
Works



Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity

WORKS

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I. HEAVEN IN FAITH

First Day

First Prayer

1. “Father, I will that where I am they also whom You have given Me may be with Me, in order that they may behold My glory which You have given Me, because You have loved Me before the creation of the world.” (Jn 17:24) Such is Christ’s last wish, His supreme prayer before returning to His Father. He wills that where He is we should be also, not only for eternity, but already in time, which is eternity begun and still in progress. It is important then to know where we must live with Him in order to realize His divine dream. “The place where the Son of God is hidden is the bosom of the Father, or the divine Essence, invisible to every mortal eye, unattainable by every human intellect” (Saint John of the Cross), as Isaiah said: “Truly You are a hidden God.” (Is 45:15) And yet His will is that we should be established in Him, that we should live where He lives, in the unity of love; that we should be, so to speak, His own shadow.

2. By baptism, says St. Paul, we have been united to Jesus Christ (cf. Rm 6:4-5). And again: “God seated us together in Heaven in Christ Jesus, that He might show in the ages to come the riches of His grace.” (Ep 2:6-7) And further on: “You are no longer guests or strangers, but you belong to the City of saints and the House of God.” (Ep 2:19) The Trinity—this is our dwelling, our “home,” the Father’s house that we must never leave. The Master said one day: “The slave does not remain with the household forever, but the son remains there forever.” (Jn 8:35)

Second prayer

3. “Remain in Me.” (Jn 15:4) It is the Word of God who gives this order, expresses this wish. Remain in Me, not for a few moments, a few hours which must pass away, but “remain . . .” permanently, habitually, Remain in Me, pray in Me, adore in Me, love in Me, suffer in Me, work and act in Me. Remain in Me so that you may be able to encounter anyone or anything; penetrate further still into these depths. This is truly the “solitude into which God wants to allure the soul that He may speak to it,” as the prophet sang (Hs 2:14).

4. In order to understand this very mysterious saying, we must not, so to speak, stop at the surface, but enter ever deeper into the divine Being through recollection. “I pursue my course” (Ph 3:12), exclaimed St. Paul; so must we descend daily this pathway of the Abyss which is God; let us slide down this slope in wholly loving confidence. “Abyss calls to abyss.” (Ps 41:8) It is there in the very depths that the divine impact takes place, where the abyss of our nothingness encounters the Abyss of mercy, the immensity of the all of God. There we will find the strength to die to ourselves and, losing all vestige of self, we will be changed into love. “Blessed are those who die in the Lord!” (Ap 14:13)

Second Day

First prayer

5. “The kingdom of God is within you.” (Lk 17:21) A while ago God invited us to “remain in Him,” (Ep 1:18) to live spiritually in His glorious heritage, and now He reveals to us that we do not have to go out of ourselves to find Him: “The kingdom of God is within!”... St. John of the Cross says that “it is in the substance of the soul where neither the devil nor the world can reach” that God gives Himself to it; then “all its movements are divine, and although they are from God they also belong to the soul, because God works them in it and with it.”

6. The same saint also says that “God is the center of the soul. So when the soul with all” its “strength will know God perfectly, love and enjoy Him fully, then it will have reached the deepest center that can be attained in Him.” Before attaining this, the soul is already “in God who is its center,” “but it is not yet in its deepest center, for it can still go further.

Since love is what unites us to God, the more intense this love is, the more deeply the soul enters into God and the more it is centered in Him.” When it “possesses even one degree of love it is already in its center”; but when this love has attained its perfection, the soul will have penetrated into its deepest center. There it will be transformed to the point of becoming very like God.” To this soul living within can be addressed the words of Père Lacordaire to St. Mary Magdalene: “No longer ask for the Master among those on earth or in Heaven, for He is your soul and your soul is He.”

Second prayer

7. "Hurry and come down, for I must stay in your house today." (Lk 19:5) The Master unceasingly repeats this word to our soul which He once addressed to Zacchaeus. "Hurry and come down." But what is this descent that He demands of us except an entering more deeply into our interior abyss? This act is not "an external separation from external things," but a "solitude of spirit," a detachment from all that is not God.

8. "As long as our will has fancies that are foreign to divine union, whims that are now yes, now no, we are like children; we do not advance with giant steps in love for fire has not yet burnt up all the alloy; the gold is not pure; we are still seeking ourselves; God has not consumed" all our hostility to Him. But when the boiling cauldron has consumed "every imperfect love, every imperfect sorrow, every imperfect fear," "then love is perfect and the golden ring of our alliance is larger than Heaven and earth. This is the secret cellar in which love places his elect," this "love leads us by ways and paths known to him alone; and he leads us with no turning back, for we will not retrace our steps." (Ruysbroeck)

Third Day

First prayer

9. "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home in him." (Jn 14:23) The Master once more expresses His desire to dwell in us. "If anyone loves Me"! It is love that attracts, that draws God to His creatures: not a sensible love but that love "strong as death that deep waters cannot quench." (Ct 8:6-7)

10. "Because I love My Father, I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." (Jn 14:31 and 8:29) Thus spoke our holy Master, and every soul who wants to live close to Him must also live this maxim. The divine good pleasure must be its food, its daily bread; it must let itself be immolated by all the Father's wishes in the likeness of His adored Christ. Each incident, each event, each suffering, as well as each joy, is a sacrament which gives God to it; so it no longer makes a distinction between these things; it surmounts them, goes beyond them to rest in its Master, above all things. It "exalts" Him high on the "mountain of its heart," yes, "higher than His gifts, His consolation, higher than the sweetness that descends from Him." (Ruysbroeck) "The property of love is never to seek self, to keep back nothing, but to give everything to the one it loves." (Saint John of the Cross) "Blessed the soul that loves" in truth; "the Lord has become its captive through love!" (Saint John of the Cross)

Second prayer

11. “You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Col 3:3) St. Paul comes to bring us a light to guide us on the pathway of the abyss. “You have died!” What does that mean but that the soul that aspires to live close to God “in the invincible fortress of holy recollection” (Saint John of the Cross) must be “set apart, stripped, and withdrawn from all things” (Saint John of the Cross) (*in spirit*). This soul “finds within itself a simple ascending movement of love to God, whatever creatures may do; it is invincible to things which” pass away, “for it transcends them, seeking God alone.” (Ruysbroeck)

12. “Quotidie morior.” (I Cor 15:31) “I die daily.” I decrease, I renounce self more each day so that Christ may increase in me and be exalted; I “remain” very little “in the depths of my poverty.” I see “my nothingness, my misery, my weakness; I perceive that I am incapable of progress, of perseverance; I see the multitude of my shortcomings, my defects; I appear in my indigence.” “I fall down in my misery, confessing my distress, and I display it before the mercy” (Ruysbroeck) of my Master. “Quotidie morior.” I place the joy of my soul (as to the will, not sensible feelings) in everything that can immolate, destroy, or humble me, for I want to make room for my Master. I live no longer I, but He lives in me: I no longer want “to live my own life, but to be transformed in Jesus Christ so that my life may be more divine than human,” (Saint John of the Cross) so that the Father in bending attentively over me can recognize the image of His beloved Son in whom He has placed all His delight.

Fourth Day

First prayer

13. “Deus ignis consumens.” (Heb 12:29) Our God, wrote St. Paul, is a consuming Fire, that is “a fire of love” which destroys, which “transforms into itself everything that it touches.” (Saint John of the Cross) “The delights of the divine enkindling are renewed in our depths by an unremitting activity: the enkindling of love in a mutual and eternal satisfaction. It is a renewal that takes place at every moment in the bond of love.” (Ruysbroeck) Certain souls “have chosen this refuge to rest there eternally, and this is the silence in which, somehow, they have lost themselves.” “Freed from their prison, they sail on the Ocean of Divinity without any creature being an obstacle or hindrance to them.” (Ruysbroeck)

14. For these souls, the mystical death of which St. Paul spoke yesterday becomes so simple and sweet! They think much less of the work of destruction and detachment that remains for them to do than of plunging into the Furnace of love burning within them which is none other than the Holy Spirit, the same Love which in the Trinity is the bond between the Father and His Word. They “enter into Him by living faith, and there, in simplicity and peace” they are “carried away by Him” beyond all things, beyond sensible pleasures, “into the sacred darkness” and are “transformed into the divine image.” (Ruysbroeck) They live, in St. John’s expression, in “communion” (Jn

1:3) with the Three adorable Persons, “sharing” their life, and this is “the contemplative life”; this contemplation “leads to possession.” (Ruysbroeck) “Now this simple possession is eternal life savored in the unfathomable abode. It is there, beyond reason, that the profound tranquillity of the divine immutability awaits us.” (Ruysbroeck)

Second prayer

15. “I have come to cast fire upon the earth and how I long to see it burn.” (Lk 12:49) It is the Master Himself who expresses His desire to see the fire of love enkindled. In fact, “all our works and all our labors are nothing in His sight. We can neither give Him anything nor satisfy His only desire, which is to exalt the dignity of our soul.” Nothing pleases Him so much as to see it “grow.” “Now nothing can exalt it so much as to become in some way the equal of God; that is why He demands from the soul the tribute of its love, as the property of love is to make the lover equal to the beloved as much as possible. The soul in possession of this love” “appears on an equal footing with Christ because their mutual affection renders everything common to both.” (Saint John of the Cross) “I have called you My friends because all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (Jn 15:15)

16. But to attain to this love the soul must first be “entirely surrendered,” (Saint John of the Cross) its “will must be calmly lost in God’s will” (Saint John of the Cross) so that its “inclinations,” “its faculties” “move only in this love and for the sake of this love. I do everything with love, I suffer everything with love: this is what David meant when he sang, ‘I will keep all my strength for You.’” (Ps 58:10) Then “love fills it so completely, absorbs it and protects it” so well “that everywhere it finds the secret of growing in love,” “even in its relations with the world”; (Saint John of the Cross) in the midst of life’s cares it can rightly say: “My only occupation is loving!” (Saint John of the Cross)

Fifth Day

First prayer

17. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man listens to My voice and opens the door to Me, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me.” (Ap 3:20) Blessed the ears of the soul alert enough, recollected enough to hear this voice of the Word of God; blessed also the eyes of this soul which in the light of a deep and living faith can witness the “coming” of the Master into His intimate sanctuary. But what then is this coming? “It is an unceasing generation, an enduring hymn of praise.” Christ “comes with His treasures, but such is the mystery of the divine swiftness that He is continually coming, always for the first time as if He had never come; for His coming, independent of time, consists in an eternal “now,” and an eternal desire

eternally renews the joys of the coming. The delights that He brings are infinite, since they are Himself.” “The capacity of the soul, enlarged by the coming of the Master, seems to go out of itself in order to pass through the walls into the immensity of Him who comes; and a phenomenon occurs: God, who is in our depths, receives God coming to us, and God contemplates God! God in whom beatitude consists.” (Ruysbroeck)

