

*My*  
**Imitation**  
**of**  
**Christ**

Thomas à Kempis

REVISED  
TRANSLATION

ILLUSTRATED

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**302**

## Foreword

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THE "Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis needs no introduction. For five centuries it has been the most popular spiritual book second only to the Sacred Scriptures. It presents the fundamental principles of the spiritual life. The Christian soul is invited to follow Christ Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. As we study its contents we are convinced that without that Way there is no going, without that Truth there is no knowing, without that Life there is no real living.

THE Confraternity of the Precious Blood feels justified in adding yet another edition to the many that have already appeared. In this day of visual education we have endeavored to pictorialize the sublime truths of the Imitation with an abundance of illustrations. Each chapter has its own illustration executed in expert fashion exclusively for this book by the noted Armenian Artist, Ariel Agemian, K. S. G.

The text has been revised to free it of archaic expressions without destroying its original flavor.

(Rt. Rev. Msgr.) Joseph B. Frey

Feast of Our Lady  
March 25, 1954



*All these will I give thee.—Matt. 4,9*

*“Vanity of vanities and all is vanity” except to love God and serve Him alone.*

### Chapter 1

#### *The Imitation of Christ, and the Contempt of All the Vanities of the World*

**H**E that followeth me, walketh not in darkness,” saith our Lord.—JOHN VIII. 12. These are the words of Christ, by which we are admonished, that we must imitate his life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened, and delivered from all blindness of heart.

Let it then be our chief study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.

2. The doctrine of Christ surpasseth all the doctrines of the saints; and whosoever hath His Spirit will find therein a hidden manna.—APOC. II. 17.

But it happeneth that many, by frequent hearing of the Gospel, are very little affected: because they have not the spirit of Christ.

But he who would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ, must study to make his whole life conformable to that of Christ.

3. What doth it avail thee to discourse profoundly of the Trinity if thou be void of humility, and consequently, displeasing to the Trinity?

In truth, sublime words make not a man holy and just: but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God.

I would rather feel compunction than know its definition.

If thou didst know the whole Bible by heart,

and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it all profit thee without the love of God and His grace?

“Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity”—ECCLES.

1. 2. except to love God and serve Him alone.

This is the highest wisdom, by despising the world to tend to heavenly kingdoms.

4. It is vanity, therefore, to seek after riches which must perish and to trust in them.

It is vanity also to be ambitious of honors, and to raise one’s self to a high station.

It is vanity to follow the lusts of the flesh and to desire that for which thou must afterwards be grievously punished.

It is vanity to wish for a long life and to take little care of leading a good life.

It is vanity also to mind this present life and not to look forward unto those things which are to come.

It is vanity to love that which passeth with all speed and not to hasten thither where everlasting joy remaineth.

5. Often remember that proverb: “The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.”—ECCLES. 1. 8.

Study, therefore, to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things, and to turn thyself to things invisible. For they that follow their sensuality defile their conscience and lose the grace of God.



*Pharisee and Publican  
Pride and Humility*

## Chapter 2

*Having an Humble Opinion of One's Self*

**A**LL men naturally desire to know, but what does knowledge avail without the fear of God?

Indeed an humble husbandman that serves God is better than a proud philosopher, who, neglecting himself, considers the course of the heavens.—ECCLES. XIX. 21.

He who knows himself well is mean in his own eyes and is not delighted with being praised by men.

If I should know all things that are in the world and should not be in charity—ROM. XIII. 8; 1 COR. XIII. 2, what would it avail me in the sight of God, who will judge me by my deeds?

2. Leave off that excessive desire of knowing: because there is found therein much distraction and deceit.

They who are learned are desirous to appear, and to be called wise.

There are many things, the knowledge of which is of little or no profit to the soul.

And he is very unwise who attends to other things than what may serve to his salvation.

Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life gives ease to the mind; and a pure conscience affords a great confidence in God.—

1 TIM. III. 9.

3. The more and better thou knowest the

more heavy will be thy judgment unless thy life be also more holy.

Be not, therefore, puffed up with any art or science: but rather fear because of the knowledge which is given thee.

If it seem to thee that thou knowest many things and understandest them well enough, know at the same time that there are many more things of which thou art ignorant.

