

## 1935

*Spiritual Exercises in Istanbul  
15-22 December, 1935, with my priests*

These are Spiritual Exercises in a manner of speaking. I have made them, here, at the Apostolic Delegation, in the company of my dear priests from the Cathedral. Father Paolo Spigre, the Superior of the Jesuit Fathers, has given them well, as usual.

We have done all we could, but held in this manner they have not been entirely satisfactory. One really must get away from one's usual surroundings and work. Staying at home and having to give one's mind to the usual responsibilities and at the same time trying to attend to one's soul is not possible. That will have to be for another year. This year I have only to renew the intentions of former years.

Since the end of August, 1934, what unexpected alterations in my affairs! I am in Turkey. What more do I need, by way of opportunities and the grace of God, to make myself holy?

By sending me here the Holy Father has wished to point out to Cardinal Sincero the impression made on him by my silence, maintained for ten years, about being kept in Bulgaria, without ever complaining or expressing the wish to be moved elsewhere. Thus was in order to honour a resolution I had made, and I am glad I was always faithful to it.

There is so much work waiting for me here ! I bless God who fills me with the joys of his sacred ministry I am determined, however, to order all my affairs with greater precision and calm.

Even the trial of having to wear civilian attire has been accepted with resignation by all my clergy. I must, however, always set an example, with proper dignity and edifying behaviour.

May the Heart of Jesus set mine on fire and maintain and increase in me his own spirit. Amen.

## 1936

*Ranica [Bergamo], Villa of the Daughters of the  
Sacred Heart. 13-16 October, 1936*

A brief retreat, full of peace and silence, in this magnificent villa which serves the novitiate of the beloved Institute of Mgr Benaglio and the Venerable Verzeri.

With God's help I have been able to examine the state of my soul. Alas! How far removed I still am from the perfection required by my obligations and by the graces which the Lord continues to bestow on me! But I still most keenly and fervently desire to attain it.

I have found a useful guide to my meditations during this retreat in the Triduum Sacrum of Father Bellecius. I see that I have now formed the habit of

constant union with God `in thought, word and deed', of bearing in mind the twofold prayer: 'thy kingdom come, thy will be done', and of seeing everything thing in relation to these two ideals. But how unsatisfactory are my daily actions and my religious practices! Alas well, I will start again and do better.

I am pleased with my new ministry in Turkey, in spite of so many difficulties I must better organize my days, and my nights too. Never going to bed before midnight is not a good thing. In particular these hours after supper need setting to rights. The wireless takes up too much time and puts everything else out of joint.

My fixed rule: at seven o'clock in the evening the rosary for everyone, in the chapel. Then supper and recreation: three-quarters of an hour is enough for both. Then Matins, followed by the news on the wireless and possibly listening to some good programme of music. Then everyone must retire: my secretary to his room and I to do a little work. At eleven I must go to bed. Every morning a good thought to give direction and a pattern for the whole day. Meditation never to be omitted; it may be brief if it cannot be longer, but it must be alert, intelligent and tranquil. Long Audiences must be avoided: I must be very friendly with everyone, as if I had no one else to see, but my conversation must be brief and to the point.

For my health's sake I must stick to a diet as regards food. I eat little in the evenings already but now I must eat less at midday too. It will do me good to go out for a walk every day. O Lord, I find this hard and it seems such a waste of time, but still it is necessary and everybody insists that I should do so. So I shall do it, offering the Lord the effort it costs me.

I feel quite detached from everything, from all thought of advancement or anything else. I know I deserve nothing and I do not feel any impatience. It is true, however, that the difference between my way of seeing situations on the spot and certain ways of judging the same things in Rome hurts me considerably: it is my only real cross. I want to bear it humbly, with great willingness to please my principal Superiors, because this and nothing else is what I desire. I shall always speak the truth, but with mildness, keeping silence about what might seem a wrong or injury done to myself, ready to sacrifice myself or be sacrificed. The Lord sees everything and will deal justly with me. Above all, I wish to continue always to render good for evil, and in all things to endeavour to prefer the Gospel truth to the wiles of human politics.

I want to study Turkish with more care and perseverance. I am fond of the Turks, to whom the Lord has sent me: it is my duty to do what I can for them. I know that my way of dealing with them is right; above all, it is Catholic and apostolic. I must continue in this with faith, prudence and sincere zeal, at the cost of any sacrifice.

Jesus, Holy Church, the souls in my care, and the souls of these Turks too, no less than those of our unfortunate brethren the Orthodox: `O Lord, save thy people, and bless thy heritage."

# 1937

## *Retreat with my secular clergy in Istanbul, at the Apostolic Delegation. 12-18 December, 1937*

(1) This is like a dear family gathering, to discuss the gravest and most sacred questions. I notice however, as I did at the end of 1935, that for myself this staying ill in my ordinary everyday surroundings, and for my priests this coming and going every day, takes away much of the efficacy of the retreat.

However, it was impossible to arrange anything better. The Residence of the Jesuit Fathers is a special object of surveillance just now, so it would be dangerous to stay there as guests. We must just make the best of it.

(2) When I look over my spiritual organism, as it is right for me to do at this time, I see that, by the grace of God, all the parts are still functioning but some are covered with dust, some nearly worn out, others have gone rusty, and elsewhere the screws and springs are not working well or are working badly. So I must renew, clean . . . and bring back to life.

My holy confession for the year, which I have made to Father Spigre who is giving the retreat, leaves me with peace in my soul. But is the Lord really pleased with what I do? I tremble to think about this. I find courage only in trusting in Him and leaving myself wholly in His hands.

(3) In December last year in Athens I received a grave warning about my physical health. I took the necessary measures at once; a year later I feel much better, although I see signs of old age in my thinning hair. I must always keep myself familiar with the thought of death, not to sadden myself but on the contrary to fill with wisdom, joy and calm the span of life that still remains for me here below.

What made the most profound impression on me in my youth was the death of my Bishop, Mgr Radini of revered memory, at the age of fifty-seven, just my present age. I always thought I might perhaps not live as long as this. I am still alive and I thank God for it. But what an obligation this is for me to seek more earnestly to sanctify myself!

(4) I feel tranquil and content with my state, only sorry that I am not so holy and exemplary in everything as I should be, and as I would be. Honours and promotions in this world do not much affect me, and I think I keep the thought of them in check. But help me, Lord, because the temptation may easily arise and I am helpless without you. The Church has already done too much for me. I am 'the last of all.'

(5) 'The Eucharistic man' (vir eucharisticus) I wish this could really be said of me. In this connection I must renew a former intention: always to say Matins the preceding evening; thus enables me to make my meditation in the morning, after Mass and the Little Hours. Then, besides my ordinary daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament, which may be long or short but must be loving and devout, on Thursday, from ten to eleven o'clock at night, I will faithfully

observe the hour of adoration, as I have already begun to do, for my own needs and those of Holy Church.

(6) The circumstances of my usual routine here, in Istanbul, only allow me two hours of undisturbed work, and these have to be at night, between ten and twelve; I shall have to get used to this. But at midnight, after the last news bulletin, I must make an absolute rule to retire, to say a few prayers and go to sleep. I notice that in general six hours of rest at night are enough for me. Later on I shall see if anything better can be done about this. What matters is that everything shall be orderly and calm, done briskly but without impatience.

(7) At supper, in the refectory, Father Giacomo Testa and I read some passages from Faber on kindness." I like this subject because I see that everything is there. I shall go on calmly trying to be, above all, good and kind, without weaknesses but with perseverance and patience with everyone. The exercise of pastoral and fatherly kindness such as befits a shepherd and father, must express the whole purpose of my life as Bishop. Kindness, charity: what grace is there! 'All good things came to me along with her.'

## 1939

*Retreat, 12-18 November 1939, Istanbul, in the  
Residence of the Jesuit Fathers Ayas of Pasa, 'Sacred Heart'  
Thoughts and Intentions*

(1) At last the retreat I have so long desired! Enclosed, without contact with the outside world, and conducted with method. I have invited here with me Any colleagues, Bishops and priests-all secular clergy; they are all here and they belong to every rite. However, many of them have to go home at night for their Mass the next morning. That is not so good, but it cannot be helped. I enjoy being here alone the whole week. Acid I bless the Lord for it.

