

# DIVINE INTIMACY

MEDITATIONS ON THE INTERIOR LIFE  
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR

by

Father Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen, O.C.D.



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## INTRODUCTION

Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D., a Belgian by birth, became a Discalced Carmelite priest. For years he taught in various Colleges in Rome. Students flocked to his lectures, and he became one of the most revered masters of the spiritual life.

He acquired a vast knowledge of the ways that lead to holiness and to union with God. His experience with souls, whom he guided to the heights of perfection, was outstanding. He was an expert in the spiritual and mystical doctrine of St. Teresa of Jesus (Avila) and of St. John of the Cross. This knowledge of the ways that lead to God, according to the teaching of the renowned Spanish mystics, is distilled into the pages of this book.

The Discalced Carmelite nuns of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Rome were the spiritual heirs of the Father Gabriel's vast output of published works and private manuscripts. For ten years, he guided these nuns as their confessor and spiritual director. It was they who helped him to arrange his material in line with the course of the liturgical year, while following the ascent of the soul to transforming union with God, or to 'Divine Intimacy.' This is the highest state attainable on earth. In this union of love, the soul produces acts of love which have an immense apostolic influence on a multitude of souls. In this way they strive to be 'able in some way to help the Crucified' (St. Teresa).

This Book of Meditations is a classic. It is seeped in Carmelite spirituality. For every day it offers two meditations that enable the soul to enter the conscious presence of God and to reflect on the theme of the day. These are followed by a 'Colloquy' that helps the person at prayer to start a friendly conversation with God where acts of praise and love, petition and thanksgiving are made, together with good resolutions for the future. Here we are at the very heart of prayer, which is a heart-to-heart encounter in faith with the living God.



This Book of Meditations on the interior life for every day of the liturgical year is a pearl of great price. For spiritual reading and personal prayer, it is a treasure, providing sound guidance on the journey of prayer, and a safe companion on the road to holiness and to intimate union with God.

✠ Philip Boyce, O.C.D.  
Bishop of Raphoe, Ireland

## INTRODUCTION TO THE 1963 EDITION

In these times when the lines of battle are being drawn more and more clearly between the forces of religion and those of atheism, we see the devotees of each of these systems calling upon every resource at their disposal. Before one can really fight for a cause, he must be fully convinced of the truth of it. He must ponder its ideals and adapt his thoughts and actions to it.

We can be sure that the fervent Communist gives serious thought and frequent consideration to the ideals for which he is sacrificing himself. Only in this way can he fire his zeal to continue the struggle. But we, as Christians, have a much greater cause to fight for. It is greater precisely because it is true and divine. How mistaken we are if we neglect to increase our knowledge of and zeal for our Faith. We can hardly expect to remain fervent and apostolic Christians unless we make it a practice to ponder the truths of our holy religion, to strive to identify our thoughts with those of Christ, our Leader, and to transform those thoughts into effective action in His service.

This book is a mine of inspirational thoughts, an excellent book of meditations which aims at helping us to review and concentrate on the treasures of our Faith, so that an intelligent appreciation thereof will become a significant factor in our thinking and acting. It should also prompt us to be one with Christ and to bring about the most intimate union that is possible in this life between souls and God. The author of *Divine Intimacy*, Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D., was one of the outstanding Discalced Carmelite authors and lecturers of modern times. A devout son of St. John of the Cross, he devoted himself generously and tirelessly to the task of promoting that desired union, both in himself and in others. His book of meditations for each day of the year is an outstanding part of his effort. Faithful to these meditations from day to day, we shall know Christ and live Christ, absorb His teach-

ings more fully and become more dedicated to His service. Our zeal for the cause of Christ will then equal—nay, far outstrip—that of the atheistic Communist. He meditates on false doctrines, the work of Godless men, which lead him to become less than a man. The Christian meditates on the Gospel of Christ, which leads him to become something more than a man—to share in an intimate manner in the life of God Himself—to become Godlike, or in the words of St. John of the Cross, “God by participation.”