Second prayer

18. “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood, remains in Me and I in him.” (Jn 6:56) “The first sign of love is this: that Jesus has given us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink.” “The property of love is to be always giving and always receiving. Now the love” of Christ is “generous. All that He has, all that He is, He gives; all that we have, all that we are, He takes away. He asks for more than we of ourselves are capable of giving. He has an immense hunger which wants to devour us absolutely. He enters even into the marrow of our bones, and the more lovingly we allow Him to do so, the more fully we savor Him.” “He knows that we are poor, but He pays no heed to it and does not spare us. He Himself becomes in us His own bread, first burning up, in His love, all our vices, faults, and sins. Then when He sees that we are pure, He comes like a gaping vulture that is going to devour everything. He wants to consume our life in order to change it into His own; ours, full of vices, His, full of grace and glory and all prepared for us, if only we will renounce ourselves. Even if our eyes were good enough to see this avid appetite of Christ who hungers for our salvation, all our efforts would not prevent us from disappearing into His open mouth.” Now “this sounds absurd, but those who love will understand!” When we receive Christ “with interior devotion, His blood, full of warmth and glory, flows into our veins and a fire is enkindled in our depths.” “We receive the likeness of His virtues, and He lives in us and we in Him. He gives us His soul with the fullness of grace, by which the soul perseveres in love and praise of the Father!” “Love draws its object into itself; we draw Jesus into ourselves; Jesus draws us into Himself. Then carried above ourselves into love’s interior,” seeking God, “we go to meet Him, to meet His Spirit, which is His love, and this love burns us, consumes us, and draws us into unity where beatitude awaits us.” “Jesus meant this when He said: ‘With great desire have I desired to eat this pascha with you.’” (Ruysbroeck)

Sixth Day

First prayer

19. “To approach God we must believe.” (Heb 11:6) Thus speaks St. Paul. He also says, “Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb 11:1) That is “faith makes so present and so

certain future goods, that by it, they take on existence in our soul and subsist there before we have fruition of them.” St. John of the Cross says that it serves as “feet” to go “to God,” and that it is “possession in an obscure manner.” “It alone can give us true light” concerning Him whom we love, and our soul must “choose it as the means to reach blessed union.” (Saint John of the Cross) “It pours out in torrents in the depths of our being all spiritual goods. Christ, speaking to the Samaritan woman, indicated faith when He promised to all those who would believe in Him that He would give them ‘a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting.’” (Saint John of the Cross) “Thus even in this life faith gives us God, covered, it is true, with a veil but nonetheless God Himself.” (Saint John of the Cross) “When that which is perfect comes,” that is, clear vision, then “that which is imperfect,” in other words, knowledge given through faith, “will receive all its perfection.” (Saint John of the Cross)

20. “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us.” (1 Jn 4:16) That is our great act of faith, the way to repay our God love for love; it is “the mystery hidden” (Col 1:26) in the Father’s heart, of which St. Paul speaks, which, at last, we penetrate and our whole soul thrills! When it can believe in this “exceeding love” (Ep 2:4) which envelops it, we may say of it as was said of Moses, “He was unshakable in faith as if he had seen the Invisible.” (Heb 11:27) It no longer rests in inclinations or feelings; it matters little to the soul whether it feels God or not, whether He sends it joy or suffering: it believes in His love. The more it is tried, the more its faith increases because it passes over all obstacles, as it were, to go rest in the heart of infinite Love who can perform only works of love. So also to this soul wholly awakened in its faith the Master’s voice can say in intimate secrecy the words He once addressed to Mary Magdalene: “Go in peace, your faith has saved you.” (Lk 7:50)

Second prayer

21. “If your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light.” (Mt 6:22) What is this single eye of which the Master speaks but this “simplicity of intention” which “gathers into unity all the scattered forces of the soul and unites the spirit itself to God. It is simplicity which gives God honor and praise; it is simplicity which presents and offers the virtues to Him. Then, penetrating and permeating itself, permeating and penetrating all creatures, it finds God in its depths. It is the principle and end of virtues, their splendor and their glory. I call simplicity of intention that which seeks only God and refers all things to Him.” “This is what places man in the presence of God; it is simplicity that gives him light and courage; it is simplicity that empties and frees the soul from all fear today and on the day of judgement.” “It is the interior slope” and “the fountain of the whole spiritual life.” “It crushes evil nature under foot, it gives peace, it imposes silence on the useless noises within us.” It is simplicity that “hourly increases our divine likeness. And then, without the aid of intermediaries, it is simplicity again that will transport us into the depths where God dwells and will give us the repose of the abyss. The inheritance which eternity has prepared for us will be given us by simplicity. All the life of the spirits, all their virtue, consists—with the divine likeness—in

simplicity, and their final rest is spent on the heights in simplicity also.” “And according to the measure of its love, each spirit possesses a more or less profound search for God in its own depths.” The simple soul, “rising by virtue of its interior gaze, enters into itself and contemplates in its own abyss the sanctuary where it is touched” by the touch of the Holy Trinity. Thus it has penetrated into its depths “to the very foundation which is the gate of life eternal.” (Ruysbroeck)

Seventh Day

First prayer

22. “God chose us in Him before creation, that we should be holy and immaculate in His presence, in love.” (Ep 1:4) “The Holy Trinity created us in its image, according to the eternal design that it possessed in its bosom before the world was created,” (Ruysbroeck) in this “beginning without beginning” of which Bossuet speaks following St. John: “In principio erat Verbum.” Jn 1:1) In the beginning was the Word; and we could add: in the beginning was nothing, for God in His eternal solitude already carried us in His thought. “The Father contemplates Himself” “in the abyss of His fecundity, and by the very act of comprehending Himself He engendered another person, the Son, His eternal Word. The archetype of all creatures who had not yet issued out of the void eternally dwelt in Him, and God saw them and contemplated them in their type in Himself. This eternal life which our archetypes possessed without us in God, is the cause of our creation.”

23. “Our created essence asks to be rejoined with its principle.” (Ruysbroeck) The Word, “the Splendor of the Father, is the eternal archetype after which creatures are designed on the day of their creation.” This is “why God wills that, freed from ourselves, we should stretch out our arms towards our exemplar and possess it,” “rising” above all things “towards our model.” “This contemplation opens” the soul “to unexpected horizons.” “In a certain manner it possesses the crown towards which it aspires.” (Ruysbroeck) “The immense riches that God possesses by nature, we may possess by virtue of love, by His dwelling in us and by our dwelling in Him.” (Ruysbroeck) “It is by virtue of this immense love” (Ruysbroeck) that we are drawn into the depths of the “intimate sanctuary” where God “imprints on us a true image of His majesty.” (Ruysbroeck) Thus it is, thanks to love and through love, as the Apostle says, that we can be holy and immaculate in God’s presence, and can sing with David: “I will be unblemished and I will guard myself from the depths of sinfulness within me.” (Ps 17:24)

Second prayer

24. “Be holy for I am holy.” (1 Pe 1:16) It is the Lord who speaks. “Whatever may be our way of life or the clothing we wear, each of us must be

the holy one of God.” (Ruysbroeck) Who then is “the most holy”? “The one who is most loving, who gazes longest on God and who most fully satisfies the desires of His gaze.” (Ruysbroeck) How do we satisfy the desires of God’s gaze but by remaining “simply and lovingly” (Saint John of the Cross) turned towards Him so that He may reflect His own image as the sun is reflected through a pure crystal. “Let us make man in our own image and likeness” (Gn 1:26): such was the great desire in the Heart of our God. “Without the likeness which comes from grace, eternal damnation awaits us. When God sees that we are prepared to receive His grace, His generous goodness is ready to give us the gift that will give us His likeness. Our aptitude for receiving His grace depends on the inner integrity with which we move towards Him.” And then God, “bringing us His gifts,” can “give Himself, imprint on us His likeness, forgive and free us.” (Ruysbroeck)

25. “The highest perfection in this life,” says a pious author, “consists in remaining so closely united to God that the soul with all its faculties and its powers is recollected in God,” “that its affections united in the joy of love find rest only in possession of the Creator. The image of God imprinted in the soul is formed by reason, memory, and will. As long as these faculties do not bear the perfect image of God, they do not resemble Him as on the day of creation. The form of the soul is God who must imprint Himself there like the seal on wax, like the stamp on its object. Now this is not fully realized unless the intellect is completely enlightened by knowledge of God, the will captivated by love of the supreme good, and the memory fully absorbed in contemplation and enjoyment of eternal happiness.” “And as the glory of the blessed is nothing else than the perfect possession of this state, it is obvious that the initial possession of these blessings constitutes perfection in this life.” To “realize this ideal” we must “keep recollected within ourselves,” “remain silently in God’s presence,” “while the soul immerses itself, expands, becomes enkindled and melts in Him, with an unlimited fullness.

Eighth Day

First prayer

26. “Those whom God has foreknown, He has also predestined to become conformed to the image of His divine Son... And those whom He has predestined, He has also called; and those whom He has called He has also justified; and those whom He has justified He has also glorified. What then shall we say after that? If God is for us, who can be against us?... Who will separate me from the love of Christ?” (Rom 8:29-31, 35) This is how the mystery of predestination, the mystery of divine election appeared to the enlightened gaze of the Apostle. “Those whom He has foreknown.” Are not we of that number? Cannot God say to our soul what He once said through the voice of His prophet: “I passed by you and saw you. I saw that the time had come for you to be loved. I spread my garment over you. I swore to you to

protect you, and I made a covenant with you, and you became mine.” (Ez 16:8)?