(2) Father Elia Chad, Superior of the Jesuit Fathers, gives its the points for meditation after the method of St Ignatius, and lie does it well. However he too must be giving us more than the points, because he takes half an hour instead of a quarter. Afterwards there should be private meditation in our rooms. I find it helpful to read the Ignatian text in the Latin translation annotated by Father Roothaan.

I observe, however, that even for my priests and Bishops, this giving us small doses, according to the strict Ignatian method, and leaving the rest to the discretion of the individual, is not practical. We are all rather like children who need to be guided by the living voice of someone who presents us with the doctrine, already prepared. So my conclusion is: the Ignatian method, but adapted to modern requirements. Oh for those grand Bergamasque priests of ours who used to preach the Exercises to us in the seminary! And they were truly faithful to the spirit and, as far as circumstances permitted, the method of St Ignatius.

(3) In a few days' time, the twenty-fifth of this month, I shall have completed fifty-eight years. Having been present at the death of Mgr Radini who died at the age of fifty-seven, it seems to me that any other years over and above these are granted to me as extra graces. Lord, I thank you. I still feel young in health and energy but I make no claim: when you call me, I am here ready. In dying also, indeed especially in dying, 'thy will be done'.

There is no lack of rumour around me, murmurs that 'greater things are in store'. I am not so foolish as to listen to thus flattery, which is, yes, I admit it, for me too a temptation. I try very hard to ignore these rumours which speak of deceit and spite. I treat them as a joke: I smile and pass on. For the little, or nothing, that I am worth to Holy Church, I have already my purple mantle, my blushes of shame at finding myself in this position of honour and responsibility when I know I am worth so little. Oh what a comfort it is to me to feel free from these longings for changes and promotions! I consider this freedom a great gift of God. May the Lord preserve me always in this state of mind.

(4) This year the Lord has tested me by taking some very dear persons away from me: my sweet, revered mother and Mgr Morlani, my first benefactor; Father Pietro Forno, my close collaborator in the Atti della Visita Apostolica di San Carlo; Father Ignazio Valsecchi who was curate at Sotto il Monte during those years when I was at the seminary at Bergamo before going to Rome, 1895-1900; all are gone. And other acquaintances and very dear friends, especially my Rector, Mgr Spolverini. The face of this world is changing for me now. 'The appearance of this world is altered.' This thought must encourage me to become familiar with the world beyond, thinking that soon I may be there myself. My beloved dead, I remember you and love you always. Pray for me.

(5) I have made my annual confession to Father Chad and I am at peace. To prepare myself well I celebrated Holy Mass and assisted at another Mass, and then got on to my knees, penitent and ashamed. 'I am alarmed at the thought of my sins and I blush before you; . . . do not condemn me.'

My confessor tells me that the Lord is content with my service. Really content? Oh if this were true! I am only partly content. It is long since the 'election' of my state was made; even as regards the details of my life and activity everything is made clear and well-defined by undertaking to 'spend and be spent for souls'.? I do not actually neglect my Episcopal duties, but alas! how badly I do them! Above all I am tormented by the disproportion between what I do and what restraints for me to do, what I would do but do not succeed in doing. The fault must be partly my own. My letters are too lengthy because I am afraid of sounding cold or unfriendly if I say less and because I think I can serve the interests of charity and Holy Church better by saying more.

I must try to find the way of discretion which lies between, and if there still remains something to torment me, I shall have to put up with it.

(6) On All Souls Day my dear secretary, Mgr Giacomo Testa, left me finally to run his own course.' He was a good lad and had been with me for two years, and I loved him in the Lord. So be it.

In his place there is now another young man, Mgr Vittore Ugo Righi. My Superiors have sent him to me so that I may help to train him for the service of the Apostolic See. He seems docile and good: I shall do my best. I should like to lighten the burden of my official correspondence by assigning part of it to him. Thus is one way of lessening the gap between what is still to be done and what has already been done. May God help me.

(7) For refectory reading I have proposed, after the new Pope's first encyclical, *Le Journal Intime* of Mgr Dupanloup which I found among the books belonging to the Delegation and which I know well. I see that these pages make a deep and edifying impression.

For my own part, I am most interested to see how frequently this priest of such dynamic energy insists on religious exercises and the interior life: Mass, Breviary, meditation, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to Our Lady, whom he calls 'Help of Christians, Help of Bishops', etc. There is comfort in being companions in suffering, comfort and encouragement for me. I must be most careful to say Matins the evening before. Mgr Righi likes to recite the Office with me, and that is what I like too and have already begun to do. Matins said the evening before means so much more precious time free for meditation the next day and greater speed and elasticity in everything else. I shall also continue with the family rosary, which I have begun. Thus was Mgr Radini's custom, too, and also Cardinal Ferrari's in Milan.

(8) It is my special intention, as an exercise in mortification, to learn the Turkish language. To know so little of it, after five years in Istanbul, is a disgrace, and would indicate scant understanding of the nature of my mission here, if there were no reasons for excuse and justification.

Now I will begin again with renewed energy; the mortification will become a source of satisfaction to me. I love the Turks, I appreciate the natural qualities of these people who have their own place reserved in the march of civilization. Whether I succeed or not in learning the language is of no consequence. My duty, the honour of the Holy See, the example I am bound to give: that is enough. If I were to succeed only in holding to this firm resolve I should consider I had gathered great and blessed fruit from my retreat.

(9) Other special intentions? I cannot think of any because I feel bound hand and foot to my life as Apostolic Vicar and Delegate. I must preserve in, serenity, but within this serenity there must be great fervour. I must be faithful to this method which means being humble and meek at all times, whatever impulse or temptation to the contrary I may feel, but my meekness will in no sense be pusillanimity. I must be sparing in my speech and say very little about politics, and I must familiarize myself with the thought of death.

(10) Every evening from the window of my room, here in the Residence of the Jesuit Fathers, I see all assemblage of boats on the Bosphorus; they come round from the Golden Horn in tens and hundreds; they gather at a given rendezvous and then they light up, some more brilliantly than others, offering a most impressive spectacle of colours and lights. I thought it was a festival on the sea for Bairam, which occurs just about now. But it is the organized fleet fishing for

bonito, large fish which are said to come from far away in the Black Sea. These lights glow all night and one can hear the cheerful voices of the fishermen.

I find the sight very moving. The other night, towards one o'clock, it was pouring with rain but the fishermen were still there, undeterred from their heavy toil.

Oh how ashamed we should feel, we priests, 'fishers of men', before such an example ! To pass from the illustration to the lesson illustrated, what a vision of work, zeal and labour for the souls of men to set before our eyes! Very little is left in this land of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Debris and seeds. But innumerable souls to be won for Christ, lost in this weltering mass of Moslems, Jews and Orthodox. We must do as the fishermen of the Bosphorus do, work night and day with our torches lit, each in his own little boat, at the orders of our spiritual leaders: that is our grave and solemn duty.

(11) My work in Turkey is not easy, but it is coming along well and gives me great consolation. I see the charity of the Lord here, and the clergy united among themselves and with their humble pastor. The political situation does not allow me to do much, but it seems to me there is something gained if at least I do not worsen it through my own fault.

My mission in Greece, on the other hand, is so full of vexations! For this very reason I love it even more and intend to go on working there with heart and soul, forcing myself to overcome all my repugnance. For me it is an order: therefore it requires obedience. I confess I would not mind if it were entrusted to someone else, but while it is mine I want to Honour the obligation at all costs. 'They who sow in tears shall reap in joy.' It matters little to me that others will reap.

(12) This year my holidays were brief and spoilt by the need to return soon. In compensation, however, I received an extremely benevolent and encouraging welcome in Rome from the Holy Father, the Office of the Secretary of State, and the Congregation for the Eastern Church. I thank the Lord. This is more than I deserve. But I do not work for men's praises. 'The Lord has given.' If, as is quite possible, the Lord should take away, I would continue to bless his name.

(13) As a constant encouragement to greater fervour at Mass, and in remembrance of this retreat, I intend from now on always to say the prayers in the Canon before my private celebration of Mass. Whoever is present will be kept waiting a little, but these prayers must be said. The only reason (opportunitas) that might dispense me from this would be the greater convenience of numerous worshippers who are kept waiting, and who must not be allowed to grow impatient. St Francis de Sales is a good master in teaching me the use of charitable discretion.