✠ Richard Cardinal Cushing  
Archbishop of Boston

## FOREWORD

The extraordinary success with which the volume, *Divine Intimacy*, has been received among clergy and religious, as well as among those in the world who are consecrated to God, those engaged in Catholic Action, and the faithful in general, is a fitting crown to the author's life, one which was permeated with the desire for intimate union with God and the apostolate of fostering the interior life.

The late Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen entered the Order of Discalced Carmelites in Bruges, Belgium, in 1910, at the age of seventeen.

The First World War (1914-18) forced him to continue his study of philosophy and theology in Ireland. He was ordained priest in 1919. From 1919 to 1926, while teaching philosophy in the Seminary of the Order at Courtrai in Belgium, he had the opportunity of completing his own studies at the nearby University of Louvain, and finally in Rome, where he attended the Pontifical Institute, the “Angelicum.”

From 1926 to 1936 Father Gabriel was spiritual director of the young theologians at the International College of St. Teresa in the city where, at the same time, he was teaching theology. From 1931 until his death (March 15, 1953), he dedicated himself especially to the study of spiritual theology. During this last period of his life, his remarkable talents as a teacher and spiritual director were clearly evidenced, both in the conferences on Carmelite spirituality, which he gave in Rome and in the larger cities of Italy, as well as in his numerous publications on St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, and St. Teresa Margaret of the Heart of Jesus.

He was also a member of the Roman Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas and a Consultor of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

By his lectures and writings, this great religious and eminent spiritual director became an ardent leader in the spiritual movement in Italy.

In 1941 he founded the review *Vita Carmelitana*, the title of which was changed in 1947 to *Revista di Vita Spirituale*. This review

continues to propagate the sound doctrine of the spiritual life that is needed more than ever today.

Father Gabriel was profoundly aware of the spiritual needs of our times, and he also understood the special mission of Carmel in the Church, that of leading souls to a life of intimate union with God by means of the practice of mental prayer. Thus he conceived the idea of a book which, taking its inspiration from the great teachers of Carmel, would set forth the whole doctrine of the spiritual life in the form of simple, but solid, meditations—a book which would introduce souls to intimate prayer.

*Divine Intimacy*, therefore, seeks to arrange daily meditations “in such a way that in the course of one year the most important problems of the spiritual life and all the supernatural realities met with in the interior life will have been reviewed” (Preface).

To promote his work, Father Gabriel asked the assistance of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Rome. To this end, he furnished them with the vast amount of material at his disposal (his publications, the texts of his conferences, instructions, sermons, and so forth). He then outlined the plan for the whole book and directed the work on it. This collaboration with his spiritual daughters in Carmel proved truly providential. After the untimely death of the renowned master, the Nuns, who were in possession of all his manuscripts, were able to bring to a happy conclusion the publication of their venerated Father’s work.

The first edition of *Divine Intimacy*, received with great enthusiasm by Christians everywhere, was quickly exhausted. Translations into several languages were requested. Numerous letters from prelates, directors of seminaries, superiors of religious houses, priests, and the laity have testified to the benefit received from this work.

May this English edition of *Divine Intimacy* awaken many souls to the need of a solid interior life and lead them to close union with God, the source of a really fruitful apostolate in the Church.

Fr. Benjamin of the Holy Trinity, O.C.D.  
First Definitor General of the Discalced Carmelites

## PREFACE

Mental prayer is indispensable to the spiritual life; normally it is, so to speak, its very breath. However, this spontaneity in prayer is usually realized only if the soul applies itself to meditation for some time by its own personal effort. In other words, one must learn how to pray. It is to teach souls this devout practice that various meditation books have been published. There are many methods, each with its own merit; among them is the Teresian method, so called because it is based on the teachings of St. Teresa of Jesus, the Foundress of the Discalced Carmelites and the great mistress of the spiritual life.

