

MEDITATIONS & READINGS

ST. ALPHONSUS

VOLUME II – PART II
EASTER ASCENSION

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Meditations and Readings

FOR:

EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

Selected from the Spiritual Writings of

SAINT ALPHONSUS

*Doctor of the Church and Founder of the Congregation
of the Most Holy Redeemer.*

VOLUME TWO.

PART II.

Edited by

JOHN BAPT. COYLE, C.S.S.R.



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MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

VOLUME II.—PART II.

EASTER :: ASCENSION

LETTER FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LOGUE
TO THE EDITOR.

ARA COELI,
ARMAGH,

16th March, 1924.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

I have put off writing to thank you for your interesting and edifying volume, *Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year*, till I should find time to look through it. I have done so now, and I can congratulate you on undertaking a very useful work; and I hope you will be spared till you complete it.

The Ascetic Works of St. Alphonsus have done wonders in conveying solid instruction, nourishing piety, and exciting fervour among the people in every state and stage of life. They have been an ever enduring source of piety, especially in inspiring love of our Holy Redeemer and tender devotion to His Blessed Mother. It is a question whether his great Theological Works have contributed more to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Hence it was not without regret I noticed that these Spiritual Works were not so common among the people as they were in my early days. They seemed to be giving place to more showy and more superficial modern works which are far from breathing the fervent spirit of the great Doctor and Saint. One of the chief fruits which I expect from the work you have undertaken is the redress of this serious spiritual loss.

You have commenced well, and I trust you will be able to continue till the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus are again as extensively circulated among the people as they were in the past. The scheme you have sketched

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PATRIII MURRAY, C.SS.Red.
Superioris Generalis et Rectoris Majoris.

Romæ,
die 4 Aprilis, 1927.

out for yourself will familiarize the people with the beauty and fervour of St. Alphonsus' Works, and from using your volumes for casual reading they will be likely to drink more deeply of the source of fervour the Saint has opened up to them.

Wishing you every blessing and success in your useful work,

I am,

Dear Father Coyle,

Yours gratefully,

✠ MICHAEL CARDINAL LOGUE.

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL O'DONNELL writes:

It is a pleasure to me to subscribe my name to the beautiful letter written by my lamented predecessor, his Eminence Cardinal Logue, to commend Father Coyle's publications from the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL O'DONNELL,

Archbishop of Armagh.

Armagh, 20th February, 1926.

J.M.S.S.S.

**SANT' ALFONSO — VIA MERULANA,
ROMA,**

28th October, 1923.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

I am very glad to hear that you have the first part of your "Meditations and Readings for every Day of the Year from the Writings of St. Alphonsus" ready for publication, and I wish this and the succeeding Volumes every success. It is difficult to exaggerate the value of these "Meditations and Readings" as is seen from the following statements of two Popes:

His Holiness Pope Pius IX., in speaking of the writings of St. Alphonsus, wrote: "The works of this most holy and learned man, written with extraordinary tender piety and devotion, breathe in every page a great love for Jesus Christ and great confidence in His mercy and merits. They also inspire their readers with the most ardent devotion to the Virgin Mother of God and to the Saints, and they inflame the hearts of men with the desire of receiving the Sacraments, as well as furnish a most abundant supply of excellent admonitions, counsels and directions to those who labour for the salvation of souls."

Pope Benedict XV. also wrote recently, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Doctorate of St. Alphonsus, that the excellence and utility of his teaching are becoming every day more apparent, and that his writings are helpful, not only to Theologians and Professors of the Sacred Sciences, but also to the faithful of every condition of life, to whom he points out the way to solid virtue, and smoothes for them the way to the highest Christian perfection. His Holiness adds that the Saint's one great ambition in all his writings was to make known to all men the infinite amiability of Jesus Christ.

