

# **The Little Catechism of the Curé of Ars (Selections)**

**By St John Vianney (Patron Saint of Parish Priests)**

*Including*

**Instructions on the Catechism**

*and*

**Explanations and Exhortations**

Edited by Br Sean, a choir monk, 2008

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**PART 1: INSTRUCTIONS ON THE CATECHISM**

**CHAPTER 1: Catechism on Salvation**

THERE ARE many Christians who do not even know why they are in the world.

"Oh my God, why have You sent me into the world?" "To save your soul." "And why do You wish me to be saved?" "Because I love you." The good God has created us and sent us into the world because He loves us; He wishes to save us because He loves us. . . . To be saved, we must know, love and serve God. Oh, what a beautiful life! How good, how great a thing it is to know, to love and serve God! We have nothing else to do in this world. All that we do besides is lost time. We must act only for God, and put our works into His hands. . . . We should say, on awaking, "I desire to do everything today for You, O my God! I will submit to all that You shall send me, as coming from You. I offer myself as a sacrifice to You But, O God, I can do nothing without You. Do help me!"

Oh, how bitterly shall we regret at the hour of death the time we have given to pleasures, to useless conversations, to repose, instead of having employed it in mortification, in prayer, in good works, in thinking of our poor misery, in weeping over our poor sins; then we shall see that we have done nothing for Heaven. Oh, my children, how sad it is! Three-quarters of those who are Christians labor for nothing but to satisfy this body, which will soon be buried and corrupted, while they do not give a thought to their poor soul, which must be happy or miserable for all eternity. They have neither sense nor reason: it makes one tremble.

Look at that man, who is so active and restless, who makes a noise in the world, who wants to govern everybody, who thinks himself as important, who seems as if he would like to say to the sun, "Go away, and let me enlighten the world instead of you." Some day this proud man will be reduced at the utmost to a little handful of dust, which will be swept away from river to river, and at last into the sea.

See my children, I often think that we are like those little heaps of sand that the wind raises on the road, which whirl round for a moment, and are then scattered . . . . We have brothers and sisters who are dead. Well, they

are reduced to that little handful of dust of which I was speaking. Worldly people say it is too difficult to save one's soul. Yet nothing is easier. To observe the Commandments of God and the Church, and to avoid the seven capital sins; or if you like to put it so, to do good and avoid evil: that is all. Good Christians, who labor to save their souls and to work out their salvation, are always happy and contented; they enjoy beforehand the happiness of Heaven: they will be happy for all eternity. While bad Christians, who lose their souls, are always to be pitied; they murmur, they are sad, they are as miserable as stones; and they will be so for all eternity. See what a difference!

This is a good rule of conduct, to do nothing but what we can offer to the good God. Now, we cannot offer to Him slanders, calumnies, injustice, anger, blasphemy, impurity, night clubs, dancing; yet that is all that people do in the world. Speaking of dances, St. Francis of Sales used to say that "they were like mushrooms, the best were good for nothing." Mothers are apt to say indeed, "Oh, I watch over my daughters." They watch over their attire, but they cannot watch over their hearts. Those who have dances in their houses load themselves with a terrible responsibility before God; they are answerable for all the evil that is done--for the bad thoughts, the slanders, the jealousies, the hatred, the revenge. . . . Ah, if they well understood this responsibility they would never have any dances. Just like those who make bad pictures and statues, or write bad books, they will have to answer for all the harm that these things will do during all the time they last. . . . Oh that makes one tremble!

See, my children, we must reflect that we have a soul to save, and an eternity that awaits us. The world, its riches, pleasures, and honors will pass away. Let us take care, then. The saints did not all begin well; but they all ended well. We have begun badly; let us end well, and we shall go one day and meet them in Heaven.

## **CHAPTER 2: Catechism on The Love of God**

OUR BODY is a vessel of corruption; it is meant for death and for the worms, nothing more! And yet we devote ourselves to satisfying it, rather than to enriching our soul, which is so great that we can conceive nothing greater--no, nothing, nothing! For we see that God, urged by the ardour of His love, would not create us like the animals; He has created us in His own image and likeness, do you see? Oh, how great is man!

Man, being created by love, cannot live without love: either he loves God, or he loves himself and he loves the world. See, my children, it is faith that

we want. . . . When we have not faith, we are blind. He who does not see, does not know; he who does not know does not love; he who does not love God loves himself, and at the same time loves his pleasures. He fixes his heart on things which pass away like smoke. He cannot know the truth, nor any good thing; he can know nothing but falsehood, because he has no light; he is in a mist. If he had light, he would see plainly that all that he loves can give him nothing but eternal death; it is a foretaste of Hell.

Do you see, my children, except God, nothing is solid--nothing, nothing! If it is life, it passes away; if it is a fortune, it crumbles away; if it is health, it is destroyed; if it is reputation, it is attacked. We are scattered like the wind. . . . Everything is passing away full speed, everything is going to ruin. O God! O God! how much those are to be pitied, then, who set their hearts on all these things! They set their hearts on them because they love themselves too much; but they do not love themselves with a reasonable love--they love themselves with a love that seeks themselves and the world, that seeks creatures more than God. That is the reason why they are never satisfied, never quiet; they are always uneasy, always tormented, always upset. See, my children, the good Christian runs his course in this world mounted on a fine triumphal chariot; this chariot is borne by angels, and conducted by Our Lord Himself, while the poor sinner is harnessed to the chariot of this life, and the devil who drives it forces him to go on with great strokes of the whip.

My children, the three acts of faith, hope and charity contain all the happiness of man upon the earth. By faith, we believe what God has promised us: we believe that we shall one day see Him, that we shall possess Him, that we shall be eternally happy with Him in Heaven. By hope, we expect the fulfilment of these promises: we hope that we shall be rewarded for all our good actions, for all our good thoughts, for all our good desires; for God takes into account even our good desires. What more do we want to make us happy?

In Heaven, faith and hope will exist no more, for the mist which obscures our reason will be dispelled; our mind will be able to understand the things that are hidden from it here below. We shall no longer hope for anything, because we shall have everything. We do not hope to acquire a treasure which we already possess. . . . But love; oh, we shall be inebriated with it! we shall be drowned, lost in that ocean of divine love, annihilated in that immense love of the Heart of Jesus! so that love is a foretaste of Heaven. Oh, how happy should we be if we knew how to understand it, to feel it, to taste it! What makes us unhappy is that we do not love God.

When we say, "My God, I believe, I believe firmly," that is, without the least doubt, without the least hesitation. . . . Oh, if we were penetrated with these words: "I firmly believe that You art present everywhere, that You

seest me, that I am under Thine eyes, that one day I myself shall see You clearly, that I shall enjoy all the good things You have promised me! O my God, I hope that You wilt reward me for all that I have done to please You! O my God, I love You; my heart is made to love You!" Oh, this act of faith, which is also an act of love, would suffice for everything! If we understood our own happiness in I being able to love God, we should remain motionless in ecstasy. . .

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If a prince, an emperor, were to cause one of his subjects to appear before him, and should say to him, "I wish to make you happy; stay with me, enjoy all my possessions, but be careful not to give me any just cause of displeasure," with what care, with what ardour, would not that subject endeavour to satisfy his prince! Well, God makes the same proposals to us . . . and we do not care for His friendship, we make no account of His promises. . . . What a pity!

### **CHAPTER 3: Catechism on The Holy Spirit**

O my CHILDREN, how beautiful it is! The Father is our Creator, the Son is our Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost is our Guide. . . . Man by himself is nothing, but with the Holy Spirit he is very great. Man is all earthly and all animal; nothing but the Holy Spirit can elevate his mind, and raise it on high. Why were the saints so detached from the earth? Because they let themselves be led by the Holy Spirit. Those who are led by the Holy Spirit have true ideas; that is the reason why so many ignorant people are wiser than the learned. When we are led by a God of strength and light, we cannot go astray.

The Holy Spirit is light and strength. He teaches us to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and between good and evil. Like glasses that magnify objects, the Holy Spirit shows us good and evil on a large scale. With the Holy Spirit we see everything in its true proportions; we see the greatness of the least actions done for God, and the greatness of the least faults. As a watchmaker with his glasses distinguishes the most minute wheels of a watch, so we, with the light of the Holy Ghost, distinguish all the details of our poor life. Then the smallest imperfections appear very great, the least sins inspire us with horror. That is the reason why the most Holy Virgin never sinned. The Holy Ghost made her understand the hideousness of sin; she shuddered with terror at the least fault.

Those who have the Holy Spirit cannot endure themselves, so well do they know their poor misery. The proud are those who have not the Holy Spirit.

Worldly people have not the Holy Spirit, or if they have, it is only for a moment. He does not remain with them; the noise of the world drives Him away. A

Christian who is led by the Holy Spirit has no difficulty in leaving the goods of this world, to run after those of Heaven; he knows the difference between them. The eyes of the world see no further than this life, as mine see no further than this wall when the church door is shut. The eyes of the Christian see deep into eternity. To the man who gives himself up to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, there seems to be no world; to the world there seems to be no God. . . . We must therefore find out by whom we are led. If it is not by the Holy Ghost, we labor in vain; there is no substance nor savour in anything we do. If it is by the Holy Ghost, we taste a delicious sweetness . . . it is enough to make us die of pleasure!

Those who are led by the Holy Spirit experience all sorts of happiness in themselves, while bad Christians roll themselves on thorns and flints. A soul in which the Holy Spirit dwells is never weary in the presence of God; his heart gives forth a breath of love. Without the Holy Ghost we are like the stones on the road. . . . Take in one hand a sponge full of water, and in the other a little pebble; press them equally. Nothing will come out of the pebble, but out of the sponge will come abundance of water. The sponge is the soul filled with the Holy Spirit, and the stone is the cold and hard heart which is not inhabited by the Holy Spirit.

A soul that possesses the Holy Spirit tastes such sweetness in prayer, that it finds the time always too short; it never loses the holy presence of God. Such a heart, before our good Saviour in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, is a bunch of grapes under the wine press. The Holy Spirit forms thoughts and suggests words in the hearts of the just. . . . Those who have the Holy Spirit produce nothing bad; all the fruits of the Holy Spirit are good. Without the Holy Spirit all is cold; therefore, when we feel we are losing our fervour, we must instantly make a novena to the Holy Spirit to ask for faith and love. . . . See, when we have made a retreat or a jubilee, we are full of good desires: these good desires are the breath of the Holy Ghost, which has passed over our souls, and has renewed everything, like the warm wind which melts the ice and brings back the spring. . . . You who are not great saints, you still have many moments when you taste the sweetness of prayer and of the presence of God: these are visits of the Holy Spirit. When we have the Holy Spirit, the heart expands--bathes itself in divine love. A fish never complains of having too much water, neither does a good Christian ever complain of being too long with the good God. There are some people who find religion wearisome, and it is because they have not the Holy Spirit.

If the damned were asked: Why are you in Hell? they would answer: For having resisted the Holy Spirit. And if the saints were asked, Why are you in Heaven? they would answer: For having listened to the Holy Spirit. When good

thoughts come into our minds, it is the Holy Spirit who is visiting us. The Holy Spirit is a power. The Holy Spirit supported St. Simeon on his column; He sustained the martyrs. Without the Holy Spirit, the martyrs would have fallen like the leaves from the trees. When the fires were lighted under them, the Holy Spirit extinguished the heat of the fire by the heat of divine love. The good God, in sending us the Holy Spirit, has treated us like a great king who should send his minister to guide one of his subjects, saying, "You will accompany this man everywhere, and you will bring him back to me safe and sound." How beautiful it is, my children, to be accompanied by the Holy Spirit! He is indeed a good Guide; and to think that there are some who will not follow Him. The Holy Spirit is like a man with a carriage and horse, who should want to take us to Paris. We should only have to say "yes," and to get into it. It is indeed an easy matter to say "yes"! . . . Well, the Holy Spirit wants to take us to Heaven; we have only to say "yes," and to let Him take us there.

The Holy Spirit is like a gardener cultivating our souls. . . . The Holy Spirit is our servant. . . . There is a gun; well you load it, but someone must fire it and make it go off. . . . In the same way, we have in ourselves the power of doing good. . . when the Holy Spirit gives the impulse, good works are produced. The Holy Spirit reposes in just souls like the dove in her nest. He brings out good desires in a pure soul, as the dove hatches her young ones. The Holy Spirit leads us as a mother leads by the hand her child of two years old, as a person who can see leads one who is blind.

