertullian (c. 160-225), and early Christian author and Church Father, exhorted all churchmen in A.D. 204 to embrace chastity and virginity when he wrote: “How many men, therefore, and how many women, in Ecclesiastical Orders, owe their position to continence, who have preferred to be wedded to God; who have restored the honor of their flesh, and who have already dedicated themselves as sons of that future age, by slaying in themselves the concupiscence of lust, and that whole propensity which could not be admitted within Paradise!” (*On Exhortation to Chastity*, Chapter 13)

It must be said, however, that everyone who chooses the admirable and superior state of chastity or virginity must not and cannot call himself better or more holy than a person who lives in the state of marriage. It is for God to reward a person for their deeds, and he who exalts himself on this earth shall surely be thrust into hell for his pride and presumption. Our Lord Jesus Christ is clear that “whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled: and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” (Matt. 23:12) If the chaste as well as the married have done their duty well, let them say in all humility, “*We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do.*” (Luke 17:10) Whether chaste or married, we must all account ourselves sinners worthy of nothing but eternal hellfire and suffering, for without God’s grace and the merit of Christ’s suffering and blood

shed for our sins, we would all have ended up in hell in the eternal fire “*where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished.*” (Mark 9:43)

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, On Chastity: “Nor again, on the other hand, in maintaining thy chastity be thou puffed up against those who walk in the humbler path of matrimony. For as the Apostle saith, "Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled." Thou too who retainest thy chastity, wast thou not begotten of those who had married? Because thou hast a possession of gold, do not on that account reprobate the silver. But let those also be of good cheer, who being married use marriage lawfully; who make a marriage according to God’s ordinance, **and not of wantonness for the sake of unbounded license; who recognize seasons of abstinence, that they may give themselves unto prayer; who in our assemblies bring clean bodies as well as clean garments into the Church; who have entered upon matrimony for the procreation of children, but not for indulgence.**” (On the Ten Points of Doctrine, *Lecture IV*, Section 25.--Of the Body)

While monasticism is to be preferred to marriage, it is to be preferred as a “better” above a “good”, and not as a “good” above an “evil.” Hence St. Gregory of Nazianzus writes, “It is good for one to be tied in marriage, temperately though, rendering more to God than to sexual relations. It is better to be free of these bonds, rendering everything to God and to the things above... Marriage is concerned about spouse and loved ones. Whereas for virginity, it is Christ.” (*On Self-Restraint*, PG 37, 643A-644A)

Marriage not only remains good and honorable after the promulgation of the Gospel and the New Law, but itself has experienced a radical transformation. In fact, the essence of earthly marriage deepens in the New Covenant and more graphically shows forth its prototype. Marriage is a “mystery and a type of a mighty thing” according to the great St. Chrysostom (*Hom. XII in Col.*; PG 62.387; NPNF, p. 317). Earthly marriage in the New Covenant is designed to show forth the true “spiritual marriage” (Chrysostom, *Catech.*, 1.1.3; SC 50, p. 10) between Christ and the Church, and between Christ and the individual believing soul. This is the true glory of Christian marriage between God and man. Earthly marriage robs a virgin of her virginity. Spiritual marriage with Christ takes many, including those who have already lost their virginity, and re-creates them as virgins. Spiritual marriage restores virginity, making non-virgins virgins. “In the world virgins remain such before marriage, but not so after marriage. Here it is not like that. But even if they are not virgins before marriage, after the marriage they become virgins. Thus the whole Church is a virgin.” (Chrysostom, *Hom. XXIII in 2 Cor.*; PG 61.553-554.) St. Ephrem writes, “O you, Virginity, your destruction is simple for all, but your restoration is easy only

for the Lord of all.” (*Hymn 2 On Virginity*, and, *Hymn 8 On Epiphany*)

The glory of this spiritual marriage is also witnessed by the fact that, unlike earthly suitors who are looking for beauty and wealth, Christ took to Himself the most uncomely and impoverished of brides and made her comely and wealthy (Chrysostom, *Hom. XX in Eph.*; PG 62.137ff). The earthly dowry contract is a type of the covenant between God and man effected in the promises of obedience to the Bridegroom in Holy Baptism. Through a spiritual birth one enters into a spiritual marriage, not of passion or the flesh, but “wholly spiritual, the soul being united to God by a union unspeakable, and which he alone knoweth.” (*Ibid.*, PG 62.141; NPNF. p. 148.) The ultimate nuptial chamber is in heaven, where there is a beauty preserved for eternity not subject to aging, disease, or anxiety, but is “ever-blooming.” (Chrysostom, *Hom. XXVIII in Heb.*; PG 63.202)

In the same vein St. Ephrem the Syrian writes concerning the “bridal couch of delights”, “You have exchanged the transitory bridal couch for the bridal couch whose blessings are unceasing.” (*Hymn 24 On Virginity*) If the bridal chamber be so beautiful, asks St. John Chrysostom, what will the Bridegroom be like? (*Hom. XXVIII in Heb.*; PG 63.202.) Chrysostom graphically describes the union of Christ and the believer in the reception of the Holy Eucharist in the imagery of the consummation of earthly marriage via intercourse, “But what shall I say? It is not in this way only that I have shown My love to thee, but by what I have suffered. For thee I was spit upon, I was scourged. I emptied myself of glory, I left My Father and came to thee, who dost hate Me, and turn from Me, and art loath to hear My Name. I pursued thee, I ran after thee, that I might overtake thee. I united and joined thee to myself, ‘eat Me, drink Me,’ I said. Above I hold thee, and below I embrace thee. Is it not enough for thee that I have thy First-fruits above? Doth not this satisfy thy affection? I descended below: I not only am mingled with thee, I am entwined in thee. I am masticated, broken into minute particles, that the interspersion, and commixture, and union may be more complete. Things united remain yet in their own limits, but I am interwoven with thee. I would have no more any division between us. I will that we both be one.” (Chrysostom, *Hom. XV in 1 Tim.*; PG 62.586; NPNF, pp. 463-464.) “Let this be blended into that flesh. This is effected by the food which He hath freely given us, desiring to show the love which He hath for us; He hath kneaded up His body with ours, that we might be a certain One thing, like a body joined to a head. ... He hath given to those who desire Him not only to see Him, but even to touch, and eat Him, and fix their teeth In His flesh, and to embrace Him, and satisfy all their love.” (Chrysostom, *Hom. XLVI in Jn.*; PG 59.260: NPNF. p. 166)

The reception of the Holy Gifts of God is the ultimate blending of flesh for Christians to embrace Christ and to satisfy all their love in the spiritual union. “This body that He given

to us both to hold and to eat; a thing appropriate to intense love.” (Chrysostom, *Homily XXIV in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.204; NPNF. p. 143.) As earthly lovers are joined in a week long marriage feast, so the lover of Mankind weds Himself in Holy Baptism to the neophytes (newcomers), and the Bright Week festivities serve as a type of heavenly wedding feast. St. Ephrem the Syrian writes, “The soul is Your bride, the body Your bridal chamber, Your guests are the senses and thoughts. And if a single body is a wedding feast for You, how great is Your banquet for the whole Church?” (*Hymns on Paradise*) As in all typology the reality exceeds the type, for “no lover, even if he be violently mad, is so inflamed with his loved one as is God in His desire for the salvation of our souls.” (*Trois Catéchèses Baptismales*, 2.3-6) God wishes to unite with us more than any lover with his beloved (*Exp. in Ps. CXIV*; PG 55.316). Tertullian used similar graphic language to describe how Christ loves pious Christian women martyrs who refused to wear cosmetics and completely rejected the vanity it entails. “Go forth now to martyrdom already arrayed in the cosmetics and ornaments of prophets and apostles; drawing your whiteness from simplicity, your ruddy hue from modesty; painting your eyes with bashfulness, and your mouth with silence; implanting in your ears the words of God; fitting on your necks the yoke of Christ... Thus painted, you will have God as your Lover!” (*De Cultu Feminarum*, II.XIII.7.35-45; CCSL I, p. 370; ANF, p. 25)

St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, A.D. 397: “For, if it was possible for one man to use many wives with chastity, it is possible for another to use one wife with lust. And I look with greater approval on the man who uses the fruitfulness of many wives for the sake of an ulterior object, than on the man who enjoys the body of one wife for its own sake. For in the former case the man aims at a useful object suited to the circumstances of the times; in the latter case he gratifies a lust which is engrossed in temporal enjoyments. And those men to whom the apostle permitted as a matter of indulgence to have one wife because of their incontinence, [1 Cor. 7] were less near to God than those who, though they had each of them numerous wives, yet just as a wise man uses food and drink only for the sake of bodily health, used marriage only for the sake of offspring. And, accordingly, if these last had been still alive at the advent of our Lord, when the time not of casting stones away but of gathering them together had come, [Eccles. 3:5] they would have immediately made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. For there is no difficulty in abstaining unless when there is lust in enjoying. And assuredly those men of whom I speak knew that wantonness even in regard to wives is abuse and intemperance, as is proved by Tobit’s prayer when he was married to his wife. For he says: “Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers, and blessed is Thy holy and glorious name for ever; let the heavens bless Thee, and all Thy creatures. Thou madest Adam, and gavest him Eve his wife for an helper and stay. . . . And now, O Lord, Thou knowest that I take not this my sister for lust, but uprightly: therefore have pity on us, O Lord”

[Tobit 7:5-7].” (Book III, Chapter 18, Section 27.--We Must Take into Consideration the Time at Which Anything Was Enjoyed or Allowed.)

God might want a more virtuous, holy and pure way of life for a couple

The path to purity and perfection if one of the spouses is barren, is to perform the sexual act with the hope that God will grant a miracle of conception. This has happened numerous times throughout history and still happens even today. *The Golden Legend* tells us how the Blessed Virgin Mary’s parents was granted this miracle of conception:

“I have seen thy shame [St. Joachim] and heard the reproach. That thou art barren is to thee no reproach by right, and God is avenger of sin and not of nature. And when he closeth the belly or womb, he worketh so that he openeth it after, more marvelously. And the fruit that shall be born shall not be seen to come forth by lechery, but that it be known that it is of the gift of God. The first mother of your people was Sara, and she was barren unto the ninetieth year, and had only Isaac, to whom the benediction of all people was promised. And was not Rachel long barren? And yet had she not after Joseph, that held all the lordship of Egypt? Which was more strong than Samson, and more holy than Samuel? And yet were their mothers barren. Thus mayst thou believe by reason and by example that the children long awaited be wont to be more marvelous. And therefore Anne thy wife shall have a daughter, and thou shalt call her Mary [The Blessed Virgin Mary], and she, as ye have avowed, shall be from her infancy sacred unto our Lord, and shall be full of the Holy Ghost...” (*The Golden Legend or The Lives of The Saints*, Vol 5, p. 59: The Nativity of Our Blessed Lady)

There is no guarantee, however, that God will grant barren couples children. In truth, God may want you to remain childless and then you have to accept this fact. There are many reasons why God would want this. One of the most common reasons for this is because God knows you will serve Him more devotedly because of it and that you will be of greater use in saving your own soul and the souls of other people, since, if you have no children, you will have more time to help and convert others and save yourself; instead of caring for your family or children. Thus, “now that the resurrection is at our gates, and we do not speak of death, but advance toward another life better than the present, the desire for posterity is superfluous [since the world is filled with people]. If you desire children, you can get much better children now, a nobler childbirth and better help in your old age, if you give birth by spiritual labor.” (St. John Chrysostom, *On the Sacred Institution of Marriage*, Homily One)

In truth, “now [in the New Law] no one who is made perfect in piety seeks to have sons, save after a spiritual sense; but then [in the Old Law] it was the work of piety itself to beget sons even after a carnal sense: in that the begetting of that people was fraught with tidings of things to come [of the birth of the Savior], and pertained unto the prophetic dispensation.” (St. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, Section 19, A.D. 401)

There are also many examples in the Bible of God granting barren couples holy children first after they made a vow of raising the child in holiness and in the service of God. St. John the Baptist and Samson are just two examples of many. *The Golden Legend* tells us how St. John the Baptist’s parents was granted this miracle of conception:

“These two, Zachariah and his wife Elizabeth [the parents of John the Baptist], were just before our Lord, living in all the justifications, and holding all the commandments of the law without murmur or complaint, praising and thanking our Lord God. They had no children, for the holy woman was barren. They had great desire to have a son that might be bishop of the law by succession of lineage after Zachariah, and hereof had they in their youth prayed much to our Lord, but when it pleased not unto our Lord, they took it a worth and thanked God of all. They served the more devoutly our Lord God, for they had no charge but only to serve and attend unto him. Many there be that withdraw them from the service and love of our Lord for the love of their children.” (*The Golden Legend or The Lives of The Saints*, Vol 3: The Nativity of St. John Baptist)

However, God may also want you to use your time and effort in giving birth to spiritual children, which is far greater than giving birth to fleshly children. Thus, a couple should not mourn the lack of a child, but instead thank God for showing them that He wishes them to do something else with their time. St. John Chrysostom writes concerning infertility, “Let women not be distressed when they have no children: instead, let them give evidence of a thankful disposition and have recourse to the Creator and direct their request to him, the Lord of nature, not attributing childbirth to the intercourse of the partners nor to any other source than the Creator of everything.” (*Homilies on Genesis*, Homily XXI; PG 53.178)

St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon* 51:4: “Therefore, those to whom God is unwilling to give children should not try to have them by means of magical herbs or signs or evil charms. It is becoming proper for Christians especially not to seem to fight against the dispensation of Christ by cruel, wicked boldness. Just as women whom God wants to bear more children must not take medicines to prevent their conception, so those whom God wished to remain sterile should desire and seek this gift from God

alone. They should always leave it to divine Providence, asking in their prayers that God in His goodness may deign to grant what is best for them. Those women whom God wants to bear children should take care of all that are conceived, or give them to someone else to rear. As many as they kill after they are already conceived or born, before the tribunal of the eternal Judge they will be held guilty of so many murders. If women attempt to kill the children within them by evil medicines, and themselves die in the act, they become guilty of three crimes on their own: suicide, spiritual adultery, and murder of the unborn child. Therefore, women do wrong when they seek to have children by means of evil drugs. They sin still more grievously when they kill the children who are already conceived or born, and when by taking impious drugs to prevent conception they condemn in themselves the nature which God wanted to be fruitful. Let them not doubt that they have committed as many murders as the number of the children they might have begotten.”

God also sometimes wants a couple to take in orphans and love them as if they were their own children; and barrenness can certainly be a result of this will of the Lord. A good couple should not be saddened if they are not given children through the natural way, but rejoice in the Lord and pray to Him fervently to be told what He wants them to do instead of raising their own fleshly children. They must love their adopted children as much as if they were their own, and not place the evil and worldly custom of loving humans just because they are of the same blood above the spiritual law that says that we must love all in the same way, whether they are of the same fleshly and temporal family as our own or not. St. John Chrysostom writes, “For that it is the business of widows—I speak of the bringing up of children—hear Paul saying, “If she hath brought up children” (1 Tim. 5:10); and again, “She shall be saved through the child-bearing,” (he has not said through her husband,) if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety” (1 Tim. 2:15).” (*Homilies on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, Homily VI, 1 Thess. iv. 9-13, Ver. 13)

The Blessed Virgin Mary’s Life is the foundation of all chaste servants of Christ

Our Beloved Mother, Lady and Queen, The Blessed Virgin Mary, spoke to Sister Mary of Agreda (1602-1665), Spain, in a spiritual revelation recorded in the book “*The Mystical City of God*,” and explained the great necessity for all people to control their eyes, and to not set their eyes on things that might disturb their souls. She also told Sr. Mary of Agreda that Her own life was the foundation of the pure and chaste life of all religious and chaste servants of Our Lord, which is a fact that was not known publicly to many people at that time. In fact, Our Lady’s “*four vows of poverty, obedience, chastity and enclosure pleased*

the Lord very much, and I [The Blessed Virgin Mary] merited thereby that the Godfearing in the Church and in the law of grace are drawn to live under these vows, as is the custom in the present time.”

*The Virgin Mary spoke to Sister Mary of Agreda, saying: “My daughter, among the great and ineffable favors of the Omnipotent in the course of my life, was the one which thou has just learned and described; for by this clear vision of the Divinity and of the incomprehensible essence I acquired knowledge of the most hidden sacraments and mysteries, and in this adornment and espousal I received incomparable blessings and felt the sweetest workings of the Divinity in my spirit. My desire to take the four vows of poverty, obedience, chastity and enclosure pleased the Lord very much, and I merited thereby that the Godfearing in the Church and in the law of grace are drawn to live under these vows, as is the custom in the present time. This was the beginning of that which you religious practice now, fulfilling the words of David in the forty-fourth psalm: "After Her shall virgins be brought to the King;" for the Lord ordained that my aspirations be the foundation of religious life and of the evangelical law. I fulfilled entirely and perfectly all that I proposed to the Lord, as far as was possible in my state of life; **never did I look upon the face of a man, not even on that of my husband Joseph, nor on that of the angels, when they appeared to me in human form, though I saw and knew them all in God. Never did I incline toward any creature, rational or irrational, nor toward any human operation or tendency.** But in all things I was governed by the Most High, either directly by Himself or indirectly through the obedience, to which I freely subjected myself.*

“Be careful therefore, my daughter, and fear so dreadful a danger; by divine assistance of grace raise thyself above thyself, never permitting thy will to consent to any disorderly affection or movement. I wish thee to consume thyself in dying to thy passions and in becoming entirely spiritualized, so that having extinguished within thee all that is of earth, thou mayest come to lead an angelic life and conversation. In order to deserve the name of spouse of Christ, thou must pass beyond the limits and the sphere of a human being and ascend to another state and divine existence. Although thou art earth, thou must be a blessed earth, without the thorns of passion, one whose fruit is all for the Lord, its Master. If thou hast for thy Spouse that supreme and mighty Lord, who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, consider it beneath thy dignity to turn thy eyes, and much more thy heart, toward such vile slaves, as are the human creatures, for even the angels love and respect thee for thy dignity as spouse of the Most High. If even among men it is held to be a daring and boundless insolence in a plebeian to cast longing eyes upon the spouse of a prince, what a crime would it be to cast them on the spouse of the heavenly and omnipotent King? And it would not be a smaller crime if she herself would receive

and consent to such familiarity. Consider and assure thyself that the punishment reserved for this sin is inconceivably terrible and I do not show it to thee visibly, lest thou perish in thy weakness. I wish that for thee my instructions suffice to urge thee to the fulfillment of all I admonish and to imitate me as my disciple, as far as thy powers go. Be also solicitous in recalling this instruction to the mind of thy nuns and in seeing that they live up to it.

“My daughter, the greatest happiness, which can befall any soul in this mortal life, is that the Almighty call her to his house consecrated to his service. For by this benefit He rescues the soul from a dangerous slavery and relieves her of the vile servitude of the world, where, deprived of true liberty, she eats her bread in the sweat of her brow. Who is so dull and insipid as not to know the dangers of the worldly life, which is hampered by all the abominable and most wicked laws and customs introduced by the astuteness of the devil and the perversity of men? The better part is religious life and retirement; in it is found security, outside is a torment and a stormy sea, full of sorrow and unhappiness. Through the hardness of their heart and the total forgetfulness of themselves men do not know this truth and are not attracted by its blessings. But thou, O soul, be not deaf to the voice of the Most High, attend and correspond to it in thy actions: I wish to remind thee, that one of the greatest snares of the demon is to counteract the call of the Lord, whenever he seeks to attract and incline the soul to a life of perfection in his service.

“Even by itself, the public and sacred act of receiving the habit and entering religion, although it is not always performed with proper fervor and purity of intention, is enough to rouse the wrath and fury of the infernal dragon and his demons; for they know that this act tends not only to the glory of the Lord and the joy of the holy angels, but that religious life will bring the soul to holiness and perfection. It very often happens, that they who have received the habit with earthly and human motives, are afterwards visited by divine grace, which perfects them and sets all things aright. If this is possible even when the beginning was without a good intention, how much more powerful and efficacious will be the light and influence of grace and the discipline of religious life, when the soul enters under the influence of divine love and with a sincere and earnest desire of finding God, and of serving and loving Him?” (*The Mystical City of God*, “The Divine History and Life of The Virgin Mother of God”, Book 2, Chapter 1)

Also, not many people are aware of this truth, but all “our good works pass through the hands of Mary” and are increased by Her, and this makes it very important for everyone to pray the Rosary and direct our supplications and prayers directly to Our Lady for the great grace to remain chaste and pure until death. St. Louis De Montfort (1710) explains that: “... **inasmuch as our good works pass through the hands of Mary, they receive an augmentation [increase] of purity, and consequently of merit, and of**

satisfactory and impetratory value. On this account they become more capable of solacing the souls in purgatory and of converting sinners than if they did not pass through the virginal and liberal hands of Mary. It may be little that we give by our Lady; but, in truth, if it is given without self-will and with a disinterested charity, that little becomes very mighty to turn away the wrath of God and to draw down His mercy.” (*True Devotion to Mary* #172)

Thus, **“in the heavens Mary commands the angels and the blessed. As a recompense, God has empowered her and commissioned her to fill with saints the empty thrones from which the apostate angels fell by pride.”** (*True Devotion to Mary* #28) And so **“the greatest saints, the souls richest in graces and virtues, shall be the most assiduous in praying to our Blessed Lady,** and in having her always present as their perfect model for imitation and their powerful aid for help.” (*True Devotion to Mary* #46) Those who fervently pray to Our Lady will always experience an alleviation in their temptations because, **“when the Holy Ghost, her Spouse, has found Mary in a soul, He flies there. He enters there in His fullness; He communicates Himself to that soul abundantly, and to the full extent to which it makes room for His Spouse.** Nay, one of the great reasons why the Holy Ghost does not now do startling wonders in our souls is because He does not find there a sufficiently great union with His faithful and inseparable Spouse.” (*True Devotion to Mary* # 36) Indeed, “... many others have proved invincibly, from the sentiments of the Fathers (among others, St. Augustine, St. Ephrem, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Germanus, St. John Damascene, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Bernardine, St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure), **that devotion to Mary is necessary to salvation, and that... it is an infallible mark of reprobation to have no esteem and love for the holy Virgin.”** (*True Devotion to Mary* #40)

In contrast to the true children of God who love and honor Mary, and who salutes Her through the daily prayer of the Most Holy Rosary, heretics and especially the Protestants regard Our Lady with contempt or disregard and often speak lowly of her as if she was a woman like everyone else and who just “happened” to be chosen by God, and nothing more. And what’s worse, they even get angry at people and accuse those who honor and pray to Our Lady for idolatry and heresy. Sadly, all heretics by their manifest contempt of Our Lady whom Our Lord loves and honors so much (and who is the most virtuous person that have ever lived or will ever live outside of Jesus Christ) reveal their impending and eternal damnation. **“All the true children of God, the predestinate, have God for their Father and Mary for their Mother. He who has not Mary for his Mother has not God for his Father. This is the reason why the reprobate, such as heretics, schismatics and others, who hate our Blessed Lady or regard her with contempt and indifference, have not God for their Father, however much they**

boast of it, simply because they have not Mary for their Mother.” (St. Louis De Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary* #30)

Protestants especially reject the intercession of the Saints, but all that can read the Bible of course know that this is a complete rejection of the Bible. We see an example in Revelation chapter 5 of saintly intercession in Heaven. “... *elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, **and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints.***” (Revelation 5:8) In the Book of Revelation or Apocalypse chapter 6, we also see dead saints who were martyred for the true faith of Jesus Christ, asking God to act on earth, and pleading to God to revenge their blood: “***And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?***” (Revelation 6:9-10) Notice that the souls of these dead martyrs cry out from underneath the altar. Since ancient times, the Catholic Church has placed the relics of martyrs underneath the altar. The fact that the voices of the martyrs come from under the altar – exactly where their relics are located in Catholic churches – is an interesting biblical confirmation of the Catholic and Biblical practice of relics. (Also see 2 Kings 2:8; 2 Kings 13:21; and Acts 19:12 for more biblical proof and passages of God’s power manifested through the relics of His holy departed or living servants.)

The next example we will look at comes from 1st Machabees chapter 5. This was a book which the Protestants removed from the Bible when they split from the Catholic Church. The comments given in the section on Purgatory in the book “**The Bible Proves the Teachings of the Catholic Church**” demonstrates that the Books of the Machabees are part of the true Old Testament. This is proven by the fact that the New Testament quotes from the Septuagint, which contains the Books of the Machabees and the 5 others which the Protestants reject. This passage concerns a vision of Onias, a high-priest who had died, “*Now the vision was in this manner: Onias who had been high priest, a good and virtuous man, modest in his looks, gentle in his manners, and graceful in his speech, and who from a child was exercised in virtues, holding up his hands, prayed for all the people of the Jews: After this there appeared also another man... Then Onias answering... this is he that prayeth much for the people, and for all the holy city, Jeremias the prophet of God. Whereupon Jeremias stretched forth his right hand, and gave to Judas a sword of gold...*” (2 Machabees 15:12) This fascinating passage (which was removed from the Protestant bible) relates the vision of the deceased high-priest Onias. After his death, he was seen holding out his hands and interceding for the Jews by his prayers. Onias also presents the deceased prophet Jeremias, who gives a sword of gold to Judas Machabeus. Judas Machabeus is not to be confused with the traitor of the New Testament, Judas

Iscariot. This passage is, therefore, another clear proof of the intercession of deceased saints, and the effectiveness of their prayers.

And so, it is an established fact of Holy Scripture that the Saints help us through their prayers. However, in comparison to all the Angels and Saints in Heaven, The Blessed Virgin Mary is greater than all Angels and men combined, according to the testimony and the Word of Our Lord Himself, and that is why her intercessory power with God is so much more effective than prayers to other Saints or Angels. (Please also see the section, [The Biblical Basis For Praying To Mary And For Catholic Teachings On Mary](#))

Indeed, *The Revelations of St. Bridget* reveals that Our Lord “preferred” his “Mother Mary above all others and loved her above every creature”, which shows us that after God, the most blessed and highly exalted creature of all in creation, is the Blessed Virgin Mary:

“[I saw a throne in Heaven on which sat the Lord Jesus Christ as Judge. At his feet sat the Virgin Mary. Surrounding the throne was a host of angels and a countless multitude of saints. A certain monk, a great scholar of theology, stood high up on a rung of a ladder that was fixed in the earth and whose top reached up to Heaven. With an impatient and agitated bearing, as though full of wickedness and guile, he put questions to the Judge:] First question. After this was said, the monk appeared on his rung as before saying: “O Judge, I ask you: Why do you seem unfair in your gifts and graces in that you gave preference to Mary your Mother before every creature and exalted her above the angels?”

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: “Friend, in my deity are contained all future things and everything that will be done as well as everything that has been done, all of them being foreseen and foreknown from the start. Just as the fall of humankind was something foreknown and permitted by God’s justice but not accomplished through God nor something that had to happen due to God’s foreknowledge, so too it was foreknown from eternity that the liberation of humankind would be accomplished through God’s mercy.

“You ask why I preferred my mother Mary above all others and loved her above every creature. This is because a special mark of virtue was found in her. As when several logs are piled up and a fire is kindled, that log which is most capable and fit for burning is more quickly set aflame and starts burning. It was the same with Mary. When the fire of divine love, which in itself is immutable and eternal, began to kindle and be seen, and the deity wished to become incarnate, there was no creature more capable and fitter to receive this fire of love than the Virgin Mary, for no creature burned with such divine charity as she. And although her love has been shown and revealed in the last age, yet it was foreseen before the beginning of the world. Thus it was predetermined in the deity from all eternity

that just as no one was found like her in charity, so too no one would be equal to her in grace and blessing.” (Book 5, Interrogation 9)

In another revelation the Son of God spoke to her Mother and said:

“My most dear Mother, your words are sweet to me, for they come from your soul. You are like the dawn that breaks forth with clarity. You outshine all the heavens and your light and your clarity surpass all the angels. By your clarity, you drew to yourself the true sun, that is, my Divinity, so much so that the sun of my Divinity came to you and settled on you. By his warmth you are warmed in my love over all others and by his splendor you are enlightened in my wisdom more than all others. The darkness of the earth was chased away and all the heavens were enlightened through you. I say in my truth that your purity pleased me more than all the angels, and it drew my Divinity to you so that you were enkindled by the warmth of my Spirit; and through it you enclosed the true God and Man in your womb whereby mankind has been enlightened and the angels made joyful. Therefore, may you be blessed by your blessed Son! And for this reason, no prayer of yours will ever come to me without being heard, and through you, anyone who prays for mercy with the intention of mending their sinful ways will receive grace for your sake. For just as heat comes from the sun, so too all mercy is given through you. You are like a filled and flowing spring from which mercy flows to the help of the wretched.”

“The Mother answered the Son: “All virtue and glory be yours, my Son! You are my God and my mercy; all good that I have comes from you. You are like the seed that was never sown but still grew and gave fruit a hundredfold and a thousandfold. For all mercy comes from you and since it is innumerable and ineffable, it can indeed be signified by the number one hundred, which signifies perfection, for all perfection comes from you and everyone is perfected in virtue by you.”

“The Son answered the Mother: “Indeed, my Mother, you likened me rightly to the seed that was never sown but still grew, since I came with my Divinity to you, and my Manhood was not sown by intercourse but still grew in you, and from it mercy flowed out from you to all. Therefore, you have spoken rightly. Since you now draw mercy out of me with the most sweet words of your mouth, ask me what you want, and it shall be given to you.”

“The Mother answered: “My Son, since I have won mercy from you, I beg for mercy and help for the wretched. For there are namely four places: The first is Heaven, where the angels and the souls of the saints need nothing but you whom they have – for in you they have every good. The second place is hell, and those who stay there are filled with malice and excluded from all mercy. Therefore, nothing good can enter into them any more. The third is the place of those being purged in purgatory, and those who stay there need a threefold mercy since they are tormented in a threefold way. They suffer through their

hearing, for they hear nothing but pain, sorrow, and misery. They suffer through their sight, for they see nothing but their own misery. They are tormented through their touch, for they feel the heat of the unbearable fire and of the harsh torment. My Lord and my Son, give them your mercy for the sake of my prayers!”

“The Son answered: “I will gladly give them a threefold mercy for your sake. First, their hearing shall be relieved, their sight will be eased, and their torment will be reduced and relieved. And all those who are in the greatest and most severe torment of the fires of purgatory shall from this moment come to the middle torment; those who are in the middle torment shall come to the lightest; and those who are in the lightest torment shall come home to rest.”

“The Mother answered: “Praise and honor to you, my Lord!” And she immediately said to her Son: “My beloved Son, the fourth place is the world, and its inhabitants are in need of three things: First, repentance for their sins. Second, penance and atonement. Third, the strength to do good deeds.”

“The Son answered: “Everyone who calls on your name and has hope in you along with a purpose of amendment for his sins shall be given these three things as well as the kingdom of Heaven. Your words are so sweet to me that I cannot deny you anything you plead for, for you want nothing other than what I want. You are indeed like a shining and burning flame by which the extinguished lights are enkindled and the burning lights are strengthened, for by your love which arose in my heart and drew me to you, those who are dead in sin will come to life again and those who are tepid and black like smoke will become strong in my love.” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 1, Chapter 50)

In an additional revelation the Mother of God spoke to her Son and said:

“Blessed be your name, my Son Jesus Christ, and all honor to your Manhood above all that is created! Glory to your Divinity above all good things, which are one God with your Manhood!”

“The Son answered: “My Mother, you are like a flower that grew in a valley. Around the valley there were five high mountains, and the flower grew out of three roots with a straight stem without any knots. This flower had five leaves that were filled with all sweetness. The valley with its flower grew above these five mountains, and the leaves of the flower spread themselves above every height of heaven and above all the choirs of angels. My beloved Mother, you are this valley for the sake of the great humility you had in comparison with all others. Your humility grew higher than five mountains.

“The first mountain was Moses because of his power. For he had power over my people through the Law, as if it were enclosed in his hand. But you enclosed the Lord of all law in your womb and, therefore, you are higher than this mountain. The second mountain was Elijah, who was so holy that he with soul and body was assumed into my holy place.

But your soul, my most dear Mother, was assumed above all the choirs of angels to the throne of God along with your most pure body. You are therefore higher than Elijah. The third mountain was the strength of Samson that surpassed all other men. Yet the devil defeated him with his treachery. But you defeated the devil with your strength and power. You are therefore stronger than Samson. The fourth mountain was David, who was a man according to my heart and will, but yet fell into sin. But you, my beloved Mother, followed my will in all and never sinned. The fifth mountain was Solomon, who was full of wisdom but nevertheless was fooled. But you, my Mother, were full of all wisdom and were never fooled or deceived. You are therefore higher than Solomon.

“The flower grew from three roots, because of the three things you had from your youth: obedience, charity, and divine understanding. Out of these three roots grew the most straight stem without any knots, which means that your will was never bent to anything but my will. This flower also had five leaves that grew above all the choirs of angels. My dear Mother, you are indeed the flower with these five leaves.

“The first leaf is your nobleness, which is so great that my angels, who are noble before me, when seeing and considering your nobleness, saw that it was above them and more eminent than their holiness and nobleness. You are therefore higher than the angels. The second leaf is your mercy, which was so great that you, when you saw the misery of all the souls, had compassion over them and suffered the greatest torment at my death. The angels are full of mercy, and yet they never endure sorrow or pain, but you, my loving Mother, were merciful to the wretched when you felt all the sorrow and torment of my death, and you wanted to suffer torment for the sake of mercy rather than being separated from it. Therefore, your mercy surpassed the mercy of all the angels. The third leaf is your loving kindness. The angels are loving and kind and want good for everyone, but you, my dearest Mother, had before your death a will like an angel in your soul and body and did good to everyone. And still you do not refuse anyone who reasonably prays for his own good. Therefore, your kindness is higher and greater than the angels. The fourth leaf is your beauty. The angels behold the beauty of each other and wonder over the beauty of all souls and all bodies, but they see that the beauty of your soul is above all that is created and that the nobleness of your body surpasses all created beings. And so, your beauty surpassed all the angels and everything created. The fifth leaf was your divine joy, for nothing pleased you but God, just as nothing but God delights the angels. Each and every one of them knows and knew his own joy in himself, but when they saw the joy in you to God, they beheld in their conscience how their joy flamed up in them like a light in the love of God. They saw that your joy was like a flaming bonfire, burning with the hottest fire, with flames so high that it came near to my Divinity. And for this reason, my most sweet Mother, your divine joy burned well above all the choirs of angels. Since this flower had these five leaves, namely, nobleness, mercy, loving kindness, beauty, and the highest joy in God, it was full of all sweetness.

“But the one who wants to taste of its sweetness should approach the sweetness and

assume it into himself. This is also what you did, my most sweet Mother. You were so sweet to my Father that he assumed all of you into his Spirit, and your sweetness delighted him above all other things. The flower also bears a seed by the heat and power of the sun and from it grows a fruit. In this way the blessed sun, my Divinity, assumed Manhood from your virginal womb. For just as the seed makes and grows flowers of the same kind as the seed wherever it is sown, so my limbs were like yours in shape and appearance, even though I was a man and you a woman and a virgin. This valley was uplifted with its flower above all mountains when your body together with your most holy soul was lifted up above all the choirs of angels.” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 1, Chapter 51)

It should thus be clear to all of good will that “The Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of God; therefore she is far more excellent than all the Angels, even the Seraphim and Cherubim. She is the Mother of God; therefore she is most pure and most holy, so that under God no greater purity can be imagined.” (Pope Pius XI, *Lux Veritatis* #42, A.D. 1931)

“Let us contemplate the sentiments of profound respect and maternal tenderness, which fill the soul of our blessed Lady, now that she has conceived Jesus in her chaste womb: He is her God, and yet He is her Son. Let us think upon this wonderful dignity bestowed upon a creature; and let us honour the Mother of our God. It is by this mystery that the prophecy of Isaias was fulfilled: “Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son;” and that of Jeremias: “The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth; a woman shall compass a Man.”

“... But what human language could express the dignity of our Lady, who carries within her chaste womb Him that is the world’s salvation! If Moses, after a mere colloquy with God, returned to the Israelites with the rays of the majesty of Jehovah circling his head, what an aureola of glory is due to Mary, who has within her, as in a living heaven, that very God Himself! The divine Wisdom tempers the effulgence of her glory that it be not visible to men; and this in order that the state of humility, which the Son of God has chosen as the one in which He would manifest Himself to the world, should not be removed at the very outset by the dazzling glory which would, otherwise, have been seen gleaming from His Mother.

“... What so lovely in creation as this Virgin, who loves the Lord with such matchless love and is so exceedingly loved by this her Lord? It is she of whom the Scripture speaks, when it calls the bride the dearest hind. What, too, so lovely as that well-beloved Son of God, born of His beloved Father from all eternity, and now, at the end of time, as the apostle speaks, formed in the womb of His dearest Mother, and become to her, in the words of the same divine proverb, the sweetest fawn? Let us, therefore, cull our flowers, and offer them to both Child and Mother. But let me briefly tell you what are the flowers

you must offer to our Lady. Christ says, speaking of His Humanity, 'I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys.' By Him, therefore, let us purify our souls and bodies, and so be able to approach our God in chastity. Next, preserve this flower of purity from all that would injure it; for flowers are tender things, and soon droop and fade. Let us wash our hands among the innocent, and, with a pure heart, and pure body, and cleansed lips, and chaste soul, let us gather in the paradise of our heavenly Father our fresh flowers for the new Nativity of our new King. With these flowers let us stay up this most saintly Mother, this Virgin of virgins, this Queen of queens, this Lady of ladies; that so we may deserve to receive the blessing of the Mother and of the divine Babe." (*The Liturgical Year* by Dom Guéranger, O.S.B.)

The best way to honor Our Lady and ask Her for spiritual graces is undoubtedly to pray the Rosary daily, which countless of Popes and Saints have revealed is especially effective in helping to conquer our sins and everyday failings. St. Louis De Montfort writes: "I could tell you at great length of the grace God gave me to know by experience the effectiveness of the preaching of the Holy Rosary and of how I have seen, with my own eyes, the most wonderful conversions it has brought about." (*The Secret of the Rosary*, p. 10) St. Louis De Montfort: "Our Lady revealed to Blessed Alan De la Roche that no sooner had St. Dominic begun preaching the Rosary than hardened sinners were touched and wept bitterly over their grievous sins... everywhere that he preached the Holy Rosary such fervor arose that sinners changed their lives and edified everyone by their penances and change of heart." (*The Secret of the Rosary*, p. 66)

In truth, Our Lord Himself directs us and tells us to take Our Lady as our Mother at the foot of the cross in the Holy Gospel when He gives Her over to John the Apostle (St. John being a type of the whole of humanity in the same way that many things in the Old Law prefigured things of the New Law). "*Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own.*" (John 19:25-27) Though other women were at the foot of the cross, Jesus singles out His mother. Jesus calls her "woman" because she is the woman of Genesis 3:15 – the one in complete opposition to the serpent. To see the overwhelming biblical evidence that Mary is the new Eve and the true Arc of the Covenant, as well as proof for other Catholic doctrines concerning Mary, please read the section about Her in the book "[The Bible Proves the Teachings of the Catholic Church](#)", which proves without a doubt that Our Lady have been given an amazing and special intercessory power by Our Lord to help mankind gain victory over sin and the Devil.

The Life of St. Gemma Gelgani (1878-1903): “The reader already knows something of the way in which she strove all her life to keep this beautiful virtue [of chastity] unsullied in her heart. She cultivated a special devotion to St. Agnes, and to the other saints who were particularly remarkable for their purity. But it was above all to the Blessed Virgin that she entrusted the protection of her treasure, and for this purpose all her life long she never omitted to say three Hail Mary’s every day with her hands under her knees. She was once surprised in this position by her Aunt Elisa and upon her asking for an explanation she replied: ‘Grandmother taught me to do it. She said that if I said three Hail Mary’s in that way, the Blessed Virgin would never allow me to commit a sin against purity.’”

The Gospel of Luke tells us about Our Lady’s love of purity and chastity

The Gospel of Luke describes the angelic salutation that the Angel Gabriel gave to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Luke 1:26-35 “And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: **Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”**

Haydock Commentary explains Luke 1:26-35: “**Ver. 34.** How shall this be done? She only asks about the manner. --- Because I know not man. This answer, as St. Augustine takes notice, would have been to no purpose, had she not made a vow to God to live always a virgin. (Witham) --- Listen to the words of this pure Virgin. The angel tells her she shall conceive; but she insists upon her virginity, holding her purity in higher estimation than the promised dignity. (St. Gregory of Nyssa.) --- She did not doubt the truth of what the

angel said, (as Calvin impiously maintained) but she wished it might not happen to the prejudice of her vowed virginity. (St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, Ven. Bede, Theophylactus, &c. &c.) --- You ask, *how shall this be done, since you know not man?* This, your ignorance of man, is the very reason why this will take place within you. For had you not been pure, you never would have been deemed worthy of so great a mystery. Not because marriage is bad, but because virginity is far more excellent. The common Lord of all ought in his birth to have something common with all mankind, and still something different. He was conceived and born in the womb like the rest of mankind, but he differed from them in being born of a virgin. (St. Chrysostom, xlix. in Genes.)”

It is of course not a coincidence that God chose a Virgin to bear and give birth to Himself. Mary’s love of chastity and purity was so pleasing to Our Lord that He was drawn to her womb and consented to become man. It was not suitable for God to become a man through the normal way of sexual copulation since, after the fall of Adam and Eve, the sexual act had become intoxicating, shameful and defective in its essence. Our Lord, being the source of all purity and virtue, chose a most holy vessel of chastity and purity ever created – The Blessed Virgin Mary – since the justice and greatness of His Majesty required this.

In *St. Bridget’s Revelations*, Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself revealed that “**I preferred to be born of a virgin rather than of a woman who was not a virgin, because that which is purest befits me who am God most pure.** While it remained in the order of its creation, human nature had no deformity. But once the commandment was transgressed, there immediately arose a sense of shame, just as happens to people who sin against their temporal lord, who are even ashamed of the very limbs with which they have sinned. Along with shame over the transgression, there also sprang up a disordered impulse, especially in the reproductive organs. Yet, in order that this impulse might not be unproductive, it was by God’s goodness turned to good, and the act of carnal union was established by divine commandment in order that nature might bear its fruits. However, since it brings greater glory to act above and beyond the commandment, adding whatever good one is led by love to make, it pleased God to choose for his work the institution tending to **greater purity and love, and that is virginity.** For it is more virtuous and generous to be in the fire of tribulation and not to burn than to be without fire and still want to be crowned. **Now, since virginity is like the fairest path to heaven while marriage is more like a road, it befitted me, God most pure, to rest in a virgin most pure.** Just as the first man was created from the virgin earth, not yet polluted by blood, and because Adam and Eve committed their sin while they were still in a sound state of nature, so too I, God, wished to be received in the purest vessel so as to transform everything by my goodness.” (*The Revelations of Saint Bridget*, Book 5, Interrogation 12)

In the same *Revelations of St. Bridget*, The Blessed Virgin Mary also describes how she had promised chastity to Our Lord long before she was told that she was going to conceive and give birth to God Himself: “I am the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God... I will now show you more fully how, from the beginning, when I first heard and understood that God existed, I always, and with fear, was concerned about my salvation and my observance of His Commandments. But when I learned more about God—that he was my Creator and the judge of all my actions—I loved him more dearly, and I was constantly fearful and watchful so as to not offend him by word or deed.

“Later, when I heard that he had given the Law and the Commandments to the people and worked such great miracles through them, I made a firm decision in my soul to never love anything but him, and all worldly things became most bitter to me. When still later I heard that God himself would redeem the world and be born of a Virgin, I was seized by such great love for him that I thought of nothing but God and desired nothing but him. I withdrew myself, as much as I was able, from the conversation and presence of parents and friends, and I gave away all my possessions to the poor, and kept nothing for myself but meager food and clothing.

“Nothing was pleasing to me but God! I always wished in my heart to live until the time of his birth, and perhaps, deserve to become the unworthy handmaid of the Mother of God. **I also promised in my heart to keep my virginity, if this was acceptable to him, and to have no possessions in the world.** However, if God wanted otherwise, my will was that his will, not mine, be done; for I believed that he could do all things and wanted nothing but what was beneficial and best for me. Therefore, I entrusted all my will to him.

“When the time approached for the virgins to be presented in the temple of the Lord, I was also among them due to the devout compliance of my parents to the Law. **I thought to myself that nothing was impossible for God, and since he knew that I wanted and desired nothing but him, I knew that he could protect my virginity, if it pleased him.** However, if not, I wanted his will to be done. After I had heard all the commandments in the temple, I returned home, burning even more now than ever before with the love of God, being inflamed daily with new fires and desires of love.”
(*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 1 Chapter 10)

In another revelation, Jesus Christ praises His mother’s most pure Virginity and other virtues and explains why He loves Her so much:

“The Son speaks: ‘I am crowned king in my divinity without beginning and without end. A crown has neither beginning nor end; thus it is a symbol of my power, which had no beginning and will have no end. I had another crown, too, in my keeping: I myself, God, am that crown. It was prepared for the person who had the greatest

love for me. And you, my most sweet Mother, won this crown and drew it to yourself through righteousness and love. **The angels and other saints bear witness that your love for me was more ardent and your chastity more pure than that of any other, and that it was more pleasing to me than all else. Your head was like gleaming gold and your hair like sunbeams, because your most pure virginity, which is like the head of all your virtues, as well as your control over every illicit desire pleased me and shone in my sight with all humility.** You are rightly called the crowned queen over all creation - “queen” for the sake of your purity, “crowned” for your excellent worth.” (*The Revelations of Saint Bridget*, Book 5, Revelation 4)

Venerable Maria de Agreda in her marvelous work “*The Mystical City of God: The Divine History and Life of The Virgin Mother of God*,” also explains that Our Lady and Queen was totally different than all of the other humans:

“The Blessed Birth Of Mary Immaculate. She was born pure and stainless, beautiful and full of grace, thereby demonstrating, that She was free from the law and the tribute of sin. Although She was born substantially like other daughters of Adam, yet her birth was accompanied by such circumstances and conditions of grace, that it was the most wonderful and miraculous birth in all creation [at that time since Our Lord had not been born yet] and will eternally redound to the praise of her Maker. At twelve o’clock in the night this divine Luminary issued forth, dividing the night of the ancient Law and its pristine darknesses from the new day of grace, which now was about to break into dawn. She was clothed, handled and dressed like other infants, though her soul dwelt in the Divinity; and She was treated as an infant, though She excelled all mortals and even all the angels in wisdom. Her mother did not allow Her to be touched by other hands than her own, but she herself wrapped Her in swaddling clothes: and in this Saint Anne was not hindered by her present state of childbirth; for she was free from the toils and labors, which other mothers usually endure in such circumstances.” (*The Mystical City of God*, Book 1, Chapter 7)

“Her Childhood Years. [Words of the Queen – The Virgin Mary speaks to Sister Mary of Agreda, Spain:] My dearest daughter, keep in mind, that all the living are born destined for death, but ignorant of the time allowed them; this they know for certain however, that the term of life is short, that eternity is without end, and that in this life only they can harvest what will yield life or death eternal. In this dangerous pilgrimage of life God has ordained, that no one shall know for certain, whether he is worthy (Eccles. 9, 1) of his love or hate; for if he uses his reason

rightly, this uncertainty will urge him to seek with all his powers the friendship of that same Lord. God justifies his cause as soon as the soul acquires the use of reason; for from that time onward He enlightens and urges and guides man toward virtue and draws him away from sin, teaching him to distinguish between water and fire, to approve of the good and reject evil, to choose virtue and repel vice. Moreover, God calls and rouses the soul by his holy inspirations and continual promptings, provides the help of the sacraments, doctrines and commandments, urges man onward through his angels, preachers, confessors, ministers and teachers, by special tribulations and favors, by the example of strangers, by trials, death and other happenings and dispositions of his Providence; He disposes the things of life so as to draw toward Him all men, for He wishes all to be saved. Thus he places at the disposal of the creature a vast field of benevolent help and assistance, which it can and should use for its own advancement. Opposing all this are the tendencies of the inferior and sensitive nature, infected with the *fomes peccati*, the foment of sin, tending toward sensible objects and by the lower appetites and repugnances, disturbing the reason and enthraling the will in the false liberty of ungoverned desires. The demon also, by his fascinations and his deceitful and iniquitous suggestions obscures the interior light, and hides the deadly poison beneath the pleasant exterior. But the Most High does not immediately forsake his creatures; He renews his mercy and his assistance, recalling them again and again, and if they respond to his first call, He adds others according to his equity, increasing and multiplying them in proportion as the soul corresponds. As a reward of the victory, which the soul wins over itself, the force of his passions and concupiscences is diminished, the spirit is made free to soar higher and rise above its own inclinations and above the demons.

“But if man neglects to rise above his low desires and his forgetfulness, he yields to the enemy of God and man. The more he alienates himself from the goodness of God, so much the more unworthy does he become of the secret callings of the Most High, and so much less does he appreciate his assistance, though it be great. For the demon and the passions have obtained a greater dominion and power over his intellect and have made him more unfit and more incapable of the grace of the Almighty. Thereon, my dear daughter, rests the whole salvation or condemnation of souls, that is, in commencing to admit or resist the advances of the Lord. I desire thee not to forget this doctrine, so that thou mayest respond to the many calls which thou receivest of the Most High. See thou be strong in resisting his enemies and punctually solicitous in fulfilling the pleasure of thy Lord, for thereby thou wilt gratify Him and attend to the commands made known to thee by divine light. I loved my parents dearly, and the tender words of my mother wounded my heart; but as I knew it to be the will of the Lord to leave them, I forgot her house and my people in order to follow my Spouse. The proper education and instruction of

children will do much toward making them more free and habituated to the practice of virtue, since thus they will be accustomed to follow the sure and safe guiding star of reason from its first dawn.” (*The Mystical City of God*, Book 1, Chapter 8)

Bad Company is the root of many evils

It is a little discussed topic nowadays, but the Holy Scripture and the Saints teach that there is a great necessity to have a detachment from all relatives and friends in order to be saved. St. Alphonsus, (c. 1755) when speaking **on the necessity to be detached from relatives, explains, saying:** “How many monks, says St. Jerome, ‘by compassion towards their father and mother have lost their own souls?’ How many religious by compassion for their relatives have been lost? In another place the saint says, that the more tender the affection of a religious for her kindred, the greater her impiety towards God... **St. Ignatius of Loyola refused to interfere in the marriage of one of his nieces, though she was heiress of the family. St. Francis Borgia would not ask the Pope for a dispensation (which he would have easily obtained) to have his son married to a relative, although the acquisition of a large estate depended upon the marriage...** When, then, relatives seek to implicate you in worldly affairs, withdraw at once from them.” In truth, **“If attachment to relatives were not productive of great mischief Jesus Christ would not have so strenuously exhorted us to estrangement from them... a man’s enemies shall be they of his own household (Mt. 10:36)... Relatives are the worst enemies of the sanctification of Christians...”**

An example in the lives of the seers of Fatima illustrates how there is also a necessity for all to be detached from friends, and especially those who are worldly or ungodly. It is related that “One afternoon Lucia brought some other girls, schoolmates. When they had gone, Francisco looked seriously at her and said: ‘Don’t walk with them, because you can learn to commit sins.’ ‘But they leave school when I do’ (Lucia replied). ‘When you leave, spend a little while at the feet of the hidden Jesus, and then come home alone.’” (William Thomas Walsh, *Our Lady of Fatima*, p. 164)

Our speech effects our purity

In *The First Letter of Saint Peter*, St. Peter tells us that we need to carefully consider how we speak and act. Sins against chastity are almost always begun by a lustful look or move, and shameful talk. That is why modesty in dress, speech and behavior is very important in the Christian life.

1 Peter 3:1-6 “In like manner also let wives be subject to their husbands: that if any believe not the word, they may be won without the word, by the conversation of the wives. **Considering your chaste conversation with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel: But the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and a meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God.** For after this manner heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: As Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are, doing well, and not fearing any disturbance.”

Haydock Commentary adds: “**Ver. 1.** *Let wives, &c.* In the first six verses he gives instructions to married women. 1. By their modest and submissive dispositions to endeavor to gain and convert their husbands, shewing them such a respect as Sara did, (whose daughters they ought to esteem themselves) who called Abraham her lord, or master; (Genesis xviii. 12.) 2. To be modest in their dress, without vanity; 3. That women take the greatest care of the *hidden man*, i.e. of the interior disposition of their heart, which he calls *the incorruptibility of a quiet and a meek spirit*; 4. *Not fearing any trouble*, when God’s service or the duty to their husbands require it. (Witham)”

The sinful and fleshly man and woman know not the humility of “*the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and a meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God.*” (1 Peter 3:4) All their actions are rather based on vanity and a most disgusting desire to get others or their spouse to sensually desire them, and that is also why (being spurred by the devil) they dress sensually, use makeup and unbecoming and disgraceful language. But those who have left the empty life of vanity and sensuality behind, and who refuses to dress like whores, using makeup and walk in “lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings” – have risen with Christ.

1 Peter 4:1-5 “Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought: **for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sins: That now he may live the rest of his time in the flesh, not after the desires of men, but according to the will of God.** *For the time past is sufficient* to have fulfilled the will of the Gentiles, for them who have walked in riotousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and unlawful worshipping of idols. Wherein they think it strange, that you run not with them into the same confusion of riotousness, speaking evil of you. Who shall render account to him, who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”

Haydock Commentary adds: “**Ver. 1.** *He that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sins.* Some expound these words of Christ; but he never had committed the least sin. The true sense is, that every one who suffers by Christ’s example, leaves off a sinful life, so as not to fall into great sins. (Witham) --- **Ver. 3.** *For the time past is sufficient, &c.* As if he said, you who were Gentiles, have already lived too long in vices before your conversion; so that they who are not yet converted, *admire* at the change they see in you, make a jest of you, talk against you for your not running on with them in the same wicked and shameful disorders: but they shall render an exact account of all to the just Judge of the living and the dead... who judgeth and condemneth those who had lived according to the flesh, but gave life to those who had lived well, or done penance according to the spirit of God. (Witham)”

The evil of lust makes man blind to spiritual things “while dulness of sense arises from gluttony”

Most men and women of the world do not recognize or know about the fact that sensual lusts (both for the married and the unmarried) actually blinds people from understanding or perceiving spiritual things/truths. This fact also requires married people from not indulging too often in the marital act. For all who overindulge in the marital act will always experience a “**blindness of mind**” of spiritual things. Indeed, St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologica* explains that:

“Different causes produce different effects. **Now Gregory says (Moral. xxxi, 45) that dulness of sense arises from gluttony, and that blindness of mind arises from lust...** The perfect intellectual operation in man consists in an abstraction from sensible phantasms, wherefore the more a man’s intellect is freed from those phantasms, the more thoroughly will it be able to consider things intelligible, and to set in order all things sensible. Thus Anaxagoras stated that the intellect requires to be “detached” in order to command, and that the agent must have power over matter, in order to be able to move it. Now it is evident that pleasure fixes a man’s attention on that which he takes pleasure in: wherefore the Philosopher says (Ethic. x, 4,5) that we all do best that which we take pleasure in doing, while as to other things, we do them either not at all, or in a faint-hearted fashion. Now carnal vices, namely gluttony and lust, are concerned with pleasures of touch in matters of food and sex; and these are the most impetuous of all pleasures of the body. For this reason these vices cause man’s attention to be very firmly fixed on corporeal things, **so that in consequence man’s operation in regard to intelligible things is weakened**, more, however, by lust than by gluttony, forasmuch as sexual pleasures are more vehement than those of the table.

Wherefore lust gives rise to blindness of mind, which excludes almost entirely the knowledge of spiritual things, while dulness of sense arises from gluttony, which makes a man weak in regard to the same [spiritual] intelligible things.” (Second Part of the Second Part, Q. 15, Art. 3, Second and Third Articles)

St. Alphonsus Ligouri, in *The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection*, **On The Necessity and Power of Prayer**, talks about how the impure temptations of the flesh affects us and that through them (if we yield to them) the Devil takes away all spiritual lights and makes us forget all our meditations and good resolutions, and even makes us disregard the truths of faith, and even almost lose the fear of the divine punishments. He writes that “it is especially to be remarked that no one can resist the impure temptations of the flesh without recommending himself to God when he is tempted. **This foe is so terrible that, when he fights with us, he, as it were, takes away all light; he makes us forget all our meditations, all our good resolutions; he makes us also disregard the truths of faith, and even almost lose the fear of the divine punishments...** He who in such a moment does not have recourse to God is lost... Chastity is a virtue which we have no strength to practice, unless God gives us; and God does not give this strength except to him who asks for it. But whoever prays for it will certainly obtain it.”

How to conquer temptations

There are many things that are necessary for us to do if we want to be able to conquer our temptations and sensual-fleshly desires. Sloth in performing acts of virtue is a sin, and therefore, it is necessary to know about and perform those acts which God requires from us. “If you desire to possess the purity which becomes the Spouse of Jesus, **you must cut off all dangerous occasions: you must cherish a holy ignorance of all that is opposed to chastity, and abstain from reading whatever has the slightest tendency to sully the soul.**” (St. Alphonsus, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, p. 32) In truth, “**The principal means of acquiring an ardent love of Christ are mental prayer, Communion, mortification, retirement.**” (*The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, p. 28) And so, “**If thou wouldst be certain of being in the number of the elect, strive to be one of the few, not of the many. And if thou wouldst be quite sure of thy salvation, strive to be among the fewest of the few;** that is to say: Do not follow the great majority of mankind, **but follow those who enter upon the narrow way, who renounce the world, who give themselves to prayer, and who never relax their efforts by day or by night, that they may attain everlasting blessedness.**” (Fr. Martin Von Cochem, *The Four Last Things*, p. 221, quoting from St. Anselm, *Archbishop and Doctor of the Church*)

The consent to bad thoughts is the beginning of all evil

St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787), *Bishop and Doctor of the Church*, writes concerning the absolute necessity of always resisting bad thoughts and temptations and that we must never in the least degree yield to them, as is shown by the following tragic example of a damned, christian soul:

“My dear Christians, be careful to banish these bad thoughts, by instantly turning for help to Jesus and Mary. He who contracts the habit of consenting to bad thoughts exposes himself to great danger of dying in sin, for the reason that it is very easy to commit sins of thought. In a quarter of an hour a person may entertain a thousand wicked desires, and for every evil desire to which he consents he deserves hell. At the hour of death the dying cannot commit sins of action, because they are unable to move; but they can easily indulge sins of thought, and the devil suggests every kind of wicked thought and desire to them when they are in that state. St. Eleazar, as Surius relates, was so violently and frequently tempted by bad thoughts at the hour of death, that he exclaimed: "Oh, how great is the power of the devils at the hour of death!" The saint, however, conquered his enemies, because he was in the habit of rejecting bad thoughts; but woe to those who have acquired a habit of consenting to them! Father Segneri tells us of a man who during his life had often consented to bad thoughts. At the hour of death he confessed his sins with great compunction, so that every one regarded him as a saint; but after death he appeared and said that he was damned; he stated that he made a good confession, and that God had pardoned all his sins; but before death the devil represented to him that, should he recover, it would be ingratitude to forsake the woman who loved him so much. He banished the first temptation: a second came; he then delayed for a little, but in the end he rejected it: he was assailed by a third temptation, and consented to it. Thus, he said, he had died in sin, and was damned. My brother, do not say, as many do, that sins against chastity are light sins, and that God bears with them.” (St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, *THE ASCETICAL WORKS VOLUME XV, Preaching: Letter to a Religious, Letter to a Bishop, the Exercises of the Missions, Instructions on the Commandments and the Sacraments*, pp. 469-470)

The above shows that we must hate sinful desires with a passion and fervor in order to overcome them, rather than fall into evil lusts, gloomy enjoyment, or the sin itself. Indeed, “To abstain from sinful actions is not sufficient for the fulfillment of God’s law. The very desire of what is forbidden is evil.” (St. John Baptist de la Salle, A.D. 1651-1719)

Exhortations to chastity

St. Alphonsus, Discourse to Maidens: “St. Ignatius, Martyr, writing to his disciples, exhorted them carefully to watch over the virgins, so that they might be constant in the promise that they had made to Jesus Christ of their virginity, which is so precious a gift before God. Virgins consecrated to the love of the divine Spouse are called by St. Cyprian the most noble part of the Church. Therefore, besides St. Cyprian, several among the holy Fathers, as St. Ephrem, St. Ambrose, St. John Chrysostom, and others, have composed works that treat entirely of the praises of virginity.

The glorious Apostle St. Matthew, as Denis the Carthusian relates, did not wish to allow the virgin St. Iphigenia, who was consecrated to Jesus Christ, to marry a monarch, although he promised to embrace the faith with all his people. Thomas Cantipratensis relates that at Rome the sister of the Count of Puglia, promised in marriage by his brother to a lord, fled in the disguise of a man so as not to be forced to marry; but she was pursued by her brother, and overtaken near a rock that projected into the sea. Putting her confidence in God, she threw herself into the abyss, and afterwards walked upon the water as far as a desert in Greece, where she remained safe. I wished to quote these examples to show that it is not a useless work, but a work that is very agreeable to God, when priests take care to exhort young persons to consecrate to Jesus Christ the lily of their virginity. This is the reason why in our missions it is customary, on the morning of one of the last days, that a missionary, assisted by another priest advanced in years, addresses in a retired place an instruction on this point to all the young women.

“Example of a Discourse to Young Women.

“My dear sisters, I do not pretend to explain to you in this discourse all the merits and all the advantages obtained by young maidens in consecrating their virginity to Jesus Christ. I will confine myself to pointing them out briefly.

“First, they become in the eyes of God beautiful as the angels of heaven: *They shall be as the angels of God in heaven* (Matt. xxii. 30). Baronius relates that at the death of a pious virgin, named Georgia, a great number of doves were seen flying about her; and when her body was carried to the church, these doves placed themselves on the part of the roof which corresponded to the place where the coffin was put, and flew away only after the burial of the deceased. Every one believed that these doves were angels, who thus honored her virginal body.

“Moreover, when a young person renounces the world and devotes herself to the love of Jesus Christ, she becomes the spouse of the Son of God. In the Gospel our Saviour is called now Father, now Mother, now Shepherd of Souls; but in regard to virgins he calls himself their Bridegroom or Spouse: *They went out to meet their bridegroom* (Matt. xxv. 1).

“A young person who wishes to establish herself in the world, if she is prudent, makes careful inquiries about those that aspire to her hand, and tries to know which among them is the noblest and richest. Let us, then, address ourselves to the Spouse of the Canticles, who knows very well the prerogatives of the divine Spouse, and let us ask him what he is. Tell me, O divine Spouse! what is he who loves thee and renders thee the most happy among all women? *My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands* (Cant. v. 10). My beloved, she says, is all white by his purity, and is ruddy by the love with which he is inflamed; he is, in a word, so beautiful, so noble, so affable, that one finds him to be the most amiable among all spouses.

“When St. Agnes was offered as her spouse the son of the Prefect of Rome, this glorious virgin was right when she answered, as St. Ambrose tells us, that she had found a far better match.

“Such was also the answer of St. Domitilla, niece of the Emperor Domitian, which she gave to persons who tried to persuade her that she could be married to Count Aurelian, since he consented that she should remain a Christian: "But, tell me," she answered them, "if to a young woman there was presented, on the one hand, a great monarch, and on the other, a poor plebeian, which of the two would she choose for a husband? To accept Aurelian, I should have to renounce the King of heaven; this would be folly, and I do not wish to be guilty of it." Hence in order to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, to whom she had consecrated her virginity, she gave herself up to be burnt alive a punishment to which her barbarous lover had condemned her.