27. Yes, we have become His through baptism, that is what Paul means by these words: “He called them”; yes, called to receive the seal of the Holy Trinity; at the same time we have been made, in the words of St. Peter, “sharers in the divine nature,” (2 Pe 1:4) we have received “a beginning of His existence.” (Heb 3:14) Then, He has justified us by His sacraments, by His direct “touches” in our contemplation “in the depths” of our soul; justified us also by faith and according to the measure of our faith in the redemption that Jesus Christ has acquired for us. And finally, He wants to glorify us, and for that reason, says St. Paul, He “has made us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints in light,” (Col 1:12) but we will be glorified in the measure in which we will have been conformed to the image of His divine Son. So let us contemplate this adored Image, let us remain unceasingly under its radiance so that it may imprint itself on us; let us go to everything with the same attitude of soul that our holy Master would have. Then we will realize the great plan by which God has “resolved in Himself to restore all things in Christ.” (Ep 1:9-10)

Second prayer

28. “It seems to me that all is loss since I have known the excelling knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ. For love of Him I have forfeited everything. I have accounted all else rubbish that I may gain Christ. What I want is to know Him, to share in His sufferings, to become like Him in His death. I pursue my course striving to attain what He has destined me for by taking hold of me. My whole concern is to forget what is behind and to strain forward constantly to what is ahead. I run straight to the goal, to the vocation to which God has called me in Christ Jesus.” (Ph 3:8-10, 12-14) That is: I want only to be identified with Him: “Mihi vivere Christus est,” “Christ is my life!” (Ph 1:21)

All the intensity of St. Paul’s soul is poured out in these lines. The object of this retreat is to make us more like our adored Master, and even more, to become so one with Him that we may say: “I live no longer I, but He lives in me. And the life that I now live in this body of death, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” (Gal 2:20) Oh! Let us study this divine Model: His knowledge, the Apostle tells us, is so “excelling.”

29. And when He first came into the world what did He say? “You no longer delight in holocausts; so I have assumed a body and I come, O God, to do Your will.” (Heb 10:5-7) During the thirty-three years of His life this will became so completely His daily bread, that at the moment of handing over His soul into His Father’s hands, He could say to Him: “All is accomplished,” (Jn 19:30) yes, all Your desires, all have been realized, that is why “I have glorified You on earth.” (Jn 7:14) When Jesus Christ spoke to His apostles of this food which they did not know, He explained to them “that it was to do the will of Him who sent Me.” (Jn 4:34) Also He could say: “I am never alone. He who

sent Me is always with Me because I do always the things that are pleasing to Him.” (Jn 8:29)

30. Let us lovingly eat this bread of the will of God. If sometimes His will is more crucifying, we can doubtless say with our adored Master: “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by,” but we will add immediately: “Yet not as I will, but as You will” (Mt 26:39); and in strength and serenity, with the divine Crucified, we will also climb our Calvary singing in the depths of our hearts and raising a hymn of thanksgiving to the Father. For those who march on this way of sorrows are those “whom He foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of His divine Son,” (Rm 8:29) the One crucified by love!

Ninth Day

First prayer

31. “God has predestined us to the adoption of children through Jesus Christ, in union with Him, according to the decree of His will, to make the glory of His grace blaze forth, by which He has justified us in His beloved Son. In whose blood we have redemption, the remission of our sins, according to the riches of His grace, which has abounded beyond measure in us in all wisdom and prudence.” (Ep 1:5-8) “The soul now a true daughter of God is, in the words of the Apostle, moved by the Holy Spirit Himself: ‘All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.’” (Saint John of the Cross) And again: “We have not received a spirit of slavery to be still led by fear, but the spirit of adoption as children in which we cry out: Abba, Father! The Spirit Himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God. But if we are children, we are heirs as well; I mean heirs of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ if only we suffer with Him so as to be glorified with Him.” (Rm 8:15-17) “It is to bring us to this abyss of glory. that God has created us in His image and likeness.”

“See,” says St. John, “what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are... Now we are the children of God, and we have not yet seen what we shall be. We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him makes himself holy, just as He Himself is holy.” (1 Jn 3:1-3)

32. This is the measure of the holiness of the children of God: “to be holy as God, to be holy with the holiness of God”; and we do this by living close to Him in the depths of the bottomless abyss “within.” “Then the soul seems in some way to resemble God Who, even though He delights in all things, yet does not delight in them as much as He does in Himself, for He possesses within Himself a supereminent good before which all others disappear. Thus all the joys which the soul receives are so many reminders inviting her to enjoy by preference the good she already possesses and to which nothing else can compare.” (Saint John of the Cross) “Our Father Who

art in Heaven...” (Mt 6:9) It is in “this little heaven” that He has made in the center of our soul that we must seek Him and above all where we must remain.

33. Christ said one day to the Samaritan woman that “the Father seeks true adorers in spirit and truth.” (Jn 4:23) To give joy to His Heart, let us be these true adorers. Let us adore Him in “spirit,” that is, with our hearts and our thoughts fixed on Him, and our mind filled with His knowledge imparted by the light of faith. Let us adore Him in “truth,” that is, by our works for it is above all by our actions that we show we are true: this is to do always what is pleasing to the Father whose children we are. And finally, let us “adore in spirit and in truth,” that is, through Jesus Christ and with Jesus Christ, for He alone is the true Adorer in spirit and truth.

34. Then we will be daughters of God; we will “know with an experiential knowledge the truth of these words of Isaiah: ‘You will be carried at the breast and He will caress you on His knees.’” In fact “God seems to be wholly occupied with overwhelming the soul with caresses and marks of affection like a mother who brings up her child and feeds it with her own milk.” (Saint John of the Cross) Oh! Let us be attentive to the mysterious voice of our Father! “My daughter,” He says, “give Me your heart.” (Pr 23:26)

Second prayer

35. “God who is rich in mercy, impelled by His exceeding love, even when we were dead because of our sins, has brought us back to life in Christ Jesus.” (Ep 2:4-5) “Because all have sinned and have need of the glory of God, they are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ, whom God has set forth as a propitiation for sins, showing both that He is just and that He makes just him who has faith in Him.” (Rm 3:23-26)

“Sin is such a terrifying evil that in order to seek any good whatsoever, or to avoid any evil whatsoever, no sin should be committed.” “Now we have committed very many.” How can we keep from “fainting in adoration when we plunge into the abyss of mercy and the eyes of our soul are fixed upon this fact: God has taken away our sins.” (Ruysbroeck) He said so Himself: “I will blot out all their iniquities and I will no longer remember their sins.” (Is 43:25)

“The Lord, in His mercy, willed to turn our sins against themselves to our advantage; He found a way to make them useful for us, to convert them in our hands into a means of salvation. But do not let this diminish in any way our horror of sinning, nor our sorrow for having sinned. But our sins” “have become a source of humility for us.” (Ruysbroeck)

36. When the soul “considers deep within itself, its eyes burning with love, the immensity of God, His fidelity, the proofs of His love, His favors which can add nothing to His happiness; then, looking at itself it sees its crimes against this immense Lord, it turns to its own center with such self-contempt that it does not know how it can endure its horror.” (Ruysbroeck) “The best thing for it to do is to complain to God, its Friend, of the strength of its self-love which betrays it by not letting it place itself as low as it would wish. It resigns itself to the will of God, and in self-abnegation, finds true,

invincible, and perfect peace, which nothing can disturb. For it has plunged into such a deep abyss that no one will seek it there.” (Ruysbroeck)

37. “If anyone should affirm to me that to find the bottom of the abyss is to be immersed in humility, I would not contradict him. However, it seems to me that to be plunged into humility is to be plunged into God, for God is the bottom of the abyss. That is why humility, like charity, is always capable of increasing.” (Ruysbroeck) “Since a humble heart is the vessel needed, the vessel capable of containing the grace God wants to pour into it,” let us be “humble.” (Ruysbroeck) “The humble can never rank God high enough nor themselves low enough. But here is the wonder: their weakness turns into wisdom, and the imperfection of their acts, always insufficient in their eyes, will be the greatest delight of their life. Whoever possesses humility has no need of many words to be instructed; God tells him more things than he can learn; such was the case with the Lord’s disciples.” (Ruysbroeck)

Tenth Day

First prayer

38. “Si scires donum Dei.” (Jn 4:10) “If you knew the gift of God,” Christ said one evening to the Samaritan woman. But what is this gift of God if not Himself? And, the beloved disciple tells us: “He came to His own and His own did not accept Him.” (Jn 1:11) St. John the Baptist could still say to many souls these words of reproach: “There is one in the midst of you, ‘in you,’ whom you do not know.” (Jn 1:26)

39. “If you knew the gift of God. . . .” There is one who knew this gift of God, one who did not lose one particle of it, one who was so pure, so luminous that she seemed to be the Light itself: “Speculum justitiae.” One whose life was so simple, so lost in God that there is hardly anything we can say about it.

“Virgo fidelis”: that is, Faithful Virgin, “who kept all these things in her heart.” (Lk 2:19 and 51) She remained so little, so recollected in God’s presence, in the seclusion of the temple, that she drew down upon herself the delight of the Holy Trinity: “Because He has looked upon the lowliness of His servant, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed!” (Lk 1:48) The Father bending down to this beautiful creature, who was so unaware of her own beauty, willed that she be the Mother in time of Him whose Father He is in eternity. Then the Spirit of love who presides over all of God’s works came upon her; the Virgin said her fiat: “Behold the servant of the Lord, be it done to me according to Your word,” (Lk 1:38) and the greatest of mysteries was accomplished. By the descent of the Word in her, Mary became forever God’s prey.

40. It seems to me that the attitude of the Virgin during the months that elapsed between the Annunciation and the Nativity is the model for interior souls, those whom God has chosen to live within, in the depths of the bottomless abyss. In what peace, in what recollection Mary lent herself to everything she did! How even the most trivial things were divinized by her!

For through it all the Virgin remained the adorer of the gift of God! This did not prevent her from spending herself outwardly when it was a matter of charity; the Gospel tells us that Mary went in haste to the mountains of Judea to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Never did the ineffable vision that she contemplated within herself in any way diminish her outward charity. For, a pious author says, if contemplation “continues towards praise and towards the eternity of its Lord, it possesses unity and will not lose it. If an order from Heaven arrives, contemplation turns towards men, sympathizes with their needs, is inclined towards all their miseries; it must cry and be fruitful. It illuminates like fire, and like it, it burns, absorbs and devours, lifting up to Heaven what it has devoured. And when it has finished its work here below, it rises, burning with its fire, and takes up again the road on high.” (Ruysbroeck)

Second prayer

41. “We have been predestined by the decree of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we may be the praise of His glory.” (Ep 1:11-12) It is St. Paul who tells us this, St. Paul who was instructed by God Himself. How do we realize this great dream of the Heart of our God, this immutable will for our souls? In a word, how do we correspond to our vocation and become perfect Praises of Glory of the Most Holy Trinity?

42. “In Heaven” each soul is a praise of glory of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, for each soul is established in pure love and “lives no longer its own life, but the life of God.” (Saint John of the Cross) Then it knows Him, St. Paul says, as it is known by Him. In other words “its intellect is the intellect of God, its will the will of God, its love the very love of God. In reality it is the Spirit of love and of strength who transforms the soul, for to Him it has been given to supply what is lacking to the soul,” as St. Paul says again. “He works in it this glorious transformation.” St. John of the Cross affirms that “the soul surrendered to love, through the strength of the Holy Spirit, is not far from being raised to the degree of which we have just spoken,” (Saint John of the Cross) even here below! This is what I call a perfect praise of glory!