Some years ago, we outlined this method in a pamphlet called the *Little Catechism of Prayer*,<sup>1</sup> which has since been translated into many European languages and into some of the Asiatic tongues. It is a simple exposition of the Teresian method according to the writings of many Carmelite authors; its widespread circulation shows very clearly that this method answers the needs and the desires of many prayerful souls. Hence we judged it timely to offer souls aspiring to advance in the interior life, a collection of subjects for meditation for each day of the year, according to the Teresian idea and method of mental prayer.

The idea of mental prayer which St. Teresa has left us is well known in our day. In her *Autobiography* she defines it as “friendly intercourse and frequent solitary converse with Him who we know loves us” (*Life*, 8).

In these words St. Teresa reveals the affective spirit of mental prayer which is its special characteristic. It is “friendly intercourse,” and exchange of “mutual benevolence” between the soul and God, during which the soul “converses intimately” with God—intimacy, as we know, is the fruit of love—and the soul speaks with Him whose love she knows. Each element of the definition contains

1. Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D., *Little Catechism of Prayer*, translated by the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Concord, New Hampshire, 1949.

the idea of love, but at the end the Saint mentions that the soul ought also to “know” and be conscious of God’s love for her: this is the part which the intellect plays in prayer. Therefore, according to St. Teresa, there is an exercise of both the intellect and the will in mental prayer: the intellect seeks to convince the soul that God loves her and wishes to be loved by her; the will, responding to the divine invitation, loves. That is all. There could be no clearer concept of prayer. But how translate it into practice? This is the task of the *method*.

\* \* \*

In order to understand the structure of the Teresian method clearly, we must keep in mind the definition of prayer given above; then we shall easily see that it is fully realized by such a method, that it truly means conversing lovingly with Our Lord, once we understand that He loves us.

We cannot speak to God intimately unless we are in contact with Him. For this reason, we make use of the “preparation,” which consists in placing ourselves more directly in the *presence of God*, turning to Him by means of a good thought.

In order to convince ourselves that God loves us, we choose for the subject of meditation one of the truths of faith which can make His love evident: this is the purpose of the *reading* of an appropriate passage.

However, it does not suffice merely to read the matter; we must examine it thoroughly, and there is no better way of doing this than by reflecting upon it—by *meditating*.

All revealed truth can manifest God’s love for me, but today I try to understand it by reflecting on the theme I have chosen in my *reading*. I make use of the good thoughts contained in the subject of the meditation to actually convince myself of His love, so that love for Him will come spontaneously into my heart, and words perhaps, to my lips.

Thus my *colloquy* with God begins; I tell Him in every way possible (using the words which come to me most spontaneously) that

I love Him, that I want to love Him, that I want to advance in His holy love, and that I wish to prove my love for Him by my actions, by doing His holy will.

And now we are at the center, *the heart of prayer*. For many souls, nothing more is needed. Some, however, prefer greater variety; therefore, to facilitate the prolonging of our loving conversation with God, the three final steps of the method are offered. These, however, are *optional*.

*Thanksgiving*: After having told Our Lord again that we love Him, we thank Him for all the benefits we have received from Him and show Him that we are grateful.

*Offering*: Aware of having received so many favors, we try to repay our debt as far as we can by making some good resolution. It is always useful to end our prayer in this way.

*Petition*: The consciousness of our weakness and frailty urges us to implore the help of God.

This is the whole Teresian method, divided into seven steps:

Two *introductory*: the preparation (presence of God) and reading.

Two *essential*: the meditation and the colloquy.

Three *optional*, to help in prolonging the colloquy: the thanksgiving, the offering, and the petition.

\* \* \*

The meditations in this book are based on this method.

We begin with the *presence of God*, an appropriate thought which brings us into contact with our Creator and orientates us toward Him.

The *reading* provides the subject for the meditation. And as many spiritual persons apply themselves to meditation twice a day, each meditation offers two points.

The soul then begins to *reflect*, using freely the text already read. In this way it will pass spontaneously to the *colloquy* which, according to the Teresian concept, is the “heart,” the center of mental prayer.