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It is unnecessary for me to add anything to these words of two Popes. I wish only to say that this infinite amiability of Jesus Christ is particularly well shown in the present volume, for, in addition to the Meditations and Readings on the Religious State and on other subjects, there are given about forty Meditations on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, in which are contained some of the most beautiful and devotional pages written by the Saint. Moreover the division of the ascetic writings of the Saint into two Meditations and a Spiritual Reading for every day of the year, and this arranged in such a way as not to interrupt the sequence of any work of the Saint, will please many, both in the Cloister and in the world, who desire to know and follow in their spiritual life the teachings of this great Doctor of the Church and Director of Souls.

In conclusion, in the name of St. Alphonsus, I bless you and these Meditations and Readings with the hope that they may be everywhere known and read and well thought on so that all may know the infinite amiability and mercy of Jesus Christ and the unspeakable amiability and mercy of His Blessed Mother, and that they may thus seek and love and serve Them alone.

Your devoted servant and confrère,
PATRICK MURRAY, C.S.S.R.,
Sup. Gen. and Rector Major.

REV. J. B. COYLE, C.S.S.R.,
 ST. JOSEPH'S,
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Easter Sunday

Morning Meditation.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Let us rejoice at seeing in His risen glory our Saviour, our Father, the best Friend we possess. Let us rejoice, too, for our own sakes, because the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is for us a sure pledge of our own resurrection and of the glory we hope one day to have in Heaven in our soul and body.

I.

Jesus came into the world not only to redeem us, but by His example to teach us all virtues, and especially humility, and holy poverty which is inseparably united with humility. For this it was, He chose to be born in a cave; to live as a poor man in a workshop for thirty years; and at last to die, poor and naked, on a Cross, seeing His garments divided amongst the soldiers before He breathed His last; while, after His death, He receives the winding-sheet for His burial as an alms from others. Let the poor be consoled at seeing Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven and earth, thus living and dying in poverty in order to enrich us with His merits and gifts. *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich he became poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich—(2 Cor. viii. 9).* For this cause the Saints, in order to become like unto Jesus in

His poverty, despised all earthly riches and honours, so that one day they might go to enjoy with Jesus Christ the riches and honours prepared by God in Heaven for them that love Him. And speaking of these blessings the Apostle St. Paul says *that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him*—(1 Cor. ii. 9).

O my Jesus, I beseech Thee by Thy Resurrection, make me rise glorious with Thee on the last day, to be always united with Thee in Heaven, to praise Thee and to love Thee for ever.

II.

Jesus Christ, then, rose from the dead with the glory of possessing all power in Heaven and on earth, not only as God, but as Man. All the angels and all men are therefore subject to Him. Let us rejoice in thus seeing in glory our Saviour, our Father, and the best Friend we possess.

And let us rejoice for ourselves, because the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is for us a sure pledge of our own Resurrection, and of the glory that we may hope one day to have in Heaven in our soul and in our body. This hope gave courage to the Martyrs to suffer with gladness all the evils of life, and the most cruel torments of tyrants. We must rest assured, however, that none will rejoice with Jesus Christ but they who are willing to suffer in this world with Him; nor will he obtain the crown who does not fight as he ought to fight. *He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully.*—(2 Tim. ii. 5). At the same time let us be assured by what the same Apostle says: that all the sufferings of this life are short and light in comparison with the boundless and eternal joys we hope to enjoy in Paradise.—(2 Cor. iv. 17). Let us labour the more to continue in the grace of God, and continually to pray for perseverance in God's friendship. Without continual prayer we shall not obtain perseverance, and without perseverance we shall not be saved.

O sweet Jesus, worthy of all love, how hast Thou so loved men that, in order to show Thy love, Thou hast

not refused to die wounded and dishonoured on an infamous tree! O my God, how is it there are so few among men who love Thee with their whole heart? O my dear Redeemer, I wish to be one of these few. Miserable that I am to have forgotten Thy love in the past, and given up Thy grace for miserable pleasures! I know the evil I have done. I grieve over it with my whole heart and would wish to die of grief. O my beloved Redeemer, I love Thee now more than myself and am ready to die a thousand deaths rather than lose Thy friendship. Jesus, I thank Thee for the light Thou hast given me. O Jesus, my Hope, leave me not in my own hands. Help me until death.

O Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

 Spiritual Reading.

THE HEAVEN GOD HAS WON FOR US.