43. A praise of glory is a soul that lives in God, that loves Him with a pure and disinterested love, without seeking itself in the sweetness of this love; that loves Him beyond all His gifts and even though it would not have received anything from Him, it desires the good of the Object thus loved. Now how do we effectively desire and will good to God if not in accomplishing His will since this will orders everything for His greater glory? Thus the soul must surrender itself to this will completely, passionately, so as to will nothing else but what God wills.

A praise of glory is a soul of silence that remains like a lyre under the mysterious touch of the Holy Spirit so that He may draw from it divine harmonies; it knows that suffering is a string that produces still more beautiful sounds; so it loves to see this string on its instrument that it may more delightfully move the Heart of its God.

A praise of glory is a soul that gazes on God in faith and simplicity; it is a reflector of all that He is; it is like a bottomless abyss into which He can flow

and expand; it is also like a crystal through which He can radiate and contemplate all His perfections and His own splendor. A soul which thus permits the divine Being to satisfy in itself His need to communicate “all that He is and all that He has,” (Saint John of the Cross) is in reality the praise of glory of all His gifts.

Finally, a praise of glory is one who is always giving thanks. Each of her acts, her movements, her thoughts, her aspirations, at the same time that they are rooting her more deeply in love, are like an echo of the eternal Sanctus.

44. In the Heaven of glory the blessed have no rest “day or night, saying: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty... They fall down and worship Him who lives forever and ever.” (Ap 4:8, 10)

In the heaven of her soul, the praise of glory has already begun her work of eternity. Her song is uninterrupted, for she is under the action of the Holy Spirit who effects everything in her; and although she is not always aware of it, for the weakness of nature does not allow her to be established in God without distractions, she always sings, she always adores, for she has, so to speak, wholly passed into praise and love in her passion for the glory of her God. In the heaven of our soul let us be praises of glory of the Holy Trinity, praises of love of our Immaculate Mother. One day the veil will fall, we will be introduced into the eternal courts, and there we will sing in the bosom of infinite Love. And God will give us “the new name promised to the Victor.” (Ap 2:17) What will it be?

LAUDEM GLORIAE

II. THE GREATNESS OF OUR VOCATION

J.M. + J.T.

1. Here comes Sabeth at last to sit down by her dearest Framboise and visit—with her *pencil!* I say pencil for the heart-to-heart communion was established long ago, and we are now as one. How I love our evening rendez-vous; it is like the prelude of that communion from Heaven to earth that will be established between our souls. It seems to me that I am like a mother bending attentively over her favorite child: I raise my eyes and look at God, and then I lower them on you, exposing you to the rays of His Love. Framboise, I do not use words when I speak to Him of you but He understands me even better for He prefers my silence. My dearest child, I wish I were a saint so that I could help you here below while waiting to do it from Heaven. What I would not endure in order to obtain for you the graces of strength that you need.

2. I want to answer your questions. Let's treat humility first; I have read some splendid pages on it in the book I spoke to you about. The pious author says that nothing can “disturb” the humble. He possesses “invincible peace for he has plunged into such an abyss that no one would go that far to look for him.” (Ruysbroeck) He also says that the humble person finds his greatest

pleasure in life in feeling his own “weakness” “before God.” (Ruysbroeck)
Little Framboise, pride is not something that is destroyed with one good blow of the sword! Doubtless, certain heroic acts of humility, such as we read of in the lives of the saints, give it, if not a mortal blow, at least one that considerably weakens it; but without that grace we must put it to death each day! “Quotidie morior,” exclaimed St. Paul, “I die daily!” (1 Co 15:31)

3. Framboise, this doctrine of dying to self is the law for every Christian, for Christ said: “If anyone wants to follow Me, let him take up his cross and deny himself.” (Mt 16:24) But this doctrine which seems so austere, takes on a delightful sweetness when we consider the outcome of this death—life in God in place of our life of sin and misery. That is what St. Paul meant when he wrote: “Strip off the old man and clothe yourselves anew in the image of Him who created you.” (Col 3:9-10) This image is God Himself. Do you recall His wish which He so clearly expressed on the day of creation: “Let us make man in our image and likeness”? (Gn 1:26) Oh! you see, if we would think more about the origin of our soul, things here below would seem so childish that we would have only contempt for them. St. Peter writes in one of his epistles that “we have been made sharers in His divine nature.” (2 Pe 1:4) And St. Paul recommends that we “hold firm to the end this beginning of His existence which He has given us.” (Heb 3:14)

4. It seems to me the soul that is aware of its greatness enters into that “holy freedom of the children of God” (Rm 8:21) of which the Apostle speaks, that is, it transcends all things, including self. The freest soul, I think, is the one most forgetful of self. If anyone were to ask me the secret of happiness, I would say it is to no longer think of self, to deny oneself always. That is a good way to kill pride: let it starve to death! You see, pride is love of ourselves; well, love of God must be so strong that it extinguishes all our self-love. Saint Augustine says we have two cities within us, the city of God and the city of SELF. To the extent that the first increases, the second will be destroyed. A soul that lives by faith in God’s presence, that has this “single eye” that Christ speaks of in the Gospel, (Mt 6:22) that is, a purity of “intention” that seeks only God; this soul, it seems to me, would also live in humility: it would recognize His gifts to it—for “humility is truth”—but it would attribute nothing to itself, referring all to God as the Blessed Virgin did.

5. Framboise, all the movements of pride that you feel within yourself, only become faults when the will takes part in them! Without that, although you may suffer much, you are not offending God. Doubtless self-love is at the bottom of those faults which, as you say, you commit without thinking, but that, my poor darling, is, in a way, part of us... What God asks of you is never to entertain deliberately any thought of pride, and never to act on the inspiration of pride, for this is wrong. And yet, if you find yourself doing either of these, you must not become discouraged, for again, it is pride which is irritated. You must “display your misery” like Magdalene at the Master’s feet, and ask Him to set you free. He so loves to see a soul recognize its weakness. Then, as a great saint said, “The abyss of God’s immensity encounters the abyss of the creature’s nothingness,” and God embraces this nothingness.

6. My dearest child, it is not pride to think that you do not want to live an easy life; I truly believe that God wants your life to be spent in a realm where the air breathed is divine. Oh! You see, I have a profound compassion

for souls that live only for this world and its trivialities; I consider them as slaves, and I wish I could tell them: Shake off the yoke that weighs you down; what are you doing with these bonds that chain you to yourself and to things less than yourself? It seems to me that the happy ones of this world are those who have enough contempt and forgetfulness of self to choose the Cross as their lot! What delightful peace we experience when we place our joy in suffering!

7. "In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the passion of Christ for the sake of His body, which is the Church." (Col 1:24) The apostle finds his happiness in this! The thought pursues me and I confess that I experience a profound inner joy in thinking that God has chosen to associate me in the passion of His Christ. This way of Calvary I climb each day seems to me more like the path of Beatitude! Have you ever seen those pictures depicting death reaping with his sickle? Well, that is my condition; I seem to feel myself being destroyed like that. Sometimes it is painful for nature and I can assure you that if I were to remain at that level, I would feel only my cowardice in the face of suffering. But that is looking at things from the human point of view! Very quickly "I open the eye of my soul in the light of faith." And this faith tells me that it is love who is destroying me, who is slowly consuming me; then I feel a tremendous joy, and I surrender myself to Him as His prey.

8. Framboise, to attain the ideal life of the soul, I believe we must live on the supernatural level, that is, we must never act "naturally." We must become aware that God dwells within us and do everything with Him, then we are never commonplace, even when performing the most ordinary tasks, for we do not live in these things, we go beyond them! A supernatural soul never deals with secondary causes but with God alone. Oh! How its life is simplified, how it resembles the life of the blessed, how it is freed from self and from all things! Everything for it is reduced to unity, to that "one thing necessary," (Lk 10:42) of which the Master spoke to Magdalene. Then the soul is truly great, truly free, for it has "*enclosed its will in God's.*"

9. My Framboise, when we contemplate our eternal predestination, visible things seem so worthless. Listen to St. Paul: "Those whom God has foreknown, He has also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son." (Rm 8:29) (That is not all, my little one, you are going to see that you are one of the number of the "known"!)" "And those He has known He has called": it is baptism which has made you a child of adoption, which has stamped you with the seal of the Holy Trinity! "And those whom He has called, He has also justified": how often you have been justified by the sacrament of penance and by all those touches of God in your soul, without you even being aware of it!

"And those whom He justified, He has also glorified." That is what awaits you in eternity! But remember that our degree of glory will depend on the degree of grace in which God finds us at the moment of death; allow Him to complete His work of predestination in you. To do this listen to St. Paul again who will give you a program of life.

10. "Walk in Jesus Christ, rooted in Him, built up on Him strengthened in faith and growing in Him in thanksgiving." (Col 2:6-7) Yes, little child of my heart and soul, walk in Jesus Christ: you need this broad road, for you were not made for the narrow paths of here below! Be *rooted* in Him. This implies being uprooted from self, or doing everything as if you were, by denying self

each time you meet it. *Be built* up on Him, high above everything that is passing, there where everything is pure, everything is luminous.

11. *Be strengthened in faith*, that is, never act except in the great light of God, never according to impressions or your imagination. Believe that He loves you, that He wants to help you in the struggles you have to undergo. Believe in His love, His *exceeding* love, as St. Paul says. Nourish your soul on the great thoughts of faith which will reveal to you all its richness and the end for which God has created you! If you live like this, your piety will never be a nervous exaltation as you fear but will be *true*. Truth is so beautiful, the truth of love. "He loved me and gave Himself up for me." (Gal 2:20) That, my little child, is what it means to be true!

12. And, finally, *grow in thanksgiving*. That is the last word of the program and is but the consequence of it. If you walk rooted in Christ, strengthened in your faith, you will live in thanksgiving: the love of the sons of God! I wonder how a soul that has sounded the depths of love the Heart of God has "*for it*" could be anything but joyful in every suffering and sorrow. Remember that "He has chosen you in Him before the creation of the world to be immaculate and pure in His presence in love" (Ep 1:4); again it is St. Paul who says this. So do not fear struggles or temptations: "When I am weak," exclaimed the Apostle, "it is then I am strong, for the strength of Jesus Christ dwells in me." (2 Co 12:10, 9)

13. I wonder what our Reverend Mother is going to think when she sees this journal. She does not let me write any more for I am extremely weak, and I feel as if I would faint at any moment. This will probably be the last letter from your Sabeth; it has taken her many days to write, and that explains its incoherence. And yet this evening I cannot bring myself to leave you. I am in solitude; it is seven-thirty, and the community is at recreation. As for me, I feel already as if I were almost in heaven here in my little cell, alone with Him alone, bearing my cross with my Master. Framboise, my happiness increases along with my suffering! If you only knew how delicious the dregs are at the bottom of the chalice prepared by my Heavenly Father!