The Sacraments which Our Lord instituted would not have saved us without the Holy Spirit. Even the death of Our Lord would have been useless to us without Him. Therefore Our Lord said to His Apostles, "It is good for you that I should go away; for if I did not go, the Consoler would not come." The descent of the Holy Ghost was required, to render fruitful that harvest of graces. It is like a grain of wheat--you cast it into the ground; yes, but it must have sun and rain to make it grow and come into ear. We should say every morning, "O God, send me Thy Spirit to teach me what I am and what You art. "

#### **CHAPTER 4: Catechism on the Blessed Virgin**

THE FATHER takes pleasure in looking upon the heart of the most Holy Virgin Mary, as the masterpiece of His hands; for we always like our own work, especially when it is well done. The Son takes pleasure in it as the heart of His Mother, the source from which He drew the Blood that has ransomed us; the

Holy Ghost as His temple. The Prophets published the glory of Mary before her birth; they compared her to the sun. Indeed, the apparition of the Holy Virgin may well be compared to a beautiful gleam of sun on a foggy day.

Before her coming, the anger of God was hanging over our heads like a sword ready to strike us. As soon as the Holy Virgin appeared upon the earth, His anger was appeased. . . . She did not know that she was to be the Mother of God, and when she was a little child she used to say, "When shall I then see that beautiful creature who is to be the Mother of God?" The Holy Virgin has brought us forth twice, in the Incarnation and at the foot of the Cross; she is then doubly our Mother. The Holy Virgin is often compared to a mother, but she is much better still than the best of mothers; for the best of mothers sometimes punishes her child when it displeases her, and even beats it: she thinks she is doing right. But the Holy Virgin does not so; she is so good that she treats us with love, and never punishes us.

The heart of this good Mother is all love and mercy; she desires only to see us happy. We have only to turn to her to be heard. The Son has His justice, the Mother has nothing but her love. God has loved us so much as to die for us; but in the heart of Our Lord there is justice, which is an attribute of God; in that of the most Holy Virgin there is nothing but mercy. Her Son being ready to punish a sinner, Mary interposes, checks the sword, implores pardon for the poor criminal. "Mother," Our Lord says to her, "I can refuse you nothing. If Hell could repent, you would obtain its pardon. "

The most Holy Virgin places herself between her Son and us. The greater sinners we are, the more tenderness and compassion does she feel for us. The child that has cost its mother most tears is the dearest to her heart. Does not a mother always run to the help of the weakest and the most exposed to danger? Is not a physician in the hospital most attentive to those who are most seriously ill? The Heart of Mary is so tender towards us, that those of all the mothers in the world put together are like a piece of ice in comparison to hers. See how good the Holy Virgin is! Her great servant St. Bernard used often to say to her, "I salute thee, Mary." One day this good Mother answered him, "I salute thee, my son Bernard. "

The Ave Maria is a prayer that is never wearisome. The devotion to the Holy Virgin is delicious, sweet, nourishing. When we talk on earthly subjects or politics, we grow weary; but when we talk of the Holy Virgin, it is always new. All the saints have a great devotion to Our Lady; no grace comes from Heaven without passing through her hands. We cannot go into a house without speaking to the porter; well, the Holy Virgin is the portress of Heaven.

When we have to offer anything to a great personage, we get it presented by the person he likes best, in order that the homage may be agreeable to him. So



our prayers have quite a different sort of merit when they are presented by the Blessed Virgin, because she is the only creature who has never offended God. The Blessed Virgin alone has fulfilled the first Commandment--to adore God only, and love Him perfectly. She fulfilled it completely.

All that the Son asks of the Father is granted Him. All that the Mother asks of the Son is in like manner granted to her. When we have handled something fragrant, our hands perfume whatever they touch: let our prayers pass through the hands of the Holy Virgin; she will perfume them. I think that at the end of the world the Blessed Virgin will be very tranquil; but while the world lasts, we drag her in all directions. . . . The Holy Virgin is like a mother who has a great many children--she is continually occupied in going from one to the other.

## **CHAPTER 5: Catechism on The Word of God**

MY CHILDREN, the Word of God is of no little importance! These were Our Lord's first words to His Apostles: "Go and teach" . . to show us that instruction is before everything.

My children, what has taught us our religion? The instructions we have heard. What gives us a horror of sin? What makes us alive to the beauty of virtue, inspires us with the desire of Heaven? Instructions. What teaches fathers and mothers the duties they have to fulfil towards their children and children the duties they have to fulfil towards their parents? Instructions.

My children, why are people so blind and so ignorant? Because they make so little account of the Word of God. There are some who do not even say an Our Father and a Hail Mary to beg of the good God the grace to listen to it attentively, and to profit well by it. I believe, my children, that a person who does not hear the Word of God as he ought, will not be saved; he will not know what to do to be saved. But with a well-instructed person there is always some resource. He may wander in all sorts of evil ways; there is still hope that he will return sooner or later to the good God, even if it were only at the hour of death. Instead of which a person who has never been instructed is like a sick person--like one in his agony who is no longer conscious: he knows neither the greatness of sin nor the value of virtue; he drags himself from sin to sin, like a rag that is dragged in the mud....

My children, you make a scruple of missing holy Mass, because you commit a great sin in missing it by your own fault; but you have no scruple in missing an instruction. You never consider that in this way you may greatly offend God. At

the Day of Judgment, when you will all be there around me, and the good God will say to you, "Give Me an account of the instructions and the catechisms which you have heard and which you might have heard," you will think very differently.

My children, you go out during the instructions, you amuse yourselves with laughing, you do not listen, you think yourselves too clever to come to the catechism . . . do you think, my children, that things will be allowed to go on so? Oh no, certainly not! God will arrange matters very differently. How sad it is! We see fathers and mothers stay outside during the instruction; yet they are under obligation to instruct their children; but how can they teach them? They are not instructed themselves. . . . All this leads straight to Hell. . . . It is a pity!...

My children, I will give you an example of what it is not to believe what priests tell you. There were two soldiers passing through a place where a mission was being given; one of the soldiers proposed to his comrade to go and hear the sermon, and they went. The missionary preached upon Hell. "Do you believe all that this priest says?" asked the least wicked of the two. "Oh, no!" replied the other, "I believe it is all nonsense, invented to frighten people." "Well, for my part, I believe it; and to prove to you that I believe it, I shall give up being a soldier, and go into a convent." "Go where you please; I shall continue my journey." But while he was on his journey, he fell ill and died. The other, who was in the convent, heard of his death, and began to pray that God would show him in what state his companion had died. One day, as he was praying, his companion appeared to him; he recognised him, and asked him, "Where are you?" "In Hell; I am lost!" "O wretched man! do you now believe what the missionary said?" "Yes, I believe it. Missionaries are wrong only in one respect; they do not tell you a hundredth part of what is suffered here. "

My children, I often think that most of the Christians who are lost for want of instruction-they do not know their religion well. For example, here is a person who has to go and do his day's work. This person has a desire to do great penances, to pass half the night in prayer; if he is well instructed, he will say, "No, I must not do that, because then I could not fulfil my duty tomorrow; I should be sleepy, and the least thing would put me out of patience; I should be weary all the day, and I should not do half as much work as if I had rested at night; that must not be done. "

Again, my children, a servant may have a desire to fast, but he is obliged to pass the whole day in digging and ploughing, or whatever you please. Well, if this servant is well instructed, he will think, "But if I do this, I shall not be able to satisfy my master." Well, what will he do? He will eat his

breakfast, and mortify himself in some other way. That is what we must do--we must always act in the way that will give most glory to the good God.

A person knows that another is in distress, and takes from his parents what will relieve that distress. He would certainly do much better to ask than to take it. If his parents refuse to give it, he will pray to God to inspire a rich person to give the alms instead of him. A well-instructed person always has two guides leading the way before him--good counsel and obedience.

## **CHAPTER 6: Catechism on the Prerogatives of the Pure Soul**

NOTHING IS so beautiful as a pure soul. If we understood this, we could not lose our purity. The pure soul is disengaged from matter, from earthly things, and from itself. . . . That is why the saints ill-treated their body, that is why they did not grant it what it required, not even to rise five minutes later, to warm themselves, to eat anything that gave them pleasure. . . . For what the body loses the soul gains, and what the body gains the soul loses.

Purity comes from Heaven; we must ask for it from God. If we ask for it, we shall obtain it. We must take great care not to lose it. We must shut our heart against pride, against sensuality, and all the other passions, as one shuts the doors and windows that nobody may be able to get in. What joy is it to the guardian angel to conduct a pure soul! My children, when a soul is pure, all Heaven looks upon it with love! Pure souls will form the circle round Our Lord. The more pure we have been on earth, the nearer we shall be to Him in Heaven. When the heart is pure, it cannot help loving, because it has found the source of love, which is God. "Happy," says Our Lord, "are the pure in heart, because they shall see God!"

My children, we cannot comprehend the power that a pure soul has over the good God. It is not he who does the will of God, it is God who does his will. Look at Moses, that very pure soul. When God would punish the Jewish people, He said to him: Do not pray for them, because My anger must fall upon this people. Nevertheless, Moses prayed, and God spared His people; He let Himself be entreated; He could not resist the prayer of that pure soul. O my children, a soul that has never been stained by that accursed sin obtains from God whatever it wishes!

Three things are wanted to preserve purity--the presence of God, prayer, and the Sacraments. Another means is the reading of holy books, which nourishes the soul. How beautiful is a pure soul! Our Lord showed one to St. Catherine; she thought it so beautiful that she said, "O Lord, if I did not know that there is

only one God, I should think it was one." The image of God is reflected in a pure soul, like the sun in the water. A pure soul is the admiration of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. The Father contemplates His work: There is My creature! . . . The Son, the price of His Blood: the beauty of an object is shown by the price it has cost. . . . The Holy Spirit dwells in it, as in a temple.

We also know the value of our soul by the efforts the devil makes to ruin it. Hell is leagued against it--Heaven for it. Oh, how great it must be! In order to have an idea of our dignity, we must often think of Heaven, Calvary, and Hell. If we could understand what it is to be the child of God, we could not do evil--we should be like angels on earth. To be children of God, oh, what a dignity!

It is a beautiful thing to have a heart, and, little as it is, to be able to make use of it in loving God. How shameful it is that man should descend so low, when God has placed him so high! When the angels had revolted against God, this God who is so good, seeing that they could no longer enjoy the happiness for which He had created them, made man, and this little world that we see to nourish his body. But his soul required to be nourished also; and as nothing created can feed the soul, which is a spirit, God willed to give Himself for its Food. But the great misfortune is that we neglect to have recourse to this divine Food, in crossing the desert of this life. Like people who die of hunger within sight of a well-provided table, there are some who remain fifty, sixty years, without feeding their souls.

Oh, if Christians could understand the language of Our Lord, who says to them, "Notwithstanding thy misery, I wish to see near Me that beautiful soul which I created for Myself. I made it so great, that nothing can fill it but Myself. I made it so pure, that nothing but My Body can nourish it. "

Our Lord has always distinguished Pure souls. Look at St. John, the well-beloved disciple, who reposed upon His breast. St. Catherine was pure, and she was often transported into Paradise. When she died, angels took up her body, and carried it to Mount Sinai, where Moses had received the Commandments of the law. God has shown by this prodigy that a soul is so agreeable to Him, that it deserves that even the body which has participated in its purity should be buried by angels.

God contemplates a pure soul with love; He grants it all it desires. How could He refuse anything to a soul that lives only for Him, by Him, and in Him? It seeks God, and He shows Himself to it; it calls Him, and God comes; it is one with Him; it captivates His will. A pure soul is all-powerful with the gracious Heart of Our Lord. A pure soul with God is like a child with its mother. It

caresses her, it embraces her, and its mother returns its caresses and embraces.

## **CHAPTER 7: Catechism on the Sanctification of Sunday**

YOU LABOR, you labor, my children; but what you earn ruins your body and your soul. If one ask those who work on Sunday, "What have you been doing?" they might answer, "I have been selling my soul to the devil, crucifying Our Lord, and renouncing my Baptism. I am going to Hell; I shall have to weep for all eternity in vain." When I see people driving carts on Sunday, I think I see them carrying their souls to Hell.