That is why our meditations are directed toward helping souls especially on this point. To this end we have tried to give the col-

loquies a form that is sufficiently ample; nevertheless, they may be used freely as desired, each soul choosing whatever corresponds to the need of the moment. To make the colloquies more efficacious, we have selected suitable ardent expressions and thoughts taken by preference from the writings of the saints and other loving souls. Very often we have been obliged to make slight modifications in these texts, in order to adapt them to the intimate form of a colloquy. However, we always indicate their source in parentheses.<sup>1</sup>

The colloquies consist of expressions of love, alternating with petitions, acts of thanksgiving, and transports of the soul toward God; these are made concrete in the resolutions.

We hope that these meditations, written in this way, will help souls to apply themselves to mental prayer according to the Teresian idea and method.

\* \* \*

Teresian spirituality is the spirituality of divine intimacy,<sup>2</sup> that is, it tries to nourish in souls the ideal of intimacy with God and it directs them toward this ideal, principally by means of mental prayer. Mental prayer should be attuned, therefore, to this great and lofty aspiration.

This is the "tone" we have tried to give our meditations, and the title, *Divine Intimacy*, indicates our intention to help souls as far as possible to attain this great end.

In addition, Teresian spirituality is also doctrinal. St. Teresa of Jesus, the great "mistress of the spiritual life," always desired—and endeavored to put her desire into practice — that the ascetical and mystical life of those who were dear to her be based on solid doctrine, for the Saint greatly loved theology. That is why we have desired to build these meditations upon a sound theological basis. We have attempted to arrange them in such a way that, in the course

1. In spite of the modifications we have made, we have not used the customary "cf.," so as to avoid constant repetition. We have used this sign only when the colloquies were merely inspired by the writings of the saints and not quoted from them.

2. See our work, *Carmelite Spirituality*, Rome, College of St. Teresa 1943.

of one year, the most important problems of the spiritual life and all the supernatural realities met with in the interior life will have been reviewed.

The meditations begin with the opening of the liturgical year, and are arranged in the following order:

*December* – The Ideal: Holiness, Intimacy with God, The Apostolate - The Mystery of the Incarnation.

*January* – Jesus : His Person, His Works, Our Relations with Him - The Church - The Sacraments.

*February* and *March* – Interior Purification and the Exercise of Abnegation - The Passion of Jesus.

*April* – The Life of Prayer.

*May* – Our Blessed Lady - The Holy Spirit.

*June* – Jesus in the Holy Eucharist - The Sacred Heart of Jesus - The Most Holy Trinity.

*July* – The Divine Perfections - The Theological Virtues.

*August* and *September* – The Moral Virtues - The Gifts of the Holy Spirit - The Beatitudes.

*October* and *November* – The Apostolate - Union with God.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

We should like to call attention to one last point.

Precisely because Teresian spirituality is the spirituality of divine intimacy, the spirit impregnating the exercises by which we hope to attain this lofty ideal must be the *spirit of love*. We have tried to keep in mind this special mark of the spirit of Carmel. Not all meditation books are adapted to souls thirsting for divine intimacy, simply because they are too much imbued with a spirit of fear. Not, indeed, that fear is not profitable for certain souls, but since there are so many books of this type, we judged it timely to publish a collection of meditations in which love would be united to filial, reverential fear, instead of servile fear, while not denying that this latter can be very salutary. This is also the reason we have by preference empha-

1. Because of the desire of many to facilitate the use of the work, it was decided to abolish the division into months, leaving only the order of the liturgical weeks.

sized the positive topics of virtue and spiritual progress rather than the negative ones of vice and sin.

May the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, who deigns to dwell in our souls in order to bring them gradually under His complete influence and direction, kindle in us, "with abundant effusion," that love of charity which will lead us to intimacy with God! May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of fair love, whose soul, filled with grace, was ever moved by the Holy Spirit, obtain for us from this divine Spirit the favor of remaining docile to His invitations, so that we may realize, with the help of an assiduous, effective practice of mental prayer, the beautiful ideal of intimate union with God.

Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D.  
Rome, Feast of the Sacred Heart, 1952.

SECRETARIATE OF STATE  
OF HIS HOLINESS

The Vatican, July 7, 1961

N. 633114

Reverend Mother,

The Reigning Pontiff accepts with pleasure the copy of the fifth edition of *Intimità Divina*, a book of meditations following the course of the liturgical year, inspired by the late Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, which you humbly offer Him. It should be added that several Religious of the Monastery of St. Joseph, Rome, collected and diligently arranged the material furnished by the Author, who had not the consolation of seeing his work, an effective compendium of Carmelite spirituality, published.

The meditations are substantial and solid, adapted to the various degrees of spirituality, and within reach of every person of good will. Priests, seminarians, contemplative souls, those dedicated to the apostolate, and finally the laity of every social class have meditated these pages and found encouragement and spiritual profit. This has been so, not only in Italy, but, it may be said, throughout the world, thanks to the translations into all the principal languages.

The Holy Father is glad to know that a new edition in Italian is being prepared. He is pleased that the book has been so successful; He hopes that it will have an ever wider diffusion, so that the innumerable souls in every state of life who long above all things for God, and aspire to an intimate life with Him, may draw light and strength from it to persevere with increased fervor in the work of their salvation.

Finally, His Holiness is happy to impart to you, and to all the Religious of your Monastery, in token of Divine Grace, the Apostolic Benediction.

Yours devotedly in Our Lord,  
✠ ANGELLO DELL'ACQUA  
Substitute

Reverend Mother  
Prioress of the Discalced Carmelites  
Monastery of St. Joseph  
Rome

## ABBREVIATIONS

- Ep* = Epistle  
*Gosp* = Gospel  
*RB* = Roman Breviary  
*RM* = Roman Missal  
*J.C.* = ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS  
*AS* = Ascent of Mt. Carmel  
*CR* = Counsels to a Religious  
*DN* = Dark Night of the Soul  
*LF* = Living Flame of Love  
*P* = Precautions (Cautions)  
*SC* = Spiritual Canticle  
*SM* = Spiritual Maxims :  
    *I* = Words of Light  
    *II* = Points of Love  
    *III* = Other Counsels  
*T.J.* = ST. TERESA OF JESUS  
*Con* = Conceptions of the Love of God  
*Exc* = Exclamations of the Soul to God  
*F* = Foundations  
*Int C* = Interior Castle (Mansions)  
*Life* = Life  
*M* = Maxims for her Nuns  
*SR* = Spiritual Relations  
*Way* = Way of Perfection  
*T.M.* = ST. TERESA MARGARET OF THE HEART OF JESUS  
*Sp* = Spirituality of St. Teresa Margaret of the Heart of Jesus (Not yet translated)  
*T.C.J.* = ST. THERESE OF THE CHILD JESUS  
*C* = Counsels and Souvenirs  
*NV* = Novissima Verba  
*St* = Story of a Soul  
*E.T.* = SR. ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY  
*I* = First Retreat (Heaven on Earth)  
*II* = Last Retreat  
*III* = Elevation to the Most Holy Trinity
- ALL AUTHORS  
*L* = Letters

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT  
TO THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

THE IDEAL: SANCTITY, INTIMACY WITH GOD, THE APOSTOLATE -  
THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION - JESUS: HIS PERSON,  
HIS WORK, OUR RELATIONS WITH HIM - THE CHURCH -  
THE SACRAMENTS.



## THE LORD COMETH FROM AFAR

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRESENCE OF GOD – The Lord is coming; I place myself in His presence and go to meet Him with all the energy of my will.

MEDITATION

1. “The Name of the Lord cometh from afar... I look from afar, and behold I see the power of God coming... Go out to meet Him, and say, ‘Tell us if You are He who shall rule...’” These words are taken from today’s liturgy, and in reply, it invites us, “Come, let us adore the King, the Lord who is coming!...” (*RB*).