“Generous souls who renounce the world for the love of Jesus Christ, become the cherished spouses of the Son of God. They are called First-fruits of the Lamb: *First-fruits to God and to the Lamb* (Apoc. xiv. 4). Why the First-fruits? Because, says Cardinal Hugo, as the first-fruits are more agreeable than others, so virgins are objects of the Lord’s predilection. The divine Spouse is nourished among the lilies: *Who feedeth among the lilies*. And what are these lilies, if not fervent souls who consecrate their virginity to Jesus Christ? Venerable Bede assures us that the chant of the virgins, that is, the honor which the virgins render to God by preserving to him intact the lily of their purity, is more agreeable to the Lord than the chant of all the other saints. In fact, the Holy Ghost declares that no good can compensate for the merit of virginity. No price is worthy of a continent soul. For this reason, according to Cardinal Hugo, one can obtain a dispensation from all other vows, but not from the vow of virginity. It is also on this account that theologians believe that the Blessed Virgin would have been disposed to renounce the sublime dignity of the Mother of God rather than lose the treasure of her virginity.

“Who then here below can ever comprehend the glory that God reserves in paradise for his chaste spouses? Doctors teach that in heaven virgins have their own

glory, which is a certain crown or a special joy, of which other holy souls are deprived.

“But let us pass to what directly refers to the subject that we actually have in view.

“A young person will say: "If I marry can I not also sanctify myself?" I wish you to hear the answer to this, not from my mouth, but from that of St. Paul; you will also see at the same time the difference between virgins and married persons. The following are the words of the Apostle: *The unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord: that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband* (I Cor. vii. 34). Then he adds: *This I speak for your profit: . . . for that which is decent, and which may give you power to attend upon the Lord without impediment* (I Cor. Vii. 35).

“Let us ponder well this advice of the Apostle. In the first place, I must remark that married women can, it is true, be holy in spirit but not in body, while a virgin that sanctifies herself is holy in spirit and in body, having consecrated to Jesus Christ her virginity: *Holy both in body and in spirit*. Note, moreover, these words: *Which may give you power to attend upon the Lord without impediment*.—Ah! how many obstacles have not married women in order to sanctify themselves! the higher their rank the greater obstacles do they encounter. In order to sanctify oneself one must use the means, especially apply oneself much to mental prayer, frequent often the sacraments, and think without ceasing of God. But how can a married woman find time to occupy herself with the things of God? *She that is married thinks on the things of the world, how she may please her husband*. She must, says St. Paul, occupy herself with the things of the world; she has to provide for the wants of her family, for food, for clothing; she has to watch over the education of her children, to please her husband and the relatives of her husband; and this will be the cause, adds the Apostle, why her heart will be divided, as she is obliged to divide her affections between her husband, her children, and God. How can a married woman devote herself much to mental prayer and go frequently to Holy Communion if she does not find enough at home to provide for the wants of her family? The husband-wishes to be served; the children cry, scream, or ask for a thousand things; how can she go to make meditation amidst so many occupations and embarrassments? It will hardly be permitted her to go to church to recollect herself and to receive Communion on Sundays. She will still have a good will; but it will be very difficult for her to attend to the things of God as she should. It is true that by this very privation she may gain merit by resigning herself to the will of God, who in this state requires of her only a continual sacrifice of resignation and of patience. ...

“Ah, would to God that married women would have nothing else to deplore

than to be deprived of the time necessary to attend to their devotions! The greatest evil is the danger in which these unfortunate persons continually find themselves of losing the grace of God, being obliged to see frequently their brothers-in-law or other relatives, or friends of their husband, either at home or elsewhere. Of this young persons are ignorant; but this is well known by married women, who are every day exposed to all these dangers, and is also well known by the confessors who hear them. We do not speak of the sad days which all married women must spend. The bad conduct of the husband, the disagreeable things caused by the children, the necessities of housekeeping, dependence on a mother-in-law or sisters-in-law, the pains of child-birth that is always accompanied by danger of death, suspicions, troubles of conscience in regard to the education of the children—all this forms a chain of tribulations in which married women can only lament, happy indeed if they do not lose their soul, and if God gives them the grace not to pass from the hell of this life to an eternal hell in the next. Such is the lot that awaits young women who give themselves up to the world.

“But you will say, Among all the married women are there none that have sanctified themselves? I beg your pardon, there are some; but who are they? Those that sanctify themselves by martyrdom, those that know how to suffer everything for God, with a patience that nothing can overcome. How many are there that rise to such perfection? They are as rare as white flies. And if you meet with any one of these, you will learn that she is always weeping for regret of having entered the world, while she could have consecrated herself to Jesus Christ. For myself, I do not remember to have ever found among married women a single pious person who was content with her state of life.

“True happiness is therefore the inheritance of virgins consecrated to Jesus Christ. They are free from the dangers to which married persons are necessarily exposed. Their affections are not fixed on children, nor on men of the world, nor on perishable goods, nor on vain ornaments, nor on any kind of dependence. While married women are obliged to adorn themselves with care, and at great expense, to appear in the world according to their rank and to please their husbands, a virgin consecrated to Jesus Christ needs to cover herself only with a garment, however common it may be; she would even create scandal if she dressed herself with elegance. Moreover, virgins are not troubled with the care of a house, a family, a husband; their sole concern, the only desire of their hearts, is to please Jesus Christ, to whom they have dedicated their souls, their bodies, and all their affections. Thus they have more liberty of spirit to think of God, and more time to give themselves up to prayer and the frequentation of the sacraments. ...

“I shall put this question to you: Do you wish to leave the world to lead a comfortable life or to sanctify yourself; to do your will or that of Jesus Christ? And if you wish to leave the world, to sanctify yourself, and to please Jesus Christ, I ask

you a second question: Tell me: in what does sanctity consist? Sanctity does not consist in remaining in the convent, nor in spending the entire day in the church, but it consists, on the one hand, in practising mental prayer and going to communion when one can, and on the other, in obeying, in rendering one's self useful to the house, in living in retirement, and in suffering pain and contempt for God. ...

At least, when you have given yourselves to God, if you have to suffer at home, you bear all for the love of Jesus Christ, and the Lord well knows how to make your cross light and sweet; but what a pain to have to suffer, and to suffer for the world, without consolation and without merit! Believe me, if Jesus calls you to his love, if he wishes you for his spouses, listen without fear to his voice; you will not fail to be consoled and even to rejoice in the midst of sufferings. This will, however, only be the case as long as you love him and conduct yourselves as his true spouses.

“Learn, then, what are the means that you should use so as to live as true spouses of Jesus Christ, and to attain sanctity.

“In order that a virgin may be holy, it is not sufficient that she should preserve her virginity and that she be called a spouse of Jesus Christ: it will be necessary that she should practise the virtues that are proper to a spouse of Jesus Christ. We read in the Gospel that heaven is like virgins; but what virgins?—no doubt wise, but not foolish, virgins. Wise virgins were led to the nuptials; but the foolish found the doors shut, and the Bridegroom said to them: I know you not: You are virgins, but I do not recognize you as my spouses. The true spouses of Jesus Christ follow their divine Spouse wherever he goes: *These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth* (Apoc. xiv. 4). What is it to follow the spouse? St. Augustine explains this to us: It is to imitate him by walking in his footsteps in body and in soul. After having consecrated to him your body, you must give him your whole heart, so that your heart may be entirely occupied in loving him.

“1. The first means is mental prayer, to which you should particularly apply yourselves. But do not believe that in order to make mental prayer it is necessary to be in the convent or to spend the entire day in the church. It is true that at home there is often noise, and there is much disturbance caused by persons who come and go; however, if one wishes one can always find a place and a time for devoting oneself to prayer, as when the house is more quiet, either in the morning before others rise, or in the evening after they have retired. Nor is it necessary, in order to pray, that one should always be on one's knees: one may meditate even while working or while walking, when there is no other more suitable time; it is sufficient if one occupies one's self with God, as when one reflects on the Passion of Jesus Christ or on some other pious subject.

“2. The second means is the frequentation of the sacraments of confession and

Communion. For confession we should choose a Director to whom we should be entirely submissive; without doing so we should not walk on the right road. As for Communion, it must depend entirely on obedience; but we must desire it and ask for it. This divine bread needs a soul that hungers after it; Jesus Christ wishes us to have a longing for him. It is frequent Communion that makes the spouses of Jesus Christ faithful to this heavenly Spouse, particularly in keeping them in holy purity. The Blessed Sacrament preserves in the soul all the virtues; but it is especially effective in preserving intact the lily of virginity, according to the words of the Prophet, who calls it: *The corn of the chosen ones, and wine which maketh virgins to spring forth* (Zach. ix. 17).

“3. The third means is retirement and vigilance. The divine Spouse compares his well-beloved to a lily surrounded by thorns: *As the lily among thorns, so is My love among daughters* (Cant. ii. 2). If a virgin wishes to live in the midst of society, of amusements, and other worldly frivolities, it will be impossible for her to remain faithful to Jesus Christ; she must, therefore, keep herself constantly among the thorns of obedience and of mortification, and should behave, especially towards men, not only with the greatest reserve and the greatest modesty in her looks and her words, but also when necessary with a rigid austerity, and even with rudeness. Such are the thorns that preserve lilies, that is, virgins; without these precautions they would soon go astray. The Lord also compares the beauty of his spouse to that of the turtle dove: *Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-dove's* (Cant. i. 9). Why? Because the turtle-dove is naturally inclined to flee the company of other birds, and loves to be always alone. A virgin, therefore, appears beautiful in the eyes of Jesus Christ when she leads a retired life, and does all she can to keep herself retired and hidden from the eyes of others. St. Jerome says that this Spouse of souls is jealous. Hence it is very displeasing to him to see a virgin, after having consecrated herself to his love, seeking to appear in the world and to please men. Those persons that are truly virtuous prefer to disfigure themselves rather than be the object of a bad desire. The venerable Sister Catharine of Jesus, before becoming a religious of St. Teresa, washed herself with dirty water, and then exposed herself to the sun so as to spoil her complexion. Bollandus relates that St. Andregesina, having been promised in marriage, begged the Lord to make her quite deformed, and her prayer was immediately heard. She at once appeared covered with leprosy so that every one fled from her; but after the espousals had been dissolved, she recovered her former beauty. We read in the *Mirror of Examples*, that there was in a convent a young virgin who had consecrated herself to God, and whose eyes had charmed a prince. The latter having threatened to set fire to the convent if she did not yield to his desires, what did she do? She tore out her eyes, and sent them to him in a basin with this message: "Here are the darts that have wounded your heart; take them, and leave me untouched." The same author also quotes the example of St. Euphemia,

whom her father had promised in marriage to a count. Seeing that this suitor neglected no means to make her his wife, she one day took a knife and cut off her nose and her lips, saying: "Vain beauty, thou shalt not be to me any longer an occasion of sin!" Baronius also relates that St. Ebba, abbess of the monastery of Coldingham, fearing an invasion of the barbarians, cut off her nose and her upper lip as far as the teeth, and that after her example all the other religious, to the number of thirty, did the same thing. The barbarians actually came, and seeing them thus disfigured, they became furious, set fire to the monastery, and made all perish in the flames. The Church honors them as martyrs. They were incited to this heroic act by an impulse of the Holy Ghost; it is not permitted to others to act in this way. You see, moreover, in these examples what virgins who love Jesus Christ have done in order to escape the lust of men. Every fervent young maiden should at least endeavor to conduct herself with modesty, and expose herself as little as possible to the gaze of the world. If it should unfortunately happen that a virgin should be the victim of any violence, without her fault, let her be assured that her purity has not been tarnished. Hence St. Lucia answered the tyrant, who threatened to have her dishonored: "If I am outraged against my will, I shall obtain a double crown." We know the adage: "Not the feeling, but the consent, wounds the soul." Besides, you must be convinced that a young maiden who conducts herself with modesty and reserve will not fail to make herself respected.

"4. The fourth means in order to preserve purity is the mortification of the senses. St. Basil says: "It is altogether improper for a virgin to violate chastity, with the tongue, with the ears, with the touch, much less with the heart." A virgin, in order to remain pure, should be chaste with her *tongue*, by always speaking modestly, and only through necessity with men, and in this case in a few words; chaste with her *ears*, by avoiding to listen to discourses about the things of the world; chaste with her *eyes*, by keeping them shut or lowered to the ground in the presence of men; chaste with regard to the *touch*, by using the greatest precaution both in regard to others and in regard to herself; but she should be especially chaste in her *heart* by trying to resist every immodest thought by promptly having recourse to Jesus and Mary. For this purpose it will also be necessary for her to mortify her body by fasts, by abstinence, by disciplines, by *ciliciums*; but in order to practise these mortifications permission from the confessor must be asked: without this they would be rather hurtful to the soul, as they might inspire one with pride. No one should therefore practise such penances without having obtained permission from one's Director; but one should desire the permission and ask it, for Directors do not grant it as long as we do not show them a desire to obtain it. Jesus is a Spouse of blood; he has espoused our souls on the cross, on which he has shed the last drop of his blood: *A bloody spouse thou art to me* (Exod. iv. 25). This is the reason why spouses that love him love to suffer tribulations, diseases, pains, ill-treatment,

injuries, and they receive them not only with patience, but with joy. In this sense the passage of Scripture is understood, namely: *These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth* (Apoc. xiv. 4). They follow Jesus their divine Spouse by singing his praises with joy, even in the midst of reproaches and pains, after the example of so many holy martyrs who expressed their happiness amid tortures, or while they were on their way to the place of execution.

“5. Finally, in order to obtain the grace of perseverance in a holy life, you should take care often to recommend yourselves to the Queen of heaven, the most pure Mother of God. She is the mediatrix who prepares and who concludes the union of souls with her divine Son; it is she that introduces and presents them to him as his spouses: *After her shall virgins be brought to the King* (Ps. xlv. 15). It is she, finally, that obtains for these chosen spouses the virtue of perseverance; without the help of Mary they would become so many faithless spouses.

“Prayer to Jesus Christ.

“(The preacher, after having made all his hearers go down on their knees at the foot of the crucifix, or a statue of the Infant Jesus, which would suit better under the circumstances, thus continues:)

“You, then, who are listening to me I am addressing myself to young maidens who feel themselves called by the divine Spouse to renounce the world for the love of him—you who have conceived the pious design of not belonging to the world, but to Jesus Christ... I wish only that by a simple act, without contracting any obligation, you should render thanks to Jesus Christ for the favor that he has done you of having called you to his love, and that you should offer yourselves to belong entirely to him during your whole life. Speak to him in the following manner:

“Ah! my Jesus, my God and my Redeemer, who didst die for me; pardon me if I also call Thee my Spouse: I am bold enough to do so, because I see that Thou deignest to invite me to this honor; it is a favor for which I know not how to thank Thee. At present I deserve to be in hell, and instead of punishing me Thou wishest me to become Thy spouse. Yes, my divine Spouse, I renounce the world, I renounce everything for love of Thee, and I give myself entirely to Thee. What is the world to me? My Jesus, Thou shalt hence forth be my only good, my only love. I see that Thou wishest to possess my whole heart; I wish to give it to Thee entirely: please accept my offering; do not repel me as I deserve to be repelled. Forget all the displeasure that I have given Thee in the past; I repent of it with my whole soul; ah! would that I had died before offending Thee! Pardon me, inflame me with Thy holy love, and grant me the grace to be faithful to Thee, and never more to turn my back on Thee. Thou, my Spouse, hast given Thyself entirely to me; here I am, I give myself entirely to Thee.

“O Mary, my Queen and my Mother! bind, chain my heart to Jesus Christ, and

attach it in such a manner that it may never be separated from him.

“(At the end, the preacher gives them the blessing with the crucifix, saying:)

“Now I am going to bless you, and by this blessing I wish to unite you to Jesus Christ in order that you may never more leave him; and while I am blessing you, you should give him your heart, saying:

“My Jesus, my divine Spouse, in future I will love Thee, Thee alone, and nothing more.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 261-276)

COMMON OBJECTIONS

Objection: You are not right in teaching that Mary was completely chaste during her whole life since the Bible teaches that Jesus had brothers during his life.

Matthew 13:55 “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? **And his brethren, James, and Joses**, and Simon, and Judas?”

Answer: Most Protestants of our day reject the perpetual virginity of Mary; they think it contradicts the Bible. **Many of them will be shocked to find out that the first Protestants, including Martin Luther, John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli and others all believed in the perpetual virginity of Mary.** The idea that Mary ceased to be a virgin and had other children besides Jesus was invented many generations after the original Protestant “reformation.” Thus, the Protestant position on this matter not only contradicts ancient Catholic tradition and the Bible (as we will see), but their own Protestant “tradition.”

MATTHEW 1:25 DOES NOT DISPROVE MARY’S PERPETUAL VIRGINITY

The first thing that Protestants usually quote against Mary’s perpetual virginity is Matthew 1:25.

Matthew 1:24-25 “Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: **And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.**”

According to Protestants, this proves that Mary ceased to be a virgin after the birth of Jesus. This is quite wrong. The Greek word for “until” or “till” (*heos*) does not imply that Joseph had marital relations with Mary after the birth of Jesus Christ. It simply means that they had no relations up to that point, without saying anything about what happened after that point. This is proven below by many passages. We should also bear in mind that the

Bible was written several thousand years ago. It was written at a time and in languages which don't express and imply things the same way that they would be expressed and implied in modern English.

For instance, in 2 Samuel 6:23 (2 Kings 6:23 in the Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible), we read that God cursed Michal, David's wife. He cursed her because she mocked David for the manner in which he rejoiced before the Ark of the Covenant. As a result, Michal had no children "until" the day of her death.

2 Samuel 6:23 "Therefore **Michal** the daughter of Saul **had no child until the day of her death.**"

Does this mean that Michal started having children after her death? Obviously it does not. This verse demonstrates **that when Scripture describes something as being true "until" or "before" a certain point, it doesn't necessarily mean that it ceased to be true after that point.** Here are numerous other examples of this:

Hebrews 1:13 "But to which of the angels said he at any time, **Sit on my right hand, until** I make thine enemies thy footstool?"

This refers to the Son of God. Does this mean that He will cease to sit at the right hand of the Father after God's enemies are made His footstool? Obviously it does not. He will remain at the right hand of God the Father.

1 Timothy 4:13 "**Till I come**, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."

Does this mean that they should abandon reading and doctrine after he comes? Obviously it does not.

Acts 23:1 "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, **I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.**"

Does this mean that Paul necessarily ceased to have a good conscience after that day? Obviously it does not.

The preposition "before" can be used the same way.

John 4:49 "Come down before my child dies."

Here we see that the word “before” can be used in a similar manner to the word “until.” This child did not die; Jesus healed him (John 4:50). Thus, the statement in Matthew 1:18, which is quoted below, that Mary was with child “before” she and Joseph came together, doesn’t mean that they came together after she was with child. It simply means that she was pregnant without any sexual contact.

Matthew 1:18 “Now the generation of Christ was in this wise. When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost.”

It’s quite certain, therefore, that Matthew 1:25 and Matthew 1:18 do not contradict Mary’s perpetual virginity in any way. Protestants cannot legitimately claim that these passages constitute proof that Mary ceased to be a virgin. These passages do not prove her perpetual virginity, either. Her perpetual virginity is proven by other things in the Bible.

WHAT ABOUT THE “FIRSTBORN” SON – DOESN’T THAT IMPLY OTHER CHILDREN?

Luke 2:7 “And she brought forth her **firstborn** son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Matthew 1:25 “And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.”

“Firstborn son” is a legal title given to a first-born male child in a Jewish family: in other words, it is given to a male child who is also the first child.

God specifically commanded the Israelites to sanctify (i.e., set apart) their first-born sons for a special consecration and service to God. The title “first-born son” held additional importance because it entitled that child to a double portion of the inheritance (Deut. 21:17). **This title of “first-born son” was given to the child regardless of whether the woman had any other children after him.** As an example: “we can see this from a Greek tomb inscription at Tel el Yaoudieh (cf. “Biblica” 11, 1930 369-90) for a mother who died in childbirth: ‘In the pain of delivering my firstborn child, destiny brought me to the end of life.’” (Quoted in “Brothers and Sisters of Jesus,” by William Most)

In Exodus 13 and 34, we read about God’s prescription that the first-born be consecrated to Him. There was a ceremony for the “sanctification of the firstborn” (Exodus 13 and 34:20). It’s not as if they postponed the ceremony for the “first-born son” until after the

woman had a second child.

Exodus 13:2,12 “Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine... Thou shalt set apart all that openeth the womb for the Lord, and all that is first brought forth of thy cattle: whatsoever thou shalt have of the male sex, thou shalt consecrate to the Lord.”

Thus, the statement that Jesus was the “first-born son” of Mary (Luke 2:7) does not in any way contradict Mary’s perpetual virginity. It simply means that He was her first and male child. It says nothing about whether any came later.

WHAT ABOUT THE “BROTHERS” OF JESUS?

Non-Catholics often bring up the passages which mention the “brothers and sisters” of Jesus. First of all, it must be mentioned that never once are these “brothers” described as the children of Mary, Jesus’ mother.

Mark 6:3 “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.”

Matthew 13:55 “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?”

In the original Greek the words used are *adelphoi* (“brethren”) and *adelphe* (“sisters”). The words *adelphoi* and *adelphe* can refer to actual siblings. However, **the Bible also uses these words to describe people who are not brothers, but cousins or relatives or step brothers or close neighbors.**

THE BIBLE SAYS THAT ABRAHAM WAS LOT’S BROTHER, BUT HE WASN’T LITERALLY

Lot was Abraham’s nephew. Abraham was his uncle (see Genesis 11:31; 14:12). Yet, the Bible twice describes Lot as Abraham’s “brother.” That’s because the word “brother” doesn’t necessarily mean a sibling. As stated above, it can mean a cousin or a relative or a step-brother or a close family friend.

Genesis 14:14 “Which when Abram had heard, to wit, **that his brother Lot** was

taken...”

Lot was Abraham’s nephew	The Bible also calls him his “brother”
<p>Gen. 11:27 “Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.”</p> <p>Gen. 12:5 “And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son...”</p> <p>Gen. 14:12 “And they took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.”</p>	<p>Gen. 14:14 “And when Abram heard that his brother [Lot] was taken captive...”</p> <p>Gen. 14:16 “And also brought again his brother Lot...”</p>

Some Protestants attempt to respond to this by arguing that the Old Testament was not written in Greek, but Hebrew. Therefore, they say, the case of Lot doesn’t prove that *adelphos* can refer to a person who is not literally a brother. This is refuted by pointing out that while the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, it was famously translated into Greek by seventy scholars a few centuries before the coming of Christ. This famous translation is called the Septuagint.

This Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, is quoted about 300 times by the inspired writers of the New Testament. That means that the New Testament writers accepted the Septuagint. **In the Septuagint, the same Greek word *adelphos* is used to describe Lot as Abraham’s brother.** *Adelphos* is the singular form of *adelphoi*, the word used in the New Testament for the “brothers” of Jesus. Therefore, the Old Testament does use *adelphos* to describe someone who is not literally a brother.

But the point can also be proven from the New Testament. **In Acts 3:17 and Romans 9:3, we see that *adelphoi* (brothers) is used to describe people of the same nationality who are not siblings.** Consider these verses to be the death-blow to the Protestant argument in this regard.

Moreover, in Luke 10:29, Matthew 5:22 and Matthew 7:3, we see that *adelphos* (“brother”) is used for neighbor, not necessarily sibling.

BUT THERE IS A GREEK WORD FOR COUSIN, *ANEPSIOS*; IF THE BRETHERN OF JESUS WERE COUSINS, RATHER THAN BROTHERS, WHY WASN’T *ANEPSIOS* USED?

The Catholic Church teaches that Mary is ever-virgin and had no other children. The Catholic Church does not teach that all the “brethren” of Jesus were necessarily His cousins. They may have been extended relatives or close friends or people considered part of the family by marriage or law or homeland. For instance, in 2 Samuel 1:26, King David calls Jonathan his “brother.” Jonathan and David were not brothers or cousins. David had married Jonathan’s sister, Michal, the daughter of King Saul. So David married into the family.

The number of Jesus’ “brothers” (*adelphoi*) mentioned in the Bible seems to suggest that some of them were not even extended relatives, but considered part of the family in other ways. If even one or a few of them were not cousins, but more extended relatives or neighbors or close family friends, then the word *adelphoi* would have been used.

Therefore, the fact that the word for cousin was not used does not in any way prove that Mary had other children.

EVIDENCE FROM MATTHEW 27:56 SHOWS THAT THE “BROTHERS” OF JESUS WERE NOT HIS SIBLINGS

Matthew 13:55 “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? **And his brethren, James, and Joses,** and Simon, and Judas?”

James and Joses are two of the names given as “brothers” of Jesus. It can be shown, by the following points, that these were children of another woman and not siblings of Jesus. Please follow this carefully.

There were three women at the foot of the Cross: 1) the Blessed Virgin Mary (the mother of Jesus); 2) Mary the wife of Cleophas (who is said to be the Blessed Virgin Mary’s sister); and 3) Mary Magdalene.

John 19:25 “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus [1] his mother, and [2] his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and [3] Mary Magdalene.”

Mary, the wife of Cleophas, is also described as “the other Mary” in Matthew 28:1. The Bible tells us that James and Joses are the children of this Mary:

Matthew 27:56 “Among which was Mary Magdalene, **and Mary the mother of James and Joses,** and the mother of Zebedees children.”

Thus, James and Joses (who are called the “brothers” of Jesus) are not His siblings, but at least His cousins. However, they are probably not even first cousins. This is because Mary of Cleophas (the mother of James and Joses), who is said to be the “sister” of Jesus’ mother (John 19:25), is also named Mary. It’s extremely unlikely that two siblings in a Hebrew family would be given the same name. Most likely they were not sisters, but members of the same clan who were called “sisters” in the same way that James, Joses, Simon and Judas were called “brothers” of Jesus.

When the Holy Bible refers to James as the Lord’s brother, we also have direct evidence that James was many years older than Jesus as well as even older than Mary, which would prove that it is impossible that the Blessed Virgin Mary is James’ biological Mother, since he was even older than her, and this in turn would prove that the word for “brother” in the Bible referred to a family member or relative rather than a blood brother.

Here is what Josephus says in *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20:9:1:

“And now Caesar [Nero], upon hearing of the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea as procurator; but the king [Agrippa II] deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus... this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who were very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority.] Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned; but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens... they also sent to the king, desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified: nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus... whereupon Albinus complied with what they had said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done.”

Please note that although Josephus doesn’t give the numerical date of 62 AD for the death of James the Lord’s brother, he gives us the historical markers that allow us to know precisely what years to which he is referring. He tells us that Festus had just died, and we know he reigned from 59-62 AD. He tells us that the priest who was deprived of his office

was Joseph Kabi, and we know he was high priest from between 61-62 AD.

Now to Epiphanius. He writes in *Panarion*, 78:14:5-6: "But James brother of the Lord and son of Joseph, died in Jerusalem, having lived twenty-four years, more or less, after the Savior's Ascension. He was ninety-six years old when he was struck on the head by a fuller with his club, flung from the pinnacle of the temple and cast down, he who had done no wrong knelt and prayed for those who had thrown him down, saying: Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. Thus even Simeon, his cousin, the son Clopas, who was standing at a distance, said, "Stop, why are you stoning the just one? Behold, he is uttering the most wonderful prayers for you." And thus he was martyred."

Epiphanius says James (the Lord's brother) died "twenty-four years, more or less, after the Savior's Ascension," which, if Jesus ascended in 33 AD, this is "more or less" 24 years prior to 62 AD. (It is actually 29 years to 62 AD). He also says James was 96 when he died. If he was 96 when he died in 62 AD, then that means he was born about 33 BC (subtracting one year for no year "0"). If he was born in 33 BC, then obviously he couldn't be the son of Joseph and Mary, since they didn't even meet each other until about 30 years later. If anything, James (the "Lord's brother") would be a son of Joseph from a previous marriage, or adopted by Joseph. Joseph, as tradition holds, was much older than Mary, and thus he could easily have been married previously, and, after his wife died, he found Mary.

In fact, the stepchildren hypothesis was introduced by the apocryphal gospel of James, otherwise known as the Protoevangelium Jacobi, which says it is written by "James the brother of the Lord" (cf., Galatians 1:19), and is extant in ancient Greek and Syriac recensions. Origen refers to it as The Book of James, and it is also cited by Justin Martyr. The author claims that when Joseph was forty years of age, he married a woman named Melcha (some render it Escha or Salome). They lived together for forty-nine years and had six children, four sons and two daughters. The youngest son was James (i.e., "the Lord's brother"). At ninety-nine years of age, a year after his wife's death, Joseph received word that the priests were looking for a man of Judah to espouse Mary. Mary was only twelve to fourteen years old at the time. Joseph is said to be chosen by a high priest as her spouse in obedience to a miraculous sign (i.e., a dove coming out of his rod and resting on his head). This account was popular among many Christians in the second and third century. Its depiction survives in Raphael's (d. 1520) painting *Espousals of the Virgin*. Other apocryphal works that contain purported details of Joseph's life are Pseudo-Matthew, The Gospel of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, The Story of Joseph the Carpenter, and The Life of the Virgin and Death of Joseph.

The question on why James is called the brother (Greek: adelphos) of the Lord, while

Simeon son of Clopas is called the anepsios (cousin) can be simply answered by assuming that Simeon was the actual cousin of Jesus, while James was merely a member of Jesus' clan (that is, connected with James per Joseph).

All of this shows that none of the statements in the Bible about the brothers and sisters of Jesus disproves, in any way, the perpetual virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Now we must look at the proof that Mary had no other children and that she was perpetually a virgin.

JOHN 19:26 PROVES THAT MARY HAD NO CHILDREN BESIDES JESUS

While dying on the Cross, Jesus entrusts His mother to the care of St. John the Apostle.

John 19:26-27 “When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother: **Woman, behold thy son.** After that, **he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple [John] took her to his own.**”

Scholars point out that this was a formal act of entrustment. Jesus entrusted His mother to St. John so that he would take care of her. If Mary had other children, as Protestants contend, Jesus would not have told St. John to take Mary for his mother. She would have been put into the care of one of his many “brothers.” The fact that Jesus entrusted Mary to St. John proves that she had no other children.

Protestants try to respond to this by arguing that Jesus’ “brothers” were not believers and that’s why Jesus entrusted her to St. John. However, that’s refuted by Acts 1:14. It indicates that Jesus’ “brothers” were believers. Jesus certainly knew that they were or would become believers and hence He would not have entrusted her to St. John if they were His siblings.

It’s also quite significant that when Jesus was found in the temple at 12 years old, there is no indication whatsoever that Mary and Joseph had other children (Luke 2:41-51). The indication is that He is an only child. He is also referred to as “the son of Mary” (Mark 6:3), not as a son of Mary. Never once is Mary said to have had other children.

MARY’S RESPONSE TO THE ANGEL IN LUKE 1 INDICATES THAT SHE HAD TAKEN A VOW OF PERPETUAL VIRGINITY

Luke 1:30-34 “And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found

favor with God. And, **behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son**, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. **Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not man?**”

The angel appears to Mary and tells her that she will conceive and bring forth a son. Mary responds by saying: “How shall this be, seeing I know not man?”

The actual meaning is: *how shall this be since I am a virgin*. How shall this be? Mary understood how children were conceived. Her response only makes sense if she had taken a lifelong vow of virginity. She was asking how she could conceive while a virgin.

It should also be pointed out that Mary’s engagement to Joseph doesn’t contradict the notion that she had taken such a vow. Moral behavior at the time dictated that women committed to virginity have a male protector who would guard and respect the vow. That was Joseph’s role.

IT’S UNIMAGINABLE THAT THE ARK OF THE NEW COVENANT WOULD HAVE SEXUAL CONTACT

We’ve already seen that the Bible clearly teaches that Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant. As the holiest creature on Earth and the vessel of the Most High, it’s totally incongruous – completely out of keeping with the Ark’s dignity and role – to think that she would have any sexual contact. To prepare the people for God’s coming on Mt. Sinai, Moses said:

Exodus 19:14-15 “And Moses came down from the mount to the people, and sanctified them. And when they had washed their garments, he said to them: **be ready against the third day, and come not near your wives.**”

When David was on the run and needed bread from the priest, we read:

1 Samuel 21:4 “And the priest answered David, saying: I have no common bread at hand, but only holy bread, **if the young men be clean, especially from women.**”

The Ark was created for a more sublime and sacred reason, and never would have sexual contact. Oza was struck dead for merely touching the Ark when he shouldn’t have done so (2 Samuel 6:6-8).

EZECHIEL 44 AND THE PROPHECY ABOUT THE CLOSED GATE IS A PROPHECY OF MARY'S PERPETUAL VIRGINITY

Ezechiel 44:2 “And the Lord said to me: **This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it: because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it**, and it shall be shut.”

Here we see that the Lord shall pass through this gate, and no other man shall pass through it. This is a prophecy about the perpetual virginity of Mary. She is the closed gate, through whom the Lord comes. That's one reason why Mary has been called “the Gate of Heaven” in traditional Catholic writings.

THE PERPETUAL VIRGINITY OF MARY WAS FIRMLY BELIEVED IN THE ANCIENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Second Council of Constantinople, 553 A.D., Can. 6 “If anyone says that the holy, glorious, **and ever-virgin** is called God-bearer by misuse of language and not truly... let him be anathema.”

Some Protestants and most members of the “Orthodox” Church claim to honor the Second Council of Constantinople. It was the fifth ecumenical council. As we see here, it clearly taught Mary's perpetual virginity.

Pope St. Martin I, *Lateran Council, 649 A.D., Can. 3* “If anyone does not properly and truly confess in accord with the holy Fathers, that the holy Mother of God **and ever Virgin** and immaculate Mary in the earliest of the ages conceived of the Holy Spirit without seed, namely, God the Word Himself specifically and truly, who was born of God the Father before all ages, and that she incorruptibly bore [Him], **her virginity remaining indestructible even after His birth**, let him be condemned.” (Denzinger 256)

The ancient Christian Church believed that Mary was perpetually a virgin. In the fourth century, St. Jerome, the father of biblical scholarship and the one who translated the Bible into Latin, defended this truth against Helveticus, a heretic who denied it. As mentioned already, even the first Protestants, including Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, accepted the perpetual virginity of Mary.

The perpetual virginity of Mary can be proven from the Bible. From the earliest biblical

days adultery carried with it a sense of defilement, so that a woman who had performed the sexual act with another man, even if by force, was considered no longer fit to be visited by her husband (Genesis 49:4; 2 Samuel 20:3, re *ibid.* 16:21-22; Book of Jubilees 33:6-9; Epstein, *Marriage Laws in the Biblical Talmud*, p.51).

The deuteronomic code teaches that a woman who is divorced by her husband and thereafter marries another man likewise cannot return to her former husband (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). As the Lord said through the prophet Jeremiah: "If a man put away his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's wife, shall he return to her again, shall not the land (his wife's body) be greatly polluted?" (Jr 3:1; see Targum to Dt 24:1-4).

In rabbinic law a woman who has committed adultery is "defiled" and cannot remain the wife of her husband, but must be divorced (Sifre on Dt, edit. M. Friedman (1864) 270 p. 122b; Sifre on Numbers, edit. M. Friedman (1915) 7 p. 4a and 19 p. 66). Furthermore any intimate male contact by the wife with Jew or gentile, potent or impotent, natural or unnatural makes divorce compulsory (Sotha 26b; Yebamoth 55a, b, 87b; Kethuboth 9a, Babylonian Talmud; Kethuboth 25a; Sotah 27a, Yad, Sotah 2,2, Jerusalem Talmud).

Betrothed

In Jewish Law a man betrothed to a woman was considered legally married to her. The word for betrothed in Hebrew is Kiddush, a word that is derived from the Hebrew word Kadash which means "holy" "consecrated," "set apart." Because by betrothal (as in Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:27), or marriage, a woman became the peculiar property of her husband, forbidden to others.

The Oral Law of Kiddushin (Marriages and Engagements) states; "The husband prohibits his wife to the whole world like an object which is dedicated to the Sanctuary" (Kiddushin 2b, Babylonian Talmud).

We know from the Gospel of Matthew 1:14 that Joseph the husband of Mary was a righteous man, a devout law-abiding Jew. Having noticed that Mary was pregnant and that he, her betrothed, had nothing to do with the pregnancy, Joseph had considered putting her away privately since he thought that he was not worthy enough to live with the Mother of God.

His decision to stay with her was made when an angel appeared to him in a dream, saying: "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife; for that which is conceived in

her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:20-21). The angel does not use the phrase for marital union: "go in unto" (as in Genesis 30:3, 4, 16) or "come together" (Matthew 1:18) but merely a word meaning leading her into the house as a wife (paralambano gunaika) but not cohabiting with her.

For when the angel revealed to him that Mary was truly the spouse of the Holy Spirit, Joseph could take Mary, his betrothed, into his house as a wife, but he could never have intercourse with her because according to the Law she was forbidden to him for all time.

Marriage to the Holy Spirit

We also have to take into consideration that when Mary was told by the archangel Gabriel "Behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus" (Luke 1:31), he also added that this was to come about because "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Holy one to be born shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

By stating it in those terms the archangel declared to Mary that God would enter into a marital relationship with her, causing her to conceive His Son in her womb, For "to lay one's power (reshuth) over a woman" (Targum to Dt 21:4) was a euphemism for "to have a marital relationship with her."

Likewise "to overshadow" (Luke 1:35) by spreading the "wing" or "cloak" over a woman was another euphemism for marital relations. Thus, the rabbis commented (Midrash Genesis Rabbah 39.7; Midrash Ruth Rabbah 3.9) that Ruth was chaste in her wording when she asked Boaz to have marital relations with her by saying to him "I am Ruth your handmaid, spread therefore your cloak (literally, "wing": kanaph) over your handmaid for you are my next-of-kin" (Ruth 3:9).

Tallith, another Aramaic-Hebrew word for cloak, is derived from tellal = shadow. Thus, "to spread one's cloak (tallith) over a woman" means to cohabit with her (Kiddushin 18b, see also Mekhilta on Exodus 21:8). Did not the Lord say to His bride Israel: "I am married to you" (Jr 3:14) and "your Maker is your husband"? (Is 54-5:5; Jr 31:32)? And what is more intimate than what the Lord said to His bride: "You developed, you grew, you came to full womanhood; your breasts became firm and your hair grew... you were naked... and I saw that you were now old enough for love so I spread my cloak over you... I gave you My oath, I entered into a covenant with you and you became Mine, says the Lord God." (Ezekiel 16:7, 8)

Mary prohibited to Joseph

Having been enlightened by an angel in a dream regarding her pregnancy, and perhaps further by Mary concerning the words of the archangel Gabriel to her at the Annunciation, Joseph knew that God had conducted himself as a husband in regard to Mary. She was now prohibited to him for all time, and for the sake of the Child and Mary he could only live with her in an absolutely chaste relationship.

Joseph as celibate caretaker

As the recipient of the great revelation that what was conceived in the womb of Mary, his betrothed, was of the Holy Spirit and that the Child to be born was destined to save His people from their sins, surely Joseph knew that he was called to take care of Mary and her Child, the Messiah, for the rest of his life, which is why the angel told him to take Mary as his wife.

We may reasonably assume that Mary herself now shared with him all that the archangel Gabriel said to her. No less a Person than "the Son of God" (Luke 1:35) was to be entrusted to his care under the shelter of his humble home, now become the Holy of Holies.

Jewish tradition mentions that, although the people had to abstain from sexual relations with their wives for only three days prior to the revelation at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:15), Moses chose to remain continent the rest of his life with the full approval of God. The rabbis explained that this was so because Moses knew that he was appointed to personally commune with God, not only at Mount Sinai but in general throughout the forty years of sojourning in the wilderness. For this reason Moses kept himself "apart from woman," remaining in the sanctity of separation to be at the beck and call of God at all times; they cited God's command to Moses in Deuteronomy 5:28 (Midrash Exodus Rabbah 19:3 and 46.3).

Again, we may be sure that Saint Joseph remained celibate all his life because throughout his married years he was in daily attendance and communication with Jesus, the incarnate Word of God.

Objection: You are not right in teaching that specific acts of virtue increases our own or other people's chances of reaching heaven. There's nothing in the Bible that teaches this. My Bible does not even have the verse that teaches this: "*But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting.*" (Matthew 17:21)

Answer: Not surprisingly, the word “fasting”, or worse, **the whole verse itself!** has been completely removed from many modern protestant translations. For instance, the following whole verse have been completely removed in the New International Version: *“But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting.”* (Matthew 17:21) **You will not find it at all in their translation. All in all, over 40 complete deletions of whole sentences is found in the New International Version (NIV)**, in addition to over 64,000 deletions of words such as: Godhead, regeneration, Calvary, remission, immutable, omnipotent, Comforter, Holy Ghost, Messiah, quickened, infallible, etc. It’s interesting to note that the same verse of Matthew 17:21 is also deleted from the Jehovah’s Witness “Bible”. In fact, many of the things missing in the Jehovah’s Witness “Bible”, such as references to the Godhead and The Trinity, have been completely omitted in the New International Version as well, such as 1 John 5:7, which reads: *“And there are three who give testimony in heaven, **the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one.**”* The bolded vitally important phrase is completely removed from both the New International Version and the Jehovah’s Witness “Bible”. This is one of the greatest verses testifying of the Godhead or Trinity. That is why the Jehovah’s Witnesses leave it out. They do not believe in the Godhead and they do not believe that Jesus is God. Why does the NIV leave it out...? It’s because the translation is satanically inspired by the same Antichrist spirit behind the Jehovah’s Witness cult. Reader, do you believe in the Godhead? Do you read the NIV translation? (or other protestant translations)? If so, then this deletion should offend you. That is why one must read the [Catholic bible](#). For in addition to all of the above, all protestant versions are corrupted and mistranslated on many important passages, in addition to **missing seven entire books (the deuterocanonical books) from the biblical canon**. Even the King James version is not to be compared with the Douay-Rheims Catholic bible and are many times excluding the deuterocanonical books. **So if you are reading a protestant bible and love the bible you are missing seven entire books of the bible.**

DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE DISPROVING THE PROTESTANT BIBLE!

When we consider the fact that the early Christian Church unanimously accepted the Catholic canon of Holy Scripture up to the time of the Protestant revolt, only a heretic, fool or liar would ever dare to claim that the Christian Church accepted false biblical books for over 1500 years and that the Christian Church erred for 1500 years in this regard, or that God would allow non-Canonical books to be considered as canonical for over 1500 years throughout the universal Christian Church. Here is some irrefutable evidence that the Catholic canon is the only true canon of scripture:

Matt. 2:16 – Herod’s decree of slaying innocent children was prophesied in Wis. 11:7 – slaying the holy innocents.

Matt. 6:19-20 – Jesus’ statement about laying up for yourselves treasure in heaven follows Sirach 29:11 – lay up your treasure.

Matt. 7:12 – Jesus’ golden rule “do unto others” is the converse of Tobit 4:15 – what you hate, do not do to others.

Matt. 7:16,20 – Jesus’ statement “you will know them by their fruits” follows Sirach 27:6 – the fruit discloses the cultivation.

Matt. 9:36 – the people were “like sheep without a shepherd” is same as Judith 11:19 – sheep without a shepherd.

Matt. 11:25 – Jesus’ description “Lord of heaven and earth” is the same as Tobit 7:18 – Lord of heaven and earth.

Matt. 12:42 – Jesus refers to the wisdom of Solomon which was recorded and made part of the deuterocanonical books.

Matt. 16:18 – Jesus’ reference to the “power of death” and “gates of Hades” references Wisdom 16:13.

Matt. 22:25; Mark 12:20; Luke 20:29 – Gospel writers refer to the canonicity of Tobit 3:8 and 7:11 regarding the seven brothers.

Matt. 24:15 – the “desolating sacrilege” Jesus refers to is also taken from 1 Macc. 1:54 and 2 Macc. 8:17.

Matt. 24:16 – let those “flee to the mountains” is taken from 1 Macc. 2:28.

Matt. 27:43 – if He is God’s Son, let God deliver him from His adversaries follows Wisdom 2:18.

Mark 4:5,16-17 – Jesus’ description of seeds falling on rocky ground and having no root follows Sirach 40:15.

Mark 9:48 – description of hell where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched references Judith 16:17.

Luke 1:42 – Elizabeth’s declaration of Mary’s blessedness above all women follows Uzziah’s declaration in Judith 13:18.

Luke 1:52 – Mary’s magnificat addressing the mighty falling from their thrones and replaced by lowly follows Sirach 10:14.

Luke 2:29 – Simeon’s declaration that he is ready to die after seeing the Child Jesus follows Tobit 11:9.

Luke 13:29 – the Lord’s description of men coming from east and west to rejoice in God follows Baruch 4:37.

Luke 21:24 – Jesus’ usage of “fall by the edge of the sword” follows Sirach 28:18.

Luke 24:4 and Acts 1:10 – Luke’s description of the two men in dazzling apparel reminds us of 2 Macc. 3:26.

John 1:3 – all things were made through Him, the Word, follows Wisdom 9:1.

John 3:13 – who has ascended into heaven but He who descended from heaven references Baruch 3:29.

John 4:48; Acts 5:12; 15:12; 2 Cor. 12:12 – Jesus’, Luke’s and Paul’s usage of “signs and wonders” follows Wisdom 8:8.

John 5:18 – Jesus claiming that God is His Father follows Wisdom 2:16.

John 6:35-59 – Jesus’ Eucharistic discourse is foreshadowed in Sirach 24:21.

John 10:22 – the identification of the feast of the dedication is taken from 1 Macc. 4:59.

John 10:36 – Jesus accepts the inspiration of Maccabees as He analogizes the Hanukkah consecration to His own consecration to the Father in 1 Macc. 4:36.

John 15:6 – branches that don’t bear fruit and are cut down follows Wis. 4:5 where branches are broken off.

And many more!

2 Tim. 3:16 – the inspired Scripture that Paul was referring to included the deuterocanonical texts that the Protestants removed. The books Baruch, Tobit, Maccabees, Judith, Sirach, Wisdom and parts of Daniel and Esther were all included in the Septuagint that Jesus and the apostles used.

Sirach and 2 Maccabees – some Protestants argue these books are not inspired because the writers express uncertainty about their abilities. But sacred writers are often humble about their divinely inspired writings. See, for example, 1 Cor. 7:40 – Paul says he “thinks” that he has the Spirit of God.

The Protestants attempt to defend their rejection of the deuterocanonicals on the ground that the early Jews rejected them. However, the Jewish councils that rejected them (e.g., School of Javneh (also called “Jamnia” in 90 – 100 A.D.) were the same councils that rejected the entire New Testament canon. Thus, Protestants who reject the Catholic Bible are following a Jewish council that rejected Christ and the Revelation of the New Testament.

We will now consider what the Bible teaches about how holy men intercede with God.

THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT MEN INTERCEDE WITH GOD –
MOSES HAD AN EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF INTERCESSION WITH GOD

Exodus 32:9-14 “**And the Lord said unto Moses**, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: **Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.** And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power... Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants... **And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.”**

Moses’ intercession with God was so great that God even asked Moses to allow Him to destroy the Israelites. This must not be understood in the sense that the Almighty God can be or was constrained by any man, but rather that He was powerfully swayed and influenced by this man’s close relationship with Him. Moses pleaded with Him not to

destroy them, and God relented because of Moses. As we can see, not all men are equal before God. Not all men have the same intercessory power with Him. The intercession of extraordinary and saintly men is powerful and effective.

ABRAHAM HAD AN EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF INTERCESSION WITH GOD

We see another example of this in the case of Abraham:

Genesis 18:26-33 “**And the Lord said to him: If I find in Sodom fifty just within the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake.** And Abraham answered, and said: Seeing I have once begun, I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes. What if there be five less than fifty just persons? wilt thou for five and forty destroy the whole city? And he said: I will not destroy it, if I find five and forty. And again he said to him: But if forty be found there, what wilt thou do? He said: I will not destroy it for the sake of forty. [**And Abraham, because he had powerful intercession with God, bargained Him all the way to ten**] **What if ten should be found there? And he said: I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.** And the Lord departed, after he had left speaking to Abraham: and Abraham returned to his place.”

THE BIBLE SAYS THAT THE PRAYERS OF A MAN WOULD CAUSE GOD TO ACCEPT PEOPLE HE OTHERWISE WOULD NOT

The next example we will consider is one where the Bible says that the prayers of a man would cause God to accept people He otherwise wouldn't.

Job 42:7-10 “... the Lord said to Eliphaz... My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering: **and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly**... So [they] went, and did according as the Lord commanded them... **And the Lord also was turned at the penance of Job, when he prayed for his friends...**”

The Lord was turned at the prayers and penance of Job. The intercession and prayers of saintly men obtain graces and favors that the Lord will not always otherwise give. God said that He would only give this grace to Eliphaz if Job would pray for him.

GOD WOULD ONLY GIVE ISRAEL THE VICTORY IF MOSES (A MAN) HELD UP HIS HANDS

Another example of the intercession of holy men is found in Exodus 17. We read that Israel went out to fight against Amalec. God enabled Israel to have the victory as long as Moses held up his hands. However, if Moses let his hands down, Amalec would overcome the Israelites.

Exodus 17:11-13 **“And when Moses lifted up his hands, Israel overcame: but if he let them down a little, Amalec overcame.** And Moses’ hands were heavy: so they took a stone, and put under him, and he sat on it: and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands on both sides. And it came to pass that his hands were not weary until sunset. And Josue put Amalec and his people to flight, by the edge of the sword.”

This is another prime example of how sometimes God only grants certain things through the intercession of holy men.

THE LORD’S STATEMENT ABOUT THE INTERCESSION OF MOSES AND SAMUEL

Jeremias 15:1 “And the Lord said to me: If Moses and Samuel shall stand before me, my soul is not towards this people: cast them out from my sight...”

God says that even if Moses and Samuel stood before Him, He would still reject this people. This is quite revealing. The people described in this passage were so bad that not even the powerful intercession of the great servants of God, Moses and Samuel, could relax God’s anger against them. However, these words show us that the intercession of extraordinary servants of God, such as Moses and Samuel – who have built up a special credit or influence with Him – impacts how God deals with and looks at people, even if it didn’t make the difference in this particular case because of how bad the people were. The intercession of saintly men helps determine what God does for people and what He does to them, as we saw with the examples above.

WHAT ABOUT 1 TIMOTHY 2:5 JESUS IS THE ONLY MEDIATOR?

Before we cover more biblical evidence for the veneration and intercession of saints, we must consider an objection. One of the main objections that non-Catholics raise against praying to saints comes from 1 Timothy 2:5.

1 Timothy 2:5 “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Jesus is the only mediator between God and men, they say, so you can't include saints or prayers to them. This objection is false for many reasons. Just because Jesus is the only mediator does not mean that others do not mediate as part of the one mediation of Christ. For example, in John 10:16 Jesus says that He is the one and only shepherd; but He appoints Peter to shepherd His sheep in John 21:15-17. Ephesians 4:11 also teaches that there are many pastors or shepherds. The point is that these other sub-shepherds all work under and by the institution of the one shepherd, Jesus.

Another example is that Jesus says He is the supreme judge. We read this in John 9:39 and in many other passages. Certain men of God, however, will also act on His behalf as judges in Heaven, even of angels. We read this in 1 Corinthians 6:2, Matthew 19:28, and elsewhere. Yes, Jesus is the unique mediator, because the mediator is the one who unites man to God. Jesus alone did this by His passion and death. We read this in 2 Corinthians 5:18. But that does not mean that within the one mediation of Christ there are not others who participate in His mediation. In fact, the Bible clearly teaches it.

IF YOU CANNOT PRAY TO SAINTS, THEN YOU CANNOT ASK OTHERS TO PRAY FOR YOU – PERIOD

If Jesus' unique mediation excluded prayers to saints, then it would also exclude asking a fellow man to pray for you. There is no way around the logic of this argument. **For when you ask a fellow man to pray for you, instead of going to Jesus directly, you are asking another person to act as a mediator with Jesus for you. That's what Catholics do when they pray to saints.** Therefore, if prayers to saints are excluded by the unique mediation of Jesus, then asking others for prayers is definitely excluded as well.

Not only do most Protestants accept the concept of asking others to pray for them – thus contradicting their rejection of prayers to saints – but, in the New Testament, St. Paul himself repeatedly asks others for prayers.

Romans 15:30 “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye **strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.**”

Paul also tells others that he is praying for them.

Colossians 1:3 "... praying always for you..."

Paul even says that the prayers of others bestow gifts upon him.

2 Corinthians 1:11 "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf."

THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT PAUL'S SUFFERING INTERCEDES TO WIN GRACES FOR PEOPLE

The Bible also says this about Paul's suffering:

Colossians 1:24 "[I] now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the church."

This verse might be a shock to some non-Catholics who are not familiar with it. Paul says that he fills up, for the Church, those things that are wanting or lacking in the sufferings of Christ. Now Christ's suffering was perfect and of infinite value; so what does this mean? What St. Paul means is that many sufferings are still wanting and needed for the members of the Church to work out their salvation, which was all made possible by Christ's sacrifice.

He is teaching that his sacrifices and his sufferings, in addition to his prayers, can intercede with God so that God gives others graces to convert or to remain faithful. Those people must still cooperate with the graces, but the efforts, prayers and sacrifices of members of the Church can help grant them. All of this confirms Catholic teaching on the communion of saints, and it refutes the Protestant misunderstanding of 1 Timothy 2:5.

THIS TRUTH IS ROOTED IN THE UNITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, WHICH EXISTS AFTER DEATH

The fact that men can go to other men for prayers, and that the saints in Heaven can answer prayers and intercede, is rooted in the biblical teaching on the unity of the Body of Christ. There is a union among the members of the Church of Jesus. This union does not cease when true members die.

St. Paul says in Romans 8:38 and following that neither death nor life separates one from the love of Christ. Nor does it separate the true faithful who abide together in the Body of

Christ, whether on Earth or in Heaven.

1 Cor. 12:12,21 "... all the members of that one body, being many, are one body... And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."

THE BIBLE SAYS THAT THE PRAYER OF A JUST MAN AVAILS MUCH

While the true members of the Church can assist each other by prayers, the prayers and intercession of saintly men is particularly powerful. That's exactly what we saw in the cases of Moses and Abraham. That's why we read:

James 5:16 "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**"

This is why prayers to saints – which have the purpose of calling for them to pray to God on our behalf – are so effective.

THE BIBLE ALSO TEACHES THAT DECEASED SAINTLY MEN INTERCEDE

In Matthew 17, we see that Jesus, when He was transfigured before three of His apostles, appeared with Moses and Elias.

Matthew 17:2-3 "And [He] was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun... And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him."

This shows us that saints, even after death, are interested in Earthly affairs and are ready to intercede for us. For the spirits of the just men made perfect, as Hebrews 12 calls the saints, are among the cloud of witnesses with the angels in Heaven who help us.

Hebrews 1:14 "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Psalms 91:11 "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

AFTER DEATH, THE PROPHET SAMUEL APPEARED TO KING SAUL

In 1 Samuel 28 (1 Kings 28 in the Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible), we see a clear example of a dead saint appearing to a man. This was the prophet Samuel, who had been dead for some time. He appeared to King Saul, and rebuked him for his disobedience to God.

1 Samuel 28:12-20 “And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice... And Samuel said to Saul... Because thou obeyed not the voice of the Lord, nor executed his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day... Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel.”

Remember, Samuel had been dead for some time.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION (OR APOCALYPSE) SHOWS US HOW THE PRAYERS OF SAINTS INTERCEDE IN HEAVEN BEFORE THE ALTAR OF GOD

The Book of Revelation or the Apocalypse also gives us a glimpse of how the saints and their prayers intercede for men.

Revelation 8:3-4 “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, **that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints** upon the golden altar which was before the throne. **And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints,** ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.”

We see another example in Revelation chapter 5.

Revelation 5:8 “... elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, **and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints.**”

PART 4. THE BIBLICAL AND APOSTOLIC FOUNDATION FOR PRIESTLY CHASTITY

The Holy Bible and the Popes, Fathers and Saints of the Catholic Church unanimously teach that all Bishops, Priests and Deacons of the Lord must be totally “chaste” and abstain from all sexual intercourse with their wives during all times

From the very beginning of the Christian Church, it was taught by the Bible and the Holy Apostles that all ministers of God had to remain in chastity even though they were married when they entered the clerical state. We see this both in the earliest Church councils, Apostolic Tradition as well as the teachings of the Popes, Saints and Fathers of the Church. It is also clear from the Bible that the Catholic teaching on priestly celibacy and that a minister of the Lord must live totally “**chaste**” (1 Tim 3:2) after becoming a minister and holy servant of Our Lord, is the only true teaching. This teaching, of course, refutes and destroys the protestant and eastern “orthodox” schismatic position on this matter.

Indeed, the fact that Holy Scripture teaches that all Bishops, Priests and Deacons are forbidden to get married again after their spouse have died, (1 Tim 3:12; Tit 1:5-6) shows us that Our Lord taught the Apostles that all priests must be completely chaste in order to become and work as a priest, for if this were not so, God would certainly have allowed a man who was a priest to marry a second time after his spouse died, but since we see that God directly forbids this, it is clear that God from the very beginning of the Church commanded all priests – married as well as unmarried – to live in perfect chastity, holiness and purity after their ordination. This is also exactly how the Apostles themselves lived according to the teachings, history and tradition of the Church. In truth, “*Let deacons be the husbands of **one wife**... ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee: If any be without crime, **the husband of one wife**...*” (1 Tim 3:12; Tit 1:5-6) Note, however, that the Church does not teach that only unmarried men can be accepted to the priesthood, but that both the married and unmarried are accepted as long as they vow to never have sex again. In the case of a married man, however, the man can only enter the priesthood if his wife agrees to it.

In the beginning, the Church allowed men to enter the priesthood who were already married since the very concept of chastity were practiced by so few at that time because the world had fallen into such a degraded state when Our Lord entered the world, but there was never any Church teaching that taught that it is allowed to perform the sexual act after one becomes a priest. In truth, we see that St. Peter himself declares in *The Gospel of Luke* that he and all the Apostles “have left all things [which includes marital life], and have

followed thee [Jesus],” and Jesus answering him: “*Amen, I say to you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, **or wife**, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, Who shall not receive much more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.*” (Luke 18:28-30) Mark 10:29 records the same incident, but while “wife” is mentioned among the things “left,” no “wife” is found among the things gained. Thus Our Lord Himself in the context of St. Peter’s confession that he and the other Apostles had left everything for His sake, showed them that “*all*” really meant that they “*left house, or parents, or brethren, **or wife**, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake*”. In truth, “*If any man come to me [Jesus], and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, **yea and his own life also**, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*” (Luke 14:26-27) And so, “*The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.*” (Mark 10:24-25)

Jesus was celibate, and the priest stands in his place (“in persona Christi” as we call it). The Twelve Apostles left their spouses, if they were married, as well as all their property and possessions (cf. Matthew 19:27; Mark 10:28 and especially Luke 18:28–30), with Christ’s explicit approval. The apostle Paul set a personal example in this matter when he exhorted all to “be as I am,” that is, celibate. Indeed, contrary to many of our times who imagine or claim that the Apostles were married, the only one of the Apostles that is recorded to have been married at one time in his life, according to Holy Scripture, is Saint Peter, since his mother in law is mentioned in the holy text, but even in his case, there is no evidence that he lived as a married man during his ministry.

The Book of Exodus also shows us that God directly commanded the priests of the Old Law (which was the prophetic sign of the priesthood of the New Law) to “sanctify” themselves when they served the Lord, which, as we have seen in *The Book of Exodus*, meant that they had to be chaste (Exodus 19:10-22). And so important is this matter of priestly chastity to God, that Our Lord directly threatens to strike priests who refuse to follow His commandment concerning this matter: “He [God] said unto him [Moses]: Go down, and charge the people: lest they should have a mind to pass the limits to see the Lord, and a very great multitude of them should perish. The priests also that come to the Lord, let them be sanctified, [that is, chaste] lest he strike them.” (Exodus 19:21-22)

The sacrificial aspect of the Eucharistic liturgy and the real presence of Our Lord’s Body is directly taught by Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Apostles as we can read in Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and this is also one of the main reasons why the Church was united against all those who dared to contradict God’s commandment for all clerics to

be chaste. In truth, the dignity of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord in the most Holy Eucharist demands that the priest is pure and chaste when he consecrates and partakes of the Sacrament. God also commanded the Jews in the Old Testament and the Old Law to perform a kind of rite similar to the Eucharistic liturgy in order for it to be a sign of the future Eucharist. For as we have already seen, all priests of the Old Law had to be totally chaste in order to be able to perform the rite of the Old Law and eat of the bread that signified the future Eucharist, *“If any one that is defiled shall eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which is offered to the Lord, he shall be cut off from his people.”* (Leviticus 7:20) The words “the flesh of the sacrifice” signifies Our Lord Jesus Christ’s Holy Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity that is offered up for our sins as a “peace offering” in the Eucharist in order to appease the just wrath of God. This very flesh is also offered up by the priests of the Church every time they perform the Eucharistic liturgy of the Church.

Since the Old Law teaches that both the priests as well as the laymen must be completely clean from all sexual activity for three days in order to be able to receive the prophetic sign of the Eucharist, it is obvious that it is also the Lord’s will for all to be completely chaste for a minimum of three days in the New Law (if not more by the grace of God) when they receive the real and actual Body of Our Lord. David said, “Now therefore if thou have any thing at hand, though it were but five loaves, give me, or whatsoever thou canst find. And the priest answered David, saying: I have no common bread at hand, but only holy bread, *if the young men be clean*, especially from women? And David answered the priest, and said to him: Truly, as to what concerneth women, we have refrained ourselves from yesterday and the day before, when we came out, and *the vessels* of the young men were *holy*. Now this way *is defiled*, but it shall also *be sanctified* this day in the vessels.” (1 Kings 21:3-5)

A key biblical passage that proves that all who have sex are defiled comes from the book of Leviticus: “And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: The man that hath an issue of seed, shall be unclean.... The man from whom the seed of copulation goeth out, shall wash all his body with water: and he shall be unclean until the evening. The garment or skin that he weareth, he shall wash with water, and it shall be unclean until the evening. The woman, with whom he copulateth, shall be washed with water, and shall be unclean until the evening.” (Verses 15:1-2,16-18). In truth, the Old Law does not only forbid the reception of the figure and sign of the future Eucharist for three days for those who have had sexual relations, but it also teaches that even those who have had a sensual or sinful dream during their sleep are banned from taking the Eucharist since they became defiled by the dream, thus showing us the height of purity and virtue that Our Lord and God expects when we are dealing with the most Holy Eucharist. *“... thou shalt keep thyself from every evil thing. If there be among you any*

man, that is defiled in a dream by night, he shall go forth out of the camp. And shall not return, before he be washed with water in the evening: and after sunset he shall return into the camp.” (Deuteronomy 23:9-11)

In comparison to the Christian priests of the New Law, however, Jewish priests in the Old Law rarely served at the altar of sacrifice. But Christian priests are different since they must offer up the “peace offering” every day. In the Old Law – which was only a shadow of the New Law to come (Hebrews 10:1) – sexual relations rendered a man ritually unclean and that meant he could not participate in Israel’s cultic life for a prescribed period of time. The Old Law clearly teaches that a person could not receive the shadow or sign of the future Eucharist unless one abstains from the sexual act for three days, and so, in the New Law it is obvious that the Bible teaches that all priests must be completely chaste since they are to perform the Eucharistic sacrifice every day.

The other sacraments of the Church, however, also implies transmitting Christ’s Blood to other people, such as in the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance, which washes away the sins of the penitent by the help of the Blood of Our Lord. And so, since the priest must always supply the sacraments for the benefit of himself and his Church in order to alleviate the wrath of God, it is a biblical fact that a priest can never be allowed to exercise the sexual act after he becomes a priest.