Oh, how mistaken in his calculations is he who labours hard on Sunday, thinking that he will earn more money or do more work! Can two or three shillings ever make up for the harm he does himself by violating the law of the good God? You imagine that everything depends on your working; but there comes an illness, an accident. . . . so little is required! a tempest, a hailstorm, a frost. The good God holds everything in His hand; He can avenge Himself when He will, and as He will; the means are not wanting to Him. Is He not always the strongest? Must not He be the master in the end?

There was once a woman who came to her priest to ask leave to get in her hay on Sunday. "But," said the priest, "it is not necessary; your hay will run no risk." The woman insisted, saying, "Then you want me to let my crop be lost?" She herself died that very evening; she was more in danger than her crop of hay. "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting." [Jn. 6: 27].

What will remain to you of your Sunday work? You leave the earth just as it is; when you go away, you carry nothing with you. Ah! when we are attached to the earth, we are not willing to go! Our first end is to go to God; we are on the earth for no other purpose. My brethren, we should die on Sunday, and rise again on Monday.

Sunday is the property of our good God; it is His own day, the Lord's day. He made all the days of the week: He might have kept them all; He has given you six, and has reserved only the seventh for Himself. What right have you to meddle with what does not belong to you? You know very well that stolen goods never bring any profit. Nor will the day that you steal from Our Lord profit you either. I know two very certain ways of becoming poor: they are working on Sunday and taking other people's property.

## CHAPTER 8: Catechism on Prayer

SEE MY children; the treasure of a Christian is not on the earth, it is in Heaven. Well, our thoughts ought to be where our treasure is. Man has a beautiful occupation, that of praying and loving. You pray, you love -- that is the happiness of man upon the earth. Prayer is nothing else than union with God. When our heart is pure and united to God, we feel within ourselves a joy, a sweetness that inebriates, a light that dazzles us. In this intimate union God and the soul are like two pieces of wax melted together; they cannot be separated. This union of God with His little creature is a most beautiful thing. It is a happiness that we cannot understand....God, in His goodness, has permitted us to speak to Him. Our prayer is an incense which He receives with extreme pleasure.

My children, your heart is poor and narrow; but prayer enlarges it, and renders it capable of loving God. Prayer is a foretaste of Heaven, an overflow of paradise. It never leaves us without sweetness. It is like honey descending into the soul and sweetening everything. Troubles melt away before a fervent prayer like snow before the sun. Prayer makes time pass away very quickly, and so pleasantly that one does not perceive how it passes....

We see some persons who lose themselves in prayer like a fish in the water, because they are all for God. There is no division in their heart. Oh, how I love those generous souls! St. Francis of Assisi and St. Colette saw Our Lord and spoke to Him as we talk to each other. While we, how often we come to church without knowing what we come for, or what we are going to ask! And yet, when we go to one's house, we know very well what we are going for. Some people seem to say to God, "I am going to say two words to You, and then I can get rid of You." I often think that when we come to adore Our Lord, we should obtain all we wish, if we would ask it with very lively faith, and a very pure heart. But, alas! we have no faith, no hope, no desire, no love!

There are two cries in man, the cry of the angel and the cry of the beast. The cry of the angel is prayer; the cry of the beast is sin. Those who do not pray, stoop towards the earth, like a mole trying to make a hole to hide itself in. They are all earthly, all brutish, and think of nothing but temporal things,

. . . like that miser who was receiving the last Sacraments the other day; when they gave him a silver crucifix to kiss, he said, "That cross weighs a full ten ounces." If...the poor lost souls, notwithstanding their sufferings, could worship, there would be no more Hell. Alas! they had a heart to love God with, a tongue to bless Him with; that was their destiny. And now they are condemned to curse Him through all eternity....

"Our Father who art in Heaven!" Oh, how beautiful it is, my children, to have a father in Heaven! "Thy kingdom come." If I make the good God reign in my heart, He will make me reign with Him in His glory. "Thy will be done." There is nothing so sweet, and nothing so perfect, as to do the will of God. In order to do things well, we must do them as God wills, in all conformity with His designs. "Give us this day our daily bread." We are composed of two parts, the soul and the body. We ask the good God to feed our poor body, and He answers by making the earth produce all that is necessary for our support. . . . But we ask Him to feed our soul, which is the best part of ourselves; and the earth is too small to furnish enough to satisfy it; it hungers for God, and nothing but God can satisfy it. Therefore the good God thought He did not do too much in dwelling upon the earth and assuming a body, in order that this Body might become the Food of our souls. "My Flesh," said Our Lord, "is meat indeed. . . . The bread that I will give is my Flesh, for the life of the world." The bread of souls is in the tabernacle. The tabernacle is the storehouse of Christians. . . . Oh, how beautiful it is, my children! When the priest presents the Host, and shows it to you, your soul may say, "There is my food." O my children, we are too blessed! . . . We shall never comprehend it till we are in Heaven. What a pity that is!

## **CHAPTER 14: Catechism on Sin**

SIN IS the executioner of the good God, and the assassin of the soul. It snatches us away from Heaven to precipitate us into Hell. And we love it! What folly! If we thought seriously about it, we should have such a lively horror of sin that we could not commit it. O my children, how ungrateful we are! The good God wishes to make us happy; that is very certain; He gave us His Law for no other end. The Law of God is great; it is broad. King David said that he found his delight in it, and that it was a treasure more precious to him than the greatest riches. He said also that he walked well, because he had sought after the Commandments of the Lord. The good God wishes, then, to make us happy, and we do not wish to be so. We turn away from Him, and give ourselves to the

devil! We fly from our Friend, and we seek after our murderer! We commit sin; we plunge ourselves into the mire. Once sunk in this mire, we know not how to get out. If our fortune were in the case, we should soon find out how to get out of the difficulty; but because it only concerns our soul, we stay where we are.

We come to confession quite preoccupied with the shame that we shall feel. We accuse ourselves with hot air. It is said that many confess, and few are converted. I believe it is so, my children, because few confess with tears of repentance. See, the misfortune is, that people do not reflect. If one said to those who work on Sundays, to a young person who had been dancing for two or three hours, to a man coming out of an alehouse drunk, "What have you been doing? You have been crucifying Our Lord!" they would be quite astonished, because they do not think of it. My children, if we thought of it, we should be seized with horror; it would be impossible for us to do evil. For what has the good God done to us that we should grieve Him thus, and put Him to death again -- Him, who has redeemed us from Hell? It would be well if all sinners, when they are going to their guilty pleasures, could, like St. Peter, meet Our Lord on the way, who would say to them, "I am going to that place where you are going yourself, to be there crucified again." Perhaps that might make them reflect.

The saints understood how great an outrage sin is against God. Some of them passed their lives in weeping for their sins. St. Peter wept all his life; he was still weeping at his death. St. Bernard used to say, "Lord! Lord! it is I who fastened You to the Cross!" By sin we despise the good God, we crucify the good God! What a pity it is to lose our souls, which have cost Our Lord so many sufferings! What harm has Our Lord done us, that we should treat Him so? If the poor lost souls could come back to the earth! if they were in our place! Oh, how senseless we are! the good God calls us to Him, and we fly from Him! He wishes to make us happy, and we will not have His happiness. He commands us to love Him, and we give our hearts to the devil. We employ in ruining ourselves the time He gives us to save our souls. We make war upon Him with the means He gave us to serve Him.

When we offend the good God, if we were to look at our crucifix, we should hear Our Lord saying to us in the depths of our soul, "Will you too, then, take the side of My enemies? Will you crucify Me again?" Cast your eyes on Our Lord fastened to the Cross, and say to yourself, "That is what it cost my Savior to repair the injury my sins have done to God!" A God coming down to earth to be the victim of our sins, a God suffering, a God dying, a God enduring every torment, because He would bear the weight of our crimes! At the sight of the Cross, let us understand the malice of sin, and the hatred we ought to feel for



it. Let us enter into ourselves; let us see what we can do to make amends for our poor life.

"What a pity it is!" the good God will say to us at our death; "why have you offended Me -- Me, who loved you so much?" To offend the good God, who has never done us anything but good; to please the devil, who can never do us anything but evil! What folly! Is it not real folly to choose to make ourselves worthy of Hell by attaching ourselves to the devil when we might taste the joys of Heaven, even in this life, by uniting ourselves to God by love? One cannot understand this folly; it cannot be enough lamented. Poor sinners seem as if they could not wait for the sentence which will condemn them to the society of the devils; they condemn themselves to it. There is a sort of foretaste in this life of Paradise, of Hell, and of Purgatory. Purgatory is in those souls that are not dead to themselves; Hell is in the heart of the impious; Paradise in that of the perfect, who are closely united to Our Lord.

He who lives in sin takes up the habits and the appearance of the beasts. The beast, which has not reason, knows nothing but its appetites. So the man who makes himself like the beasts loses his reason, and lets himself be guided by the inclinations of his body. He takes his pleasure in good eating and drinking, and in enjoying the vanities of the world, which pass away like the wind. I pity the poor wretches who run after that wind; they gain very little, they give a great deal for very little profit -- they give their eternity for the miserable smoke of the world.

My children, how sad it is! when a soul is in a state of sin, it may die in that state; and even now, whatever it can do is without merit before God. That is the reason why the devil is so pleased when a soul is in sin, and perseveres in it, because he thinks that it is working for him, and if it were to die he would have possession of it. When we are in sin, our soul is all diseased, all rotten; it is pitiful. The thought that the good God sees it ought to make it enter into itself. And then, what pleasure is there in sin? None at all. We have frightful dreams that the devil is carrying us away, that we are falling over precipices. Put yourself on good terms with God; have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance; you will sleep as quietly as an angel. You will be glad to waken in the night, to pray to God; you will have nothing but thanksgivings on your lips; you will rise I towards Heaven with great facility, as an eagle soars through the air.

See, my children, how sin degrades man; of an angel created to love God, it makes a demon who will curse Him for eternity. Ah! if Adam, our first father, had not sinned, and if we did not sin every day, how happy we should be! we should be as happy as the saints in Heaven. There would be no more unhappy people on the earth. Oh, how beautiful it would be! In fact, my children, it is

sin that brings upon us all calamities, all scourges, war, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, fires, frost, hail, storms -- all that afflicts us, all that makes us miserable. See, my children, a person who is in a state of sin is always sad. Whatever he does, he is weary and disgusted with everything; while he who is at peace with God is always happy, always joyous. . . . Oh, beautiful life! Oh, beautiful death!

My children, we are afraid of death; I can well believe it. It is sin that makes us afraid of death; it is sin that renders death frightful, formidable; it is sin that terrifies the wicked at the hour of the fearful passage. Alas! O God! there is reason enough to be terrified, to think that one is accursed -- accursed of God! It makes one tremble. Accursed of God! and why? for what do men

expose themselves to be accursed of God? For a blasphemy, for a bad thought, for a bottle of wine, for two minutes of pleasure! For two minutes of pleasure to lose God, one's soul, Heaven forever! We shall see going up to Heaven, in body and soul, that father, that mother, that sister, that neighbour, who were here with us, with whom we have lived, but whom we have not imitated; while we shall go down body and soul to burn in Hell. The devils will rush to overwhelm us. All the devils whose advice we followed will come to torment us.

My children, if you saw a man prepare a great pile of wood, heaping up sticks one upon another, and when you asked him what he was doing, he were to answer you, "I am preparing the fire that is to burn me," what would you think? And if you saw this same man set fire to the pile, and when it was lighted throw himself upon it, what would you say? This is what we do when we commit sin. It is not God who casts us into Hell; we cast ourselves into it by our sins. The lost souls will say, "I have lost God, my soul, and Heaven; it is through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault!" He will raise himself out of the fire only to fall back into it. He will always feel the desire of rising because he was created for God, the greatest, the highest of beings, the Most High . . . as a bird shut up in a room flies to the ceiling, and falls down again, the justice of God is the ceiling which keeps down the lost.