The bliss of Heaven consists in seeing and loving God face to face. "Everything we expect," says St. Augustine, "is expressed in a word of one syllable, namely, *God*." The reward God promises to us does not consist altogether in the beauty, the harmony, and other advantages of the city of Paradise. God Himself, Whom the Saints are allowed to behold, is, according to the promises made to Abraham, the principal reward of the just in Heaven. *I am thy reward exceeding great.*—(Gen. xv. 1). St. Augustine asserts that were God to show His face to the damned, "hell would be instantly changed into a paradise of delights." And he adds that were a departed soul allowed the choice of seeing God and suffering the pains of hell, or of being freed from these pains and deprived of the sight of God, "it would prefer to see God, and to endure those torments."

The delights of the soul infinitely surpass all the pleasures of the senses. Even in this life, Divine love infuses such sweetness into the soul when God communicates Himself to it that the body is raised from the

earth. St. Peter of Alcantara once fell into such an ecstasy of love that, taking hold of a tree, he drew it up from the roots, and raised it with him on high. So great is the sweetness of Divine love, that the holy Martyrs, in the midst of their torments, felt no pain, but were on the contrary filled with joy. Hence St. Augustine says that when St. Laurence was laid on a red-hot gridiron, the fervour of Divine love made him insensible to the burning heat of the fire. Even on sinners who weep for their sins, God bestows consolations which exceed all earthly pleasures. Hence St. Bernard says : " If it be so sweet to weep for Thee, what must it be to rejoice in Thee ! "

How great is the sweetness which a soul experiences when, in the time of prayer, God, by a ray of His own light, reveals to it His goodness and His mercies towards it, and particularly the love Jesus Christ has borne to it in His Passion ! It feels its heart melting and, as it were, dissolved through love. But in this life we do not see God as He really is : we see Him, as it were, in the dark. *We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face.*—(1 Cor. xiii. 12). Here below God is hidden from our view ; we can see Him only with the eyes of Faith. How great shall be our happiness when the veil is raised, and we are permitted to behold God face to face ! We shall then see His beauty, His greatness, His perfection, His amiableness, and His immense love for our souls.

Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.—(Eccles. ix. 1). The fear of not loving God, and of not being loved by Him, is the greatest affliction which souls that love God endure on the earth ; but in Heaven the soul is certain that it loves God and that He loves it ; and sees that the Lord embraces it with infinite love, and that this love shall not be dissolved for all eternity. The knowledge of the love Jesus Christ has shown it in offering Himself in sacrifice for it on the Cross, and in making Himself its Food in the Sacrament of the Altar, shall increase the ardour of its love. It shall also see clearly all the graces God has bestowed upon it, all the helps which He has given it, to preserve it from falling into sin, and to draw it to His love.

It shall see that all the tribulations, the poverty, the infirmities and persecutions which it regards as misfortunes, have all proceeded from love, and have been the means employed by Divine Providence to bring it to glory. It shall see all the lights, loving calls, and mercies which God had granted to it after it had insulted Him by its sins. From the blessed mountain of Paradise it shall see so many souls damned for fewer sins than it had committed, and shall see that it is saved and secured against the possibility of ever losing God.

Justly, then, has St. Augustine said that to gain the eternal bliss and peace of Paradise, we should embrace eternal labour.

Evening Meditation.

“ YOUR SORROW SHALL BE TURNED INTO JOY.”

I.

Oh, happy are we, if we suffer with patience on earth the troubles of this present life ! Distress of circumstances, fears, bodily infirmities, persecutions, and crosses of every kind, will one day all come to an end ; and if we be saved, they will all become for us subjects of joy and glory in Paradise : *Your sorrow, says the Saviour to encourage us, shall be turned into joy.*—(John xvi. 20). So great are the delights of Paradise that they can neither be explained nor understood by us mortals : *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.*—(1 Cor. ii. 9). Beauties like to the beauties of Paradise, eye hath never seen ; harmonies like unto the harmonies of Paradise, ear hath never heard ; nor hath ever human heart gained the comprehension of the joys God hath prepared for those that love Him. Beautiful is the sight of a landscape adorned with hills, plains, woods, and views of the sea. Beautiful is the sight of a garden abounding with fruits, flowers, and fountains. Oh, how much more beautiful is Paradise !