*Retreat, 25 November-1 December, 1940, at  
Terapia on the Bosphorus, the Villa of the  
Sisters of Our Lady of Sion.*

(1) This year because of the war it was impossible to snake the retreat at the Residence of the Jesuit Fathers at Ayas Pasa.

I have come here to act as chaplain to the good sisters, old and in retirement, who have fled here for shelter from their houses in Jassy and Galatz in Rumania. After me will come my priests from the Holy Spirit, one at a time, for their retreat. This solitude is really ideal and delightful. Jesus I thank you and I bless you.

(2) I have chosen these particular days for my retreat because they are the first of my sixtieth year. I am now entering that period in which a man begins to be old, and admits it. Oh tray my old age be one long straining after that perfection of which, as Bishop, I ought to be master but from which I am still so far removed! It is something at least to sanctify the beginning of old age with prayer and meditation, in a penitent spirit; it is certainly pleasing to the Lord: it is an appeal for mercy.

(3) As a spiritual exercise, setting aside the usual method, I have chosen as the object of my meditation the Penitential Psalm, the Miserere, meditating on four verses each day. I have taken as my guide, because one needs a guide in these matters, even if one is growing old, the ample and well-reasoned exposition of Father Paolo Segneri, an author I admire very much. It is too lengthy for my own needs and too highly wrought, with the result that the style is a little forced and ornate. But it is nevertheless a real treasure-house of thoughts and practical applications. I have meditated on this, and typed out some notes of what seemed to me most interesting and helpful. I shall use these notes for my own edification.

(4) What is the result of this spiritual concentration of mine? Nothing remarkable or exciting but, as it seems to me, a consolidation of my principles and positions in the eyes of the Lord and in all that regards my own humble life and my sacred ministry in the service of Holy Church. Even without exaggerating the importance of entering upon this last, possibly rapid and brief, period of my life, I feel something more mature and authoritative in me in relation to all that interests and surrounds me. I think I notice a greater detachment from all that concerns my own future, a more marked indifference 'to all created things', a slow and slight blurring of the outlines of things, persons, places and undertakings to which I was formerly more strongly attached, a more evident inclination to understand and sympathize and a greater clarity and tranquillity in impressions and judgments. I will be careful to preserve a fine simplicity in my conversation and behaviour, without any affectation; at the same time there must be apparent the gravity and lovable dignity of the elderly prelate, who diffuses an air of nobility, wisdom and grace.

(5) I have once more meditated on my episcopal duties. Above all, I have dwelt on 'cherishing humility and patience in myself and teaching these virtues



to others.' Every now and then a thorn pricks me, sometimes very sharply. I ought, strictly speaking, to make stern decisions. By doing so I should pull out the thorn. Would I not then deserve others, and sharper ones? And then, what about truth, charity, merry? And the spirit of Christ in dealing with the souls of men? In dealing with my own soul?

(6) This year Providence has placed considerable sums of money ill my hands for my own personal use. I have distributed it all, some to the poor, some for my own needs and the needs of members of my family, and the rest, the main part, for the restoration of the Apostolic Delegation and some of my priests' rooms at the Holy Spirit. According to thus world's judgments, which can penetrate even the sacred inner recesses of clerical life, and according to the criteria of human prudence, I have been a fool.

In fact, now I am poor again. Blessed be the Lord. I think that, by his grace, I did the right thing. Again I trust in his generosity for the future. 'Give and it shall be given unto you.'

(7) The study of the Turkish language. To be sure, at the age of sixty I ought not to shirk this labour. It is simply a matter of good will and energy, nothing more. If this labour served for nothing else but to set a good example it would still be most meritorious.

### *Notes*

#### *Monday evening 25 November*

Yesterday our Holy Father Pius XII invited the whole world to join him in the sorrowful singing of the Litany of the Saints and the penitential psalm, the Miserere

We all, from the West and from the East, joined with him in his petition.

In my solitary retreat I am making the Spiritual Exercises, as the Holy Father himself is doing just now in the Vatican, and in this way I begin the sixtieth-year of my humble life (1881 -- 25 November, 1940). For myself and for the good of all, I think I cannot do better than return to the penitential psalm dividing the twenty verses into four for each day and making them the subject of religious meditation.

As a starting-point I am using Father Segneri's exposition of the Miserere but with considerable freedom of inspiration and applications.

To understand the profound meaning of the Psalm I find it a great help to bear in mind the figure of the royal prophet himself and the circumstances of his repentance and grief. It is a king who has fallen; it is a king who rises again.

#### *First day, Tuesday, 26 November*

VERSE 1: 'Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy.'

1. *The mourning of the nations.* This cry reaches my ears from every part of Europe and beyond. The murderous war which is being waged on the ground, on the seas and in the air is truly a vindication of divine justice because the

sacred laws governing human society have been transgressed and violated. It has been asserted, and is still being asserted, that God is bound to preserve this or that country, or grant it invulnerability and final victory, because of the righteous people who live there or because of the good that they do. We forget that although in a certain sense God has made the nations, he has left the constitution of states to the free decisions of men. To all he has made clear the rules which govern human society: they are all to be found in the Gospel. But he has not given any guarantee of special and privileged assistance, except to the race of believers, that is, to Holy Church as such. And even his assistance to his Church, although it preserves her from final defeat, does not guarantee her immunity from trials and persecutions.

The law of life, alike for the souls of men and for nations, lays down principles of justice and universal harmony and the limits to be set to the use of wealth, enjoyments and worldly power. When this law is violated, terrible and merciless sanctions come automatically into action. No state can escape. To each its hour. War is one of the most tremendous sanctions. It is willed not by God but by men, nations and states, through their representatives. Earthquakes, floods, famines and pestilences are applications of the blind laws of nature, blind because nature herself has neither intelligence nor freedom. War instead is desired by men, deliberately in defiance of the most sacred laws. That is what makes it so evil. He who instigates war and foments it is always the 'Prince of this world', who has nothing to do with Christ, the 'Prince of peace.'

And while the war rages, the peoples can only turn to the Miserere and beg for the Lord's mercy, that it may outweigh his justice and with a great outpouring of grace bring the powerful men of this world to their senses and persuade them to make peace.

2. *The mourning of my own soul.* What is happening in the world on a grand scale is reproduced on a small scale in every man's soul, is reproduced in mine. Only the grace of God has prevented me from being eaten up with malice. There are certain sins which may be called typical: thus sins of David's, the sins of St Peter and St Augustine. But what might I not have done myself, if the Lord's hand had not held me back? For small failings the most perfect saints underwent long and harsh penances. So many, even in our own times, have lived only to make atonement; and there are souls whose lives, even today, are one long expiation of their own sins, of the sins of the world. And I, in all ages of my life more or less a sinner, should I not spend my time mourning? Cardinal Federico's famous reply is still so eloquent and moving: 'I did not ask for praises, which make me tremble: what I know of myself is enough to confound me.'

Far from seeking consolation by comparing myself with others, I should make the Miserere for my own sins my most familiar prayer. The thought that I am a priest and Bishop and therefore especially dedicated to the conversion of sinners and the remission of sins should add all the more anguish to my feelings of grief, sadness and tears, as St Ignatius says.' What is the meaning of all these flagellations or having oneself set on the bare ground, or on ashes,

to die, if not the priestly soul's continual plea for mercy, and his constant longing to be a sacrificial victim for his own sins and the sins of the world ?

3. *The great mercy.* It is not just ordinary mercy that is needed here. The burden of social and personal wickedness is so grave that an ordinary gesture of love does not suffice for forgiveness. So we invoke the great mercy. This is proportionate to the greatness of God. 'For according to his greatness, so also is his mercy' (Ecclus. 2: 23). It is well said that our sins are the seat of divine mercy. It is even better said that God's most beautiful name and title is this: mercy. This must inspire us with a great hope amidst our tears. 'Yet merry triumphs over judgment. This seems too much to hope for. But it cannot be too much if the whole mystery of the Redemption hinges on this: the exercise of mercy is to be a portent of predestination and of salvation. 'Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy.'

VERSE II: 'And according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.' The Lord is said to be 'merciful and gracious'.-' I-Es mercy is not simply a feeling of the heart; it is an abundance of gifts.