Our Lord Himself stands as the primary sign and example for the necessity of a chaste priesthood. In truth, He is the High Priest and Example that we all must live and die with if we want to be saved. Our Lord lived and died completely chaste, and from beginning to end, tried to help and inspire his followers as well as everyone else to adopt the more meritorious life of chastity and virginity: “Having therefore a great high priest that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God: let us hold fast our confession... Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly vocation, consider the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus: Who is faithful to him that made him, as was also Moses in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, by so much as he that hath built the house, hath greater honor than the house. For every house is built by some man: but he that created all things, is God.” (Hebrews 3:1-4, 4:14)

Christ Our Lord, the High Priest, made the way clear for all priests of the Church by the example of his own life and suffering. The servant of Christ should not expect less than some suffering if he perfectly wants to follow Our Lord in this life. Just as Christ was glorified in eternity for his suffering, so also his sons, the priests, must follow him in suffering in order to be glorified in eternity. There is no other way but the cross of Our Lord: “*And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, **cannot be my***

disciple.” (Luke 14:27) If Christ who suffered the most horrible torture imaginable is our example, is it strange that his special sons, the priests, should follow him in small penances and chastity that are as nothing compared to His suffering on the Cross? Not at all! In truth, anything else would have been completely unacceptable and directly inspired by the devil of voluptuousness and sensuality. For *“The disciple is not above his master: but every one shall be perfect, if he be as his master [Our Lord Jesus Christ].”* (Luke 6:40) Thus, *“Where the **forerunner** Jesus is entered for us, made a high priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech,”* (Hebrews 6:20) it obviously follows that his beloved sons, the priests, must follow Him in the way of penance and chastity in order to perfectly resemble the one and only High Priest – Our Lord Jesus Christ. In truth, *“So Christ also did not glorify himself, that he might be made a high priest”* (Hebrews 5:5).

Hebrews 7:11-28 “If then perfection was by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchisedech, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being translated [to the New Law], it is necessary that a translation also be made of the law. For he, of whom these things are spoken, is of another tribe, of which no one attended on the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprung out of Juda: in which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. And it is yet far more evident: if according to the similitude of Melchisedech there ariseth another priest, Who is made not according to the law of a carnal commandment, but according to the power of an indissoluble life: For he testifieth: Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech.

“There is indeed a setting aside of the former commandment, because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof: (For the law brought nothing to perfection,) but a bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh to God. And inasmuch as it is not without an oath, (for the others indeed were made priests without an oath; But this with an oath, by him that said unto him: The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever.) By so much is Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And the others indeed were made **many priests**, because by reason of death they were not suffered to continue: But this, for that he continueth for ever, hath an everlasting priesthood, Whereby he is able also to save for ever them that come to God by him; always living to **make intercession** for us.

“For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily (as the other priests) to offer sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, in offering himself. For the law maketh men priests, who have infirmity: but the word of the oath, which was since the law, the Son who is perfected for evermore.”

Douay Rheims Bible Commentary explains the words “*many priests*” in Hebrews 7:23, saying that: “The apostle notes this difference between the high priests of the law, and our high priest Jesus Christ; that they being removed by death, made way for their successors; whereas our Lord Jesus is a priest for ever, and hath no successor; but liveth and concurreth for ever with his ministers, the priests of the new testament, in all their functions. Also, that no one priest of the law, nor all of them together, could offer that absolute sacrifice of everlasting redemption, which our one high priest Jesus Christ has offered once, and for ever.” (Challoner) --- The words “*make intercession*” in verse 25 means that “Christ, as man, continually maketh intercession for us, by representing his passion to his Father” (Challoner) whose merit is applied to humanity by the priesthood and its distribution of the sacraments of the Church to the faithful. In truth, it is fitting that the priests of the New Law should not daily “*offer sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the people’s... For the [Old] law maketh men priests, who have infirmity: but the word of the oath, which was since the law, the Son who is perfected for evermore.*” (Hebrews 7:27-28)

From the very beginning, all the Councils, Popes, Saints and Fathers of the Church rejected the heretical and unbiblical teaching of those impure and selfish heretics and schismatics who reject the biblical Church teaching that all ministers must be totally chaste and that the high and pure office of being a minister of the Lord obligates a man to abstain from all sexual relations, even with a wife. There are many reasons why the Church teaches this doctrine. St. Augustine, for example, explains that “in intercourse man becomes all flesh” (St. Augustine, *Sermons* 62.2) and that the sexual act degrades the masculine soul. “For I know that nothing so debases a man’s soul as the charms of a woman and that bodily contact which is so much a part of having a wife.” (St. Augustine of Hippo, *Soliloquies* 1.10) Thus, it is not hard to understand based on just these two arguments of St. Augustine why the Church directly condemns the heretical teaching that ministers of God are allowed to have marital relations. Since the act of abstaining from the sexual act is highly extolled in Holy Scripture by the Holy Ghost and praised as a more meritorious and virtuous life, it is obvious why the Catholic Church teaches that all Her priests must abstain from all kinds of sexual acts.

Simply said, the pure Catholic priest who is wholly dedicated to serving God in mind and body – and that is not disturbed by the marital life nor by raising fleshly children – will always be more effective in saving and bringing sinners back from the clutches of the devil than those people who choose to live in a more sensual lifestyle. Since their life is exclusively dedicated to God and His Holy Church, they will be more closer to God than those who are married and have children. That is also exactly why almost exclusively all

canonized saints in the Catholic Church have been either ecclesiastics, monks, nuns, virgins or ascetics. And the Holy Bible is clear on why this happens, since “He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband.” (1 Cor. 7:32-34)

Thus, we see that Holy Scripture itself teaches that the chaste servants of Christ are more “holy both in body and in spirit” and more “solicitous” for the things of the Lord than those who marry. As a result of this holiness, the pure servants of Christ will always be more effective in their prayers and intercessions for sinful souls, "snatching them out of the fire" (Jude 1:23) and in bringing the lost sheep back into the fold of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only will a man become more blessed in the afterlife if he chooses the angelic life of chastity, but he will also receive more spiritual gifts from Our Lord to the benefit of himself and others in this life since he has chosen to welcome Our Lord into his heart with a more perfect and pure love.

From *The Life of Fr. De Smet, Apostle of the Rockies*:

“[Pg 176] How is the phenomenal success of these missions to be explained? Many of the Indians possessed admirable natural virtues; they but needed to know Christianity to embrace it. Even the most degraded had preserved a high ideal of the greatness of the power of God. Blasphemy was unknown among them: not presuming to address the “Great Spirit,” they entreated their manitous to intercede for them. Superstition if you will, but beneath it was a religious sentiment which the missionary had only to enlighten and direct. None held back through false pride or prejudice. Even the Sioux, the proudest of the Western tribes, compared themselves to children bereft of a father’s guiding hand, and to the ignorant animals of the prairie, and with touching humility begged the missionary to “take pity on them.”

“Such elevated, upright souls could, moreover, appreciate the chastity of the Catholic priesthood. With rare discernment, the Indian understood that, belonging as he does to all men, a priest cannot give himself to one person, and not for an instant did they hesitate to choose the Black Robe, who had consecrated his life to them, rather than the minister in lay dress, installed in a comfortable home with wife and children, devoted to the interests of his family, giving only the time that remained to distributing Bibles”.

“[Pg 52] The Indians, meanwhile, were not overlooked. Dispossessed of their

lands and driven west by the whites, they now found refuge and support in the Catholic Church. A considerable number of them, whose fathers had been instructed and baptized by the Jesuits, were well disposed toward Catholicity. **Protestant ministers made repeated attempts to gain their confidence, but were always coldly received.** “What had they to do,” asked the Indians, “with married preachers, men who wore no crucifix, and said no rosary? They wanted only the Black Robes to teach them how to serve God. They even went so far as to appeal to the President of the United States, asking that the married ministers might be recalled and Catholic priests sent in their place.”

“[Pg 117] I was given the place of honor in the chief’s tent, who, surrounded by forty of his braves, addressed me in the following words: ‘Black Robe, this is the happiest day of our lives, for to-day, for the first time, we see in our midst a man who is near to the Great Spirit. These are the principal warriors of my tribe. I have invited them to the feast I have prepared for you, that they may never forget the great day.’”

“It seems strange that with the savages the fact of being a Catholic priest merited a triumphal reception for the lowly missionary, while in other times, and to men proud of their civilization, he would have been the object of suspicion. During the repast the great chief showered attentions on his guest, even to giving him a mouthful of his own food to chew, a refined usage among his tribe.

“At night, after the missionary had retired and was about to fall asleep, he saw the chief who had received him with so much honor, enter his tent. Brandishing a knife that gleamed in the light of the torch, he said: “Black Robe, are you afraid?” The missionary, taking the chief’s hand, placed it on his breast and replied: “See if my heart beats more rapidly than usual! Why should I be afraid? You have fed me with your own hands, and I am as safe in your tent as I would be in my father’s house.” Flattered by this reply, the Blackfoot renewed his professions of friendship; he had wished only to test the confidence of his guest.

“[Pg 86] **Protestant ministers tried to compete with the Catholic priests; but between a salaried official who distributed tracts to inquisitive members of the tribe, and the missionary, devoted body and soul to their interests, the Indians did not hesitate to make a choice.**” They refused the most alluring offers from Protestants and came from all directions to ask for a Black Robe to show them the way to heaven.

“After five years’ residence with the Otoes, the Protestant minister has not yet baptized one person, and the greater part of the Protestant missionaries who overrun the Indian Territory make no better showing.” (Letter of Father De Smet to Father Verhaegen, June, 1838)

In truth, one can accurately say that only the Catholic priest is entirely “solicitous” for the Lord’s Church when he is compared to the other servants of all the other “Churches” and that he is the father to all in his congregation, his family being spiritual rather than fleshly and temporal. And because good, virtuous and pious priests, religious, monks and nuns of the Church are so effective in saving souls from hell and the devil’s grip, the devil labors mightily to get them under his control. The Holy Fathers of the Church, as we have seen, also agree with the teaching of the Bible and the Apostles that the chaste are more spiritually advanced and wise, teaching that people who are pure and chaste are more apt to receive and understand the spiritual truths of God since they are not busy or distracted with the temporal concerns of this world.

We also see that the Holy Bible directly teaches that the meritorious penance and abstinence of a virtuous person directly effects and draws down graces to the benefit of other souls, contrary to what many protestants nowadays teach who claim that nothing we say or do can effect our own or other people’s spiritual welfare. However, *The Gospel of Matthew* clearly shows us that a certain kind of demon can only be exorcised “by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21).

Matthew 17:14-20 “And when he [Jesus] was come to the multitude, there came to him a man falling down on his knees before him, saying: Lord, have pity on my son, for he is a lunatic, and suffereth much: for he falleth often into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said: O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked him, and the devil went out of him, and the child was cured from that hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus secretly, and said: Why could not we cast him out? Jesus said to them: Because of your unbelief. For, amen I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove from hence hither, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you. **But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting.**”

Now, it is obvious that if a demon is successfully exorcised by the virtue and power of a good deed (in this case, by the mortification of the flesh for a charitable cause), it is also exorcised by a virtue of a higher and greater degree of merit, such as holy chastity. And so, it is a biblical fact that chastity and virginity in this life not only affects our own eternal blessedness and spiritual well-being in this life and in the next to come, but that it also affects and helps the spiritual well-being of our beloved brothers and sisters. “For there are two ways in life, as touching these matters. The one the more moderate and ordinary, I

mean marriage; the other angelic and unsurpassed, namely virginity. Now if a man choose the way of the world, namely marriage, he is not indeed to blame; yet he will not receive such great gifts as the other. For he will receive, since he too brings forth fruit, namely thirtyfold [Mark 4:20]. But if a man embrace the holy and unearthly way, even though, as compared with the former, it be rugged and hard to accomplish, yet it has the more wonderful gifts: for it grows the perfect fruit, namely an hundredfold.” (St. Athanasius, *The Letters of St. Athanasius*, Letter XLVIII, To Amun, c. 353 A.D.)

“How many men, therefore, and how many women, in Ecclesiastical Orders, owe their position to continence, who have preferred to be wedded to God; who have restored the honor of their flesh, and who have already dedicated themselves as sons of that future age, by slaying in themselves the concupiscence of lust, and that whole propensity which could not be admitted within Paradise! Whence it is presumable that such as shall wish to be received within Paradise, ought at last to begin to cease from that thing from which Paradise is intact [i.e., sexual intercourse].” (Tertullian, *On Exhortation to Chastity*, Chapter 13, c. 204 A.D.)

The chaste servant of Christ stands as a spiritual warrior against the temptations and deception of the world and the devil. His sword is his chastity and purity by which he slays the devil and acquires spiritual knowledge and grace for himself and his friends. “But so far is this true and spiritual knowledge removed from that worldly erudition, which is defiled by the stains of carnal sins... And therefore if you are anxious to attain to that never-failing fragrance, you must first strive with all your might to obtain from the Lord the purity of chastity. **For no one, in whom the love of carnal passions and especially of fornication still holds sway, can acquire spiritual knowledge.** For “in a good heart wisdom will rest;” and: “He that feareth the Lord shall find knowledge with righteousness.” [Prov. 24:33; Eccus. 32:20].” (Holy Abbot and Ascetic Nesteros (c. 420), From *The Conferences of John Cassian*, Conference 14, Chapter XVI)

Pope St. Damasus I (366-384) confirmed the teaching of the Holy Bible and the Holy Apostles on the necessity of a chaste priesthood, and declared that marital intercourse was incompatible with presiding at the Eucharistic sacrifice. Pope St. Siricius (384-399) who taught that “those who are in the flesh cannot see God” stated in A.D. 392 that “Jesus would not have chosen birth from a virgin, had he been forced to look upon her as so unrestrained as to let that womb... be stained by the presence of male seed.” Pope St. Siricius also declared that the only persons worthy of serving at the altar were those who were forever free of “the stain” of intercourse. Pope St. Leo the Great (440-461) carried on this uninterrupted Apostolic Tradition. Thus deacons were to remain married, but they were instructed to avoid marital intercourse in order to grow in holiness. Referring to First

Corinthians 7:29, Pope Leo declared: “Therefore, so that a spiritual bond may grow from the physical marriage, [deacons] may not send their spouses away and must live as though they had none, whereby the love of the married couple remains intact and the conjugal acts cease.” (Pope Saint Leo the Great, *Epistles*)

Pope St. Leo the Great, *To Rusticus* (c. 442-459 A.D.): “Concerning those who minister at the altar and have wives, whether they may lawfully cohabit with them? Reply. The law of continence is the same for the ministers of the altar as for bishops and priests, who when they were laymen or readers, could lawfully marry and have offspring. But when they reached to the said ranks, what was before lawful ceased to be so. And hence, in order that their wedlock may become spiritual instead of carnal, it behoves them not to put away their wives but to "have them as though they had them not," whereby both the affection of their wives may be retained and the marriage functions cease.” (*The Letters of St. Leo the Great*, Letter 167, Question III)

The Early Councils of the Church unanimously forbids Bishops, Priests and Deacons from having marital sexual relations with their wife

From the very earliest times, lustful and impure men have tried to reject or ignore the biblical, Apostolic and patristic teaching that all priests must be perpetually chaste. Because of this, many councils of the Church through the ages have also been forced to reaffirm this dogmatic and infallible teaching of the Church. The first recorded council that confirmed this requirement of celibacy upon all clerics is *The Council of Elvira* that took place in c. 306-311 A.D. Canon 33 declared that married priests and bishops were obligated to permanently refrain from all marital sexual relations. It stated that “Bishops, presbyters, and deacons and all other clerics having a position in the ministry are ordered to abstain completely from their wives and not to have children. Whoever, in fact, does this, shall be expelled from the dignity of the clerical state.” This canon clearly ordered higher clerics to observe perfect continence with their wives under the pain of deposition from their ministry. Canon 27 of the same Council prohibited women living with ecclesiastics, except for a sister or a daughter who was a consecrated virgin: “A bishop or other cleric may have only a sister or a daughter who is a virgin consecrated to God living with him. No other woman who is unrelated to him may remain.”

From these primitive and important legal texts, it can be deduced that many of the ecclesiastics in the Spanish church were *viri probati*, that is, men who were married before becoming ordained deacons, priests or bishops. All, however, were obliged, after receiving Holy Orders, to renounce completely the use of marriage, that is to live in total continence.

Although some erroneously claim that Elvira was a departure from an earlier tradition which did not require married clerics to remain continent, the fact of the matter is that the council codified an already existing but unwritten rule of continence for all clerics. Indeed, in no way can one see in canon 33 a statement of a new law. *The Council of Elvira* was, on the contrary, a reaction to the extended lack of observance of a traditional and well-known obligation, to which at this time the Council confirmed and imposed a sanction to the biblical law concerning priestly chastity: either the delinquent ecclesiastics accepted the obligation of the law of continence (*lex continentiae*) by living their lives in perfect conformity to it or they became “expelled from the dignity of the clerical state.” The fact that the legislation of Elvira was pacifically accepted confirms that no juridical novelty was being introduced, but that it was concerned primarily with maintaining an already existing teaching of the Church. This is what Pius XI taught when, in his encyclical on the priesthood, he affirms that this written law implied a previous law and practice that “made obligatory what the gospels and the apostolic preaching had already shown to be something like a natural requirement”, thus showing us that this law of clerical celibacy came directly from Our Lord and the teaching of the Apostles as well as that it was taught by the many generations of Christians before the 4th century.

Pope Pius XI, *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii* (# 43), Dec. 20, 1935: “The earliest trace of a law of ecclesiastical celibacy – based, however, on long established custom – is found in the 33rd canon of the Council of Elvira, held at the beginning of the fourth century when Christians were still being actively persecuted. This law only made obligatory what the gospels and the apostolic preaching had already shown to be something like a natural requirement.” (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 28 [1936] 25)

To suggest, therefore, that Elvira is the origin of the law of celibacy in the Church, and that there is, consequently, a discontinuity in the Church’s moral teaching concerning this matter between its introduction and what was the practice beforehand, is, for the reasons already given, a fundamentally erroneous conclusion. The persecution suffered by the early Church during the first three centuries made it difficult for it to write down most of its laws by convoking councils of Bishops and Priests, and just like in the case of many of the Church’s dogmas and doctrines, such as the Trinity, the Church only defined them when a greater necessity arose that needed it. Yet it is very unlikely that when the Church did begin to write down its laws in the fourth century, that it would have ignored its earlier, unwritten rules and composed brand new ones, especially one such as the Elvira canon, since, if such was the case, such laws would have deprived clerics of a long-established so-called “right” and if so, it is highly unlikely, as even reason itself dictates, *that no one would have objected to this if a new teaching concerning clerical celibacy would have*

sprung up without any earlier foundation; and this fact is much more obvious since we are dealing with an issue that regards sensual pleasure, and most men in this world are directly intent on satisfying their sexual desire. Thus, even though this teaching denied priestly men their sensual appetites, there was no objections, which in a striking manner confirms the fact that all priests of the Church must be perpetually chaste and that this fact was well known and understood by the Church's members of this time. It is therefore very clear that the tradition of clerical continence dates back to apostolic times.

The Council of Arles (314) also required clerics to observe perfect continence, citing ritual purity as the reason. Canon 29 reads, "Furthermore, with a care for what is worthy, pure and honest, we exhort our brothers [in the episcopate] to act in such a way that priests and deacons have no [sexual] relations with their spouses, given that they are engaged each day in the ministry. Whoever acts contrariwise to this decision will be deposed from the honor of the clerical state." (*Corpus Christianorum*, 148.25)

The Synod of Neocaesarea (314-325) confirmed this ancient teaching of the Church that priests were obligated to remain free from the stain of marital sexual intercourse. "If a priest marry, he shall be removed from the ranks of the clergy; if he commit fornication or adultery, he shall be excommunicated, and shall submit to penance." (Canon 1)

The wording of these canons does not immediately suggest that an innovation is being introduced, and it would be an error in historical procedure to maintain beforehand that such was the case. The seriousness of the implications for the life of the clergy, the absence of justification for the strictness of the discipline and the canonical penalty attached, would suggest, on the contrary, that the Church authorities were concerned with the *maintenance* and not the introduction of this rule. The important papal decretals of the fourth century, which show the rule for the Universal Church — *Directa* (385) and *Cum in unum* (385-86) of Pope St. Siricius; *Dominus inter* of Pope St. Innocent I, and the Synod of Carthage (390) — were in fact emphatic that clerical continence belonged to immemorial, even apostolic, tradition (as we shall also see further down).

Pope St. Siricius, *Cum in unum*, A.D. 385: "**The question is not one of ordering new precepts**, but we wish through this letter to have people observe those that either through apathy or laziness on the part of some have been neglected. They are, however, matters that have been established by apostolic constitution, and, by a constitution of the Fathers." (*Cum in unum* (Ad episcopos Africae); PL 13, 11 56a. P. Coustant, *Epistolae Romanorum Pontificum*, Paris, 1721, p. 562)

The writings of the Church Fathers are often explicit in considering the apostles as models

of the priesthood. Yet those who might have been married were thought not to have lived other than in continence. (Cf. St. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata. III*, 6; Tertullian, *De Monogamia*, 8, 4; St. Jerome, *Apologeticum ad Pammachium*, Ep. 49(48), 2, 21; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio evangelica*, 111, 4, 37; St. Isidore of Pelusium, Ep. 111, 176.)

In 325 A.D., *The First Council of Nicaea*, which was the first of the infallible and Ecumenical Councils in Church history, decreed in Canon 3 that a cleric is absolutely forbidden to keep a woman to live with him: “This great synod absolutely forbids a bishop, presbyter, deacon or any of the clergy to keep a woman who has been brought in to live with him, with the exception of course of his mother or sister or aunt, or of any person who is above suspicion.”

Another perhaps more accurate translation of Canon 3 reads:

“The great Synod has stringently forbidden any bishop, presbyter, deacon, or any one of the clergy whatever, to have a subintroducta dwelling with him, except only a mother, or sister, or aunt, or such persons only as are beyond all suspicion.”

The term "subintroducta" refers to an unmarried woman living in association with a man in a merely spiritual marriage, a practice that we see indicated already in the 1st century biblical teaching of St. Paul, where he teaches that “the time is short; it remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as if they had none”; in the 4th century such a woman was also referred to as an "agapeta". The pre-Nicaean acceptance of that arrangement for clerics was a clear indication that the clergy were expected to live in continence even with their wives. For instance, a leading participant in the Council of Nicaea, Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-340), wrote: “It is fitting, according to Scripture, ‘that a bishop be the husband of an only wife.’ But this being understood, it behoves consecrated men [those in the priesthood], and those who are at the service of God’s cult, to abstain thereafter from conjugal intercourse with their wives.” (*Demonstratio Evangelica*, Book 1, Chapter 9)

Commentators on this passage confirms that it really is a law concerning clerical celibacy. *The Ancient Epitome of Canon III* explains that Nicea teaches that “No one shall have a woman in his house except his mother, and sister, and persons altogether beyond suspicion.” Fuchs in his *Bibliothek der kirchenver sammlungen* confesses that this canon shews that the practice of clerical celibacy had already spread widely. And finally, Hefele explains that “It is very certain that the canon of Nicea forbids such spiritual unions, [of certain women living in the same house as a priest] but the context shows moreover that the Fathers had not these particular cases in view alone; and the expression συνείσακτος should be understood of every woman who is *introduced* (συνείσακτος) into the house of a

clergyman for the purpose of living there. If by the word *συνείσακτος* was only intended the wife in this spiritual marriage, the Council would not have said, any *συνείσακτος*, except his mother, etc.; for neither his mother nor his sister could have formed this spiritual union with the cleric. The injunction, then, does not merely forbid the *συνείσακτος* in the specific sense, but orders that “no woman must live in the house of a cleric, unless she be his mother,” etc. This canon is found in the *Corpus Juris Canonici*, Gratian’s *Decretum*, Pars I., Distinc. XXXII., C. xvj.

Similarly, *The Council of Carthage* (in 390) confirmed the same teaching concerning clerical chastity and decreed that higher clerics observe perfect continence because they act as mediators between God and man. They stressed particularly in Canon 3 the antiquity and apostolic origin of this law: “It is fitting that the holy bishops and priests of God as well as the Levites, i.e. those who are in the service of the divine sacraments, observe perfect continence, so that they may obtain in all simplicity what they are asking from God; what the Apostles taught and what antiquity itself observed, let us also endeavor to keep. The bishops declared unanimously: It pleases us all that bishop, priest and deacon, guardians of purity, abstain from conjugal intercourse with their wives, so that those who serve at the altar may keep a perfect chastity.” Subsequent councils at Hippo (393) and Carthage (401 and 419) repeated these requirements.

At that time most, though not all, of the clergy were married men. They are directed by the African Synod to give up all conjugal intercourse, because of the fact that this would prevent them from properly carrying out their mediatory function. The import of the canon is that those who by consecration have now become sacred persons must in the future manifest by their lives this new reality by adopting the more perfect and blessed life of perfect chastity. The specific reasons for the continence they are asked to observe, is in order that they may be effective mediators between God and man, and because of the commitment to service at the altar.

The ancient summary of Canon 3 above emphatically declared: “Let a bishop, a presbyter, and a deacon be chaste and continent.” As can be seen, *The Council of Carthage* declared obligatory continence to be “...what the apostles taught and what antiquity itself observed...”, thus showing us that the practice of clerical chastity is an ancient and apostolic teaching. In this context of historical study, the important study by author Christian Cochini should be noted: “*The Apostolic origins of priestly celibacy*” (original French version: *Origines apostoliques du célibat sacerdotale*, Lethielleux/Paris 1981).

St. Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage and patron to St. Augustine, was head of *The Council of Carthage* in A.D. 419 in union with “217 Blessed Fathers who assembled at Carthage”.

They reaffirmed the previous Canon 3 in their own Canon 3, stating that: “When at the past council [of 390] the matter on continency and chastity was considered, those three grades, which by a sort of bond are joined to chastity by their consecration, to wit bishops, presbyters, and deacons, so it seemed that it was becoming that the sacred rulers and priests of God as well as the Levites, or those who served at the divine sacraments, should be continent altogether, by which they would be able with singleness of heart to ask what they sought from the Lord: **so that what the apostles taught and antiquity kept**, that we might also keep.” Canon 4 of the same Council also spoke of the different orders that should abstain from their wives: “It seems good that a bishop, a presbyter, and a deacon, or whoever perform the sacraments, should be keepers of modesty and should abstain from their wives. By all the bishops it was said: It is right that all who serve the altar should keep pudicity from all women.”

The ancient summary of Canon 3 of The Council of Carthage in 419 declared: “Let a bishop, a presbyter, and a deacon be chaste and continent. This canon is taken from Canon ii., of Carthage 387 or 390.” More specifically, the canon was probably referring to Canon 3 from the council held in Carthage in 390.

As we have seen, the law that was promulgated during the synod of 390 would remain valid and be officially inserted in the great legislative record of the African Church, the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiae Africanae*, compiled and promulgated in the Council of Carthage in 419 (in the time of St. Augustine). We also see in this law the biblical fact that we have already discussed, that is, that the prayer and spiritual intercession of a pure and chaste priest or ecclesiastic is better and more effective to help save souls than a priest or ecclesiastic who performs the marital act and is distracted by worldly cares, the keeping of a house, and wife, and children, etc. Thus, “those who are in the service of the divine sacraments, observe perfect continence, so that they may obtain in all simplicity what they are asking from God...”

Codex Canonum Ecclesiae Africanae, A.D. 419: “Epigonius, Bishop of the Royal Region of Bulla, says: “The rule of continence and chastity had been discussed in a previous council. Let it [now] be taught with more emphasis what are the three ranks that, by virtue of their consecration, are under the same obligation of chastity, i.e., the bishop, the priest, and the deacon, and let them be instructed to keep their purity.””

“Bishop Genethlius says: ‘As was previously said, it is fitting that the holy bishops and priests of God as well as the Levites, i.e., those who are in the service of the divine sacraments, observe perfect continence, so that they may obtain in all

simplicity what they are asking from God; what the apostles taught and what antiquity itself observed, let us also endeavor to keep.”

“The bishops declared unanimously: ‘It pleases us all that bishop, priest, and deacon, guardians of purity, abstain from [conjugal intercourse] with their wives, so that those who serve at the altar may keep a perfect chastity.’” (*The Apostolic Origins of Priestly Celibacy* by Christian Cochini, pages 4-5)

In saying that “in certain provinces it is permitted to the readers and singers to marry”, Canon 14 of the *Council of Chalcedon* (451) suggests that, in other provinces, not only bishops, priests, deacons and subdeacons, but even those in the lower or minor orders of readers and singers were at that time not permitted to marry.

In Gaul in the middle of the 5th century, a synod of sixteen bishops held a council at Orange in 441 under the presidency of St. Hilary of Arles, that made an explicit public declaration of the commitment to continence, emphasizing the duty of celibacy for those belonging to the clerical state, especially deacons and widows, forbidding married men to be ordained as deacons, and digamists, that is, those who contract a second marriage after the death of their spouse, to be advanced beyond the sub-diaconate. (cf. *First Council of Orange* (441), c. 8, 21. CC 148,84). This was to prevent excuses of ignorance of the obligation which previously had been implicit in the reception of orders. The wife (who in the Gallic Church was termed a *presbytera*, *diaconissa*, *subdiaconissa* or even *episcopia* according to the status of her husband) was to live as a ‘sister’ in a brother-sister relationship. (cf. Girona (517), c. 6. H.T. Bruns, *Canones Apostolorum et Conciliorum saeculorum IV-VII*, Berlin, 1839,11, 19. Clermont (535), c. 13. CC 148 A, 108. Tours (567), c. 13. *Ibid.*, 180-1). Her rights were protected as ordination could not go ahead without her agreement. Her promise to live in continence was also an impediment to future marriage.

Continent cohabitation expressed trust in the nobility of human love to combine marital affection with the values of the consecrated clerical state. St. Paulinus of Nola (d. 431) and St. Jerome (ca. 417) indicate a warm spirituality for those embracing this new life. (cf. *Ep. 44*. CSEL 29,372-7. *De Septem Ordinibus Ecclesiae*. PL 30,1 59c-d.) However, because of the real possibilities of incontinence, total physical separation would be recommended (*Arles* IV A.D. 524) or even sometimes required (*Toledo* III A.D. 589). A return to conjugal relations, after all, was considered to be as serious a sin as adultery (cf. Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I, 34), the cleric being punished by reduction to the lay state.

In Gaul in the early sixth century, councils held under the reforming and energetic St. Caesarius of Arles (c. 468-542) reaffirmed legislation for the restoration of priestly

celibacy, a discipline which had suffered as a result of the Visigoth invasions during the previous century. *The Council of Agde* held in 506, in Gaul, in the South of France under the presidency of St. Caesarius of Arles, had 47 genuine canons that dealt with such subjects as clerical celibacy, the canonical age for ordination, the relations of a bishop and his diocesan synod, church property, public peace, and the religious obligations of the faithful. The same council also forbade subdeacons to marry, and such synods as those of Orléans in 538 and Tours in 567 prohibited even those already married from continuing to live with their wives.

In 541 *The Fourth Synod of Orleans* ordered that “the bishop must treat his wife as his sister” and added that “the people must not respect but scorn the priest who cohabits with his wife, for in the place of being a doctor of penitence he is a doctor of libertinage.” Again, we see that the priest’s job in the eyes of the Church is to practice penitence, and to thus draw down a shower of grace for himself as well as for his flock, and that all priests who perform the marital act “in the place of being a doctor of penitence he is a doctor of libertinage.” Meeting in 583, *The Synod of Lyon’s* first canon decreed that married priests could not live together with their spouses. In 589 *The Synod of Toledo* issued canon 5, that also was a declaration that married clerics may not live with their wives.

Indeed, so fervent were the early church to hinder Her clerics from performing the marital act, that in 530 the Emperor Justinian declared null and void all marriages contracted by clerics in Holy Orders, and the children of such marriages to be spurious by ordering that the children of priests, deacons and subdeacons who, “in disregard of the sacred canons [of clerical continency], have children by women with whom, according to sacerdotal regulation, they may not cohabit”, or according to another translation: “they are not permitted to have relations” be considered illegitimate on the same level as those “procreated in incest and in nefarious nuptials” (*Code of Justinian*, 1.3.44). As for bishops, he forbade “any one to be ordained bishop who has children or grandchildren” (*Code of Justinian*, 1.3.41).

The *Breviatio Ferrandi* was a digest of Church legislation in Africa assembled about 550 which reaffirms earlier norms of priestly celibacy. In summary the main points were as follows:

- bishops, priests and deacons were to abstain from relations with their wives;
- any priest who got married was to be deposed; if he commits the sin of fornication he is to do penance;

- in order to safeguard the reputation of ministers of the Church and to help them observe chastity, clerics were not to live with women other than close family relations.

It is worth noting that this was a period of merciless persecution for the Church in North Africa when the Vandals invaded and eliminated the leaders of many of these Christian communities (cf. Cochini, *Apostolic Origins of Priestly Celibacy*, pp. 324-26).

The *Third Council of Toledo* (589) was convoked to remedy abuses that had penetrated the clergy arising from the Arian heresy. Bishops, priests and deacons, returning to the Catholic faith after abandoning Arianism, no longer considered continence an obligation of the priestly state. So called matrimonial “rights” had reasserted themselves and, therefore, although Arianism had been officially defeated at the *Council of Constantinople* in 381, the negative effects of this heresy, as far as priestly chastity was concerned, were still being felt two centuries later. Canon 5 of Toledo III renewed the traditional discipline, indicating the sanctions which attended its infraction.

Third Council of Toledo, Canon 5, A.D. 589: “It has come to the knowledge of the Holy Council that bishops, priests, and deacons, who were once heretics but returned to Catholicism, still gave in to carnal desire and united with their wives; so that it does not happen again in the future, we have ordered as follows, which had already been decreed by previous canons: that it not be permitted to these [clerics and their wives] to lead a common life favouring incontinence, but that while keeping conjugal fidelity toward each other, they watch to what is mutually beneficial to them both and not share the same room. With the help of virtue, it would be even better that the cleric find for his wife a new home, so that their chastity enjoy a good witnessing before both God and men. But if, after this warning, someone prefers to live in incontinence with his wife, let him be considered a lector; as to those who are still subject to the ecclesiastical canon, if they live in their cells, contrary to the elders’ orders, in the company of women apt to raise suspicions harmful to their reputation, let those be struck with severe canonical penalties.” (Cochini, *Apostolic Origins of Priestly Celibacy*, p. 331)

The reader will be interested in reading the answer on this point made by King Henry VIII (1491-1547), to the letter sent him by the German ambassadors. For those who don’t know, King Henry VIII was the apostate King of England who created his own sect (the Anglican sect) after the Catholic Church and the Pope would not grant him a divorce with a right to remarry. (This letter is found in full in the Addenda to the Appendix at the end of the seventh volume of Burnet’s *History of the Reformation* (London. Orr & Co., 1850, p. 148).

Note that even the apostate king himself upheld the ancient church tradition of clerical celibacy; although his own sect later came to contradict it: “Although the Church from the beginning admitted married men, as priests and bishops, who were without crime, the husband of one wife, (out of the necessity of the times, as sufficient other suitable men could not be found as would suffice for the teaching of the world) yet Paul himself chose the celibate Timothy; but if anyone came unmarried to the priesthood and afterwards took a wife, he was always deposed from the priesthood, according to the canon of the Council of Neocaesarea (315) which was before that of Nice (325). So, too, in the Council of Chalcedon (451), in the first canon of which all former canons are confirmed, it is established that a deaconess, if she give herself over to marriage, shall remain under anathema, and a virgin who had dedicated herself to God and a monk who join themselves in marriage, shall remain excommunicated. ... No Apostolic canon nor the Council of Nice contain anything similar to what you assert, viz.: that priests once ordained can marry afterwards. And with this statement agrees the Sixth Synod (Third Council of Constantinople in 649), in which it was decreed that if any of the clergy should wish to lead a wife, he should do so before receiving the Subdiaconate, since afterwards it was by no means lawful; nor was there given in the Sixth Synod any liberty to priests of leading wives after their priesting, as you assert. Therefore from the beginning of the newborn Church it is clearly seen that at no time it was permitted to a priest to lead a wife after his priesting, and nowhere, where this was attempted, was it done with impunity, but the culprit was deposed from his priesthood.”

Hence if a priest were at any time to attempt to marry, he would be attempting to do that which from the earliest times of which we have no record, and which no priest has ever been allowed to do, but which always has been punished as a grave sin of immorality.

The *Directa* and *Cum in unum* decretals of Pope St. Siricius

Among the many statements of the early Church on the topic of sexual continence and celibacy, the *Directa* and *Cum in unum* decretals of Pope St. Siricius (c. 385) stands out among them all, since it directly confirmed that clerical sexual abstinence was an apostolic practice that must be followed by the ministers of the universal church.

In the *Directa*, the Pope dealt with clerics (deacons, priests, and bishops) that were still living with their wives and having children. Priests were justifying this by referring to the traditions of the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament. Pope St. Siricius was emphatic that clerical continence belonged to immemorial, even apostolic, tradition. He declared that the priests of the Old Law had been under a duty to observe temporary continence

when serving in the Temple, but that the coming of Christ had brought the old priesthood to completion, and by this fact the duty of temporary continence had become an obligation to *perpetual* continence.

Pope St. Siricius (384-398) epistle "*Directa ad Decessorem*" was promulgated in the year 385 A.D. This epistle dealt with the Celibacy of the Clergy, and it **excommunicated all priests who dared to defile themselves with sexual acts with their wives, and prescribed that they all were banned from celebrating the heavenly mysteries of Our Lord:**

Pope St. Siricius, *Directa* (# 7), February, A.D. 385: "Let us talk now about the very holy clerical Orders. As your Charity advises us, we see that in your provinces they are trampled underfoot and confused, with great prejudice to the honor due to religion. It has come to the point where we must say with Jeremiah: "*Who will turn my head into a fountain, and my eyes into a spring for tears, so that I may weep all day, all night for all the dead out of the daughter of my people?*" (Jer 8:23) ... We have indeed discovered that many priests and deacons of Christ brought children into the world, either through union with their wives or through shameful intercourse. And they used as an excuse the fact that in the Old Testament—as we can read—priests and ministers were permitted to beget children.

"Whatever the case may be, if one of these disciples of the passions and tutors of vices thinks that the Lord—in the law of Moses—gives an indistinct license to those in sacred Orders so that they may satisfy their passions, let him tell me now: why does [the Lord] warn those who had the custody of the most holy things in the following way: "*You must make yourselves holy, for I am Yahweh your God*" (Lev 20:7). Likewise, why were the priests ordered, during the year of their tour of duty, to live in the temple, away from their homes? Quite obviously so that they would not be able to have carnal knowledge of any woman, even their wives, and, thus, having a conscience radiating integrity, they could offer to God offerings worthy of his acceptance. Those men, once they had fulfilled their time of service, were permitted to have marital intercourse for the sole purpose of ensuring their descent, because no one except [the members] of the tribe of Levi could be admitted to the divine ministry.

"This is why, after having enlightened us by his coming, the Lord Jesus formally stipulated in the Gospel that he had not come to abolish the law, but to bring it to perfection; this is also why he wanted the beauty of the Church whose Bridegroom he is to shine with the splendor of chastity, so that when he returns, on the Day of Judgment, he will find her without stain or wrinkle (Eph 5:27), as his Apostle taught [Apostolic Tradition]. It is through the indissoluble law of these

decisions that all of us, priests and deacons, are bound together from the day of our ordination, and put our hearts and our bodies to the service of sobriety and purity; may we be pleasing to our God in all things, in the sacrifices we offer daily. "People who are interested only in unspiritual things can never be pleasing to God", says the Chosen Vessel. "Your interests, however, are not in the unspiritual, but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made his home in you" (Rom 8:8-9).

"But those, who contend with an excuse for the forbidden privilege, so as to assert that this has been granted to them by the Old Law, should know that by the authority of the Apostolic See they have been cast out of every ecclesiastical office, which they have used unworthily, nor can they ever touch the sacred mysteries, of which they themselves have deprived themselves so long as they give heed to impure desires. **And because existing examples warn us to be on our guard for the future should any bishop, priest, or deacon be found such,** which henceforth we do not want let him now understand that every approach to indulgence is barred through us, because it is necessary that the wounds which are not susceptible to the healing of warm lotions be cut out with a knife." (St. Siricius 384-398, The Primacy of the Roman Pontiff, From the epistle "*Directa ad decessorem*" Feb. 10, 385, On The Celibacy of the Clergy; Denzinger 89)

The circumstance leading the Roman Pontiff to write about clerical continence, as this document shows, was the news coming from Spain: many clerics belonging to major Orders in those provinces went on living with their wives and having children. He was distraught by such news because they were grave violations of what was the indisputable teaching of the Church. Hence his intervention, the purpose of which was not to promulgate new regulations, but to reinstate those that should never have been broken. Siricius also learned from Himerius that those clerics were attempting to justify their behavior through Scripture, which is why he also uses Scripture. Some people are saying that the Old Testament, in particular the rules of Leviticus, authorized marriage for the Levites. Yes, indeed, he retorts, but married priests were under the obligation of temporary continence when serving in the temple. Now the priesthood of Christ brought the old priesthood to perfection. And by this very fact the obligation of continence became an obligation to perpetual continence. If the priests of the Old Law had to abstain periodically from intercourse with their wives "so that, with a conscience radiating integrity, they could present to God offerings worthy of his acceptance", as Pope St. Siricius affirms, the ministers and priests of Jesus Christ in the New Law who offer sacrifice daily, a sacrifice far superior to that of Jerusalem, can only be pleasing to God through perfect and perpetual chastity.

According to Wikipedia: "The *Directa*... became the first of a series of documents

published by the Magisterium that claimed apostolic origin for clerical celibacy and reminded ministers of the altar of the perpetual continence required of them. It is known that the First Ecumenical Council which took place at Nicaea included in its legislation a discipline of the priesthood known as clerical ‘continence’ or celibacy. This was the requirement of all priests and bishops to refrain from sexual contact with their wives or with any other woman. Thus, for a married man to become a priest, his wife had to agree to abstain from all sexual relations. This discipline added to the legislation of various councils, particularly the Council of Elvira, the date of which cannot be determined with precision, but believed to have been in the first quarter of the fourth century, in Spain.”

In the *Cum in unum* decretal, sent to the different ecclesiastical provinces in 386, Pope St. Siricius refers to the various Pauline texts (cf. Tit 1:15; 1 Tim 3:2; 1 Cor 7:7; Rom 8:8-9) as the scriptural foundation for the Church’s teaching on ecclesiastical celibacy, and in doing so gives an authoritative interpretation of the Pauline phrase, *unius uxoris vir*, or *unius uxoris virum* “a husband of one wife” found in 1 Timothy 3:2. Besides, Pope St. Siricius himself later presented the norms of this text at the Council of Rome of A.D. 386. If Timothy and Titus are to choose bishops, priests or deacons among “men married once only”, this does not mean that after ordination they can continue with their conjugal life.

Here the Pope first formulated an objection that the expression *unius uxoris vir* of 1 Timothy 3:2, some said, specifically guaranteed the bishop the right to use marriage after sacred ordination. Pope St. Siricius answered by giving the stipulation’s correct interpretation: “He (Paul) was not speaking of a man who might persist in the desire to beget children (*non permanentem in desiderio generandi dixit*); he was speaking about continence which they had to observe in future (*propter continentiam futuram*).” It is thus interpreted as a requirement to guarantee the future continence that the candidate for orders will be asked to practice. In other words, a man who had remarried after his first wife died could not be considered as a candidate for ordination, since the fact of his remarriage would indicate an inability to live the life of perpetual continence required of clerics in major orders. This fundamental text was repeated a number of times subsequently. For the decretal *Cum in unum* of Pope Siricius, cf. Ep. V. c. 9 (PL 13, 1161 A); it is also found in the African Council of Theleptis (A.D. 418): Conc. Thelense (CCL 149, 62): French trans.: Cochini, op. cit., p. 32; see also the two letters of Pope St. Innocent I (A.D. 404-405) to the bishops Victricius of Rouen and Exuperius of Toulouse: Ep. II, (PL 20, 476 A. 497 B; Cochini, op. cit., pp. 284-286). Africa, Spain and the Gauls thus take direction as indicated by the Popes.

The legislation of Pope St. Siricius in 385 and 386, and the canons of the Council of Carthage (390), claim apostolic origin for the *lex continentiae* (law of continence). It is

worth noting that these are not the claims of mere individuals but are the view of those who carried hierarchical responsibility in the Church. In Carthage it was the unanimous view of the whole African episcopate which declared “*ut quod apostoli docuerunt, et ipsa servavit antiquitas nos quoque custodiamus*” (what the Apostles taught and what antiquity itself observed, let us also endeavour to keep). In Rome Pope St. Siricius was conscious of placing himself in the line of the same living tradition with his predecessors as bishops of the See of St. Peter.

The Fathers and Early Writers of the Church confirms that priests must be completely chaste

The Fathers of the Church also insisted that clerics remain chaste. Theologically, in the first four centuries of the Church’s history, the validation of clerical continence is grounded on the Pauline teaching, linking it to the perpetual availability for service at the altar and a greater freedom for prayer. Being permanently in God’s presence, and because of the importance given to prayer, praise and adoration, the minister of the New Covenant ought not to care for the things of the world nor have the leisure needed to fulfill the responsibilities of married life.

In his treatise, *On the Duties of the Clergy* (c. 391), St. Ambrose of Milan (340-397) vehemently rejected the idea that married clerics should be allowed to have conjugal relations just because the priests of the Old Testament did. To the married clergy who, “in some out-of-the-way places”, claimed, on the model of the Old Testament priesthood, the right to father children, he recalled that in Old Testament times even lay people were obliged to observe continence on the days leading to a sacrifice, and commented: “If such regard was paid in what was only the figure, how much ought it to be shown in the reality!” (*De officiis ministrorum* or *On the Duties of the Clergy*, I, 258). Yet more sternly he wrote: “He [Saint Paul] spoke of one who has children, not of one who begets children.” “*habentem filios dixit, non facientem*” (St. Ambrose, *Epistle LXIII*, 62; *Ep. extra coll.*).

One can clearly see in the writings of St. Ambrose that the requirement that priests, whether married or celibate, should be continent was the established law of the Church. Priests “should live in a state of perpetual continence” since they served at the altar all their lives. Ambrose admonished his priests to “continue in a ministry which is unhampered and spotless, one which should not be profaned by conjugal intercourse.” (*On the Duties of the Clergy*, I, 50)

The *Didascalia Apostolorum*, written in Greek in the first half of the 3rd century, mentions the requirements of chastity on the part of both the bishop and his wife, as well as the

requirement that he brings up his children in the fear of God, when it quotes 1 Timothy 3:2-4 as requiring that, before someone is ordained a bishop, enquiry be made “whether he be chaste, and whether his wife also be a believer and chaste; and whether he has brought up his children in the fear of God”.

The specific tradition of the Church also confirms that the Apostles lived in this way. St. Clement of Alexandria (150-215) who thus lived very near in time to the Apostles, taught that the Apostles, after their calling by Our Lord to the ministry, took their wives with them not as women with whom they had marriage relations, but as sisters in purity and honesty: “But the latter [the Apostles], in accordance with their particular ministry, devoted themselves to preaching without any distraction, and took their wives with them not as women with whom they had marriage relations, but as sisters, that they might be their fellow-ministers in dealing with housewives. It was through them that the Lord’s teaching penetrated also the women’s quarters without any scandal being aroused.” (*The Stromata* or *Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter VI, Section 71)

When we come to the question of what was the practice of Our Lord Jesus Christ’s first followers in this matter of clerical chastity, there would likewise be but little if any reasonable doubt. For while of the Apostles we have it recorded only of Peter that he was a married man, we have it also expressly recorded that in his case, as in that of all the rest who had “forsaken all” to follow Our Lord, the Lord himself said, “Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, ***or wife***, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake shall receive an hundred fold and shall inherit eternal life.” (Matt. 19:29; Lk. 18:29) Mark 10:29 records the same incident, but while “wife” is mentioned among the things “left,” no “wife” is found among the things gained.

St. Jerome, referred in *Against Jovinianus* to marriage prohibition for priests when he argued that Peter and the other apostles had been married, but had married before they were called and subsequently gave up their marital relations (*Aduersus Jovinianum* I, 7. 26 (PL 23, 230C; 256C).

There can be no doubt that St. Paul in his epistles allows and even contemplates the probability that those admitted to the ranks of the clergy will have been already married, but distinctly says that they must have been the “husband of one wife,” (1 Tim. 3:2 and 12; Titus i., 6) by which all antiquity and every commentator of gravity recognizes that digamists (more than once married) are cut off from the possibility of ordination, but there is nothing to imply that the marital connexion was to be continued after ordination. For a thorough treatment of this whole subject from the ancient and Patristic point of view, the reader is referred to St. Jerome. (Cf. *Hieron, Adv. Jovin. Lib. I. Confer also the In Apolog.*

pro libris Adv. Jovin.) We will be quoting only a few passages from St. Jerome further down.

Commenting on the “husband of one wife” clause, Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-340) writes: “It is fitting, according to Scripture, ‘that a bishop be the husband of an only wife.’ But this being understood, it behooves consecrated men, and those who are at the service of God’s cult, to abstain thereafter from conjugal relations with their wives.” (*Demonstratio Evangelica*, I, 9)

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313-386), in his *Catechetical Lectures* XII:25, writes: “For it became Him who is most pure, and a teacher of purity, to have come forth from a pure bride-chamber. For if he who well fulfils the office of a priest of Jesus abstains from a wife, how should Jesus Himself be born of man and woman? “For thou,” says He in the Psalms, “art He that took Me out of the womb” (Psalm 22:9; 21:10). Mark that carefully, He that took Me out of the womb, signifying that He was begotten without man, being taken from a virgin’s womb and flesh. For the manner is different with those who are begotten according to the course of marriage.”

Several popes of the patristic era also issued decrees upholding clerical continence. Pope St. Siricius (384-99), who wrote the earliest extant papal legislation on this matter, insisted that bishops, priests, and deacons must practice perpetual rather than periodic continence since they must be ready to say the liturgy or perform the sacraments at any time. He affirmed that continence had an eschatological dimension, “pointing to the completion of the kingdom, to a time when marriage will be no more.” Similarly, Pope Leo I (440-61) upheld the rule that married clerics observe continence after ordination while Pope St. Gregory I (590-604) prohibited bishops from ordaining subdeacons who would not vow to live in perpetual chastity. The decrees of these popes show two things. The first is that clerical continence, or celibacy defined in its broad sense, was the law and practice of the universal Church and was not just a law of some of the local churches. The second is that some clerics were not obeying the law. Even at this early time in the Church’s history, it was becoming apparent that clerical continency was of apostolic origin.

St. Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315-403), born in Palestine and consecrated bishop of Constantia in Cyprus, condemns all forms of encratism (the “Encratites”, which means the “self-controlled”, were an ascetic 2nd century sect who forbade marriage and counseled abstinence from meat) but the Saint nonetheless insists that priests themselves are required to live continently, as regulated by the apostles. Priestly continence is observed, he maintains, wherever the ecclesiastical canons are adhered to, human weakness and the shortage of vocations being inadequate reasons for clergy to contravene the law of the

Church.

St. Epiphanius, the monk-bishop well known for his “zeal for the monastic life” and who had close ties with the Church of Rome, was thus in agreement with the other Fathers who promoted priestly continency for clerics, including subdeacons: “Holy Church respects the dignity of the priesthood to such a point that she does not admit to the diaconate, the priesthood or the episcopate, nor even to the subdiaconate, anyone still living in marriage and begetting children. She accepts only him who if married gives up his wife or has lost her by death, especially in those places where the ecclesiastical canons are strictly attended to.” (*Panarion*, 59, 4; cf. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Celibacy of the Clergy”, Vol. 3, 1908). St. Epiphanius, Father of the Church, further wrote: “It is the Apostles themselves who decreed this law [of celibacy].” (*Panarion*, 48, 9; cf. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Celibacy of the Clergy”, Vol. 3, 1908)

Similar evidence of the existence in the 4th-century East, as in the West, of a law of clerical continence that was considered to be canonical is found in Epiphanius’ *Expositio Fidei*, 21.

In *Against Vigilantius* (406), St. Jerome condemned bishops who refused to ordain unmarried men as deacons, pointing out that this contradicted the practice of the churches of Egypt and Rome, which ordained only unmarried men or married men who had taken a vow of continence:

“What would the Eastern Churches do? What would (those of) Egypt and the Apostolic See do, they who never accept clerics unless they are virgins or continent men, or if they had had a wife, (accept them only) if they give up matrimonial life...” (*Adversus Vigilantium*, 2)

He also said:

“What do the churches of Egypt and the Orient do? They choose clerics who are virgins or continent; and if they have a wife, they cease to be husbands.” (*Adversus Vigilantium*, 2)

St. Jerome states a well-known fact: a married man was not ordained unless the two spouses had mutually consented to a life of perpetual continence.

Similarly, in *Against Jovianius* (393) he upheld the superior dignity of celibacy and virginity. Here he argued that allowing clerics to have conjugal relations would mean that marriage was on par with virginity, but since the latter was clearly superior, it could not be

lawful for priests to touch their wives:

“Nor did they lay down rules for continence, nor hint at virginity, nor urge to fasting, nor repeat the directions given in the Gospel to the Apostles, not to have two tunics, nor scrip, nor money in their girdles, nor staff in their hand, nor shoes on their feet. And they certainly did not bid them, [Matthew 19:21] if they wished to be perfect, go and sell all that they had and give to the poor, and "come follow me." For if the young man who boasted of having done all that the law enjoins, when he heard this went away sorrowful, because he had great possessions, and the Pharisees derided an utterance such as this from our Lord's lips: how much more would the vast multitude of Gentiles, whose highest virtue consisted in not plundering another's goods, have repudiated the obligation of perpetual chastity and continence, when they were told in the letter to keep themselves from idols, and from fornication, seeing that fornication was heard of among them, and such fornication as was not "even among the Gentiles." But the very choice of a bishop makes for me. For he does not say: *Let a bishop be chosen who marries one wife and begets children; but who marries one wife, and has his children in subjection and well disciplined.* **You surely admit that he is no bishop who during his episcopate begets children. The reverse is the case— if he be discovered, he will not be bound by the ordinary obligations of a husband, but will be condemned as an adulterer.** Either permit priests to perform the work of marriage with the result that virginity and marriage are on a par: or if it is unlawful for priests to touch their wives, they are so far holy in that they imitate virgin chastity. But something more follows. A layman, or any believer, cannot pray unless he abstain from sexual intercourse. **Now a priest must always offer sacrifices for the people: he must therefore always pray. And if he must always pray, he must always be released from the duties of marriage.** For even under the old law they who used to offer sacrifices for the people not only remained in their houses, but purified themselves for the occasion by separating from their wives, nor would they drink wine or strong drink which are wont to stimulate lust. That married men are elected to the priesthood, I do not deny: the number of virgins is not so great as that of the priests required. Does it follow that because all the strongest men are chosen for the army, weaker men should not be taken as well? All cannot be strong.” (St. Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, Book I, Section 34, A.D. 393)

In his *Letter to Pammachius*, Ep. 48.10 (c. 393), St. Jerome further wrote: “A mother before she was wedded, she remained a virgin after bearing her son. Therefore, as I was going to say, the virgin Christ and the virgin Mary have dedicated in themselves the first fruits of virginity for both sexes. The apostles have either been virgins or, though married,

have lived celibate lives. Those persons who are chosen to be bishops, priests, and deacons are either virgins or widowers; or at least when once they have received the priesthood, are vowed to perpetual chastity. Why do we delude ourselves and feel vexed if while we are continually straining after sexual indulgence, we find the palm of chastity denied to us? We wish to fare sumptuously, and to enjoy the embraces of our wives, yet at the same time we desire to reign with Christ among virgins and widows. Shall there be but one reward, then, for hunger and for excess, for filth and for finery, for sackcloth and for silk? Lazarus (Luke 16:19-25), in his lifetime, received evil things, and the rich man, clothed in purple, fat and sleek, while he lived enjoyed the good things of the flesh but, now that they are dead, they occupy different positions. Misery has given place to satisfaction, and satisfaction to misery. And it rests with us whether we will follow Lazarus or the rich man.” (*The Letters of St. Jerome*, Letter 48, To Pammachius, Section 21)

St. Jerome, one of the Four Great Western Doctors of the Church, also testified: “Priests and deacons must be either virgins or widowers before being ordained, or at least observe perpetual continence after their ordination... If married men find this difficult to endure, they should not turn against me, but rather against Holy Writ and the entire ecclesiastical order.”

St. Jerome, *To Pammachius* (c. 393 A.D.): “See my express declaration that marriage is allowed in the Gospel, yet that those who are married cannot receive the rewards of chastity so long as they render their due one to another. If married men feel indignant at this statement, let them vent their anger not on me but on the Holy Scriptures; nay, more, upon all bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and the whole company of priests and levites, who know that they cannot offer sacrifices if they fulfill the obligations of marriage.” (*The Letters of St. Jerome*, Letter 48, To Pammachius, Section 10)

So, while some priests did break their vow of celibacy the Church never approved of that. It was considered a disgrace for a man that was married before he became a priest to beget children with his wife after ordination.

Also consider that all of the most important figures in the church were celibate, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist, (Peter after his ordination) Paul, and the rest of the Apostles in accordance to the Tradition of the Church, etc.

Pope St. Innocent I (401-417 A.D.) wrote in the same vein: “This is not a matter of imposing upon the clergy new and arbitrary obligations, but rather of reminding them of those which the tradition of the Apostles and the Fathers has transmitted to us.”

St. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), adds: "If then "he who is married cares for the things of the world" [1 Corinthians 7:33], and a Bishop ought not to care for the things of the world, why does he say the husband of one wife? Some indeed think that he says this with reference to one who remains free from a wife. But if otherwise, he that has a wife may be as though he had none [1 Corinthians 7:29]. For that liberty was then properly granted, as suited to the nature of the circumstances then existing. ... "Having his children in subjection with all gravity" [1 Timothy 3:4]. This is necessary, that an example might be exhibited in his own house. For who would believe that he who had not his own son in subjection, would keep a stranger under command? "One that rules well his own house" [Ibid]. Even those who are without say this, that he who is a good manager of a house will be a good statesman. For the Church is, as it were, a small household, and as in a house there are children and wife and domestics, and the man has rule over them all; just so in the Church there are women, children, servants. And if he that presides in the Church has partners in his power, so has the man a partner, that is, his wife. Ought the Church to provide for her widows and virgins? So there are in a family servants, and daughters, to be provided for. And, in fact, it is easier to rule the house; therefore he asks, "if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" [1 Timothy 3:5]" (*Homily X on First Timothy*, 1 Timothy 3:1-7)

St. Augustine participated in the Council of Carthage (419) where the general obligation to continence for major clerics had been repeatedly affirmed and traced back to the apostles and to a constant tradition. In his treatise *De conjugii adulterinis* (396) he asserted that even married men who were unexpectedly called to enter the ranks of the major clergy, and were ordained, were obliged to continence. In this they became an example to those laymen who had to live separated from their wives and who therefore were more liable to be tempted to commit adultery (no. 2, 22: PL, 40, 486).

Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais (died c. 414), of the Libyan Church, knew that he is expected to live in continence with his wife if made a priest-bishop (*Epistle* 105 ca. 410) (he was still a layman at the time of his ordination), and Palladius the historian reports that a synod presided over by St. John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople in the year 400, condemned Antoninus, Bishop of Ephesus, for doing what was forbidden by the 'holy laws' including resuming common life with his wife: "after separating from his married wife, he had taken her again" (*The Dialogue of Palladius concerning the Life of St. John Chrysostom*, chapter XIII). In his note on this phrase, the translator Herbert Moore says: "According to the 'Apostolic Canons', only the lower orders of clergy were allowed to marry after their appointment to office; the Council in Trullo ordered that a bishop's wife should retire to a convent, or become a deaconess; that of Caesarea, that if a priest marries after

ordination he must be degraded. For Antoninus to resume relations with his wife was equivalent to marriage after ordination. It was proposed at the Council of Nicaea that married clergy should be compelled to separate from their wives... though it was generally held that the relations of bishops with their wives should be those of brother and sister.”

Church laws and writings of this era not only affirm the requirement of clerical continence, even if it was not always followed in practice, they also reflect a sophisticated theology of the priesthood. Ritual purity requires only periodic abstinence, which was sufficient for the priests of the Old Testament, who offered animals in sacrifice to God. However, since the priests of the New Testament offer the Holy Victim, Jesus Christ, in sacrifice to the Father, they are, as St. Ambrose pointed out, called to a more radical and perfect purity than that of their Hebrew predecessors. Furthermore, the holiness of the clerical office demanded absolute purity. Their daily ministry included not only the Mass, which was offered every day in many places, but also the administration of the sacraments and the practice of praying constantly on behalf of the Church. Finally, celibacy gave an eschatological dimension to the priesthood, pointing to the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Tertullian at the beginning of the third century, reminds the clergy that monogamy (marriage with only one person at a time) is not only the teaching of the Church but also a precept of the Apostle (*Ad uxorem*, 1, 7, 4 (CCL 1, 381)). It thus dates back to apostolic times. Furthermore, he insists on the fact that, in the Church, not a few believers are not married, that they live in continence and that some of them belong to ‘ecclesiastical orders’ (*De exhort. cast.*, 13, 4 (CCL 2, 1035)). Now, the men and women who live like this, Tertullian goes on, “have preferred to marry God” (*Deo nubere maluerunt*); (*Ibid.*, *cf Ad uxorem*, 1, 4, 4).

While Tertullian commented with admiration upon the number of those in sacred orders who have embraced continence, Origen seems to contrast the spiritual offspring of the priests of the New Law with the natural offspring begotten in wedlock by the priests of the Old (*In Levit. Hom.* vi, no. 6).

Other testimonies to be taken into special account include Origen (d. ca. 253) (*23rd homily on Numbers*, *6th homily on Leviticus*), Ephraem Syrus (*Carmina Nisibena*, 18 and 19 (ca. 363)), and the Syriac *Doctrina Addei* (ca. 400).

Origen (c. 185-254), *Homily 23 on Numbers 28:1-29:39*, 3:1-2: “Since therefore we have the laws for feasts in hand and the present words concerns this subject, let us diligently investigate the order of the feasts in order to be able to conclude from these orders and from the rite of sacrifices how each one can prepare a feast for God

by his own actions and by his holy manner of life. Well, the first feast of God is the one called "perpetual." (cf. Num 28:6) For a command is given concerning these morning and evening sacrifices, which are offered perpetually and without any interruption whatsoever. Thus, when he commands the rites of the feasts, he does not come first of all and immediately to the Passover feast, nor to the feast of Unleavened Bread, nor to that of Tabernacles, nor to the others about which commandments are given; but he has recorded this one first, in which he commands a perpetual sacrifice to be offered. The reason for this is so that each one who wants to be perfect and holy may know that it is not merely now and then that one must celebrate a feast for God, but at other times, there is no need to celebrate a feast. On the contrary, always and perpetually the just person should celebrate the feast day. For the sacrifice that is commanded to be offered perpetually, both in the morning and in the evening, indicates this, that in the law and the prophets, which point to the morning time, and in the teaching of the gospel, which points to the evening time, that is, to the evening of the world, it points to the coming of the Savior, it persists with a perpetual intention. So it is of these kinds of feasts that the Lord says: "And you will observe my feast days." Thus it is a feast day of the Lord, if we offer him a sacrifice perpetually, if "we pray without intermission," (1 Thess 5:17) so that "our prayer may ascend like incense in his sight in the morning, and the lifting up of our hands may become an evening sacrifice to him." (Ps 141:2) So this is the first celebration of a perpetual sacrifice, which must be fulfilled by worshipers of the gospel in this manner that we have explained above.