To understand how great the joys of Paradise are, it is

enough to know that in that blessed realm resides a God omnipotent, Whose care it is to render happy His beloved souls. St. Bernard says that Paradise is a place where "there is nothing thou wouldst not, and everything thou wouldst." There thou shalt not find any thing displeasing to thyself, and every thing thou dost desire thou shalt find: "There is nothing thou wouldst not." In Paradise there is no night; no seasons of winter and summer; but one perpetual day of unvaried serenity, and one perpetual spring of unvaried delight. No more persecutions or jealousies are there; for there all sincerely love one another, and each rejoices in each other's good as if it were his own. No more bodily infirmities or pains are there, for the body is no longer subject to suffering; no poverty is there, for every one is rich to the full, not having anything more to desire; no more fears are there, for the soul being confirmed in grace can sin no more, nor lose that supreme good which it possesses.

II.

"There is everything thou wouldst." In Paradise thou shalt have whatsoever thou desirest. There the sight is satisfied in beholding that city so beautiful, and its citizens all clothed in royal apparel, for they are all kings of that everlasting kingdom. There shall we see the beauty of Mary, whose appearance will be more beautiful than that of all the Angels and Saints together. We shall see the beauty of Jesus, which will immeasurably surpass the beauty of Mary. The smell will be satisfied with the perfumes of Paradise. The hearing will be satisfied with the harmonies of Heaven, and the canticles of the Blessed, who will all with ravishing sweetness sing the Divine praises for all eternity. Ah, my God, I deserve not Paradise, but hell; yet Thy death gives me a hope of obtaining it. I desire and ask Paradise of Thee, not so much in order to enjoy as in order to love Thee for ever, secure that it will never more be possible for me to lose Thee. O Mary, my Mother, O Star of the Sea, it is for thee, by thy prayers, to conduct me to Paradise.

Monday—Easter Week

Morning Meditation.

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN DYING FOR US.

Jesus died for us that by His love for us He might gain the entire dominion of our hearts. *For to this end,* wrote St. Paul, *Christ died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.*—(Rom. xiv. 9). Contemplating the death of Jesus Christ, and the love with which He died for men, the Saints esteemed it little to forfeit for His sake, property, honours, and life itself.

I.

Who could have conceived that the Son of God, the Lord of the Universe, to show His love for us, would suffer and die upon the Cross, if He had not really done so? With reason did Moses and Elias on Mount Tabor speak of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as of an *excess*.—(Luke ix. 31). And what could be greater excess of love than for the Creator to die for His creatures?

To make Thee an adequate return for Thy love, my dear Redeemer, it would be necessary for another God to die for Thee. It would therefore be but little, it would be nothing, were we poor miserable worms of the earth to give up our whole lives for Thee, Who hast given Thine for us.

What should still more excite us to love Him is the ardent desire with which, through the course of His life, He longed for the hour of His death. By this desire He indeed proved how great His love was for us. *I have a baptism, He said, wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.*—(Luke xii. 50). I must be baptized with the Baptism of My own

Blood, to wash away the sins of men, and how am I dying with the desire of My bitter Passion and Death! My soul, lift up your eyes, and behold your Lord hanging upon a disgraceful Cross; behold the Blood which trickles down from His Wounds. Behold His mangled body, all inviting you to love Him. Your Redeemer in His sufferings would have you love Him at least through compassion.

O Jesus, Thou didst not refuse me Thy life and precious Blood, and shall I refuse Thee anything that Thou requirest of me? No, Thou hast given Thyself to me without reserve. I will give myself to Thee without reserve.

II.