When we consider how many graces are poured into the sinner's soul along with God's forgiveness, we feel ashamed. These are: the loving remission of our offence; the new infusion of sanctifying grace, given as to a friend, as to a son; the reintegration of the gifts, habits and virtues associated with the grace; the restitution of our right to heaven; the restoration of the merits we had earned before our sin; the increase of grace which this forgiveness adds to former graces; the increase of gifts which grow in proportion to the growth of grace just as the rays of the sun increase as it rises, and the rivulets are wider as the fountain overflows.

VERSE III: 'Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me froth my sin': holy confession.

Three verbs: to blot out, to wash and to cleanse, in this order. First the iniquity must be blotted out, then well washed, that is, every slightest attachment to it is removed; finally the cleansing, which means conceiving an implacable hatred for sin and doing things which are contrary to it, that is making acts of humility, meekness, mortification, etc., according to the diversity of the sins. These three operations follow one another but to God alone belongs the first. To God, in co-operation with the soul, the second and the third: the washing and the cleansing. Let us, poor sinners, do our duty: repent and -,with the Lord's help, wash and cleanse ourselves. We are sure that the Lord will do the first, the blotting out; this is prompt and immediate. And so we must believe it to be, without doubts or hesitations. 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins.' The two processes which depend on our co-operation need time, progress, effort. Therefore we say: 'Wash me yet more . . . and cleanse me.'

This mysterious process of our purification is perfectly accomplished in holy confession, through the intervention of the blood of Christ which washes and cleanses us. The power of the divine blood, applied to the soul, acts progressively, froth one confession to another. 'Yet more' and ever more.

Hence the importance of confession in itself, with the words of absolution, and of the custom of frequent confession for persons of a spiritual profession, such as priests and Bishops. How easy it is for mere routine to take the place of true devotion in our weekly confessions! Here is a good way of drawing the best out of thus precious and divine exercise: to think of Christ who, according to St Paul, was created by God to be 'our wisdom, our righteousness, sanctification and redemption' (1 Cor. 1: 30).

So, when I confess, I must beg Jesus first of all to be my wisdom, helping me to make a calm, precise, detailed examination of my sins and of their gravity, so that I may feel sincere sorrow for them. Then, that he may be my justice, so that I may present myself to my confessor as to my judge and accuse myself sincerely and sorrowfully. May he also be my perfect sanctification when I bow my head to receive absolution from the hand of the priest, by whose gesture is restored or increased sanctifying grace. Finally, that he may be my redemption as I perform that meagre penance which is set me instead of the great penalty I deserve: a meagre penance indeed, but a rich atonement because it is united with the sacrament to the blood of Christ, which intercedes and atones and washes and cleanses, for me and with the.

This 'ash me yet more' must remain the sacred motto of my ordinary confessions. These confessions are the surest criterion by which to judge my spiritual progress.

VERSE IV: 'For I know my iniquity and my sin is ever before me.'

The advice of the ancient philosophers: 'Know thyself', was already a good foundation for an honest and worthy life. It served for the ordinary exercise of humility, which is the prime virtue of great men. For the Christian, for the ecclesiastic, the thought of being a sinner does not by any means signify that we must lose heart, but it must mean confident and habitual trust in the Lord Jesus who has redeemed and forgiven us; it means a keen sense of respect for our fellow men and for all men's souls and a safeguard against the danger of becoming proud of our achievements. If we stay in the cell of the penitent sinner, deep in our heart, it will be not only a refuge for the soul which has found its own true self, and with its true self calm in decision and action, but also a fire by which zeal for the souls of men is kept more brightly lit, with pure intentions and a mind free from preoccupations about success, - which is extraneous to our apostolate.

David needed the shock of the prophet's voice saying: 'You are the man.' But afterwards his sin is always there, always before his eyes, an ever-present warning: 'My sin is always before me.'

Father Segneri -vilely points out that it is not necessary to remember the exact form of every single sin, which would be neither profitable nor edifying, but it is well to bear in mind the memory of past failings as a 'warning, as an incitement to Holy fear and zeal for souls. How often the thought of sins and sinners recurs in the liturgy! This is even more true of the Eastern than of the Latin liturgy; but it is well expressed in both: 'My sin is always before me', just

as the sins of men were before Jesus in his agony in the garden of Gethsemane, as they were before Peter at the height of his authority as Supreme Pontiff, before Paul in the glory of his apostolate, and before Augustine in the splendour of his great learning and episcopal sanctity. I pity those unhappy men who, instead of keeping their sin before them, hide it behind their backs! They will never be free from past or future sins.

*Second day, Wednesday 27 November*

VERSE V: 'Against thee only have I sinned and have done evil in thy sight, that thou mayest be justified in thy sentence and blameless in thy judgment. Sin is an offence against God, and for this alone a grave evil. The other considerations are all secondary in comparison with this: a wife raped and a husband killed are things of small account compared with an outraged God. This is what David understood and what we must understand too. How differently this world thinks! People are sorry, not for having offended the Lord, but because they have suffered disgrace, loss or misfortune. The saints did not feel that way. 'I said "O Lord, be merciful to me, heal my soul for I have sinned against thee" ' (Psalm 40(41) : 4).

Another thought: 'I have done evil in thy sight.' Sin, even if directed against one's neighbour and against oneself, directly violates God's holy law. But it is graver because it is committed in God's sight. 'God sees me': our humble grandmothers used to work this motto into their samplers of rustic embroidery: it still hangs on the old walls of our houses and it contains a stern reminder which serves to give a character of decency to all our behaviour. What a profound truth this is of the omnipresence of God, of his searching glance which penetrates even the secret recesses of our privacy. A whole treatise of ascetic doctrine could be written about this truth which is derived from the purest beauty of sanctified souls, as clear as crystal, as pure as well water, using no deceit with others or with themselves (for it happens sometimes that we are insincere even with ourselves, surely the height of folly!) even at the risk of seeming of little worth. 'The simplicity of the just man is derided. What a fine passage this is from St Gregory the Great!

VERSE VI: 'For behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.'

This might seem to be proffered as an excuse but is really a more explicit statement of his own helplessness. David is referring to the law of original sin, of which St Paul speaks and which theologians call 'natural infirmity', the law we feel in our body, in opposition to the law of the spirit, but he did not mention this in order to turn the question aside, or seek a pretext or a justification.

We must recognize that wickedness is in us because, although the temptation comes from without, the grace to resist it is entirely at our disposal and is stronger than the temptation. 'Devils? What devils?' Professor Tabarelli used to say when he was expanding to us the Treatise *De gratia* at the Apollinare,

'We are the devils. We are the ones responsible.' Of David's case, St Augustine wisely said: 'When the woman was far away, the man's desire was at hand. What he desired to see, and the cause of his sin, were elsewhere.'

Our knowledge of human frailty must be for us, physicians of souls, a reason for pitying, raising and encouraging others, not for excusing ourselves.

We have the grave responsibility of guarding the grace that is always offered us to hold nature in check. In our poor nature lie hidden perverse tendencies towards ambition, pride, greed, impatience, envy, avarice, sloth and impurity. These are 'within us, as Segneri says, as in a vast menagerie of wild beasts, bears, wolves, tigers, lions and leopards. They cannot hurt us so long as the portcullis is down and holds them back. It is as if they were not there: grace has shut them in and holds them down. But if the barrier is raised the wild beasts, following their own natural instincts, rush to sate their appetites! 'A Saviour, a wall and a rampart shall be set therein (Isaiah 26: 1). If exterior and interior grace, the wall and the rampart, fall, what a disaster for a poor Christian, for a poor priest! 'For behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' Not our own good natural mothers, but the ancient sinful mother of mankind.

VERSE VII: 'For behold thou hast loved truth: the uncertain hidden things of thy wisdom thou hast revealed to me.'

First of all the Psalmist wished to justify the Lord's words spoken to him by the prophet: 'that thou mayst be justified in thy sentence', and to exalt the triumph of his judgment: 'that thou mayst be blameless in thy judgment'.

Now he proclaims that his God is a lover of truth. In fact truth is in God as in its source and God is all truth; as Jesus, the divine Word, said himself: 'I am the truth. A declaration of this sort would seem that of a madman had it not come from the lips of God made man. The Roman governor was much puzzled by this declaration of Christ's and asked him: 'What is truth?'