There is no need to prove the existence of Hell. Our Lord Himself speaks of it, when He relates the history of the wicked rich man who cried out, "Lazarus! Lazarus!" We know very well that there is a Hell, but we live as if there were not; we sell our souls for a few pieces of money. We put off our conversion till the hour of death; but who can assure us that we shall have time or strength at that formidable moment, which has been feared by all the saints -- when Hell will gather itself up for a last assault upon us, seeing that it is the decisive moment? There are many people who lose the faith, and never see Hell till they enter it. The Sacraments are administered to them; but ask them if they have

committed such a sin, and they will answer you, "Oh! settle that as you please."

Some people offend the good God every moment; their heart is an anthill of sins: it is like a spoilt piece of meat, half-eaten by worms. . . . No, indeed; if sinners were to think of eternity -- of that terrible forever -- they would be converted instantly.

## **CHAPTER 16: Catechism on Impurity**

THAT WE MAY understand how horrible and detestable is this sin, which the demons make us commit, but which they do not commit themselves, we must consider

what a Christian is. A Christian, created in the image of God, redeemed by the Blood of a God! a Christian, the child of God, the brother of a God, the heir of a God! a Christian, whose body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; that is what sin dishonors. We are created to reign one day in Heaven, and if we have the misfortune to commit this sin, we become the den of the devils. Our Lord said that nothing impure should enter into His kingdom. Indeed, how could a soul that has rolled itself in this filth go to appear before so pure and so holy a God?

We are all like little mirrors, in which God contemplates Himself. How can you expect that God should recognize His likeness in an impure soul? There are some souls so dead, so rotten, that they lie in their defilement without perceiving it, and can no longer clear themselves from it; everything leads them to evil, everything reminds them of evil, even the most holy things; they always have these abominations before their eyes; like the unclean animal that is accustomed to live in filth, that is happy in it, that rolls itself and goes to sleep in it, that grunts in the mud; these persons are an object of horror in the eyes of God and of the holy angels. See, my children, Our Lord was crowned with thorns to expiate our sins of pride; but for this accursed sin, He was scourged and torn to pieces, since He said Himself that after his flagellation all His bones might be counted.

O my children, if there were not some pure souls here and there, to make amends to the good God, and disarm His justice, you would see how we should be punished! For now, this crime is so common in the world, that it is enough to make one tremble. One may say, my children, that Hell vomits forth its abominations upon the earth, as the chimneys of the steam engine vomit forth smoke. The devil does all he can to defile our soul, and yet our soul is everything. . . our body is only a heap of corruption: go to the cemetery to see what you love, when you love your body. As I have often told you, there is

nothing so vile as the impure soul. There was once a saint, who had asked the good God to show him one; and he saw that poor soul like a dead beast that has been dragged through the streets in the hot sun for a week.

By only looking at a person, we know if he is pure. His eyes have an air of candour and modesty which leads you to the good God. Some people, on the contrary, look quite inflamed with passion. . . Satan places himself in their eyes to make others fall and to lead them to evil. Those who have lost their purity are like a piece of cloth stained with oil; you may wash it and dry it, and the stain always appears again: so it requires a miracle to cleanse the impure soul.

## **CHAPTER 17: Catechism on Confession**

MY CHILDREN, as soon as ever you have a little spot upon your soul, you must do like a person who has a fine globe of glass, which he keeps very carefully. If this globe has a little dust on it, he wipes it with a sponge the moment he perceives it, and there is the globe clear and brilliant. In the same way, as soon as you perceive a little stain on your soul, take some holy water with respect, do one of those good works to which the remission of venial sins is attached -- an alms, a genuflection to the Blessed Sacrament, hearing a Mass. My children, it is like a person who has a slight illness; he need not go and see a doctor, he may cure himself without. If he has a headache, he need only go to bed; if he is hungry, he has only to eat. But if it is a serious illness, if it is a dangerous wound, he must have the doctor; after the doctor come the remedies. In the same way, when we have fallen into any grievous sin, we must have recourse to the doctor, that is the priest; and to the remedy, that is confession.

My children, we cannot comprehend the goodness of God towards us in instituting this great Sacrament of Penance. If we had had a favor to ask of Our Lord, we should never have thought of asking Him that. But He foresaw our frailty and our inconstancy in well-doing, and His love induced Him to do what we should not have dared to ask. If one said to those poor lost souls that have been so long in Hell, "We are going to place a priest at the gate of Hell: all those who wish to confess have only to go out," do you think, my children, that a single one would remain? The most guilty would not be afraid of telling their sins, nor even of telling them before all the world. Oh, how soon Hell would be a desert, and how Heaven would be peopled! Well, we have the time and the means, which those poor lost souls have not. And I am quite sure that those wretched

ones say in Hell, "O accursed priest! if I had never known you, I should not be so guilty!"

It is a beautiful thought, my children, that we have a Sacrament which heals the wounds of our soul! But we must receive it with good dispositions. Otherwise we make new wounds upon the old ones. What would you say of a man covered with wounds who is advised to go to the hospital to show himself to the surgeon? The surgeon cures him by giving him remedies. But, behold! this man takes his knife, gives himself great blows with it and makes himself worse than he was before. Well, that is what you often do after leaving the confessional.

My children, some people make bad confessions without taking any notice of it. These persons say, "I do not know what is the matter with me" . . . They are tormented, and they do not know why. They have not that agility which makes one go straight to the good God; they have something heavy and weary about them which fatigues them. My children, that is because of sins that remain, often even venial sins, for which one has some affection. There are some people who, indeed, tell everything, but they have no repentance; and they go at once to Holy Communion. Thus the Blood of Our Lord is profaned! They go to the Holy Table with a sort of weariness. They say, "Yet, I accused myself of all my sins. . . I do not know what is the matter with me." There is an unworthy Communion, and they were hardly aware of it!

My children, some people again profane the Sacraments in another manner. They have concealed mortal sins for ten years, for twenty years. They are always uneasy; their sin is always present to their mind; they are always thinking of confessing it, and always putting it off; it is a Hell. When these people feel this, they will ask to make a general confession, and they will tell their sins as if they had just committed them: they will not confess that they have hidden them during ten years -- twenty years. That is a bad confession! They ought to say, besides, that they had given up the practice of their religion, that they no longer felt the pleasure they had formerly in serving the good God.

My children, we run the risk again of profaning the Sacrament if....we speak quickly, profiting by the moment when the priest is not very attentive to get over the great sins. Take a house which has been for a long time very dirty and neglected;

it is in vain to sweep out, there will always be a nasty smell. It is the same with our soul after confession; it requires tears to purify it. My children, we must ask earnestly for repentance. After confession, we must plant a thorn in our heart, and never lose sight of our sins. We must do as the angel did to St. Francis of Assisi; he fixed in him five darts, which never came out again.

## CHAPTER 18: Catechism on Suffering

WHETHER WE will or not, we must suffer. There are some who suffer like the good thief, and others like the bad thief. They both suffered equally. But one knew how to make his sufferings meritorious, he accepted them in the spirit of reparation, and turning towards Jesus crucified, he received from His mouth these beautiful words: "This day you shall be with Me in Paradise." The other, on the contrary, cried out, uttered curses and blasphemies, and expired in the most frightful despair. There are two ways of suffering -- to suffer with love, and to suffer without love. The saints suffered everything with joy, patience, and perseverance, because they loved. As for us, we suffer with anger, vexation, and weariness, because we do not love. If we loved God, we would love crosses, we would wish for them, we would take pleasure in them. . . . We would be happy to be able to suffer for the love of Him who lovingly suffered for us. Of what do we complain? Alas! the poor infidels, who have not the happiness of knowing God and His infinite loveliness, have the same crosses that we have; but they have not the same consolations. You say it is hard? No, it is easy, it is consoling, it is sweet; it is happiness. Only we must love while we suffer, and suffer while we love.

On the Way of the Cross, you see, my children, only the first step is painful. Our greatest cross is the fear of crosses. . . . We have not the courage to carry our cross, and we are very much mistaken; for, whatever we do, the cross holds us tight -- we cannot escape from it. What, then, have we to lose? Why not love our crosses and make use of them to take us to Heaven? But, on the contrary, most men turn their backs upon crosses, and fly before them. The more they run, the more the cross pursues them, the more it strikes and crushes them with burdens. . . . If you were wise, you would go to meet it like St. Andrew, who said, when he saw the cross prepared for him and raised up into the air, "Hail O good cross! O admirable cross! O desirable cross! receive me into your arms, withdraw me from among men, and restore me to my Master, who redeemed me through you."

Listen attentively to this, my children: He who goes to meet the cross, goes in the opposite direction to crosses; he meets them, perhaps, but he is pleased to meet them; he loves them; he carries them courageously. They unite him to Our Lord; they purify him; they detach him from this world; they remove all obstacles from his heart; they help him to pass through life, as a bridge helps us to pass over water. . . . Look at the saints; when they were not persecuted, they persecuted themselves. A good religious complained one day to Our Lord that he was persecuted. He said, "O Lord, what have I done to be

treated thus?" Our Lord answered him, "And I, what had I done when I was led to Calvary?" Then the religious understood; he wept, he asked pardon, and dared not complain any more. Worldly people are miserable when they have crosses, and good

Christians are miserable when they have none. The Christian lives in the midst of crosses, as the fish lives in the sea.

Look at St. Catherine; she has two crowns, that of purity and that of martyrdom: how happy she is, that dear little saint, to have chosen to suffer rather than to consent to sin! There was once a ..... little boy in bed, covered with sores, very ill, and very miserable; I said to him, "My poor little child, you are suffering very much!" He answered me, "No, sir; today I do not feel the pain I had yesterday, and tomorrow I shall not suffer from the pain I have now: ' "You would like to get well?" "No; I was naughty before I was ill, and I might be so again. I am very well as I am." We do not understand that, because we are too earthly. Children in whom the Holy Spirit dwells put us to shame.

If the good God sends us crosses, we resist, we complain, we murmur; we are so averse to whatever contradicts us, that we want to be always in a box of cotton: but we ought to be put into a box of thorns. It is by the Cross that we go to Heaven. Illnesses, temptations, troubles, are so many crosses which take us to Heaven. All this will soon be over. . . . Look at the saints, who have arrived there before us. . . . The good God does not require of us the martyrdom of the body; He requires only the martyrdom of the heart, and of the will.....

If someone said to you, "I would like to become rich; what must I do?" you would answer him, "You must labor: ' Well, in order to get to Heaven, we must suffer. Our Lord shows us the way in the person of Simon the Cyrenian; He calls His friends to carry His Cross after Him....

He who does not love the Cross may indeed be saved, but with great difficulty: he will be a little star in the firmament. He who shall have suffered and fought for his God will shine like a beautiful sun. Crosses, transformed by the flames of love, are like a bundle of thorns thrown into the fire, and reduced by the fire to ashes. The thorns are hard, but the ashes are soft.... If you put fine grapes into the wine press, there will come out a delicious juice: our soul, in the wine press of the Cross, gives out a juice that nourishes and strengthens it. When we have no crosses, we are arid: if we bear them with resignation, we feel a joy, a happiness, a sweetness! . . . it is the beginning of Heaven. The good God, the Blessed Virgin, the angels, and the saints, surround us; they are by our side, and see us....

The Cross gave peace to the world; and it must bring peace to our hearts. All our miseries come from not loving it. The fear of crosses increases them. A

cross carried simply, and without those returns of self-love which exaggerate troubles, is no longer a cross. Peaceable suffering is no longer suffering. We complain of suffering! We should have much more reason to complain of not suffering, since nothing makes us more like Our Lord than carrying His Cross. Oh, what a beautiful union of the soul with Our Lord Jesus Christ by the love and the virtue of His Cross! I do not understand how a Christian can dislike the Cross, and fly from it! Does he not at the same time fly from Him who has deigned to be fastened to it, and to die for us?

Contradictions bring us to the foot of the Cross, and the Cross to the gate of Heaven. That we may get there, we must be trodden upon, we must be set at naught, despised, crushed. . . . There are no happy people in this world but those who enjoy calmness of mind in the midst of the troubles of life: they taste the joys of the children of God. . . . All pains are sweet when we suffer in union with Our Lord. . . . To suffer! what does it signify? It is only a moment. If we could go and pass a week in Heaven, we would understand the value

of this moment of suffering. We would find no cross heavy enough, no trial bitter enough. . . . The Cross is the gift that God makes to His friends.