This coming was expected for long ages; it was foretold by the prophets, and desired by all the just who were not granted to see its dawn. The Church commemorates and renews this expectation with each recurring Advent, expressing this longing to the Savior who is to come. The desire of old was sustained solely by hope, but it is now a confident desire, founded on the consoling reality of the Redemption already accomplished. Although historically completed nineteen centuries ago, this longing should be actualized daily, renewed in ever deeper and fuller reality in every Christian soul. The spirit of the Advent liturgy, commemorating the age-long expectation of the Redeemer, will prepare us to celebrate the mystery of the Word made Flesh by arousing in each one of us an intimate, personal expectation of the renewed coming of Christ to our soul. This coming is accomplished by grace; to the degree in which grace develops and matures in us, it becomes more copious, more penetrating, until it transforms the soul into an *alter Christus*. Advent is a season of waiting and of fervent longing for the Redeemer: “Drop down dew, ye heavens, and let the clouds rain the Just One!” (*ibid.*).

2. In today’s Epistle (*Rom 13,11-14*), St. Paul exhorts us, “Brethren, it is now the hour ... to rise from sleep.” During Advent, the “spring-time” of the Church, we must arouse ourselves and bring forth new

fruits of sanctity. Even now, the Apostle shows us the great fruits of Advent: "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light ... put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." If we have been somewhat drowsy and languid in Our Lord's service, now is the time to arouse ourselves to a new life, to strip ourselves generously of our meanness and weakness, and to "put on Jesus Christ," that is, His holiness. In order to help us attain this end, Jesus encourages us by reminding us of His love in coming as our Redeemer: He comes to meet us with His grace; it is infinite mercy that inclines to us.

On the other hand, the Church, in today's Gospel (*Lk* 21,25-33), puts before us the last coming of Jesus as supreme Judge, "and then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty." He came with love to Bethlehem; He comes with grace into our souls; He will come with justice at the end of the world: Christ's triple coming, the synthesis of Christianity, an invitation to a vigilant, trusting expectation, "Lift up your heads, for your redemption is at hand!"

#### COLLOQUY

O my God, Word of the Father, Word made flesh for love of us, You assumed a mortal body in order to suffer and be immolated for us. I wish to prepare for Your coming with the burning desires of the prophets and the just who in the Old Testament sighed after You, the one Savior and Redeemer. "O Lord, send Him whom You are going to send... As You have promised, come and deliver us!" I want to keep Advent in my soul, that is, a continual longing and waiting for this great Mystery wherein You, O Word, became flesh to show me the abyss of Your redeeming, sanctifying mercy.

O sweetest Jesus, You come to me with Your infinite love and the abundance of Your grace; You desire to engulf my soul in torrents of mercy and charity in order to draw it to You. Come, O Lord, come! I, too, wish to run to You with love, but alas! my love is so limited, weak, and imperfect! Make it strong and generous; enable me to overcome myself, so that I can give myself entirely to You. Yes, my love can become strong because "its foundation is the intimate certainty that it will be repaid by the love of God. O Lord, I cannot

doubt Your tenderness, because You have given me proofs of it in so many ways, with the sole purpose of convincing me of it. Therefore, trusting in Your love, my weak love will become strong with Your strength. What a consolation it will be, O Lord, at the moment of death to think that we shall be judged by Him whom we have loved above all things! Then we can enter Your presence with confidence, despite the weight of our offenses!" (*T.J. Way*, 40).

O Lord, give me love like this! I desire it ardently, not only to escape Your stern eye at Judgment, but especially in order to repay You in some degree for Your infinite charity.