The truth, says Father Segneri, is a transcendent virtue which enters into all well-ordered human affairs and, according to the diversity of these, assumes different names. In the schools it is called science, in speech veracity, in conduct frankness, in conversation sincerity, in actions righteousness, in business dealings honesty, in giving advice freedom from prejudice, in the keeping of promises loyalty, and in the courts of law it has the noble title of justice. This is the Lord's truth which 'abides for ever'.

The love of truth. On the day of my episcopal consecration the Church gave me a particular mandate concerning it: 'Let him choose humility and truth and never forsake them for any flattery or threats. Let him not consider light to be darkness, or darkness light; let him not call evil good, or good evil. Let him learn from wise men and fools, so that he may profit from all.' I thank the Lord for having given me a natural inclination to tell the truth, always and in all circumstances and before everyone, in a pleasant manner and with courtesy, to be sure, but calmly and fearlessly. Certain small fibs of my childhood have left in my heart a horror of deceit and falsehood. Now, especially as I am

growing old, I want to be particularly careful about this: to love the truth, God helping me! I have repeated this many times, swearing it on the Gospel.

The revelation of the uncertain and hidden things of divine wisdom comes by itself. The love of truth means perpetual childhood, fresh and joyful. And the Lord reveals his most sublime mysteries to children and conceals them from the learned and the so-called wise men of this world.

VERSE VIII: `Sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.'

This refers to the Mosaic rite of the cleansing of lepers. They had to let themselves be sprinkled by the priest with a bunch of hyssop dipped in blood, and then wash themselves from head to foot in pure water.' Here are foreshadowed the sins which defile the body and sully the soul. Hyssop is a plant of mean appearance but of great strength. It sprouts on rock and strikes roots in it. Oh how great is man's need of this cleansing! ! Isaiah was right when he saw Jesus as the great purifier: 'He shall sprinkle many nations (with hyssop)' (Isaiah 52: is). In the metaphor David used we may see not only the reference associated with the Mosaic rite but also, and more significantly, the double cleansing reserved for the human race by means of the two sacraments of baptism and penance. He who cleanses us is our Redeemer himself. The altar of his sacrifice is humble, like hyssop, but his blood is powerful, sprinkled with divine generosity over the bodies and souls of believers for their purification. What a great gift this is, daily poured out all over the world, in the two sacraments of reconciliation and salvation! Through these this poor world is purified and rises again, whiter than snow. ,

I will make further use of this verse when I make my weekly confession: 'Sprinkle me, Lord, and I shall be cleansed.'

May the Lord cleanse me from my self-love which, as Segneri says, is attached to three things: to my will, which wants to go its own way; to my reputation, making me intolerant of scorn; to my own comfort, which is averse to suffering and encourages the wasteful use of time!

I think too of the Sunday aspersions with holy water in the parish churches before Mass. `Familiarity breeds contempt.' We must return to the mystical significance of these rites, and expound it to the faithful. How can we not fail to recall the coming of Christ as the `High Priest of the good things to come' who `through his own blood assures for us eternal redemption' and in this way purifies his faithful people.'

*Third day. Thursday, 28 November*

VERSE IX: `To my hearing thou shalt give joy and gladness; and the bones that have been humbled shall rejoice.'

When we hear that we are forgiven: `The Lord has put away your sin', we are full of joy and gladness. We have felt this so often when after the absolution we rise from kneeling before our confessor, especially when we are in retreat

or on some other more solemn occasions in our life. The joy is in our understanding, the gladness in our heart. Thus two-fold sensation is expressed also in the renewed physical vigour and energy of our bodies: 'The bones that have been humbled will rejoice.' There are some most moving references to this in the Bible: Isaiah tells us 'Your heart shall thrill and rejoice' (Isaiah 60: 5), and we read in Proverbs: 'a glad heart makes a cheerful countenance' (Prov. 15: 13).

The mystery of spiritual joy, which is a characteristic of saintly souls, is seen here in all its beauty and charm. The Lord leaves us uncertain about our eternal salvation, but gives us signs which suffice to calm our souls and make us joyful.

'It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God' (Romans 8: 16). I ask you: is this a small thing, to feel we are God's children? This confidence, which is often in our hearts without our being able to account for it, is the inexhaustible source of our joy, the most solid foundation of true piety, which consists in desiring everything that is full and loving service to the Lord. The essential is that this desire of ours should be prompt and effective. That it should be a source of enjoyment also, that is, of tender affection, sweetness, delight and joy-this is also important, but accidental and secondary. The realization of Our Lord's goodness to us, and of our worthlessness, craves us happy and sad at the same time. But the sadness is lessened as it becomes an encouragement for our apostolate in the service of all that is sublime and noble, to make Jesus known, loved and served, and to take away the sins of the world.

The thought of holiness, smiling amidst trials and crosses, is always with me. Interior calm, founded on the words and promises of Christ, produces the imperturbable serenity which may be seen in face, words and behaviour, the expression of all-conquering charity. We feel a renewal of energies, physical as well as spiritual: sweetness to the soul and health to the body (Prov. 16: 24). To live in peace with the Lord, to hear that we are forgiven, and in our turn to forgive others, gives the soul that feast of 'marrow and fat' of which the psalmist sang, and brings the Magnificat constantly to our lips.'

VERSE X: 'Turn away thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

The prayer of the penitent king rises once more, imploringly, and is now broadened to include all the iniquities he has committed, besides the graver sin which has inspired the Miserere. How moving is this reference to the Lord's face, that is to his eyes and features and his expression of scorn and anger! We shall see his face once more, on our last day, and unrepentant sinners will be smitten with eternal despair and horror.

I must make myself very familiar with this verse, as an expression of renewed contrition. One must not be afraid to call oneself a sinner. Any exaggerated form of expression spoils the effect; each must express himself according to his own temperament, but as we always need Our Lord's forgiveness, it is well to be imploring divine mercy, and trusting to it, at all times. 'A contrite and a



humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' David was soon to say this. But we must not neglect any of the forms that may express this humble contrition.

VERSE XI: `Create a clean heart in me, O God, and .renew a right spirit within me.'

The heart is the will and the spirit is the understanding. So we need a purified will and a renewed understanding.

Alas! how many attachments and temptations assail our will, especially in the sphere of our feelings: objects, people and circumstances! The charms of certain circles, sometimes even of a chance meeting, try it sorely. The heart is helpless by itself. Once it has been spoilt, weakened by superfluities it has to be made anew. It is not much good patching it:

the weakness reappears. The heart, of Paul, the heart of Augustine, were new creations. Great God, what a miracle that was! Once they had been turned in a new direction, the wills of these two men never turned back, never faltered. In the hour of their death they were still as true as steel.

The right spirit, that is, the understanding of what is most important to believe and to do, yes, this can simply be renewed. For this a man must have a most just conception of the chief motives of his own conduct and a more sufficient knowledge of what, in practice, he must do. The reform must be above all interior and profound, `within me', in order to express itself externally in the various aspects of life: reform in speaking, seeing, hearing and writing; a new art of living, corresponding to a new conception of life.

VERSE XII: `Cast me not away from thy face; and take not thy holy spirit from me.'

The gravest punishment David could impose on his son Absalom, who had betrayed him, was this: `Let him no longer see my face.'" So we understand why he implores the Lord not to banish him from his sight. It is one thing for God to turn his face away from our iniquities, it is quite another for him to banish the sinner from his sight. The mystery of the Lord's face: how impressive and terrifying that is! On the other hand, one can understand the redeemed soul's supreme joy in the vision of the Lord's face. May the Lord grant me the grace not to be rejected by him at the end. May he be merciful and admit me, even if I am the last and least of all, that I may contemplate him for ever.

Another point: the presence of the Holy Spirit in the faithful soul. Here, without books or commentaries, I cannot verify whether thus holy Spirit of the Lord must be understood specifically as the third Person of the most Holy Trinity. It seems obvious to me that it must be so. The action of grace in a soul is described in the words `and we will come to him and make our home with hinting This means the three divine Persons. Each comes with his own personal characteristics. The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life, and it is he who sanctifies the soul. Is not the Christian a living temple of the Holy Spirit? And

what a wealth of benefits to the soul comes with this indwelling of the Lord's Spirit! St Paul numbers these gifts: they are twenty-four. They begin with peace and joy.

*Fourth day. Friday, 29 November*

VERSE XIII: 'Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit!'