St. Francis de Sales, speaking of these words of the Apostle, *The charity of Christ presseth us*—(2 Cor. v. 14), says: “Knowing that Jesus Christ, being true God, has loved us even to the laying-down of His life for us, and this upon a Cross, do we not feel our hearts as it were in a press, forcibly straitened, and love pressed from them by a violence which is the more powerful as it is the more amiable?” And he adds: “Why, therefore, do we not cast ourselves upon Jesus Christ crucified, to die on the Cross for the love of Him Who has willingly died upon the Cross for the love of us? I will cling to Him, should we say, and will never abandon Him; I will die with Him, and be consumed in the fire of His love. My Jesus has given Himself entirely to me, and I will give myself entirely to Him. I will live and die upon His bosom; neither life nor death shall ever separate me from Him. O Eternal Love, my soul seeks Thee and espouses Thee forever!”

Spiritual Reading.

THE HAPPY LIFE OF THOSE WHO LOVE GOD.

Justice and peace have kissed—(Ps. lxxxiv. 11).
Peace resides in every soul in which justice dwells.

Hence David said: *Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.*—(Ps. xxxvi. 4). To understand these words we must consider that worldlings seek to satisfy the desires of their hearts with the goods of this earth; but, because these cannot make them happy, their hearts continually make fresh demands; and how much soever they may acquire of these goods, they are not content. Hence the Prophet says: *Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.* Give up creatures, seek your delight in God, and He will satisfy all the cravings of your heart.

This is what happened to St. Augustine, who, as long as he sought happiness in creatures, never enjoyed peace; but, as soon as he renounced them and gave to God all the affections of his heart, he exclaimed: “All things are hard, O Lord, and Thou alone art repose.” As if he had said: Ah, Lord! I now know my folly. I expected to find felicity in earthly pleasures; but now I know that they are only vanity and affliction of spirit, and that Thou alone art the peace and joy of our hearts.

The Apostle says that the peace which God gives to those who love Him surpasses all the sensual delights a man can enjoy on this earth. *The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding.*—(Phil. iv. 7). St. Francis of Assisi, in saying “My God and my All!” experienced on this earth an anticipation of Paradise. St. Francis Xavier, in the midst of his labours in India for the glory of Jesus Christ, was so replenished with Divine consolations, that he would exclaim: “Enough, O Lord! Enough!” Where, I ask, has any lover of this world been found, so satisfied with the possession of worldly goods as to say: Enough, O world, enough; no more riches, no more honours, no more applause, no more pleasures? Ah, no! worldlings are constantly seeking after higher honours, greater riches, and new delights; but the more they have of them, the less are their desires satisfied, and the greater their disquietude.

It is necessary to persuade ourselves of this truth, that God alone can give content. Worldlings do not wish to be convinced of it, through an apprehension that, if they give themselves to God, they will lead a

life of bitterness and discontent. But with the Royal Prophet, I say to them : *O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet.*—(Ps. xxxiii. 9). Why, O sinners, will you despise and regard as miserable that life which you have not as yet tried? *O taste and see.* Begin to make a trial of it; hear Mass every day; practise Mental Prayer and the Visit to the Most Holy Sacrament; go to Communion at least once a week; fly from evil conversations; walk always with God; and you shall see that, by such a life, you will enjoy that sweetness and peace which the world, with all its delights, has not hitherto been able to give you.

Evening Meditation.

THOU SHALT BE CROWNED.

I.

Let us imagine to ourselves a soul which, on departing out of this world, enters into eternity in the grace of God. All full of humility and of confidence, it presents itself before Jesus, its Judge and Saviour. Jesus embraces it, gives it His benediction, and causes it to hear these words of sweetness : *Come, my spouse, come!* Purified, He sends it to Purgatory, and, all resigned, it embraces the chastisement, because itself wishes not to enter into Heaven, that land of purity, if it is not wholly purified. The Guardian Angel comes to conduct it to Purgatory; it first returns him thanks for the assistance he has rendered it in its lifetime, and then obediently follows him. Ah, my God, when will that day arrive on which I shall see myself out of this world of perils, secure of never being able to lose Thee any more? Yes, willingly will I go to the Purgatory which shall be mine; joyfully will I embrace all its pains; sufficient will it be for me in that fire to love Thee with all my heart, since there I shall love none else but Thee.

II.