A Dieu, beloved Framboise; I cannot go on. And in the silence of our rendez-vous you will guess, you will understand, what I do not tell you. I send you a kiss. I love you as a mother loves her little child. A Dieu my little one. "In the shadow of His wings may He guard you from all evil." (Ps 90:4, 10, 11)

S.M. Elizabeth of the Trinity

Laudem Gloriam
(This will be my new name in Heaven.)

III. LAST RETREAT

First Day

1. “Nescivi.” (Ct 6:11) “I no longer knew anything.” This is what the “bride of the Canticles” sings after having been brought into the “inner cellar.” It seems to me that this must also be the refrain of a praise of glory on this first day of retreat in which the Master makes her penetrate the depths of the bottomless abyss so that He may teach her to fulfill the work which will be hers for eternity and which she must already perform in time, which is eternity begun and still in progress. “Nescivi”! I no longer know anything, I do not want to know anything except “to know *Him*, to share in His sufferings, to become like Him in His death.” (Ph 3:10) “Those whom God has foreknown He has also predestined to become confirmed to the image of His divine Son,” (Rm 8:29) the One crucified by love. When I am wholly identified with this divine Exemplar, when I have wholly passed into Him and He into me, then I will fulfill my eternal vocation: the one for which God has “chosen me in Him” (Ep 1:4) “in principio,” the one I will continue “in aeternum” when, immersed in the bosom of my Trinity, I will be the unceasing praise of His glory, *Laudem gloriae ejus.* (Ep 1:12)

2. “No one has seen the Father,” Saint John tells us, “except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.” It seems to me that we can also say, “No one has penetrated the depths of the mystery of Christ except the Blessed Virgin. “John and Mary Magdalene penetrated deeply this mystery; Saint Paul often speaks of “the understanding of it which was given to him” (Ep 3:3-4); and yet, how all the saints remain in the shadows when we look at the Blessed Virgin’s light!

This is the unspeakable “secret” that she kept in mind and pondered in her heart which no tongue can tell or pen describe! This Mother of grace will form my soul so that her little child will be a living, “striking” image of her first-born, the Son of the Eternal, He who was the perfect praise of His Father’s glory.

Second Day

3. “My soul is always in my hands.” (Ps 118:109) My Master sang this in His soul, and that is why in the midst of all His anguish He always remained the calm and strong One. My soul is always in my hands! What does that mean but this complete self-possession in the presence of the peaceful One? There is another of Christ’s songs that I would like to repeat unceasingly: “I shall keep my strength for you.” (Ps 58:10) My Rule tells me: “In silence will your strength be.” It seems to me, therefore, that to keep one’s strength for the Lord is to unify one’s whole being by means of interior silence, to collect all one’s powers in order to “employ” them in “the one work of love,” to have this “single eye” which allows the light of God to enlighten us. A soul that debates with its self, that is taken up with its feelings, and pursues useless thoughts and desires, scatters its forces, for it is not wholly directed toward God. Its lyre does not vibrate in unison and when the Master plays it, He cannot draw from it divine harmonies, for it is still too human and discordant. The soul that still keeps something for self in its “inner kingdom,” whose powers are not “enclosed” in God, cannot be a perfect praise of glory; it is not fit to sing

uninterruptedly this “canticum magnum” of which Saint Paul speaks since unity does not reign in it. Instead of persevering in praise through everything in simplicity, it must continually adjust the strings of its instrument which are all a little out of tune.

4. How indispensable this beautiful inner unity is for the soul that wants to live here below the life of the blessed, that is, of simple beings, of spirits. It seems to me the Master had that in mind when He spoke to Mary Magdalene of the “Unum necessarium.” (Lk 10:42) How well that great saint understood this! “The eye of her soul enlightened by faith” recognized her God beneath the veil of His humanity; and in silence, in the unity of her powers, “She listened to what He told her.” (Lk 10:39) She could sing, “My soul is always in my hands,” and also this little word: “Nescivi”! Yes, she knew nothing but *Him*! There could be noise and excitement around her: “Nescivi”! They could accuse her: “Nescivi”! Neither empty self-esteem nor exterior things could draw her out of her “sacred silence.”

5. It is the same for the soul that has entered into the “fortress of holy recollection”: the eye of its soul, opened in the light of faith, discovers its God present, living within it; in turn it remains so present to Him, in beautiful simplicity, that He guards it with a jealous care. Then disturbances from without and tempests from within may arise; its self-esteem may be wounded: “Nescivi”! God may hide Himself, withdraw His sensible grace: “Nescivi.” Or, as Saint Paul writes: “For love of Him I have forfeited everything.” (Ph 3:8) Then the Master is free, free to flow into the soul, to give Himself “according to His measure.” And the soul thus simplified, unified, becomes the throne of the Unchanging One, since “unity is the throne of the Holy Trinity.”

Third Day

6. “We have been predestined by the decree of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we may be the praise of His glory.” (Ep 1:11-12) It is Saint Paul who announces to us this divine election, Saint Paul who penetrated so deeply the “mystery hidden from eternity in the heart of God.” (Ep 3:9) Then he gives us light on this vocation to which we are called. “God,” he says, “chose us in *Him* before creation that we might be holy and immaculate in His presence, in love.” (Ep 1:4) If I compare these two explanations of the divine and eternal unchanging plan, I conclude from them that in order to fulfill worthily my work of *Laudem Gloriam*, I must remain “in the presence of God” through everything; and that is not all: the Apostle tells us “in charitate,” that is, in God, “*Deus Caritas est...*” (1 Jn 4:16); and it is contact with the divine Being that will make me “holy and immaculate” in His eyes...

7. I relate all this to the beautiful virtue of simplicity of which a pious author wrote: “It gives the soul the repose of the abyss,” that is, rest in God, the unfathomable Abyss, prelude and echo of the eternal Sabbath of which Saint Paul spoke when he said, “We then who have believed shall enter into this rest.” (Heb 4:3)

The glorified have this repose of the abyss because they contemplate God in the simplicity of His essence. “They know Him,” says Saint Paul again,

“as they are known by Him,” (1 Co 13:12) that is, by intuitive vision, a simple gaze; and that is why, the great saint continues, “they are transformed from brightness to brightness into His very Image by the power of His Spirit” (2 Co 3:18); then they are an unceasing praise of glory of the divine Being who contemplates in them His own splendor.

8. It seems to me that it would give immense joy to the Heart of God if we would perfect in the heaven of our soul this occupation of the blessed and cling to Him by this simple contemplation which resembles that of man in the state of innocence before original sin when God created him “in His image and likeness.” (Gn 1:26) Such was the Creator’s dream: to be able to contemplate Himself in His creature and see reflected there all His perfections, all His beauty as through a pure and flawless crystal. Is not that a kind of extension of His own glory?

The soul, by the simplicity of the gaze which it fixes on its divine object, finds itself set apart from all that surrounds it, set apart also and above all from itself. Then it is resplendent with this “knowledge of the glory of God,” (2 Co 4:6) of which the Apostle speaks, because it permits the divine Being to be reflected in it, “and all His attributes are communicated to it.” Truly this soul is the praise of glory of all His gifts; through everything, even the most commonplace acts, it sings the canticum magnum, the canticum novum, and this canticle thrills God to His very depths.

“Your light,” we can say with Isaiah, “shall rise up in darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. The Lord will give you rest continually, and will fill your soul with His brightness; He will strengthen your bones, and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail... I will lift you above the high places of the earth...” (Is 58:10-11, 14)

Fourth Day

9. Yesterday Saint Paul lifted the veil a little and allowed me to gaze on “the inheritance of the saints in light,” (Col 1:12) that I might see what their occupation is and try, as far as possible, to conform my life to theirs so as to carry out my work of “Laudem Gloriam.” Today it is Saint John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, who partially opens “the eternal gates” (Ps 23:7) for me, that I may rest my soul in “the heavenly Jerusalem, sweet vision of peace!” First of all he tells me there are no lights in the city “for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb.” (Ap 21:23)

If I want my interior city to have some similarity and likeness to that “of the King of eternal ages” (1 Tm 1:17) and to receive this great illumination from God, I must extinguish every other light and, as in the holy city, the Lamb must be “its only light.”

10. Here faith, the beautiful light of faith appears. It alone should light my way as I go to meet the Bridegroom. The psalmist sings that He “hides Himself in darkness,” (Ps 17:12) then in another place he seems to contradict himself by saying that “light surrounds Him like a cloak.” (Ps 103:2) What stands out for me in this apparent contradiction is that I must immerse myself in “the sacred darkness” by putting all my powers in darkness and emptiness; then I will meet my Master, and “the light that surrounds Him like a cloak”

will envelop me also, for He wants His bride to be luminous with His light, His light *alone*, “*which is the glory of God.*”

It was said of Moses that he was “unshakable in his faith, as if he had seen the Invisible.” (Heb 11:27) It seems to me that this should be the attitude of a praise of glory who wishes to continue her hymn of thanksgiving through everything: “unshakable in her faith, as if she had seen the Invisible”; unshakable in her faith in His “exceeding love.” (Ep 2:4) “We have known the love of God for us, and we have believed in it.” (1 Jn 4:16)

11. “Faith,” Saint Paul says, “is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb 11:1)

What does it matter to the soul that is absorbed in recollection of the light which these words create in it, whether it feels or does not feel, whether it is in darkness or light, whether it enjoys or does not enjoy. It feels a kind of embarrassment in making any distinction between these things; and when it still feels affected by them, it holds itself in deep contempt for its lack of love and quickly looks to its Master that He might set it free. In the expression of a great mystic it “exalts” Him “on the highest summit of the mountain of its heart, above the sweetness and consolations that descend from Him for it has resolved to go beyond everything to be united with Him whom it loves.” It seems to me that to this soul, unshakable in its faith in the God of Love, may be addressed these words of the Prince of Apostles, “Because you believe you will be filled with an unshakable and glorified joy.” (1 Pe 1:8)

Fifth Day

12. “I saw a great multitude which no man could number... These are they who have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He who sits upon the throne will dwell with them. They shall neither hunger nor thirst anymore, neither shall the sun strike them nor any heat. For the Lamb will be their shepherd, and He will lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Ap 7:9, 14-17)

All these elect who have palms in their hands, and who are wholly bathed in the great light of God, have had first to pass through the “great tribulation,” to know this sorrow “immense as the sea,” of which the psalmist sang. Before contemplating “with uncovered face the glory of the Lord,” (2 Co 3:18) they have shared in the annihilation of His Christ; before being “transformed from brightness to brightness in the image of the divine Being,” (2 Co 3:18) they have been conformed to the image of the Word Incarnate, the One crucified by love.