"... I fear to say something that is given to be understood based on the apostolic sayings, least I seem to cause grief in some people. For if "the prayer of the just is offered like incense in the sight of God, and the lifting up of hands is his evening sacrifice," (cf. Ps 141:1-2) but the apostle says to those who are married: "Do not deprive one another, except by consent for a time, that you may be free for prayer, and again be unto this very thing," (1 Cor 7:5) it is certain that the perpetual sacrifice is impeded in those who serve conjugal needs. This is why it seems to me that the offering of a perpetual sacrifice [such as in the priesthood and the religious life] belongs to that one alone who has pledged himself to perpetual and continual chastity."

Origin, *Homily 6 on Leviticus*, 2-3: "But let us see, perhaps, since we said in the preceding this kind of clothing (Lev 6:10-11; 16:4) was seen as a sign of chastity, where they seem either to cover the tights or to restrain the kidneys and loins (Eph 6:14), I say, perhaps, not always in those, who then [in the Old Law] were priests, does it say these parts are restrained. For sometimes concessions were granted concerning the posterity of the race and the succession of offspring. But I would not introduce such an understanding for the priests of the Church [in the New Law], for

I see something else suggested in the mystery.

“For in the Church, the priests and teachers can beget sons [in a spiritual sense], just as that one [St. Paul] who said, "My little children, for whom I am again in travail until Christ is formed in you." (Gal 4:19) And again in another place he says, "Although you have myriad teachers in Christ, but not many fathers. For I begat you in Christ Jesus for the gospel." (1 Cor 4:15) Therefore, these teachers of the Church, in procreating such generations, sometimes use the binding of the thighs and abstain from begetting [spiritual] generations, since they find such hearers in whom they know they could not have fruit [by their preaching]. Finally, also in the Acts of the Apostles, it is related concerning some of these that "we could not speak the word of God in Asia." (cf. Acts 16:6) That is, they had put on the tight covering and preserved themselves that they not beget sons, for certainly these were such hearers in whom both the seed would die and could not have offspring. Thus therefore, the priests of the Church, when they see incapable ears or when they encounter counterfeit hypocritical hearers, let them put on "the apron," let them use "the thigh covering," (cf. Exod 28:42)..."

St. Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306-373), *The Nisibene Hymns*, Hymn XVIII: “1. O thou who art made priest after thy master, the illustrious after the excellent, the chaste after the grave, the watchful after the abstinent, thy master from thee has not departed; in the living we see the deceased: for lo! in thee is his likeness painted; and impressed upon thee are his footprints, and all of him shines from all of thee. *R., Blessed be He Who in His stead has given us thee!*

“2. The fruit wherein its tree is painted, bears witness concerning the root. Hitherto there has not failed us, the savour of his sweetness. His words thou showest forth in bodily act, for thou hast fulfilled them in deed. In thy conversation is painted his doctrine, in thy conduct his exposition, in thy fulfilment his interpretation. *R., Blessed be He Who has made thy lustre to excel!*

“... 12. That he should purge his mind, and cleanse also his tongue; that he should purify his hands, and make his whole body to shine; this is too little for the priest and his title, who offers the Living Body. Let him cleanse all himself at all hours; for he stands as mediator, between God and mankind. *R., Blessed be He Who has cleansed His ministers!*”

St. Ephrem the Syrian, *The Nisibene Hymns*, Hymn XIX: “1. Thou who answerest to the name of Abraham, in that Thou art made father of many; but because to Thee none is spouse, as Sarah was to Abraham,—lo! Thy flock is Thy spouse; bring up her sons in Thy truth; spiritual children may they be to Thee, and the sons be sons of promise, that they may become heirs in Eden. *R., Blessed be He Who foreshowed*

Thee in Abraham!

“2. Fair fruit of chastity, in whom the priesthood was well pleased, youngest among Thy brethren as was the son of Jesse; the horn overflowed and anointed Thee, the hand alighted and chose Thee, the Church desired and loved Thee; the pure altar is for Thy ministry, the great throne for Thy honour, and all as one for Thy crown. *R., Blessed be He Who multiplied Thy crowning!*

“3. Lo! thy flock, O blessed one, arise and visit it, O diligent one! Jacob ranged the flocks in order; range Thou the sheep that have speech, and enlighten the virgin-youths in purity, and the virgin-maids in chastity; raise up priests in honour, rulers in meekness, and a people in righteousness. *R. Blessed be He Who filled Thee with understanding!*

“... 13. Harken to the Apostle when he saith, to that virgin whom he had espoused; I am jealous over you with jealousy, with a jealousy verily of God, not of the flesh but of the spirit. Be jealous therewith thou also in pureness, that He may know what she is and whose she is. In thee may she cherish, and in thee may she love, Jesus the Bridegroom in truth. *R., Blessed is he whose zeal is holy!*

“14. As are her masters, so are her manners: for with the teacher that lags a laggard is she, and with him that is noble, excellent is she. The Church is like unto a mirror, for according to the face that gazes into it, thus does it put on the likeness thereof. For as is the king so also his host, and as is the priest so also his flock; according as these are it is stamped on them. *R., Blessed be He Who stamped her in His likeness!*

“15. Without a testament they departed, those three illustrious priests; who in Testaments used to meditate, those two Testaments of God. Great gain have they bequeathed to us, even this example of poverty. They who possessed nothing the blessed ones, made us their possessions; the Church was their treasure. *R., Blessed is he who possessed in them his possessions!*”

In the East, this tradition of exalting virginity over marriage was exemplified by St. John Chrysostom: “Marriage was not instituted for wantonness or fornication, but for chastity.” He also said: “**That virginity is good I do agree. But that it is even better than marriage, this I do confess.** And if you wish, I will add that it is as much better than marriage as Heaven is better than Earth, as much better as angels are better than men.” (*The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 2: 1116)

In this context of exalting chastity, St. Athanasius the Great in his *Apologia ad Constantium* 33 (c. 357) writes: “The Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, having become man for our sakes, and having destroyed death, and delivered our race from the bondage of corruption, in addition to all His other benefits bestowed this also

upon us, that we should possess upon earth, in the state of virginity, a picture of the holiness of Angels. Accordingly such as have attained this virtue, the Catholic Church has been accustomed to call the brides of Christ. And the heathen who see them express their admiration of them as the temples of the Word. For indeed this holy and heavenly profession is nowhere established, but only among us Christians, and it is a very strong argument that with us is to be found the genuine and true religion.”

Tertullian, speaking of women who, instead of choosing a husband, have preferred a virginal life: “They prefer to be wedded to God. To God their beauty, to God their youth (is dedicated). With Him they live; with Him they converse; Him they "handle" by day and by night; to the Lord they assign their prayers as dowries; from Him, as oft as they desire it, they receive His approbation as dotal gifts. Thus they have laid hold for themselves of an eternal gift of the Lord; and while on earth, by abstaining from marriage, are already counted as belonging to the angelic family.” (CCL 1, 377; *Ad uxorem*, 1, 4); and speaking about virgins, he says that they are “brides of Christ” (*De virg. vel.*, 16, 4: “Nupsisti enim Christo, illi tradidisti carnem tuam, illi sponsasti maturitatem tuam,” (CCL 2, 1225); *De res.*, 61, 6: “virgines Christi maritae” (CCL 2, 1010).

The reforms of the Middle Ages

Although it has already been proven that absolute and perpetual priestly chastity is a biblical, apostolic and patristic teaching that cannot be denied by any Christian, the Catholic Church from the time of Christ had to confirm this teaching from time to time since impure factions of heretics or fallen away Catholics tried to reject or neglect this teaching in order to live out their unlawful lusts.

From the fifth century through the eleventh century, the Catholic Church firmly held to its law that all clerics in major orders were to observe perfect continence after ordination. In fact, over the course of these centuries, the Church actually increased its restrictions on married clerics. In 567, the *Second Council of Tours* ruled that any priest found in bed with his wife would be excommunicated for a year, and reduced to the lay state. In 653 the *Council of Toledo* prohibited clerics from having any type of public relationship with their wives or concubines. When the Frankish Church held its first reform synod in 743, it forbade any priest or deacon to live in the same house with any woman, including his wife. The Irish Penitentials of the sixth century, which were one of the earliest collections of disciplinary norms on clerical life of the middle ages or the medieval period, imposed strict penalties upon clerics who committed fornication or who engaged in conjugal activity after ordination. Similar ordinances for Anglo-Saxon lands could be found in penitential books of the eighth century. Bishop Chrodegang of Metz (d. 766) issued the *Regula canonicorum*,

which required that his cathedral clergy, or canons, live in a community governed by a rule similar to those of religious orders. This practice, which was eventually adopted by many other dioceses, provided a practical alternative to the existing custom of allowing married clerics to live with their wives, making it easier for priests to live celibately.

It is therefore true to say that, during those centuries of crisis for clerical morals, the Church never lost sight of the ancient tradition concerning the law of celibacy. From her memory she constantly affirmed the prohibition of marriage for clerics in major orders and the duty of a vow of perpetual continence for those married before ordination, even at times when these laws were being flagrantly violated. Apart from evidence in the collections of disciplinary norms, this commitment is also attested to by the efforts of regional councils and diocesan synods. In France, for example, the Council of Metz (888) forbade priests to keep a woman in their homes; the Council of Rheims (909), noting the decadence in clerical conduct as regards continence, urged that association with women should be forbidden, and also cohabitation with them, both norms being related to the precept of continence. In Germany, the Council of Mainz (888) recalled that the prohibition on cohabitation with women prohibited cohabitation even with a wife living in continence whom the cleric had previously married, that is, it confirmed the prohibition of canon 3 of the Council of Nicea (325); the Council of Rheims (909), noting the decadence in clerical conduct as regards continence, urged that association with women should be forbidden, and also cohabitation with them, both norms being related to the precept of continence. This tendency was taken up by the 11th-century Gregorian Reform, which aimed at eliminating what it called “Nicolaitism” (the widespread violation of clerical celibacy and the practice of priests being married or having a mistress or concubine). It was one of the twin evils to be overthrown in the eyes of the reform movement of 11th century Rome, inspired by Pope St. Gregory VII. (The second evil practice was simony.)

In 893, the ‘Statutes of Riculph, Archbishop of Soissons and his bishops’ state: “Neither bishop, priest, deacon, nor any cleric shall have a woman in his house...” Indeed, during the following centuries, the decrees of the Catholic Church on this matter maintained the biblical and apostolic teaching of clerical celibacy when compared to other “Churches” who tried to reject or ignore this teaching of the Church. In some dioceses, men could not receive Orders unless they made a formal vow of perfect chastity first. In the late ninth and early tenth centuries, several councils prohibited clerics from living with any women, including their wives.

Sadly, in the Middle Ages, abuses of clerical celibacy arose, which incited a strong reaction from the Church. *The Synod of Augsburg* (952), and the local *Councils of Anse* (994) and *Poitiers* (1000) all affirmed the rule of celibacy. In 1009, the Church *Council of Egham* in

England cautioned: “We beg and admonish all ministers of God, especially priests, to cultivate chastity... They must surely know that a priest must not have a wife...”

The Council of Pavia (1022), which was convened by Pope Benedict VIII and St. Henry II, Holy Roman Emperor, mandated strict celibacy, banning clerical marriage and forbidding clergy to live with any women, including their wives. Clerics refusing to separate from their wives, including bishops, were to be laicized (to be deprived of their clerical ministry, although they remain ordained priests forever). *The Council of Burgess* (1031) ordered the wives of clerics to leave the towns where their clerichusbands lived. They also struck a blow against the hereditary priesthood by declaring that any children fathered after ordination were illegitimate and, therefore, ineligible to receive Orders. During the pontificate of Pope St. Leo IX (1049-54), synods in Rome and Mainz banned clerical marriage. Pope Victor II (1055-1057) continued Leo’s policy and on 4 June 1055 anathematized clerical marriage and unchastity. Pope Nicholas II (1059-61) convened a synod at the Lateran, which ordered the laity not to attend Masses said by priests who were living with their wives or concubines and which ordered the excommunication of clerics who had not yet complied with Leo IX’s directives. More importantly, the synod established the College of Cardinals and vested it with the authority to elect popes. By stripping the Holy Roman Emperor and his nobles of their power to appoint popes, this synod ended the most egregious example of lay investiture and greatly increased the power and authority of the papacy.

Nicholas II also made effective use of his legates, Cardinal Humbert of Silva, Archdeacon St. Hildebrand of Rome, and the indomitable monk, St. Peter Damian, in enforcing the decrees of his councils. Humbert crusaded tirelessly against clerical incontinence or “nicolaitism,” which had been condemned as a heresy in 1059. At the pope’s behest, Damian, who was also the Cardinal of Ostia, wrote several works that praised celibacy and that condemned unchaste clerics and their consorts. St. Hildebrand used his authority as the Archdeacon to reform the clergy of Rome and he also made trips abroad on behalf of the pope. Nicholas held other councils that repeated the decrees of the synod of 1059 and he wrote an encyclical on celibacy.

Nicholas II was succeeded by Alexander II (1061-73), who had to contend with the claims of the anti-pope Honorius II, and who did little to advance his predecessor’s agenda on clerical chastity. When Alexander died, Archdeacon St. Hildebrand was elected pope and took the name Gregory VII (1073-1085). The new bishop of Rome wasted no time in restarting the engine of reform. Although his bitter struggle over lay investiture with Emperor Henry IV took up much of his energy and ultimately resulted in his exile from Rome in 1080, Pope St. Gregory VII effectively combated clerical marriage up until then. He held several synods at the Lateran, including one in 1074, which required all clerics to

make a vow of celibacy upon ordination and which prohibited lay people from attending Masses or receiving the sacraments from unchaste clerics. The synod of 1078 put the burden of enforcing clerical chastity upon the bishops, who would be suspended if they tolerated the behavior of unchaste clerics. The pope even enlisted the aid of abbots and nobles in bringing reluctant bishops to heel.

Gregory VII's motives were threefold. First and foremost, they were moral, since he rightly considered that clerical marriage was adultery. Secondly, they were material – a celibate clergy would not have possessions to pass on to their children and thus property would be inherited by the Church. Thirdly, they were political: a celibate clergy would be subject only to the Pope and would therefore not have dealings with the world.

During the struggle to gain control over the priesthood, Pope St. Gregory VII finally gave his ultimatum in 1074 by declaring that no man could be ordained without first pledging himself to celibacy: "The Church cannot escape from the clutches of the laity unless priests first escape from the clutches of their wives." (Citing the authority of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:33-34). Thus, if a married clergyman did not separate from his wife, he was to be deposed. After this ultimatum other synods and local councils passed similar legislation. By the year 1080, when St. Gregory VII was forced into exile, strict clerical celibacy was becoming the accepted practice throughout the Catholic Church. In 1089 Pope Urban II (1088-1099) ordered that married priests who ignored the celibacy laws was to be imprisoned for the good of their souls and that all clerics who continued to live with their wives were to be removed from office. If, after being warned by a bishop, clerics did not comply, the pope gave secular rulers permission to make slaves of clerical wives. In 1095, the *Council of Piacenza* passed a resolution outlawing the marriage of priests. Pope Callistus II (1119-1124) presided over the First Lateran Council which decreed that clerical marriages were invalid, fought simony and concubinage of the clergy, ended the lay investiture crisis, and decreed that it was adultery for bishops to forsake their see for marriage.

These decrees culminated in the reforms of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which reaffirmed the holy law of clerical celibacy as the undisputed law and practice of the Catholic Church. Although Pope St. Gregory VII (1073-85) is credited with carrying out the reforms that effected this change, the popes and councils who preceded him laid the groundwork of his program, which also included ending the abuses of simony and lay investiture.

Still, the Gregorian programme for reform was not without opposition. The opponents of reform presented their own arguments, not only at the practical but also at the theoretical

level. Their main argument was a scriptural one drawn from the Old Testament, which not only allowed priests to marry but mandated marriage to perpetuate the priestly caste. They also drew on the episode of Paphnutius whom, they claimed, opposed the idea of requiring absolute continence from married clerics at the Council of Nicea (325). As for the East, the Greek ecclesiastical historians Socrates (c. 380-439) and Sozomen (c. 400-450), who wrote a century after the event, reported that the First Council of Nicaea considered ordering all married clergy to refrain from conjugal relations, but the Council was dissuaded by Paphnutius of Thebes. As the story goes, he is alleged to have risen during the Council to protest any plan to impose a discipline of total continence on married clerics, suggesting that it be left to the decision of the particular Churches. The argument runs that his advice is supposed to have been accepted by the assembly. The well-known Church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-340), who was present at the Council and sympathetic to the Arians, does not make any reference to this episode. It is first recorded by the 5th century Greek historian Sozomen. There are several arguments against the authenticity of this episode, but the most telling one is that the Eastern Church itself, which should have had a great interest in it, either did not know of it or, because the Eastern Church leaders were convinced that it was false, did not have a record of it in any official document it used. None of the polemical writers on clerical celibacy made use of it, nor did the Council of Trullo (691) refer to it. And given the polemical tone of Trullo it would have served its purpose well to have referred to it if it was true. The story of Paphnutius was used against the Gregorian reform, and this was why Pope St. Gregory VII, at the Synod of Rome in 1077, condemned the episode as one of the two most important falsifications used by the opponents of the reform (cf. Cholij, *Clerical Celibacy in East and West*, pp. 78-92, and Stickler, *The Case for Clerical Celibacy*, pp 62-65). This means that the historical value of the Paphnutius incident at Nicea is rejected by Rome.

Subsequent Later Reforms and the History and Reason Behind the Great Western Schism

St. Peter Damian (1007-1072), Doctor of the Church and cardinal-bishop of the diocese of Ostia, Italy, said that, since the Virgin Mary delivered the infant Jesus, only virgin priests ought to bring Him forth on the Eucharistic altar (Peter Damian, *On the Dignity of the Priest*). Damian taught that any married priest who had marital intercourse with his wife “became impure and his impurity contaminated every liturgical action he performed, sullied the sacred vessels that he touched, and defiled the sacred words that he spoke.” (Peter Damian, *Against the Intemperate Clerics*, Chapter 4). While some who refuse to accept the Church’s teaching in this regard might object that St. Peter the Apostle himself was married, (although there is nothing in the Bible or Tradition that says that he performed the marital act after his ordination) Peter Damian affirms St. Jerome’s condemnation of forbidden sexual activity of the clergy, declaring that, “Peter washed away

the filth of marriage with the blood of his martyrdom.” (St. Peter Damian, *On the Perfection of Bishops*)

In truth, Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself tells us in *The Revelations of St. Bridget* that St. Peter Damian’s teaching is perfectly right in this regard and that the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul was conformed to how they lived and how much they loved their flesh in this life: “Peter and Paul died for the sake of righteousness, although Peter died a more painful death than Paul, for he loved the flesh more than Paul; he also had to be more conformed to me through his painful death since he held the primacy of my church. Paul, however, inasmuch as he had a greater love of continence and because he had worked harder, died by the sword like a noble knight, for I arrange all things according to merit and measure. So, in God’s judgment it is not how people end their lives or their horrible death that leads to their reward or condemnation, but their intention and will.” (Our Lord speaking to St. Bridget, *The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 3, Chapter 19)

Peter Damian showed that married priests betrayed their high calling because “they lived as married men, amid the reek and screams of sniveling brats, side by side with a smirking, randy wife, [and] bedeviled by daily temptations to unclean thoughts, words, and deeds.” (St. Peter Damian, *Against the Intemperate Clerics*, Chapter 7)

Cardinal Humbert, one of St. Peter Damian’s contemporaries, was Pope St. Leo IX’s apostolic delegate to the Eastern Church in Byzantium (present-day Istanbul). Condemning the Eastern Church for allowing the impurity of a married priesthood, Humbert depicted the Eastern Rite priests in these words: “Young husbands, just now exhausted from carnal lust, serve the altar. And immediately afterward they again embrace their wives with hands that have been hallowed by the immaculate Body of Christ. That is not the mark of true faith, but an invention of Satan.” Because of various reasons (in addition to the impious practice mentioned above by Cardinal Humbert), on 16 July 1054, during the celebration of the liturgy, Humbert excommunicated his host, Eastern Patriarch Michael, by placing a Papal Bull of excommunication of the Patriarch on the high altar of the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia. Michael reciprocated by “excommunicating” Latin Church leaders for permitting “irregularities” such as prohibiting the marriage of priests. The tragic split between the Eastern “Orthodox” Church – which is a sensual, condemned and heretical sect as we have seen from the Bible and Apostolic Tradition – and the Western (and Eastern) Catholic Church, which is the one and only true Christian Faith, dates from that year, and it has never been healed since that time. So because of the Eastern Schismatics’ obstinacy and inordinate love of this fleeting fleshly pleasure, in addition to their other obstinate rejections of various other doctrines of the Catholic Church, they have sadly denied and rejected Christ and the faith in the process.

The reforms of the eleventh century were finalized in the twelfth century by the Ecumenical and infallible *First Lateran Council* (1123), which proclaimed that after a cleric was ordained a subdeacon, deacon, or priest, he could not validly marry or live with his wife, and that the marriages of all higher clerics were invalid. The First Lateran Council was held during the pontificate of Pope Callistus II, and was “for various important matters of the church”, as Callistus himself says in the letter of convocation. Canon 7 declared: “We absolutely forbid priests, deacons or subdeacons to live with concubines and wives, and to cohabit with other women, except those whom the Council of Nicaea permitted to dwell with them solely on account of necessity, namely a mother, sister, paternal or maternal aunt, or other such persons, about whom no suspicion could justly arise.” Canon 21 declared that any marriages contracted of clerics and the chaste servants of Christ were void: “We absolutely forbid priests, deacons, subdeacons and monks to have *concubines* or to contract *marriages*. We adjudge, as the sacred canons have laid down, that marriage contracts between such persons should be made void and the persons ought to undergo penance.”

At the *Synod of Clermont* in 1130 Pope Innocent II decreed that marital intercourse was incompatible with holy men and their holy actions. The pope said that: “since priests are supposed to be God’s temples, vessels of the Lord and sanctuaries of the Holy Spirit... it offends their dignity to lie in the conjugal bed and live in impurity.”

Repeating the decrees of the First Lateran Council, the Ecumenical *Second Lateran Council* (1139) decreed in Canon 6: “We also decree that those who in the subdiaconate and higher orders have contracted marriage or have concubines, be deprived of their office and ecclesiastical benefice. For since they should be and be called the temple of God, the vessel of the Lord, the abode of the Holy Spirit, it is unbecoming that they indulge in marriage and in impurities.” Canon 7: “Following in the footsteps of our predecessors, the Roman pontiffs Gregory VII, Urban, and Paschal, we command that no one attend the masses of those who are known to have wives or concubines. But that the law of continence and purity, so pleasing to God, may become more general among persons constituted in sacred orders, we decree that bishops, priests, deacons, subdeacons, canons regular, monks, and professed clerics (*conversi*) who, transgressing the holy precept, have dared to contract marriage, shall be separated. For a union of this kind which has been contracted in violation of the ecclesiastical law, we do not regard as matrimony. Those who have been separated from each other, shall do penance commensurate with such excesses.”

Thus the infallible decrees of the *First* and *Second Lateran Councils* made it clear once and for all—and especially to those contraveners in the Christian world that opposed and still

oppose the Apostolic and Biblical teaching of clerical celibacy in the New Testament and in the New Law—that this teaching indeed was true and biblical and that henceforth, all clerics had to remain perfectly chaste if they wished to be spotless and lawful and pure ministers of Our Lord Jesus Christ. While it has already been proved that all deacons, priests and bishops of the Church must live totally and perpetually chaste from the time of their ordination and that this is indeed the teachings of the Bible and the Apostles, from that time onward, the law and practice of the Church concerning strict celibacy was made more firm.

And later legislation, found especially in the *Quinque Compilationes Antiquae* and the Decretals of Gregory IX, continued to deal with questions concerning married men who were ordained legally. In 1322 Pope John XXII insisted that no one bound in marriage—even if unconsummated—could be ordained unless there was full knowledge of the requirements of Church law. If the free consent of the wife had not been obtained, the husband, even if already ordained, was to be reunited with his wife, exercise of his ministry being barred. Accordingly, the assumption that a wife might not want to give up her marital rights may have been one of the factors contributing to the eventual universal practice in the Latin Church of ordaining only unmarried men.

One further word on the canonical legislation of the Middle Ages. On various occasions, in penitential books, it is said that for a married priest to go on having sexual relations with his wife after ordination would be an act of unfaithfulness to the promise made to God. It would be an *adulterium* since, the minister now being married to the Church, his relationship with his own wife “is like a violation of the marriage bond” (Stickler, *L'évolution... (ut supra)*, p. 381). This weighty accusation against a lawfully wedded man only makes sense if something is left unexpressed because it is well-known, i.e., that the sacred minister, from the moment of his ordination, now lives in another relationship, also of a matrimonial type — that which unites Christ and the Church in which he, the minister, the man (*vir*), represents Christ the bridegroom; with his own wife (*uxor*) therefore “the carnal union should from now on be a spiritual one”, as St. Leo the Great said. (*Ep. ad Rusticum Narbonensem episc. Inquis. III: Resp.* (PL 54, 1204 A): «*ut de carnali fiat spirituale coniugium*».)

Conclusion

The universal law of clerical celibacy confirmed by the Council of Nicaea applied, and still applies, to the Eastern Church as well as the Western. It is noteworthy that at that Council, the Easterners (Greeks) made up the overwhelming majority. Previously, the *Council of Neo-Caesarea* (c. 314) had reminded all Eastern clerics in major orders of the inviolability

of this law under pain of deposition: “If a presbyter marry, let him be removed from his order.” (Canon 1) And of course, we must not forget to cite earliest canon law on the subject: “None of the clergy, except readers and singers may marry after ordination.” (*The Apostolic Canons*, Canon 26)

We may then take it for a general principle that in no part of the ancient Church was a priest allowed to contract holy matrimony; and in no place was he allowed to exercise his priesthood afterwards, if he should dare to enter into such a relation with a woman.

The Eastern Church began at a late date to violate its own law of celibacy. *The Quinisext Council* of 692, also called *Council in Trullo*, which St. Bede the Venerable (673-735) called “a reprobate synod,” breached the Apostolic Tradition concerning the celibacy of clerics by declaring that “all clerics except bishops may continue in wedlock” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Council in Trullo, vol. 4, 1908). This reprobate synod taught: “Nor shall it be demanded of him at the time of his ordination that he promise to abstain from lawful intercourse with his wife...” (Canon 13) The popes refused to endorse the conclusions of the Council in the matter of celibacy, and the Eastern Church planted the seeds of its schism.

It is abundantly clear that the fathers in *The Quinisext Council* thought the discipline they were setting forth to be the original discipline of the Church in the matter, and the discipline of the West an innovation, but that such was really the case is an innovation itself. Thomassinus (1619-1695), French theologian and Oratorian, treats this point with much learning, and I shall cite some of the authorities he brings forward. Of these the most important is St. Epiphanius (c. 310-403), bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, of whom we have already cited some verses before, who as a Greek would be certain to give the tradition of the East, had there been any such tradition known in his time. I give the three great passages:

“It is evident that those from the priesthood are chiefly taken from the order of virgins, or if not from virgins, at least from monks; or if not from the order of monks, then they are wont to be made priests who keep themselves from their wives, or who are widows after a single marriage. But he that has been entangled by a second marriage is not admitted to priesthood in the Church, even if he be continent from his wife, or be a widower. Anyone of this sort is rejected from the grade of bishop, presbyter, deacon, or subdeacon. The order of reader, however, can be chosen from all the orders these grades can be chosen from, that is to say from virgins, monks, the continent, widowers, and they who are bound by honest marriage. Moreover, if necessity so compel, even digamists may be lectors, for such is not a priest, etc., etc.” (Epiph. *Exposit. Fid. Cath.*, c. xxi)

“Christ taught us by an example that the priestly work and ornaments should be communicated to those who shall have preserved their continency after a single marriage, or shall have persevered in virginity. And this the Apostles thereafter honestly and piously decreed, through the ecclesiastical canon of the priesthood.” (Epiph. *Hæresi*. 48, n. 7)

“Nay, moreover, he that still uses marriage, and begets children, even though the husband of but one wife, is by no means admitted by the Church to the order of deacon, presbyter, bishop, or subdeacon. But for all this, he who shall have kept himself from the commerce of his one wife, or has been deprived of her, may be ordained, and this is most usually the case in those places where the ecclesiastical canons are most accurately observed.” (Epiph. *Hæresi*, 59, n. 4)

Nor is the weight of this evidence lessened, but much increased, by the acknowledgment of the same father that in some places in his days the celibate life was not observed by such priests as had wives, for he explains that such a state of things had come about “not from following the authority of the canons, but through the neglect of men, which is wont at certain periods to be the case.” (*Ibid.* ut supra.)

The witness of the Western Fathers, although so absolutely and indisputably clear on this subject already, yet one more passage from St. Jerome should be quoted: “The Virgin Christ and the Virgin Mary dedicated the virginity of both sexes. The Apostles were chosen when either virgins or continent after marriage, and bishops, presbyters, and deacons are chosen either when virgins, or widowers, or at least continent forever after the priesthood.” (*Hieron. Apolog. pro. lib. adv. Jovin.*)

It cannot be more clearly stated. And there is a reason for the tradition. The main reason why clerical celibacy is doctrinal and not disciplinary, is because the cleric in major orders, by virtue of his ordination, contracts a marriage with the Church, and he cannot be a bigamist (the crime of marrying a person while one is still legally married to someone else). As our fathers in the Faith still explain it, these clerics are virgins in order to be true disciples and ministers of Christ, a virgin consecrated to His Spouse. St. Jerome, in his treatise, *Adversus Jovinianum*, bases clerical celibacy on the virginity of Christ. Thus as early as 306 the Council of Elvira in Spain imposed sanctions on virgins who had been unfaithful to their consecration to God and their vow of virginity. At the same time the Council of Ancyra (314) declared that consecrated virgins who marry were guilty of bigamy, since they were espoused to Christ. In 364 the civil law, under Valens, declared that anyone who married a consecrated virgin was subject to the death penalty. Canon 16

of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451) states that: “It is not lawful for a virgin who has dedicated herself to the Lord God, nor for monks, to marry; and if they are found to have done this, let them be excommunicated.” St. Peter Damian adds: “No one can be ignorant of the fact that all the Fathers of the Catholic Church unanimously imposed the inviolable rule of continence on clerics in major orders. The Body of the Lord in the sacrament of the altar is the same as the one carried by the immaculate hands of the Virgin at Bethlehem. To be able to touch It, it is necessary to have pure hands, sanctified by perfect continence.”

This is also why there is a connection between *monogamous* marriage (the state or practice of having only one husband or wife over a period of time) on the one hand and *continence* on the other. Tertullian speaking clearly about this invokes the example set by Christ who, according to the flesh, was not married and lived in celibacy (he was not, therefore, “a husband of one wife”); yet, in the spirit, “he had one bride the Church” (*De monog.*, 5,7 (CCL 2, 1235)). This doctrine of Christ’s spiritual marriage to the Church, here inspired by the Pauline text of Ephesians 5:25-32, was common in early Christianity; Tertullian saw this spiritual marriage as one of the main theological bases for the law of monogamous marriage: “because Christ is *one* and his Church is *one*” (*De exhort. cast.*, 5, 3 (CCL 2, 1023)); hence, Tertullian goes on, the law of single marriage is also founded on ‘*Christi sacramentum*’). But it does not follow from this that Tertullian had already made the connection between this doctrine and the formulae *unius uxoris vir* or *unius yin uxor* of the Pastoral Letters (*1 Timothy*; *2 Timothy*; *Epistle to Titus*), where monogamous marriage is explicitly referred to.

Besides, Ephesians 5:25-32 dealt not precisely with monogamous marriage but, in principle, the relationship of every Christian marriage with the *covenant*. Here Paul is speaking of *all* married members of the Church. When, referring to Genesis 2:24, the Apostle says that husband and wife “will be one flesh” (v. 31), he is justifying the use of marriage for them. The formula *unius uxoris vir* of the Pastoral Letters, however, is not used for all married men but only for *ministers* of the Church (this fact has been too little noted); yet subsequently it came to be regarded as the biblical basis of the law of continence for clerics. This is the point that still needs to be cleared up.

With St. Augustine we take a step forward. He, having taken part in the deliberations of the African synods, was certainly aware of the ecclesiastic law (based on divine law) governing the ‘continence of clerics’ (St. Augustine speaks of this in the *De coniugiis adulterinis*, II, 20, 22: «*solemnus eis proponere continentiam clenicorum*» (PL 40, 486)). But how does Augustine then explain the stipulation *unius uxoris vir* which is used by Paul for married clerics? In *De bono conjugali* (written in about A.D. 420), he advances a theological

explanation for it, and asks himself why polygamy was accepted in the Old Testament, whereas “in our own age, the sacrament has been restricted to the union between *one man* and *one woman*; and consequently it is only lawful to ordain as a minister of the Church (*ecclesiae dispensatorem*) a man who has had one wife (*unius uxoris virum*).” And here is Augustine’s answer: “As the many wives (*plures uxores*) of the ancient Fathers symbolized our future churches of all nations, subject to the one man, Christ (*uni viro subditas Christo*), so the guide of the faithful (*noster antistes*, our bishop), who is the husband of one wife (*unius uxoris vir*) signifies the union of all nations, subject to the one man, Christ (*uni viro subditam Christo*).” (*De bono coniugali*, 18, 21 (PL 40, 3 87-388))

In this text, where we find the formula *unius uxoris vir* being applied to the *bishop*, the whole accent falls on the fact that he, ‘the man’, in his relations with his ‘wife’, symbolizes the relationship between Christ and the Church. An analogous use of the phrase ‘man and wife’ occurs in a passage of *De continentia* (c. 418-420): “The Apostle invites us to observe so to speak three pairs (*copulas*): Christ and the Church, husband and wife, the spirit and the flesh” (*De continentia*, 9, 23 (PL 40, 364)). The suggestion these texts offer us for interpreting the stipulation *unius uxoris vir* applied to the (married) minister of the sacrament is that he, as minister, not only represents the second pair (husband and wife) but also the first: henceforth he personifies *Christ* in his married relationship with the *Church*. Here we have the basis for the doctrine which was later to become a classic one: *Sacerdos alter Christus*. Like Christ, the priest is the Church’s bridegroom. From this, it has become abundantly clear that, for married ministers, their ordination implied an invitation to live in continence thereafter.

At the *Council of Trent*, the discussions of the theological commission led to the approval of the following canon by the Fathers of Trent on November 11, 1563. *The Council of Trent* (1545-1563) considered the matter and at its twenty-fourth session decreed that marriage after ordination was invalid: “If any one saith, that clerics constituted in sacred orders, or Regulars, who have solemnly professed chastity, are able to contract marriage, and that being contracted it is valid, notwithstanding the ecclesiastical law, or vow; and that the contrary is no thing else than to condemn marriage; and, that all who do not feel that they have the gift of chastity, even though they have made a vow thereof, may contract marriage; let him be anathema: seeing that God refuses not that gift to those who ask for it rightly, neither does He suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able.” (Session 24, Canon 9, A.D. 1563)

It also decreed, concerning the relative dignity of marriage and celibacy: “If any one saith, that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity, or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in

matrimony; let him be anathema.” (Canon 10)

In relation to the Apostles who were married before being called by Christ, all the theologians affirmed unhesitatingly that afterwards they gave up conjugal life with their wives in line with their own declaration: “We have left everything and followed you...” (Matthew 19:27).

So not only would it be a violation of Sacred Tradition to blot out a constant teaching decreed for 2,000 years to be absolutely obligatory, but also one must recognize that clerical celibacy is to be seen not merely as of ecclesiastical institution, but part of what is more broadly known in Catholic moral theology as “divine positive law,” initiated by Christ and His Apostles. That is, it is not merely disciplinary in nature, as many assert.

Against the long-standing tradition of the Church in the East as well as in the West, which excluded marriage after ordination, the “reformer” Zwingli married in 1522, Luther in 1525, and Calvin in 1539. And against what had also become, though seemingly at a later date, a tradition in both East and West, the married Thomas Cranmer was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533 (Cranmer was not yet a priest when he entered into marriage; he was also a widower before his ordination). Once his appointment was approved by the pope, Cranmer declared Henry’s marriage to Catherine “void”, and four months later “married” him to Anne Boleyn; thus was the seeds of the Anglican schism sown.

Barely nine months after the king’s death Convocation voted in December 1547 to abolish the laws which made the marriages of clerks in Holy Orders null and void *ab initio*, and a Bill to this effect was passed in the House of Commons in the 1548-49 session. All such marriages hitherto contracted, involving as many as eight or nine thousand clerics, were rendered good and lawful by the same Bill. Three years later a second Act was passed which legitimated the children born of such unions. In 1553 the new code of Canon Law for the Church of England condemned as heresy the belief that Holy Orders were an invalidating impediment to marriage.

Following the elimination of celibacy in different countries, it is not surprising that many priests, diocesan as well as religious, abandoned their obligations. Sadly this was often the prelude to the abandonment of the faith as well.

As Stickler incisively comments in *The Case for Clerical Celibacy*, pp. 50-51: “This demanding commitment, which involves a life of constant sacrifice, can only be lived out if it is nourished by a living faith, since human weakness is a constant reminder of its

practical implications. It is only through a faith that is constantly and consciously sustained that the supernatural reasons underlying the commitment can be truly understood. When this faith grows weak, the determination to persevere fades; when faith dies, so does continence.” He goes on to point out that “a constant proof of this truth is to be found in the various heretical and schismatic movements that have arisen in the Church. One of the first institutions to be attacked is clerical continence. Therefore we should not be surprised that one of the first things that was rejected by the heretical movements that broke away from the unity of the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century – Lutherans, Calvinists, Zwinglians, Anglicans – was in fact clerical celibacy.” (*ibid.*, p. 51) It is also significant that the Old Catholics, when they seceded after Vatican I, abolished celibacy and reverted to a married clergy.

The revolutionary dimension of the opposition to celibacy at first evinced a political response from many civil authorities. The emperors Charles V (1519-56), Ferdinand I (1558-64) and Maximilian II (1564-76) all counselled a mitigation of the law at different stages during the Council of Trent. Humanists like Erasmus advised the same course. A change was admissible, even desirable they said, if it did not touch on the substance of the faith.

Some theologians and bishops rowed in with the humanists and were prepared for any accommodation which did not undermine their flawed and false understanding of what “the essentials of the faith” is. Still, the majority of bishops, convinced of the doctrinal and ascetical arguments for celibacy, refused to be railroaded into change. Since many of the priests who were living in compromised situations were already committed to heterodox theological positions, the bishops judged that a change in the law of celibacy would do little to win back these men to orthodoxy. They were also convinced that tolerating marriage for priests would completely undermine the radical reform of the clergy which was necessary if they were to become exemplary ministers of Christ.

Despite powerful political pressures Rome refused to legislate for a compromise solution. Priests who desired to be readmitted to the ministry could do so only on condition that they separated from their concubines and showed an authentic spirit of repentance. These were the dispositions which were offered to Germany. Through Cardinal Pole, Rome made a similar arrangement with England during the period of the Catholic restoration under Mary (1553-58) to facilitate those married priests who wanted to return to orthodoxy. From 1917, all cases of dispensation from the impediment of marriage were reserved to the Holy See. But those receiving dispensation were not authorized by that fact to continue with marital relations. (cf. B. Ojetti, *Commentarium in Codicem Iuris Canonici*, Rome/P.U.G., 1930), 11, pp. 103-109; M.C. a Coronata, *Compendium Iuris Canonici*

(Turin/Rome, Marietti, 1949 III, pp. 327-8; F. Capello, *Summa Iuris Canonici* Rome/P.U.G. 1951.), II, pp. 277-8.)

The decrees and reforms of the Council of Trent were not immediately followed in all Catholic nations but with time they did bring about a general observance of the law of celibacy, thanks in no small measure to their provisions for the better training of the clergy. The “Enlightenment” brought fresh assaults against clerical celibacy and after the First Vatican Council, the Old Catholics, as already noted, separating themselves from Rome, abolished the rule. Despite the pressures on the Catholic Church to relax the law of celibacy, it has always resisted. Pope Benedict XV declared, in his Consistorial Allocution of 16 December 1920, that the Church considered celibacy to be of such importance that it could never abolish it: “We once more affirm, solemnly and formally, that this Apostolic See will never in any way lighten or mitigate the obligation of this holy and salutary law of clerical celibacy, not to speak of abolishing it.” (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 12 (1920), p. 585)

In the early nineteenth century an association was formed in Germany to advocate a change in the law, but Gregory XIV rejected this move in his encyclical *Mirari Vos* (1834). Fourteen years later Pius IX defended the discipline in his *Qui Pluribus*. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Modernism provoked a new attack on the law of celibacy, but its effects were limited, due largely to the decisive measures taken by St. Pius X. In his Apostolic Exhortation on the Priesthood, *Haerent animo*, published on August 4, 1908 to mark the Golden Jubilee of his ordination, the pope refers to celibacy as “the fairest jewel of our priesthood.” Pope Pius XI, in his detailed encyclical on the priesthood, *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*, reaffirmed St. Pius X’s appropriateness of the Church’s teaching on clerical celibacy, where he refers to celibacy as “the most precious treasure of the Catholic priesthood.”

As always, since lustful men tried to deny and reject the biblical and apostolic teaching on clerical chastity, Pope Pius XI, in *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii* (#’s 40-43), of Dec. 20, 1935, had to reaffirm the Church’s position once again concerning this matter: “It is impossible to treat of the piety of a Catholic priest without being drawn on to speak, too, of another most precious treasure of the Catholic priesthood, that is, of chastity; for from piety springs the meaning and the beauty of chastity. Clerics of the Latin Church in higher Orders are bound by a grave obligation of chastity; so grave is the obligation in them of its perfect and total observance that a transgression involves the added guilt of sacrilege. ... In the Old Law, Moses in the name of God commanded Aaron and his sons to remain within the Tabernacle, and so to keep continent, during the seven days in which they were exercising their sacred functions. But the Christian priesthood, being much superior to that of the Old Law, demanded a still greater purity. The law of ecclesiastical celibacy, whose first written

traces pre-suppose a still earlier unwritten practice, dates back to a canon of the Council of Elvira, at the beginning of the fourth century, when persecution still raged. This law only makes obligatory what might in any case almost be termed a moral exigency that springs from the Gospel and the Apostolic preaching. For the Divine Master showed such high esteem for chastity, and exalted it as something beyond the common power; He Himself was the Son of a Virgin Mother, *Florem Matris Virginis*, and was brought up in the virgin family of Joseph and Mary; He showed special love for pure souls such as the two Johns – the Baptist and the Evangelist. The great Apostle Paul, faithful interpreter of the New Law and of the mind of Christ, preached the inestimable value of virginity, in view of a more fervent service of God, and gave the reason when he said: "He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God." All this had almost inevitable consequences: the priests of the New Law felt the heavenly attraction of this chosen virtue; they sought to be of the number of those "to whom it is given to take this word," and they spontaneously bound themselves to its observance. Soon it came about that the practice, in the Latin Church, received the sanction of ecclesiastical law. The Second Council of Carthage at the end of the fourth century declared: "What the Apostles taught, and the early Church preserved, let us too, observe." [Council of Carthage, Canon 3 A.D. 390]"

Indeed, the Son of God Himself in *The Revelations of Saint Bridget* also reveals to us that the Apostles "had every intention of remaining chaste, and living continently in every way" at the time of Pentecost, which was in the very start of the Church, which shows us that the necessity of priestly chastity was well known to the Apostles at the very start of the Church at the time of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and their few followers in the shape of tongues of fire.

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to Saint Bridget, saying: "I who am speaking with you am he who on a day like today sent my Holy Spirit to my apostles and disciples. He came to them in three ways: first, as a forceful wind; second, as fire; third, in the shape of tongues. He came to them through closed doors, for they were alone, and they had three good qualities. First, they had every intention of remaining chaste, and living continently in every way; second, they possessed outstanding humility; third, all their desire was for God, for they desired nothing but him. They were like three clean but empty vessels—therefore the Holy Spirit came and filled them. He came like a forceful wind, for he filled their every joint and limb with divine delight and solace. He came like fire, for he so set their hearts aflame with the fire of divine love that they loved none but God, feared none but God. Third, he came in the shape of tongues, for, just as a tongue is inside the mouth without harming it but, rather, helping it to speak, so too the Holy Spirit was inside their souls, making them desire nothing but me and making them eloquent with divine wisdom. By his power, as if it

were functioning as a tongue, they spoke the whole truth.

“Thus, because these vessels were empty of desire, it was fitting that the Holy Spirit should come to them. Indeed, he cannot enter those people who are already filled and full. Who are ‘filled’ if not those who are full of all sin and filth? Such people are like three foul vessels. The first is full of stinking human excrement with a stench so foul that no one can bear to smell it. The second is full of the most disgusting semen with so bitter a taste that no one can bear to sip it. The third is full of diseased blood and pus so repulsive that no one can bear to see it. Likewise the wicked are full of worldly ambition and greed that stinks to me and my saints worse than human excrement. What are all temporal things if not excrement? The wretches find pleasure in this foul excrement that will soon disappear. The second vessel contains ***excessive lust*** and ***unchastity*** in every deed. This is as bitter to my taste as semen. I cannot endure such people; still less can I enter into them with my grace. How can I, true purity, enter into such impure beings? How can I, the fire of true love, inflame those whom the base fire of lust inflames? The third is their pride and arrogance. This is like diseased blood and pus. It corrupts people both within and without in their pursuit of the good, removes God’s given grace and renders them repulsive to God and neighbor. Someone filled with that cannot be filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit.” (*The Revelations of Saint Bridget*, Book 6, Chapter 36)

The conspiracy against the perpetual chastity of the Bishops, Priests and Clerics of the Church by the enemies of the Church and purity is revealed by the Popes of the Catholic Church

Since most people on this earth are impure, selfish and lustful, there currently exists a conspiracy against clerical chastity. Indeed, there have always been lustful men, and thus, there have always been heretics who have tried to pervert or reject this biblical teaching of clerical celibacy, but today this conspiracy is much more powerful and influential since almost all in the world are controlled by their sensuality. The Eastern “Orthodox” and the Protestants are prime examples of this, for both of these sects allow their believers to divorce and remarry even during the lifetime of their spouse, which is a mortal sin of adultery according to Our Lord in the Holy Scripture who says that *“he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery”* (Matthew 19:9). Both the Eastern “Orthodox” and the Protestants also allow their “ministers” to perform sexual relations, which is directly condemned by the Holy Bible and Apostolic Tradition, as we have seen. It is a fact of history that the impure and lustful protestants “carried away by the enticements of pleasure” are especially guilty of this conspiracy against clerical chastity since (as we have seen) they reject both the Holy Bible as well as the Church’s teaching on this matter in

order to satisfy their abominable and unlawful sexual desires.

Pope Gregory XVI condemned this “conspiracy against clerical celibacy” that were made by the lustful through the direct inspiration of their father, the Devil, in his encyclical *Mirari Vos*, which also firmly condemned modernism and exposed the insidious plans of the heretics to pervert the Church and society: “Now, however, We want you to rally to combat the abominable conspiracy against **clerical celibacy**. This conspiracy spreads daily and is promoted by profligate philosophers, some even from the clerical order. They have forgotten their person and office, and have been carried away by the enticements of pleasure. They have even dared to make repeated public demands to the princes for the abolition of that *most holy discipline*. But it is disgusting to dwell on these evil attempts at length. Rather, We ask that you strive with all your might to justify and to defend the law of clerical celibacy as prescribed by the sacred canons, against which the arrows of the lascivious are directed from every side.” (Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos* (#11), August 15, 1832)

Pope Pius IX carried on this papal tradition of confirming the reality of this conspiracy against clerical celibacy in his encyclical *Qui Pluribus*, where he showed very clearly that the evil people behind this conspiracy “make men fly in terror from all practice of religion, and they cut down and dismember the sheep of the Lord” (#17) and that as “a result of this filthy medley of errors which creeps in from every side, and as the result of the unbridled license to think, speak and write, We see the following: morals deteriorated,” (#18) and once morals is lost, faith is lost, and sin abounds and spirals out-of-control producing the resultant evil fruits. In truth, as “Augustine was wont to say ‘When all restraints are removed by which men are kept on the narrow path of truth, their nature, which is already inclined to evil, propels them to ruin.’” (Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos* #14)

Pope Pius IX, *Qui Pluribus* (#’s 16-18), November 9, 1846: “**The sacred celibacy of clerics** has also been the victim of conspiracy. Indeed, some churchmen have wretchedly forgotten their own rank and let themselves be converted by the charms and snares of pleasure. This is the aim too of the prevalent but wrong method of teaching, especially in the philosophical disciplines, a method which deceives and corrupts incautious youth in a wretched manner and gives it as drink the poison of the serpent in the goblet of Babylon. To this goal also tends the unspeakable doctrine of Communism, as it is called, a doctrine most opposed to the very natural law. For if this doctrine were accepted, the complete destruction of everyone’s laws, government, property, and even of human society itself would follow.

“To this end also tend the most dark designs of men in the clothing of sheep, while inwardly ravening wolves. They humbly recommend themselves by means of a

feigned and deceitful appearance of a purer piety, a stricter virtue and discipline; after taking their captives gently, they mildly bind them, and then kill them in secret. They make men fly in terror from all practice of religion, and they cut down and dismember the sheep of the Lord. To this end, finally—to omit other dangers which are too well known to you—tends the widespread disgusting infection from books and pamphlets which teach the lessons of sinning. These works, well-written and filled with deceit and cunning, are scattered at immense cost through every region for the destruction of the Christian people. They spread pestilential doctrines everywhere and deprave the minds especially of the imprudent, occasioning great losses for religion.

“As a result of this filthy medley of errors which creeps in from every side, and as the result of the unbridled license to think, speak and write, We see the following: morals deteriorated, Christ’s most holy religion despised, the majesty of divine worship rejected, the power of this Apostolic See plundered, the authority of the Church attacked and reduced to base slavery, the rights of bishops trampled on, the sanctity of marriage infringed, the rule of every government violently shaken and many other losses for both the Christian and the civil commonwealth. Venerable brothers, We are compelled to weep and share in your lament that this is the case.”

Indeed, since the devil knows that all the chaste, pure and humble servants of the Lord are more spiritually wise as well as more effective and powerful in helping to save souls, (as we have seen from the Holy Bible and Tradition), the Devil also labors mightily to get them under his control in order to make them fall away from religion and purity since he knows that much more people will be damned if he can remove the holy and good examples of virtuous priests and churchmen. Pope Pius IX and Gregory XVI expressly warned about this in their encyclicals, and now, today, we have all sorrowfully seen this, in fact, become prophetically fulfilled to the letter, especially when one considers the great evils of the Vatican II hierarchy, its sexual perversions, pedophilia and innumerable other sexual abuse scandals. Indeed, when even those people who should represent holiness and stand as the highest moral example to the world refuse to adopt a good and virtuous lifestyle and are unimaginably impure, then one can know with a certainty that the whole world and its “morals” has fallen into the complete control of the Devil. Indeed, the Vatican II sect’s sex abuse scandals and their handling of it is just another proof that shows why they are not the Catholic Church but the end times “Whore of Babylon” prophesied in the Bible that would lead souls astray by her filth and impurities.

In an interview with Sr. Lucia of Fatima, (the visionary who foretold that the Miracle of the Sun would occur on the 13th of October in the year 1917 – and that was witnessed by approximately 70,000 people – is undoubtedly one of the greatest miracles ever given

from Heaven in Catholic history outside of the Resurrection) Father Agustin Fuentes who, at the time, was the postulator of the Cause of Beatification of the two little Seers, Francisco and Jacinta, revealed Our Lady's words that was given in a revelation to Sr. Lucia, which prophesied that the widespread apostasy and sensuality that now fills the world would soon occur in even more widespread terms (than what was already happening in their time), even among those people who dare to call themselves chaste servants of Our Lord or by the name of Catholic:

"I bring you a message of extreme urgency: the Holy Father has permitted me to visit Lucia. She received me sadly. She was very thin and quite afflicted. Upon seeing me she said: "Father, our Lady is very unhappy because they have not taken her message of 1917 seriously. Neither the good nor the bad have paid any attention to it. The good continue their way without preoccupying themselves with it, they do not heed Her celestial requests. The bad walk through life swollen with perdition, not taking into account the punishment that threatens them. Believe me, Father, God will chastise the world very soon. Think, Father, about all the souls who will fall into Hell. This will happen because no one prays, because they do not do penance.

"All this is the reason why the Blessed Virgin is sad. Father, tell everyone that our Lady has, frequently, announced to me that many nations will disappear off the face of the earth. Russia is the scourge chosen by God to punish mankind [with war and communism], if we, through prayer and the sacraments, do not obtain the grace of their conversion. **Tell them, Father, tell them that the devil has begun a decisive battle against our Lady, because what most afflicts the Immaculate heart of Mary and the Sacred heart of Jesus is the fall of the souls of religious and priests. The devil knows that when religious and priests fail in their beautiful vocations they carry along with them many souls into hell.**

"And now, precisely, is the moment to stop the chastisement of Heaven. We have at our disposition two very efficacious means of doing this: prayer and sacrifice. The devil does everything he can to distract us and take away our liking for prayer; we shall save ourselves or condemn ourselves together. Furthermore, Father, it is now necessary to tell the people that they should not wait for a call to penitence and to prayer from the Holy Father, nor from the Bishops, nor the pastors, nor the Superiors. It is the right moment for them to use their own initiative in fulfilling good and holy works and reform their lives as the Holy Virgin desires.

"The devil desires to strengthen himself through consecrated souls; he tries to corrupt them so he can deceive others into a final impenitence. He uses many tricks even the ruse of suggesting tardiness in entering a religious life. The results are a sterility of interior life and a

coldness among the laity keeping them from renouncing pleasures and from offering a total immolation of themselves to God.

“Tell them, Father, that two things are the basis of the sanctification of Jacinta and Francisco, the sorrow of our Lady and the vision of Hell. It is as if our Lady were between two swords: On one side She sees humanity obstinate and indifferent facing the announced chastisements and on the other side She sees how we profane the Sacraments and ignore the punishment which is coming ever nearer and nearer, remaining incredulous, sensuous and materialistic. Our Lady has said: "We are on the border of the last times."

“Our Lady has told me three times: First: She has affirmed that the devil has begun a decisive battle, that is to say, from which one or the other will win or lose. We are with God or we are with the devil. Second: She repeated to me that the last remedies given to the world are the Holy Rosary and the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Third: She told me that other means of salvation have been despised by men many times. In Her anguish She offers us the last anchor of salvation which is Herself (perhaps the other means were Her numerous apparitions, signs of tears, messages of various seers scattered throughout the world).

“Our Lady has also said that if we will not listen and continue to offend God, we will not be pardoned. Father, it is urgent to understand this terrible reality, we do not wish to frighten souls, but it is an urgent call to humanity.

“Since the Blessed Virgin has given such a great remedy as the Rosary, there does not exist a single material, spiritual, national or international problem that cannot be solved through the Holy Rosary and our sacrifices. To pray the Rosary with love and piety will console Mary and erase the numerous tears of Her Immaculate Heart." (Taken from the "Messaggero del Cuore di Maria" No. 8-9 August–September, 1961, Rome, Italy)

The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus, by Teresa of Avila herself confirms the fact that the chaste servants of God will not only strengthen their own chances of reaching heaven but that they will help “many others also” into heaven, which says a lot about why the devil concentrates so much to bring down consecrated and chaste souls from the height of purity and blessedness that they inhabit: “He [God] showeth great mercy unto him to whom He gives the grace and resolution to strive for this blessing [the religious life] with all his might; for God withholdeth Himself from no one who perseveres. He will by little and little strengthen that soul, so that it may come forth victorious. I say resolution, because of the multitude of those things which Satan puts before it at first, to keep it back from beginning to travel on this road; for he knoweth what harm will befall him thereby—he will lose not only that soul, but many others also. If he who enters on this road does violence to himself, with the help of God, so as to reach the summit of perfection, such a one, I believe, will

never go alone to Heaven; he will always take many with him: God gives to him, as to a good captain, those who shall be of his company.”

Galatians 5:16-25 **“I say then, walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit: and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another: so that you do not the things that you would.** But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, **uncleanness, immodesty, luxury [lust]**, idolatry, witchcrafts, enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects, envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. **Of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the Kingdom of God.** But the fruit of the Spirit is, charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, **modesty, continency, chastity.** Against such there is no law. **And they that are Christ’s, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences.** If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

The presence of the Kingdom of Christ on the earth and in the heart of men can in no more drastic way be proved to the world than by observing the establishment of perpetual virginity and monastic life. St. John Chrysostom describes this redemptive-historical movement, and its expression in human sexuality, with the beautiful illustration of a mother bird and her nestlings (*Hom. XIII in Jn.*; PG 59.88; *Hom. XXI in Jn.*; PG 59.128). Initially, the mother rears her young. Then, she nudges them into the air, escorting them from the nest. If they are too weak, they are permitted to remain in the nest until they are able to gather sufficient strength to fly off with security. Christ, the mother bird, has come to escort us all from the nest of the world. Those who remain in the nest do so because of their “plodding nature,” and “deep sleep,” and because they are “attached to worldly things” (*Virg., XVII. 2.18-20*; SC 125, p. 150). Those who are truly noble “quit the nest with great ease and fly high in the air and skim the heavens” (*Virg., XVII. 2.20-22*; SC 125, p. 150).

Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary revealed in *The Revelations of St. Bridget* the truth that clerical celibacy has always been the will of God since the beginning of the New Law

Contrary to the many lustful heretics of today’s world, Our Lord and Our Lady revealed to St. Bridget in her Revelations that it “seemed very abominable and hateful to all the heavenly court and to me [the Blessed Virgin Mary]” that the priests of the New Law who

touched the Holy Eucharist should have wives or be contaminated by the sexual act, adding that the Popes are banned from allowing priests to marry, and that if any Pope at any time would dare to change this eternal law, “God will condemn him to a sentence as great” that literally defies human understanding.

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke, saying: “I honored the priests [in the New Law] with a sevenfold honor, as it were, on seven steps. On the first step, they should be my standard-bearers and special friends by reason of the purity of their mind and body, for purity is the first position near to God, whom nothing foul can touch nor adorn. **It was not strange that marital relation was permitted to the priests of the [old] law during the time in which they were not offering sacrifice, for they were carrying the shell, not the nut itself. Now, however, with the coming of the truth and the disappearance of the figure, one must strive all the more fully for purity by as much as the nut is sweeter than the shell.** As a sign of this kind of continence, first the hair is tonsured, so that desire for pleasure does not rule over spirit or flesh.” (*The Revelations of St. Bridget*, Book 4, Chapter 58)

Comparing the priests of the Old and New Law, Our Lady also revealed that although many of the priests in the New Law for a long time observed matrimony according to the Old Law through their misunderstanding of God’s will in the New Law, this practice of theirs was in fact hated and abominable before all the heavenly court and to God: namely, that Christian priests with their defiled hands touched and handled the New and Immaculate Sacrament of the Most Holy Body of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 7, Chapter 10: “It happened that a person who was absorbed in prayer heard then a voice saying to her: “O you to whom it has been given to hear and see spiritually, hear now the things that I [the Mother of God] want to reveal to you: namely, concerning that archbishop who said that if he were pope, he would give leave for all clerics and priests to contract marriages in the flesh. He thought and believed that this would be more acceptable to God than that clerics should live dissolutely, as they now do. For he believed that through such marriage the greater carnal sins might be avoided; and even though he did not rightly understand God’s will in this matter, nonetheless that same archbishop was still a friend of God.

“But now I shall tell you God’s will in this matter; for I gave birth to God himself. You will make these things known to my bishop and say to him that circumcision was given to Abraham long before the law was given to Moses and that, in that time of Abraham, all human beings whatsoever were guided according

to their own intellect [according to natural reason] and according to the choice of their own will and that, nevertheless, many of them were then friends of God. But after the law was given to Moses, it then pleased God more that human beings should live under the law and according to the law rather than follow their own human understanding and choice. It was the same with my Son's blessed Body.

“For after he instituted in the world this new sacrament of the Eucharist and ascended into Heaven, the ancient law [the Old Law that had just been abrogated] was then still kept [and observed by them]: namely, that Christian priests lived in carnal matrimony [according to the Old Law]. And, nonetheless, many of them were still friends of God because they believed with simple purity that this was pleasing to God [in the New Law]: namely, that Christian priests should have wives and live in wedlock just as, in the ancient times of the Jews, this had pleased him in the case of Jewish priests. And so, this was the observance of Christian priests for many years.

“But that observance and ancient custom seemed very abominable and hateful to all the heavenly court and to me, who gave birth to his body: namely, because it was being thus observed by Christian priests who, with their hands, touch and handle this new and immaculate Sacrament of the most holy Body of my Son. For the Jews had, in the ancient law of the Old Testament, a shadow, i.e., a figure, of this Sacrament; but Christians now have the truth itself – namely, him who is true God and man – in that blessed and consecrated bread.

“After those earlier Christian priests had observed these practices for a time, God himself, through the infusion of his Holy Spirit, put into the heart of the pope then guiding the Church another law more acceptable and pleasing to him in this matter: namely, by pouring this infusion into the heart of the pope so that he established a statute in the universal Church that Christian priests, who have so holy and so worthy an office, namely, of consecrating this precious Sacrament, should by no means live in the easily contaminated, carnal delight of marriage.

“And therefore, through God's preordination and his judgment, it has been justly ordained that priests who do not live in chastity and continence of the flesh are cursed and excommunicated before God and deserve to be deprived of their priestly office. But still, if they truthfully amend their lives with the true purpose of not sinning further, they will obtain mercy from God.

“Know this too: that if some pope concedes to priests a license to contract carnal marriage, God will condemn him to a sentence as great, in a spiritual way, as that which the law justly inflicts in a corporeal way on a man who has transgressed so gravely that he must have his eyes gouged out, his tongue and lips, nose and ears cut off, his hands and feet amputated, all his body's blood spilled out to grow completely cold, and finally, his whole bloodless corpse cast out to be devoured by dogs and other wild beasts. Similar things would truly happen in a spiritual way to

that pope who were to go against the aforementioned preordination and will of God and concede to priests such a license to contract marriage.

“For that same pope would be totally deprived by God of his spiritual sight and hearing, and of his spiritual words and deeds. All his spiritual wisdom would grow completely cold; and finally, after his death, his soul would be cast out to be tortured eternally in hell so that there it might become the food of demons everlastingly and without end. Yes, even if Saint Gregory the Pope had made this statute, in the aforesaid sentence he would never have obtained mercy from God if he had not humbly revoked his statute before his death.”

COMMON OBJECTIONS

Objection: The Church does not teach that a priest or a deacon must remain chaste after their ordination since the *Quinisext Council* in A.D. 692 declared that they were allowed to continue in the normal marital state.

Answer: The erroneous and fallible *Quinisext Council* (A.D. 692), also called *Council in Trullo*, which was mainly an eastern council presided over by eastern authorities, is the council the Eastern “Orthodox” Churches mainly bases their authority and false conclusion on regarding conjugal relations by priests and deacons married before ordination. Indeed, even though this fallible council clearly contradicted the ancient, unanimous, constant, teaching tradition of the Church and the Bible on the necessity of priestly celibacy before or after ordination in the New Law and the New Testament (as has been clearly documented above), this council nevertheless also claimed apostolic credentials for its repudiation of this ancient teaching of the Universal Church:

*The Quinisext Council, Canon 13, A.D. 692: “Since we know it to be handed down as a rule of the Roman Church that those who are deemed worthy to be advanced to the diaconate or presbyterate should promise no longer to cohabit with their wives, we, preserving the ancient rule and apostolic perfection and order, will that the lawful marriages of men who are in holy orders be from this time forward firm, by no means dissolving their union with their wives nor depriving them of their mutual intercourse at a convenient time. Wherefore, if anyone shall have been found worthy to be ordained subdeacon, or deacon, or presbyter, he is by no means to be prohibited from admittance to such a rank, even if he shall live with a lawful wife. Nor shall it be demanded of him at the time of his ordination that he promise to abstain from lawful intercourse with his wife... But we know, as they who assembled at Carthage [in 390] (with a care for the honest life of the clergy) said, *that subdeacons, who handle the Holy Mysteries, and deacons, and presbyters should**

abstain from their consorts according to their own course [of ministration]. So that what has been handed down through the Apostles and preserved by ancient custom, we too likewise maintain, knowing that there is a time for all things and especially for fasting and prayer. For it is meet that they who assist at the divine altar should be absolutely continent when they are handling holy things, in order that they may be able to obtain from God what they ask in sincerity. If therefore anyone shall have dared, contrary to the apostolic Canons, to deprive any of those who are in holy orders, presbyter, or deacon, or subdeacon of cohabitation and intercourse with his lawful wife, let him be deposed. In like manner also if any presbyter or deacon on pretence of piety has dismissed his wife, let him be excluded from communion; and if he persevere in this let him be deposed.”