Restore to me the joyful certainty that you will save me: serene confidence in my Saviour. St Jerome uses the apt translation: joy of thy Jesus', instead of joy of thy salvation'. This is the true joy of a forgiven soul, the first fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit, to feel numbered with the elect. And all this through the merits of Jesus who shed his blood to redeem this soul of ours and to fill it with his virtue and his life. Thus confidence must not be free from fear, for we bear the treasure of grace in fragile vessels; a small jolt may make us stagger: the vessel is broken again. Oh poor sinners that we are! But if we do our best the Lord continues to give us his grace, the grace of feeling we are his for ever, this foretaste of the eternal companionship with Jesus which is reserved for us, for that long day that will have no sunset. And the thought that our Saviour is Jesus himself-David in his melancholy chant sang for the New as well as for the Old Testament-oh, how it makes my heart rejoice the whole day long! The first Christians expressed this doctrine with the symbol of the fish, 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour' -and placed this sign above their tombs in the catacombs as a pledge of resurrection, and also as a symbol of the Eucharistic mystery, known only to the initiated. What is more dear to me, a priest and Bishop, than daily contact with the great sacrament, the pledge of future glory? And the 'perfect spirit'? This is the indispensable condition for our preservation of the joyous and certain hope of paradise. It is a habitual reception of continual graces, which keep the soul inclined towards good, like the saints in heaven, without any hesitations-a confirmation in grace, a very rare gift which the Lord grants without his chosen creature even knowing it, so that the uncertainty of possessing it may encourage the exercise of many virtues which derive from it, chaste fear, circumspection, humility, a perpetual recourse to God, and other virtues.

David also asked for this gift, which he called the 'perfect' spirit, that is, no common spirit but one worthy of a most noble prince, a lofty, disinterested spirit, untouched by self-love, eager only for God and his glory. St Paul too asked for it, as he subjected his body to mortification and chastisement, trembling lest 'after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified'. I also ask for it, O Lord, with David and Paul, but feeling so puny beside them. I also ask, as a great boon, for this gift which will confirm me in a low opinion of myself and my own worthlessness, and give me a selfless longing for you, for whom alone I should live since you have died for me (2 Cor. 5: 15).

VERSE XIV: `I will teach the unjust thy ways, and the wicked shall be converted to thee

My priesthood means not only sacrifice for the sins of the world and for my own sins but also an apostolate of truth and love. My vocation leads me to this. The thought of the little I have done till now and the pardon I have received from the Lord for my past failings must induce greater fervour.

`Mercy and truth, the universal ways of God.'" It is here I must distinguish myself. I must not be a teacher of political science, of strategy, of human knowledge: there are teachers galore of these subjects. I am a teacher of mercy and truth. And by teaching these I shall also contribute a great deal to the social order. Thus is stated also in the Psalms: `Mercy and truth have met together: justice and peace have kissed.' My teaching must be by word and example: therefore principles and exhortations from my lips and encouragement from my conduct in the eyes of all, Catholics, Orthodox, Turks and Jews. `Words move but examples draw.'

`The wicked shall be converted to thee The problem of the conversion of the irreligious and apostate world presents one of the mysteries which weigh most heavily on my soul. However, the solution is not my business but the Lord's secret. On my shoulders, on the shoulders of all priests, all Catholics, rests the solemn duty of working together for the conversion of this impious world and for the return of heretics and schismatics to the unity of the Church and the preaching of Christ to the Jews who put him to death. We are not responsible for the result. Our sole comfort, but it is enough for our peace of mind is knowing that Jesus the Saviour is much more anxious than we are for the salvation of souls: he wants them to be saved through our co-operation, but it is his grace alone, working in their souls, which saves them; and his grace will not be lacking when the moment comes for their conversion. This moment will be one of the most joyful surprises of our glorified souls in heaven.

VERSE XV: `Deliver me from blood, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall extol thy justice.'

To this verse dear Father Segneri devotes no fewer than fifteen pages of comment, in which he says some fine things, but in too ornate a manner. For me the interpretation must be so simple and practical. What is this `blood' from which the royal Psalmist begs the Lord to deliver him? I do not know the exegetical interpretation of this. Looking at it from my own angle I choose to see in this:

(1) The internal impulses of carnal desire, the result of our `natural infirmity', of the tainted blood which mankind has inherited from its first source in fallen Eve. Advancing years, when one is in the sixties like I am, wither the evil impulses to some extent, and it is a real pleasure to observe the silence and tranquillity of the flesh, which has now become old and irresponsive to the temptations which disturbed it in the years of my youth and vigorous maturity.

However, one must always be on the alert. The Bible speaks also of the foolish, doting old man, one of 'the three things my soul hates'.

(2) Excessive attachment to members of one's own family which, when they are felt beyond the limits of charity, become an embarrassment and a hindrance. The law of the apostolate and the priesthood is above the law of flesh and blood. Therefore I must love my own kith and kin, and go to their assistance when their poverty makes this necessary, because this is an obvious duty for one who does so much to help strangers, but all must be done discreetly, in a purely priestly spirit, in an orderly and impartial manner. My closest relations, brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces, with very few exceptions, are exemplary Christians and give me great joy. But it would never do for me to get mixed up in their affairs and concerns, so as to be diverted from my duties as a servant of the Holy See, and a Bishop! !

(3) Patriotism, which is right and may be holy, but may also degenerate into nationalism, which in my case would be most detrimental to the dignity of my episcopal ministry, must be kept above all nationalistic disputes. The world is poisoned with morbid nationalism, built up on the basis of race and blood, in contradiction to the Gospel. In this matter especially, which is of burning topical interest, 'deliver me from men of blood, O God'. 1-Tiere fits in most aptly the invocation: 'God of my salvation': Jesus our Saviour died for all nations, without distinction of race or blood, and became the first brother of the new human family, built on him and his Gospel.

With what enthusiasm and liberty the tongue of the priest and Bishop, thus loosed from earthly ties, will be able to preach to all the Lord's commands, and to praise his justice, mercy and peace, in the name of the Father who is God of all virtues, the Son who is God of salvation, and the Holy Spirit who is God of peace! In the enjoyment of this holy liberty how much more joy is felt in the sacred ministry of souls! 'Thy statutes have been my songs in the place of my pilgrimage' (Psalm 118 (119): 54). 'Come, let us praise the Lord with joy; let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour' (Psalm 94(95) : i).

VERSE XVI: 'Lord thou wilt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare thy praise.'

This is one of the best loved verses in the whole Psalm. The priest's morning prayer, his 'sacrifice of praise', opens with these words. They breathe such poetry and tenderness! The priest is also a teacher, and his lips must guard the truth. How fine it would be to begin all sermons, discourses, and all forms of teaching thus: 'Lord, thou wilt open my lips.' After the invocation comes the whole Office, distributed in the various Hours of day and night. This sets the tone for the whole sacred ministry of the Word, which is the announcement of the good tidings, an exaltation of religious truth and a hymnal of glory to the Lord.

When Father Segneri reaches thus verse he jumps a whole octave: omitting the literal interpretations of the exegetes, he invites the contemplative soul to see in this declaration of praise the exaltation of the Lord's greatest work, in which he employed the fullness of his powers, that is the founding of Holy

Church, which came to pass ten centuries after the time of David but was foreseen by him as God's masterpiece, wrought by means of his Christ. In fact elsewhere (Psalm 47(48) : 1) it is said: 'Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.' But where? On earth, in the sea, in the air, in fire, in the sky, in the stars, in the sun? No, but in the 'city of our God, in his holy mountain'. This interpretation is shared by St Robert Bellarmine who writes: 'Among those things which have been revealed to us we have hardly anything greater, or from which we may better discover the greatness of God, so as to praise it more fervently, than the founding of the Church.' Having made this point, Segneri finds reasons to infer that, as David wished to give God the greatest possible praise in return for the many benefits he had recovered with God's forgiveness, he chose this as the main theme for his ready harp. This was to be the grandest achievement of all ages and David, viewing it from afar with the spirit of a prophet, wanted to have the honour of announcing it: 'My mouth shall declare thy praise.' When we think that these words are repeated at all Matins, in the name of Holy Church, who prays for herself and for the whole world, and repeated by innumerable lips opened by the touch of the grace they have invoked, the vision broadens, comes alive and is fulfilled. Here the Church is seen not as a historic monument of the past but as a living institution. Holy Church is not like a palace that is built in a year. It is a vast city which must one day cover the whole universe 'With the joy of the whole earth is Mount Sion founded; in the far north the city of the great king.' The building was begun twenty centuries ago, but it spreads and stretches through all lands until the name of Christ is everywhere adored. As the Church increases so new nations, hearing the good news, rejoice: 'And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad' Acts 13: 48). The pious and daring commentator concludes with a thought that is very fine and uplifting for every priest as he reads his Breviary: everyone must take part in this building of Holy Church. He whose work is preaching this grand enterprise must, as a messenger of his Gospel, say to the Lord: 'Lord, thou wilt open my lips and my mouth shall declare thy praise.' A priest who is not engaged in missionary work should long to co-operate in the great task of the apostolate, and when he reads the Psalms privately in his cell he also should say: 'Lord, thou wilt open my lips', because even there, through the communion of love, he must consider as his own voice any voice that is at that moment announcing the Gospel, 'the supreme praise of God which has given us the theme for this verse, more charged with hidden mysteries than with words'.