13. The soul that wants to serve God day and night in His temple—I mean this inner sanctuary of which Saint Paul speaks when he says, “The temple of God is holy and you are that temple,” (1 Co 3:17) this soul must be resolved to share *fully* in its Master’s passion. It is one of the redeemed who in its turn must redeem other souls, and for that reason it will sing on its lyre: “I glory in the Cross of Jesus Christ.” (Ga 6:14) “With Christ I am nailed to the Cross” (Ga 2:19) And again, “I suffer in my body what is lacking in the passion

of Christ for the sake of His body, which is the Church.” (Col 1:24) “The queen stood at your right hand” (Ps 44:11): such is the attitude of this soul; she walks the way of Calvary at the right of her crucified, annihilated, humiliated King, yet always so strong, so calm, so full of majesty as He goes to His passion “to make the glory of His grace blaze forth” according to that so strong expression of Saint Paul. He wants to associate His Bride in His work of redemption and this sorrowful way which she follows seems like the path of Beatitude to her, not only because it leads there but also because her holy Master makes her realize that she must go beyond the bitterness in suffering to find in it, as He did, her rest.

14. Then she can serve God “*day and night in His temple!*” Neither trials from without nor from within can make her leave the holy fortress in which the Master has enclosed her. She no longer feels “*hunger or thirst,*” for in spite of her consuming desire for Beatitude, she is satisfied by this food which was her Master’s: “the will of the Father.” (Jn 4:32-34) “*She no longer feels the heat of the sun,*” that is, she no longer suffers from suffering. Then the Lamb can “*lead her to the fountain of life,*” where He wills, as He wills, for she does not look at the paths on which she is walking; she simply gazes at the Shepherd who is leading her. (Ps 22:3-4) God bends lovingly over this soul, His adopted daughter, who is so conformed to the image of His Son, the “firstborn among all creatures,” (Col 1:15) and recognizes her as one of those whom He has “predestined, called, justified.” (Rm 8:30) And His fatherly heart thrills as He thinks of consummating His work, that is, of “glorifying” (Jn 17:4) her by bringing her into His kingdom, there to sing for ages unending “the praise of His glory.” (Ep 1:12)

Sixth Day

15. “And I saw, and behold, the Lamb was standing upon Mount Sion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice like a voice of many waters, and like a voice of loud thunder; and the voice that I heard was as of several harpers playing on their harps. And they were singing as it were a new song before the throne; and no one could learn the song except those hundred and forty-four thousand, for they were virgins. These follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” (Ap 14:1-4)

There are some who even here below belong to this “generation pure as the light” (Sg 4:1); they already bear on their foreheads the name of the Lamb and of His Father. “*The name of the Lamb*”: by their resemblance and conformity with Him whom Saint John calls “the Faithful and True” (Ap 19:11) and whom he shows us “clothed in a robe stained with blood” (Ap 19:13); these also are the faithful and true, and their robe is stained with the blood of their constant sacrifice. “*The name of His Father*”: because He radiates in them the beauty of His perfections. All His divine attributes are reflected in these souls, and they are like so many strings which vibrate and sing “*the new song.*” They “*also follow the Lamb where ever He goes,*” not only on the highways that are broad and easy to travel but down the thorny paths, along the brambly ways. That is why these souls are *virgins*, that is,

free, set apart, stripped; free from all save their love, set apart from everything, especially themselves, stripped of all things both in the supernatural order as well as in the natural order.

16. What a going out from self that implies! What a death! Let us say with Saint Paul, “Quotidie morior.” (1 Co 15:31) The great saint wrote to the Colossians, “You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Col 3:3)

That is the condition: we must be dead! Without that we may be hidden in God at certain moments; but we do not LIVE habitually in this divine Being because all our emotions, self-seekings and the rest, come to draw us out of Him.

The soul that gazes steadfastly on its Master with this “single eye which fills the whole body with light” (Mt 6:22) is kept “from the depths of iniquity within it” (Ps 17:24) of which the prophet complains. The Lord has brought it into “this spacious place” (Ps 17:20) which is nothing else than Himself; there everything is pure, everything is holy!

O blessed death in God! O sweet and gentle loss of self in the beloved Being which permits the creature to cry out: “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in this body of death, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” (Ga 2:20)

Seventh Day

17. “Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei.” (Ps 18:1) This is what the heavens are telling: the glory of God.

Since my soul is a heaven in which I live while awaiting the “heavenly Jerusalem,” (Heb 12:22) this heaven too must sing the glory of the Eternal, *nothing* but the glory of the Eternal.

“Day to day passes on this message.” (Ps 18:3) All God’s lights, all His communications to my soul are this “day which passes on to day the message of His glory.” “The command of the Lord is clear,” sings the psalmist, “enlightening the eye...” (Ps 18:9) Consequently, my fidelity in corresponding with each of His decrees, with each of His interior commands, makes me live in His light; it too is a “message which passes on His glory.” But this is the sweet wonder: “Yahweh, he who looks at you is radiant!” (Ps 33:6) the prophet exclaims. The soul that by the depth of its interior gaze contemplates its God through everything in that simplicity which sets it apart from all else is a “*radiant*” soul: it is “a day that passes on to day the message of His glory.”

18. “Night to night announces it.” (Ps 18:3) How very consoling that is! My weaknesses, my dislikes, my mediocrity, my faults themselves tell the glory of the Eternal! My sufferings of soul or body also tell the glory of my Master! David sang: “How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?” This: “I will take up the cup of salvation.” (Ps 115:12-13) If I take up this cup crimsoned with the Blood of my Master and, in wholly joyous thanksgiving, I mingle my blood with that of the holy Victim, it is in some way made infinite and can give magnificent praise to the Father. Then my suffering is “a message which passes on the glory” of the Eternal.

19. “There (in the soul that tells His glory) He has pitched a tent for the Sun.” (Ps 18:5) The sun is the Word, the “Bridegroom.” If He finds my soul empty of all that is not contained in these two words—His love, His glory, then He chooses it to be “His bridal chamber”; He “rushes” in “like a giant racing triumphantly on his course” and I cannot “escape His heat.” (Ps 18:5-6) He is this “consuming fire” (Heb 12:29) which will effect the blessed transformation of which Saint John of the Cross speaks when he says: “Each seems to be the other and the two are but one”: a “praise of glory” (Ep 1:12) of the Father!

Eighth Day

20. “And they do not rest day and night, saying, Holy holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who will be for ages unending. . . . And they fall down and worship Him and they cast down their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy are you, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power...” (Ap 4:8, 10-11)

How can I imitate in the heaven of my soul this unceasing occupation of the blessed in the Heaven of glory? How can I sustain this uninterrupted praise and adoration? Saint Paul gives me light on this when he writes to his followers his wish that “the Father would strengthen them inwardly with power through His Spirit so that Christ would dwell through faith in their hearts, and so that they would be rooted and grounded in love.” (Ep 3:16-17) To be rooted and grounded in love: such, it seems to me, is the condition for worthily fulfilling its work as praise of glory. The soul that penetrates and dwells in these “depths of God” of which the royal prophets sing, and thus does everything “in Him, with Him, by Him and for Him” with that limpid gaze which gives it a certain resemblance to the simple Being, this soul, by each of its movements, its aspirations, as well as by each of its acts, however ordinary they may be, “is rooted” more deeply in Him whom it loves. Everything within it pays homage to the thrice-holy God: it is so to speak a perpetual Sanctus, an unceasing praise of glory!

21. “They fall down and adore, they cast down their crowns...” First of all the soul should “fall down,” should plunge into the abyss of its nothingness, sinking so deeply into it that in the beautiful expression of a mystic, it finds “true, unchanging, and perfect peace which no one can disturb, for it has plunged so low that no one will look for it there.”

Then it can “adore.” Adoration, ah! That is a word from Heaven! It seems to me it can be defined as the ecstasy of love. It is love overcome by the beauty, the strength, the immense grandeur of the Object loved, and it “falls down in a kind of faint” in an utterly profound silence, that silence of which David spoke when he exclaimed: “Silence is Your praise!” (Ps 65:1) Yes, this is the most beautiful praise since it is sung eternally in the bosom of the tranquil Trinity; and it is also the “last effort of the soul that overflows and can say no more...” (Lacordaire).

“Adore the Lord, for He is holy,” (Ps 98:9) the Psalmist says. And again: “They will adore Him always because of Himself.” (Ps 71:15) The soul that is absorbed in recollection of these thoughts, that penetrates them with “this mind of God” (Rm 11:34) of which Saint Paul speaks, lives in an

anticipated Heaven, beyond all that passes, beyond the clouds, beyond itself! It knows that He whom it adores possesses in Himself all happiness and all glory and, “casting its crown” before Him as the blessed do, it despises self, loses sight of self, and finds its beatitude in that of the adored Being, in the midst of every suffering and sorrow. For it has left self, it has “*passed*” into Another. It seems to me that in this attitude of adoration the soul “resembles those wells” of which Saint John of the Cross speaks, which receive “the waters that flow down from Lebanon,” and we can say on seeing it: “The impetus of the river delights the City of God.” (Ps 45:5)

Ninth Day

22. “Be holy for I am holy.” (1 Pe 1:16) Who then is this who can give such a command?... He Himself has revealed His name, the name proper to Him, which He alone can bear: “I am Who Am,” (Ex 3:14) He said to Moses, the only living One, the principle of all the other beings. “In Him,” the Apostle says, “we live and move and have our being.” (Ac 17:28) “Be holy for I am holy!” It seems to me that this is the very same wish expressed on the day of creation when God said: “Let us make man in Our image and likeness.” (Gn 1:26) It is always the desire of the Creator to identify and to associate His creature with Himself! Saint Peter says “that we have been made sharers in the divine nature” (2 Pe 1:4); Saint Paul recommends that we hold on to “this beginning of His existence” (Heb 3:14) which He has given us; and the disciple of love tells us: “Now we are the children of God, and we have not yet seen what we shall be. We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him makes himself holy, *just as He Himself is holy.*” (1 Jn 3:2-3) To be holy as God is holy, such is, it seems, the measure of the children of His love! Did not the Master say: “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”? (Mt 5:48)

23. Speaking to Abraham God said: “Walk in My presence and be perfect.” (Gn 17:1) This then is the way to achieve this perfection that our Heavenly Father asks of us! Saint Paul, after having immersed himself in the divine counsels, revealed exactly this to us when he wrote “God has chosen us in Him before the creation of the world, that we might be holy and immaculate *in His presence* in love.” (Ep 1:4) It is also by the light of this same saint that I will be enlightened so that I might walk without deviating from this magnificent road of the presence of God on which the soul journeys “alone with the Alone,” led by the “strength of His right arm,” (Lk 1:51) “under the protection of His wings, without fearing the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the evil that stalks in darkness, nor the attacks of the noonday devil.