How beautiful it is to offer ourselves every morning in sacrifice to the good God, and to accept everything in expiation of our sins! We must ask for the love of crosses; then they become sweet.

I tried it for four or five years. I was well calumniated, well contradicted, well knocked about. Oh, I had crosses indeed! I had almost more than I could carry! Then I took to asking for love of crosses, and I was happy. I said to myself, truly there is no happiness but in this! We must never think from whence crosses come: they come from God. It is always God who gives us this way of proving our love to Him.

## **CHAPTER 19: Catechism on Hope**

MY CHILDREN, we are going to speak of hope: that is what makes the happiness of man on earth. Some people in this world hope too much, and others do not hope enough. Some say, "I am going to commit this sin again. It will not cost me more to confess four than three." It is like a child saying to his father, "I am going to give you four blows; it will cost me no more than to give you one: I shall only have to ask your pardon. "

That is the way men behave towards the good God. They say, "This year I shall amuse myself again; I shall go to dances and to the alehouse, and next year I will be converted. The good God will be sure to receive me, when I choose



to return to Him. He is not so cruel as the priests tell us." No, the good God is not cruel, but He is just. Do you think He will adapt Himself in everything to your will? Do you think that He will embrace you, after you have despised Him all your life? Oh no, indeed! There is a certain measure of grace and of sin after which God withdraws Himself. What would you say of a father who should treat a good child, and one not so good, in the same manner? You would say that father is not just. Well! God would not be just if He made no difference between those who serve Him and those who offend Him. My children, there is so little faith now in the world that people either hope too much, or they despair. Some say, "I have done too much evil; the good God cannot pardon me." My children, this is a great blasphemy; it is putting a limit to the mercy of God, which has no limit -- it is infinite. You may have done evil enough to lose the souls of a whole parish, and if you confess, if you are sorry for having done this evil, and resolve not to do it again, the good God will have pardoned you.

....The good God is as prompt to grant us pardon when we ask it of Him as a mother is to snatch her child out of the fire.

## **CHAPTER 20: Catechism on the Cardinal Virtues**

PRUDENCE SHOWS us what is most pleasing to God, and most useful to the salvation of our soul. We must always choose the most perfect. Two good works present themselves to be done, one in favour of a person we love, the other in favour of a person who has done us some harm; well, we must give the preference to the latter. There is no merit in doing good, when a natural feeling leads us to do it. A lady, wishing to have a widow to live with her to take care of, asked St. Athanasius to find her one among the poor. Afterwards, meeting the Bishop, she reproached him that he had treated her ill, because this person was too good, and gave her nothing to do by which she could gain Heaven; and she begged him to give her another. The saint chose the worst he could find; of a cross, grumbling temper, never satisfied with what was done for her. This is the way we must act, for there is no great merit in doing good to one who values it, who thanks us and is grateful.

There are some persons who think they are never treated well enough; they seem as if they had a right to everything. They are never pleased with what is done for them: they repay everybody with ingratitude. . . . Well! those are the people to whom we should do good by preference. We must be prudent in all our actions, and seek not our own taste, but what is most pleasing to the good God. Suppose you have a franc that you intend to give for a Mass; you see a poor family in distress, in want of bread: it is better to give your money to these

wretched people, because the Holy Sacrifice will still be offered; the priest will not fail to say Holy Mass; while these poor people may die of hunger. . . . You would wish to pray to the good God, to pass your whole day in the church; but you think it would be very useful to work for some poor people that you know, who are in great need; that is much more pleasing to God than your day passed before the holy tabernacle.

Temperance is another cardinal virtue: we can be temperate in the use of our imagination, by not letting it gallop as fast as it would wish; we can be temperate with our eyes, temperate with our mouth -- some people constantly have something sweet and pleasant in their mouth; we can be temperate with our ears, not allowing them to listen to useless songs and conversation; temperate in smelling -- some people perfume themselves to such a degree as to make those about them sick... In short, we can practice temperance with our whole body, this poor machine, by not letting it run away like a horse without bit or bridle, but checking

it and keeping it down. Some people lie buried there, in their beds; they are glad not

to sleep, that they may the better feel how comfortable they are. The saints were not like that. I do not know how we are ever to get where they are. . . . Well! if we are saved, we shall stay infinitely long in Purgatory, while they will fly straight to Heaven to see the good God.

That great saint, St. Charles Borromeo, had in his apartment a fine cardinal's bed, which everybody saw; but, besides that, there was one which nobody could see, made of bundles of wood; and that was the one he made use of. He never warmed himself; when people came to see him, they remarked that he placed himself so as not to feel the fire. That is what the saints were like. They lived for Heaven, and not for earth; they were all heavenly; and as for us, we are all earthly. Oh, how I like those little mortifications that are seen by nobody, such as rising a quarter of an hour sooner, rising for a little while in the night to pray! but some people think of nothing but sleeping.... And we, we think of nothing but finding good beds, that we may sleep at our ease.

We may refrain from warming ourselves; if we are sitting uncomfortably, we need not try to place ourselves better; if we are walking in our garden, we may deprive ourselves of some fruit that we should like; in preparing the food, we need not eat the little bits that offer themselves; we may deprive ourselves of seeing something pretty, which attracts our eyes, especially in the streets of great towns. There is a gentleman who sometimes comes here. He wears two pairs of spectacles, that he may see nothing. . . . But some heads are always in motion, some eyes are always looking about. . . . When we are going along the

streets, let us fix our eyes on Our Lord carrying His Cross before us; on the Blessed Virgin, who is looking at us; on our guardian angel, who is by our side. How beautiful is this interior life! It unites us with the good God. . . .

Therefore, when the devil sees a soul that is seeking to attain to it, he tries to turn him aside from it by filling his imagination with a thousand fancies. A good Christian does not listen to that; he goes always forward in perfection, like a fish plunging into the depths of the sea. . . . As for us, Alas! we drag ourselves along like a leech in the mud....

## **PART II: EXPLANATIONS AND EXHORTATIONS**

### **Sixteen Exhortations of the Holy Cure of Ars**

#### **CHAPTER 1: On Salvation**

THE HAPPINESS of man on earth, my children, is to be very good; those who are very good bless the good God, they love Him, they glorify Him, and do all their works with joy and love, because they know that we are in this world for no other end than to serve and love the good God.

Look at bad Christians; they do everything with trouble and disgust; and why, my children? because they do not love the good God, because their soul is not pure, and their hopes are no longer in Heaven, but on earth. Their heart is an impure source which poisons all their actions, and prevents them from rising to God; so they come to die without having thought of death, destitute of good works for Heaven, and loaded with crimes for Hell: this is the way they are lost forever, my children. People say it is too much trouble to save one's soul; but, my children, is it not trouble to acquire glory or fortune? Do you stay in bed when you have to go and plough, or mow, or reap? No. Well, then, why should you be more idle when you have to lay up an immense fortune which will never perish -- when you have to strive for eternal glory?

See, my children, if we really wish to be saved we must determine, once for all, to labor in earnest for our salvation; our soul is like a garden in which the weeds are ever ready to choke the good plants and flowers that have been sown in it. If the gardener who has charge of this garden neglects it, if he is not continually using the spade and the hoe, the flowers and plants will soon disappear. Thus, my children, do the virtues with which God has been pleased to adorn our soul disappear under our vices if we neglect to cultivate them. As a

vigilant gardener labours from morning till night to destroy the weeds in his garden, and to ornament it with flowers, so let us labor every day to uproot the vices of our soul and to adorn it with virtues. See, my children, a gardener never lets the weeds take root, because he knows that then he would never be able to destroy them. Neither let us allow our vices to take root, or we shall not be able to conquer them.

One day, an anchorite being in a forest with a companion, showed him four cypresses to be pulled up one after the other; the young man, who did not very well know why he told him to do this, took hold of the first tree, which was quite small, and pulled it up with one hand without trouble; the second, which was a little bigger and had some roots, made him pull harder, but yet he pulled it up with one hand; the third, being still bigger, offered so much resistance, that he was obliged to take both hands and to use all his strength; the fourth, which was grown into a tree, had such deep roots, that he exhausted himself in vain efforts. The saint then said to him, "With a little vigilance and mortification, we succeed in repressing our passions, and we triumph over them when they are only springing up; but when they have taken deep root, nothing is more difficult; the thing is even impossible without a miracle."

Let us not reckon on a miracle of Providence, my children; let us not put off till the end of our life the care that we ought daily to take of our soul; let us labor while there is yet time -- later it will no longer be within our power; let us lay our hands to the work; let us watch over ourselves; above all, let us pray to the good God -- with His assistance we shall always have power over our passions. Man sins, my children; but if he has not in this first moment lost the faith, he runs, he hastens, he flies, to seek a remedy for his ill; he cannot soon enough find the tribunal of penance, where he can recover his happiness. That is the way we should conduct ourselves if we were good Christians. Yes, my children, we could not remain one moment under the empire of the devil; we should be ashamed of being his slaves. A good Christian watches continually, sword in hand. The devil can do nothing against him, for he resists him like a warrior in full armour; he does not fear him, because he has rejected from his heart all that is impure. Bad Christians are idle and lazy, and stand hanging their heads; and you see how they give way at the first assault: the devil does what he pleases with them; he presents pleasures to them, he makes them taste pleasure, and then, to drown the cries of their conscience, he whispers to them in a gentle voice, "You will sin no more." And when the occasion presents itself, they fall again, and more easily than the first time. If they go to confession he makes them ashamed, they speak only in half-words, they lower their voice, they explain away their sins, and, what is more

miserable, they perhaps conceal some. The good Christian, on the contrary, groans and weeps over his sins, and reaches the tribunal of Penance already half justified.

## **CHAPTER 2: On Death**

A DAY WILL come, perhaps it is not far off, when we must bid goodbye to life, goodbye to the world, goodbye to our relations, goodbye to our friends. When shall we return, my children? Never. We appear upon this earth, we disappear, and we return no more; our poor body, that we take such care of, goes away into dust, and our soul, all trembling, goes to appear before the good God. When we quit this world, where we shall appear no more, when our last breath of life escapes, and we say our last goodbye, we shall wish to have passed our life in solitude, in the depths of a desert, far from the world and its pleasures. We have these examples of repentance before our eyes every day, my children, and we remain always the same. We pass our life gaily, without ever troubling ourselves about eternity. By our indifference to the service of the good God, one would think we were never going to die.

See, my children, some people pass their whole life without thinking of death. It comes, and behold! they have nothing; faith, hope, and love, all are already dead within them. When death shall come upon us, of what use will three-quarters of our life have been to us? With what are we occupied the greatest part of our time? Are we thinking of the good God, of our salvation, of our soul? O my children! what folly is the world! We come into it, we go out of it, without knowing why. The good God places us in it to serve Him, to see if we will love Him and be faithful to His law; and after this short moment of trial, He promises us a recompense. Is it not just that He should reward the faithful servant and punish the wicked one? Should the Trappist, who has passed his life in lamenting and weeping over his sins, be treated the same as the bad Christian, who has lived in abundance in the midst of all the enjoyments of life? No; certainly not. We are on earth not to enjoy its pleasures, but to labor for our salvation.

Let us prepare ourselves for death; we have not a minute to lose: it will come upon us at the moment when we least expect it; it will take us by surprise. Look at the saints, my children, who were pure; they were always trembling, they pined away with fear; and we, who so often offend the good God -- we have no fears. Life is given us that we may learn to die well, and we never think of it. We occupy ourselves with everything else. The idea of it often occurs to us, and we always reject it; we put it off to the last moment. O my children! this last

moment, how much it is to be feared! Yet the good God does not wish us to despair; He shows us the good thief, touched with repentance, dying near Him on the cross; but he is the only one; and then see, he dies near the good God. Can we hope to be near Him at our last moment -- we who have been far from Him all our

life? What have we done to deserve that favor? A great deal of evil, and no good.