The purgation over, the Angel will return and say to the soul : Come, beautiful soul, the punishment is over; come, and enjoy the Presence of thy God Who is awaiting thee in Paradise. Behold, the soul now passes beyond the clouds, passes beyond the spheres and the stars, and enters into Heaven. O God, what will it say on entering into that beautiful country, and casting its first glance on that city of delights? The Angels and Saints, and especially its own holy advocates, will go to meet it, and with jubilation will they welcome it, saying, Welcome, O companion of our own! Welcome! Ah, my Jesus, do Thou make me worthy of it.

What consolation will the soul not feel in there meeting with relations and friends of its own who have previously entered into Heaven! But greater by far will be its joy in beholding Mary its Queen, and in kissing her feet, and thanking her for the many kindnesses she has done it. The Queen will embrace it, and will herself present it unto Jesus, Who will receive it as a spouse. And Jesus will then present it to His Divine Father, Who will embrace and bless it, saying : *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* And thus will He beatify it with the same beatitude He Himself enjoys. Ah, my God, make me love Thee exceedingly in this life, that I may love Thee exceedingly in eternity. Thou art the object most worthy of being loved; Thou dost deserve all my love; I will love none but Thee. Do Thou help me by Thy grace. And, Mary, my Mother, be thou my protectress.

Tuesday—Easter Week

Morning Meditation.

“YOU ARE BOUGHT WITH A GREAT PRICE.”

We ought to set a higher value on the soul than on all the goods of the earth. To be convinced of this truth

it is enough to know that God Himself condemned His Divine Son to death in order to save our souls. And the Eternal Word has not refused to purchase them with His own Blood. *For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son . . . that the world may be saved by him.*—(John iii. 16, 17).

I.

The business of eternal salvation is for us the most important of all affairs; but it is also the most neglected by Christians. They are diligent, and lose no time in seeking to gain a lawsuit, or a situation of emolument. How many measures are taken to attain these objects! How many means adopted! They neither eat nor sleep. And what efforts do they make to secure their eternal salvation? How do they live? To save their souls the greater number of Christians do nothing; on the contrary, they do everything to bring their souls to perdition; they live as if *Death, Judgment, Hell, Heaven, and Eternity* were not Truths of Faith, but fables invented by the poets. If a person lose a lawsuit, or a harvest crop, how great is his pain and distress of mind! With what zeal does he labour to repair the loss! If worldlings lose a horse, or a dog, with what diligence do they seek after it? But if they lose the grace of God, they sleep, and jest, and laugh. All blush at being told that they neglect their worldly affairs, but how few are ashamed to neglect the business of eternity, which is the most important of all. The worldling says that the Saints were truly wise, because they sought only the salvation of their souls; and still he himself attends to all worldly business, and utterly neglects the concerns of the soul. *But we entreat you, brethren, says St. Paul, that you do your own business.*—(1 Thess. iv. 10, 11).

Ah, my God, how have I spent so many years, which Thou hast given me in order to secure my eternal salvation? Thou, my Redeemer, hast purchased my soul with Thy Blood, and hast consigned it to me that I may attend to its salvation; and I have laboured only for its perdition by offending Thee Who hast loved me so tenderly. I thank Thee for giving me time to be able to

repair the great loss I have suffered. I have lost my soul and Thy grace. Lord, I am sorry with my whole heart for my past offences, and I resolve, henceforth, to lose everything, even my life, rather than forfeit Thy friendship.

II.

Salvation is the most *important* affair, because if the soul be lost, all is lost. We ought to set a higher value on the soul than on all the goods of the earth. "The soul," says St. Chrysostom, "is more precious than the whole world." To be convinced of this truth it is enough to know that God Himself condemned His Son to death in order to save our souls. The Eternal Word has not refused to purchase them with His own Blood. Hence a holy Father says that man appears to be of as much value as God. And Jesus Christ has asked: *What exchange shall a man give for his soul?*—(Matt. xvi. 26). *For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son.*—(John iii. 16). If, then, such is the value of the soul, for what earthly good shall a man exchange and lose it?