24. “Strip off the old man in whom you lived your former life, “ he tells me, “and put on the new man, who has been created according to God in justice and holiness.” (Ep 4:22-24) This is the way set forth; we have only to strip off self to follow it as God wills! To strip off self, to die to self, to lose sight of self. It seems to me the Master meant this when He said: “If anyone wants to follow Me, let him take up his cross and deny himself.” (Mt 16:24) “If you live according to the flesh,” the Apostle also says, “you will die, but if you

put to death in the spirit the works of the flesh, you will live.” (Rm 8:13) This is the death that God asks for and of which it is said: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” (1 Co 15:54) “O death,” says the Lord, “I will be your death” (Ho 13:14); that is: O soul, my adopted daughter, look at Me and you will forget yourself; flow entirely into My Being, come die in Me that I may live in you!

Tenth Day

25. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48) When my Master makes me understand these words in the depths of my soul, it seems to me that He is asking me to live like the Father “in an eternal present,” “with no before, no after,” but wholly in the unity of my being in this “eternal now.” What is this present? This is what David tells me: “They will adore Him always because of Himself.” (Ps 71:15)

This is the eternal present in which *Laudem Gloriam* must be established. But for her to be truly in this attitude of adoration, so that she can sing, “I will awake the dawn,” (Ps 56:9) she must also be able to say with Saint Paul, “For love of Him I have forfeited everything” (Ph 3:8); that is: because of Him, that I may adore Him always, I am “alone, set apart, stripped” of all things, both with regard to the natural as well as the supernatural gifts of God. For a soul that is not thus “destroyed and freed” from self will of necessity be trivial and natural at certain moments, and that is not worthy of a daughter of God, a spouse of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit. To guard against this natural life the soul must be wholly vigilant in her faith with her gaze turned towards the Master. Then she “can walk,” as the royal prophet sings, “in the integrity of her heart within her house.” (Ps 100:3) Then she “will adore her God always because of Himself” and will live, like Him, in that eternal present where He lives...

26. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” “God,” says Saint Dionysius, “is the great solitary.” My Master asks me to imitate this perfection, to pay Him homage by being a great solitary. The divine Being lives in an eternal, immense solitude. He never leaves it, though concerning Himself with the needs of His creatures, for He never leaves Himself; and this solitude is nothing else than His divinity.

So that nothing may draw me out of this beautiful silence within, I must always maintain the same dispositions, the same solitude, the same withdrawal, the same stripping of self! If my desires, my fears, my joys or my sorrows, if all the movements proceeding from these “four passions” are not perfectly directed to God, I will not be solitary: there will be noise within me. There must be peace, “sleep of the powers,” the unity of being. “Listen, my daughter, lend your ear, forget your people and your father’s house, and the King will become enamoured of your beauty.” (Ps 44:12-13)

It seems to me that this call is an invitation to silence: listen... lend your ear... But to listen we must forget “our father’s house,” that is, everything that pertains to the natural life, this life to which the Apostle refers when he says: “If you live according to the flesh, you will die.” (Rm 8:13) To forget “your people” is more difficult, I think, for this people is everything which is, so to

speaking, part of us: our feelings, our memories, our impressions, etc., the *self*, in a word! We must forget it, abandon it, and when the soul has made this break, when it is free from all that, the King is enamored of its beauty. For beauty is unity, at least it is the unity of God!

Eleventh Day

27. “The Lord brought me into a spacious place, because He was gracious toward me.” (Ps 17:20) The Creator, seeing the beautiful silence which reigns in His creature, and gazing on her wholly recollected in her interior solitude, is enamored of her beauty and leads her into this immense, infinite solitude, into this “spacious place” sung of by the prophet, which is nothing else but Himself: “I will enter into the depths of the power of God.” (Ps 70:16) Speaking through his prophet, the Lord said: “I will lead her into solitude and speak to her heart.” (Ho 2:14) The soul has entered into this vast solitude in which God will make Himself heard! “His word,” Saint Paul says, “is living and active, and more penetrating than a two edged sword: extending even to the division of soul and spirit, even of joints and marrow.” (Heb 4:12) It is His word then that will directly achieve the work of stripping in the soul; for it has this particular characteristic, that it effects and creates what it intends, provided however that the soul consents to let this be done.

28. But it is not enough just to listen to this word, we must keep it! And it is in keeping it that the soul will be “sanctified in the truth,” and that is the desire of the Master: “Sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth.” (Jn 17:17) To the one who keeps His word has He not made this promise: “My Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home *in him*”? (Jn 14:23) It is the whole Trinity who dwells in the soul that loves them in truth, that is, by keeping their word! And when this soul has realized its riches, all the natural or supernatural joys that can come to it from creatures or from God Himself are only an invitation to reenter into itself in order to enjoy the substantial Good that it possesses, which is nothing else than God Himself. And thus it has, Saint John of the Cross says, a certain resemblance to the divine Being.

“Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Saint Paul tells me “that He works all things according to the counsel of His will,” (Ep 1:11) and my Master asks me also to pay Him homage in this regard: “to do all things according to the counsel of His will.” Never to let myself be ruled by impressions, by the first impulses of nature, but to let the will gain self-mastery... And for this will to be free, it must be, in the expression of a pious writer, “enclosed in God’s will.” Then I will be “moved by His Spirit,” (Rm 8:14) as Saint Paul says. I will do only what is divine, only what is eternal, and, like my Unchanging One, I will live even here below in an eternal present.

Twelfth Day

29. “Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.” (Jn 1:14) God has said: “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Pe 1:16) But He remained hidden in His inaccessible light and the creature needed to have Him descend to it, to live its life, so that following in His footsteps, it can thus ascend to Him and become holy with His holiness. “I sanctify myself for them that they also may be sanctified in the truth.” (Jn 17:19) Here I am in the presence “of a mystery hidden from ages and generations,” the mystery “which is Christ”: “your hope of glory,” (Col 1:26-27) says Saint Paul! And he adds that “the understanding of this mystery” was given to him. (Ep 3:4) So it is from the great Apostle that I am going to learn how I may possess this knowledge which, in his expression, “surpasses all other knowledge: the knowledge of the love of Christ Jesus.” (Ep 3:19)

30. First of all he tells me that He is “my peace,” (Ep 2:14) that it is “through Him that I have access to the Father,” (Ep 2:18) for it has pleased this “Father of lights” (Ja 1:17) that “in Him all fullness should dwell, and that through Him He should reconcile to Himself all things, whether on the earth or in the heavens, making peace through the Blood of His Cross.” (Col 1:19-20) “You have received of His fullness,” the Apostle continues, “you were buried with Him in Baptism, and in Him you rose again through faith in the working of God... He brought you to life along with Him, forgiving you all your sins, cancelling the decree of condemnation which weighed on you: He abolished it by nailing it to the Cross. Despoiling Principalities and Powers, He victoriously led them away as captives, triumphing over them in Himself,” (Col 2:10, 12-15) “to present you holy, pure, and without reproach before Him.” (Col 1:22)

31. This is Christ’s work in every soul of good will and it is the work that His immense love, His “*exceeding love*,” (Ep 2:4) is eager to do in me. He wants to be my peace so that nothing can distract me or draw me out of “the invincible fortress of holy recollection.” It is there that He will give me “access to the Father” and will keep me as still and as peaceful in His presence as if my soul were already in eternity. It is by the Blood of His Cross that He will make peace in my little heaven, so that it may truly be the repose of the Three. He will fill me with Himself; He will bury me with Him; He will make me live again with Him, by His life: “*Mihi vivere Christus est!*” (Ph 1:21) And if I fall at every moment, in a wholly confident faith I will be helped up by Him. I know that He will forgive me, that He will cancel out everything with a jealous care, and even more, He will “despoil” me, He will “free” me from all my miseries, from everything that is an obstacle to the divine action. “He will lead away all my powers,” (Col 2:15) making them His captives, triumphing over them in Himself. Then I will have wholly passed into Him and can say: “I no longer live. My Master lives in me!” (Ga 2:20) And I will be “*holy, pure, without reproach*” in the Father’s eyes.

Thirteenth Day

32. “Instaurare omnia in Christo.” (Ep 1:10) Again it is Saint Paul who instructs me, Saint Paul who has just immersed himself in the great counsel of

God and who tells me “that He has resolved in Himself to restore all things in Christ.”

So that I may personally realize this divine plan, it is again Saint Paul who comes to my aid and who will himself draw up a rule of life for me. “Walk in Jesus Christ,” he tells me, “be rooted in Him, built up in Him, strengthened in faith, growing more and more in Him through thanksgiving.” (Col 2:6-7)

33. *To walk in Jesus Christ* seems to me to mean to leave self, lose sight of self, give up self, in order to enter more deeply into Him with every passing moment, so deeply that one is *rooted* there; and to every event, to every circumstance we can fling this beautiful challenge: “Who will separate me from the love of Jesus Christ?” (Rm 8:35) When the soul is established in Him at such depths that its *roots* are also deeply thrust in, then the divine sap streams into it and all this imperfect, commonplace, natural life is destroyed. Then, in the language of the Apostle, “that which is mortal is swallowed up by life.” (2 Co 5:4) The soul thus “stripped” of self and “clothed” in Jesus Christ has nothing more to fear from exterior encounters or from interior difficulties, for these things, far from being an obstacle, serve only “to root it more deeply in the love” of its Master. Through everything, despite everything, the soul can “adore Him always because of Himself.” (Ps 71:15) For it is free, rid of self and everything else; it can sing with the psalmist: “Though an army encamp against me, I will not fear; though war be waged upon me I will trust in spite of everything; for Yahweh will hide me in the secrecy of His tent” (Ps 26:3, 5) and this tent is nothing else but Himself. I think that is what Saint Paul means when he says: “be rooted in Jesus Christ.”

34. And now what does it mean *to be built up in Him*? The prophet also sings “He has set me high upon a rock, now my head is held high above my enemies who surround me” (Ps 26:5-6); I think that this can well be taken as a figure of the soul “built up in Jesus Christ.” He is that rock on which it is set high above self, the senses and nature, above consolations or sorrows, above all that is not *Him* alone. And there in complete self-control, it overcomes self, it goes beyond self and all else as well.