There was once a good Trappist Father, who was trembling all over at perceiving the approach of death. Someone said to him, "Father, of what then are you afraid?" "Of the judgment of God," he said. "Ah! if you dread the judgment -- you who have done so much penance, you who love God so much, who

have been so long preparing for death -- what will become of me?" See, my children,

to die well we must live well; to live well, we must seriously examine ourselves: every evening think over what we have done during the day; at the end of each week review what we have done during the week; at the end of each month review what we have done during the month; at the end of the year, what we have done during the year. By this means, my children, we cannot fail to correct ourselves, and to become fervent Christians in a short time. Then, when death comes, we are quite ready; we are happy to go to Heaven.

### **CHAPTER 3: On the Last Judgment**

OUR CATECHISM tells us, my children, that all men will undergo a particular judgment on the day of their death. No sooner shall we have breathed our last sigh than our soul, without leaving the place where it has expired, will be presented before the tribunal of God. Wherever we may die, God is there to exercise His justice. The good God, my children, has measured out our years, and of those years that He has resolved to leave us on this earth, He has marked out one which shall be our last; one day which we shall not see succeeded by other days; one hour after which there will be for us no more time. What distance is there between that moment and this -- the space of an instant. Life, my children, is a smoke, a light vapor; it disappears more quickly than a bird that darts through the air, or a ship that sails on the sea, and leaves no trace of its course!

When shall we die? Alas! will it be in a year, in a month? Perhaps tomorrow, perhaps today! May not that happen to us which happens to so many

others? It may be that at a moment when you are thinking of nothing but amusing yourself, you may be summoned to the judgment of God, like the impious Balthasar. What will then be the astonishment of that soul entering on its eternity? Surprised, bewildered, separated thenceforth from its relations and friends, and, as it were, surrounded with Divine light, it will find in its Creator no longer a merciful Father, but an inflexible Judge. Imagine to yourselves, my children, a soul at its departure from this life. It is going to appear before the tribunal of its Judge, alone with God; there is Heaven on one side, Hell on the other. What object presents itself before it? The picture of its whole life! All its thoughts, all its words, all its actions, are examined.

This examination will be terrible, my children, because nothing is hidden from God. His infinite wisdom knows our most inmost thoughts; it penetrates to the bottom of our hearts, and lays open their innermost folds. In vain sinners avoid the light of day that they may sin more freely; they spare themselves a little shame in the eyes of men, but it will be of no advantage to them at the day of judgment; God will make light the darkness under cover of which they thought to sin with impunity. The Holy Spirit, my children, says that we shall be examined on our words, our thoughts, our actions; we shall be examined even on the good we ought to have done, and have not done, on the sins of others of which we have been the cause. Alas! so many thoughts to which we abandon ourselves -- to which the mind gives itself up; how many in one day! in a week! in a month! in a year! How many in the whole course of our life! Not one of this infinite number will escape the knowledge of our Judge.

The proud man must give an account of all his thoughts of presumption, of vanity, of ambition; the impure one of all his evil thoughts, and of the criminal desires with which he has fed his imagination. Those young people who are incessantly occupied with their dress, who are seeking to please, to distinguish themselves, to attract attention and praise, and who dare not make themselves known in the tribunal of Penance, will they be able still to hide themselves at the day of the judgment of God? No, no! They will appear there such as they have been during their life, before Him who makes known all that is most secret in the heart of man.

We shall give an account, my children, of our using the name of God in vain, of our curses. God hears our slanders, our calumnies, our loose conversations, our worldly and licentious songs; He hears also the discourse of the impious. This is not all, my children; God will also examine our actions. He will bring to light all our unfaithfulness in His service, our forgetfulness of His Commandments, our transgression of His law, the profanation of His churches, the attachment to the world, the ill-regulated love of pleasure and of the perishable goods of earth. All, my children, will be unveiled; those thefts,

that injustice, that usury, that intemperance, that anger, those disputes, that tyranny, that revenge, those criminal liberties, those abominations that cannot be named without blushing....

## **CHAPTER 4: On Sin**

Sin is a thought, a word, an action, contrary to the law of God.

BY SIN, my children, we rebel against the good God, we despise His justice, we tread under foot His blessings. From being children of God, we become the executioner and assassin of our soul, the offspring of Hell, the horror of Heaven, the murderer of Jesus Christ, the capital enemy of the good God. O my children! if we thought of this, if we reflected on the injury which sin offers to the good God, we would hold it in abhorrence, we would be unable to commit it; but we never think of it, we like to live at our ease, we slumber in sin. If the good God sends us remorse, we quickly stifle it, by thinking that we have done no harm to anybody, that God is good, and that He did not place us on the earth to make us suffer.

Indeed, my children, the good God did not place us on the earth to suffer and endure, but to work out our salvation. See, He wills that we should work today and tomorrow; and after that, an eternity of joy, of happiness, awaits us in Heaven. . . . O my children! how ungrateful we are! The good God calls us to Himself; He wishes to make us happy forever, and we are deaf to His word, we will not share His happiness; He enjoins us to love Him, and we give our heart to the devil. . . . The good God commands all nature as its Master; He makes the winds and the storms obey Him; the angels tremble at His adorable will: man alone dares to resist Him. See, God forbids us that action, that criminal pleasure, that revenge, that injustice; no matter, we are bent upon satisfying ourselves; we had rather renounce the happiness of Heaven, than deprive ourselves of a moment's pleasure, or give up a sinful habit, or change our life. What are we, then, that we dare thus to resist God? Dust and ashes, which He could annihilate with a single look. . . .

By sin, my children, we despise the good God. We renew His Death and Passion; we do as much evil as all the Jews together did, in fastening Him to the Cross. Therefore, my children, if we were to ask those who work without necessity on Sunday: "What are you doing there?" and they were to answer truly, they would say, "We are crucifying the good God." Ask the idle, the gluttonous, the immodest, what they do every day. If they answer you according to what they are really doing, they will say, "We are crucifying the good God." O my children! it is very ungrateful to offend a God who has never done us any harm;



but is it not the height of ingratitude to offend a God who has done us nothing but good?

It is He who created us, who watches over us. He holds us in His hands; if He chose, He could cast us into the nothingness out of which He took us. He has given us His Son, to redeem us from the slavery of the devil; He Himself gave Him up to death that He might restore us to life; He has adopted us as His children, and ceases not to lavish His graces upon us. Notwithstanding all this, what use do we make of our mind, of our memory, of our health, of those limbs which He gave us to serve Him with? We employ them, perhaps, in committing crimes.

The good God, my children, has given us eyes to enlighten us, to see Heaven, and we use them to look at criminal and dangerous objects; He has given us a tongue to praise Him, and to express our thoughts, and we make it an instrument of iniquity--we swear, we blaspheme, we speak ill of our neighbour, we slander him; we abuse the supernatural graces, we stifle the salutary remorse by which God would convert us. . . . we reject the inspirations of our good guardian angel. We despise good thoughts, we neglect prayer and the Sacraments. What account do we make even of the Word of God? Do we not listen to it with disgust? How miserable we are! How much we are to be pitied! We employ the time

that the good God has given us for our salvation, in losing our souls. We make war upon Him with the means He has given us to serve Him; we turn His own gifts against Him! Let us cast our eyes, my children, upon Jesus fastened to the Cross, and let us say to ourselves, "This is what it has cost my Savior to repair the injury my sins have done to God. "

A God coming down to the earth to be the victim of our sins! A God suffering, a God dying, a God enduring every torment, because He has put on the semblance of sin, and has chosen to bear the weight of our iniquities! Ah, my children! at the sight of that Cross, let us conceive once for all the malice of sin, and the abhorrence in which we should hold it. . . . Let us enter into ourselves, and see what we ought to do to repair our past sins; let us implore the clemency of the good God, and let us all together say to Him, from the bottom of our heart, "O Lord, who are here crucified for us, have mercy upon us! You comest down from Heaven to cure souls of sin; cure us, we beseech You; cause our souls to be purified by approaching the tribunal of penance; yes, O God! make us look upon sin as the greatest of all evils, and by our zeal in avoiding it, and in repairing those we have had the misfortune to commit, let us one day attain to the happiness of the saints. "

## CHAPTER 5: On Temptations

WE ARE all inclined to sin, my children; we are idle, greedy, sensual, given to the pleasures of the flesh. We want to know everything, to learn everything, to see everything; we must watch over our mind, over our heart, and over our senses, for these are the gates by which the devil penetrates. See, he prowls round us incessantly; his only occupation in this world is to seek companions for himself. All our life he will lay snares for us, he will try to make us yield to temptations; we must, on our side, do all we can to defeat and resist him. We can do nothing by ourselves, my children; but we can do everything with the help of the good God; let us pray Him to deliver us from this enemy of our salvation, or to give strength to fight against him. With the Name of Jesus we shall overthrow the demons; we shall put them to flight. With this Name, if they sometimes dare to attack us, our battles will be victories, and our victories will be crowns for Heaven, all brilliant with precious stones.

See, my children, the good God refuses nothing to those who pray to Him from the bottom of their heart. St. Teresa, being one day in prayer, and desiring to see the good God, Jesus Christ showed to the eyes of her soul His Divine hands; then, another day, when she was again in prayer, He showed her His face. Lastly, some days after, He showed her the whole of His Sacred Humanity. The good God who granted the desire of St. Teresa will also grant our prayers. If we ask of Him the grace to resist temptations, He will grant it to us; for He wishes to save us all, He shed His Blood for us all, He died for us all, He is waiting for us all in Heaven. We are two or three hundred here: shall we all be saved, shall we all go to Heaven? Alas! my children, we know nothing about it; but I tremble when I see so many souls lost in these days.

See, they fall into Hell as the leaves fall from the trees at the approach of winter. We shall fall like the rest, my children, if we do not avoid temptations, if, when we cannot avoid them, we do not fight generously, with the help of the good God -- if we do not invoke His Name during the strife, like St. Antony in the desert.

This saint having retired into an old sepulchre, the devil came to attack him; he tried at first to terrify him with a horrible noise; he even beat him so cruelly that he left him half dead and covered with wounds. "Well," said St. Antony, "here I am, ready to fight again; no, you shall not be able to separate me from Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God." The spirits of darkness redoubled their efforts, and uttered frightful cries. St. Antony remained unmoved, because he put all his confidence in God. After the example of this saint, my children, let us be always ready for the combat; let us put our confidence in God; let us fast and pray; and the devil will not be able to separate us from Jesus Christ,

either in this world or the next.

## **CHAPTER 6: On Pride**

Pride is an untrue opinion of ourselves, an untrue idea of what we are not.

THE PROUD MAN is always disparaging himself, that people may praise him the

more. The more the proud man lowers himself, the more he seeks to raise his miserable nothingness. He relates what he has done, and what he has not done; he feeds his imagination with what has been said in praise of him, and seeks by all possible means for more; he is never satisfied with praise. See, my children, if you only show some little displeasure against a man given up to self-love, he gets angry, and accuses you of ignorance or injustice towards him. . . . My children, we are in reality only what we are in the eyes of God, and nothing more. Is it not quite clear and evident that we are nothing, that we can do nothing, that we are very miserable? Can we lose sight of our sins, and cease to humble ourselves?

If we were to consider well what we are, humility would be easy to us, and the demon of pride would no longer have any room in our heart. See, our days are like grass--like the grass which now flourishes in the meadows, and will presently be withered; like an ear of corn which is fresh only for a moment, and is parched by the sun. In fact, my children, today we are full of life, full of health; and tomorrow, death will perhaps come to reap us and mow us down, as you reap your corn and mow your meadows. . . . Whatever appears vigorous, whatever shines, whatever is beautiful, is of short duration. . . . The glory of this world, youth, honours, riches, all pass away quickly, as quickly as the flower of grass, as the flower of the field. . . . Let us reflect that so we shall one day be reduced to dust; that we shall be thrown into the fire like dry grass, if we do not fear the good God.

Good Christians know this very well, my children; therefore they do not occupy themselves with their body; they despise the affairs of this world; they consider only their soul and how to unite it to God. Can we be proud in the face of the examples of lowliness, of humiliations, that Our Lord has given us, and is still giving us every day? Jesus Christ came upon earth, became incarnate, was born poor, lived in poverty, died on a cross, between two thieves. . . . He instituted an admirable Sacrament, in which He communicates Himself to us under the Eucharistic veil; and in this Sacrament He undergoes the most extraordinary humiliations. Residing continually in our tabernacles, He is deserted,

misunderstood by ungrateful men; and yet He continues to love us, to serve us in the Sacrament of the Altar.