St. Philip Neri with reason could say that he who does not attend to the salvation of his soul is a fool. Were there on this earth two classes of men, one mortal and the other immortal, and were the former to see the latter seeking after the things of this world, its honours, goods, and amusements, they should certainly exclaim: O fools that you are! You have it in your power to acquire eternal riches, and do you fix your thoughts on those miserable and transitory things? Will you, for these, condemn yourselves to an eternity of torments in the next life? Leave us, for whom all shall end at death, leave us to seek after these earthly goods! But no; we are all immortal. How then does it happen that so many lose their souls for the miserable pleasures of this life? How does it come to pass, says Salvian, that Christians believe in Judgment, Hell, and Eternity, and still live as if they feared them not?

I love Thee above all things, and I resolve always to love Thee, my Sovereign Good, Who art worthy of infinite love. Assist me, my Jesus, that this purpose

may not be like my past resolutions to which I have been always unfaithful. Take me out of life rather than suffer me ever again to offend Thee, or ever to cease to love Thee. O Mary, my hope after Jesus, save me by obtaining for me holy perseverance.

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSIO.

I.—IMPORTANCE OF FREQUENT CONFESSIO.

I do not intend to treat in this place of the Confessions of those who commit mortal sins, although I shall say something on proximate occasions and on sacrilegious Confessions; but I will principally speak of the Confessions of timorous souls that love perfection and endeavour constantly to purify their souls more and more from the stain of venial sins.

Cesarius relates that a good priest commanded, in the Name of God, a devil who appeared to him, to tell what was most hurtful to him. The demon answered that nothing was more injurious or displeasing to him than frequent Confession. Jesus Christ once said to St. Bridget, that they who wish to preserve fervour should often purify their souls by accusing themselves in Confession of all their defects, and all their negligence in His service. Cassian says that he who aspires to perfection should aim at great purity of conscience; because from purity of conscience the soul passes to perfect love. Hence love corresponds to cleanness of heart. It is, however, necessary to know that in the present state this purity of soul does not consist in a total exemption from all faults; for except our Divine Saviour and His Divine Mother, there neither has been nor will be in this world, any soul free from all stain. *In many things we all offend.*—(James iii. 2). But it consists in two things: first, in a careful guard over the heart, to prevent the commission of every deliberate sin, however venial; and

secondly, in instantly purifying the soul from any fault that it may commit. Now these two are precisely the fruits of frequent Confession.

In the first place, Confession cleanses the soul from the stains it contracts. St. John Climacus relates that a young man, in order to discontinue the scandalous life that he led in the world, went to a Monastery in order to become a Religious. Before his admission the Abbot told him that if he wished to be received, he must make a public confession of all his sins. The young man, who was sincerely resolved to give himself to God, readily obeyed; and behold, while he confessed his faults in the presence of the monks, a holy Religious who was among them saw a man of venerable aspect cancel from a written paper that he held in his hand, every sin the penitent confessed, so that at the end of the Confession all his sins were cancelled. Now, what then took place in a visible manner, happens invisibly to every one that confesses his sins with the requisite dispositions.

Confession not only washes away the stains of the soul, but it also gives it strength against relapse. The angelic Doctor teaches that the virtue of Penance not only destroys the fault that has been committed, but also prevents it from budding forth again. In his Life of St. Malachy, St. Bernard relates that there was a certain woman who was so much given to impatience and to anger that she became insupportable. Hearing from her that she had never confessed her impatience, St. Malachy induced her to make a Confession of all her sins of anger. St. Bernard states that after her Confession she became so meek and patient that she appeared incapable of resenting any injury or insult that she received.

Hence, to acquire purity of conscience, many Saints confessed their sins every day. Such was the practice of St. Catharine of Sienna, of St. Bridget, of Blessed Colletta, of St. Charles Borromeo, of St. Ignatius of Loyola, and of many others. St. Francis Borgia went to Confession even twice a day. If worldlings cannot bear to appear before those whom they love with a stain on the countenance, what wonder is it that souls that love God should endeavour always to purify themselves more and more, in order to render themselves more pleasing