This canon shows that by that time there was a direct contradiction between the teaching of the East and West about the legitimacy of conjugal relations on the part of clergy lower than the rank of bishop who had married before being ordained.

The canon also mistakenly claims that the canon of the late-4th-century Council of Carthage excluded conjugal intercourse by clergy lower than bishops only in connection with their liturgical service or in times of fasting. The Council of Carthage (390), however, made no such distinctions and excluded such intercourse perpetually and made no distinction between bishops, priests and deacons. In fact, the canon decreed that higher clerics observe *perfect continence* because they act as mediators between God and man. They stressed particularly the antiquity and apostolic origin of this law:

The Council of Carthage (390): “It is fitting that the holy bishops and priests of God as well as the Levites, i.e. those who are in the service of the divine sacraments, observe perfect continence, so that they may obtain in all simplicity what they are asking from God; what the Apostles taught and what antiquity itself observed, let us also endeavor to keep. The bishops declared unanimously: It pleases us all that bishop, priest and deacon, guardians of purity, abstain from conjugal intercourse with their wives, so that those who serve at the altar may keep a perfect chastity.”
(Canon 3)

There have been no changes since the Quinisext Council in the teaching of the Eastern “Orthodox” Church, which for bishops, priests, deacons, and subdeacons excludes marriage after ordination, but allows, except for periods before celebrating the Divine Liturgy, conjugal relations by priests and deacons married before ordination, and requires celibacy and perpetual continence only of bishops. This Council, of course, was never

approved by the Catholic Church.

Pope Sergius I, who was of Syrian origin, rejected the council, preferring, he said, “to die rather than consent to erroneous novelties”. Meanwhile, in Visigothic Spain, the council was ratified by the Eighteenth Council of Toledo at the urging of the king, Wittiza, who was, of course, condemned by later chroniclers for his decision. It is also interesting to note that this false council was the last of the councils of Toledo held in Visigothic Spain before the Moorish invasion in 711. The council was held probably around 703. Fruela I of Asturias reversed the decision of Toledo sometime during his reign (757-768). The Eastern “Orthodox” churches hold this council to be part of the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils, adding its canons thereto. In the West, Bede calls it (in *De sexta mundi aetate*) a “reprobate” synod, and Paul the Deacon calls it an “erratic” one. The Catholic Church has never accepted the council as authoritative or ecumenical.

The Holy Bible teaches that only St. Peter (among all the other apostles) was given the keys to the kingdom of heaven, which thus means that him and his valid successors are the only ones who can make infallible proclamations in the Church, and this of course excludes the *Quinisext Council* from being an ecumenical and authoritative council since the Pope never approved it.

Matthew 16:18-19 “And I [Jesus] say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. **And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”**

WHY THE EASTERN ORTHODOX POSITION, WHICH IS SCHISMATIC AND HERETICAL ACCORDING TO CATHOLIC TEACHING, IS COMPLETELY ILLOGICAL AND FALSE

Jesus Christ gave the keys to the Kingdom to St. Peter (Mt. 16), and gave him jurisdiction over his flock (John 21:15-17). St. Peter was the Bishop of Rome, and his followers (i.e., the members of the Church in Rome) elected his successor, or he appointed his own successor as the Bishop of Rome and head of the universal Church. This process continued through the ages, with the pope being able to change the process of election (such as by instituting a college of cardinals) if he so decided, since the pope has supreme authority in the Church from Christ (Mt. 16). All individuals not elected in this fashion (e.g., one who was elected after the Bishop of Rome had already been chosen in the tradition thus described, or one who was appointed by an outside source, such as an emperor, after the pope had already

been chosen, or one who was elected as a non-member of the community, such as a manifest heretic) wouldn't be true popes, but (logically) antipopes. This logical framework holds true for all of history, and has allowed one to see which are the true popes and which are not – even if at some of the most difficult periods of Church history, such as the Great Western Schism, ascertaining the facts to correctly apply these principles was difficult enough that some mistakes were made by certain individuals.

I have thus described the consistent, logical framework of the succession of the authority given to St. Peter by Jesus Christ to the popes down through the ages. This shows that the Catholic Faith is consistent. (The authority given to St. Peter and his successors is the backing of the dogmatic councils; this is the authority which anathematizes those who deny the dogmatic councils' teaching.)

ILLOGIC AT THE HEART OF EASTERN "ORTHODOXY"

On the other hand, **Eastern “Orthodoxy,” since it rejects the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome and considers all bishops equal, cannot even put forward a framework or criteria by which one could logically distinguish those councils which it says are dogmatic and binding, from those which it says are false and heretical. Ephesus II (the heretical monophysite council in 449) had almost exactly the same number of bishops as Constantinople I (150 bishops).** “Eastern Orthodoxy” would say one must accept Constantinople I under pain of heresy, while one must reject Ephesus II! But if we apply the principles of Eastern “Orthodoxy,” the two councils are on the same level, both being backed by the authority of equal bishops. Unless there is a supreme bishop to make one council binding, it's a farce to say that one council is definitely dogmatic while the other *with the same number of bishops* is definitely heretical! Equal vs. Equal results in a draw....

Furthermore, if Christ said He would be with His Church all days until the end of the world (Mt. 28), why did the Church suddenly stop having councils in 787? Doesn't it strike as a bit ridiculous that many other councils were held after 787, which the Eastern “Orthodox” arbitrarily reject as “not accepted by the Church,” even though these councils which they reject had more bishops than those which they accept? What about the Council of Florence (1438-1442), which saw reunion of the East with the Catholic Church when **Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople accepted Florence, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, and Florence's teaching against all who would deny it**? How on Earth could one *logically* say that Florence was not accepted “by the Church,” while other councils were? What are the criteria? I've asked many Eastern “Orthodox” this very question and received no answer simply because they have none. Whatever criteria they

pick to use as the justification for accepting a particular council as dogmatic, and rejecting another council as non-dogmatic, can be used against them to prove that, on that very basis, they would have to accept later Roman Catholic councils.

Yes, Eastern “Orthodoxy” cannot logically hold any council to be dogmatic and binding, as one will see if one honestly and deeply think about it. **In Eastern “Orthodoxy” there is nothing which backs the anathemas of Ephesus or another council other than the word of bishops, who are equal to other bishops who many times taught the opposite.** If the “Church” spoke at Constantinople I because 150 bishops came to it and pronounced authoritatively on faith, then the “Church” spoke at many other false councils in the early Church which had similar numbers of bishops! It is inescapable, therefore, that according to the Eastern “Orthodox” position the Church of Christ has defected (i.e., officially fallen into error) many times at the various false councils. This contradicts the promises of Christ that the gates of Hell cannot prevail and that God would be with His Church always (Mt. 16). Eastern “Orthodoxy” is an illogical farce, which rejects the clear teaching of Scripture and the fathers on the Papal Primacy, and which causes those who accept it to truly wind up believing in no dogma at all. That’s why Pope Leo XIII says those who reject one dogma reject all Faith. Because of the fact that Eastern “Orthodoxy” does not – and cannot – *really* believe in any dogmatic councils (as shown above) is why it’s so appealing to so many: *it provides the comfort of Protestantism, yet the appearance of ancient tradition, at the same time the feel of liturgical piety, with the illusion of hierarchical authority.*

Matthew 16:17-18 “And I say to thee: **That thou are Peter: and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.** And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.”

Our Lord made St. Peter the first Pope, entrusted to him His entire flock, and gave him supreme authority in the Universal Church of Christ.

John 21:15-17 “**Jesus saith to Simon Peter:** Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. **He saith to him: Feed my lambs.** He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. **He saith to him: Feed my lambs.** He saith to him a third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved, because he had said to him the third time: Lovest thou me? And he said to him: Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. **He said to him:**

Feed my sheep.”

Regarding the objection that papal infallibility wasn't established until the Council of Trent, that's not correct. It was defined as a dogma at Vatican I in 1870, but the truth of it was believed since the beginning. We find the promise of the unfailing faith for St. Peter and his successors referred to by Christ in Luke 22.

Luke 22:31-32 “And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have all of you, that he may sift you as wheat: **But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not**: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.”

Satan desired to sift all the Apostles (plural) like wheat, but Jesus prayed for Simon Peter (singular), that his faith fail not. Jesus is saying that St. Peter and his successors (the popes of the Catholic Church) have an unfailing faith when authoritatively teaching a point of faith or morals to be held by the entire Church of Christ.

Pope Pius IX, Vatican Council I, 1870, *ex cathedra*: “**SO, THIS GIFT OF TRUTH AND A NEVER FAILING FAITH WAS DIVINELY CONFERRED UPON PETER AND HIS SUCCESSORS IN THIS CHAIR...**”

Pope Pius IX, Vatican Council I, 1870, *ex cathedra*: “... **the See of St. Peter always remains unimpaired by any error**, according to the divine promise of our Lord the Savior made to the chief of His disciples: ‘**I have prayed for thee [Peter], that thy faith fail not...**’”

And this truth has been held since the earliest times in the Catholic Church.

Pope St. Gelasius I, epistle 42, or Decretal de recipiendis et non recipiendis libris, 495: “Accordingly, **the see of Peter the Apostle of the Church of Rome** is first, **having neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor anything of this kind** (Eph. 5:27).”

The word “infallible” actually means “cannot fail” or “unfailing.” Therefore, the very term Papal Infallibility comes directly from Christ's promise to St. Peter (and his successors) in Luke 22, that Peter has an unfailing Faith. And it was also believed in the early Church, as we see here. Though this truth was believed since the beginning of the Church, it was specifically defined as a dogma at the First Vatican Council in 1870.

To read more about how the Bible condemns and destroys the teachings of the Eastern

“Orthodox” church, please read this article: [Eastern “Orthodoxy” Destroyed](#)

Also see:

- [The Early Church Fathers on the Primacy of the Roman Catholic Church](#)
 - [MORE QUOTES ON THE SAME SUBJECT](#)
- [The Bible Teaches That Jesus Made St. Peter the First Pope](#)
- [Specific Catholic teaching against Protestant and Schismatic Sects](#)

Interestingly enough, it is also very important to notice that it was almost exactly during the time of the erroneous and fallible *Quinisext Council* that the Muslims started to gain a real foothold in their wars against the Eastern Byzantine Empire as well as in their attempts to occupy Spain. As we already have seen in the *The Book of Judith*, (*Judith 15:11*) *The First Book of Kings*, (*1 Kings 21:2-5*) and *the Book of Deuteronomy* (*Deuteronomy 23:9-11*) from the Holy Bible, military success is directly and intimately connected to the virtue of chastity; and it is highly probable that this teaching of the Eastern “Orthodox” Church that rejected the necessity of priestly celibacy and purity was the very teaching that angered God and left them to the wrath and control of the Muslim infidels. This is not to say that there were not other problems with the eastern church during this time as well as after it, but this teaching of a chaste priesthood is, as we have seen, is very dear to God, and it is thus obvious that their rejection of the Church’s teaching concerning this matter played a great role in why God allowed the infidel Muslims to gain a victory over them. Over and over in the Old Testament, we see that God punished a rebellious nation, and God likewise punishes such nations in the New Testament time when justice requires it. But not only the eastern Byzantine Empire was attacked by the Muslims at this time, but also Spain who had chosen to allow the novelty of an impure priesthood. As a perfect fulfillment and sign of God’s vengeance over those nations who try to defile the holy priesthood of Our Lord and God with impure sexual relations, Our Lord also allowed Spain to be struck with the scourge of the Saracen or Muslim, since in Visigothic Spain, the *Quinisext Council* was ratified by the Eighteenth Council of Toledo at the urging of the king, Wittiza.

Even in the time of St. Ambrose in the 4th century, lustful priests had begun to disobey the clear teaching of the Bible and Apostolic Tradition concerning the necessity for a completely chaste priesthood. St. Ambrose, in his work *On the Duties of the Clergy* tells us that “in some out-of-the-way places” some priests had begun to defile themselves with

sexual intercourse already in the 4th century: **“But ye know that the ministerial office must be kept pure and unspotted, and must not be defiled by conjugal intercourse; ye know this, I say, who have received the gifts of the sacred ministry, with pure bodies, and unspoiled modesty, and without ever having enjoyed conjugal intercourse.** I am mentioning this, because in some out-of-the-way places, when they enter on the ministry, or even when they become priests, they have begotten children. They defend this on the ground of old custom [of the Old Testament Law], when, as it happened, the sacrifice was offered up at long intervals. However, even the people had to be purified two or three days beforehand, so as to come clean to the sacrifice. As we read in the Old Testament, [Exodus 19:10] they even used to wash their clothes. If such regard was paid in what was only the figure, how much ought it to be shown in the reality! Learn then, Priest and Levite, what it means to wash your clothes. You must have a pure body wherewith to offer up the sacraments.” (*On the Duties of the Clergy*, Book 1, Chapter 50, Section 258, A.D. 391)

Objection: Saints Peter, Paul and Barnabas is confirmed by Paul himself to have had women with them during their travels. This proves that God does not approve of priestly or clerical chastity since the Apostles was not living in complete chastity.

1st Corinthians 9:3-7 “This is my defense to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right to our food and drink? Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brethren of the Lord and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?”

Answer: The word “*Wife*” in the English translation is more rightly translated in the Greek as, “*a woman, a sister.*” It cannot be deduced from this text that the Apostles were married, nor is there a single text in the whole New Testament that affirms that any of the Apostles were married during their ministry, or that anyone of them performed the marital sexual act during this time, although we do know that St. Peter, for one, was married at one time during his life since the Gospels mentions his mother in law (cf. Mk 1:29-31; Mt 8: 14-15; Lk 4:38-39). There is no evidence in the New Testament, however, that indicates that St. Peter’s wife was living during the time of Jesus’ ministry as well as after it when the Apostles started to minister to the nations, spreading the Christian Faith. Concerning the more right translation of the Greek as “*a woman, a sister*” the Gospels mention certain women as accompanying our Lord and his disciples, providing for them out of their resources and ministering to them (cf. Lk 8:1-3; 23:55). To meet their material needs some Apostles counted on the help of women, but Saints Paul and Barnabas did not avail of this

right. A more correct translation shows us the correct meaning of this passage.

1st Corinthians 9:5-6 “Have we not power to carry about *a woman, a sister*, as well as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to do this? (*Douay Rheims Bible*)

Douay Rheims Bible Commentary explains verse 5 in further detail: “*A woman, a sister*: Some erroneous translators have corrupted this text by rendering it, a sister, a wife: whereas, it is certain, St. Paul had no wife (chap. 7 ver. 7, 8) and that he only speaks of such devout women, as, according to the custom of the Jewish nation, waited upon the preachers of the gospel, and supplied them with necessaries.”

According to a prominent tradition among the Church Fathers, Paul speaks, not of marriage, but of his right to be helped by a traveling female assistant (the word translated “wife” can also be translated “woman”). Precedent for such an arrangement can be traced back to the ministry of Jesus (Lk. 8:1-3).

Haydock Commentary: “Ver. 5. It appears certain, from the testimony of the fathers, that St. Paul was not in the state of wedlock. St. Jerome informs us that the apostle is here speaking of such holy women who, according to the Jewish custom, supplied their teachers with the necessaries of life, as we see was done to Christ himself. It is evident from ancient records that this was a very prevalent custom in Judea, and therefore a cause of no scandal; but to the Gentiles this custom was unknown, and therefore lest it might prove a cause of scandal to any, St. Paul did not allow any woman to follow him as a companion. Tertullian denies, with St. Augustine and St. Jerome, that St. Paul is here speaking of his wife.”

Finally, note the context: Paul is not talking about marriage, but about receiving monetary compensation and help with daily chores and needs in return for his evangelizing work. As a note says in the Knox version, “‘Sister’ does not imply any relationship, physical or spiritual; it only means that the woman was a Christian. St. Paul is not claiming credit here for avoiding the society of women; he only claims credit for living at his own expense, when other apostles supported not only themselves, but the women who waited on their needs, out of offerings made by the faithful.” See also Luke 18:25-30 and Matthew 19:12 for further background. Thus, this biblical passage (1st Cor. 9:5-6) does not show that the Apostles or their successors were allowed to perform the marital act during their life as priests. The teaching of clerical celibacy, as we have seen, was taught from the very start of the Church by Our Savior Himself as well as the Bible, the Holy Apostles and the Fathers of the Church.

The specific tradition of the Church also confirms that the Apostles lived in chastity. St. Clement of Alexandria (150-215) who lived very near in time to the Apostles, taught that the Apostles, after their calling by Our Lord to the ministry, took their wives with them not as women with whom they had marriage relations, but as sisters in purity and honesty: “But the latter [the Apostles], in accordance with their particular ministry, devoted themselves to preaching without any distraction, and took their wives with them not as women with whom they had marriage relations, but as sisters, that they might be their fellow-ministers in dealing with housewives. It was through them that the Lord’s teaching penetrated also the women’s quarters without any scandal being aroused.” (*The Stromata or Miscellanies*, Book III, Chapter VI, Section 71)

When we come to the question of what was the practice of Our Lord Jesus Christ’s first followers in this matter of clerical chastity, there would likewise be but little if any reasonable doubt. For while of the Apostles we have it recorded only of Peter that he was a married man, we have it also expressly recorded that in his case, as in that of all the rest who had “forsaken all” to follow Our Lord, the Lord himself said, “Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake shall receive an hundred fold and shall inherit eternal life.” (Matt. xix. 29; Lk. xviii. 29) Mark 10:29 records the same incident, but while “wife” is mentioned among the things “left,” no “wife” is found among the things gained.

St. Jerome, referred in *Against Jovinianus* to marriage prohibition for priests when he argued that Peter and the other apostles had been married, but had married before they were called and subsequently gave up their marital relations (*Aduersus Jovinianum* I, 7. 26 (PL 23, 230C; 256C).

In his *Letter to Pammachius*, Ep. 48.10 (c. 393), St. Jerome further wrote: “The apostles have either been virgins or, though married, have lived celibate lives. Those persons who are chosen to be bishops, priests, and deacons are either virgins or widowers; or at least when once they have received the priesthood, are vowed to perpetual chastity.” (*The Letters of St. Jerome*, Letter 48, To Pammachius, Section 21)

And in his *Letter XXII, To Eustochium* (A.D. 384), St. Jerome says the following concerning virginity,

“... I will say it boldly, though God can do all things He cannot raise up a virgin when once she has fallen. He may indeed relieve one who is defiled from the penalty of her sin, but He will not give her a crown. Let us fear lest in us also the prophecy be fulfilled, "Good

virgins shall faint." Notice that it is good virgins who are spoken of, for there are bad ones as well. "Whosoever looketh on a woman," the Lord says, "to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." So that virginity may be lost even by a thought. Such are evil virgins, virgins in the flesh, not in the spirit; foolish virgins, who, having no oil, are shut out by the Bridegroom.

"... Do you wish for proof of my assertions? Take examples. Sampson was braver than a lion and tougher than a rock; alone and unprotected he pursued a thousand armed men; and yet, in Delilah's embrace, his resolution melted away. David was a man after God's own heart, and his lips had often sung of the Holy One, the future Christ; and yet as he walked upon his housetop he was fascinated by Bathsheba's nudity, and added murder to adultery. Notice here how, even in his own house, a man cannot use his eyes without danger. Then repenting, he says to the Lord: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." Being a king he feared no one else.

"... It is hard for the human soul to avoid loving something, and our mind must of necessity give way to affection of one kind or another. The love of the flesh is overcome by the love of the spirit. Desire is quenched by desire. What is taken from the one increases the other. Therefore, as you lie on your couch, say again and again: "By night have I sought Him whom my soul loveth." "Mortify, therefore," says the apostle, "your members which are upon the earth." Because he himself did so, he could afterwards say with confidence: "I live, yet not I, but Christ, liveth in me." He who mortifies his members, and feels that he is walking in a vain show, is not afraid to say: "I am become like a bottle in the frost. Whatever there was in me of the moisture of lust has been dried out of me." And again: "My knees are weak through fasting; I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin."

"... Some one may say, "Do you dare detract from wedlock, which is a state blessed by God?" I do not detract from wedlock when I set virginity before it. No one compares a bad thing with a good. Wedded women may congratulate themselves that they come next to virgins. "Be fruitful," God says, "and multiply, and replenish the earth." He who desires to replenish the earth may increase and multiply if he will. But the train to which you belong is not on earth, but in heaven. The command to increase and multiply first finds fulfillment after the expulsion from paradise, after the nakedness and the fig-leaves which speak of sexual passion. Let them marry and be given in marriage who eat their bread in the sweat of their brow; whose land brings forth to them thorns and thistles, and whose crops are choked with briars. My seed produces fruit a hundredfold. "All men cannot receive God's saying, but they to whom it is given." Some people may be eunuchs from necessity; I am one of free will.

"... In paradise Eve was a virgin, and it was only after the coats of skins that she began her married life. Now paradise is your home too. Keep therefore your birthright and say: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." To show that virginity is natural while wedlock only follows guilt, what is born of wedlock is virgin flesh, and it gives back in fruit what in root it

has lost. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a flower shall grow out of his roots." The rod is the mother of the Lord--simple, pure, unsullied; drawing no germ of life from without but fruitful in singleness like God Himself. The flower of the rod is Christ, who says of Himself: "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys." In another place He is foretold to be "a stone cut out of the mountain without hands," a figure by which the prophet signifies that He is to be born a virgin of a virgin. For the hands are here a figure of wedlock as in the passage: "His left hand is under my head and his right hand doth embrace me.

"... I praise wedlock, I praise marriage, but it is because they give me virgins. I gather the rose from the thorns, the gold from the earth, the pearl from the shell. "Doth the plowman plow all day to sow?" Shall he not also enjoy the fruit of his labor? Wedlock is the more honored, the more what is born of it is loved. Why, mother, do you grudge your daughter her virginity? She has been reared on your milk, she has come from your womb, she has grown up in your bosom. Your watchful affection has kept her a virgin. Are you angry with her because she chooses to be a king's wife and not a soldier's? She has conferred on you a high privilege; you are now the mother-in-law of God. "Concerning virgins," says the apostle, "I have no commandment of the Lord." Why was this? Because his own virginity was due, not to a command, but to his free choice. For they are not to be heard who feign him to have had a wife; for, when he is discussing continence and commending perpetual chastity, he uses the words, "I would that all men were even as I myself." And farther on, "I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I." And in another place, "have we not power to lead about wives even as the rest of the apostles?" Why then has he no commandment from the Lord concerning virginity? Because what is freely offered is worth more than what is extorted by force, and to command virginity would have been to abrogate wedlock. It would have been a hard enactment to compel opposition to nature and to extort from men the angelic life; and not only so, it would have been to condemn what is a divine ordinance.

"... In those days, as I have said, the virtue of continence was found only in men: Eve still continued to travail with children. But now that a virgin has conceived in the womb and has borne to us a child of which the prophet says that "Government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called the mighty God, the everlasting Father," now the chain of the curse is broken. Death came through Eve, but life has come through Mary. And thus the gift of virginity has been bestowed most richly upon women, seeing that it has had its beginning from a woman. As soon as the Son of God set foot upon the earth, He formed for Himself a new household there; that, as He was adored by angels in heaven, angels might serve Him also on earth. Then chaste Judith once more cut off the head of Holofernes. Then Haman - whose name means iniquity - was once more burned in fire of his own kindling. Then James and John forsook father and net and ship and followed the Savior: neither kinship nor the world's ties, nor the care of their home could hold them back. Then were the words heard: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself

and take up his cross and follow me." For no soldier goes with a wife to battle.

"... In the same strain, the apostle writes: "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married careth for the things of the world how she may please her husband." (Letters of St. Jerome, *Letter XXII, To Eustochium*)

St. Jerome in his "Against Jovinianus" continues to explain the perfection of chastity. He writes,

"Among other things the Corinthians asked in their letter whether after embracing the faith of Christ they ought to be unmarried, and for the sake of continence put away their wives, and whether believing virgins were at liberty to marry. And again, supposing that one of two Gentiles believed on Christ, whether the one that believed should leave the one that believed not? And in case it were allowable to take wives, would the Apostle direct that only Christian wives, or Gentiles also, should be taken? Let us then consider Paul's replies to these inquiries.

"Let us turn back to the chief point of the evidence: "It is good," he says, "for a man not to touch a woman." If it is good not to touch a woman, it is bad to touch one: for there is no opposite to goodness but badness. But if it be bad and the evil is pardoned, the reason for the concession is to prevent worse evil. But surely a thing which is only allowed because there may be something worse has only a slight degree of goodness. He would never have added "let each man have his own wife," unless he had previously used the words "but, because of fornications." Do away with fornication, and he will not say "let each man have his own wife." Just as though one were to lay it down: "It is good to feed on wheaten bread, and to eat the finest wheat flour," and yet to prevent a person pressed by hunger from devouring cow-dung, I may allow him to eat barley.

"Does it follow that the wheat will not have its peculiar purity, because such an one prefers barley to excrement? That is naturally good which does not admit of comparison with what is bad, and is not eclipsed because something else is preferred. At the same time we must notice the Apostle's prudence. He did not say, it is good not to have a wife: but, it is good not to touch a woman: as though there were danger even in the touch: as though he who touched her, would not escape from her who "hunteth for the precious life," who causeth the young man's understanding to fly away. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk upon hot coals and his feet not be scorched?" As then he who touches fire is instantly burned, so by the mere touch the peculiar nature of man and woman is perceived, and the difference of sex is understood, Heathen fables relate how Mithras and Erichonius were begotten of the soil, in stone or earth, by raging

lust.

“Hence it was that our Joseph, because the Egyptian woman wished to touch him, fled from her hands, and, as if he had been bitten by a mad dog and feared the spreading poison, threw away the cloak which she had touched. "But, because of fornications let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." He did not say, because of fornication let each man marry a wife: otherwise by this excuse he would have thrown the reins to lust, and whenever a man's wife died, he would have to marry another to prevent fornication, but "have his own wife." Let him he says have and use his own wife, whom he had before he became a believer, and whom it would have been good not to touch, and, when once he became a follower of Christ, to know only as a sister, not as a wife unless fornication should make it excusable to touch her. "The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife."

“The whole question here concerns those who are married men. Is it lawful for them to do what our Lord forbade in the Gospel, and to put away their wives? Whence it is that the Apostle says, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." But inasmuch as he who is once married has no power to abstain except by mutual consent, and may not reject an unoffending partner, let the husband render unto the wife her due. He bound himself voluntarily that he might be under compulsion to render it. "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer." What, I pray you, is the quality of that good thing which hinders prayer? which does not allow the body of Christ to be received? [Here St. Jerome refers to the biblical teaching from the Book of 1st Kings 21:4 which teaches that one are to remain chaste for three days before receiving the Eucharist.] So long as I do the husband's part, I fail in continency. The same Apostle in another place commands us to pray always. If we are to pray always, it follows that we must never be in the bondage of wedlock, for as often as I render my wife her due, I cannot pray.

“The Apostle Peter had experience of the bonds of marriage. See how he fashions the Church, and what lesson he teaches Christians: "Ye husbands in like manner dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered." Observe that, as St. Paul before, because in both cases the spirit is the same, so St. Peter now, says that prayers are hindered by the performance of marriage duty. When he says "likewise," he challenges the husbands to imitate their wives, because he has already given them commandment: "beholding your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel: but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

“You see what kind of wedlock he enjoins. Husbands and wives are to dwell together according to knowledge, so that they may know what God wishes and desires, and give

honor to the weak vessel, woman. If we abstain from intercourse, we give honor to our wives: if we do not abstain, it is clear that insult is the opposite of honor. He also tells the wives to let their husbands "see their chaste behavior, and the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit." Words truly worthy of an apostle, and of Christ's rock! He lays down the law for husbands and wives, condemns outward ornament, while he praises continence, which is the ornament of the inner man, as seen in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit. In effect he says this: Since your outer man is corrupt, and you have ceased to possess the blessing of incorruption characteristic of virgins, at least imitate the incorruption of the spirit by subsequent abstinence, and what you cannot show in the body exhibit in the mind. For these are the riches, and these the ornaments of your union, which Christ seeks.

"But you will say: "If everybody were a virgin, what would become of the human race"? Like shall here beget like. If everyone were a widow, or continent in marriage, how will mortal men be propagated? Upon this principle there will be nothing at all for fear that something else may cease to exist. To put a case: if all men were philosophers, there would be no husbandmen. Why speak of husbandmen? There would be no orators, no lawyers, no teachers of the other professions. If all men were leaders, what would become of the soldiers? If all were the head, whose head would they be called, when there were no other members? You are afraid that if the desire for virginity were general there would be no prostitutes, no adulteresses, no wailing infants in town or country. Every day the blood of adulterers is shed, adulterers are condemned, and lust is raging and rampant in the very presence of the laws and the symbols of authority and the courts of justice. Be not afraid that all will become virgins: virginity is a hard matter, and therefore rare, because it is hard: "Many are called, few chosen." Many begin, few persevere. And so the reward is great for those who have persevered." (*Against Jovinianus*, Book 1, Section 7, A.D. 393)

WWW.CATHOLIC-SAINTS.NET

Free DVDs and Books

INFALLIBLE CATHOLIC DOGMA AND DOCTRINE YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT

INTRODUCTION

The unchanging dogma Outside the Catholic Church There is No Salvation and the necessity of the Sacrament of Baptism for Salvation, was defined as a truth by our first pope St. Peter himself:

*“... the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ... **Nor is there salvation in any other.** For there is no other name, under heaven, given to men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12).*

There is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ, and the Catholic Church is His Mystical Body. Since there is no entering into the Catholic Church of Christ without the Sacrament of Baptism, this means that only baptized Catholics who die in the state of grace (and those who become baptized Catholics and die in the state of grace) can hope to be saved.

“If anyone abideth not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth.” (John 15:6)

*Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (# 22), June 29, 1943: “**Actually only those are to be numbered among the members of the Church who have received the laver of regeneration [water baptism] and profess the true faith.**”*

*Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (# 27), June 29, 1943: “He (Christ) also determined that **through Baptism (cf. Jn. 3:5) those who should believe would be incorporated in the Body of the Church.**”*

THE KEYS OF ST. PETER AND HIS UNFAILING FAITH

It is a fact of history, scripture and tradition that Our Lord Jesus Christ founded His universal Church (the Catholic Church) upon St. Peter.

Matthew 16:18-19-“And I say to thee: **That thou art Peter: and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.** And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou

shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.”

Our Lord made St. Peter the first pope, entrusted to him His entire flock, and gave him supreme authority in the universal Church of Christ.

John 21:15-17-“**Jesus saith to Simon Peter:** Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. **He saith to him: Feed my lambs**. He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. **He saith to him: Feed my lambs**. He saith to him a third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved, because he had said to him the third time: Lovest thou me? And he said to him: Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. **He said to him: Feed my sheep**.”

And with the supreme authority that Our Lord Jesus Christ conferred upon St. Peter (and his successors, the popes) comes what is called Papal Infallibility. Papal Infallibility is inseparable from Papal Supremacy – there was no point for Christ to make St. Peter the head of His Church (as Christ clearly did) if St. Peter or his successors, the popes, could err when exercising that supreme authority to teach on a point of Faith. The supreme authority must be unailing on binding matters of Faith and morals or else it is no true authority from Christ at all.

Papal Infallibility does not mean that a pope cannot err at all and it does not mean that a pope cannot lose his soul and be damned in Hell for grave sin. It means that the successors of St. Peter (the popes of the Catholic Church) cannot err when authoritatively teaching on a point of Faith or morals to be held by the entire Church of Christ. We find the promise of the unailing faith for St. Peter and his successors referred to by Christ in Luke 22.

Luke 22:31-32- “And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have all of you, that he may sift you as wheat: **But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not**: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.”

Satan desired to sift all the Apostles (plural) like wheat, but Jesus prayed for Simon Peter (singular), that his faith fail not. Jesus is saying that St. Peter and his successors (the popes of the Catholic Church) have an unailing faith when authoritatively teaching a point of faith or morals to be held by the entire Church of Christ.

Pope Pius IX, *Vatican Council I*, 1870, *ex cathedra*:

“SO, THIS GIFT OF TRUTH AND A NEVER FAILING FAITH WAS DIVINELY CONFERRED UPON PETER AND HIS SUCCESSORS IN THIS

CHAIR...

Pope Pius IX, *Vatican Council I*, 1870, *ex cathedra*:

“... the See of St. Peter always remains unimpaired by any error, according to the divine promise of our Lord the Savior made to the chief of His disciples: **‘I have prayed for thee [Peter], that thy faith fail not ...’**”

And this truth has been held since the earliest times in the Catholic Church.

Pope St. Gelasius I, epistle 42, or Decretal *de recipiendis et non recipiendis libris*, 495: “Accordingly, **the see of Peter** the Apostle of the Church of Rome is first, **having neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor anything of this kind** (Eph. 5:27).”

The word “infallible” actually means “cannot fail” or “unfailing.” Therefore, the very term *Papal Infallibility* comes directly from Christ’s promise to St. Peter (and his successors) in Luke 22, that Peter has an unfailing Faith. Though this truth was believed since the beginning of the Church, it was specifically defined as a dogma at the First Vatican Council in 1870.

Pope Pius IX, *Vatican Council I*, 1870, Session 4, Chap. 4:

“...the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra* [from the Chair of Peter], that is, when carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians in accord with his supreme apostolic authority he explains a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the universal Church... **operates with that infallibility** with which the divine Redeemer wished that His Church be instructed in defining doctrine on faith and morals; **and so such definitions of the Roman Pontiff from himself, but not from the consensus of the Church, are unalterable.**”

But how does one know when a pope is exercising his unfailing Faith to infallibly teach from the Chair of St. Peter? The answer is that we know from the language that the pope uses or the manner in which the pope teaches. Vatican I defined two requirements which must be fulfilled: 1) when the pope is carrying out his duty as pastor and teacher of all Christians in accord with his supreme apostolic authority; 2) when he explains a doctrine on faith or morals to be held by the entire Church of Christ. A pope can fulfill both of these requirements in just one line, by anathematizing a false opinion (such as many dogmatic councils) or by saying “By our apostolic authority we declare...” or by saying “We believe, profess, and teach” or by using words of similar importance and meaning, which indicate that the pope is teaching the whole Church on Faith in a definitive and binding fashion.

So, when a pope teaches from the Chair of Peter in the manner stipulated above he cannot

be wrong. If he could be wrong, then the Church of Christ could be officially led into error, and Christ's promise to St. Peter and His Church would fail (which is impossible). That which is taught from the Chair of Peter by the popes of the Catholic Church is the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. To reject that which is taught by the popes from the Chair of Peter is simply to despise Jesus Christ Himself.

Luke 10:16- "He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you despiseth me..."

Matthew 18:17 -"And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum*, 1896:

"... Christ instituted a living, authoritative and permanent Magisterium... If it could in any way be false, an evident contradiction follows; for then God Himself would be the author of error in man."

NO SALVATION OUTSIDE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The following statements on Outside the Catholic Church There is No Salvation are from the highest teaching authority of the Catholic Church. They are *ex cathedra* Papal decrees (decrees from the Chair of St. Peter). Therefore, they constitute the teaching given to the Catholic Church by Jesus Christ and the Apostles. Such teachings are unchangeable and are classified as part of the solemn magisterium (the extraordinary teaching authority of the Catholic Church).

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, "Cantate Domino," 1441, *ex cathedra* (*infallible statement from the chair of Peter*): **"The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches that all those who are outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans but also Jews or heretics and schismatics, cannot share in eternal life and will go into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they are joined to the Church before the end of their lives; that the unity of this ecclesiastical body is of such importance that only for those who abide in it do the Church's sacraments contribute to salvation and do fasts, almsgiving and other works of piety and practices of the Christian militia produce eternal rewards; and that nobody can be saved, no matter how much he has given away in alms and even if he has shed blood in the name of Christ, unless he has persevered in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church."**

As we can see from this infallible statement from the chair of Peter, no one at all can be saved **unless they are joined to the Church before the end of their lives..** Yet, many people today who call themselves Catholic or Christian, boldly and obstinately assert the direct opposite of this statement and claim that protestants, heretics, Jews, schismatics and even Pagans can attain eternal life.

Pope Gregory XVI, *Summo Iugiter Studio* (# 2), May 27, 1832: “**Finally some of these misguided people attempt to persuade themselves and others that men are not saved only in the Catholic religion,** but that even heretics may attain eternal life.”

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, The Athanasian Creed, Sess. 8, Nov. 22, 1439, *ex cathedra*: “**Whoever wishes to be saved, needs above all to hold the Catholic faith; unless each one preserves this whole and inviolate, he will without a doubt perish in eternity.**” (*Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. 1, pp. 550-553; Denzinger 39-40.)

Pope Innocent III, *Fourth Lateran Council*, Constitution 1, 1215, *ex cathedra*: “**There is indeed one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which nobody at all is saved,** in which Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice.”

Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, Nov. 18, 1302, *ex cathedra*: “With Faith urging us we are forced to believe and to hold the one, holy, Catholic Church and that, apostolic, and we firmly believe and simply confess **this Church outside of which there is no salvation nor remission of sin... Furthermore, we declare, say, define, and proclaim to every human creature that they by absolute necessity for salvation are entirely subject to the Roman Pontiff.**”

Those who refuse to believe in the dogma Outside the Church There is No Salvation until *they* understand how there is justice in it are simply withholding their Faith in Christ's revelation. Those with the true Faith in Christ (and His Church) accept His teaching first and understand the truth in it (i.e., *why* it is true) second. A Catholic does not withhold his belief in Christ's revelation until he can understand it. That is the mentality of a faithless heretic who possesses insufferable pride. St. Anselm sums up the true Catholic outlook on this point.

St. Anselm, Doctor of the Church, *Prosologion*, Chap. 1: “**For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand.** For

this also I believe, that **unless I believed, I should not understand.**”

CONCERNING THOSE BAPTIZED VALIDLY AS INFANTS BY MEMBERS OF NON-CATHOLIC SECTS

The Catholic Church has always taught that anyone (including a layman or a non-Catholic) can validly baptize if he adheres to proper matter and form and if he has the intention of doing what the Church does.

Pope Eugene IV, Council of Florence, “Exultate Deo,” 1439: “In case of necessity, however, not only a priest or a deacon, but even a layman or woman, yes even a pagan and a heretic can baptize, so long as he preserves the form of the Church and has the intention of doing what the Church does.” (Denzinger 696)

The Church has always taught that infants baptized in heretical and schismatic churches are made Catholics, members of the Church and subjects of the Roman Pontiff, even if the people who baptized them are heretics who are outside the Catholic Church. This is because the infant, being below the age of reason, cannot be a heretic or schismatic. He cannot have an impediment which would prevent Baptism from making him a member of the Church.

Pope Paul III, Council of Trent, Sess. 7, Can. 13 on the Sacrament of Baptism: “**If anyone shall say that infants**, because they have not actual faith, **after having received baptism are not to be numbered among the faithful...** let him be anathema.”

This means that all baptized infants wherever they are, even those baptized in heretical non-Catholic churches by heretical ministers, are made members of the Catholic Church. They are also made subject to the Roman Pontiff (if there is one). So, at what one point does this baptized Catholic infant become a non-Catholic – severing his membership in the Church and subjection to the Roman Pontiff? After the baptized infant reaches the age of reason, he or she becomes a heretic or a schismatic and severs his membership in the Church and severs subjection to the Roman Pontiff *when he or she obstinately rejects any teaching of the Catholic Church or loses Faith in the essential mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation.*

Pope Clement VI, *Super quibusdam*, Sept. 20, 1351: “...We ask: **In the first place whether you and the Church of the Armenians which is obedient to you, believe that all those who in baptism have received the same Catholic**

faith, and afterwards have withdrawn and will withdraw in the future from the communion of this same Roman Church, which one alone is Catholic, are schismatic and heretical, if they remain obstinately separated from the faith of this Roman Church. In the second place, we ask whether you and the Armenians obedient to you believe that no man of the wayfarers outside the faith of this Church, and outside the obedience of the Pope of Rome, can finally be saved.”

So, one must be clear on these points: 1) The unbaptized (Jews, Muslims, pagans, etc.) must all join the Catholic Church by receiving Baptism and the Catholic Faith or they will *all* be lost. 2) Among those who are baptized as infants, they are made Catholics, members of the Church and subjects of the Roman Pontiff by Baptism. They only sever that membership (*which they already possess*) when they obstinately reject any Catholic dogma or believe something contrary to the essential mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation. In the teaching of Pope Clement VI above, we see this second point clearly taught: all who receive the Catholic Faith in Baptism lose that Faith and become schismatic and heretical if they become “obstinately separated from the faith of this Roman Church.”

The fact is that all Protestants who reject the Catholic Church or its dogmas on the sacraments, the Papacy, etc. have obstinately separated from the Faith of the Roman Church and have therefore severed their membership in the Church of Christ. The same is true with the “Eastern Orthodox” who obstinately reject dogmas on the Papacy and Papal Infallibility. They need to be converted to the Catholic Faith for salvation.

MATERIAL HERESY

The children or people that are baptized in heretical communities cannot become heretics until they reach the age of reason or until they adopt any heretical views that are opposed to the Catholic Church. This means that some of those baptized persons who are now going to a heretical or schismatic “Church” might not yet be heretics even if everyone else in the same Church are heretics. However, when these children reach the age of reason, many of them might fall into an error called “material heresy.”

The term “material heresy” is used to describe persons who believe in a heresy without knowing that they are contradicting the Catholic Church’s official and infallible teaching. There’s no such thing as a material heretic in the dogmatic teaching of the Church. There are heretics; there are schismatics; and there are Catholics. *Material heretic* is simply a name for a Catholic who is erring in good faith about a dogma. In other words, it’s another name for a mistaken Catholic. It’s a person who is holding a false position – one that is

strictly incompatible with Catholic dogma. However, that person is not obstinate against that dogma. He would change his position immediately upon being informed of the true position. The “material heretic” is a Catholic. This is very important to understand. Many Catholic saints have been material heretics. **St. Thomas, for example, did not believe that Mary was conceived immaculately** (*Summa Theologica*, Part. III, Q. 14, Art. 3, Reply to Obj. 1) even though it is now a defined dogma that Mary was conceived immaculately, and no wonder that even Saints have erred in their teaching, for it is very hard to imagine that a human can know every Church teaching that exists.

THE NATURAL LAW

The natural law is written on the heart of all men, so that all men know that certain things are against God’s law and that certain things are in accordance with the natural law of charity, etc.

As the *Haydock Bible and Commentary* correctly explains about Romans 2:14-16,

*“these men are a law to themselves, and have it written in their hearts, as to the existence of a God, and their reason tells them, that many sins are unlawful: they may also do some actions that are morally good, as by giving alms to relieve the poor, honoring their parents, etc. **not that these actions, morally good, will suffice for their justification of themselves, or make them deserve a supernatural reward in the kingdom of heaven; but God, out of His infinite mercy, will give them some supernatural graces**”* which if they continue to cooperate with they will get more graces and eventually be exposed to the Catholic Faith, which they must have to be saved.”

All baptized *infants* are Catholics, **even if they are baptized in a Methodist church-building**, etc. This is *de fide*. These baptized Catholics, when they reach the age of reason in a Protestant building, if they hold the Trinity and the Incarnation (which are the two essential mysteries of the Catholic Faith) hold the absolutely essential mysteries of the Catholic Faith.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, Athanasian Creed, Sess. 8, Nov. 22, 1439, *ex cathedra*: “Whoever wishes to be saved, needs above all to hold the Catholic faith; unless each one preserves this whole and inviolate, he will without a doubt perish in eternity.– But **the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity.**..

“But it is necessary for eternal salvation that he faithfully believe also in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ...the Son of God is God and man... **This is the Catholic faith**; unless each one believes this faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.”

If they don't know about any *other* Catholic dogmas (other than the Trinity and Incarnation) then they are not heretics but Catholics [Christians], unless they hold a position that is incompatible with Faith in the Trinity and Incarnation or deny a truth that all know about God and the natural law or deny something that they know to be clearly taught in Scripture. For instance, if the baptized person described above claims to believe in the Trinity and Incarnation but holds that all religions are more or less good, then he is a heretic and does not have the Catholic Faith (*even before he knows that such a position is condemned by the Church*) **because his belief is incompatible with true Faith in the Trinity as the one true God, which belief he must have to be said to have the Catholic Faith in its simplest components.**

Pope Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos* (# 2), Jan. 6, 1928:

“...that false opinion which considers all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy... **Not only are those who hold this opinion in error and deceived, but also in distorting the idea of true religion they reject it...**”

Another example would be if the baptized person who believes in the Trinity and the Incarnation (**which are the simplest components of the Catholic Faith**) and has never heard of *other* Catholic dogmas holds that man does not have free will (which some Protestants teach). This person would also become a heretic even before he has seen his position condemned by the Church and before he has heard of *other* Catholic dogmas (other than the Trinity and Incarnation) **because he is rejecting a truth which all know to be true from the natural law, namely, that man has a free will**. Thus, he is denying a truth all know about man from the natural law and he is a heretic.

Another example would be if the baptized person who believes in the Trinity and Incarnation (the Catholic Faith in its simplest components) and has never heard of *other* Catholic dogmas refuses to believe that God is a rewarder and a punisher. This person is a heretic, even though he has never seen that his position is condemned by the Church and has never heard of *other* Catholic dogmas, because he rejects a truth he knows to be true from the natural law, that God is a rewarder and a punisher of our actions (see Heb. 11:6).

A large majority of Protestants today believe in the doctrines of “faith alone” and “eternal security.” These doctrines contradict both the natural law and reason which says that every man shall be rewarded or punished for his deeds. It also contradicts, word for word, the

teaching of James 2 in scripture, which teach that faith without works is dead, and that man is not saved by faith alone. This person who believes in faith alone or eternal security is a heretic, even though he has never seen that his position is condemned by the Church and has never heard of *other* Catholic dogmas, because he rejects a truth he knows to be true from the natural law, that God is a rewarder and a punisher of our actions, and that faith alone does not justify a man only, but our deeds also.

Other common heresies against the natural law is to hold that birth control or natural family planning, also called nfp, which many “Catholics” practise to avoid conception, (which makes them guilty of the mortal sin of contraception) is acceptable, or if a person is to hold that abortion is acceptable, or if a person is to hold that the consuming of mind altering drugs to the point where the conscience is impeded is acceptable. These examples would all fall under the category of deadly sin, because he is rejecting a truth which all know to be true from the natural law, namely, 1) that abortion is murder, 2) that contraception or nfp deliberately frustrates the natural power to generate life, 3) and that mind altering drugs such as smoking marijuana is a mortal sin, just like getting drunk is.

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (# 23), June 29, 1943:

“For not every sin, however grave it may be, is such as of its own nature **to sever a man** from the Body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy.”

We can see that it’s the teaching of the Catholic Church that a man is severed from the Church and Salvation by heresy, schism or apostasy.

The baptized children who reach the age of reason in Protestant, Eastern Schismatic, etc. church buildings and believe in the Trinity and the Incarnation (the essential components of the Catholic Faith) and who don’t reject any Catholic dogma because they don’t know of any other than the Trinity and Incarnation, and who don’t embrace any of the positions like those described above, which are directly incompatible with Faith in God, Jesus Christ, the Trinity, the Natural Law or what they know to be clearly taught in Scripture, would be Catholics in a heretical church building.

THERE IS NO SALVATION FOR MEMBERS OF ISLAM, JUDAISM OR OTHER HERETICAL OR SCHISMATIC NON-CATHOLIC SECTS

So far we’ve seen that it’s an infallibly defined dogma that all who die as non-Catholics, including all Jews, pagans, heretics, schismatics, etc. cannot be saved. They need to be converted to have salvation. Now we must take a brief look at more of what the Church

specifically says about some of the prominent non-Catholic religions, such as Judaism, Islam, and the Protestant and Eastern schismatic sects. This will illustrate, once again, that those who hold that members of non-Catholic religions can be saved are not only going against the solemn declarations that have already been quoted, but also the specific teachings quoted below.

SPECIFIC CATHOLIC TEACHING AGAINST JUDAISM

Jews practice the Old Law and reject the Divinity of Christ and the Trinity. The Jews reject Our Lord Jesus Christ and call him a deceiver, yet many “Christians” say that they are good? This is mind-blowing! The Church teaches the following about the cessation of the Old Law and about all who continue to observe it:

Pope Eugene IV, Council of Florence, 1441, *ex cathedra*: **“The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and teaches that the matter pertaining to the law of the Old Testament, the Mosaic law, which are divided into ceremonies, sacred rites, sacrifices, and sacraments... after our Lord’s coming... ceased,** and the sacraments of the New Testament began, and that whoever, even after the passion, placed hope in these matters of the law and submitted himself to them as necessary for salvation, as if faith in Christ could not save without them, **sinned mortally.** All, therefore, who after that time (the promulgation of the Gospel) observe circumcision and the Sabbath (not to be mistaken with the Christian Sabbath) and the other requirements of the law, the holy Roman Church declares alien to the Christian faith and not in the least fit to participate in eternal salvation.”

Many people, who call themselves Catholic, do also boldly assert in contradiction of this infallible statement by Pope Eugene IV in the Council of Florence, that Jews who either reject Christ or who have not found or accepted Christ as their Messiah, can be saved. They also contradict our Lord’s words in the gospel.

John 3:36 “He that believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Pt. I-II, Q. 103, A. 4: “In like manner the ceremonies of the Old Law betokened Christ as having yet to be born and to suffer: whereas our sacraments signify Him as already born and having suffered.

Consequently, just as it would be a mortal sin now for anyone, in making a profession of faith, to say that Christ is yet to be born, which the fathers of old said devoutly and truthfully; so too it would be a mortal sin now to observe those

ceremonies which the fathers of old fulfilled with devotion and fidelity.”

Pope Benedict XIV, *Ex Quo Primum* (# 61), March 1, 1756:

“The first consideration is that the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law were abrogated by the coming of Christ and that they can no longer be observed without sin after the promulgation of the Gospel.”

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (#’s 29-30), June 29, 1943: “And first of all, by the death of our Redeemer, **the New Testament took the place of the Old Law which had been abolished...** on the gibbet of His death **Jesus made void the Law with its decrees** [Eph. 2:15]... establishing the New Testament in His blood shed for the whole human race. **‘To such an extent, then,’ says St. Leo the Great, speaking of the Cross of our Lord, ‘was there effected a transfer from the Law to the Gospel, from the Synagogue to the Church, from many sacrifices to one Victim, that, as our Lord expired, that mystical veil which shut off the innermost part of the temple and its sacred secret was rent violently from top to bottom.’ On the Cross then the Old Law died, soon to be buried and to be a bearer of death...**”

Thus, those who obstinately defends that faithless Jews who reject Christ can be saved and willfully contradict these infallible teachings of the Church, is a heretic, and will receive the full force of the automatic condemnation.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, “Cantate Domino,” 1441, *ex cathedra*: “The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches **that all those who are outside the Catholic Church**, not only pagans but also **Jews** or heretics and schismatics, **cannot share in eternal life and will go into the everlasting fire** which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they are joined to the Church before the end of their lives...”

SPECIFIC TEACHING AGAINST ISLAM

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Basel*, Session 19, Sept. 7, 1434: “... there is hope that very many from **the abominable sect of Mahomet** will be converted to the Catholic faith.”

Pope Callixtus III, 1455: “I vow to... exalt the true Faith, and to extirpate **the diabolical sect of the reprobate and faithless Mahomet** [Islam] in the East.”

The Catholic Church considers Islam an “abominable” and “diabolical” sect. [Note: the

Council of Basel is only considered ecumenical/approved in the first 25 sessions, as *The Catholic Encyclopedia* points out in Vol. 4, “Councils,” pp. 425-426.] An “abomination” is something that is abhorrent in God’s sight; it’s something that He has no esteem for and no respect for. Something “diabolical” is something of the Devil. Islam rejects, among many other dogmas, the Divinity of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. Its followers are outside the pale of salvation so long as they remain Muslims.

Pope Clement V, *Council of Vienne*, 1311-1312: “**It is an insult to the holy name and a disgrace to the Christian faith** that in certain parts of the world subject to Christian princes where Saracens [i.e., the followers of Islam, also called Muslims] live, sometimes apart, sometimes intermingled with Christians, the Saracen priests, commonly called Zabazala, in their temples or mosques, in which the Saracens meet to adore **the infidel Mahomet**, loudly invoke and extol his name each day at certain hours from a high place... There is a place, moreover, where once was buried a certain Saracen whom other Saracens venerate as a saint. **This brings disrepute on our faith and gives great scandal to the faithful. These practices cannot be tolerated without displeasing the divine majesty.** We therefore, with the sacred council’s approval, strictly forbid such practices henceforth in Christian lands. **We enjoin on Catholic princes, one and all...** They are to remove this offense together from their territories and take care that their subjects remove it, so that they may thereby attain the reward of eternal happiness. **They are to forbid expressly the public invocation of the sacrilegious name of Mahomet...** Those who presume to act otherwise are to be so chastised by the princes for their irreverence, that others may be deterred from such boldness.”

While the Church teaches that all who die as non-Catholics are lost, it also teaches that no one should be forced to embrace baptism, since belief is a free act of the will.

Pope Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei* (#36), Nov. 1, 1885: “And, in fact, the Church is wont to take earnest heed that no one shall be forced to embrace the Catholic faith against his will, for, as St. Augustine wisely reminds us, ‘Man cannot believe otherwise than of his own will.’”

The teaching of the *Council of Vienne* that Christian princes should enforce their civil authority to forbid the public expression of the false religion of Islam shows again that Islam is a false religion which leads souls to Hell (not Heaven) and displeases God.

SPECIFIC CATHOLIC TEACHING AGAINST PROTESTANT AND SCHISMATIC SECTS

The Catholic Church also teaches that those baptized persons who embrace heretical or schismatic sects will lose their souls. Jesus founded His Church upon St. Peter, as we saw already, and declared that whoever does not hear the Church be considered as the heathen and publican (Matthew 18:17). He also commanded His followers to observe “all things whatsoever” He has commanded (Matthew 28:20). The Eastern schismatic sects (such as the “Orthodox”) and the Protestant sects are breakoff movements that have separated from the Catholic Church. By separating themselves from the one Church of Christ, they leave the path of salvation and enter the path of perdition.

These sects obstinately and pertinaciously reject one or more of the truths that Christ clearly instituted, such as the Papacy (Matthew 16; John 21; etc.), Confession (John 20:23), the Eucharist (John 6:54), and other dogmas of the Catholic Faith. In order to be saved one must assent to all the things which the Catholic Church, based on Scripture and Tradition, has infallibly defined as dogmas of the Faith.

Below are *just a few* of the infallible dogmas of the Catholic Faith which are rejected by Protestants and (in the case of the Papacy) by the Eastern “Orthodox.” The Church “anathematizes” (a severe form of excommunication) all who obstinately assert the contrary to its dogmatic definitions.

“To understand the word anathema...we should first go back to the real meaning of *herem* of which it is the equivalent. *Herem* comes from the word *haram*, to cut off, to separate, to curse, and indicates that which is cursed and condemned to be cut off or exterminated, whether a person or a thing, and in consequence, that which man is forbidden to make use of. This is the sense of anathema in the following passage from Deut., vii, 26: ‘Neither shalt thou bring anything of the idol into thy house, lest thou become an anathema like it. Thou shalt detest it as dung, and shalt utterly abhor it as uncleanness and filth, because it is an anathema.’”

Thus, a Protestant or an “Eastern Orthodox” who obstinately rejects these dogmatic teachings is anathematized and severed from the Church, outside of which there is no salvation. It’s quite interesting that, in issuing these dogmatic canons, the Church says: “If anyone shall say.... let him be anathema [*anathema sit*]” as opposed to “If anyone shall say... *he is* anathema [*anathema est*].” This qualification of “let him be” allows room for those Catholics who may be unaware of a particular dogma and would conform to the teaching of the canon as soon as it were presented to him. The person who is obstinate, however, and willfully contradicts the dogmatic teaching of the Church receives the full force of the automatic condemnation.

The point here is that if one is able to reject these dogmas and still be saved, *then these infallible definitions and their accompanying anathemas have no meaning, value or force*. But they do have meaning, value and force – they are infallible teachings protected by Jesus Christ. Thus, all who reject these dogmas are anathematized and on the road to damnation.

Pope Pius XI, *Rerum omnium perturbationem* (#4), Jan. 26, 1923: “The saint was no less a person than Francis de Sales... **he seemed to have been sent especially by God to contend against the heresies begotten by the [Protestant] Reformation. It is in these heresies that we discover the beginnings of that apostasy of mankind from the Church**, the sad and disastrous effects of which are deplored, even to the present hour, by every fair mind.”

Pope Julius III, *Council of Trent*, Session 13, Can. 1 on the Eucharist, *ex cathedra*: “**If anyone denies that in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist there are truly, really, and substantially contained the Body and Blood** together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the whole Christ, but shall say that He is in it as by sign or figure, or force, **let him be anathema.**”

Pope Julius III, *Council of Trent*, Session 14, Canon 3 on the Sacrament of Penance: “If anyone says that the words of the Lord Savior: ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained’ [John 20:22 f.], **are not to be understood of the power remitting and retaining sins in the sacrament of penance... let him be anathema.**”

Pope Julius III, *Council of Trent*, Session 14, on Extreme Unction and Penance: “These are the things which this sacred ecumenical synod professes and teaches concerning **the sacraments of penance and extreme unction**, and it sets them forth to be believed and held by all the faithful of Christ. Moreover, the following canons, it says, must be inviolately observed, and **it condemns and anathematizes forever those who assert the contrary.**”

Pope Paul III, *Council of Trent*, Session 6, Chap. 16, *ex cathedra*: “**After this Catholic doctrine of justification - which, unless he faithfully and firmly accepts, no one can be justified** - it seemed good to the holy Synod to add these canons, so that all may know, not only what they must hold and follow, but also what they ought to shun and avoid.”

Pope Pius IX, *Vatican Council I*, 1870, Sess. 4, Chap. 3, ex cathedra: "... **all the faithful of Christ must believe that the Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff hold primacy over the whole world, and the Pontiff of Rome himself is the successor of the blessed Peter, the chief of the apostles, and is the true vicar of Christ and head of the whole Church...**

Furthermore We teach and declare that the Roman Church, by the disposition of the Lord, holds the sovereignty of ordinary power over all others... **This is the doctrine of Catholic truth from which no one can deviate and keep his faith and salvation."**

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM IS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

To further show that the Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for salvation, I will quote numerous infallible statements from the Chair of St. Peter.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Sess. 7, Can. 5 on the Sacrament of Baptism, **ex cathedra**: **"If anyone says that baptism [the Sacrament] is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation (cf. Jn. 3:5): let him be anathema."**

This infallible dogmatic definition from the Chair of St. Peter condemns anyone who says that the Sacrament of Baptism is not necessary for salvation. The Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for all for salvation, first of all, because, as the Council of Trent defines, all men (except the Blessed Virgin Mary) were conceived in a state of original sin as a result of the sin of Adam, the first man. The Sacrament of Baptism is also necessary for all for salvation because it is the means by which one is marked as a member of Jesus Christ and incorporated into His Mystical Body. And in defining the truth that all men were conceived in the state of Original Sin, the Council of Trent specifically declared that the Blessed Virgin Mary was an exception to its decree on Original Sin. But in defining the truth that the Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for salvation, the Council of Trent made no exceptions at all.

Pope Eugene IV, *The Council of Florence*, "Exultate Deo," Nov. 22, 1439: "Holy baptism, which is the gateway to the spiritual life, holds the first place among all the sacraments; through it we are made members of Christ and of the body of the Church. **And since death entered the universe through the first man, 'unless we are born again of water and the Spirit, we cannot,' as the Truth says, 'enter into the kingdom of heaven' [John 3:5].** The matter of this sacrament is real and natural water."

Pope Innocent III, *Fourth Lateran Council*, Constitution 1, 1215, *ex cathedra*: “**But the sacrament of baptism is consecrated in water at the invocation of the undivided Trinity – namely, Father, Son and Holy Ghost – and brings salvation to both children and adults** when it is correctly carried out by anyone in the form laid down by the Church.”

Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas* (# 15), Dec. 11, 1925 : “Indeed this kingdom is presented in the Gospels as such, into which men prepare to enter by doing penance; **moreover, they cannot enter it except through faith and baptism**, which, although **an external rite**, yet signifies and effects an interior regeneration.”

We see here that one cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven without faith and the external rite of baptism (i.e., the Sacrament of Baptism). Ignorant people nowadays contradict this fact and claim that people can reach heaven without a real and actual water baptism. One could easily understand if a person were ignorant of these facts and believed that a person or infant could be Saved without the sacrament of baptism since many have been wrong on this issue, even Saints. But when one has seen these infallible dogmatic declarations from the Popes, and still obstinately hold to the position that people or infants can be saved without real and actual water baptism, he is a heretic. A heretic is a person who obstinately, willfully and knowingly hold an opinion which he knows to be in opposition with what the Church teach.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Can. 2 on the Sacrament of Baptism, Sess. 7, 1547, *ex cathedra*: “**If anyone shall say that real and natural water is not necessary for baptism, and on that account those words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit’ [John 3:5], are distorted into some sort of metaphor: let him be anathema.**”

Pope Benedict XIV, *Nuper ad nos*, March 16, 1743, Profession of Faith: “**Likewise (I profess) that baptism is necessary for salvation, and hence, if there is imminent danger of death, it should be conferred at once and without delay**, and that it is valid if conferred with the right matter and form and intention by anyone, and at any time.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent, *Baptism made obligatory after Christ’s Resurrection*, p. 171: “Holy writers are unanimous in saying that after the Resurrection of our Lord, when He gave His Apostles the command to go and teach all nations: *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, **the law of Baptism became obligatory on all who were to be saved.**”

For a person to assert that salvation can be attained invincibly or ignorantly by Jews, pagans, heretics or schismatics without baptism or the Catholic Faith, is truly the most evil of doctrine since it renders Faith in Jesus Christ and the true Catholic Faith meaningless. According to this erroneous world view, anyone who is “good” can attain eternal life.

Many people like to object against these truths as “bitter” or “uncharitable.” But this is not true. The “foundation of charity is faith pure and undefiled” (Pope Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos*, #9). Some will also say that they cannot understand the justice behind these infallible declarations by God through the Popes. But it is not our job to question God’s laws and decrees. Our job is to believe first and understand second. Yet, if one looks at this situation clearly, one can understand the justice behind it. Adam and Eve brought death and original sin on every human being through their sin of eating the forbidden fruit. Did they fall for just desiring the fruit? NO! They fell after eating a real physical fruit. If you cannot accept that all of humanity must be baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, how can you accept that all of humanity fell into sin because of Adam and Eve ate a physical fruit?

Here are some very relevant quotes from the Revelations of St. Bridget that describes the power of a real baptism and how real water must be joined to the sacrament of baptism for baptism to be efficacious:

“The Mother appeared again and said: “My son, you still have need of a horse and saddle. The spiritual signification of the horse is baptism. Just as a horse has its four legs and carries a man on the journey he must accomplish, so too baptism, as signified by the horse, carries a man in the sight of God and has four spiritual effects. The first effect is that the baptized are liberated from the devil and bound to the commandments and service of God. The second effect is that they are cleansed from original sin. The third is that they are made God's children and coheirs. The fourth is that heaven is opened to them.