*Fifth day. Saturday, 30 November: fast of St Andrew, the apostle*

VERSE XVII: 'For if thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would indeed have given it: with burnt offerings thou wilt not be delighted.'

These words reveal David's willingness for sacrifice, for any sacrifice. The thought of the sin he has committed still weighs on his heart. Since he has acknowledged the gravity of his twofold crime, the rape of another man's wife

and the murder of an innocent man-and it took him a year to realize this-he feels that the proper expiation should be death. This would be in accordance with the Mosaic law. But since the prophet has assured him: 'The Lord has put away your sin: you shall not die', he knows that he must make an offering to the Lord of all that is the expression of death, that is, the annihilation of everything, before the offended majesty of God: hence the sacrifice according to the legal requirements and, since he was inordinately rich, a more abundant sacrifice in burnt offerings and in creatures of the earth. But the Lord did not want him to offer these fortes of sacrifice, prescribed for the Jews who had come from Egypt, where they had been workers with straw, earth arid lithe. For one who was to be a progenitor of Christ, for a man made after God's own heart, these forms of worship and expiation were too ignoble. Therefore the Lord did not want them from him, and would take no delight in burnt offerings. But David was right when he showed his willingness to offer them, in order at least to show himself ready to obey the divine commands.

Readiness for self-sacrifice, such as the Lord wants from every one of us, and in the measure he requires, this must present a great lesson and warning for me. This is what loyal and sincere devotion means. Not just shedding consoling tears during prayer but preparing a ready will for God's service, whatever it may be. 'My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready', for much or for little, to do what God wants of me and understand what he does not want, which therefore must not be done. So frequently we are deceived about this. We take pleasure in fashioning for ourselves ways of serving the Lord which really are simply ways of expressing our own taste, our own ambition, our own caprice. 'The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock' (Obadiah 3). You hardly know how to take, in God's service, one step outside your hole, in which, like a tarantula, you take refuge from the storms that rage, and yet you like to persuade yourself that you could fly like an eagle if you received a call from beyond the mountains and beyond the seas. In your piety you have unwittingly deceived yourself. Let the readiness of your will be seen in works done to carry out the will of the Lord, as this is true known to you day by day, and do not show this readiness merely by heaving fervent sighs.

VERSE XVIII: 'A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.'

The sacrifice that is most pleasing to God is the spirit beset by trials, indeed doubly beset because to the torment of the spirit is frequently added the suffering of the body which with the soul has played its own large part in doing evil. If we consider this doctrine apart from the particular case of David, the repentant sinner, it sets before us that great mystery of the Cross and of all suffering which is the surest way to priestly and episcopal perfection.

During my retreat in Rustchuk in May, 1930 I was entirely absorbed in this doctrine which, moreover, appeared to me with amazing clarity when I prostrated myself before the altar of San Carlo al Corso in Rome, during the ceremony of my episcopal consecration, and arose from that ceremony bearing

with the a clear impression of resemblance, at least in my soul, ,with Christ crucified. `Make the love thy Cross." I must frequently repeat this invocation! Until now I have suffered too little. My own happy nature, which is a great gift from God, has kept me immune from those afflictions which accompany daring and generous spirits who hurl themselves like living flames into their zealous labour for souls. But it is only to be expected that, before the end of my humble life, the Lord will send me trials of a particularly painful nature. 'WA, I am ready: provided that the Lord, who sends the these, will also grant me the strength to bear them with calm, dignity and sweetness. I read III the life of the last Mistress of Novices, Mother Maria Alfonsa, of these Sisters of Sion whose pleasant hospitality I enjoy, that the spirit of this Institute consists in abnegation souriante. Oh, this motto is just right for me ! I desire always to be ready for the interior sacrifice, which must be borne with humility, in a spirit of penitence and with a contrite heart contrite heart in ashes' as is said of all the most famous characters of the Old Testament, and as we read of the most beloved saints of the New. It is enough to think of St Francis of Assisi, whose prayer was always the same: `O Jesus, lave mercy oil me, a sinner.' To help me to acquire this contrite spirit I will be most careful acid fervent in celebrating Holy Mass, which transports the to the garden of Gethsemane, to the most secret sanctuary of Christ's sufferings. I shall find the necessary trials also in the series of daily pinpricks for which I have to find a perfect answer through compliance patience, resignation and justice, dignity and peace.

VERSE XIX: `Deal favourably, O Lord, in thy good will, with Sion, that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up!'

Biblical exegesis has a wonderful opportunity here to exercise itself in the examination of the three meanings literal, allegorical or mystical, and anagogic. The royal prophet, raised tip again after his sits, ready for sacrifice, looks towards the future and prays that it may be one of glorification for his merciful God. The favourable treatment he begs for his house, established on Mount Sion, which will permit him to rebuild the walls of the royal city, foreshadows the appearance of Christ the Saviour: 'The goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared', says St Paul (Titus 3 : 4). Sion was to sec the dynasties of the kings of Judah, which gave place to Constantine and then to the more firmly established and unfailing pontifical religious monarchy. Jerusalem is Holy Church, which pitches its tents in every part of the world and has firm, massive walls, sometimes breached here and there but rebuilt and fortified more strongly than ever. From the mystic Jerusalem, or Church Militant, we raise our eyes to the heavenly Jerusalem, or Church Triumphant, which awaits us in the final consummation. The last notes of David's Miserere set the tone for St John's Apocalyptic vision which, after the description of the 'blessed vision of peace', ends with the prayer 'Come, Lord Jesus'.'

My poor heart too is ravished and moved by these splendours and from them I draw encouragement to do my best to cooperate in preaching the spirit of Jesus from Mount Sion, and in the extension and restoration of the walls of

Jerusalem, in the service of Holy Church, as Providence has decided for me, who, though the humblest of the Bishops and representatives of the Holy See, am none the less desirous to honour my vocation.

These remaining years should be my best years of earnest, effective and worthy co-operation in the great work carried on by the Catholic Church, from the sacred heights of Sion to the ramparts of Jerusalem. May Jesus accept at least my good intention and bless it graciously, in his good will.

VERSE XX: 'Then shalt thou accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations, and whole burnt offerings. Then shall they lay calves upon thy altar.'

This speaks of the great and authentic sacrifice which Jesus offered for us when 'he delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness' (Eph. 5 : 2).

David, in rapt contemplation, saw this from afar, the true sacrifice of justice and universal atonement which, from the summit of the sacred hill that rises between Sion and Moriah, was to complete all other sacrifices all over the world, and also endow with divine virtue all the sacrifices that would be made by millions down through the centuries who, drawn by a passionate love for the Cross, would offer their penitence and suffering, as they shred in the Mystical Body of Christ.

Around the sacrifice of the Cross it is well to contemplate these 'oblations and whole burnt offerings'. They are the apostles, confessors, martyrs, saints of every age. Here are the virgins whose life was and continues to be the glory of Holy Church, all fervour, all sacrifice, all blood. 'Like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.' A mount of oblations and burnt sacrifices, often obscure and unknown, rising towards the Most High, in propitiation for the whole world. And the calf or calves placed on the altar? The commentators are agreed in seeing in thus the image of the Holy Eucharist, by means of which the sacrifice of the Cross is mystically and no less truly and perpetually renewed. What an honour for a priest or Bishop, in thus ministry that has been entrusted to him, to offer the divine victim on the altar every day! But what a responsibility before heaven and earth!