O my children! what an example of humiliation does the good Jesus give us! Behold Him on the Cross to which our sins have fastened Him; behold Him: He calls us, and says to us, "Come to Me, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." How well the saints understood this invitation, my children! Therefore, they all sought humiliations and sufferings. After their example, then, let us not be afraid of being humbled and despised.

## **CHAPTER 7: On Avarice**

Avarice is an inordinate love of the goods of this world.

YES, MY CHILDREN, it is an ill-regulated love, a fatal love, which makes us forget the good God, prayer, the Sacraments, that we may love the goods of this world -- gold and silver and lands. The avaricious man is like a pig, which seeks its food in the mud, without caring where it comes from. Stooping towards the earth, he thinks of nothing but the earth; he no longer looks towards Heaven, his happiness is no longer there. The avaricious man does no good till after his death. See, how greedily he gathers up wealth, how anxiously he keeps it, how afflicted he is if he loses it. In the midst of riches, he does not enjoy them; he is, as it were, plunged in a river, and is dying of thirst; lying on a heap of corn, he is dying of hunger....

O my children! how many there are in these days who are idolators! how many there are who think more of making a fortune than of serving the good God! They steal, they defraud, they go to law with their neighbour; they do not even respect the laws of God. They work on Sundays and holydays: nothing escapes their greedy and rapacious hands. Good Christians, my children, do not think of their body, which must end in corruption; they think only of their soul, which is immortal. While they are on the earth, they occupy themselves with their soul alone. So you see how assiduous they are at the Offices of the Church, with what fervour they pray before the good God, how they sanctify Sunday, how recollected they are at holy Mass, how happy they are! The days, the months, the years are nothing to them; they pass them in loving the good God, with their eyes fixed on their eternity. . . .

Seeing us so indifferent to our salvation, and so occupied in gathering up a little mud, would not anyone say that we were never to die? Indeed, my children, we are like people who, during the summer, should make an ample provision of gourds, of melons, for a long journey; after the winter, what would

remain of it? Nothing. In the same way, my children, what remains to the avaricious man of all his wealth when death comes upon him unawares? A poor covering, a few planks, and the despair of not being able to carry his gold away with him. Misers generally die in this sort of despair, and pay eternally to the devil for their insatiable thirst for riches. Misers, my children, are sometimes punished even in this world.

Once St. Hilarion, followed by a great number of his disciples, going to visit the monasteries under his rule, came to the abode of an avaricious solitary. On their approach, they found watchers in all parts of the vineyard, who threw stones and clods of earth at them to prevent their touching the grapes. This miser was well punished, for he gathered that year much fewer grapes than usual, and his wine turned into vinegar. Another solitary, named Sabbas, begged him, on the contrary, to come into his vineyard, and eat the fruit. St. Hilarion blessed it, and sent in to it his religious, to the number of three thousand, who all satisfied their hunger; and twenty days after, the vineyard yielded three hundred measures of wine, instead of the usual quantity of ten. Let us follow the example of Sabbas, and be disinterested; the good God will bless us, and after having blessed us in this world, He will also reward us in the other.

## **CHAPTER 8: On Lust**

Lust is the love of the pleasures that are contrary to purity.

NO SINS, my children, ruin and destroy a soul so quickly as this shameful sin; it snatches us out of the hands of the good God and hurls us like a stone into an abyss of mire and corruption. Once plunged in this mire, we cannot get out, we make a deeper hole in it every day, we sink lower and lower. Then we lose the faith, we laugh at the truths of religion, we no longer see Heaven, we do not fear Hell. O my children! how much are they to be pitied who give way to this passion! How wretched they are! Their soul, which was so beautiful, which attracted the eyes of the good God, over which He leaned as one leans over a perfumed rose, has become like a rotten carcass, of which the pestilential odor rises even to His throne. . . .

See, my children! Jesus Christ endured patiently, among His Apostles, men who were proud, ambitious, greedy -- even one who betrayed Him; but He could not bear the least stain of impurity in any of them; it is of all vices that which He has most in abhorrence: "My Spirit does not dwell in you," the Lord says, "if you are nothing but flesh and corruption." God gives up the impure to all

the wicked inclinations of his heart. He lets him wallow, like the vile swine, in the mire, and does not even let him smell its offensive exhalations. . . . The immodest man is odious to everyone, and is not aware of it. God has set the mark of disgrace on his forehead, and he is not ashamed; he has a face of brass and a heart of bronze; it is in vain you talk to him of honour, of virtue; he is full of arrogance and pride. The eternal truths, death, judgment, Paradise, Hell -- nothing terrifies him, nothing can move him. So, my children, of all sins, that of impurity is the most difficult to eradicate. Other sins forge for us chains of iron, but this one makes them of bull's hide, which can be neither broken nor torn; it is a fire, a furnace, which consumes even to the most advanced old age. See those two infamous old men who attempted the purity of the chaste Susannah; they had kept the fire of their youth even till they were decrepit. When the body is worn out with debauchery, when they can no longer satisfy their passions, they supply the place of it, oh, shame! by infamous desires and memories.

With one foot in the grave, they still speak the language of passion, till their last breath; they die as they have lived, impenitent; for what penance can be done by the impure, what sacrifice can be imposed on himself at his death, who during his life has always given way to his passions? Can one at the last moment expect a good confession, a good Communion, from him who has concealed one of these shameful sins, perhaps, from his earliest youth -- who has heaped sacrilege on sacrilege? Will the tongue, which has been silent up to this day, be unloosed at the last moment? No, no, my children; God has abandoned him; many sheets of lead already weigh upon him; he will add another, and it will be the last . . .

## **CHAPTER 9: On Envy**

Envy is a sadness which we feel on account of the good that happens to our neighbour.

ENVY, my children, follows pride; whoever is envious is proud. See, envy comes to us from Hell; the devils having sinned through pride, sinned also through envy, envying our glory, our happiness. Why do we envy the happiness and the goods of others? Because we are proud; we should like to be the sole possessors of talents, riches, of the esteem and love of all the world! We hate our equals, because they are our equals; our inferiors, from the fear that they may equal us; our superiors, because they are above us. In the same way, my

children, that the devil after his fall felt, and still feels, extreme anger at seeing us the heirs of the glory of the good God, so the envious man feels sadness at seeing the spiritual and temporal prosperity of his neighbour.

We walk, my children, in the footsteps of the devil; like him, we are vexed at good, and rejoice at evil. If our neighbour loses anything, if his affairs go wrong, if he is humbled, if he is unfortunate, we are joyful. . . we triumph! The devil, too, is full of joy and triumph when we fall, when he can make us fall as low as himself. What does he gain by it? Nothing. Shall we be richer, because our neighbour is poorer? Shall we be greater, because he is less? Shall we be happier, because he is more unhappy? O my children! how much we are to be pitied for being like this! St. Cyprian said that other evils had limits, but that envy had none. In fact, my children, the envious man invents all sorts of wickedness; he has recourse to evil speaking, to calumny, to cunning, in order to blacken his neighbour; he repeats what he knows, and what he does not know he invents, he exaggerates. . . .

Through the envy of the devil, death entered into the world; and also through envy we kill our neighbour; by dint of malice, of falsehood, we make him lose his reputation, his place. . . . Good Christians, my children, do not do so; they envy no one; they love their neighbour; they rejoice at the good that happens to him, and they weep with him if any misfortune comes upon him. How happy should we be if we were good Christians. Ah! my children, let us, then, be good Christians and we shall no more envy the good fortune of our neighbour; we shall never speak evil of him; we shall enjoy a sweet peace; our soul will be calm; we shall find paradise on earth.

## **CHAPTER 10: On Gluttony**

Gluttony is an inordinate love of eating and drinking.

WE ARE GLUTTONOUS, my children, when we take food in excess, more than is required for the support of our poor body; when we drink beyond what is necessary, so as even to lose our senses and our reason. . . . Oh, how shameful is this vice! How it degrades us! See, it puts us below the brutes: the animals never drink more than to satisfy their thirst: they content themselves with eating enough; and we, when we have satisfied our appetite, when our body can bear no more, we still have recourse to all sorts of little delicacies; we take wine and liquors to excess! Is it not pitiful? We can no longer keep upon our legs; we fall, we roll into the ditch and into the mud, we become the laughing stock of everyone, even the sport of little children. . . .

If death were to surprise us in this state, my children, we should not have time to recollect ourselves; we should fall in that state into the hands of the good God. What a misfortune, my children! How would our soul be surprised!

How

would it be astonished! We would shudder with horror at seeing the lost who are in Hell. . . . Do not let us be led by our appetite; we shall ruin our health, we shall lose our soul. . . . See, my children, intemperance and debauchery are the support of doctors; that lets them live, and gives them a great deal of practice. . . . We hear every day, such a one was drunk, and falling down he broke his leg; another, passing a river on a plank, fell into the water and was drowned. . . . Intemperance and drunkenness are the companions of the wicked rich man. . . . A moment of pleasure in this world will cost us very dear in the other. There they will be tormented by a raging hunger and a devouring thirst; they will not even have a drop of water to refresh themselves; their tongue and their body will be consumed by the flames for a whole eternity. . . .

O my children! we do not think about it; and yet that will not fail to happen to some amongst us, perhaps even before the end of the year! St. Paul said that those who give themselves to excess in eating and drinking shall not possess the kingdom of God. Let us reflect on these words! Look at the saints: they pass their life in penance, and we would pass ours in the midst of enjoyments and pleasures....

We should gain a great deal for Heaven at our meals; we should deprive ourselves of many little things which, without being hurtful to our body, would be very pleasing to the good God; but we choose rather to satisfy our taste than to please God; we drown, we stifle our soul in wine and food. My children, God will not say to us at the Day of Judgment, "Give Me an account of your body"; but, "Give Me an account of your soul; what have you done with it?" . . . What shall we answer Him? Do we take as much care of our soul as of our body? O my children! let us no longer live for the pleasure of eating; let us live as the saints have done; let us mortify ourselves as they were mortified. The saints never indulged themselves in the pleasures of banqueting. Their pleasure was to feed on Jesus Christ! Let us follow their footsteps on this earth, and we shall gain the crown which they have in Heaven.

## **CHAPTER 11: On Anger**

Anger is an emotion of the soul, which leads us violently to repel whatever hurts or displeases us.

THIS EMOTION, my children, comes from the devil: it shows that we are



in his hands; that he is the master of our heart; that he holds all the strings of it, and makes us dance as he pleases. See, a person who puts himself in a passion is like a puppet; he knows neither what he says, nor what he does; the devil guides him entirely. He strikes right and left; his hair stands up like the bristles of a hedgehog; his eyes start out of his head--he is a scorpion, a furious lion. . . . Why do we, my children, put ourselves into such a state? Is it not pitiable? It is, I tell you, because we do not love the good God. Our heart is given up to the demon of pride, who is angry when he thinks himself despised; to the demon of avarice, who is irritated when he suffers any loss; to the demon of luxury, who is indignant when his pleasures are interfered with. . . . How unhappy we are, my children, thus to be the sport of demons? They do whatever they please with us; they suggest to us evil-speaking, calumny, hatred, vengeance: they even drive us so far as to put our neighbor to death. See, Cain killed his brother Abel out of jealousy; Saul wished to take away the life of David; Theodosius caused the massacre of the inhabitants of Thessalonica, to revenge a personal affront. . . . If we do not put our neighbour to death, we are angry with him, we curse him, we give him to the devil, we wish for his death, we wish for our own. In our fury, we blaspheme the holy Name of God, we accuse His Providence. . . . What fury, what impiety! And what is still more deplorable, my children, we are carried to these excesses for a trifle, for a word, for the least injustice! Where is our faith! Where is our reason? We say in excuse that it is anger that makes us swear; but one sin cannot excuse another sin. The good God equally condemns anger, and the excesses that are its consequences. . . . How we sadden our guardian angel! He is always there at our side to send us good thoughts, and he sees us do nothing but evil. . . . If we did like St. Remigius, we should never be angry. See, this saint, being questioned by a Father of the desert how he managed to be always in an even temper, replied, "I often consider that my guardian angel is always by my side, who assists me in all my needs, who tells me what I ought to do and what I ought to say, and who writes down, after each of my actions, the way in which I have done it."