Yet how many there are today who, having reached the age of reason, pull the reins on the horse of baptism and ride it off on a false path! The baptismal path is true and rightly followed when people are instructed and upheld in good moral habits before reaching the age of reason and when, upon reaching the age of reason and carefully considering what was promised at the baptismal font, they keep their faith and love of God intact. However, they ride away from the right path and rein the horse in when they prefer the world and the flesh to God.

The saddle of the horse or of baptism is the effect of the bitter passion and death of

Jesus Christ, which gave baptism its efficacy. What is water if not an element? As soon as God's blood was poured out, God's word and the power of God's outpoured blood entered into the element. Thus, by the word of God, the water of baptism became the means of reconciliation between humankind and God, the gate of mercy, the expulsion of demons, the way to heaven, and the forgiveness of sins. So those who would boast of the power of baptism should first consider how the effect of baptism was instituted through bitter pain. When their mind swells up with pride against God, let them consider how bitter their redemption was, how many times they have broken their baptismal vows, and what they deserve for their relapses into sin." *The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 4, Chapter 74*

As we can read from this splendid teaching by our Holy Mother, the water received the blood of our Lord when he died for our sins, and that is why the water can have such a great efficacy that it can even wash away original sin when it is used with the invocation of the name of the Holy Trinity. Here comes another good example from St. Bridget's revelations about the efficacy of baptism:

Christ describes why a three year old boy is tormented by a demon: "And even though the boy is born by the seed of the father and mother, the devil still has the greatest power over him, for he is not reborn through the true baptism, but is only baptized in the way that women are accustomed to baptize, who do not know about the words of the Holy Trinity. That is why the boy may be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; then he will be cured."

BELIEVE DOGMA AS IT WAS ONCE DECLARED

There is only one way to believe dogma: as holy mother Church has once declared.

Pope Pius IX, *First Vatican Council*, Sess. 3, Chap. 2 on Revelation, 1870, *ex cathedra*: "**Hence, also, that understanding of its sacred dogmas must be perpetually retained, which Holy Mother Church has once declared; and there must never be a recession from that meaning under the specious name of a deeper understanding.**"

One of the main problems with most traditional "Catholic" groups and the heretical Second Vatican Council - the Vatican II "Church" - is the constant and obstinate deviation from the true literal meaning as the dogmas once was infallibly declared. As we learn above, there can never be a recession from the true meaning of the dogmas as they were once declared *under the specious name of deeper understanding*. Thus we are forced to accept the

dogmas as they are written under pain of mortal sin.

This definition of the First Vatican Council is critically important for dogmatic purity, because the primary way the Devil attempts to corrupt Christ's doctrines is by getting men to recede (move away) from the Church's dogmas *as they were once declared*. There is no meaning of a dogma other than what the **words themselves state and declare**, so the Devil tries to get men to "understand" and "interpret" these words in a way that is different from how holy mother Church has declared them.

Many of us have dealt with people who have attempted to explain away the clear meaning of the definitions on Outside the Church There is No Salvation by saying, "you must understand them." What they really mean is that you must understand them in a way *different from what the words themselves state and declare*. And this is precisely what the First Vatican Council condemns. It condemns their moving away from the understanding of a dogma which holy mother Church has once declared to a different meaning, under the specious (false) name of a "deeper understanding."

Besides those who argue that we must "understand" dogmas in a different way than what the words themselves state and declare, there are those who, when presented with the dogmatic definitions on Outside the Church There is No Salvation, say, "that is your interpretation." They belittle the words of a dogmatic formula to nothing other than one's private interpretation. And this also is heresy. For it's not our own interpretation which defines the dogmas, the dogmas define themselves, as have been shown. A person claiming otherwise will make himself guilty of bearing false witness. And this also is mortal sin.

THOSE WHO DIE IN ORIGINAL SIN OR MORTAL SIN DESCEND INTO HELL

As I have proven above, there is no possible way for children to be freed from original sin other than through the Sacrament of Baptism. This, of course, proves that there is no way for infants to be saved other than through the Sacrament of Baptism. So the following definitions merely affirm what has already been established: no child can possibly enter the kingdom of Heaven without receiving water baptism, but will rather descend into Hell.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, "Letentur coeli," Sess. 6, July 6, 1439, *ex cathedra*: "We define also that... **the souls of those who depart this life in actual mortal sin, or in original sin alone, go straightaway to hell**, but to undergo punishments of different kinds."

Pope Pius VI, *Auctorem fidei*, Aug. 28, 1794: "26. **The doctrine which rejects as**

a Pelagian fable, that place of the lower regions (which the faithful generally designate by the name of the limbo of the children) in which the souls of those departing with the sole guilt of original sin are punished with the punishment of the condemned, exclusive of the punishment of fire, just as if, by this very fact, that these who remove the punishment of fire introduced that middle place and state free of guilt and of punishment between the kingdom of God and eternal damnation, such as that about which the Pelagians idly talk” – **Condemned** as false, rash, injurious to Catholic schools.

Here Pope Pius VI condemns the idea of some theologians that infants who die in original sin suffer the fires of Hell. At the same time, he confirms that these infants do go to a part of the lower regions (i.e., Hell) called the limbo of the children. They do not go to Heaven, but to a place in Hell where there is no fire. This is perfectly in accord with all of the other solemn definitions of the Church, which teach that infants who die without water baptism descend into Hell, but suffer a punishment different from those who die in mortal sin. Their punishment is eternal separation from God.

Pope Pius XI, *Mit brennender Sorge* (# 25), March 14, 1937: “**Original sin**’ is the hereditary but impersonal fault of Adam’s descendants, who have sinned in him (Rom. v. 12). **It is the loss of grace, and therefore eternal life,** together with a propensity to evil, which everybody must, with the assistance of grace, penance, resistance and moral effort, repress and conquer.”

THE UNBAPTIZED CHILDREN AND THE LIMBO OF THE CHILDREN

The Catholic Church teaches that aborted children and infants who die without baptism descend immediately into Hell, but that they do not suffer the fires of Hell. They go to a place in Hell called the limbo of the children. The most specific definition of the Church proving that there is no possible way for an infant to be saved without the Sacrament of Baptism is the following one from Pope Eugene IV.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, Session 11, Feb. 4, 1442, *ex cathedra*: “**Regarding children**, indeed, because of danger of death, which can often take place, **when no help can be brought to them by another remedy than through the sacrament of baptism, through which they are snatched from the domination of the Devil [original sin] and adopted among the sons of God,** it advises that holy baptism ought not be deferred for forty or eighty days, or any time according to the observance of certain people...” (Denz. 712)

Pope Eugene IV here defined *from the Chair of Peter* that there is no other remedy for infants to be snatched away from the dominion of the devil (i.e., original sin) other than the Sacrament of Baptism. This means that anyone who obstinately teaches that infants can be saved without receiving the Sacrament of Baptism is a heretic, for he is teaching that there is **another remedy** for original sin in children other than the Sacrament of Baptism.

Pope Martin V, *Council of Constance*, Session 15, July 6, 1415 - Condemning the articles of John Wyclif - Proposition 6: **“Those who claim that the children of the faithful dying without sacramental baptism will not be saved, are stupid and presumptuous in saying this.”** - **Condemned**

The arch-heretic John Wyclif was proposing that those (such as ourselves) are stupid for teaching that infants who die without water (i.e., sacramental) baptism cannot possibly be saved. He was anathematized for this assertion, among many others. And here is what the Council of Constance had to say about John Wyclif's anathematized propositions, such as #6 above.

Pope Martin V, *Council of Constance*, Session 15, July 6, 1415: “The books and pamphlets of John Wyclif, of cursed memory, were carefully examined by the doctors and masters of Oxford University... **This holy synod, therefore, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, repudiates and condemns, by this perpetual decree, the aforesaid articles and each of them in particular; and it forbids each and every Catholic henceforth, under pain of anathema, to preach, teach, or hold the said articles or any one of them.**”

So those who criticize Catholics for affirming the dogma that no infant can be saved without the Sacrament of Baptism are actually proposing the anathematized heresy of John Wyclif. Here are some other dogmatic definitions on the topic:

Pope St. Zosimus, *The Council of Carthage*, Canon on Sin and Grace, 417 A.D.- **“It has been decided likewise that if anyone says that for this reason the Lord said: ‘In my Father’s house there are many mansions’ [John 14:2]: that it might be understood that in the kingdom of heaven there will be some middle place or some place anywhere where the blessed infants live who departed from this life without baptism, without which they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, which is life eternal, let him be anathema.”** (Denz. 102, authentic addition to canon 2.)

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, On Original Sin, Session V, *ex cathedra*: “If anyone says that recently born babies should not be baptized even if they have been born to baptized parents; **or says that they are indeed baptized for the remission of sins, but incur no trace of the original sin of Adam needing to be cleansed by the laver of rebirth for them to obtain eternal life**, with the necessary consequence that in their case there is being understood a form of baptism for the remission of sins which is not true, but false: **let him be anathema.**” (Denz. 791)

This means that anyone who asserts that infants don't need the “laver of rebirth” (water baptism) to attain eternal life is teaching heresy. St. Augustine was perhaps the most outspoken proponent of the apostolic truth that infants who die without Baptism are excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven (since they have original sin).

St. Augustine, A.D. 415: “**Anyone who would say that infants who pass from this life without participation in the Sacrament [of Baptism] shall be made alive in Christ truly goes counter to the preaching of the Apostle and condemns the whole Church**, where there is great haste in baptizing infants because it is believed without doubt that there is no other way at all in which they can be made alive in Christ.” (Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 3: 2016.)

The Revelations of St. Bridget also corroborates this infallible dogmatic truth revealed by God in Book 5, Interrogation 6:

First question. Again he appeared on his ladder as before, saying: "O Judge, I ask you: Why does one infant emerge alive from the mother's womb and obtain baptism, while another, having received a soul, dies in the mother's belly?"

Answer to the first question. The Judge answered: "You ask why one infant dies in the mother's belly while another emerges alive. There is a reason. All the strength of the child's body comes, of course, from the seed of its father and mother; however, if it is conceived without due strength, because of some weakness of its father or mother, it dies quickly. As a result of the negligence or carelessness of the parents as well as of my divine justice, many times it happens that what was joined together comes apart quickly.

Yet a soul is not brought to the harshest punishment for this reason, however little time it had for giving life to the body, but, rather, it comes to the mercy that is

known to me. Just as the sun shining into a house is not seen as it is in its beauty - only those who look into the sky see its rays - so too the souls of such children, though they do not see my face for lack of baptism, are nevertheless closer to my mercy than to punishment, but not in the same way as my elect." - *The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 5, Interrogation 6, Question 1*

More proof:

“But consider my goodness and mercy! For, as the teacher says, I give virtue to those who do not have any virtue. By reason of my great love I give the kingdom of heaven to all of the baptized who die before reaching the age of discretion. As it is written: It has pleased my Father to give the kingdom of heaven to such as these. By reason of my tender love, I even show mercy to the infants of pagans. If any of them die before reaching the age of discretion, given that they cannot come to know me face to face, they go instead to a place that it is not permitted for you to know but where they will live without suffering.” - *The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 2, Chapter 1*

These fascinating sentences clearly affirm infallible Catholic dogma by teaching that no one can see God's face without water baptism. Yet, they also give us explicit confirmation that these children are in a state of light and mercy, though not in the same way as those in Heaven.

BAPTISM OF BLOOD AND BAPTISM OF DESIRE – ERRONEOUS TRADITIONS OF MAN

In this document, I have shown that the Catholic Church infallibly teaches that the Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for salvation. I have also shown that it is only through receiving the Sacrament of Baptism that one is incorporated into the Catholic Church, outside of which there is no salvation. I have also shown that the Catholic Church infallibly teaches that the words of Jesus Christ in John 3:5 – *Amen, amen I say unto thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* – are to be understood literally: as they are written. **This is the infallible teaching of the Church and it excludes any possibility of salvation without being born again of water and the Holy Ghost.** However, throughout the history of the Church, many have believed in the theories called baptism of desire and baptism of blood: that one's desire for the Sacrament of Baptism or one's martyrdom for the faith supplies for the lack of being born again of water and the Holy Ghost. Those who believe in baptism of blood and baptism of desire raise certain objections to the absolute necessity of receiving

the Sacrament of Baptism for salvation. I will respond to some of the major objections made by baptism of desire and blood advocates; and in the process, I will give an overview of the history of the errors of baptism of desire and baptism of blood. In doing this I will demonstrate that neither baptism of blood nor baptism of desire is a teaching of the Catholic Church.

THE FATHERS ARE UNANIMOUS FROM THE BEGINNING

The Fathers (or prominent early Christian Catholic writers) are unanimous from the beginning that no one enters heaven or is freed from original sin without water baptism.

In 140 A.D., the early Church Father Hermas quotes Jesus in John 3:5, and writes:

“They had need to come up through the water, so that they might be made alive; **for they could not otherwise enter into the kingdom of God.**”

This statement is obviously a paraphrase of John 3:5, and thus it demonstrates that from the very beginning of the apostolic age it was held and taught by the fathers that no one enters heaven without being *born again of water and the Spirit* based specifically on Our Lord Jesus Christ’s declaration in John 3:5.

In 155 A.D., St. Justin the Martyr writes:

“... they are led by us to a place where there is water; and there they are reborn in the same kind of rebirth in which we ourselves were reborn... in the name of God... they receive the washing of water. For Christ said, ‘***Unless you be reborn, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.***’ **The reason for doing this we have learned from the apostles.**”

Notice that St. Justin Martyr, like Hermas, also quotes the words of Jesus in John 3:5, and based on Christ’s words he teaches that it is from apostolic tradition that no one at all can enter Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit in the Sacrament of Baptism.

In his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, also dated 155 A.D., St. Justin Martyr further writes:

“... hasten to learn in what way forgiveness of sins and a hope of the inheritance... may be yours. **There is no other way than this: acknowledge Christ, be washed in the washing announced by Isaias [Baptism]...**”

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, 350 A.D.:

“He says, ‘*Unless a man be born again*’ – and He adds the words ‘*of water and the Spirit*’ – *he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*....if a man be virtuous in his deeds, but does not receive the seal by means of the water, shall he enter into the kingdom of heaven. **A bold saying, but not mine; for it is Jesus who has declared it.**”

We see that St. Cyril continues the apostolic Tradition that no one enters heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit, based again on an absolute understanding Our Lord’s own words in John 3:5.

Pope St. Damasus, 382 A.D.:

“**This, then, is the salvation of Christians:** that believing in the Trinity, that is, in the Father, and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, **and baptized in it...**”

St. Ambrose, 387 A.D.:

“... **no one ascends into the kingdom of heaven except through the Sacrament of Baptism.**”

St. Ambrose, 387 A.D.:

“**‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’** No one is excepted: not the infant, not the one prevented by some necessity.”

St. Ambrose, *De mysteriis*, 390-391 A.D.:

“You have read, therefore, that the three witnesses in Baptism are one: water, blood, and the spirit; and if you withdraw any one of these, the Sacrament of Baptism is not valid. For what is water without the cross of Christ? A common element without any sacramental effect. **Nor on the other hand is there any mystery of regeneration without water: for ‘unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’ [John 3:5] Even a catechumen** believes in the cross of the Lord Jesus, by which also he is signed; but, unless he be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, *he cannot receive the remission of sins* nor be recipient of the gift of spiritual

grace.”

St. John Chrysostom, 392 A.D.:

“Weep for the unbelievers; weep for those who differ not a whit from them, those **who go hence without illumination, without the seal!** ... They are outside the royal city.... with the condemned. **‘Amen, I tell you, if anyone is not born of water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’**”

St Augustine, 395 A.D.:

“... **God does not forgive sins except to the baptized.**”

Pope St. Innocent, 414 A.D.:

“But that which Your Fraternity asserts the Pelagians preach, **that even without the grace of Baptism infants are able to be endowed with the rewards of eternal life, is quite idiotic.**”

Pope St. Gregory the Great, c. 590 A.D.:

“**Forgiveness of sin is bestowed on us only by the baptism of Christ.**”

Theophylactus, Patriarch of Bulgaria, c. 800 A.D.:

“*He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. It does not suffice to believe; he who believes, and is not yet baptized, but is only a catechumen, has not yet fully acquired salvation.*”

Many other passages could be quoted from the fathers, but it is a fact that the fathers of the Church are unanimous from the beginning of the apostolic age that no one at all can be saved without receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, based on the words of Jesus Christ in John 3:5. The eminent Patristic Scholar Fr. William Jurgens, who has literally read thousands of texts from the fathers, was *forced* to admit the following (even though he believes in baptism of desire) in his three volume set on the fathers of the Church.

Fr. William Jurgens: “**If there were not a constant tradition in the Fathers that the Gospel message of ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the kingdom of God’ is to be taken absolutely**, it would be easy to say that Our Savior simply did not see fit to mention

the obvious exceptions of invincible ignorance and physical impossibility. **But the tradition in fact is there; and it is likely enough to be found so constant as to constitute revelation.**”

The eminent scholar Fr. Jurgens is admitting here three important things:

- 1) The fathers are constant in their teaching that John 3:5 is absolute with no exceptions; that is, no one at all enters heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit;
- 2) The fathers are so constant on this point that it likely constitutes divine revelation, without even considering the infallible teaching of the popes;
- 3) The constant teaching of the fathers that all must receive water baptism for salvation in light of John 3:5 excludes exceptions for the “invincibly ignorant” or “physically impossible” cases.

And based on this truth, declared by Jesus in the Gospel (John 3:5), handed down by the Apostles and taught by the fathers, the Catholic Church has infallibly defined as a dogma (as we have seen already) that no one at all enters heaven without the Sacrament of Baptism.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Canon 5 on the Sacrament of Baptism, ***ex cathedra***: “**If anyone says that baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation (John. 3:5): let him be anathema.**”

NOT ALL OF THE FATHERS REMAINED CONSISTENT WITH THEIR OWN AFFIRMATION

Despite the fact that there is a constant tradition from the beginning that no one at all is saved without water baptism, not all of the fathers always remained consistent with their own affirmation on this point. **And that is where we come across the theories of “baptism of blood” and “baptism of desire.”** It must be understood that the fathers of the Church were mistaken and inconsistent with their own teaching and the apostolic Tradition on many points – since they were fallible men who made many errors.

The fathers of the Church are only a definite witness to Tradition when expressing a point held universally and constantly or when expressing something that is in line with defined dogma. Taken individually or even in multiplicity, they can be dead wrong and even dangerous. St. Basil the Great said that the Holy Ghost is second to the Son of God in order and dignity, in a horrible and even heretical attempt to explain the Holy Trinity.

St. Basil (363): “The Son is not, however, second to the Father in nature, because the Godhead is one in each of them, and plainly, too, in the Holy Spirit, even if in order and dignity He is second to the Son (yes, this we do concede!), though not in such a way, it is clear, that He were of another nature.”

When St. Basil says above that the Godhead is one in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he is correctly affirming the universal, apostolic Tradition. But when he says that the Holy Spirit is second in *dignity* to the Son he ceases to remain consistent with this Tradition and falls into error (material heresy, in fact). And the fathers made countless errors in attempting to defend or articulate the Faith.

St. Augustine wrote an entire book of corrections. St. Fulgentius and a host of others, including St. Augustine, held that it was certain that infants who die without *baptism descend into the fires of Hell*, a position that was later condemned by Pope Pius VI. As Pope Pius VI confirmed, unbaptized infants go to Hell, but to a place in Hell where there is no fire.

But St. Augustine was so outspoken in favor of this error that it became the common and basically unchallenged teaching for more than 500 years, according to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 9, “Limbo,” p. 257: “**On the special question, however, of the punishment of original sin after death, St. Anselm was at one with St. Augustine in holding that unbaptized infants share in the positive sufferings of the damned; and Abelard was the first to rebel against the severity of the Augustinian tradition on this point.**”

This is why Catholics don’t form definite doctrinal conclusions from the teaching of a father of the Church or a handful of fathers; a Catholic goes by the infallible teaching of the Church proclaimed by the popes; and a Catholic assents to the teaching of the fathers of the Church when they are in universal and constant agreement from the beginning and in line with Catholic dogmatic teaching.

Pope Benedict XIV, *Apostolica* (# 6), June 26, 1749: “**The Church’s judgment is preferable to that of a Doctor** renowned for his holiness and teaching.”

Errors of the Jansenists, #30: “**When anyone finds a doctrine clearly established in Augustine, he can absolutely hold it and teach it, disregarding any bull of the pope.**” - **Condemned** by Pope Alexander VIII

Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis* (# 21), Aug. 12, 1950: **“This deposit of faith our Divine Redeemer has given for authentic interpretation not to each of the faithful, not even to theologians, but only to the Teaching Authority of the Church.”**

The Catholic Church recognizes infallibility in no saint, theologian or early Church father. It is only a pope operating with the authority of the Magisterium who is protected by the Holy Ghost from teaching error on faith or morals. So, when we examine and show how Churchmen have erred on the topics of baptism of desire and blood this is 100% consistent with the teaching of the Church, which has always acknowledged that any Churchman, no matter how great, can make errors, even significant ones.

THE THEORY OF BAPTISM OF BLOOD – A TRADITION OF MAN

A small number of the fathers – **approximately 8 out of a total of hundreds** – are quoted in favor of what is called “baptism of blood,” the idea that a catechumen (that is, one preparing to receive Catholic Baptism) who shed his blood for Christ could be saved without having received Baptism. It is crucial to note at the beginning that **none of the fathers considered anyone but a catechumen as a possible exception to receiving the Sacrament of Baptism; they would all condemn and reject as heretical and foreign to the teaching of Christ the modern heresy of “invincible ignorance”** saving those who die as non-Catholics. So, out of the fathers, approximately 8 are quoted in favor of baptism of blood for catechumens. And, **only 1 father out of hundreds, St. Augustine, can be quoted as clearly teaching what is today called “baptism of desire”**: the idea that a catechumen could be saved by his explicit desire for water baptism. This means that with the exception of St. Augustine, all of the few fathers who believed in baptism of blood actually rejected the concept of baptism of desire. Take St. Cyril of Jerusalem, for example.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, 350 A.D.: **“If any man does not receive baptism, he does not receive salvation. The only exception is the martyrs...”**

Here we see that St. Cyril of Jerusalem believed in baptism of blood, but rejected baptism of desire. St. Fulgence expressed the same.

St. Fulgence, 523: “From that time at which Our Savior said: *“If anyone is not reborn of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,”* no one can, without the sacrament of baptism, except those who, in the Catholic Church, without Baptism pour out their blood for Christ...”

Here we see that St. Fulgence believed in baptism of blood but rejected the idea of baptism of desire. And what's ironic and particularly dishonest is that the baptism of desire apologists (such as the priests of the Society of St. Pius X) will quote these patristic texts (such as the two above) in books written to prove *baptism of desire*, without pointing out to their readers that these passages actually deny baptism of desire; for we can see that St. Fulgence, while expressing belief in baptism of blood, rejects baptism of desire, only allowing martyrs as a possible exception to receiving baptism. (What would St. Fulgence say about the modern version of the heresy of baptism of desire, also taught by such priests of the SSPX, SSPV, CMRI, etc. whereby Jews, Muslims, Hindus and pagans can be saved without Baptism?)

It is also important to point out that some of the fathers use the term "baptism of blood" to describe the Catholic martyrdom of one already baptized, **not as a possible replacement for water baptism**. This is the only legitimate use of the term.

St. John Chrysostom, *Panegyric on St. Lucian*, 4th Century AD:

"Do not be surprised that I call martyrdom a Baptism; for here too the Spirit comes in great haste and there is a taking away of sins and a wonderful and marvelous cleansing of the soul; and just as those being baptized are washed in water, so too those being martyred are washed in their own blood."

St. John is here describing the martyrdom of a priest St. Lucian, a person already baptized. He is not saying that martyrdom replaces baptism. St. John Damascene describes it the same way:

St. John Damascene: "These things were well understood by our holy and inspired fathers --- thus they strove, **after Holy Baptism**, to keep... spotless and undefiled. Whence some of them also thought fit to receive **another** Baptism: I mean that which is by blood and martyrdom."

This is important because many dishonest scholars today (such as the priests of the Society of St. Pius X) will distort the teaching on this point; they will quote a passage on baptism of blood where St. John is simply speaking of baptism of blood as a Catholic martyrdom for one already baptized, and they will present it as if the person were teaching that martyrdom can replace baptism – when such is not stated anywhere.

Some may wonder why the term *baptism of blood* was used at all. I believe that the reason the term "baptism of blood" was used by some of the fathers was because Our Lord described His coming passion as a baptism in Mark 10:38-39.

Mark 10:38-39: “And Jesus said to them: You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I drink of: or be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized? But they said to him: We can. And Jesus saith to them: You shall indeed drink of the chalice that I drink of: and with the baptism wherewith I am baptized, you shall be baptized.”

We see in the aforementioned passage that Our Lord, although already baptized by St. John in the Jordan, refers to another baptism which He must receive. This is His martyrdom on the cross, not a substitute for baptism of water. It is His “second baptism,” if you will, not his first. Thus, baptism of blood is described by Our Lord in the same way as St. John Damascene, not to mean a substitute baptism for an unbaptized person, but rather a Catholic martyrdom which remits all the fault and punishment due to sin.

The term *baptism* is used in a variety of ways in the scriptures and by the Church fathers. The baptisms: of water, of blood, of the spirit, of Moses, and of fire are all terms that have been implemented by Church Fathers to characterize certain things, but not necessarily to describe that an unbaptized martyr can attain salvation. Read the verse of scripture in which the term *baptism* is used for the Old Testament forefathers:

1Cor. 10:2-4: “And all in Moses were BAPTIZED, in the cloud, and in the sea: And did all eat the same spiritual food, And all drank the same spiritual drink: (and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.)”

I believe this explains why a number of fathers **erred** in believing that baptism of blood supplies the place of baptism of water. They recognized that Our Lord referred to His own martyrdom as a baptism, and they erroneously concluded that martyrdom for the true faith can serve as a substitute for being born again of water and the Holy Ghost. But the reality is that there are no exceptions to Our Lord’s words in John 3:5, as the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church confirms. **Anyone of good will who is willing to shed his blood for the true faith will not be left without these saving waters. It is not our blood, but Christ’s blood on the Cross, communicated to us in the Sacrament of Baptism, which frees us from the state of sin and allows us entrance into the kingdom of Heaven.**

Pope Eugene IV, “Cantate Domino,” *Council of Florence, ex cathedra*: “**No one, whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has persevered within the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.**”

SUMMARIZING THE FACTS ON BAPTISM OF BLOOD

As stated already, the theory of baptism of blood has never been taught by one pope, one council or in any Papal Encyclical. At least 5 dogmatic councils of the Catholic Church issued detailed definitions on Baptism, and not one ever mentioned the concept or the term baptism of blood. The Council of Trent had 14 canons on Baptism, and baptism of blood is mentioned nowhere. And, in fact, various infallible statements from the popes and councils exclude the idea.

Pope Eugene IV, “Cantate Domino,” *Council of Florence, ex cathedra*: **“No one, whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has persevered within the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.”**

Pope Eugene IV explicitly excludes from salvation even those who “shed blood for the name of Christ” unless they are living within the bosom and unity of the Church! And, as proven already, the unbaptized are not living within the bosom and unity of the Church (*de fide*)! The unbaptized are not subjects of the Catholic Church (*de fide, Council of Trent, Sess. 14, Chap. 2*); the unbaptized are not members of the Catholic Church (*de fide, Pius XII, Mystici Corporis # 22*); and the unbaptized do not have the mark of Christians (*de fide, Pius XII, Mediator Dei # 43*).

If “baptism of blood” truly served as a substitute for the Sacrament of Baptism, God would never have allowed the Catholic Church to understand John 3:5 *as it is written* in its infallible decrees, as He has (Pope Eugene IV, *The Council of Florence*, “Exultate Deo,” Nov. 22, 1439, etc.). This is certain, because the Church’s official understanding of the scriptures cannot err.

Furthermore, God would never have allowed the infallible Council of Trent to completely pass over any mention of this “exception” in its canons on baptism and its chapters on justification as an alternative way of achieving the state of grace. He would never have allowed all of the infallible definitions from popes on *only one baptism* to avoid any mention of “the baptism of blood.”

And God would not have allowed Pope Eugene IV to define that nobody, even *if he has shed blood in the name of Christ*, can be saved unless he is in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church, without mentioning the exception of “baptism of blood.” **God has never allowed the theory of baptism of blood to be taught in one council, by one pope, or in one infallible decree, but only by fallible theologians and fallible**

early Church fathers. All of this is because baptism of blood is not a teaching of the Catholic Church, but the erroneous speculation of certain fathers who also erred frequently in the same documents. Besides, there would be no need for God to save anyone by baptism of blood (or “baptism of desire”), since He can keep any sincere souls alive until they are baptized.

THE THEORY OF BAPTISM OF DESIRE – A TRADITION OF MAN

Those who have been brainwashed by apologists for the theory of baptism of desire may be surprised to learn that of all the fathers of the Church, **only 1 can even be brought forward by baptism of desire advocates as having taught the concept.** That’s correct, only one, St. Augustine. The baptism of desire advocates will make a feeble attempt to bring forward a second father, St. Ambrose, as we will see; but even if that were true, that would make only two fathers out of hundreds who can be quoted as ever having speculated on the concept of baptism of desire. So then, what is one to say about the following statements of the priests of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX), who have written three separate books on “baptism of desire”?

Fr. Jean-Marc Rulleau (SSPX), *Baptism of Desire*, p. 63: “This baptism of desire makes up for the want of sacramental baptism... The existence of this mode of salvation is a truth taught by the Magisterium of the Church and held from the first centuries **by all the Fathers.** **No Catholic theologian has contested it.**”

Fr. Francois Laisney (SSPX), *Is Feeneyism Catholic?*, p. 79, on Baptism of desire: “**It is not only the common teaching, but unanimous teaching;** it is not only since the early part of this millennium, but rather from the beginning of the Church...”

These statements are totally false and grievous lies which completely misrepresent the teaching of Tradition and corrupt people’s faith, as we already have seen. **The fathers are unanimously against** the concept that anyone (including a catechumen) could be saved without water baptism. But let us examine the teaching of the one father, St. Augustine, who did express belief (at least at times) in the idea that a catechumen could be saved without the Sacrament of Baptism by his desire for it.

ST. AUGUSTINE (354-430)

St. Augustine is quoted in favor of the concept of baptism of desire, but he admittedly

struggled with the issue, sometimes clearly opposing the idea that unbaptized **catechumens** could achieve salvation, and other times supporting it.

St. Augustine, 400: “That the place of Baptism is sometimes supplied by suffering is supported by a substantial argument which the same Blessed Cyprian draws...

Considering this over and over again, I find that not only suffering for the name of Christ can supply for that which is lacking by way of Baptism, but even faith and conversion of heart, if... recourse cannot be had to the celebration of the Mystery of Baptism.”

There are two interesting points about this passage. The first relates to baptism of blood: notice that Augustine says that his belief in baptism of blood is supported by an inference or an argument that St. Cyprian made, not anything rooted in the Tradition of the Apostles or the Roman Pontiffs.

St. Cyprian, *To Jubaianus* (254): “... *in regard to what I might think in the matter of the baptism of heretics... This baptism we cannot reckon as valid...*”

As we saw already, many of the inferences of St. Cyprian showed themselves to be quite wrong, to put it nicely, such as his “inference” that it was from “apostolic Tradition” that heretics cannot confer baptism, which is wrong, since even heretics can baptize validly. Thus, St. Augustine is revealing by this statement a very important point: **that his belief even in baptism of blood is rooted in fallible human speculation, not in divine revelation or infallible Tradition. He is admitting that he could be wrong and, in fact, he is wrong.**

Secondly, when Augustine concludes that he also believes that faith (that is, faith in Catholicism) and a desire for baptism could have the same effect as martyrdom, he says: “*Considering this over and over again...*” By saying that he considered this over and over again, St. Augustine is admitting that his opinion on *baptism of desire* is also something that he has come to from his own consideration, not through infallible Tradition or teaching. It is something that he admittedly struggled with and contradicted himself on. All of this serves to prove again that baptism of desire, like baptism of blood, is a tradition of man, born in erroneous and fallible human speculation (albeit from some great men), and not rooted in or derived from any Tradition of the Apostles or of the popes.

Out of the hundreds of fathers of the Church, the only other one that the baptism of desire advocates *even try* to quote is St. Ambrose. They think that in his funeral speech for his friend (the Emperor Valentinian) he taught that the emperor (who was only a catechumen) was saved by his desire for baptism. But St. Ambrose’s funeral speech for Valentinian is

extremely ambiguous and could be interpreted in a variety of ways. It is thus gratuitous for them to assert that it clearly teaches the idea of “baptism of desire.”

LITURGICAL TRADITION AND APOSTOLIC BURIAL TRADITION

Besides these clear testimonies of the fathers against the theory of baptism of desire, perhaps most striking is the fact that in the history of the Catholic Church **there is not a single tradition that can be cited for praying for – or giving ecclesiastical burial to – catechumens who died without baptism.** *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1907) had the following to say about the actual Tradition of the Church in this regard:

“A certain statement in the funeral oration of St. Ambrose over the Emperor Valentinian II has been brought forward as a proof that the Church offered sacrifices and prayers for catechumens who died before baptism. **There is not a vestige of such a custom to be found anywhere...** The practice of the Church is more correctly shown in the canon (xvii) of the Second Council of Braga (572 AD): **‘Neither the commemoration of Sacrifice [oblationis] nor the service of chanting [psallendi] is to be employed for catechumens who have died without baptism.’**”

There you have the teaching of Catholic Tradition! No catechumen who died without the Sacrament of Baptism received prayer, sacrifice or Christian burial! The Council of Braga, in 572 A.D., forbade prayer for catechumens who died without Baptism. Pope St. Leo the Great and Pope St. Gelasius had earlier confirmed the same Church discipline – which was the universal practice – forbidding Catholics to pray for unbaptized catechumens who had died. **This means that the belief in the early Church was that there was no such thing as baptism of desire.** The theory of baptism of desire didn’t become a widespread belief until the middle ages, when St. Thomas Aquinas and some other eminent theologians made it their own, which caused many theologians to subsequently adopt that position out of deference to them, a position on the possible salvation of catechumens who died without baptism which was contrary to the overwhelming belief and liturgical tradition of the early Church, not to mention the Church’s later infallible teaching on the scripture John 3:5.

The true teaching of apostolic and Catholic tradition on this topic is also seen from the teaching of the Catholic Liturgy, which all worshipping Catholics in the early Church acknowledged and believed: namely, that no unbaptized catechumen or unbaptized person was considered part of *the faithful*. That unbaptized catechumens are not part of the faithful was held by all of the fathers because it was taught to all Catholics in the liturgy.

Dr. Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Membership in the Church, p. 309: “3. The Fathers draw a sharp line of separation between Catechumens and ‘the faithful.’”

This means that no unbaptized person can be saved, because Catholic dogma has defined that no one is saved outside the one Church of the faithful.

Pope Gregory XVI, *Summo Iugiter Studio*, May 27, 1832, on no salvation outside the Church: “Official acts of the Church proclaim the same dogma. Thus, in the decree on faith which Innocent III published with the synod of Lateran IV, these things are written: ***‘There is one universal Church of all the faithful outside of which no one is saved.’***”

POPE ST. SIRICIUS (384-398)

In his letter to the Bishop of Tarragona in the year 385, Pope St. Siricius also shows how the belief in the early Church rejected any concept of baptism of desire.

Pope St. Siricius, 385, [Concerning the necessity of baptism] “Therefore just as we declare that respect for the Easter sacrifice [Paschal time] should not be lessened in the case of any person, in like manner **we wish help to be brought with all speed to children who because of their age cannot yet speak, and to those who in any emergency are in need of the water of holy baptism, lest it should lead to the destruction of our souls if, by refusing the water of salvation to those who desire it, each of them, when taking leave of this world, should lose both the kingdom and life.** Indeed whoever suffers the peril of shipwreck, an enemy attack, the danger of siege or desperation resulting from some bodily infirmity, and so **asks for what in their faith is their only help, let them receive at the moment of their request the reward of regeneration that they beg for.** This much should suffice for my digression on this subject; now let all priests who do not wish to be wrenched from the firmly-fixed rock of the apostles, on which Christ built his universal church, hold fast to the aforesaid rule.” (Latin found in Denzinger-Schonmetzer, Latin Edition, 1962, no. 184; an English Translation found in *The Christian Faith*, Sixth Revised and Enlarged Edition, Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1996, p. 540.)

I hope that the baptism of desire advocates read this one very carefully. The Pope declares that the man who begs for regeneration and desires water baptism is still denied heaven if

he dies without it! This quotation from Pope St. Siricius is striking in that it again clearly shows how the early Church rejected belief in the concept of baptism of desire. The Pope begins by affirming that the observance of Paschal time should not be relaxed. (He is referring to the fact that Baptisms were historically performed during Paschal time.) **After affirming that this tradition should be maintained, the Pope warns that infants and those in any necessity or danger should be baptized immediately, lest those who desire baptism die and are “deprived of the Kingdom and life” for not having received water baptism** which they desired. This is a clear rejection of the idea of baptism of desire.

This point is made again by the Pope in the second half of the quotation, where he says that when those unbaptized persons “**ask for what in their faith is their only help, let them receive at the very moment of their request the reward of regeneration they beg for.**” This means that receiving water Baptism is the *only help to salvation* for such persons who earnestly desire to receive Baptism. There is no help to salvation for such persons in their desire or martyrdom, but only in receiving the Sacrament of Baptism.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Can. 2 on the Sacrament of Baptism, Sess. 7, 1547, *ex cathedra*: “**If anyone shall say that real and natural water is not necessary for baptism, and on that account those words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit’ [John 3:5], are distorted into some sort of metaphor: let him be anathema.**”

As you can see, you are anathematized if you assert that baptism of desire is a Catholic doctrine!

MAJOR OBJECTIONS

SESS. 6, CHAP. 4 OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

OBJECTION- In Session 6, Chapter 4 of its decree on Justification, the Council of Trent teaches that justification can take place by the water of baptism or the desire for it! So there!

ANSWER- [**Preliminary Note:** If Sess. 6, Chap. 4 of Trent were teaching what the baptism of desire advocates claim (which it isn't), then it would mean that every man must receive baptism or at least have the actual desire/vow for baptism to be saved. It would mean that it would be **heresy** to say that any unbaptized person could be saved if he doesn't have at least the desire/vow for water baptism. But 99% of the people who quote

this passage in favor of baptism of desire don't even believe that one must desire baptism to be saved! They believe that Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, etc. can be saved who don't desire water baptism. Thus, 99% of those who quote this passage **reject even what they claim it is teaching**. Frankly, this fact just shows the dishonesty and the bad will of most baptism of desire advocates in attempting to quote this passage as if they were devoted to its teaching when, in fact, they don't believe in it at all and are in heresy for teaching that non-Catholics can be saved who don't even desire water baptism.]

That being noted, this passage of the Council of Trent does not teach that Justification can take place by the water of baptism or the desire for it. It says that justification in the impious **CANNOT TAKE PLACE WITHOUT** the water of baptism or the desire for it. This is totally different from the idea that justification can take place by the water of baptism or the desire for it.

Pope Paul III, *Council of Trent*, Sess. 6, Chap. 4: "In these words there is suggested a description of the justification of the impious, how there is a transition from that state in which a person is born as a child of the first Adam to the state of grace and of adoption as sons of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ our savior; indeed, this transition, once the gospel has been promulgated, **CANNOT TAKE PLACE WITHOUT** the laver of regeneration or a desire for it, **AS IT IS WRITTEN: Unless a man is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5).**"

First off, the reader should note that this crucial passage from Trent has been horribly mistranslated in the popular English version of Denzinger, the Sources of Catholic Dogma, which is cited above.

The critical phrase, "*this transition, once the gospel has been promulgated, cannot take place without the laver of regeneration or a desire for it*" has been mistranslated to read: "*this transition, once the gospel has been promulgated, cannot take place except through the laver of regeneration or a desire for it...*" This mistranslation of the Latin word "*sine*" (without) – which is found in the original Latin – to "except through" completely alters the meaning of the passage to favor the error of baptism of desire. This is important to keep in mind because this mistranslation is still being used all the time by baptism of desire apologists (often deliberately), including in recent publications of the SSPX and CMRI. That being mentioned, I will proceed to discuss what the council actually says here.

Looking at a correct translation, which is found in many books, the reader also should notice that, in this passage, the Council of Trent teaches that John

3:5 is to be taken as it is written (Latin: *sicut scriptum est*), which excludes any possibility of salvation without being born again of water in the **Sacrament of Baptism. There is no way that baptism of desire can be true if John 3:5 is to be taken as it is written, because John 3:5 says that every man must be born again of water and the Spirit to be saved, which is what the theory of baptism of desire denies. The theory of baptism of desire and an interpretation of John 3:5 as it is written are mutually exclusive (they cannot both be true at the same time) – and every baptism of desire proponent will admit this. That is why all of them must – and do – opt for a non-literal interpretation of John 3:5.**

But what does the passage in Trent that we just discussed say: It says infallibly, “**AS IT IS WRITTEN**, UNLESS A MAN IS BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE HOLY GHOST, HE CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

But what about the claim of the baptism of desire people: that the use of the word “or” (Latin: *aut*) in the above passage means that justification **can** take place by the water of baptism or the desire for it. A careful look at the correct translation of this passage shows this claim to be false. Suppose I said, “*This shower cannot take place without water or the desire to take one.*” Does this mean that a shower can take place by the desire to take a shower? No it doesn’t. It means that both (water and desire) are necessary.

Or suppose I said, “*There cannot be a wedding without a bride or a groom.*” Does this mean that you can have a wedding with a groom and not a bride? Of course not. It means that both are necessary for the wedding. One could give hundreds of other examples. Likewise, the passage above in Trent says that Justification **CANNOT TAKE PLACE WITHOUT** water or desire; in other words, both are necessary. It does not say that Justification *does take place* by either water or desire!

THE CATECHISM OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

OBJECTION- The Catechism of the Council of Trent taught that one’s determination to receive baptism could avail him to grace and righteousness if it is impossible for him to receive baptism.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, *Ordinarily They Are Not Baptized At Once*, p. 179: “On adults, however, the Church has not been accustomed to confer the Sacrament of Baptism at once, but has ordained that it be deferred for a certain time. The delay is not attended with the same danger as in the case of infants, which we have already mentioned; should any unforeseen accident make it impossible for

adults to be washed in the salutary waters, their intention and determination to receive Baptism and their repentance for past sins, will avail them to grace and righteousness.”

ANSWER- The Catechism of the Council of Trent is not infallible. Fathers John A. McHugh, O.P. and Charles J. Callan, O.P. wrote the introduction for a common English translation of the Catechism of the Council of Trent. Their introduction contains the following interesting quote from Dr. John Hagan, Rector of the Irish College in Rome, about the Catechism’s authority.

*Catechism of the Council of Trent- Fifteenth printing, TAN Books, Introduction XXXVI: “Official documents have occasionally been issued by Popes to explain certain points of Catholic teaching to individuals, or to local Christian communities; whereas the Roman Catechism comprises practically the whole body of Christian doctrine, and is addressed to the whole Church. **Its teaching is not infallible**; but it holds a place between approved catechisms and what is *de fide*.”*

THE CATECHISM ATTRIBUTED TO ST. PIUS X

The Catechism attributed to Pope St. Pius X repeats for us the same *de fide* teaching of the Catholic Church on the absolute necessity of water baptism for salvation.

The Catechism of Pope St. Pius X, *The Sacraments*, “Baptism,” Q. 16: “Q. Is Baptism necessary to salvation? A. **Baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation, for Our Lord has expressly said: ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.’**”

So, contrary to popular belief, those who reject “baptism of desire” actually follow the teaching of the Catechism attributed to Pope St. Pius X on the absolute necessity of water baptism. They don’t follow, however, the teaching of this *fallible* Catechism when it proceeds to contradict this truth on the absolute necessity of water baptism for salvation.

The Catechism of Pope St. Pius X, *The Sacraments*, “Baptism,” Q. 17: “Q. Can the absence of Baptism be supplied in any other way? A. **The absence of Baptism can be supplied** by martyrdom, which is called Baptism of Blood, or by an act of perfect love of God, or of contrition, along with the desire, at least implicit, of Baptism, and this is called Baptism of Desire.”

This again is a total contradiction to what is stated in Question 16. It should be noted that

this catechism, while attributed to Pope St. Pius X, did not come from his pen and was not solemnly promulgated by him. There is no Papal Bull from him promulgating the catechism, so it is just a fallible catechism that went out during his reign and was given his name. But, even if St. Pius X had himself authored the above words (which he didn't), it wouldn't make a bit of difference to the points I've made. This is because a pope is only infallible when speaking magisterially. This catechism is not infallible because it wasn't promulgated solemnly from the Chair of Peter or even specifically by the pope. Further, this catechism is proven not to be infallible by the fact that it teaches the abominable heresy that there is salvation "outside" the Church (as I will show)!

But I will first quote where the catechism affirms the dogma.

The Catechism of Pope St. Pius X, *The Apostles' Creed*, "The Church in Particular," Q. 27: "Q. Can one be saved outside the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church? A. **No, no one can be saved outside the Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church, just as no one could be saved from the flood outside the Ark of Noah, which was a figure of the Church.**"

Here the Catechism attributed to Pope St. Pius X reaffirms the defined dogma. But it proceeds to deny this dogma just two questions later!

The Catechism of Pope St. Pius X, *The Apostles' Creed*, "The Church in Particular," Q. 29: "Q. But if a man through no fault of his own is **outside** the Church, can he be saved? A. **If he is outside the Church through no fault of his, that is, if he is in good faith**, and if he has received Baptism, or at least has the implicit desire of Baptism; and if, moreover, he sincerely seeks the truth and does God's will as best as he can, such a man is indeed separated from the body of the Church, but is united to the soul of the Church and consequently is on the way of salvation."

Here we see this fallible Catechism word for word denying the dogma Outside the Church There is No Salvation! It teaches that there can be salvation "outside" the Church, which directly denies the truth it taught to the people in Question 27. This statement is so heretical, in fact, **that it would be repudiated even by most of the crafty heretics of our day, who know that they cannot say that people are saved "outside," so they argue that non-Catholics are not "outside" but are "inside" somehow**. So even those crafty heretics who reject the true meaning of Outside the Church There is No Salvation would have to admit that the above statement is heretical!

Further, notice that the catechism attributed to St. Pius X teaches the heresy that persons can be united to the "Soul" of the Church, but not the Body. As proven already, the Catholic

Church is a Mystical Body. Those who are not part of the Body are no part at all.

Pope Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos* (# 10), Jan. 6, 1928: “For since the mystical body of Christ, in the same manner as His physical body, is one, compacted and fitly joined together, it were foolish and out of place to say that the mystical body is made up of members which are disunited and scattered abroad: **whosoever therefore is not united with the body is no member of it, neither is he in communion with Christ its head.**”

This discussion on the catechisms should demonstrate to the reader how the rampant denial of Outside the Church There is No Salvation and the necessity of Water Baptism has been perpetuated through fallible texts with imprimaturs and why it has been imbibed today by almost all who profess to be Catholic. It has been perpetuated by fallible documents and texts which contradict themselves, which contradict defined dogma, and which teach heresy, and which – all the while – elsewhere affirm the immutable truths of the absolute necessity of the Catholic Church and water baptism for salvation. And this is why Catholics are bound to adhere to infallibly defined dogma, not fallible catechisms or theologians.

Pope Pius IX, *Singulari Quadem*: “For, in truth, when released from these corporeal chains, ‘we shall see God as He is’ (1 John 3:2), we shall understand perfectly by how close and beautiful a bond divine mercy and justice are united; but, as long as we are on earth, weighed down by this mortal mass which blunts the soul, **let us hold most firmly that, in accordance with Catholic teaching, there is ‘one God, one faith, one baptism’ [Eph. 4:5]; it is unlawful to proceed further in inquiry.**”

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Can. 5 on the **Sacrament** of Baptism, *ex cathedra*: “**If anyone says that baptism [the sacrament] is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation (cf. Jn. 3:5): let him be anathema.**”

How many infallible statements from Popes have we not seen, which absolutely proves that a real psychical water-baptism is necessary for salvation? Anyone denying this fact is simply a liar and a heretic who obstinately adhere to fallible sources instead of infallible ones, and imagines himself (or some other man, or some other fallible source) to be the source of truth, thus putting man in the place of God (the infallible Popes, through whom God's truth is revealed). When such a person above described prays the "Our Father" he is a hypocrite, because he himself has no intention of doing the will of God!

**THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR EVERYONE ABOVE THE AGE OF REASON
TO KNOW ABOUT THE TRINITY AND THE INCARNATION TO BE SAVED**

John 3:36- “He that believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

The Catholic Church also teaches that it is absolutely necessary for everyone above reason to positively know about the most holy mysteries of our great religion in order to be saved. These mysteries are the Trinity and the Incarnation. Those who speak about invincible ignorance and that ignorance about the Catholic faith can somehow save a person are thoroughly refuted by these words below. They are also refuted by Our Lord’s words in the Gospel!

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, Sess. 8, Nov. 22, 1439, *ex cathedra*:

“Whoever *wishes* to be saved, needs above all to hold the Catholic faith; unless each one preserves this whole and inviolate, he will without a doubt perish in eternity.– But the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity; neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance; for there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Spirit, their glory is equal, their majesty coeternal...and in this Trinity there is nothing first or later, nothing greater or less, but all three persons are coeternal and coequal with one another, so that in every respect, as has already been said above, both unity in Trinity, and Trinity in unity must be worshipped. **Therefore let him who wishes to be saved, think thus concerning the Trinity.**

“But it is necessary for eternal salvation that he faithfully believe also in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ...the Son of God is God and man... This is the Catholic faith; unless each one believes this faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.”

Some will state that dogmas of the Catholic Church that true non heretical Popes have pronounced are somehow their own interpretation of how things work and that the Popes are not inspired by God when they speak infallibly from the chair of Peter. Such nonsense would mean that no foundation of truth could ever exist since there would be no infallible declarations by the Popes to rely on to explain Scripture to us. These woeful wretches are also condemned by our saintly Pope St. Pius X!

Pope St. Pius X, *Lamentabile*, The Errors of the Modernists, July 3, 1907, #22: **“The dogmas which the Church professes as revealed are not truths fallen from heaven, but they are a kind of interpretation** of religious facts, which

the human mind by a laborious effort prepared for itself.”- **Condemned**

Dogmas are truths fallen from heaven which cannot possibly contain error.

They are not merely human statements, written to warn non-Catholics, which are subject to correction and qualification. Dogmas are infallible definitions of the truth which can never be changed or corrected, and have no need to be changed or corrected since they cannot possibly contain error. Dogmas are defined so that Catholics must know what they must believe as true from divine revelation without any possibility of error.

Pope Leo XII, *Ubi Primum* (# 14), May 5, 1824: “**It is impossible for the most true God**, who is Truth itself, the best, the wisest Provider, and the Rewarder of good men, **to approve all sects who profess false teachings** which are often inconsistent with one another and contradictory, **and to confer eternal rewards on their members... by divine faith we hold one Lord, one faith, one baptism... This is why we profess that there is no salvation outside the Church.**”

Pope Innocent III, *Fourth Lateran Council*, Constitution 1, 1215, *ex cathedra*: “There is indeed one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which nobody at all is saved, in which Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice.”

Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, Nov. 18, 1302: “With Faith urging us we are forced to believe and to hold the one, holy, Catholic Church and that, apostolic, and we firmly believe and simply confess **this Church outside of which there is no salvation nor remission of sin.**”

INVINCIBLE IGNORANCE

2 Corinthians 4:3: “**And if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them.**”

Pope Paul III, *Council of Trent*, Sess. 6 on Justification, Chap. 15: “...it must be maintained that the grace of justification, although received, is lost not only by infidelity, whereby even faith itself is lost, but also by any other mortal sin, although faith be not lost, **thereby defending the doctrine of the divine law which excludes from the kingdom of God not only the unbelievers**, but also the faithful who are ‘fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, liars with mankind, thieves,

covetous, drunkards, railers, extortioners' [1 Cor. 6:9], and all others who commit deadly sins..."

The dogma Outside the Catholic Church There is No Salvation has been solemnly defined at least seven times by popes speaking from the Chair of St. Peter. Never once were any exceptions mentioned about "invincible ignorance." In fact, it is just the opposite: all exceptions were always excluded.

Pope Innocent III, *Fourth Lateran Council*, Constitution 1, 1215, *ex cathedra*:

"There is indeed one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which nobody at all is saved, in which Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice."

Thus, the idea that a non-Catholic who is ignorant of the Faith can be saved is heretical; it is contrary to the dogma that "**no one**," (Pope Pius IV; Benedict XIV; Pius IX) "**nobody at all**," (Innocent III) "**nobody**, even if he shed his blood in the name of Christ" (Eugene IV) can be saved as a non-Catholic. It is a denial of the dogma that "**every human creature**" (Boniface VIII) must be a Catholic, and that "**only those**" (Eugene IV) inside the bosom and unity of the Church can achieve salvation.

Those who insist that "invincible ignorance" can possibly save a person who dies as a non-Catholic simply depart from and deny the dogmatic teaching of the Catholic Church.

Fr. Francisco de Vitoria, O.P., a famous 16th century Dominican theologian, summed up the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church on this topic very well. Here is how he put it: "**When we postulate invincible ignorance on the subject of baptism or of the Christian faith, it does not follow that a person can be saved without baptism or the Christian faith.** For the aborigines to whom no preaching of the faith or Christian religion has come will be damned for mortal sins or for idolatry, but not for the sin of unbelief. As St. Thomas says, however, if they do what in them lies [in their power], accompanied by a good life according to the law of nature, it is consistent with God's providence that he will illuminate them regarding the name of Christ."

Fr. Michael Muller, C.S.S.R., *The Catholic Dogma*, pp. 217-218, 1888: "**Inculpable or invincible ignorance has never been and will never be a means of salvation.** To be saved, it is necessary to be justified, or to be in the state of grace. In order to obtain sanctifying grace, it is necessary to have the proper dispositions for justification; that is, true divine faith **in at least the necessary truths of salvation**, confident hope in the divine Savior, sincere sorrow for sin, together with the firm purpose of doing all that God has commanded, etc. **Now, these**

supernatural acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, etc., which prepare the soul for receiving sanctifying grace, can never be supplied by invincible ignorance; and if invincible ignorance cannot supply the preparation for receiving sanctifying grace, much less can it bestow sanctifying grace itself. ‘Invincible ignorance,’ says St. Thomas, ‘is a punishment for sin.’ (De, Infid. Q. x., art. 1).

All the people who die in cultures which have never been penetrated by the Gospel go to Hell for sins against the natural law and the other grave sins which they commit – which bad will and failure to cooperate with God’s grace is the reason He does not reveal the Gospel to them. The First Vatican Council defined infallibly, based on Romans 1, that the one true God can be known with certitude by the things which have been made, and by the natural light of human reason.

St. Paul, *Romans 1:18-20*: “For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and injustice of those men that detain the truth of God in injustice: Because that which is known of God is manifest in them. For God hath manifested it to them. **For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity: so that they are inexcusable.**”

Everyone can know with certainty that there is a supreme spiritual being, Who is the One True God and the Creator of the world and all that it contains. Everyone knows that God is not something that they have carved out of wood or jade or stone. They know that God is not the tree that they worship or the river they worship or the rock or the snake or the sacred tree frog. They know that these things aren’t the Creator of the universe. Every such person knows that he is worshipping a creature rather than the Creator. They are, as St. Paul says in verse 20, without excuse. St. Augustine explains this well in reference to persons who died ignorant of the Faith and without baptism.

St. Augustine (+428): “... **God foreknew that if they had lived and the gospel had been preached to them, they would have heard it without belief.**”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, 14, A. 11, ad 1: Objection- “**It is possible that someone may be brought up in the forest, or among wolves; such a man cannot explicitly know anything about the faith.** St. Thomas replies- It is the characteristic of Divine Providence to provide every man with what is necessary for salvation... provided on his part there is no hindrance. In the case of a man who seeks good and shuns evil, by the leading of natural reason, **God would either reveal to him through internal inspiration what had to be believed, or**

would send some preacher of the faith to him..."

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sent. II, 28, Q. 1, A. 4, ad 4*: "If a man born among barbarian nations, does what he can, God Himself will show him what is necessary for salvation, either by inspiration or sending a teacher to him."

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sent. III, 25, Q. 2, A. 2, solute. 2*: "**If a man should have no one to instruct him, God will show him**, unless he culpably wishes to remain where he is."

In his Encyclical Letters, dated Dec. 8, 1849; Dec.. 8, 1864; and Aug. 10, 1863, and in his Allocution on Dec. 9, 1854: Pope Pius IX. says:

"It is not without sorrow that we have learned another not less pernicious error, which has been spread in several parts of Catholic countries, and has been imbibed by many Catholics, who are of opinion that all those who are not at all members of the true Church of Christ, can be saved: Hence they often discuss the question concerning the future fate and condition of those who die without having professed the Catholic faith, and give the most frivolous reasons in support of their wicked opinion"

"We must mention and condemn again that most pernicious error, which has been imbibed by certain Catholics, who are of the opinion that those people who live in error and have not the true faith, and are separated from Catholic unity, may obtain life everlasting. Now this opinion is most contrary to Catholic faith, as is evident from the plain words of our Lord, (Matt. xviii. 17 ; Mark xvi. 16; Luke x. 16; John iii. 18) as also from the words of St. Paul, (II. Tim. Iii. 11) and of St. Peter (II. Peter. ii. 1). To entertain opinions contrary to this Catholic faith is to be an impious wretch."

"We therefore again reprobate, proscribe, and condemn all and every one of these perverse opinions and doctrines, and it is our absolute will and command that all sons of the Catholic Church shall hold them as reprobated, proscribed, and condemned. It belongs to our Apostolic office to rouse your Episcopal zeal and watchfulness to do all in your power to banish from the minds of the people such impious and pernicious opinions, which lead to indifference of religion, which we behold spreading more and more, to the ruin of souls. Oppose all your energy and zeal to these errors and employ zealous priests to impugn and annihilate them, and to impress very deeply upon the minds and hearts of the faithful the great dogma of our most holy religion, that salvation can be had only in the Catholic faith. Often exhort the clergy and the faithful to give thanks to God for the great gift of the Catholic faith."

St. Augustine, *Tractate 89*, on John 15:22-23- “**What, then, does He [Jesus] mean by the words, *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin?* [John 15:22] Was it that the Jews were without sin before Christ came to them in the flesh? Who, though he were the greatest fool, would say so?...** But when He went on to say, *But now they have no excuse for their sin*, some may be moved to inquire whether those to whom Christ neither came nor spoke, have an excuse for their sin. For if they have not, why is it said here that these had none, on the very ground that He did come and speak to them? And if they have, have they it to the extent of thereby being barred from punishment, or of receiving it in a milder degree? To these inquiries, with the Lord's help and to the best of my capacity, I reply, that such have an excuse, ***not for every one of their sins, but for this sin of not believing on Christ***, inasmuch as He came not and spoke not to them.”

Pope Gregory XVI, *Summo Iugiter Studio*, May 27, 1832, on no salvation outside the Church: “**Finally some of these misguided people attempt to persuade themselves and others that men are not saved only in the Catholic religion, but that even heretics may attain eternal life...** You know how zealously Our predecessors taught that article of faith which these dare to deny, namely the necessity of the Catholic faith and of unity for salvation... Omitting other appropriate passages *which are almost numberless in the writings of the Fathers*, We shall praise St. Gregory the Great who expressly testifies that THIS IS INDEED THE TEACHING OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. He says: ‘*The holy universal Church teaches that it is not possible to worship God truly except in her and asserts that all who are outside of her will not be saved.*’

THE DOGMA, POPE PIUS IX AND INVINCIBLE IGNORANCE

OBJECTION- What about Pope Pius IX? Isn't it true that he taught that the invincibly ignorant could be saved in two documents? What about *Singulari Quadem* and *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*?

ANSWER- Confusion on this topic has increased as a result of a few misunderstood statements from Pope Pius IX. As we analyze these statements, **it is imperative to keep in mind that, even if Pope Pius IX had taught that the invincibly ignorant could be saved on these two occasions, it wouldn't mean that such a position is true, because they were fallible documents which could have contained error.** No pope can change or contradict dogma. Pope Honorius, who reigned in the 7th century,

was, in fact, later condemned for propagating heresy, though not in his solemn capacity teaching to the universal Church, further proving how even a pope can err or teach heresy in his fallible capacity. Thus, no one, not even a pope, can change the dogma that no one who dies outside the Catholic Church, ignorant or not, can be saved. Here are some more quotes on ignorance.

Pope Benedict XV, *Humani Generis Redemptionem* (# 14), June 15, 1917:

“...‘Ignorance is the mother of all errors,’ as the Fourth Lateran Council so truthfully observes.”

The Errors of Peter Abelard, Condemned by Innocent II, July 16, 1140, #10: “That they have not sinned who being ignorant have crucified Christ, **and that whatever is done through ignorance must not be considered sin.**” - **Condemned**

The first of the documents from Pope Pius IX, frequently quoted by those who believe in salvation outside the Church, is *Singulari Quadem*, an allocution (a speech to the cardinals) given December 9, 1854:

“...those who are affected by ignorance of the true religion, if it is invincible ignorance, are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord.”

First of all, this is a speech of Pope Pius IX to the cardinals. It is not a dogmatic pronouncement, not even an encyclical, nor even an encyclical addressed to the entire Church.

But is Pope Pius IX saying that the invincibly ignorant can be justified and saved in their condition? No. Rather, he is stating that the “invincibly ignorant” will not be held accountable for the sin of infidelity, but they will still go to Hell. Read carefully the last part of the sentence, “are not subject to any guilt IN THIS MATTER,” that is, in the matter of infidelity. St. Thomas Aquinas explains that **unbelievers who have never heard of the Gospel are damned for their other sins**, which cannot be remitted without Faith, not because of the sin of infidelity (or disbelief in the Gospel). These other sins of the unbelievers serve as the reason why God does not reveal the Gospel to them and which ultimately excludes them from salvation. If one among them, however, were truly sincere and of good will, and cooperating with the natural law, then God would send a preacher (even miraculously, if necessary) to bring the Catholic Faith and baptism to him. Pope Pius IX goes on to say in the same allocution concerning a person of good will who is invincibly ignorant:

“the gifts of heavenly grace will assuredly not be denied to those who sincerely

want and pray for refreshment by the divine light...”

St. Thomas Aquinas, Sent. III, 25, Q. 2, A. 2, solute. 2: **“If a man should have no one to instruct him, God will show him,** unless he culpably wishes to remain where he is.”

St. Augustine, *Tractate 89*, on John 15:22-23- **“What, then, does He [Jesus] mean by the words, *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin?* [John 15:22] Was it that the Jews were without sin before Christ came to them in the flesh? Who, though he were the greatest fool, would say so?...To these inquiries, with the Lord's help and to the best of my capacity, I reply, that such have an excuse, *not for every one of their sins, but for this sin of not believing on Christ,* inasmuch as He came not and spoke not to them.”**

Thus, Pope Pius IX was not teaching that people who are ignorant of the Catholic Faith can be saved; he was, rather, stating that such unbelievers are not damned for the matter of infidelity. The fact that all who die as ignorant non-Catholics are not saved is the affirmation of all of Catholic Tradition and all the saints, besides being the dogmatic teaching of the Catholic Church.

Pope Pius IX proceeded to speak about the invincibly ignorant again seven years later in his encyclical *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*, August 10, 1863. *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore* does not meet the requirements for infallibility; it is addressed only to the cardinals and bishops of Italy.