Next Saint Paul advises me to *be strengthened in faith*: in that faith which never lets the soul doze but keeps it wholly vigilant beneath its Master’s gaze, wholly absorbed in recollection of His creating word, in that faith “in His exceeding love,” (Ep 2:4) which permits God, Saint Paul tells me, to fill the soul “*with His fullness.*” (Ep 3:19)

35. Finally, he wants me “to grow in Jesus Christ through *thanksgiving*”: for everything should end in this! “Father, I thank You!” (Jn 11:41) My Master sang this in His soul and He wants to hear the echo of it in mine! But I think that the “new song” (Ap 14:3) which will most charm and captivate my God is that of a soul stripped and freed from self, one in whom He can reflect all that He is, and do all that He wills. This soul remains under His touch like a lyre, and all His gifts to it are like so many strings which vibrate to sing, day and night, the praise of His glory!

Fourteenth Day

36. “It seems to me that all is loss since I have known the excelling knowledge of my Lord, Jesus Christ. For love of Him I have forfeited everything; I have accounted all else rubbish that I may gain Christ, so as to be found in Him, not with my own justice but with the justice that comes from God through faith. What I want is to know Him, to share in His sufferings, to become like Him in His death. I pursue my course, striving to attain to what Christ has destined me for by taking hold of me; my whole concern is to forget what is behind and to strain forward constantly to what is ahead; I run straight to the goal..., to the prize of the heavenly vocation to which God has called me in Christ Jesus.” (Ph 3:8-10, 12-14) The Apostle has often revealed the greatness of this vocation: “God,” he says, “has chosen us in Him before the creation of the world that we might be holy and immaculate in His presence in love... We have been predestined by the decree of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we may be the praise of His glory.” (Ep 1:4, 11-12)

37. But how do we respond to the dignity of this vocation? This is the secret: “Mihi vivere Christus est!... Vivo enim, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus.” (Ph 1:21; Ga 2:20) We must be transformed into Jesus Christ; again it is Saint Paul who teaches me this: “Those whom God has foreknown, He has predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.” (Rm 8:29)

It is important then that I study this divine Model so as to identify myself so closely with Him that I may unceasingly reveal Him to the eyes of the Father. First of all, what did He say when He came into the world? “Here I am, O God, I come to do your will.” (Heb 10:9) I think that this prayer should be like the bride’s heartbeat: “Here *we* are, O Father, we come to do your will!”

38. The Master was truth itself in this first oblation! His life was as it were but the consequence of it! “My food,” He liked to say, “is to do the will of Him who sent Me.” (Jn 4:34) It should also be that of the bride, and at the same time the sword that immolates her... “If it is possible, let this cup pass me by, yet not as I will but as You will.” (Mt 26:39) And then she will joyfully go in peace to every sacrifice with her Master, rejoicing to “*have been known*” by the Father since He crucifies her with His Son. “Your decrees are my inheritance forever; they are the joy of my heart” (Ps 118:111): my Master sang this in His soul, and it should echo resoundingly in that of the bride! It is by her constant fidelity to these “*decrees*,” whether exterior or interior, that she will “bear witness to the truth” (Jn 18:37) and will be able to say “He who sent me has not left me alone. He is always with me because I do always the things that are pleasing to Him.” (Jn 8:29) And by never leaving Him, by remaining in closest contact with Him, she will radiate “this secret power” (Lk 6:19) which saves and delivers souls. Stripped and set free of self and all else, she can follow the Master to the mountain to pray there with Him in her soul, “a prayer of God.” (Lk 6:12) Then, still through the divine Adorer, He who is the great praise of glory to the Father, she will “ceaselessly offer a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips praising His name” (Heb 13:15). And, as the psalmist sings, she will praise Him “in the expansion of His power, and for the immensity of His grandeur.” (Ps 150:1-2)

39. Then, when her hour of humiliation, of annihilation comes, she will recall this little phrase, “Jesus autem tacebat” (Mt 26:63); and she will be

silent, “keeping all her strength for the Lord” (Ps 58:10); this strength which “we draw from silence.” (Is 30:15) And when the hour of abandonment, of desertion, and of anguish comes, the hour that drew from Christ this loud cry, “Why have You abandoned Me?” (Mt 27:46), she will recall this prayer: “that they may have in themselves the fullness of My joy” (Jn 17:13); and drinking to the dregs “the cup prepared by the Father,” (Jn 18:11) she will find a divine sweetness in its bitterness. Finally, after having said so often “I am thirsty,” (Jn 19:30) thirsty to possess You in glory, she will sing: “Everything is consummated; into Your hands I commend my spirit.” (Lk 23:46) And the Father will come for her to “bring her into His inheritance,” (Col 1:12-13) where in “the light she will see light.” (Ps 35:10)

“Know that the Lord has marvelously glorified His Holy One,” (Ps 4:4) David sang. Yes, the Holy One of God will have been glorified in this soul, for He will have destroyed everything there to “clothe it with Himself,” (Ga 3:27) and it will have lived in reality the words of the Precursor: “He must increase and I must decrease.” (Jn 3:30)

Fifteenth Day

40. After Jesus Christ, doubtless at the distance that there is between the Infinite and the finite, there is one who was also the great praise of glory of the Holy Trinity. She responded fully to the divine election of which the Apostle speaks: she was always “*pure, immaculate, and without reproach*” (Col 1:22) in the eyes of the thrice-holy God. Her soul is so simple. Its movements are so profound that they cannot be detected. She seems to reproduce on earth the life which is that of the divine Being, the simple Being. And she is so transparent, so luminous that one would mistake her for the light, yet she is but the “mirror” of the Sun of Justice: “*Speculum justitiae!*”

“The Virgin kept all these things in her heart” (Lk 2:19): her whole history can be summed up in these few words! It was within her heart that she lived, and at such a depth that no human eye can follow her. When I read in the Gospel “that Mary went in haste to the hill country of Judea” (Lk 1:39) to perform her loving service for her cousin Elizabeth, I imagine her passing by so beautiful, so calm and so majestic, so absorbed in recollection of the Word of God within her. Like Him, her prayer was always this: “*Ecce, here I am!*” Who? “The servant of the Lord,” (Lk 1:38) the lowliest of His creatures: she, His Mother! Her humility was so real for she was always forgetful, unaware, freed from self. And she could sing: “The Almighty has done great things for me, henceforth all peoples will call me blessed.” (Lk 1:48, 49)

41. This Queen of virgins is also Queen of martyrs; but again it was *in her heart* that the *sword pierced* (Lk 2:35), for with her everything took place within!... Oh! How beautiful she is to contemplate during her long martyrdom, so serene, enveloped in a kind of majesty that radiates both strength and gentleness... She learned from the Word Himself how those must suffer whom the Father has chosen as victims, those whom He has decided to associate with Himself in the great work of redemption, those whom He “has foreknown and predestined to be conformed to His Christ,” (Rm 8:29) crucified by love.

She is there at the foot of the Cross, *standing*, full of strength and courage, and here my Master says to me: “Ecce Mater tua.” (Jn 19:27) He gives her to me for my Mother. And now that He has returned to the Father and has substituted me for Himself on the Cross so that “I may suffer in my body what is lacking in His passion for the sake of His body, which is the Church,” (Col 1:24) the Blessed Virgin is again there to teach me to suffer as He did, to tell me, to make me hear those last songs of His soul which no one else but she, His Mother, could overhear.

When I shall have said my “consummatum est,” (Jn 19:30) it is again she, “Janua coeli,” who will lead me into the heavenly courts, whispering to me these mysterious words: “*Laetatus sum in his quae dicta sunt mihi; in domum Domini ibimus!*” (Ps 121:1)

Sixteenth Day

42. “As the thirsty doe longs for the springs of fresh water, so my soul longs for You, O God! My soul thirsts for the living God! When will I appear before His face?” (Ps 41:1-2)

And yet, as “the sparrow has found a home,” and “the turtledove a nest in which she may lay her young,” (Ps 83:3) so *Laudem Gloriam* has found while waiting to be brought to the holy Jerusalem, “*beata pacis visio*” —her retreat, her beatitude, her anticipated Heaven in which she begins her life of eternity. “In God my soul is silent; my deliverance comes from Him. Yes, He is the rock in which I find salvation, my stronghold, I shall not be disturbed!” (Ps 61:2-3)

This is the mystery my lyre sings of today! My Master has said to me as to Zacchaeus: “Hurry and come down, for I must stay in your house today.” (Lk 19:5) Hurry and come down, but where? Into the innermost depths of my being: after having forsaken self, withdrawn from self been stripped of self in a word, *without self*.

43. “I must stay in your house!” It is my Master who expresses this desire! My master who wants to dwell in me with the Father and His Spirit of love, so that, in the words of the beloved disciple, I may have “communion” (1 Jn 1:3) with Them. “You are no longer guests or strangers, but you already belong to the House of God,” (Ep 2:19) says Saint Paul. This is how I understand “belong to the House of God”: it is in living in the bosom of the tranquil Trinity, in my interior abyss, in this “invincible fortress of holy recollection” of which Saint John of the Cross speaks!

David sang: “My soul falls down in a faint for the courts of the Lord.” (Ps 83:3) I think that this should be the attitude of every soul that enters into its interior courts to contemplate its God and to come into closest contact with Him: it “falls down in a faint” in a divine swoon before this all-powerful Love, this infinite Majesty who dwells within it! It is not life that abandons the soul, but rather the soul that scorns this natural life and withdraws from it. . . . For it feels that this life is not worthy of His rich essence so it dies and flows into its God.

44. Oh! How beautiful is this creature thus stripped, freed from self! It can “use the ascensions in its heart so that it may pass from this valley of tears” (that is, from all that is less than God) “to the place which is its

goal,” (Ps 83:6) this “Spacious place,” (Ps 17:20) of which the psalmist sings, which is, it seems to me, the unfathomable Trinity “Immensus Pater, immensus Filius, immensus Spiritus sanctus!” It ascends, it rises above the senses, above nature; it transcends itself; it goes beyond every joy and every pain and passes through the clouds, not stopping until it has penetrated “*into the interior*” of Him whom it loves and who Himself will give it “the repose of the abyss.” And all that without leaving the holy fortress” The Master had said to it: “Hurry and *come down*...” It is also without leaving it that the soul will live, like the immutable Trinity, in an *eternal present*, “adoring Him always because of Himself,” (Ps 71:15) and becoming by an always more simple, more unitive gaze, “the splendor of His glory,” (Heb 1:3) that is, the unceasing praise of glory of His adorable perfections.