Be not high-minded, but rather acknowledge thy ignorance. Why wouldst thou prefer thyself to any one, since there are many more learned and skillful in the law than thyself?

If thou wouldst know and learn anything to the purpose, love to be unknown and esteemed as nothing.

4. This is the highest science and most profitable lesson, truly to know and despise ourselves.

To have no opinion of ourselves and to think always well and commendably of others, is great wisdom and high perfection.

If thou shouldst see another openly sin or commit some heinous crime, yet thou oughtst not to esteem thyself better: because thou knowest not how long thou mayst remain in a good state.

We are all frail: but see thou think no one more frail than thyself.



*The Stoning of Stephen  
There I will give thee glory for the affronts  
which thou has suffered.*

## Chapter 49

*The Desire of Eternal Life*

CHRIST:

**S**ON, when thou perceivest a longing after eternal bliss to be infused into thee from above, and thou desirest to go out of the dwelling of this body, that thou mayst contemplate My brightness, without any shadow of change—*JAMES I. 17, enlarge thy heart—PS. CXVIII. 32, and with all thy affections embrace this holy inspiration.*

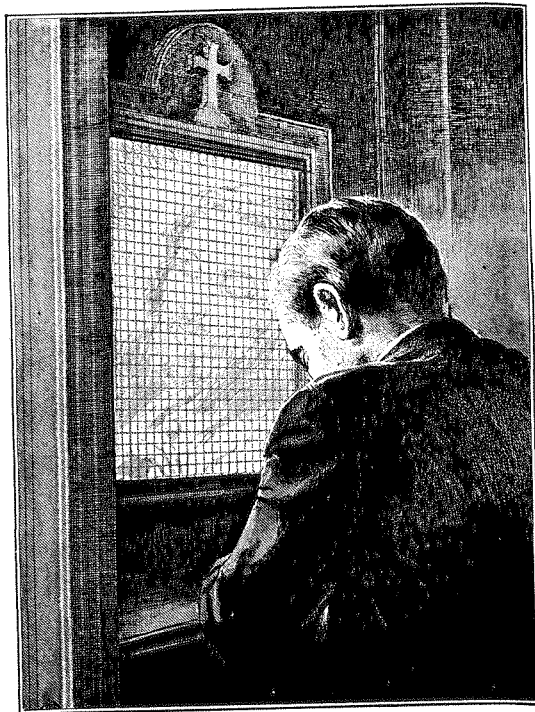
Return very great thanks to the divine bounty, which deals so favorably with thee, which mercifully visits thee, ardently incites thee, and powerfully raises thee up, lest by thy own weight thou fall down to the things of the earth.

For it is not by thy own thought or endeavor that thou attainest to this; but only by the favor of heavenly grace and the divine visit: that so thou mayst advance in virtue and greater humility, and prepare thyself for future conflicts, and labor with the whole affection of thy heart to keep close to Me, and serve Me with a fervent will.

2. Son, the fire often burns, but the flame ascends not without smoke.

So also some people's desires are on fire after heavenly things, and yet they are not free from the temptation of carnal affection.

And therefore it is not altogether purely for



Confession

## Chapter 12

*He Who Is to Communicate Ought to Prepare Himself For Christ With Great Diligence*

CHRIST:

**I** AM the lover of purity and the giver of all holiness.

I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of My rest.—IS. LXVI. 1.

Make ready for Me “a large upper room furnished, and I will eat the pasch with thee, together with My disciples.”—MARK XIV. 14, 15.

If thou wilt have Me come to thee, and remain with thee, purge out the old leaven—1 COR. V. 7, and make clean the habitation of thy heart.

Shut out the whole world, and all the tumult of vices: sit like a sparrow solitary on the house-top—PS. CI. 8, and think of thy excesses in the bitterness of thy soul.—IS. XXXVIII. 15.

For every lover prepareth the best and fairest room for his dearly beloved; and hereby is known the affection of him that entertaineth his beloved.

2. Know, nevertheless, that thou canst not sufficiently prepare thyself by the merit of any action of thine although thou shouldst prepare thyself a whole year together, and think of nothing else.

But it is of My mere goodness and grace that thou art suffered to come to My table; as if a beggar should be invited to dinner by a rich