Pope Pius IX, *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*: *“And here, beloved Sons and Venerable Brothers, **We should mention again and censure a very grave error in which some Catholics are unhappily engaged, who believe that men living in error, and separated from the true faith and from Catholic unity, can attain eternal life.** Indeed, this is certainly quite contrary to Catholic teaching. It is known to us and to you that they who labor in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion AND WHO ZEALOUSLY KEEPING THE NATURAL LAW AND ITS PRECEPTS ENGRAVED IN THE HEARTS OF ALL BY GOD, AND BEING READY TO OBEY GOD, LIVE AN HONEST AND UPRIGHT LIFE, can, by the OPERATING POWER OF DIVINE LIGHT AND GRACE, attain eternal life since God...will by no means suffer anyone to be punished with eternal torment who has not the guilt of deliberate sin.”*

First, notice that Pope Pius IX specifically condemns the idea that a man “living in error

and separated from the true Faith” can be saved. What, may I ask, is the idea of salvation for the “invincibly ignorant”? Why, of course, it is the idea that a man living in error and separated from the true Faith can be saved. So, the very concept of salvation for the “invincibly ignorant” is condemned as QUITE CONTRARY TO CATHOLIC TEACHING in this very document of Pope Pius IX.

Second, notice again that Pope Pius IX does not say anywhere that the invincibly ignorant can be saved where they are. Rather, he is reiterating that the ignorant, if they cooperate with God’s grace, keep the natural law and respond to God’s call, they can by God’s “operating power of divine light and grace” [being enlightened by the truth of the Gospel] attain eternal life, since God will certainly bring all of his elect to the knowledge of the truth and into the Church by baptism. **According to the specific definition of Sacred Scripture, “divine light” is the Gospel truth of Jesus Christ** (the Catholic Faith) which removes the ignorant from darkness.

Ephesians 5:8 “For **you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord.** Walk then as children of the light.”

1 Thess. 5:4-5 “But you, **brethren [believers]**, are not in darkness... For all **you are the children of the light.**”

So, we must not interpret Pius IX’s words in *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore* about the good-willed ignorant being saved by receiving “divine light and grace” contrary to their clear scriptural and Traditional meaning, which is that divine light and grace is received by hearing of the Gospel, believing it and being baptized. Thus, in *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*, Pius IX is saying that the good-willed, sincere person who is ignorant of the Faith will be “illuminated” by receiving the “divine light” (hearing the Gospel) and will enter the Catholic Church so that he can be saved.

I realize that Pope Pius IX was not nearly as clear as he could have been in the second half of *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*. The heretics have had a field day with it, because they think that they can exploit its wording to favor their heresy that there is salvation outside the Church. If Pope Pius IX had repeated in a strong way the previous definitions of the popes, without any ambiguous language, he would have avoided the danger of modernists *misinterpreting* his words. This is a shame because almost all of his statements on this topic do very clearly affirm Church dogma without any ambiguity that heretics can jump on.

Pope Pius IX, *Nostis et Nobiscum* (# 10), Dec. 8, 1849: “In particular, **ensure that the faithful are deeply and thoroughly convinced of the truth of the**

doctrine that the Catholic faith is necessary for attaining salvation. (This doctrine, received from Christ and emphasized by the Fathers and Councils, is also contained in the formulae of the profession of faith used by Latin, Greek and Oriental Catholics).”

Pope Pius IX, *Ubi primum* (# 10), June 17, 1847: “**For ‘there is one universal Church outside of which no one at all is saved; it contains regular and secular prelates along with those under their jurisdiction, who all profess one Lord, one faith and one baptism.”**

Pope Pius IX- *Syllabus of Modern Errors*- Proposition 16, Dec. 8, 1854: “Man may, in the observance of any religion whatever, find the way of eternal salvation, and arrive at eternal salvation.” – **Condemned**

Notice again that the concept of salvation for the “invincibly ignorant” is condemned here. The concept of salvation for the “invincibly ignorant,” as it is held by almost everyone who holds it today, is that some men – including those who observe non-Catholic religions – can find and arrive at salvation in these religions because they are “without fault of their own.” But this is heretical and condemned by Pius IX’s own Syllabus of Errors above.

SALVATION FOR THE “INVINCIBLY IGNORANT” REDUCED TO ITS ABSURD PRINCIPLE

Invincible ignorance becomes a destructive heresy, obliterating the necessity of the catholic faith all over the world. The theory that “invincible ignorance” saves can also be refuted by reducing it to its absurd principle, which is this: If being ignorant of the Savior could render one worthy of salvation, then Catholics are actually doing non-Christians a disservice in preaching Jesus Christ to them. St. Paul, St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Francis Xavier, Fr. Pierre De Smet, the North American Martyrs and the other countless heroic missionaries in Church history, who suffered mind-boggling hardships to preach the Gospel to the ignorant pagans, *were simply making these people more culpable and more guilty before God*, according to the modern heresy of salvation for the “invincibly ignorant.” If the missionaries had just stayed home, according to the invincible ignorance heresy, the sincere pagans could have been saved for never having heard of Christ through *no fault of their own*. But by making the effort to preach Christ to them, as the missionaries did, they were – according to the invincible ignorance heresy – rendering these persons *without excuse* if they failed to live up to the obligations of the Gospel or rejected it altogether. Thus, preaching the Gospel to the non-Christians, according to the

heretical “invincible ignorance” theory, puts the pagans in a situation in which it is more likely that they are going to be damned. Thus, the modern heresy of salvation by being “invincibly ignorant” actually makes preaching to the pagans *counterproductive* for the salvation of souls. But such a notion is absurd, of course, and proves the illogical and false nature of the invincible ignorance heresy.

But, in fact, the heresy has gotten so bad today in the time of the Great Apostasy in which we live that most “Catholics” today readily profess that pagans, Jews, Buddhists, etc. who know of the Gospel *and reject it* can also be saved by “invincible ignorance.” But this is only the necessary result of the invincible ignorance heresy; for if pagans who’ve never heard of Christ can be saved “in good faith,” then pagans who reject Christ could also be in good faith too, for how much does one have to hear to lose his “invincible ignorance”? Once one strays from the principle – that is to say, once one rejects the divinely revealed truth – that *all who die as pagans are definitely lost without exception* (Pope Eugene IV, *de fide*), the clear cut lines of demarcation are rejected, and a gray area necessarily takes over, a gray area according to which *one cannot possibly know or set limits on who is possibly in good faith and who is not*.

Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos* (# 13), Aug. 15, 1832: “With the admonition of the apostle that ‘there is one God, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph. 4:5) **may those fear who contrive the notion that the safe harbor of salvation is open to persons of any religion whatever.** They should consider the testimony of Christ Himself that ‘those who are not with Christ are against Him,’ (Lk. 11:23) and that they disperse unhappily who do not gather with Him. **Therefore, ‘without a doubt, they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith whole and inviolate’ (Athanasian Creed).**

GIFTS, DONATIONS AND WILLS

Catholics should neither will things nor give gifts/donations to those who are heretics or non-Catholics. This would include those who profess to be traditional Catholics, but don’t hold the correct positions. Well, here are some interesting canons we’ve recently come across in study. They come from the regional councils in Africa around the year 419 A.D. They inculcate the same ancient Christian concept:

Canons of the African Code, 419 A.D., Canon 22: “And that to those who are not Catholic Christians, even if they be blood relations, **neither bishops nor clergymen shall give anything at all by way of donation of their possessions.**”

Canons of the African Code, 419 A.D., Canon 81: “It was ordained that **if any bishop should prefer to his Church strangers to blood relationship with him, or his heretical relatives, or pagans as his heirs**, he shall be anathematized even after his death...”

ABOUT RECEIVING THE SACRAMENTS FROM HERETICS AND PRAYER IN COMMUNION WITH HERETICS

(For our most recent article refuting Peter and Michael Dimond's lies and dishonesties on receiving sacraments from heretics in the debate with us, and on their website, "Sacraments from Undeclared Heretics Debate" – The Important Quotes, [CLICK HERE.](#))

(Also see [the unanimous consent of the Fathers condemns being in religious communion with heretics and forbids receiving the sacraments from them.](#))

PREFACE

This article will not refute the concept of whether validly ordained (but heretical or schismatical priests) consecrate the sacraments validly – for they do – but will rather deal with whether one may approach such priests for the sacraments. Some people claim that one may approach heretical (but validly ordained) priests for the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession licitly and without sin. This concept however is totally false and will be thoroughly refuted in this article. (It must also be pointed out that while the validly ordained but heretical priests can consecrate most of the sacraments validly, they nevertheless cannot validly administer the sacraments of confession (Penance, Extreme Unction etc.) since they cannot give an absolution in these sacraments since they are lacking jurisdiction, which is required for the validity of these sacraments, and which they have not since they are heretics and outside the Church. See [COUNCIL OF TRENT TEACHES THAT HERETICS CANNOT GIVE AN ABSOLUTION IN CONFESSION](#); and [ST. THOMAS TEACHES THAT HERETICS CANNOT GIVE AN ABSOLUTION IN CONFESSION.](#))

Important to understand here is **that a heretical or schismatical priest** consecrate these *other* sacraments validly – **but illicitly** – and sins mortally every time he confect these sacraments. Also everyone that knowingly approach a heretical or schismatical priest for the sacraments, receives them illicitly and sins mortally every time he approach these sacraments (unless ignorance excuse him).

The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 13; "Sacraments" (1912): "The care of all those sacred rites has been given to the Church of Christ. Heretical or schismatical ministers can administer the sacraments validly if they have valid Orders, but their ministrations are sinful (see Billot, op. cit., thesis 16). Good faith would excuse the recipients from sin [that is, only if they didn't know it was heretics they approached or that it was wrong to approach them.]"

The priest consecrates validly because of his valid ordination to the priesthood; he consecrates illicitly because of his heresy or schism.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 13; "Sacraments" (1912): "For administering Baptism validly no special ordination is required. Any one, even a pagan, can baptize, provided that he use the proper matter and pronounce the words of the essential form, with the intention of doing what the Church does (Decr. pro Armen., Denzinger-Bannwart, 696). Only bishops, priests, and in some cases, deacons may confer Baptism solemnly. It is now held as certain that in Matrimony the contracting parties are the ministers of the sacrament, because they make the contract and the sacrament is a contract raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament (cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical "Arcanum", 10 Febr., 1880). For the validity of the other five sacraments the minister must be duly ordained. The Council of Trent anathematized those who said that all Christians could administer all the sacraments (Sess. VII, can.10). Only bishops can confer Sacred Orders (Council of Trent, sess. XXIII, can.7). Ordinarily only a bishop can give Confirmation. The priestly Order is required for the valid administration of Penance and Extreme Unction (Conc. Trid., sess. XIV, can.10, can.4). As to the Eucharist, those only who have priestly Orders can consecrate, i.e. change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ."

It should be stressed, of course, that all ordinations which has taken place in antipope Paul VI's new rite of "Holy Orders" of bishops, priests and deacons are invalid, since they have deviated from the traditional formula of consecration. This means that all ordinations which have occurred after 1968 in Paul VI's new rite of "Holy" Orders are invalid. This means that almost all the priests in the new Vatican II religion are invalidly ordained and never consecrate the sacraments either validly or licitly. Priests in the New Vatican II religion, however, who was ordained before 1968 and Paul VI's new rite of ordination, are still valid priests and consecrates these sacraments validly (but illicitly) if they use the traditional formula (correct wording) of confecting these Sacraments. Some argue that even these heretical or apostate priests may be approached for the sacraments licitly. This, however, is completely false and will be thoroughly refuted in this article.

[If you want to learn more about the invalidity of Vatican II, the New Mass, and Paul VI's new rite of ordination, consult this page:

<http://www.catholic-saints.net/new-mass-vs-traditional-mass/>

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR AVOIDING HERETICS

Now, the doctrine that people can never pray in communion with heretics, receive the sacraments from heretics or enter their churches, are taught from the beginning of the Church, and its foundation is of course from the Bible.

Titus 3:10:- “A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid.”

The infallible word of God commands us to avoid a heretic after the first and second admonition.

2 John 1:9-10:- “Whosoever revolteth, and continueth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that continueth in the doctrine, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house nor say to him, God speed you. For he that saith unto him, God speed you, **communicateth** with his wicked works.”

This bible verse makes it crystal clear that those who have dealings with heretics or schismatics, “**communicateth with his wicked works.**” This means that those who have dealings with heretics have a part of and share in their sins.

However, there is **one** exception to this doctrine of receiving the Sacraments from heretics. This specific canon from the *Council of Florence* deals with the sacrament of baptism. The Catholic Church will always make it clear when there is an exception to a doctrine.

Pope Eugene IV, Council of Florence, “Exultate Deo,” 1439: “In case of necessity, however, not only a priest or a deacon, but even a layman or woman, yes even a pagan and a **heretic can baptize, so long as he preserves the form of the Church and has the intention of doing what the Church does.” (Denz. 696)**

This exception on baptism is really necessary since no man can ever be saved or by any other means enter into the bosom and unity of the Church without the sacrament of baptism. This, of course, is another proof of the explicit necessity for all to be baptized in order to be saved.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Can. 5 on the Sacrament of Baptism, *ex cathedra*: “If anyone says that baptism [the sacrament] is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation (cf. Jn. 3:5): let him be anathema.”

Pope Eugene IV, *The Council of Florence*, “Exultate Deo,” Nov. 22, 1439, *ex cathedra*: “Holy baptism, which is the gateway to the spiritual life,

holds the first place among all the sacraments; through it we are made members of Christ and of the body of the Church. And since death entered the universe through the first man, 'unless we are born again of water and the Spirit, we cannot,' as the Truth says, 'enter into the kingdom of heaven' [John 3:5]. The matter of this sacrament is real and natural water."

The Church made this specific exception in regard to heretics since everyone - young as well as old - must receive the water of regeneration to be saved. However, the words of Pope Eugene IV, in the Council of Florence, do not allow a person to receive the sacrament of Baptism from heretics in all cases, but only in an extreme necessity. One example would be when the danger of death is imminent, and the person in question might risk dying without the sacrament of baptism. (This exception would also of course be valid if you don't know any Catholics in your area and need baptism. If you have no Catholic friends or family members and need baptism you may be baptized by a heretic as fast as possible. See [Baptism; the Steps to Convert to the Traditional Catholic Faith; the Steps for Those Leaving the New Mass; and Conditional Baptism](#)). In such a situation, as described above, however, **"not only a priest or a deacon, but even a layman or woman, yes even a pagan and a heretic can baptize, so long as he preserves the form of the Church and has the intention of doing what the Church does."** And so, it is clear why God made this exception through the Pope. Again, when there are exceptions, it will always be mentioned and made clear.

The point being made, one will not, however, find any exceptions regarding any other of the sacraments in regard to heretics or schismatics. According to the teachings of the Church, heretics and schismatics must be avoided under pain of mortal sin. You may thus not have friendly relations with them, e.g., playing sports together, or doing other activities like this, or even meet with them as one would meet with a real Catholic friend. The only exception to this would be if you're trying to convert a heretic or an unbeliever. In such a case you can meet with him, play sports with him and talk with him. However, if your intention is wrong and you know that you keep contact with atheists or heretics for the wrong reasons, and not for the purpose of really converting them (or even if your intention is right but the sinner, heretic or schismatic is obstinate and non-convertible and refuses to listen), as all too often happens with heretical family members, then you must cease all contact with them. For doing otherwise might be the cause of your eternal destruction. How many people have not forfeited God to please other men more? How many have not lost God because they spent too much time trying to help others whilst overlooking themselves? "Beware of men", Jesus Christ warns (Matthew 10:17). Catholics must realize that few are Saved; most adult Catholics are damned. Not even Jesus Christ, who is God, could convert all the hardened Jews.

AGAINST HERETICS AND PRAYING IN COMMUNION WITH HERETICS

Catholics are explicitly forbidden to knowingly pray in communion with heretics or receive the sacraments from them as Pope Leo X and the following dogmatic Councils makes clear. These quotations, of course, also condemn the Vatican II sect's false ecumenism, as well as their false prayer meetings or gatherings with the false religions of the world.

Pope Leo X, *Fifth Lateran Council, Session 8 and 9, ex cathedra*: “And since truth cannot contradict truth, we define that every statement contrary to the enlightened truth of the faith is totally false and we strictly forbid teaching otherwise to be permitted. We decree that **all those who cling to erroneous statements of this kind**, thus sowing heresies which are wholly condemned, **should be avoided in every way** and punished as detestable and odious heretics and infidels who are undermining the Catholic faith.

“...**All false Christians** and those with evil sentiments towards the faith, of whatever race or nation they may be, **as well as heretics and those stained with some taint of heresy**, or Judaizers, **are to be totally excluded from the company of Christ's faithful** and expelled from any position, especially from the Roman curia, and punished with an appropriate penalty...”

The Pope just said infallibly that **all heretics should be avoided in every way**. Note that you can only know that someone is a heretic if *you yourself have obtained this knowledge of the person in question*. Thus, if you ***know*** your priest to be a heretic, you are obliged to **avoid him in every way**, and may not approach him for the sacraments. The same authoritative language can be seen in Pope Vigilius ex cathedra decree from the Second Council of Constantinople.

Pope Vigilius, *Second Council of Constantinople, 553, ex cathedra*: “**The heretic, even though he has not been condemned formally by any individual, in reality brings anathema on himself, having cut himself off from the way of truth by his heresy**. What reply can such people make to the Apostle when he writes: ***As for someone who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned (Titus 3:10).***”

Question: Does this mean that I cannot live with my heretical parents, even though I've

tried to convert them?

Answer: Of course not. All it means is that you cannot unite yourself with heretics purposely (outside of what the Church approves of), or be friends with them, or be in religious communion with them. That's what's condemned here. The Pope is *not* condemning those who, in a necessity, live with a heretic, who are married with a heretic (so long as the Church has approved of it), who buys food or do business with heretics, or who work under a heretic or take orders from him, etc.

Moving on:

III Council of Constantinople, 680-681: “If any ecclesiastic or layman shall go into the synagogue of the Jews or the meetinghouses of the heretics to join in prayer with them, let them be deposed and deprived of communion [excommunicated]. If any bishop or priest or deacon shall join in prayer with heretics, let him be suspended from communion [excommunicated].”

The Third Council of Constantinople just defined infallibly that any person who prays in communion with heretics are to be excommunicated and refused communion for praying with other heretics. Now let's look at some other quotes:

Council of Laodicea, 4th century, (#Canon 6): “No one shall pray in common with heretics and schismatics... It is not permitted to heretics to enter the house of God while they continue in heresy.”

Council of Carthage: “One must neither pray nor sing psalms with heretics, and whoever shall communicate with those who are cut off from the communion of the Church, whether clergy or layman: let him be excommunicated.”

Pope Pius IX, Sept. 16, 1864, *letter to the English Episcopate* (CH 254): “That Christians and ecclesiastics should pray for Christian unity under the direction of heretics and, what is worse, according to an intention which is radically impregnated and vitiated with heresy, is absolutely impossible to tolerate!”

1917 Code of Canon Law, Canon 823: “Mass may not be said in churches of heretics or schismatics, even though they were in the past properly consecrated or blessed.”

1917 Code of Canon Law, Canon 1258.1: “It is unlawful for the faithful to

assist in any active manner, or to take part in the sacred services of non-Catholics.”

Pope Pius XI, *Mortalium animos* (# 10): “So, Venerable Brethren, it is clear why this Apostolic See has never allowed its subjects to take part in the assemblies of non-Catholics: for the union of Christians can only be promoted by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it, for in the past they have unhappily left it. To the one true Church of Christ, we say, which is visible to all, and which is to remain, according to the will of its Author, exactly the same as He instituted it.”

Pope Pius VI, *Charitas Quae*, April 13, 1791: “31... Keep away from all intruders, whether called archbishops, bishops, or parish priests; do not hold communion with them especially in divine worship.”

For people then to claim (in spite of all the quotations above saying otherwise) that one may pray at heretical churches or receive the sacraments from them or that an assembly presided over by heretics or an assembly that prays in communion with other heretics, *to somehow be the Church of God or the Church of Catholics*, is simply to deny God’s revealed infallible truth.

ST. THOMAS AGAINST COMMUNION WITH HERETICS

Now, let’s look at what St. Thomas has to say about heretics.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, Tertia Pars, Question 82, Art. 9*: "I answer that, As was said above, heretical, schismatical, excommunicate, or even sinful priests, although they have the power to consecrate the Eucharist, yet they do not make a proper use of it; on the contrary, they sin by using it. But whoever communicates with another who is in sin, becomes a sharer in his sin."

First, I want to make clear that the second part of this quotation from St. Thomas (which is taken out of context by certain individuals) will be dealt with shortly in the *major objections section*. However, St. Thomas is clearly teaching (in agreement with the Popes) that the people who knowingly attend the churches of heretics, schismatics, or even sinful (excommunicated) priests, become a sharer in their sin. And although one may approach a sinful priest licitly until the Church has made Her sentence on him, one may nevertheless not approach a priest who is a notorious or known heretic or schismatic, even if he’s

undeclared, since he is not a Catholic.

One example of a known, notorious priest that must be avoided is the following: even if a priest's heresy or schism was concealed to most people and you perhaps was the only one who knew about it after talking to him and ***you thus knew him to be a heretic***, then you must avoid him as a heretic and may not approach him for the sacraments. If, however, you would culpably or knowingly choose to go to such a heretical priest, then you are actually helping in this priest's wicked and sinful deeds since you, by receiving the sacraments from him, are helping him to commit mortal sins and sacrileges against our Lord; and since you, by showing external communion with him, profess to everyone present that you have the same faith as he do. (And by the way, most if not all heretical priests today are not merely occult heretics but are in fact known as heretics to the people who uphold all (or most) dogmas, i.e., no baptism of desire, no salvation outside the Church at all). A priest who is a heretic or schismatic sins mortally when using the sacraments, and thus draws down on his own head and those he deceive an eternal flame of fire that will never be extinguished. So then, by entering the "Churches" of heretics you are clearly showing to everyone present that you are in communion with this person and that you agree with his heresies. That should be absolutely clear to any honest person.

IMPOSING OR NOT

Some will object to this by saying: "I can go to a heretical (but validly ordained) priest licitly for the mass and the sacraments as long as he isn't imposing about his heresy or preach heresy from the pulpit."

Answer: It does not matter whether the priest is imposing about his heresy or whether he preaches it from the pulpit, as some deceived people believe. For tell me, dear reader. Is someone who is a heretic a member of the Church even if he does not preach his heresy from the pulpit or are imposing about it? What about a "Pope" who was to become a heretic, but wasn't imposing about his heresies; would you consider him as the Pope or go to him for the sacraments? According to these people, this heretical "pope" must be a valid pope, or at least a person that one can approach licitly for the sacraments, as long as he isn't imposing about his heresies... But is this really so? Who would ever claim such nonsense? No, in truth, you would answer that he would not be a member of the Church, since all heretics are separated from the Church, and that he thus would consecrate the sacraments illicitly. Thus, the same logic then follows here with heretical priests, whether they are imposing or not, or whether they preach heresy from the pulpit or not. **They are all to be avoided as odious heretics that undermine the Catholic Faith.** (Pope

Leo X, Fifth Lateran Council, Session 8, *ex cathedra*)

And if you don't agree with this, then why don't you go to the apostate Benedict XVI and receive the sacraments from him? He's not any better than any of the other heretical priests you approach for the sacraments! In fact, they are just as bad as he is, they even hold to the same heresies as he do, and most of them even accept him as the pope and as head of the Catholic Church! We are not allowed to choose which heretics we can approach, as if some heretics should be tolerated. This is totally unscriptural, and contradicts numerous Catholic teachings.

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (# 9), June 29, 1896: "... can it be lawful for anyone to reject any one of those truths without by the very fact falling into heresy? – without separating himself from the Church? – without repudiating in one sweeping act the whole of Christian teaching? For such is the nature of faith that nothing can be more absurd than to accept some things and reject others... **But he who dissents even in one point from divinely revealed truth absolutely rejects all faith**, since he thereby refuses to honor God as the supreme truth and the *formal motive of faith*."

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (# 9), June 29, 1896: "The practice of the Church has always been the same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to hold as **outside Catholic communion, and alien to the Church**, whoever would recede in the least degree from any point of doctrine proposed by her authoritative **Magisterium**."

IMPOSING – A TERM INVENTED BY HERETICS

Imposing is a term some people have invented for themselves to justify their going to different priests (that they know are heretics) for the sacraments and to hear mass from them. Well, the problem with this thinking isn't that they are unaware of the fact that the priest is a heretic... but that they in fact are fully aware of this, yet make up excuses to go to him. But has there ever been a dogma that declares anything even close to this? Can anything even be cited to give such an indication? Of course not! You will not find any Church teaching that says so! To invent one's own doctrines to justify one's own mortal sin in receiving the sacraments illicitly, and then to teach others to do the same, is really outrageous and scandalous to say the least! These people have no shame! Whether a priest is imposing his heresies on other people or not has nothing to do with whether the priest becomes a notorious heretic, as St. Robert Bellarmine clearly shows:

St Robert Bellarmine, *De Romano Pontifice*, lib. IV, c. 9, no. 15.: **For men are not bound, or able to read hearts;** but when they see that someone is a heretic by his **external works, they judge him to be a heretic pure and simple, and condemn him as a heretic.**”

The point is: what Catholic dogma says that one may knowingly approach a heretical priest for the sacraments (except for the sacrament of baptism in case of necessity)? Not a single dogma have been given thus far that have indicated this; (the *Fourth Lateran Council*, taken out of context, will be dealt with shortly). We would gladly change our position if someone proved to us with Catholic dogma that their position was true. However, this is not the case and no such dogmatic proof has ever been presented. Only **fallible** saints (*taken out of context*) and **fallible** theologians can be quoted, which then reveals that their position is weak and wavering and that it is lacking a good Catholic foundation. Is this what we are to build our Faith on; namely, saints and theologians, and in view of all the dogmas and reasoning, deny what has been put before our eyes? Isn't this exactly what the believers in baptism of blood/desire do as well? Do they not obstinately cling to fallible saints and theologians instead of the infallible dogmas? And are they not condemned for this exact behavior, maybe even from you? Why then do you act precisely in the same way here? If you can't prove your case with Catholic dogma, then you should not obstinately defend it or hold to it as true!

Besides, how can a person claim to believe in the Lord Jesus when he without compromise - even knowingly and willfully - approach a priest whom he knows reject the necessity of believing in Him, or any of His words? Do you really love Jesus and believe in Him, or do you just say you do? Are mass attendance and illicit sacraments more important to you than Jesus Christ and the Faith itself? For by the external deed you show to other people and to Our Lord that you have no problem to approach a priest who rejects Him! Apostates, heretics, and schismatics, crucify Our Lord a second time when they presume to consecrate these sacraments, and you are helping in this deed by going to them!

Neither can you preserve your faith or please God if you approach heretical priests, as Pope Pius IX makes clear: “**For the Church's children should consider the proper action to preserve the most precious treasure of faith, without which it is impossible to please God.**”

And you become a sharer in the heretical priest's sin as St Thomas says: “As was said above, **heretical, schismatical, excommunicate**, or even sinful priests, although they have the power to consecrate the Eucharist, yet they do not make a proper use of it; on the contrary, they sin by using it. But whoever communicates with another who is in sin, becomes a sharer in his sin.”

NOTORIOUS OR NOT

Some people also falsely claim that one factor which determines if a priest is to become a heretic that must be *avoided* for communion, is determined by the fact of his notoriety, or how many other people actually are aware of the priest's heretical position, or if his heresies or sins (of which they are not always so clear to define what constitutes notorious heresy, and which they determine for themselves when it suits their purpose) are notorious. They claim this by asserting that only certain heresies can be classified as notorious (of which denying the necessity of believing in Jesus Christ for salvation [or obstinate denial of almost any other dogma] is not included in this category, according to them! which essentially means that no priest can ever be considered as notorious (isn't that an amazingly convenient position that they have come up with?) and that notoriety is determined by the fact if it is well known, and that if only a *few* people are aware of the priest's heretical position, then the priest must not be a notoriously heretical priest that thus one may approach for the Sacraments.

Thus they reason, for according to them, only a notorious heretic must be avoided; and if the priest isn't obviously known to 'everyone' (or most people)—or if his heresy doesn't fit their virtually non-existent category of notoriety—***he must therefore not be a notorious heretic and can thus be approached for the sacraments.*** However, they fail to realize that the priest in question may already have revealed his heresy and obstinacy and bad will to anyone who have made the true position known to him.

What determines if a priest must be avoided for communion is *not* decided by the fact how many others are actually aware of him being a heretic or if he is only guilty of certain specific heresies. This is so since the priest by being a heretic, whatever heresy he may hold, have already severed himself from the Church and communion, and because the whole of Heaven (The Holy Trinity, The Blessed Virgin and all the Angels and the Saints) also have pronounced judgment on him. Are we then (in spite of these facts), to profess external communion with him who have severed himself from the Church, and whom God already have condemned? (If the priest converts, of course, the condemnation turns into mercy.)

Obviously then, the factor which determines if someone is to be avoided for communion is what ***you*** can know about the said person in question. It is *not* determined by what others decide or understand about him or by the fact of how many others actually are aware of him being a heretic. ***You*** will *not* be judged to hell for what others knew or didn't know about. ***You*** will, however, be judged to hell for what ***you knew about; what you did***

not care to know about, and what you failed to do when you had obtained this knowledge!

St Robert Bellarmine, *De Romano Pontifice*, lib. IV, c. 9, no. 15.: **For men are not bound, or able to read hearts;** but when they see that someone is a heretic by his **external works, they judge him to be a heretic pure and simple, and condemn him as a heretic.**"

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, "Cantate Domino," 1441: "**Therefore the Holy Roman Church condemns, reprovcs, anathematizes and declares to be outside the Body of Christ, which is the Church, whoever holds opposing or contrary views.**"

And if you don't agree with this, then you must hold to the opinion that one could have approached the ultra-heretical antipope from hell, *Paul VI, for the sacraments*, even if we knew him to be a heretical antipope and even if we had obtained knowledge beforehand on what he would (try) do to the Church (*according to the logic of the heretics*) if only a few people were aware of him being a heretic and if only a few people knew about his evil intentions, or if his heresies would not be considered as *notorious*. Yes, according to this false position, (the illogical position of the heretics), one could even have approached him for the sacraments when he had started to put all these heresies into practice.

So when Paul VI was undermining and trying to destroy the faith in the hearts of the people as much as a heretic could possibly have done in a lifetime, i.e., by approving and putting into practice all the heresies of the Second Vatican Council; by changing the Traditional Mass into a New invalid Mass; by changing the Rites of Holy Orders (thus making all Vatican II priests and bishops invalidly ordained); by abolishing the index of forbidden books (which reveals his true intention, to spread heresy and lies); and by allowing contraception or NFP, etc, etc... then, in spite of all these facts, if only few people knew him to be a heretic or if he was not considered notorious, one could have approached him for the Sacraments... This is the inescapable and illogical conclusion of the heretics' reasoning, but none, however, would ever dare admit to it!

But if your position is the true Catholic position: namely, that one couldn't have approached Paul VI or any other heretic like him for the Sacraments, then you must also hold the position that one cannot approach other heretical priests for the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, that one personally knows are heretical. You cannot pick and choose what heretics to go to. All heretics are outside the Church. Therefore, all heretics must be avoided.

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (# 9): "No one who merely disbelieves in all can for that reason regard himself as a Catholic or call himself one. For there may be or arise some other heresies, which are not set out in this work of ours, **and, if any one holds to one single heresy he is not a Catholic.**"

POPE PIUS IX AGAINST HERETICS

Pope Pius IX, "*Graves Ac Diuturnae*," 1875, (# 4): "You should remind them to beware of these treacherous enemies of the flock of Christ and their poisoned foods. **THEY SHOULD TOTALLY SHUN THEIR RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS, THEIR BUILDINGS, AND THEIR CHAIRS OF PESTILENCE WHICH THEY HAVE WITH IMPUNITY ESTABLISHED TO TRANSMIT THE SACRED TEACHINGS. THEY SHOULD SHUN THEIR WRITINGS AND ALL CONTACT WITH THEM. THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE ANY DEALINGS OR MEETINGS WITH USURPING PRIESTS AND APOSTATES FROM THE FAITH** who dare to exercise the duties of an ecclesiastical minister without possessing a legitimate mission or any jurisdiction. They should **avoid them as strangers and thieves who come only to steal, slay, and destroy.** For the Church's children should consider the proper action to preserve the most precious treasure of faith, without which it is impossible to please God, as well as action calculated to achieve the goal of faith, that is the salvation of their souls, by following the straight road of justice."

Can it be any clearer than that? We "**SHOULD NOT HAVE ANY DEALINGS OR MEETINGS WITH USURPING PRIESTS AND APOSTATES FROM THE FAITH** who dare to exercise the duties of an ecclesiastical minister without possessing a legitimate mission or any jurisdiction..." we "**should avoid them as strangers and thieves who come only to steal, slay, and destroy.**" and "**THEY SHOULD TOTALLY SHUN THEIR RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS, THEIR BUILDINGS, AND THEIR CHAIRS OF PESTILENCE WHICH THEY HAVE WITH IMPUNITY ESTABLISHED TO TRANSMIT THE SACRED TEACHINGS. THEY SHOULD SHUN THEIR WRITINGS AND ALL CONTACT WITH THEM**"

Further commenting on the absolute, undeniable words of Pope Pius IX above isn't really necessary for an honest soul.

But why must heretics be totally avoided, you may ask? Pope Pius IX answers this too: "**For the Church's children should consider the proper action to preserve the**

most precious treasure of faith, without which it is impossible to please God..." Pope Pius IX says that your faith will be destroyed by going to heretics and that you cannot please God by doing this. How clear does it have to get? Thus, you may never approach your apostate or heretical Novus Ordo priest or your heretical and schismatical traditional "Catholic" priest, or any other heretical or schismatical priest of that sort for Confession or the Eucharist. For almost all of them, without exception, deny the necessity of believing in our Lord Jesus Christ by granting salvation to people who do not even believe in Him. Most of them also obstinately deny various dogmas of the Church when it is presented to them!

FALLIBLE VS INFALLIBLE

Heretics simply refuse to follow the teachings of the Church on these matters, but rather follow wrong and fallible statements of certain theologians or saints. Many of these saints and theologians do not even agree with their position. Yet, these heretics twist their words to fit their own heretical belief system (more on this later).

The point is: If we were to decide what constitutes the Catholic faith based on fallible saints or theologians, then we could as well deny the immaculate conception of Mary, we could believe that all unbaptized Children who die before the age of reason burns in the fires of hell, we could believe in the theory of baptism of desire and blood, etc. All these opinions, in fact, seems convincing and true in view of the respected saints and theologians, who have held these positions and taught it (which is the cause of so many believing in it), in spite of Catholic dogma saying otherwise.

However, be it the opinion of a *theologian* or a *saint* (or even both), it really holds no weight at all in comparison with infallible Catholic dogma. Real Catholics (not fake Catholics) base their Faith on infallible Catholic dogma, and not on the opinions of saints or theologians. That should be clear to anyone. When people stop believing in the infallible Magisterium of the Church and instead choose to base their faith solely on the theories of saints and theologians (or even on themselves and what they deem to be of the faith), then one knows that their case is doomed, and that their position is not the Catholic one.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, "Cantate Domino," 1441, *ex cathedra*: "The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches **that all those who are outside the Catholic Church**, not only pagans but also Jews or **heretics and schismatics**, cannot share in eternal life and will go into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, **unless they are joined to the**

Church before the end of their lives."

As we see above, it's an infallible dogma (that one are bound to believe under pain of mortal sin) that all heretics are outside the Church and thus outside the bounds of licitly administering the sacraments. Therefore, you can never knowingly receive the sacraments from a heretical priest (licitly) without sinning mortally [unless ignorance excuse, such as if you didn't know it was heretics you approached or that it was wrong to approach them]. You could, however, receive them licitly from a heretic, if you were unaware of him being a heretic. This is the only exception, but this exception doesn't work if you know the priest to be a heretic or if you know the Church forbids religious communion with them.

However, if we were to say, (for the sake of argument) that it were true that one could approach a heretical priest for the sacraments without sin (which it isn't); but let's theorize that it is so that we can refute this position further. If there were any such teaching by a saint or theologian that allowed such a thing, namely, that one could approach a heretical priest for the sacraments; and even if they held such a position, (which they don't) they were still not talking about approaching the kind of heretical priests that exists in our day, in the Great Apostasy. Examples of this would be a priest who rejects the necessity of believing in Jesus Christ or who believes in salvation for people who even reject Christ, such as pagans, Jews and Muslims. Would anyone dare to say that this is what the theologians and saints actually believed if they had theorized that one could go to a heretical priest for the mass and the sacraments? Absolutely not! Then don't try to make it look as if they do!

Nevertheless, this is the *exact* same straw man argument the baptism of desire/blood advocates use. Don't these people just love to stress (lying through their teeth) that "*all the saints and theologians believed in baptism of desire and blood; so it must be true*", and by it trying to imply that they (the saints and theologians) also believed in salvation for pagans, Muslims and Jews; (even though, in truth, their version of baptism of desire/blood only applied to people who already believed in Jesus Christ and who were catechumens, and not pagans, Muslims and Jews). See the difference?

Why then do some people try to make it look like as though the theologians had as opinion that one could go to the worst kind of abominable, apostate or heretical priests that may ever have existed, for the sacraments? They who hold this position even make it appear as though one are perfectly free to go to a heretic even *after* one have found out about his Christ rejecting heresy. It must also be pointed out that the only saints and theologians these people even try to quote to defend their position (of receiving the sacraments from heretics), do not even agree with their heretical position (except for *one* theologian); however, except for this one theologian (*John de Lugo*), the rest actually refutes their

sacrilegious position (as we will show).

But according to these sad heretics, one can freely go to a priest who believes in universal salvation for everyone, and to a priest who obstinately defends, supports and accepts as "Pope" the most vile and abominable heretics to have ever lived in the history of the world! Yes, according to their view, one could even go to that priest after one have presented him with the proof about the *Novus Ordo Church*, *Benedict XVI* and *Vatican II*, that proves them to be heretical. Yes, one could go to him even after that priest obstinately rejected that undeniable proof you presented to him (according to their heretical logic), just as long as he isn't preaching his heresies from the pulpit or are imposing about them! Such are their words, then you can go to him. Anything goes it seems for these people, anything but Catholic sense and Catholic dogma! The bad will of these people are truly remarkable and sad.

So then, what are we to do when we have presented our priest with the information about *Benedict XVI* and *Vatican II*, and he yet obstinately adheres to *Benedict XVI* as the pope and the *Novus Ordo church* as the true Church? Are we then to avoid him as the heretic he has manifestly shown himself to be? The answer to this question is of course yes!

Titus 3:10: "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid."

2 John 1:9-10: "Whosoever revolteth, and continueth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that continueth in the doctrine, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house nor say to him, God speed you. For he that saith unto him, God speed you, **communicateth** with his wicked works."

St Robert Bellarmine, *De Romano Pontifice*, lib. IV, c. 9, no. 15.: **For men are not bound, or able to read hearts**; but when they see that someone is a heretic by his **external works, they judge him to be a heretic pure and simple**, and condemn him as a heretic."

Therefore, it's both a dogmatic and biblical fact that you cannot approach any heretical priests for the mass or the sacraments.

GOD WANTS OBEDIENCE RATHER THAN SACRIFICE

God wants obedience, rather than sacrifice. In other words, if you accept heretics or reject His dogmas, all your spiritual works will be worthless in His sight.

1 Kings 15:22-23: “And Samuel said: **Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed? For obedience is better than sacrifices**; and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams. **Because it is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel: and like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey. Forasmuch as thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath also rejected thee from being king.**”

If a person rejects God’s truth, he cannot please Him. To hold that one may licitly receive the sacraments from heretics, in light of all the facts, is simply to deny God.

Pope Pius VIII, *Traditi Humilitati* (#4), May 24, 1829: “Indeed this deadly idea concerning the lack of difference among religions is refuted even by the light of natural reason. We are assured of this because the various religions do not often agree among themselves. **If one is true, the other must be false; there can be no society of darkness with light**. Against these experienced sophists **the people must be taught that the profession of the Catholic faith is uniquely true**, as the apostle proclaims: **one Lord, one faith, one baptism.**”

NO COMMUNION WITH HERETICS

It is also of divine law and not only a disciplinary law that Catholics can only be in communion with other Catholics and that they may never worship with people who are heretics, schismatics, or infidels. To knowingly enter into a religious house that is heretical or schismatic is of course to profess religious unity outwardly in a way that is completely unacceptable. The scandal this provokes in the eyes of true Catholics is easy to understand. For every person that sees you entering a “church” where the priest is a heretic or schismatic, will assume that you agree with his heresy or schism. The unity of faith that must exist between people who call themselves Catholic and who worship God is one constant that can never be changed according to Catholic teaching. This is called divine law. Without the unity of faith, there is only darkness and eternal fire, as Pope Leo XIII and the following quotes makes clear:

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (# 10), June 29, 1896: “For this reason, **as the unity of the faith is of necessity required for the unity of the Church**, inasmuch as it is the body of the faithful, so also for this same unity, inasmuch as the Church is a divinely constituted society, unity of government, which effects and involves **unity of communion, is necessary jure divino (by divine law).**”

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (# 22): “As therefore **in the true**

Christian community there is only one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one Baptism, so **there can be only one faith**. And therefore if a man refuse to hear the Church let him be considered – so the Lord commands – as a heathen and a publican. It follows that **those who are divided in faith or government cannot be living in the unity of such a Body**, nor can they be living the life of its one Divine Spirit.”

Pope St. Clement I, 1st Century: "**If any man shall be friendly to those with whom the Roman Pontiff is not in communion, he is in complicity with those who want to destroy the Church of God**; and, although he may seem to be with us in body, he is against us in mind and spirit, and is a much more dangerous enemy than those who are outside and are our avowed foes."

*III Council of Constantinople, 680-681: “**If any ecclesiastic or layman shall go into the synagogue of the Jews or the meetinghouses of the heretics to join in prayer with them, let them be deposed and deprived of communion. If any bishop or priest or deacon shall join in prayer with heretics, let him be suspended from communion.**”*

Pope Pius IX, *Etsi Multa*, #26, Nov. 21, 1873: "**Therefore, by the authority of Almighty God, We excommunicate and hold as anathema Joseph Humbert himself and all those who attempted to choose him, and who aided in his sacrilegious consecration. We additionally excommunicate whoever has adhered to them and belonging to their party has furnished help, favor, aid, or consent. We declare, proclaim, and command that they are separated from the communion of the Church. They are to be considered among those with whom all faithful Christians are forbidden by the Apostle [2 John 10-11] to associate and have social exchange to such an extent that, as he plainly states, they may not even be greeted.**"

The above quote is very relevant to our situation today in that many priests and adherents of those priests would fall under this very same condemnation.

First let's learn a little history about the above condemnation of Joseph Humbert and all his adherents: "A surprisingly large number of German priests and laymen rejected the First Vatican Council's solemn teaching on the papacy. In September 1870, nearly 1,400 Germans who called themselves 'Old Catholics' signed a declaration that renounced the conciliar teaching. In September 1871, 300 delegates met in Munich to organize a new church. Unable to find a Catholic bishop who would renounce Catholic dogma and join them, the Old Catholics turned to the Jansenist Bishop Heykamp of Devetner in the Netherlands of the schismatic Little Church of Utrecht. He ordained **Father Joseph**

Humbert Reinkens a bishop in August 1873."

Pope Pius IX, *Graves ac diuturnae* (#'s 1-4), March 23, 1875: "... **the new heretics who call themselves 'Old Catholics'... these schismatics and heretics... their wicked sect... these sons of darkness... their wicked faction... this deplorable sect...** This sect overthrows the foundations of the Catholic religion, **shamelessly rejects the dogmatic definitions of the Ecumenical Vatican Council**, and devotes itself to the ruin of souls in so many ways. We have decreed and declared in Our letter of 21 November 1873 that **those unfortunate men who belong to, adhere to, and support that sect should be considered as schismatics and separated from communion with the Church.**"

Here, Pope Pius IX gives an explicit confirmation that people **must** consider heretics or schismatics to be outside the Church and that there is no need for a further declaration to decide this. But who can deny the fact that Vatican II also is a "**new church**", and that all the validly ordained bishops and priests left in this "**new church**" also would fall under the same condemnation as **Joseph Humbert**? Therefore, without a doubt, you may not approach any of the validly ordained *Novus Ordo* priests for the sacraments of Confession or the Eucharist at all, as the heretics and schismatics teach.

Another striking fact is that almost all of the validly ordained priests left in the entire world (both *traditional* "Catholic" priests and *Novus Ordo* priests alike), also reject Vatican I and papal infallibility, by obstinately denying infallible Catholic dogma. The old "Catholics" was excommunicated for this very reason, and one were not even allowed to greet them, and anyone who would adhere to them (for example, receive the sacraments from them) was to be excommunicated just like them.

"We have decreed and declared in Our letter of 21 November 1873 that those unfortunate men who belong to, adhere to, and support that sect should be considered as schismatics and separated from communion with the Church." (Pope Pius IX, *Graves ac diuturnae* (#'s 1-4), March 23, 1875)

Therefore, without a doubt, neither may you approach any of the validly ordained traditional "Catholic" priests left in the world for the sacraments, if they obstinately deny or reject even a single Catholic dogma or hold to even a single heresy, as Pope Leo XIII makes clear:

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (# 9): "No one who merely disbelieves in all can for that reason regard himself as a Catholic or call himself one. For there may be or

arise some other heresies, which are not set out in this work of ours, **and, if any one holds to one single heresy he is not a Catholic.**"

CAN HERETICS HAVE AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH?

What are the requirements for a licit reception of the sacraments? This is a very important question to understand since many claim one can receive them licitly not only from heretics, but from apostate priests as well.

The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 13. "Sacraments." (1912) *Conditions for the licit reception*: (b) "For the licit reception it is also necessary to observe all that is prescribed by Divine or ecclesiastical law, e.g. as to time, place, the minister, etc. As the **Church alone has the care of the sacraments and generally her duly appointed agents alone** have the right to administer them, *except Baptism in some cases*, it is a general law that application for the sacraments should be made to worthy and duly appointed ministers."

Sadly, we have come to a point in the history of the Church where even heretics are considered by some to consecrate the Eucharist licitly **in the Church**; which means, *somehow*, that heretics are given authority in the Church. But this is of course impossible. For to give or receive the sacraments licitly, means to give or receive them by the authority and permission of the Church. Do heretics have this authority in the Catholic Church (except for the sacrament of baptism)? Do heretics confect the sacrament of Confession and the Eucharist validly or licitly with the permission and the authority of the Catholic Church? Of course not! They do not have this authority either to consecrate the Eucharist licitly, or to absolve from sins validly or licitly, as we have proved! Please look at the following dogmas of the Church carefully, and see how heretics are outside the Church of Christ.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, "Cantate Domino," 1441, ex cathedra: "The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches **that all those who are outside the Catholic Church**, not only pagans but also Jews or **heretics and schismatics**, cannot share in eternal life and will go into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they are joined to the Church before the end of their lives"

Here we can see that all Catholics are bound under pain of mortal sin to believe that a heretic is outside the Catholic Church. Here are some other testimonies from the Magisterium which affirm this fact.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, "Cantate Domino," 1441: "Therefore the Holy Roman Church condemns, reproves, anathematizes and **declares to be outside the Body of Christ**, which is the Church, whoever holds opposing or contrary views."

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (# 23), June 29, 1943: "For not every sin, however grave it may be, is such as of its own nature to **sever a man from the Body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy.**"

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (# 9), June 29, 1896: "The practice of the Church has always been the same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to hold as **outside Catholic communion, and alien to the Church**, whoever would recede in the least degree from any point of doctrine proposed by her authoritative **Magisterium.**"

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (# 9): "No one who merely disbelieves in all can for that reason regard himself as a Catholic or call himself one. For there may be or arise some other heresies, which are not set out in this work of ours, **and, if any one holds to one single heresy he is not a Catholic.**"

Pope Innocent III, *Eius exemplo*, Dec. 18, 1208: "By the heart we believe and by the mouth we confess the one Church, **not of heretics**, but the Holy Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Church outside of which we believe that no one is saved."

This last solemn profession of faith by Pope Innocent III in *Eius exemplo*, demonstrates how foreign to Catholic belief - that is to say, how heretical - is the idea that a heretic can be inside the Church. Nevertheless, this is exactly the idea proposed by individuals who assert that heretics – *somehow* – have authority to licitly administer the sacraments. And since it is a dogma that a heretic cannot be inside the Church, it is a dogmatic fact (*a fact which if it were not true would render a dogma false*) that a heretic cannot have any authority in the Church.

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (#15), June 29, 1896: "it is absurd to imagine that he who is **outside can command in the Church.**"

Therefore, it is most certain that a heretic cannot consecrate the Eucharist licitly or administer the sacrament of Confession validly or licitly, because it is absurd to imagine that one who is outside can command in the Church.

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (# 22), June 29, 1943: "**Actually only those are to be included as members of the Church who have been**

baptized and profess the true faith, and who have not been so unfortunate as to separate themselves from the unity of the Body, or been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed."

MAJOR HERETICAL OBJECTIONS

FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL

FIRST OBJECTION: "Pope Innocent III, in the *Fourth Lateran Council*, teaches that heretics must first be pointed out before one is bound to stop going to them for religious purposes. So there."

ANSWER TO THE FIRST OBJECTION: The perverted, out of context quote with perverted out of context commentary, as presented by the deceiving heretics:

"Pope Innocent III, *Fourth Lateran Council*, Constitution 3, On Heretics, 1215: "Moreover, we determine to subject to excommunication believers who receive, defend or support heretics [...] If however, he is a cleric, let him be deposed from every office and benefice, so that the greater the fault the greater the punishment. **If any refuse to avoid such persons AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN POINTED OUT BY THE CHURCH** [*postquam ab ecclesia denotati fuerint*], let them be punished with the sentence of excommunication until they make suitable satisfaction. Clerics should not, of course, give the sacraments of the Church to such pestilent persons nor give them a Christian burial..."

Notice the smoke and mirrors [...] where they whip out the Latin and say: "Look at this part here! Focus in on this only because if you read the whole thing you'll see we are perverting what the pope decreed when we claimed this was referring to heretics!" But now let us see the whole paragraph and let us examine what it REALLY says:

Pope Innocent III, Fourth Lateran Council (Tanner Edition): "Catholics who take the cross and gird themselves up for the expulsion of heretics shall enjoy the same indulgence, and be strengthened by the same holy privilege, as is granted to those who go to the aid of the holy Land. Moreover, we determine to subject to excommunication believers who receive, defend or support heretics."

Alright, the pope just said that those **believers** (not heretics) who receive defend or support heretics are to be excommunicated...

Pope Innocent III, Fourth Lateran Council, continued: "We strictly ordain that if any such person, after he has been designated as excommunicated,"

Keep in mind that we are still talking about non-heretical **believers** who have been excommunicated for in some way helping a heretic.

Pope Innocent III, Fourth Lateran Council, continued: "We strictly ordain that if any such person, after he has been designated as excommunicated, refuses to render satisfaction within a year, then by the law itself he shall be branded as infamous and not be admitted to public offices or councils or to elect others to the same or to give testimony. He shall be intestable, that is he shall not have the freedom to make a will nor shall succeed to an inheritance. Moreover nobody shall be compelled to answer to him on any business whatever, but he may be compelled to answer to them. If he is a judge sentences pronounced by him shall have no force and cases may not be brought before him; if an advocate, he may not be allowed to defend anyone; if a notary, documents drawn up by him shall be worthless and condemned along with their condemned author; and in similar matters we order the same to be observed. If however he is a cleric, let him be deposed from every office and benefice, so that the greater the fault the greater be the punishment. **If any refuse to avoid such persons AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN POINTED OUT BY THE CHURCH** [*postquam ab ecclesia denotati fuerint*], let them be punished with the sentence of excommunication until they make suitable satisfaction. Clerics should not, of course, give the sacraments of the Church to such pestilent persons nor give them a Christian burial..."

"*If he be a cleric,*" **a cleric who is NON-heretical and has been excommunicated for in some way helping a heretic.** Do you see how clearly they have perverted the meaning of this council? The heretics want it to speak about heretics, since it suits their purpose of going to other heretics for the sacraments, but anyone but a liar can see that it is not speaking about a heretic, but a **believer** "*who receive, defend or support heretics.*"

There are two points to look at here. The first point is that these actions of *supporting, defending or receiving heretics* aren't evil in themselves, but rather charitable if done rightly. The second point is that a believer can be in good faith regarding heretics. Helping a heretic doesn't necessarily mean that the person agreed with the heretic or that he himself was a heretic or that he even knew he was helping a heretic. That's why the council declares these people as "*believers,*" who "*receive, defend or support heretics...*" And since there are many ways of defending, supporting and receiving heretics that doesn't necessarily involve heresy or schism, one cannot conclude (as heretics do), that one can go to undeclared (excommunicated) heretical or schismatical priests for the sacraments, that

one know are heretics or schismatics, until the *Church has made Her sentence on them*, as their excuse is.

There are many examples one could give to show that a believer who receives, defends or even supports heretics isn't heretical himself:

For can a believer *receive* a heretic into his home for the purpose of converting him?

Of course he can!

Can the same believer in good faith and charity have compassion on a heretic who doesn't have the means to financially *support* himself or his family? Absolutely!

(The believer should of course, if he is aware of this person's heresy, wish to use this charity or support as a carrot or incentive in order to bring the heretic, schismatic or apostate into the Church again.)

And can a believer be in material heresy regarding a doctrine of the Church and unknowingly, *defend* the heretical position of a heretic? Absolutely!

As we have seen, these actions by the believer were neither heretical nor schismatic but charitable (if done in good faith). A believer can thus do well towards others without understanding that he actually might do harm or give greater scandal. That is why, according to the said council, they (the supporters) are to be avoided only after they have been *pointed out by the Church*, and their true intention have been revealed. For just as a person can do these things unknowingly and in good faith, so too can a person do these things out of compassion - not only for the heretic - but for the heresy held by him as well. A person who thus have compassion with a heresy held by a heretic - rather than compassion for the heretical person - is himself also a heretic, since he agrees with his heretical position and supports it. And if a believer was to become aware that a supporter of a heretic was agreeing with his heresy or *supporting* it, then he are to avoid him as a heretic since there is no need then to await the Church's declaration to reveal the 'supporters' inner intentions. This is the reason why the Church doesn't automatically declare these people who "*receive, defend or support heretics*" - as heretics - that absolutely must be avoided "*until they have been pointed out by the Church.*"

That's why it's extremely dishonest for people to use the **Fourth Lateran Council or St. Thomas Aquinas** (next objection) as an argument for receiving communion or confession from an obstinately heretical priest (whom you know to be a heretic) for the Council clearly doesn't teach that. In fact, it is a mortally sinful distortion of the truth taught in it!

Furthermore, it's very dishonest to pronounce *the sentence of the Church* as a basis of avoiding heretics in these times, when the Church and Her hierarchy no longer is visible or

accessible for Catholics. Even those instances (like with sinful priests) where the Church would have judged normally, are today abrogated by the law or principle of *epikeia*, since there are no valid or non-heretical hierarchy in existence in the Church today. ***Epieikeia* or *Epikeia*, meaning “equity,” is the name for the canonical principle that merely Church laws, a.k.a. ecclesiastical laws or disciplinary laws, can cease to bind in particular cases which were not envisioned by the lawgiver.** This term can be found in any book dealing with these subjects. This principle does not apply to dogmatic teachings of faith or morals, but laws instituted by the Church for the governance of its members. That is why we today are even forced to make these judgments about sinful priests by our own judgment and by our own authority since there are no valid Church hierarchy. Thus, when **WE** see someone hold a heretical belief, we must by our own judgment and reason, judge him to be a heretic, and avoid him as such. Again, if we have the knowledge and reason to know or spot heresy, then we are to use that knowledge; for doing otherwise would be a sin against the Faith.

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (# 23), June 29, 1943: "For not every sin, however grave it may be, is such as of its own nature to **sever a man from the Body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy.**"

It's perfectly understandable if a person lacks knowledge to detect finer or more specific heresies that people can be material "heretics" about and which doesn't entail rejecting the natural law or the essential mysteries that all must know about. However, if **you know your priest to be a heretic**, then you must avoid him as such. If you don't know that your priest is a heretic and you haven't put much effort in finding out if he is, then find out if he is; and if he isn't a heretic, then you can go to him (as long as he isn't professing external communion with other heretics, as most priests do, who holds the notorious arch heretic Benedict XVI as the "Pope"). Such a priest is to be assumed to be a heretic (even though he doesn't seem to hold to any other heresy), for the fact of him professing external communion with a notorious heretic. We assume that priest to be a heretic in the very same way we would assume as a heretic a person who enters a protestant church (who then is to be assumed to be a protestant heretic) for being in communion with other protestant heretics (even if there is a slight possibility of him being only a material heretic). Yes, there is a possibility that your priest is unaware of all the heresies that are promoted by Benedict XVI and Vatican II. In fact, there is a slight possibility that anyone who has been baptized - whatever "Christian" church building he may enter – may be a material heretic (as long as he doesn't contradict the natural law or the essential mysteries), although this scenario is very unlikely.

However, if you would have pointed out the true position regarding Vatican II and Benedict XVI to (for example) an independent priest who seem to hold to no heresy (at

least outwardly), and who are not in communion with any other heretical society, and the priest, after having been presented with the evidence, yet obstinately continued to accept Benedict XVI as the "Pope" or Vatican II and the Novus Ordo "Church" as the true Catholic Church, then his heresy would have become manifested and you would be forced to avoid him. Thus, we must both avoid the priest whom we find out to be a heretic, and the priest whom we see profess external communion with other manifest heretics. This is a truth of faith that is further taught by St. Robert Bellarmine:

St Robert Bellarmine, *De Romano Pontifice*, lib. IV, c. 9, no. 15.: **For men are not bound, or able to read hearts;** but when they see that someone is a heretic by his **external works, they judge him to be a heretic pure and simple**, and condemn him as a heretic."

We do not sin by assuming someone to be a heretic (even if absolute proof is absent) if he by his external works reveals this possibility to be true. For when we make an assumption, we do not judge anything in a conclusive way. This method of thinking is not to be applied with other happenings that may occur to man through life (or even with material heresy in regards to faithful Catholics who can and may be erring on certain finer points of Faith). We are not to assume or judge on those things without clear irrefutable evidence, since most happenings in life are neither heretical nor sinful. But notorious or external signs of heresy or schism on graver points on the other hand, are mortally sinful and separates a soul from God. Heresy kills souls!

However, to judge someone as a definitive heretic for believing in baptism of desire (for example) - would be to go too far and to judge falsely, if you first failed to ask him what he thought or knew about it. For it could very well be that he is a material heretic (*if his version of baptism of desire only concerns people or catechumens who already believe in Christ*) and not as the heretics believe, who applies it to everyone, including pagans and people who reject Christ. A person becomes a heretic or schismatic by obstinately refusing to accept a position he knows the Church teaches. Thus, if he has been presented false or non-infallible evidence against baptism of desire, and he still is uncertain, it is possible that he is a material "heretic" (as long as he does not deny the necessity of belief in Jesus Christ for salvation.) He may not have fully understood what the Church teaches on this matter, and if he is uncertain and not obstinate, he may still be a material heretic.

A priest, however, who rejects Christ, by believing in universal salvation for everyone, including pagans and people that hate or even reject Christ such as the Jews or the Muslims - such a case would of course be an obvious one - for it is of divine law that every Christian must hold the belief in Jesus Christ as essential for Salvation. The same goes for the doctrine concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation. The number of these so called

priests of Satan, who holds the belief in Jesus Christ and his Church as meaningless, are almost innumerable these days. All these so called priests must of course be totally avoided and condemned, even if, perhaps, your very good "friend" tells you otherwise. For you know very well in your heart that this is true.

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, Athanasian Creed, Sess. 8, Nov. 22, 1439, *ex cathedra*: "**Whoever wishes to be saved**, needs above all to hold the Catholic faith; unless each one preserves this whole and inviolate, he will without a doubt perish in eternity. – But **the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity...**

"But it is necessary for eternal salvation that he faithfully believe also in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ...the Son of God is God and man... This is the Catholic faith; unless each one believes this faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved."

Pope Leo X, Fifth Lateran Council, Session 8, *ex cathedra*: "And since truth cannot contradict truth, we define that every statement contrary to the enlightened truth of the faith is totally false and we strictly forbid teaching otherwise to be permitted. We decree that **all those who cling to erroneous statements of this kind**, thus sowing heresies which are wholly condemned, **should be avoided in every way** and punished as detestable and odious heretics and infidels who are undermining the Catholic faith."

And really, do the heretics think that the Catholic Church can contradict itself? They must hold to this, or be totally illogical.

WHY PEOPLE OF BAD WILL AND PRIDE ARE LEFT IN DARKNESS

Many people also don't understand why so many "good" people are left in heresy or schism, faithlessness and darkness, or why so many "good" people have never even heard of Jesus Christ - and why these "good" people would be condemned and go to Hell if they died in that state, when they are not yet heretics or schismatics (for they cannot reject what they do not yet know about)?

The answer to these questions is that God beforehand knew of these peoples rejection of the true faith even though it was never presented to them. For even though a person has never heard of the Catholic Church or Her teachings on the Eucharist, Confession, Baptism, Faith and Works unto Salvation etc, during his whole life, but that person - while reading his Bible - rejects words which clearly indicates these teachings, i.e. "*unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have, you have no life in you*", or

"receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained;" then, if he read such and like words, but simply refused to believe that Jesus really could mean what he was saying, and that it was impossible that his personal interpretation was wrong, and if he was obstinate about his position, then he would be a mortal sinner and prideful, for he have already made up his mind that his personal interpretation is *right*. Thus, if ever the true position would have been presented to him, he would simply have refused to believe in it, and would then have become a heretic. I think many people who have talked with protestant heretics are aware of these facts. These protestant heretics often express opinions such as: "I simply refuse to believe such a teaching to be true", or "I simply refuse to believe the Catholic teaching on the Eucharist, etc..."

A humble soul will always think that it is possible that he or she has understood some things wrong, and thus will always conform herself immediately to the true faith when it is presented to her. A person who always thinks he's right or who cannot accept advice from other people or who always have a high esteem of his own mind, he cannot, in truth, be in good disposition of ever receiving the true Catholic Faith. He would just simply refuse to believe if the true faith ever was presented to him. It's truly a most sad and abominable pride and presumption to believe that it is not possible that one has understood some things wrong, and that one could not be corrected by other people. All heretics, without exception, have fallen in this trap of pride and presumption. The same must be said about all people who die as heretics, schismatics, pagans, infidels, Jews or Muslims, etc. A humble soul will not reject God's words because he can't understand it, but will rather seek to understand it, in that he prays to God for help and guidance (in knowing the truth). The mere thought or reflection of a humble soul that he or she might be in error, and her humble prayers to God coupled with abstinence from mortal sins, fervently pleading for His enlightenment concerning a specific issue, is often enough for a soul to come out of a heresy. For humility is the perfect way to Heaven, and none but the humble will enter therein.

"Heresies are only embraced by those who had they persevered in the faith, would be lost by the irregularity of their lives."

-St. Augustine

The first sin that every single heretic falls for before falling into heresy is always one or many of the seven mortal sins; namely, pride, lust, gluttony, envy, greed, sloth, and wrath. By reason of their mortal sins, the devil gains the possession of their conscience by justice, and is able to influence them into believing heresies. This is the sad truth behind heresy. A person who avoids mortal sins and follows the natural law, and also tries as much as he is able to avoid venial sins, will never fall into heresy, since holy angels guard him when he is

in the state of grace.