Ali, Lord Jesus, I take refuge in my nothingness, I plead for pity and forgiveness for my failings, I renew the consecration of my life to your worship, your love, your altar. 'Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me'.

## 1942

*Retreat with my clergy at the Apostolic Delegation  
from the feast of Christ the King to All Saints Day  
Istanbul, 25-31 October, 1942*

(1) Last year I could not make a retreat, as I was busy in Greece directing relief work, in the name of the Holy Father.



This year I would willingly have made my retreat again with the Jesuit Fathers, as I did in 1939. But it is still inadvisable for many people to be seen coming and going around that house and the Fathers themselves are uncertain and afraid. So I decided to be content with making the retreat at borne, as we did in 1935 and 1937. I invited their Excellencies Kiredjian, the Archbishop of the Armenians, and Varuhas, the Ordinary of the Greeks of the Byzantine rite, to join us. Varuhas brought with him his three ecclesiastics : Fathers Basil and Polycarp and Deacon Haralampos. There are also the three Heads of the Eastern rites: Chami for the Melkites, Fakir for the Syrians and Nikoloff for the Bulgarians. The Bishops and these representative of the three rites remain at the Delegation for dinner. In all we are fifteen this retreat, a good number Father Folet, a French Jesuit, is preaching very well, with great fidelity to Scriptural doctrine. Silence in the house, and punctuality to the time altogether a general atmosphere of good will on everyone's part, which is pleasing and edifying for us all.

(2) On the feast of St Simon and St Jude I made my confession to father Folet, after I had celebrated my own holy Mass and attended Mass, in preparation for the sacrament of purification. I extended my examination and confession to cover the two years from December, 1940 until now, My penance: recital of the Miserere and the Magnificat. But alas! I trust accustom myself to very different penances if I want to enter heaven easily and honourably ! May the Lord grant me more and more the right spirit. The hour of greatest penance for the whole world is drawing near.

It is right that Bishops and priests should set the example, just as St Charles Borromeo and Cardinal Federico did in times of great calamity: they went in procession, bare-footed, with ropes around their necks and wear hair shirts, bearing the relics of the holy Cross.

(3) I am continually disappointed, and often secretly disquieted about the same old problem: not being able to keep LIP with all I have to do, and having to watch myself closely to try to overcome my natural sloth, which tends to make me calm and unhurried, although I never stop working. This disappointment humiliates and almost saddens me. I must welcome and cherish everything that may be a source of humiliation but Without losing my inner calm and serenity. This is my torment. My not being able to get on more quickly may be due to several reasons. It may be due to the fact that I really have too much to do, or to the particular circumstances of my position here and in Greece. But I must choose to attribute this state of things to my own insufficiency and 'at least bear it patiently, if not joyfully', as Thomas a Kempis says (bk. III, chap. 57). And remembering that other admonition of Ills in the same book of *Vie Imitation* I must not consider myself really humble until I admit that I am inferior to everyone else.'

(4) The fundamental principles of the spiritual life still hold firm, thanks be to God: to feel wholly detached from my own nothingness and to remind myself that, in the words of the Ambrosian Mass, I am the least of all, and a sinner. I must abandon myself completely to the will of the Lord and desire to live for nothing else but the apostolate and the faithful service of Holy Church. I must

feel no concern about my future and be ready to sacrifice everything, even life itself-should the Lord think rue worthy-for the glory of God and the accomplishment of my duty; I must have a great spiritual fervour, in keeping with the mind of the Church and the best tradition, without any exaggeration of eternal forms or methods, but constant zeal and mildness, with an eye for everything, always with great patience and gentleness, remembering what Cardinal Mercier quotes from Gratry: gentleness is the fulness of strength. And finally, I must always be familiar With the thought of death, which helps so much to make life carefree and joyful.

(5) I find it rather mortifying to go over the same things again, but tills is what my soul needs. So, I renew my resolve to observe the custom of reciting Matins in the evening, so as to be sure of having tune for meditation in the morning and I renew also my determination to study the Turkish and Greek languages. I have beets studying Greek now for some months, and I am pleased. As soon as I can I will take up Turkish again, not because I have any hope of becoming learned in these languages, but simply to do my duty and set a good example for my successors.

(G) My ministry in Greece is the one more beset with difficulties. For this reason I must love it more. Moreover, in recent months it has given me the greatest consolation. When I am here, in Istanbul, I never wish to leave for that country which today has become a `place of torments', but once I get there I am like a fish in water. The thought that Mgr Giacomo Testa is working there and doing well is a great consolation to me, but cannot free me of much responsibility as long as the Holy See intends to leave it all to me.

The two great evils which are poisoning the world today are secularism and nationalism. The former is characteristic of the men in power and of lay folk in general. The latter is found even among ecclesiastics. I am convinced that the Italian priests, especially the secular clergy, are less contaminated by this than others. But I must be very watchful, both as Bishop and as representative of the Holy See. It is one thing to love Italy, as I most fervently do, and quite another to display this affection in public. The holy Church which I represent is the mother of nations, all nations. Everyone with whom I come into contact must admire in the Pope's representative that respect for the nationality of others, expressed with graciousness and mild judgments, which inspires universal trust. Great caution then, respectful silence, and courtesy on all occasions. It will be wise for me to insist on thus line of conduct being followed by all my entourage, at home and outside. We are all more or less tainted with nationalism. The Apostolic Delegate must be, and must be seen to be, free from this contagion. May God help me.

(8) We are living through great events, and chaos lies ahead. This makes it all the more necessary to return to those principles which are the foundation of the Christian social order, and to judge what is happening today in the light of what the Gospel teaches us, recognizing in the terror and horror which engulf us the terrible sanctions that guard the divine law, even on earth. The Bishop must be distinguished by his own understanding, and his adequate explanation to others, of the philosophy of history, even the history that is now, before our

eyes, adding pages of blood to pages of political and social disorders. I want to re-read St Augustine's City of God, and draw from his doctrine the necessary material to form my own judgment, a wise judgment which may bring light and comfort to all who come within the scope of my ministry.

(9) Good Father Rene Folet, who is giving the Exercises with great fidelity to Sacred Scripture, has for once diverged from this method to give an image of the perfect Bishop, using the words of St Isidore of Seville about St Fulgentius (Liber 11 Officiorum chap. 5). I copy these words out as a warning to myself and in remembrance of this happy retreat. If only my own life could mirror this doctrine!

`He who is set in authority for the education and instruction of the people for their good must be holy in all things and reprehensible in nothing .... His speech must be pure, simple, open, full of dignity and integrity, full of gentleness and grace when he is dealing with the mystery of the law, the teaching of the faith, the virtue of continence and the law of justice; admonishing everyone, with exhortations varying according to that person's profession and the quality of his morals; that is, he must know in advance of what, to whom, when and how he should speak. It is his special and primary duty to read the Scriptures, to know the Canons, to imitate the examples of the saints, and devote himself to vigils, fasts and prayers, to live at peace with his brethren and never alienate any member, to condemn no one without proof, to excommunicate no one without due consideration. Every Bishop should be distinguished as much by his humility as by his authority, so that lie may neither cause the vices of his subordinates to flourish, through his own excessive humility, nor exercise his authority with immoderate severity. The more strictly lie fears he will be judged by Christ, the more warily should he act towards those committed to his care.

`He will also preserve that charity which excels all other gifts, and without which all virtue is nothing. For charity is the safeguard of chastity too, but this safeguard is grounded in humility. Besides all these things, he will also preserve perfect chastity, so that his mind, given to Christ, will be clean and free from all fleshly corruption. Among other things, it will be his duty to show care for the poor, with anxious stewardship, to clothe the naked, to succour pilgrims, to ransom captives, to watch over widows and orphans and to show vigilant care for all, making provision for all with due discretion. In hospitality also lie will be noteworthy in supplying the needs of all with kindness and charity. For if all the faithful long to hear that saying of the Gospel: "I was a stranger and you took me in", all the more must the Bishop, whose house must give shelter to all.'

## **1943-1944**

### *NOTE*

The year 1943 was full of uncertainty about the retreat. It was fixed and prepared for the end of 1944.

Father Leveque a Lazarist Father, was to have given it. Then, just before Christmas, I was ordered to Paris.'