O Lord, do not, I beseech You, permit that this exceeding great love which led You to become incarnate for my salvation, be given in vain! My poor soul needs You so much! It sighs for You as for a compassionate physician, who alone can heal its wounds, draw it out of its languor and tepidity, and infuse into it new vigor, new enthusiasm, new life. Come, Lord, come! I am ready to welcome Your work with a docile, humble heart, ready to let myself be healed, purified, and strengthened by You. Yes, with Your help, I will make any sacrifice, renounce everything that might hinder Your redeeming work in me. Show Your power, O Lord, and come! Come, delay no longer!

## 2

### INVITATION TO SANCTITY

PRESENCE OF GOD - I place myself in the presence of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, contemplating Him as the Redeemer and Sanctifier of my soul.

#### MEDITATION

1. "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound" (*Rom* 5,20). Adam's fall brought about the destruction of God's plan for man's sanctification. Our first parents, created to the image and likeness of God, in a state of grace and justice, and raised to the dignity of children of God, were hurled into an abyss of misery, drawing with

them the whole human race. For centuries man groaned in his sin, he could no longer call God by the sweet name of Father, he did not even dare to pronounce His name, regarding the Most High with a sense of terror: "He is a powerful and terrible God, the God of justice and vengeance." Sin made an insurmountable abyss between man and God, and man groaned in the depths of the abyss, utterly incapable of rising from it.

To do what man could not do, to destroy sin and restore divine sonship to the human race, a Savior was promised. The most merciful God, "so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son" (*Jn* 3,16) for its salvation. The Word, the splendor of the Father, and the figure of His substance became flesh in order to destroy sin and restore grace to us, that "we might once again be called, and really be the children of God" (cf. *1 Jn* 3,1).

God wants us "all to be saved"; for this reason He gave us His Son, and with Him and through Him, all the means necessary for our salvation. Therefore, if a soul is not saved, it alone will be responsible.

2. Jesus was not satisfied with destroying sin and meriting only a sufficient amount of grace for our salvation. He did much more and He Himself declared it, "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (*Jn* 10,10). This plenitude of life is the plenitude of grace, the supernatural life which causes sanctity to blossom.

Sanctity is not reserved for a few; Jesus, by His Incarnation and by His death on the Cross, merited the means of salvation and sanctification for all who believe in Him. He, the All-holy, came to sanctify us, and has taught us, "Be you therefore perfect, as also Your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Mt* 5,48).

Jesus did not give this precept to a chosen group of persons, nor did He reserve it for His Apostles and close friends; He proclaimed it to the multitude who were following Him. St. Paul received His message and announced it to the Gentiles, "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (*1 Thes* 4,3). And in our times the Church, speaking through the great Pope Pius XI, has repeated it strongly and on many occasions to the modern world: "Christ has called the whole human race to the lofty heights of sanctity.... There are some who say that sanctity is not everyone's vocation; on the contrary,

it is everyone's vocation, and all are called to it.... Jesus Christ has given Himself as an example for all to imitate." And elsewhere: "Let no one believe that sanctity belongs to a few chosen people, while the rest of humanity can limit itself to a lesser degree of virtue. Everyone is included in this law; no one is exempt from it." Jesus comes not only to save me, but to sanctify me. He is calling me to sanctity and has merited for me all the graces I need to attain it.

#### COLLOQUY

"It grieves me, my God, that I should be so wicked and that I am able to do so little in Your service. I well know that it is my own fault that You have not granted me the favors which You gave to those who went before me.... I grieve over my life, Lord, when I compare it with theirs; and I cannot say this without weeping. When I meditate, my God, upon the glory which You have prepared for those who persevere in doing Your will, and when I think how many trials and pains it cost Your Son to gain it for us, and how little we have deserved it, and how bound we are not to be ungrateful for this wondrous love which has taught us love at such a cost to itself, my soul becomes greatly afflicted. How is it possible, Lord, that all this should be forgotten, and that, when they offend You, mortal men should be so forgetful of You? O my Redeemer, how forgetful are men! They are forgetful even of themselves. And how great is Your goodness that You should remember us when we have fallen and have tried to strike You a mortal blow, and that You forget what we have done and give us Your hand again and awaken us from our incurable madness so that we seek and beg You for salvation. Blessed be such a Lord, blessed be such great mercy and praised be He forever for His merciful pity! O my soul, bless forever so great a God! How can a soul turn against Him?" (*T.J. F.*, 4 - *Exc.* 3).