We can never accept even the smallest venial sin. St. Teresa of Avila said, “For the love of God, take care never to grow careless about venial sin, however small ... There is nothing small if it goes against so great a sovereign.” Deliberate venial sin weakens the spiritual powers, reduces our resistance to evil, and causes us to wander in our journey to the Cross. It is an illness of the soul, but not its supernatural death.

1 John 5:16 **“There is sin which is mortal ... All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal.”**

When a venial sin is enacted with full consent, the devil gets a hold over the person’s soul, where he is able to influence the soul more, and in a little while, he leads the soul into countless of mortal sins from this seemingly small venial sin, unless penance and amendment is made in reparation to God’s justice. A soul that continues in venial sin without quitting his sinful occasions deserve to fall into mortal sin since he rejected God’s commandments. If the soul continues committing venial sin, it will always end in mortal sin, so it’s very important to guard against mortal and venial sins at all times. Billions of poor souls are now suffering in the fires of hell, cursing their habitual venial sins that led them into committing mortal sins. If you wish to avoid joining them in the fires of hell, avoid every occasion of sin as if it were true poison.

Can you imagine the horror of standing before the Judge and hearing the sentence of death and eternal condemnation pronounced against you? Probably not. But you have felt the driving guilt and fear when God’s Word stabs you with this sentence: “*The wages of sin is death.*” (Romans 6:23). Why do we fear and feel guilt? Because “*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*” (Romans 3:23).

All heretics, and all the other people who die outside the Church and Salvation, does not sincerely seek after the truth nor prays to God with sincerity to enlighten them about the truth. These people rather refuse to believe, or only believe in what they think is of the true Faith, rejecting everything else. This is the heresy or mortal sin all the Protestants or Eastern “Orthodox,” etc, fall under, who in truth (many of them) do not fully understand what the Church teaches (yet obstinately refuses to believe in it whenever it is presented to them) or would refuse to believe in it if it ever were presented to them.

This is the exact reason why many people are left in darkness and faithlessness, since God beforehand knew of their bad will and their refusal to accept the true Catholic Faith. This is a truth of Faith that is taught by many of the Popes, Saints and Fathers of the Church.

St. Augustine (+428): “... **God foreknew that if they had lived and the gospel**

had been preached to them, they would have heard it without belief.”

St. Thomas Aquinas, Sent. III, 25, Q. 2, A. 2, solute. 2: **“If a man should have no one to instruct him, God will show him, unless he culpably wishes to remain where he is.”**

Pope St. Pius X, *Acerbo Nimis* (# 2), April 15, 1905: “And so Our Predecessor, Benedict XIV, had just cause to write: **‘We declare that a great number of those who are condemned to eternal punishment suffer that everlasting calamity because of ignorance of those mysteries of faith which must be known and believed in order to be numbered among the elect.’**”

Pope Benedict XIV, *Cum Religiosi* (# 4), June 26, 1754: “See to it that every minister performs carefully the measures laid down by the holy Council of Trent... that confessors should perform this part of their duty whenever anyone stands at their tribunal who does not know **what he must by necessity of means know to be saved...**”

2 Corinthians 4:3: **“And if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them.”**

This is why every Doctor of the Church held that no adult could be saved without knowledge of the Trinity and the Incarnation. It is why the Doctors of the Church who believed in baptism of desire (although they were wrong about this) only extended it to unbaptized catechumens who believed in the Trinity and Incarnation.

However, we should not think we are good in any way for having the Faith or think that we are special in anyway for being brought into the Faith. This is a trap which one easily could fall for. And it is a very dangerous trap, for if a person thinks himself to be special in anyway, then he is probably already lost. Pride (in my opinion) leads most souls to Hell. It is the beginning and end of damnation. (You may of course think or consider yourself to be *specially* evil or sinful, such as: “*that you are the worst person on earth*” or “*the greatest sinner on earth*” etc, which is good to think about oneself. This is the way one should consider oneself: as the greatest sinner in the world and totally unworthy to receive any grace from God.) In truth, personally, I do not understand why I have been brought to the Faith, and why so many pagans, Jews or Muslims, who are better than me, have not. What did I do to deserve this grace of Faith, and what did they fail to do? Why are they in darkness, while I have found the true light of the Gospel? Why, I often ask myself, without

understanding why.

St. Alphonsus, Preparation For Death, (c. +1760): "How thankful we ought to be to Jesus Christ for the gift of faith! What would have become of us if we had been born in Asia, Africa, America, or in the midst of heretics and schismatics? He who does not believe is lost. This, then, was the first and greatest grace bestowed on us: our calling to the true faith. O Savior of the world, **what would become of us if Thou hadst not enlightened us? We would have been like our fathers of old, who adored animals and blocks of stone and wood: and thus we would have all perished.**"

St. Alphonsus Liguori, Sermons (c. +1760): "**How many are born among the pagans, among the Jews, among the Mohometans and heretics, and all are lost.**"

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

SECOND OBJECTION: "St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that one may go to a heretic for the sacraments until the Church have pointed him out."

ANSWER TO THE SECOND OBJECTION: Sadly, the heretics have perverted St. Thomas' teaching here too, by saying that he was talking about heretical priests when he was actually talking about sinful priests. It must be understood that it would not matter if St. Thomas had said what the heretics want him to say, since St. Thomas would then be in contradiction with the infallible dogmatic teachings of the Catholic Church. That's why Catholics (real Catholics) don't go by the definitions of Saints or theologians when deciding what constitutes the Catholic Faith, but by infallible Catholic dogma proclaimed by the Popes from the chair of Peter (ex cathedra). Here is the full quote from St. Thomas as it is presented by the heretics:

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supp. Part, Q. 82, A. 9: "Still there is a difference among the above, because heretics, schismatics, and excommunicates, have been forbidden, by the Church's sentence, to perform the Eucharistic rite. And therefore whoever hears their mass or receives the sacraments from them, commits sin. **But not all who are sinners** are debarred by the Church's sentence from using this power: and so, although suspended by the Divine sentence, yet they are not suspended in regard to others by any ecclesiastical sentence: **consequently, until the Church's sentence is pronounced, it is lawful to receive Communion at their hands, and to hear their mass.** Hence on 1 Corinthians

5:11, "with such a one not so much as to eat," Augustine's gloss runs thus: "In saying this he was unwilling for a man to be judged by his fellow man on arbitrary suspicion, or even by usurped extraordinary judgment, but rather by God's law, according to the Church's ordering, whether he confess of his own accord, or whether he be accused and convicted."

Let's examine this teaching of St. Thomas closely. When he says "*But not all who are **SINNERS**,*" it is clear that he excludes some of the people from being "*debarred by the Church's sentence from using this power*" that he speaks about above, that is, "*heretics, schismatics, and excommunicates.*" When he mentions "*sinners,*" one can only assume that he is not speaking about heretics or schismatics since he would have stated this if this were so. Also notice how St. Thomas said that those who receive the sacraments from a heretic commits sin: "Still there is a difference among the above, because **heretics, schismatics, and excommunicates**, have been forbidden, by the Church's sentence, to perform the Eucharistic rite. And therefore whoever hears their mass or receives the sacraments from them, **commits sin.**" He then goes on to speak about the last category of priests, that is, sinful priests: "But not all who are **sinners...**" and says that some of the sinners (not heretics) must first be formally excommunicated before one must avoid them for the sacraments.

As people should know already, heretics and schismatics have no need for a declaration since they are already **automatically excommunicated** (from simply falling into heresy) and put outside the Catholic Church and Her Communion by the Divine law (*de fide*). SINNERS, on the other hand, are not generally excommunicated automatically, unless through notoriety by committing grave crimes like concubinage.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Third Part, Q. 82, Art. 9: "On the contrary, The Canon says (Dist. 32): **LET NO ONE HEAR THE MASS OF A PRIEST WHOM HE KNOWS WITHOUT DOUBT TO HAVE A CONCUBINE.**"

So St. Thomas is clearly dividing the priests into four different categories when he mentions "**heretical, schismatical, excommunicate**, or even **sinful priests**" and then concludes that "not all who are **sinners** are debarred by the Church's sentence from using this power". It's clear that he's here trying to distinguish between sins that debars people automatically from using this power to perform the Eucharistic rite, such as concubinage, with the other sins that do not, referring to the lesser crimes Catholic priests can commit without being automatically *suspended* or *excommunicated* as a consequence of their *sin*.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Third Part, Q. 64, Art. 6, Reply to

Objection 2: “He who approaches a sacrament, receives it from a minister of the Church [a Catholic priest], not because he is such and such a man, but because he is a minister of the Church [remember, heretics are not ministers of the Church]. Consequently, as long as the latter is **tolerated** in the ministry, he that receives a sacrament from him [Catholic sinful priest], **does not communicate in his sin, but communicates with the Church from whom he has his ministry. But if the Church, by degrading, excommunicating, or suspending him, does not tolerate him in the ministry, HE THAT RECEIVES A SACRAMENT FROM HIM SINS, BECAUSE HE COMMUNICATES IN HIS SIN.**”

Notice that this quotation is essentially identical to the other we saw above. But the difference in this quote from the former is that he here did not mention anything about heretical or schismatical priests, thus helping people to avoid any possible confusion and what St. Thomas could have meant.

In the above quotation it is self evident that St. Thomas did not intend to include heretics in his other statement or that it is lawful to receive the sacraments from them because St. Thomas said that we “**receives it [the sacrament] from a *minister of the Church...* as long as the latter is tolerated in the ministry” . However heretics are not tolerated by the Church nor ministers of Her, hence that St. Thomas couldn’t have referred to heretics as the heretics claim.**

Therefore, when St. Thomas mentioned that it was “lawful to receive Communion at their hands, and to hear their mass” until the Church’s sentence has been pronounced, he was not referring to heretics or schismatics, but specifically to **tolerated sinful, undeclared Catholic** priests. That should be absolutely obvious to any honest person of good will reading this document.

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (#15), June 29, 1896: “it is absurd to imagine that he who is **outside [he who is a heretic] can command in the Church [have jurisdiction].**”

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (# 9), June 29, 1896: “The practice of the Church has always been the same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to hold as **OUTSIDE CATHOLIC COMMUNION, AND ALIEN TO THE CHURCH**, whoever would recede in the least degree from any point of doctrine proposed by her authoritative **Magisterium.**”

It is obvious that St. Thomas was in agreement with the constant and infallible tradition of the Church which explicitly orders people to stay away from the churches of heretics,

(Pope Leo X, Fifth Lateran Council, Session 8.) But it would not matter anyway since Catholics decide these things by infallible Catholic dogma, and not on fallible Saints. But just to prove the point further we will look at what St. Robert Bellarmine has to say:

St. Robert Bellarmine, *De Romano Pontifice*, II, 30: "For, in the first place, **it is proven with arguments from authority and from reason that the manifest heretic is 'ipso facto' [by that very fact] deposed.** The argument from authority is based on St. Paul (Titus 3:10), who orders that the heretic be avoided after two warnings, that is, after showing himself to be manifestly obstinate - **which means before any excommunication or judicial sentence.** And this is what St. Jerome writes, adding that the other **sinners are excluded from the Church by sentence of excommunication, but the heretics exile themselves and separate themselves** by their own act from the body of Christ."

Let's look again at what St. Bellarmine just said: "**sinners** are excluded from the Church **by sentence of excommunication**"..."but the **heretics exile themselves.**"

So it's absolutely clear, as just proved by St. Robert Bellarmine, who quoted from St. Jerome, that St. Thomas was actually talking about how sinful priests are not "*debarred by the Church's sentence from using this power to perform the Eucharistic rite*". Unless, of course, one would like to be a total liar. And so, St. Thomas is clearly speaking about how a priest with private or public mortal sins is not suspended by the Church's sentence (not formally) from performing the Eucharistic rite, even if he sins every time he confects the sacraments on account of the Divine suspension. We may thus approach sinful priests (and not heretical priests, as liars try to make it say) for the sacraments, *until the Church's sentence is pronounced.*

Catholics, however have no obligation to approach notoriously sinful priests for the sacraments and can stay home, but neither are they forbidden to go if they desire these sacraments. This is so because heresy automatically excommunicates every person guilty of it and puts him outside the Church; a person's own mortal sins, however, does not.

The Church further teaches that one may approach such a priest for the sacraments (who have been excommunicated for other reasons than heresy, schism or apostasy), only in grave circumstances, *if no other reasonable option is available* (more on this in the Fourth objection). For sin and heresy is not the same, and to be excommunicated for sin or to be excommunicated for heresy is not the same (although both cases lead the excommunicated soul to Hell). The Pope, even if he is a public mortal sinner, still remains Pope and has the same authority as any other Pope however sinful he may be. If, however, he was to become a heretic, schismatic or apostate, he would automatically cease to be the Pope and head of

the Church, and would lose all his authority and ecclesiastical power.

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (# 23), June 29, 1943: “For not every sin, however grave it may be, is such as of its own nature **to sever a man from the Body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy.**”

And really, when people use fallible quotes from fallible Saints and theologians to try to prove their position, you can know that they have lost track of the distinction between fallible and infallible words.

For other St. Thomas Aquinas objections usually presented by the heretics to support their heresies, please consult the following section on our website: [DOES ST. THOMAS REALLY TEACH THAT WE MAY RECEIVE THE SACRAMENTS FROM EXCOMMUNICATED “UNDECLARED” HERETICAL PRIESTS?](#)

CARDINAL JOHN DE LUGO

THIRD OBJECTION: "Cardinal John de Lugo, who was a respected theologian, and who was counted by St. Alphonsus himself as second only after St. Thomas Aquinas, and who was called "a light of the Church" by Pope Benedict XIV, said that one could go to a heretical priest whom you know to be a heretic for the mass and the sacraments."

ANSWER TO THE THIRD OBJECTION: Cardinal John de Lugo was simply wrong. He was also confused about certain points on which he taught (as we will show). This made him come up with a belief system of his own. This fact was even admitted by the Catholic Encyclopedia:

The Catholic Encyclopedia, "Cardinal John de Lugo," Vol. 9, (1910): “All his writings (Lugo), whether on dogmatic or moral theology, exhibit two main qualities: A penetrating, critical mind, sometimes **indulging a little too much in subtleties, and a sound judgment...In several problems he formed a system of his own, as for instance about faith, the Eucharist, the hypostatic union, etc.**”

John de Lugo even argued that the words, "This is My Blood", (or a similar short form), to be a complete sacramental form for the wine-consecration. De Lugo argued that the very existence of such (erroneous) liturgies in ancient times (based on non-approved and spurious documents) proved that those few words are enough for validity, and that ipso facto the additional words of the form, although used universally in the Church, are not

essential. He thus argued (at his own time) as the Vatican II “Church” does today. This proposition by John de Lugo was of course condemned (the theory) as false (Salmanticenses 30-32, Disp. IX, dub. 3). The heretics however, would have us believe that a short form consecration would be a true and valid one, for why else would he (Lugo) have said so? But who amongst these heretics would ever admit to such a thing? Our guess is that none or very few ever would. This striking fact then reveals these people to in fact be bad willed heretics, since heretics only reject those articles of faith that do not fit them, or only believe in those they deem to be from the deposit of faith. Both of these terms is what makes up a heretic! This then should further prove these peoples absolute hypocrisy and bad will.

Now, Cardinal de Lugo was certainly not infallible, and he was even wrong on major theological subjects (such as regarding the mass and the form of consecration). In fact, the changes proposed by Cardinal de Lugo would have rendered the act of consecration (transubstantiation) invalid, as Pope St. Pius V makes clear:

Pope St. Pius V, *De Defectibus*, chapter 5, Part 1: "The words of Consecration, which are the FORM of this Sacrament, are these: *FOR THIS IS MY BODY*. And: *FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD, OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL TESTAMENT: THE MYSTERY OF FAITH, WHICH SHALL BE SHED FOR YOU AND FOR MANY UNTO THE REMISSION OF SINS*. Now if one were to remove, or change anything in the FORM of the consecration of the Body and Blood, and in that very change of words the [new] wording would fail to mean the same thing, he would not consecrate the sacrament."

This, yet again, shows us why real Catholics build their Faith, (not on saints or theologians) but on the infallible magisterium of the Church. This quote by Pope St. Pius V also proves the invalidity of the *Novus Ordo mass* (Vatican II mass) where the words of consecration have been changed.

FORM OF CONSECRATION IN THE NEW MASS

“For this is my body. For this is the chalice of my blood, of the new and eternal testament. It shall be shed for you and FOR ALL SO THAT SINS MAY BE FORGIVEN.”

First, the words *THE MYSTERY OF FAITH* have been abolished in the form of consecration in the new mass which in itself renders it highly doubtful. However, what absolutely renders the new mass invalid without a doubt are the following: The original form of consecration does not use the words “for all so that sins may be forgiven” but uses

the words “for many so that sins may be forgiven”. The Vatican II sect uses the words for all, since they publicly and notoriously hold and teach and believe in the heresy of universal salvation or salvation for people in false religions. Thus, they have changed the wording from many (which indicates that not all are saved) to for all, which then fits their heretical belief system. The words for MANY, was used by Jesus Christ himself, and not even a Pope can change the words instituted by our Lord, as Pope Pius XII makes clear:

Pope Pius XII, *Sacramentum Ordinis* (# 1), Nov. 30, 1947: "**...the Church has no power over the 'substance of the sacraments,' that is, over those things which, with the sources of divine revelation as witnesses, Christ the Lord Himself decreed to be preserved in a sacramental sign...**"

It would neither make much a difference if they ever changed back to the traditional formula, since almost all of the Vatican II priests left in the world are invalidly ordained anyway and never consecrates the Eucharist. The hosts in the Vatican II churches are thus just a piece of bread. [*If you want to learn more about the invalidity of the new mass, please read this [article](#) or watch this [video](#)*]

Therefore, in view of all these theological errors by Cardinal John de Lugo - especially concerning the mass - one can only conclude (when he was talking about approaching a heretical priest for the mass and the sacraments) that he also here, “**in several problems... formed a system of his own, as for instance about faith, the Eucharist, the hypostatic union, etc.**” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*) and not that of the Church... Not that his opinion has any significance anyway, since real Catholics first and foremost follow the infallible magisterial teaching of the Church (and not first or foremost the fallible opinions of theologians).

We will now look at the following quotes by Cardinal de Lugo regarding the reception of the Church’s sacraments from heretics:

Cardinal John de Lugo: “The second chief doubt is whether we may communicate with an undeclared heretic only in civil and human affairs or even in sacred and spiritual things. It is certain that we cannot communicate with heretics in the rites proper to a heretical sect, because this would be contrary to the precept of confessing the faith and would contain an implicit profession of error. But the question relates to sacred matters containing no error, e.g. whether it is lawful to hear Mass with a heretic, or to celebrate in his presence, or to be present while he celebrates in the Catholic rite, etc.”

Notice that Cardinal de Lugo distinguishes between attending a heretical rite (which is

never permitted) and attending a Catholic Mass or rite celebrated by an “undeclared heretic,” which is also never permitted, if one is aware of the priest being a heretic (e.g. a priest of the SSPX who celebrates the Catholic rite and *claims* to be Catholic but is actually a heretic who professes external communion with other heretics, e.g. Vatican II.)

Cardinal de Lugo: “But the opposite view is general and true, unless it should be illicit for some other reason on account of scandal or implicit denial of the faith, or because charity obliges one to impede the sin of the heretical minister administering unworthily where necessity does not urge. **This is the teaching of Navarro and Sanchez, Suarez, Hurtado and** is what I have said in speaking of the sacrament of penance and of matrimony and the other sacraments. It is also certain by virtue of the said *litterae extravagantes* in which communication with *excommunicati tolerati* is conceded to the faithful in the reception and administration of the sacraments.”

Notice that Cardinal de Lugo bases much of his conclusion on other theologians instead of on papal authority. This is the way error or heresy is begun. He also seems to have confused people who are guilty of an automatic excommunication (heretics, schismatics and apostates) with ***sinners*** (*excommunicati tolerate*) who are specifically excommunicated by the Church.

John de Lugo: “So as these heretics are not declared [formal?] excommunicates or notoriously guilty of striking a cleric, there is no reason why we should be prevented from receiving the sacraments from them because of their [automatic?] excommunication, although on other grounds this may often be illicit unless necessity excuse as I have explained in the said places.” (Cardinal John de Lugo S.J. (1583-1660), Tractatus de Virtute Fidei Divinae: Disputatio XXII, Sectio.)

First, what he says here is simply wrong and one cannot follow his fallible opinion here since it is contradicted by many Popes. Thus, one cannot use the fallible and erroneous opinions of Cardinal John de Lugo, or any other theologian or saint for that matter *as some kind of proof for receiving the sacraments from heretics* when the Church teaching on this matter clearly speaks against it. This should be clear to any honest person, but the heretics simply can’t get this fact through their obstinate heads.

Second, it is also clear from the the words: “*So as these heretics are not declared excommunicates or notoriously guilty of **striking a cleric***” that he was here referring to Pope Martin V’s bull *Ad Evitanda Scandala*, as his source, and which he, by the way, also interpreted wrongly! *Ad Evitanda Scandala* (which you can read about [here](#)) never refers to excommunicated heretics in Catholic communion, but refers specifically to

excommunicated tolerated sinners (Catholics) or people otherwise notoriously guilty of striking a cleric!

So with these facts in mind, and considering the fact that John de Lugo didn't even understand the very bull that he was citing when he came up with his position of receiving sacraments from heretics, should one even consider his opinion as having any worth whatsoever? No, I think not! To even consider his opinion in light of these facts would be ridiculous.

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (# 9), June 29, 1896: "The practice of the Church has always been the same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to hold as **outside Catholic communion, and alien to the Church**, whoever would recede in the least degree from any point of doctrine proposed by her authoritative **Magisterium**."

All apostates, heretics, or schismatics are outside Catholic communion and must be shunned, as the following dogmatic Council makes perfectly clear:

*III Council of Constantinople, 680-681: "**If any ecclesiastic or layman shall go into the synagogue of the Jews or the meetinghouses of the heretics to join in prayer with them, let them be deposed and deprived of communion. If any bishop or priest or deacon shall join in prayer with heretics, let him be suspended from communion.**"*

It's a dogma that all heretics are outside the Church (*de fide*). Thus, no *heretical* priest can ever licitly administer the sacraments (unless we are speaking about baptism) and people who knowingly approach illicit sacraments, sins mortally. Thus, Cardinal John de Lugo's private opinions are not something to even be considered in light of all these dogmatic facts.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Suppl. Part, Q. 23, Art. 3, Reply to Objection 2: "The commandment of the Church regards spiritual matters directly, and legitimate actions as a consequence: **hence by holding communion in Divine worship [with one who is excommunicated,] one acts against the commandment, and commits a mortal sin**;"

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (#15), June 29, 1896: "it is absurd to imagine that he who is **outside can command in the Church**."

Heretics or schismatics are true spiritual murderers (which is far worse than physical murderers), and to give other people the impression that they (heretics and schismatics)

are true Catholics, is truly abominable and shameful. However, the heretics, who brings forth every excuse possible that they can find, would love to stress just that (that heretics and schismatics are Catholics). And so, the only reason these heretics spend so much time and effort in proclaiming the fallible opinions of saints and theologians (as though it were the true and Catholic one) is because they know they have nothing else to back up their sacrilegious position with. These people's conscience must be weighing down hard on them since all know one should not profess or show a friendship or communion with people who are spiritual murderers and enemies of Jesus Christ. That's why these people must choose to overlook the dogmas which condemn their heresy of praying in communion with heretics and receiving the sacraments from them.

What you **must** do (instead of looking for excuses to go to them) is to denounce these murderers of souls (heretics and schismatics) before other people. And what you **mustn't** do, is to profess communion with them. It's really easy if you are honest with yourself. Unless you oppose heretics and schismatics, you will be condemned to an eternal hellfire, as the following quotes makes perfectly clear:

Pope St. Felix III (5th Century): "Not to oppose error is to approve it; and not to defend truth is to suppress it, and, indeed, to neglect to confound evil men - when we can do it - is no less a sin than to encourage them."

James 4:17 "To him therefore who knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin."

Pope Leo XIII, *Inimica Vis*, 1892: "An error which is not resisted is approved; a truth which is not defended is suppressed... He who does not oppose an evident crime is open to the suspicion of secret complicity."

All non-Catholic religious services are crimes against the true God, the Catholic God, in the highest degree possible!

THE 1917 CODE OF CANON LAW

FOURTH OBJECTION: "The 1917 Code of Canon law teaches that one may attend the religious services of heretics or schismatics and receive the sacraments from them. Canon 2261.2-3, of the *1917 Code of Canon Law* states: "... **the faithful may for any just cause ask the sacraments or sacramentals of one who is excommunicated,**

especially if there is no one else to give them (c. 2261.2)... But from an excommunicated vitandus [to be shunned] or one against whom there is a declaratory or condemnatory sentence, the faithful may only in danger of death ask for sacramental absolution according to canons 882, 2252, and also for other sacraments and sacramentals in case there is no one else to administer them (c. 2261.3).”

ANSWER TO THE FOURTH OBJECTION: First, let's note that the 1917 Code of Canon law does not speak about heretics or schismatics. It explicitly speaks about excommunicated people. This canon is obviously excluding heretics, schismatics and apostates since it's the **Divine Law** that forbids them from receiving or consecrating a sacrament. But even if this canon were speaking about heretics and schismatics (which it isn't), it would still hold no weight against the infallible declarations made by the Catholic Church. The 1917 Code of Canon Law is also not infallible, as will be proved further down.

Pope Leo X, Fifth Lateran Council, Session 8, *ex cathedra*: "And since truth cannot contradict truth, we define that every statement contrary to the enlightened truth of the faith is totally false and we strictly forbid teaching otherwise to be permitted. We decree that **all those who cling to erroneous statements of this kind**, thus sowing heresies which are wholly condemned, **should be avoided in every way** and punished as detestable and odious heretics and infidels who are undermining the Catholic faith."

Second, also notice how (as usual) the very quotation that the heretics use to prove their position, refutes them:

Canon 2261.2-3, *1917 Code of Canon Law*: “But from an excommunicated vitandus or one against whom there is a declaratory or condemnatory sentence, the faithful may **ONLY IN DANGER OF DEATH** ask for sacramental absolution according to canons 882, 2252, **and also for other sacraments and sacramentals** in case there is no one else to administer them (c. 2261.3).”

So even if this canon was referring to heretical priests (the vitandus or shunned), which it is not, it would still mean that they could only be approached **in danger of death!** But the heretics doesn't teach that heretics may *only* be approached for the Eucharist or Confession *in danger of death*, for they teach that they may be approached **every time as long as they are *not* notorious**.

Third, one needs to understand that excommunication can be incurred for many things. **Historically, excommunications were distinguished by the terms *major* and *minor***. Major excommunications were incurred for heresy and schism (sins against the

faith) and certain other major sins. Those who received major excommunication for heresy were not members of the Church (as we have just proven at length). Minor excommunication, however, *did not remove one from the Church*, but forbade one to participate in the Church's sacramental life. Pope Benedict XIV made note of the distinction.

Pope Benedict XIV, *Ex Quo Primum* (# 23), March 1, 1756: "**Moreover heretics and schismatics are subject to the censure of major excommunication by the law of *Can. de Ligu. 23, quest. 5, and Can. Nulli, 5, dist. 19.***"

Minor excommunication, on the other hand, was incurred for things such as violating a secret of the Holy Office, falsifying relics (c. 2326), violating a cloister (c. 2342), etc. These are all ecclesiastical or Church penalties. Such actions, though gravely sinful, *did not separate a person from the Church*. And though the terms major and minor excommunication are no longer used, it remains a fact that **a person could incur an excommunication (for something other than heresy) which would not separate him from the Church**, and he could incur an excommunication for heresy which would separate him from the Church. **Therefore, a Catholic who receives an excommunication for heresy is no longer a Catholic** because heretics are outside the Catholic Church (*de fide*, Pope Eugene IV). But a **Catholic** who receives an excommunication for something else is still a **Catholic**, though in a state of grave sin. Thus, it is clear that the 1917 Code of Canon Law is speaking about sinners and disobedient Catholics of different kinds, and not about heretics.

MORE ON THE 1917 CODE OF CANON LAW

The 1917 Code was definitely not an *ex cathedra* (from the Chair of Peter) pronouncement because it does not bind the whole Church, but only the Latin Church (not the Eastern Rites), as stipulated in Canon 1 of the 1917 Code.

Canon 1, 1917 Code of Canon Law: "Although in the Code of canon law the discipline of the Oriental Church is frequently referenced, nevertheless, **this [Code] applies only to the Latin Church and does not bind the Oriental**, unless it treats of things that, by their nature, apply to the Oriental."

A pope speaks infallibly from the Chair of Peter when his teaching on faith or morals binds *the entire Church*, which the 1917 Code doesn't:

Pope Pius IX, *Vatican Council I*, 1870, Session 4, Chap. 4: "...the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra* [from the Chair of Peter], that is, when carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians in accord with his supreme apostolic

authority he explains a doctrine of faith or morals **to be held by the universal Church... operates with that infallibility...**”

The 1917 Code is not infallible Church discipline either, as proven by the fact that it contains a law which directly contradicts the infallible discipline of the Church since the beginning on a point tied to the Faith. The actual Bull promulgating the 1917 Code, *Providentissima Mater Ecclesia*, was not signed by Benedict XV, but by Cardinal Gasparri and Cardinal De Azevedo. Cardinal Gasparri, the Secretary of State, was the main author and compiler of the canons. Some theologians would argue that only disciplines which bind the whole Church – unlike the 1917 Code – are protected by the infallibility of the governing authority of the Church, an argument which seems to be supported in the following teaching of Pope Pius XII.

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (# 66), June 29, 1943: “**Certainly the loving Mother is spotless** in the Sacraments, by which she gives birth to and nourishes her children; in the faith which she has always preserved inviolate; **in her sacred laws imposed upon all**; in the evangelical counsels which she recommends; in those heavenly gifts and extraordinary graces through which, with inexhaustible fecundity, she generates hosts of martyrs, virgins, and confessors.”

This would mean that a disciplinary law is not a law of the "Catholic" (i.e. universal) Church unless it binds the universal Church. It should also be remembered that it is of divine law that only the Popes are infallible when speaking *ex cathedra* (from the chair of Peter.) Thus, this proves that Pius XII was speaking about the infallible statements from the chair of Peter. Regardless, the 1917 Code doesn't enjoy infallibility. This is further proven by the following canons.

1) THE 1917 CODE OF CANON LAW TEACHES THAT CHRISTIAN BURIAL CAN BE GIVEN TO UNBAPTIZED CATECHUMENS

The 1917 Code teaches in canon 1239, that unbaptized catechumens can be given Christian burial. This contradicts the entire Tradition of the Catholic Church for 1900 years on whether unbaptized persons can be given Christian burial.

Canon 1239, 1917 Code: “1. Those who die without baptism are not to be accorded ecclesiastical burial. 2. **Catechumens who through no fault of their own die without baptism are to be reckoned as baptized.**”

Since the time of Jesus Christ and throughout all of history, the Catholic Church

universally refused ecclesiastical burial to catechumens who died without the Sacrament of Baptism, as *The Catholic Encyclopedia* admits:

The Catholic Encyclopedia, “Baptism,” Volume 2, 1907: “A certain statement in the funeral oration of St. Ambrose over the Emperor Valentinian II has been brought forward as a proof that the Church offered sacrifices and prayers for catechumens who died before baptism. **There is not a vestige of such a custom to be found anywhere...** The practice of the Church is more correctly shown in the canon (xvii) of the Second Council of Braga (572 AD): ‘Neither the commemoration of Sacrifice [oblationis] nor the service of chanting [psallendi] is to be employed for catechumens who have died without baptism.’”

This is the law of the Catholic Church since the beginning and throughout all of history. So, since this issue is tied to the Faith and not merely disciplinary, either the Catholic Church was wrong since the time of Christ for *refusing ecclesiastical burial for catechumens who died without baptism* or the 1917 Code is wrong for granting it to them. It is either one or the other, because the 1917 Code **directly contradicts** the Traditional and constant law of the Catholic Church for nineteen centuries on this point which is tied to the Faith. The answer is, obviously, that the 1917 Code is wrong and not infallible, and the Catholic Church’s law for all of history refusing ecclesiastical burial to catechumens is right. In fact, it is interesting to note that the Latin version of the 1917 Code contains many footnotes to traditional popes, councils, etc. to show from where certain canons were derived. **Canon 1239.2 on giving ecclesiastical burial to unbaptized catechumens has no footnote, not to any pope, previous law or council, simply because there is nothing in Tradition which supports it!**

The Catholic Encyclopedia (1907) quotes an interesting decree from Pope Innocent III wherein he commented on *the traditional, universal and constant law of the Catholic Church from the beginning* which refused ecclesiastical burial to all who died without the Sacrament of Baptism.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, “Baptism,” Volume 2, 1907: “The reason of this regulation [forbidding ecclesiastical burial to all unbaptized persons] is given by **Pope Innocent III (Decr., III, XXVIII, xii): ‘It has been decreed by the sacred canons that we are to have no communion with those who are dead, if we have not communicated with them while alive.’**”

2) THE 1917 CODE TEACHES THAT HERETICS CAN BE IN GOOD FAITH

Canon 731.2, 1917 Code: "It is forbidden that the Sacraments of the Church be ministered to **heretics and schismatics, even if they ask for them and are in good faith**, unless beforehand, rejecting their errors, they are reconciled with the Church."

A heretic, **by infallible definition, is of bad faith** and brings down upon his head eternal punishment.

Pope St. Celestine I, *Council of Ephesus*, 431: "... **all heretics** corrupt the true expressions of the Holy Spirit **with their own evil minds** and they **draw down on their own heads an inextinguishable flame.**"

Pope Eugene IV, *Council of Florence*, "Cantate Domino," 1441, *ex cathedra*: "The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches that **all those** who are outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans but also Jews or **heretics** and schismatics, cannot share in eternal life and **will go into the everlasting fire** which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they are joined to the Church before the end of their lives..."

Pope Gregory XVI, *Summo Iugiter Studio* (# 2), May 27, 1832: "Finally some of these **misguided people attempt to persuade themselves** and others that men are not saved only in the Catholic religion, but **that even heretics may attain eternal life.**"

A person in *good faith* who is erring innocently about a dogma (loosely and improperly called a material heretic in theological discussions) is not a heretic, but a Catholic erring in good faith. So the statement in the 1917 Code about heretics and schismatics in good faith is definitely theologically erroneous and it proves that it was not protected by infallibility.

Objection: "A heretic can be in good faith about certain theological issues. A heretic may also be in good faith in some ways since, how else could a heretic turn from his errors and become a Catholic!"

Answer to the objection: No, a heretic cannot be of good Faith as long as he remains a heretic, and as long as he obstinately rejects God's grace of conversion to the true Catholic Faith. The moment a heretic ceases to be heretical, he is of good faith. Important to understand (for otherwise this might cause confusion) is that a heretic or a schismatic is a baptized person above the age of reason who has knowledge of and affirms a belief in the Trinity and the Incarnation, (the essential mysteries) but who rejects the full teaching of

Christ and of His Church. A heretic is thus not a *material heretic* (a term used to describe a Catholic erring in good Faith), for a heretic is by definition a person who knowingly and obstinately rejects parts of the true Faith. A person can only reject what he have read, or heard about, and understood (unless we are speaking about the Trinity and the Incarnation and the natural law which all are bound to know explicitly without exception to be saved.) Thus, a heretic is by definition always of bad faith and will continue to be this as long as he remains in his heresy. That a heretic may desire the true faith is true, but that does not mean that he holds the true faith (until he actually has been converted).

This is further proven by an example. For if you were to say to an obstinate murderer and rapist: "You should cease to murder and rape people (remember that heresy murder souls)!" And the murderer would answer: "I am considering it since I see that it is wrong. I desire to change. Yet, I will continue to murder and rape for a bit more (he will continue to spread heresies and lies a bit more)." Would anyone be so mad as to say that he is in good faith even though he desires to cease doing evil? Of course not. Likewise, heretics are like murderers since they murder their own and other people's souls eternally. In fact, they are worse than murderers and rapists. And as long as they are obstinate in their heresy, they are of bad faith and continue to murder souls.

The heretics are also not able to be in good faith about some parts of the faith, since the faith must be taken as a whole, or rejected as a whole, as Pope Leo XIII teaches:

Pope Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (# 9), June 29, 1896: "... can it be lawful for anyone to reject any one of those truths without by the very fact falling into heresy? – without separating himself from the Church? – without repudiating in one sweeping act the whole of Christian teaching? For such is the nature of faith that nothing can be more absurd than to accept some things and reject others... But he who dissents even in one point from divinely revealed truth absolutely rejects all faith, since he thereby refuses to honor God as the supreme truth and the *formal motive of faith*.

The Catholic Encyclopedia has the following points to say about heresy:

The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 7. "Heresy", the gravity of the sin (1910): "Heresy is a sin because of its nature it is destructive of the virtue of Christian faith. Its malice is to be measured therefore by the excellence of the good gift of which it deprives the soul. Now faith is the most precious possession of man, the root of his supernatural life, the pledge of his eternal salvation. Privation of faith is therefore the greatest evil, and deliberate rejection of faith is the greatest sin. St. Thomas (II-II, Q. x, a. 3) arrives at the same conclusion thus: "All sin is an aversion from God. A sin, therefore, is the greater the more it separates man from God. But infidelity does this

more than any other sin, for the infidel (unbeliever) is without the true knowledge of God: his false knowledge does not bring him help, for what he opines is not God: manifestly, then, the sin of unbelief (infidelitas) is the greatest sin in the whole range of perversity." And he adds: "Although the Gentiles err in more things than the Jews, and although the Jews are farther removed from true faith than heretics, yet the unbelief of the Jews is a more grievous sin than that of the Gentiles, because they corrupt the Gospel itself after having adopted and professed the same. . . . It is a more serious sin not to perform what one has promised than not to perform what one has not promised." It cannot be pleaded in attenuation of the guilt of heresy that heretics do not deny the faith which to them appears necessary to salvation, but only such articles as they consider not to belong to the original deposit. In answer it suffices to remark that two of the most evident truths of the depositum fidei [deposit of faith] are the unity of the Church and the institution of a teaching authority [The Popes] to maintain that unity. That unity exists in the Catholic Church, and is preserved by the function of her teaching body: these are two facts which anyone can verify for himself. In the constitution of the Church there is no room for private judgment sorting essentials from non-essentials: any such selection disturbs the unity, and challenges the Divine authority, of the Church; it strikes at the very source of faith. The guilt of heresy is measured not so much by its subject-matter as by its formal principle, which is the same in all heresies: revolt against a Divinely constituted authority."

3) THE 1917 CODE TEACHES THAT CATHOLICS MAY BE PRESENT AT NON-CATHOLIC FORMS OF WORSHIP, INCLUDING NON-CATHOLIC WEDDINGS AND NON-CATHOLIC FUNERALS!

Canon 1258, 1917 Code: "1. It is not licit for the faithful by any manner to assist actively or to have a part in **the sacred [rites] of non-Catholics**. 2. **Passive or merely material presence can be tolerated for the sake of honor or civil office, for grave reason approved by the Bishop in case of doubt, at the funerals, weddings, and similar solemnities of non-Catholics**, provided danger of scandal is absent."

Note: this canon is talking about *non-Catholic or non-Christian (false) worship and rites*. This is outrageous! This canon allows one to travel to and attend a Jewish Synagogue or a Hindu Temple or a Lutheran Service, etc., etc., etc. for the wedding or funeral of infidels or heretics – *just as long as one doesn't actively participate!* This is ridiculous, for to go out of his way to be present at such non-Catholic services where false worship is conducted (for

the sake of honoring or pleasing the person involved in it) is a scandal in itself. It is to honor a person who is sinning against the First Commandment. To go to the funeral of a non-Catholic is to imply that there was some hope for him for salvation outside the Church; and to attend the wedding of a non-Catholic is to imply that God condones his or her marriage outside the Church. A Catholic can neither take part *actively* in false worship nor go out of one's way to travel to the false worship or the non-Catholic ceremony to honor it with his "passive" presence. To have a passive presence at non-Catholic services, is actually to honor the devil and the demons, since Psalms 95:5 says that "all the gods of the Gentiles are devils." To show to others that you are attending their religious houses, is to show formal consent to their religion and it is mortally sinful, and completely inexcusable. And as always, heretics must either state that the Church can contradict itself on a matter that is tied to the faith or be totally illogical. Here is the true infallible faith again:

Pope Leo X, Fifth Lateran Council, Session 8, *ex cathedra*: "And since truth cannot contradict truth, we define that every statement contrary to the enlightened truth of the faith is totally false and we strictly forbid teaching otherwise to be permitted. We decree that **all those who cling to erroneous statements of this kind**, thus sowing heresies which are wholly condemned, **should be avoided in every way** and punished as detestable and odious heretics and infidels who are undermining the Catholic faith."

"Should be avoided in every way," is just not "clear" enough for the heretics. Hence, this canon also proves that this code is not infallible.

4) THE 1917 CODE OF CANON LAW TEACHES BAPTISM OF DESIRE

Again, a pope speaks infallibly from the Chair of Peter when his teaching on faith or morals binds the entire Church, which the 1917 Code doesn't; thus, the 1917 Code's proposition in canon 737 that Baptism is necessary "at least in desire" for salvation is not binding on the universal Church or protected by infallibility. The 1917 Code contradicts the immemorial Tradition of the Church on ecclesiastical burial for catechumens (unbaptized persons) and it holds no weight for a moment against the infallible declaration of the Chair of St. Peter (binding the entire Church) that no one can enter heaven without the Sacrament of Baptism.

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Can. 5 on the Sacrament of Baptism, ***ex cathedra***: "If anyone says that baptism [the sacrament] is optional, that is, **not necessary for salvation (cf. Jn. 3:5): let him be anathema.**"

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Can. 2 on the Sacrament of Baptism, Sess. 7, 1547, *ex cathedra*: "**If anyone shall say that real and natural water is not necessary for baptism, and on that account those words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit" [John 3:5], are distorted into some sort of metaphor: let him be anathema.**"

For numerous other objections and arguments (not covered in this article) commonly used by the heretics in favour of receiving sacraments from heretical ministers, please see our latest article: [THE AMAZING LIES, HERESIES AND CONTRADICTIONS OF PETER DIMOND CAUGHT ON TAPE EXPOSED](#)

AUTOMATIC EXCOMMUNICATION FOR ALL HERETICS, SCHISMATICS AND APOSTATES WITHOUT EXCEPTION

The declaratory sentence which follows an automatic excommunication is merely a legal recognition of something which already exists. If this were not true, the automatic excommunication would be meaningless. Canon 2314, of the 1917 Code of Canon Law, although not infallible, is perfectly in line with Catholic teaching: "All apostates from the Christian faith and each and every heretic or schismatic: 1) Incur *ipso facto* [by that very fact] excommunication..."

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (# 23), June 29, 1943: "For not every sin, however grave it may be, is such as of its own nature **to sever a man from the Body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy.**"

Pope Leo XIII, Satis Cognitum (# 9), June 29, 1896: "The practice of the Church has always been the same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to hold as outside Catholic communion, AND ALIEN TO THE CHURCH, WHOEVER WOULD RECEDE IN THE LEAST DEGREE FROM ANY POINT OF DOCTRINE PROPOSED BY HER AUTHORITATIVE MAGISTERIUM."

Pope Pius VI, *Auctorem fidei*, Aug. 28, 1794: "**47. Likewise, the proposition which teaches that it is necessary, according to the natural and divine laws, for either excommunication or for suspension, that a personal examination should precede, and that, therefore, sentences called 'ipso facto' have no other force than that of a serious threat without any actual effect**" – false, rash, pernicious, injurious to the power of the

Church, erroneous.”

The heretical person is already severed from the Church. Most heretics are known to be heretics without a trial or declaratory sentence, and must be denounced as such. As we see here, the Catholic Church teaches that formal processes and judgments are not **necessary for ipso facto (by that very fact) excommunications to take effect**. They are very often, as in the case of the heretic Martin Luther, formal recognitions of the *ipso facto excommunication that has already occurred. This should be obvious to a Catholic*.

Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (# 22): “As therefore **in the true Christian community** there is only one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one Baptism, so **there can be only one faith**. And therefore if a man refuse to hear the Church let him be considered – so the Lord commands – as a heathen and a publican. It follows that **those who are divided in faith or government cannot be living in the unity of such a Body**, nor can they be living the life of its one Divine Spirit.”

St. Robert Bellarmine, *De Romano Pontifice*, II, 30: “... for men are not bound, or able to read hearts; BUT WHEN THEY SEE THAT SOMEONE IS A HERETIC BY HIS EXTERNAL WORKS, THEY JUDGE HIM TO BE A HERETIC PURE AND SIMPLE, AND CONDEMN HIM AS A HERETIC. For, in the first place, **it is proven with arguments from authority and from reason that the manifest heretic is ipso facto deposed**. The argument from authority is based on St. Paul (Titus 3:10), who orders that the heretic be avoided after two warnings, that is, after showing himself to be manifestly obstinate **which means before any excommunication or judicial sentence**. And this is what St. Jerome writes, adding that the other sinners are excluded from the Church by sentence of excommunication, but the heretics exile themselves and separate themselves by their own act from the body of Christ.”

As we’ve already shown, it’s a dogma that 1) heretics are not members of the Church; and 2) that a heretic is automatically excommunicated (ipso facto) without any further declaration. It is a dogmatic fact, therefore, that a heretic cannot be a part of or govern the Church, since he is not a member of it. To state that Catholics should hold communion with a manifest heretic because no process against him had been completed, is contrary to Catholic teaching, Catholic Tradition and Catholic sense.

THE NECESSITY AND OBLIGATION FOR ALL TO JUDGE AND CONDEMN HERESY OR SCHISM

“We have decreed and declared in Our letter of 21 November 1873 that those unfortunate men who belong to, adhere to, and support that sect should be considered as schismatics and separated from communion with the Church.” (Pope Pius IX, *Graves ac diuturnae* (#'s 1-4), March 23, 1875)

Here we clearly see that Pope Pius IX gives every man and woman the authority to condemn and judge people who have separated themselves from the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church. This is a command, and not something which people can choose to do. You must defend the true faith whenever your behavior, silence or omission would imply that you deny the faith or agree with heresy. Every evasion you'll make from denouncing heresy or heretics will torment you for all eternity in the fires of hell, as the Catholic Church have always taught.

Pope St. Felix III (5th Century): "Not to oppose error is to approve it; and not to defend truth is to suppress it, and, indeed, to neglect to confound evil men - when we can do it - is no less a sin than to encourage them."

Here is another quote from the Council of Trent which proves that one can and must decide what is and what is not of the Catholic Faith, by one's own judgment.

Pope Pius IV, *Council of Trent*, Sess. 13, Chap. 4: “These are the matters which in general it seemed well to the sacred Council to teach to the faithful of Christ regarding the sacrament of order. **It has, however, resolved to condemn the contrary in definite and appropriate canons in the following manner, so that all, making use of the rule of faith, with the assistance of Christ, may be able to recognize more easily the Catholic truth in the midst of the darkness of so many errors.**”

This proves that everyone are allowed to decide when someone have fallen in heresy or not, since the canon would never have said: **“so that all, making use of the rule of faith, with the assistance of Christ, may be able to recognize more easily the Catholic truth in the midst of the darkness of so many errors,”** without actually permitting people to judge what is a heresy, or who is a heretic. Without this truth, people are forced to profess communion with everyone: Protestants, Muslims, Devil-worshippers and so on. If you claim that you can judge a devil-worshiper to be outside the Church, then you can also judge someone who professes to be a Catholic, yet who holds to one or more

heresies. But this is common sense, unless one is a liar.

THE NECESSITY TO STUDY AND KNOW THE CATHOLIC FAITH

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa, Prima Secunda Pars, Q. 76, Art. 2*: "Now it is evident that whoever neglects to have or do what he ought to have or do, commits a sin of omission. Wherefore **through negligence, ignorance of what one is bound to know, is a sin; whereas it is not imputed as a sin to man, if he fails to know what he is unable to know. Consequently ignorance of such like things **is called "invincible," because it cannot be overcome by study.** For this reason such like ignorance, not being voluntary, since it is not in our power to be rid of it, is not a sin: Wherefore it is evident that no invincible ignorance is a sin. On the other hand, **vincible ignorance is a sin, if it be about matters one is bound to know; but not, if it be about things one is not bound to know.**"**

Truly, one is bound to know the Catholic Faith well enough to be able to spot heresy when it is presented. So then - in accordance with the Angelic Doctor - if we know that our priest, bishop, etc. is heretical or schismatical, but we adhere to him anyway, then we indeed share in his sin of heresy or schism, whereby we would then be labouring **OUTSIDE** the true religion. Invincible ignorance on the other hand - ignorance that is not able to be overcome by any well ordered human effort - is a different matter, and is totally excusable, unless we are speaking about the essential mysteries (the Trinity and the Incarnation), and the natural law, which must be known explicitly by everyone above the age of reason for salvation. When people break the natural law it's always a sin, and cannot be excused, since this law is written by God on every man's heart. Ignorance of the Trinity and the Incarnation, however, is not a sin in itself, but God withholds this knowledge of the essential mysteries from many people since He foreknew that they would reject His offer of salvation.

Pope St. Pius X, *Acerbo Nimis* (# 2), April 15, 1905: "And so Our Predecessor, Benedict XIV, had just cause to write: '**We declare that a great number of those who are condemned to eternal punishment suffer that everlasting calamity because of ignorance of those mysteries of faith which must be known and believed in order to be numbered among the elect.**'"

BAPTISM; THE STEPS TO CONVERT TO THE TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC FAITH; THE STEPS FOR THOSE LEAVING THE NEW MASS; AND CONDITIONAL BAPTISM

CONTAINED IN THESE PAGES BELOW: *-THE STEPS TO CONVERT TO THE TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC FAITH - THE COUNCIL OF TRENT'S PROFESSION OF FAITH FOR CONVERTS - THE STEPS TO BE TAKEN BY THOSE COMING OUT OF THE NEW MASS - THE FORM OF BAPTISM AND CONDITIONAL BAPTISM WITH EXPLANATION*

The steps one must take to convert to the traditional Catholic Faith are actually simple. They are slightly different, however, depending upon whether one has or has not received baptism. Please consult this file carefully.

If you haven't received baptism, the steps to convert to the Traditional Catholic Faith are as follows:

1) Know and believe the basic catechism (i.e. the basic teachings) of the traditional Catholic Faith. **PLEASE READ THE CATHECHISM NOW** One should also immediately begin to pray the Rosary each day (15 decades preferably). If you don't know how, consult the [How to Pray the Rosary](#) section of our website. Always take time every day to read and study the Faith, and ask God for final perseverance.

2) Hold belief in all the traditional dogmas of the Church and the correct Catholic positions against the post-Vatican II sect (covered in detail in our material), including, for example, the dogma Outside the Church There is No Salvation (without exception), the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Papacy, Papal Infallibility, the necessity of water baptism, etc.

3) After you know the basic catechism (which shouldn't take very long), and are confident that you assent to all the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church, and that you are not living in mortal sin, nor have a will to continue living in mortal or venial sin, receive baptism. There is no reason to delay this (see Acts 8:36-37) if you have completed steps 1 and 2. Normally this would be done by a Catholic priest at your local Catholic Church. Since we are in the Great Apostasy, and there are almost zero fully [Traditional Catholic priests](#) around, a layperson is probably the one who should do it for you. The Council of Florence (see below) declared that anyone can validly administer baptism. Thus, if you have a strong Catholic friend or, in case you don't, if you have a non-Catholic family member or friend who could perform the baptism

reliably with the proper intention, then that person can administer baptism for you using the form given below. Confession is not necessary for a person who has never received baptism, since baptism removes original sin and all actual sins. After baptism, however, one should get into the habit of going to confession to a traditional priest ordained in the traditional rite of ordination at least once a month if that is possible. Sadly, however, today there are virtually not a single non-heretical priest left in the world. One must go to confession if a non-heretical priest is available if he or she commits a mortal sin after baptism, which hopefully will not occur. A good practice is to write down your sins on a piece of paper so that you will have an easier time remembering the sins you have committed. This can also be done by those who have no priest and who confess directly to God, in order to facilitate that your confession to Our Lord will be as exact as possible. One could also make a confession of sins or heresies to any person or friend you feel you trust. This should generally be someone who is able to advise you on spiritual things, and not to any person you know.

Confessing our sins to each other, even though we cannot give absolution, is still a great tool to use in exposing the devil and in overcoming habitual bad habits or sins (reoccurring or habitual bad habits is in most cases what lead people to sin in the first place). The Saints had as a habit to confess their sins daily, and thus we should try to act in this way as much as we are able. For confessing our sins daily, breeds humility.

4) Make the profession of faith for converts from the Council of Trent, which is below. If there is a specific sect to which you belonged, or if you believed in a specific heresy, add at the end that you also reject that heretical sect or heresy. [The Council of Trent's Profession of Faith for Converts](#)

[Please read this section on Catholics who had no access to Catholic priests and avoided non-Catholic priests \(link to section\);](#)

For those who have received baptism, it is slightly different:

1) Know and believe the basic catechism (i.e. the basic teachings) of the traditional Catholic Faith. **PLEASE READ THE CATHECHISM NOW** One should also immediately begin to pray the Rosary each day (15 decades preferably). If you don't know how, consult the [How to Pray the Rosary](#) section of our website. Always take time every day to read and study the Faith, and ask God for final perseverance.

2) Hold belief in all the traditional dogmas of the Church and the correct Catholic positions against the post-Vatican II sect (covered in detail in our

material), including, for example, the dogma Outside the Church There is No Salvation (without exception), the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Papacy, Papal Infallibility, the necessity of water baptism, etc..

3) Make the profession of faith for converts from the Council of Trent, which is below. If there is a specific sect to which you belonged, or if you believed in a specific heresy, add at the end that you also reject that heretical sect or heresy. [The Council of Trent's Profession of Faith for Converts](#)

4) If a non-heretical priest is available to you, you must make a general confession to a priest ordained in the traditional rite of ordination after taking the previous 3 steps. This is a confession in which one mentions all mortal and venial sins committed after baptism that one can remember, including adherence to any sects or false religions or having spread a false sect or false religion. Beware to check carefully beforehand that the priest you approach for the sacraments is not heretical nor in communion with other heretics. Today, in the Great Apostasy, there is almost not a single non-heretical priest left in the world. The only alternative that is left for almost everyone today is to confess their sins to God directly and ask Him with tears or sorrow and true repentance to forgive them their sins. This will forgive your sins if you are sincere, if no other option is available. If you find a non-heretical priest, then as long as the priest says “I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” the confession is valid. A good practice is to write down your sins on a piece of paper so that you will have an easier time remembering the sins you have committed. This can also be done by those who have no priest and who confess directly to God, in order to facilitate that your confession to Our Lord will be as exact as possible. One could also make a confession of sins or heresies to any person or friend you feel you trust. This should generally be someone who is able to advice you on spiritual things, and not to any person you know.

Confessing our sins to each other, even though we cannot give absolution, is still a great tool to use in exposing the devil and in overcoming habitual bad habits or sins (reoccurring or habitual bad habits is in most cases what lead people to sin in the first place). The Saints had as a habit to confess their sins daily, and thus we should try to act in this way as much as we are able. For confessing our sins daily, breeds humility.

[Please read this section on Catholics who had no access to Catholic priests and avoided non-Catholic priests \(link to section\);](#)

For those who aren't sure whether they are baptized, the order is:

1) Know and believe the basic catechism (i.e. the basic teachings) of the traditional Catholic Faith. **PLEASE READ THE CATHECHISM NOW** One should also immediately begin to pray the Rosary each day. If you don't know how, consult the [How to Pray the Rosary](#) section of our website. Always take time every day to read and study the Faith, and ask God for final perseverance.

2) Hold belief in all the traditional dogmas of the Church and the correct Catholic positions against the post-Vatican II sect (covered in detail in our material), including, for example, the dogma Outside the Church There is No Salvation (without exception), the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Papacy, Papal Infallibility, the necessity of water baptism, etc.

3) Make the profession of faith for converts from the Council of Trent, which is below. If there is a specific sect to which you belonged, or if you believed in a specific heresy, add at the end that you also reject that heretical sect or heresy. [The Council of Trent's Profession of Faith for Converts](#)

4) Have someone perform a conditional baptism using the conditional form of baptism given below. If there is any doubt about your baptism, this should be done.

5) After your conditional baptism, make a general confession to a non-heretical priest if one is available, mentioning all mortal and venial sins committed after your first possibly valid baptism that you can remember. A good practice is to write down your sins on a piece of paper so that you will have an easier time remembering the sins you have committed. This can also be done by those who have no priest and who confess directly to God, in order to facilitate that your confession to Our Lord will be as exact as possible. One could also make a confession of sins or heresies to any person or friend you feel you trust. This should generally be someone who is able to advise you on spiritual things, and not to any person you know.

Confessing our sins to each other, even though we cannot give absolution, is still a great tool to use in exposing the devil and in overcoming habitual bad habits or sins (reoccurring or habitual bad habits is in most cases what lead people to sin in the first place). The Saints had as a habit to confess their sins daily, and thus we should try to act in this way as much as we are able. For confessing our sins daily, breeds humility.

People leaving the New Mass or adherence to the Vatican II Counter Church also need to make a confession (to a validly ordained and non-heretical priest, if one is available) that they attended a non-Catholic service and for however

long they attended. If they participated in other things at the New Mass (e.g. were a lay-minister, dressed immodestly, etc.) or accepted false ecumenism or denied some other dogma or if they practiced NFP, these things should also be mentioned in confession. This must be done before receiving Communion at the Traditional Mass (if there is an acceptable one for you to attend in your area). Those leaving the New Mass and adherence to the Vatican II false Church should also make that same profession of faith from the Council of Trent. [The Council of Trent's Profession of Faith for Converts](#)

[Please read this section on Catholics who had no access to Catholic priests and avoided non-Catholic priests \(link to section\):](#)

BAPTISM AND CONDITIONAL BAPTISM

The form of baptism is: "***I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.***" or "***I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.***"

If there is some doubt about the validity of your baptism, the conditional form of baptism is: "*If you are baptized, I do not baptize you again, but if you are not yet baptized [pour water on the head, making sure it touches the skin] I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" Since there are barely any true Catholic priests in the whole country, you can have a Catholic friend perform a conditional baptism, and you can administer baptism to your own children.

Pope Eugene IV, Council of Florence, "*Exultate Deo*," 1439: "**In case of necessity, however, not only a priest or a deacon, but even a layman or woman, yes even a pagan and a heretic can baptize, so long as he preserves the form of the Church and has the intention of doing what the Church does.**" (Denz. 696)

BAPTISMAL VOWS

According to the Roman Ritual, at present in use, three questions are to be addressed to the person to be baptized, as follows: "Dost thou renounce Satan? and all his works? and all his pomps?" To each of these questions the person, or the sponsor in his name, replies: "I do renounce". The practice of demanding and making this formal renunciation seems to go back to the very beginnings of organized Christian worship. Tertullian among the Latins

and St. Basil among the Greeks are at one in reckoning it as a usage which, although not explicitly warranted in the Scriptures, is nevertheless consecrated by a venerable tradition. St. Basil says this tradition ascends from the Apostles. Tertullian, in his "De Coronâ", appears to hint at a twofold renunciation as common in his time, one which was made at the moment of baptism and another made sometime before, and publicly in the church, in the presence of the bishop. The form of this renunciation as found in the Apostolic Constitutions (VIII, 4) reads as follows: "Let therefore the candidate for baptism declare thus in his renunciation: 'I renounce Satan and his works and his pomps and his worship and his angels and his inventions and all things that are under him'. And after his renunciation let him in his consociation say: 'And I associate myself to Christ and believe and am baptized into one unbegotten Being, the only true God Almighty, the Father of Christ, the Creator and Maker of all things, from whom are all things; and into the Lord Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, the Firstborn of the whole creation, who before the ages was begotten by the good pleasure of the Father, by whom all things were made... I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

St. Justin Martyr testifies that baptism was only administered by those who, together with their profession of faith, made a promise or vow that they would live in conformity with the Christian code. Hence the generally employed formula: *syntassomai soi, Christe*, "I surrender myself to thee, O Christ, to be ruled by thy precepts". This took place directly over the apotaxis or renunciation of the devil, and was variously described by the Latins as *promissum*, *pactum*, and *votum*. During this declaration of attachment to Jesus Christ the person to be baptized turned towards the East as towards the region of light.

The practice of renewing the baptismal promises is more or less widespread. This is done under circumstances of special solemnity such as at the closing exercises of a mission, after the administration of First Communion to children, or the conferring of the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is thus intended as a way of reaffirming one's loyalty to the obligations taken over by membership in the Christian Church.

PROFESSION OF CATHOLIC FAITH

Promulgated solemnly by Pope Pius IV and the Council of Trent

● I, N., with firm faith believe and profess each and every article contained in the symbol of faith which the holy Roman Church uses; namely:

● I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in

● one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages; God from God, light from light, true God from true God; begotten not made, of one substance (consubstantial) with the Father, through whom all things were made;

● who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was made incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

● He was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, died, and was buried; and

● He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven;

● He sits at the right hand of the Father, and He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and of His kingdom there will be no end.

● And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who equally with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified; who spoke through the prophets.

● And I believe that there is one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.

● I confess one baptism for the remission of sins; and I hope for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

● I resolutely accept and embrace the apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions and the other practices and regulations of that same Church.

● In like manner I accept Sacred Scripture according to the meaning which has been held by holy Mother Church and which she now holds. It is Her prerogative to pass judgment on the true meaning and interpretation of Sacred Scripture. And I will never accept or interpret it in a manner different from the unanimous agreement of the Fathers.

● I also acknowledge that there are truly and properly seven sacraments of the New Law,

instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord, and that they are necessary for the salvation of the human race, although it is not necessary for each individual to receive them all.

- I acknowledge that the seven sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony; and that they confer grace; and that of the seven, Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders cannot be repeated without committing a sacrilege.
- I also accept and acknowledge the customary and approved rites of the Catholic Church in the solemn administration of these sacraments.
- I embrace and accept each and every article on Original Sin and Justification declared and defined in the most holy Council of Trent.
- I likewise profess that in Mass a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice is offered to God on behalf of the living and the dead, and that the Body and Blood together with the Soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is truly, really, and substantially present in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, and that there is a change of the whole substance of the bread into the Body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood; and this change the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation.
- I also profess that the whole and entire Christ and a true Sacrament is received under each separate species.
- I firmly hold that there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained there are helped by the prayers of the faithful.
- I likewise hold that the saints reigning together with Christ should be honored and invoked, that they offer prayers to God on our behalf, and that their relics should be venerated.
- I firmly assert that images of Christ, of the Mother of God ever Virgin, and of the other saints should be owned and kept, and that due honor and veneration should be given to them.
- I affirm that the power of indulgences was left in the keeping of the Church by Christ, and that the use of indulgences is very beneficial to Christians.
- I acknowledge the holy, Catholic, and apostolic Roman Church as the mother and teacher of all churches; and...

- I unhesitatingly accept and profess all the doctrines (especially those concerning the primacy of the Roman Pontiff and his infallible teaching authority) handed down, defined, and explained by the sacred canons and ecumenical councils and especially those of this most holy Council of Trent (and by the ecumenical Vatican Council I). And at the same time:

- **I condemn, reject, and anathematize everything that is contrary to those propositions, and all heresies without exception that have been condemned, rejected, and anathematized by the Church.**

- I, N., promise, vow, and swear that, with God's help, I shall most constantly hold and profess this true Catholic faith, outside which no one can be saved and which I now freely profess and truly hold. With the help of God, I shall profess it whole and unblemished to my dying breath; and, to the best of my ability, I shall see to it that my subjects or those entrusted to me by virtue of my office hold it, teach it, and preach it. So help me God and His holy Gospel.

We are looking for translators. Please contact us at:

<http://www.prophecyfilm.com/contact/>

WWW.CATHOLIC-SAINTS.NET

Free DVDs and Books