O Lord, although I know how much this poor soul of mine has cost You, yet how often have I offended You, resisted Your grace, been unfaithful to Your love, and deaf to Your invitation to a more perfect life, to sanctity.

You, my God, have given everything, You have given Yourself entirely for me; therefore, it is not seeking too much in return to ask me to give myself entirely to You, to give You everything in order to

match Your love for me. Yes, I know that You are not satisfied with my thinking only of saving my soul, just as You were not satisfied to acquire for me only the means necessary for my salvation, but willed also to acquire the means necessary for my sanctification. You have already purchased and paid for all of them; therefore, if I do not become a saint, it is entirely my own fault.

But, O Lord, how can a soul as weak and miserable as mine, one so full of faults, selfishness and meanness aspire to an ideal as high as that of sanctity? Oh yes, my pretensions would certainly be the greatest temerity if You Yourself had not shown me that this is exactly what You will. You have even given me a precious commandment concerning it, "Be you therefore perfect as also Your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Mt 5,48*).

I beseech You, O Lord, repeat this sublime invitation to my poor soul, pressingly, compellingly, so that held by this ideal, it may be urged to greater generosity, stronger resolutions, and more complete confidence in Your merciful work of redemption and sanctification.

## 3

### SANCTITY AND THE PLENITUDE OF GRACE

PRESENCE OF GOD – I draw near to Jesus, the "fountain of life and holiness," with an ardent desire to drink from this inexhaustible fount.

#### MEDITATION

1. If Jesus came to sanctify all, if it is God's will that "all should be saints," then sanctity cannot consist in extraordinary gifts of nature and grace, which depend solely upon God's liberality.

Sanctity, therefore, must consist in something that all souls of good will, even the simplest and most humble, can attain, sustained by the divine assistance. Sanctity is the perfection of the Christian life. It is the full development in us of the supernatural life, whose beginnings are sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism has deposited within us this seed of sanctity, which is grace, a seed capable of blossoming into precious fruits of supernatural and eternal life for the soul which zealously cultivates it.

By elevating us to the supernatural state, grace makes us capable of entering into relations with the Blessed Trinity, that is, capable of knowing and loving God as He is in Himself, as He knows and loves Himself. Grace, therefore, engenders and nourishes a new life of knowledge and love in us, a life which is a participation in the divine life. What could be holier or more sanctifying than these intimate relations with the Blessed Trinity? Such are the lofty heights to which grace raises us, and this gift is bestowed on all who have been baptized.

2. This supernatural life, proceeding from grace, must permeate our entire human life in such a way that the latter will be supernaturalized in all its activities, in every detail, as well as in its totality. As grace grows and flourishes in our soul, its influence becomes deeper and wider; and when this influence extends effectively to all our actions, directing them solely to God's glory and uniting us wholly to Him by means of charity, then we have reached the fullness of Christian life, sanctity.

Grace is a wholly gratuitous gift bestowed on us by God through the infinite merits of Jesus. He merited it for us by His death on the Cross, and not in a limited measure, but superabundantly. St. John says that He is "full of grace ... and of His fullness we all have received, and grace for grace" (*Jn 1,14,16*). Hence, we can all become saints.

This does not mean, however, that we are all called to the same degree and kind of sanctity. Besides those we call the "great" saints, those who had a special mission to accomplish and therefore received singular gifts of nature and grace, there have always been the humble, hidden saints, who were sanctified in obscurity and silence.

Sanctity does not consist in the greatness of the works accomplished or of the gifts received, but in the degree of sanctifying grace and charity to which the soul has attained by faithful correspondence with God's invitations. I, too, can aspire to this kind of sanctity with no fear of rashness or self-deception.