Philip II, King of Spain, having passed several hours of the night in writing a long letter to the Pope, gave it to his secretary to fold up and seal. He, being half asleep, made a mistake; when he meant to put sand on the letter, he took the ink bottle and covered all the paper with ink. While he was ashamed and inconsolable, the king said, quite calmly, "No very great harm is done; there is another sheet of paper"; and he took it, and employed the rest of the night in writing a second letter, without showing the least displeasure with his secretary.

## CHAPTER 12: On Sloth

Sloth is a kind of cowardice and disgust, which makes us neglect and omit our duties, rather than to deny our own will and our appetites.

ALAS, MY CHILDREN, how many slothful people there are on this earth: how

many are cowardly, how many are indolent in the service of the good God! We neglect, we omit our duties of piety....

We will not deny our disordered appetites; we will not put ourselves to any inconvenience. Everything wearies, everything disgusts the slothful man. Prayer, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which do so much good to pious souls, are a torture to him. He is weary and dissatisfied in church, at the foot of the altar, in the presence of the good God. At first he feels only dislike and indifference towards everything that is commanded by religion....

O my children! how miserable we are in losing, in this way, the time that we might so usefully employ in gaining Heaven, in preparing ourselves for eternity! How many moments are lost in doing nothing, or in doing wrong, in listening to the suggestions of the devil, in obeying him! Does not that make us tremble? If one of the lost had only a day or an hour to spend for his salvation, to what profit would he turn it! What haste he would make to save his soul, to reconcile himself with the good God! And we, my children, who have days and years to think of our salvation, to save our souls.... We neglect, we lose our souls. When death shall come, what shall we have to present to Our Lord? Ah! my children, hear how the good God threatens the idle: "Every tree that brings not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire." "Take that unprofitable servant, and cast him out into the exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Idleness is the mother of all vices. Look at the idle; they think of nothing but eating, drinking, and sleeping. They are no longer men, but stupid beasts, giving up to all their passions; they drag themselves through the mire truly like swine. They are filthy, both within and without. They feed their soul only upon impure thoughts and desires. They never open their mouth but to slander their neighbour, or to speak immodest words. Their eyes, their ears, are open only to criminal objects. . . . O my children! that we may resist idleness, let us imitate the saints. Let us watch continually over ourselves; like them, let us be very zealous in fulfilling all our duties; let the devil never find us doing nothing, lest we should yield to temptation. Let us prepare ourselves for a good death, for eternity. Let us not lose our time in lukewarmness, in negligence, in our habitual infidelities. Death is advancing: tomorrow we must,

perhaps, quit our relations, our friends. Let us make haste to merit the reward promised in Paradise to the faithful servant in the Gospel!

## **CHAPTER 13: On Grace**

CAN WE, of our own strength, avoid sin, and practice virtue? No, my children, we can do nothing without the grace of God: that is an article of faith; Jesus Christ Himself taught it to us. See, the Church thinks, and all the saints have thought with her, that grace is absolutely necessary to us, and that without it we can neither believe, nor hope, nor love, nor do penance for our sins.... As the earth can produce nothing unless it is fertilized by the sun, so we can do no good without the grace of the good God. Grace, my children, is a supernatural assistance which leads us to good....

O my children! how good is the good God! If we would think of all that He has done, of all that He still does every day for us, we would not be able to offend Him -- we would love Him with all our heart; but we do not think of it, that is the reason. . . . The angels sin, and are cast into Hell. Man sins, and God promises him a Deliverer. What have we done to deserve this favor? What have we done to deserve to be born in the Catholic religion, while so many souls are every day lost in other religions? What have we done to deserve to be baptised, while so many little children...die without Baptism? What have we done to deserve the pardon of all the sins that we commit after the age of reason, while so many are deprived of the Sacrament of Penance?

....All our merit, my children, consists in cooperating with grace..... In order to receive this grace, my children, our soul must turn to the good God by a sincere conversion: we must open our hearts to Him by an act of faith and love. As the sun alone cannot make a flower expand if it is already dead, so the grace of the good God cannot bring us back to life if we will not abandon sin.

God speaks to us, without ceasing, by His good inspirations; He sends us good thoughts, good desires. In youth, in old age, in all the misfortunes of life, He exhorts us to receive His grace, and what use do we make of His warnings? At this moment, even, are we cooperating rightly with grace? Are we not shutting the door of our heart against it? Consider that the good God will one day call you to account for what you have heard today; woe to you, if you stifle the cry that is rising from the depths of your conscience! We are in prosperity, we live in the midst of pleasures, all puffed up with pride....Let us be on our guard, my children; let us take care not to be unfaithful to grace. The good God leaves us free to choose life or death; if we choose death, we shall be cast into the fire, and we must burn forever with the devils. Let us ask pardon of God for

having up to now abused the graces He has given us, and let us humbly pray Him to grant us more.

## **CHAPTER 14: On Prayer**

OUR CATECHISM teaches us, my children, that prayer is an elevation, an application of our mind and of our heart to God, to make known to Him our wants and to ask for His assistance. We do not see the good God, my children, but He sees us, He hears us, He wills that we should raise towards Him what is most noble in us -- our mind and our heart. When we pray with attention, with humility of mind and of heart, we quit the earth, we rise to Heaven, we penetrate into the Bosom of God, we go and converse with the angels and the saints. It was by prayer that the saints reached Heaven: and by prayer we too shall reach it. Yes, my children, prayer is the source of all graces, the mother of all virtues, the efficacious and universal way by which God wills that we should come to Him. He says to us: "Ask, and you shall receive." ....Ought we not to be ashamed of our idleness, of our indifference to prayer, when our Divine Saviour, the Dispenser of all graces, has given us such touching examples of it? For you know that the Gospel tells us He prayed often, and even passed the night in prayer....Have we no graces to ask for?....Do not the continual needs of our soul and of our body warn us to have recourse to Him who alone can supply them? How many enemies to vanquish -- the devil, the world, and ourselves. How many bad habits to overcome, how many passions to subdue, how many sins to efface! In so frightful and painful a situation, what remains to us, my children? The armour of the saints: prayer, that necessary virtue, indispensable to good as well as to bad Christians. . . .

....Everyone on the earth who has a heart, everyone who has the use of reason ought to love and pray to God.... See, my children, we are poor people who have been taught to beg spiritually, and we do not beg. We are sick people, to whom a cure has been promised, and we do not ask for it. The good God does not require of us fine prayers, but prayers which come from the bottom of our heart.

St. Ignatius was once travelling with several of his companions; they each carried on their shoulders a little bag, containing what was most necessary for them on the journey. A good Christian, seeing that they were fatigued, was interiorly excited to relieve them; he asked them as a favour to let him help

them to carry their burdens. They yielded to his entreaties. When they had arrived at the inn, this man who had followed them, seeing that the Fathers knelt down at a little distance from each other to pray, knelt down also. When the Fathers rose again, they were astonished to see that this man had remained prostrate all the time they were praying: they expressed to him their surprise, and asked him what he had been doing. His answer edified them very much, for he said: "I did nothing but say, Those who pray so devoutly are saints: I am their beast of burden: O Lord! I have the intention of doing what they do: I say to You whatever they say." These were afterwards his ordinary words, and he arrived by means of this at a sublime degree of prayer. Thus, my children, you see that there is no one who cannot pray -- and pray at all times, and in all places; by night or by day; amid the most severe labours, or in repose; in the country, at home, in travelling. The good God is everywhere ready to hear your prayers, provided you address them to Him with faith and humility.

## **CHAPTER 15: On the Love of God**

"If you love Me, keep My Commandments."

NOTHING IS so common among Christians as to say, "O my God; I love You,"

and nothing more rare, perhaps, than the love of the good God. Satisfied with making outward acts of love, in which our poor heart often has no share, we think we have fulfilled the whole of the precept. An error, an illusion; for see, my children, St. John says that we must not love the good God in word, but in deed. Our Lord Jesus Christ also says, "If anyone love Me he will keep My Word." If we judge by this rule, there are very few Christians who truly love God, since there are so few who keep His Commandments. Yet nothing is more essential than the love of God. It is the first of all virtues, a virtue so necessary, that without it we shall never get to Heaven; and it is in order to love God that we are on the earth. Even if the good God did not command it, this feeling is so natural to us, that our heart should be drawn to it of its own accord.

But the misfortune is that we lavish our love upon objects unworthy of it, and refuse it to Him alone who deserves to be infinitely loved. Thus, my children, one person will love riches, another will love pleasures; and both will offer to the good God nothing but the languishing remains of a heart worn out in the service of the world. From thence comes insufficient love, divided love, which is for that very reason unworthy of the good God; for He alone, being infinitely above all created good, deserves that we should love Him above

all things: more than our possessions, because they are earthly; more than our friends, because they are mortal; more than our life, because it is perishable; more than ourselves, because we belong to Him. Our love, my children, if it is true, must be without limit, and must influence our conduct....

If the Saviour of the world, addressing Himself to each one of us separately, were now to ask us the same question that He formerly asked St. Peter: "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" could we answer with as much confidence as that great Apostle, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You"? *Domine, tu scis quia amo te.* We have perhaps pronounced these words without taking in their meaning and extent; for, my children, to love the good God is not merely to say with the mouth, "O my God! I love You!" Oh, no! where is the sinner who does not sometimes use this language?

To love the good God is not only to feel from time to time some emotions of tenderness towards God; this sensible devotion is not always in our own power. To love the good God is not to be faithful in fulfilling part of our duties and to neglect the rest. The good God will have no division: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole strength." This shows the strength of the Commandment to love God. To love God with our whole heart is to prefer Him to everything, so as to be ready to lose all our possessions, our honor, our life, rather than offend this good Master. To love God with our whole heart is to love nothing that is incompatible with the love of God; it is to love nothing that can share our heart with the good God: it is to renounce all our passions, all our ill-regulated desires. Is it thus, my children, that we love the good God?

To love the good God with our whole mind is to make the sacrifice to Him of our knowledge and our reason, and to believe all that He has taught. To love the good God with our whole mind is to think of Him often, and to make it our principal study to know Him well. To love the good God with our whole strength is to employ our possessions, our health, and our talents, in serving Him and glorifying Him. It is to refer all our actions to Him, as our last end. Once more, is it thus that we love the good God? Judging by this invariable rule, how few Christians truly love God!

Do those bad Christians love the good God, who are the slaves of their passions? Do those worldly persons love the good God, who seek only to gratify their body and to please the world? Is God loved by the miser, who sacrifices Him for a vile gain? Is He loved by that pleasure seeker, who abandons himself to vices the most opposite to divine love? Is He loved by that man who thinks of nothing but wine and partying? Is He loved by that other man, who cherishes an aversion to his neighbor, and will not forgive him? Is He loved by that young girl, who loves nothing but pleasures, and thinks of nothing but indulgence and

vanity? No, no, my children, none of these persons love the good God; for we must love Him with a love of preference, with an active love!

If we would rather offend the good God than deprive ourselves of a passing satisfaction, than renounce those guilty associations, those shameful passions, we do not love the good God with a love of preference, since we love our pleasures, our passions, better than the good God Himself. Let us go down into our own souls; let us question our hearts, my children, and see if we do not love some creature more than the good God. We are permitted to love our relations, our possessions, our health, our reputation; but this love must be subordinate to the love we should have for God, so that we may be ready to make the sacrifice of it if He should require it....

Can you suppose that you are in these dispositions -- you who look upon mortal sin as a trifle, who keep it quietly on your conscience for months, for years, though you know that you are in a state most displeasing to the good God? Can you suppose that you love the good God -- you who make no efforts to correct yourselves; you who will deprive yourselves of nothing; you who offend the Creator every time that you find opportunity? Yes, my children, what the miser loves with his whole heart is money; what the drunkard loves with his whole heart is drink; what the libertine loves with his whole heart is the object of his passion. You, young girls, you who had rather offend God than give up your finery and your vanities, you say that you love God; say rather that you love yourselves.

No, no, my children; it is not thus that the good God is to be loved, for we must love Him not only with a love of preference, but also with an active love. "Love," says St. Augustine, "cannot remain without the constant action of the soul: *Non potest vacare amor in anima amantis*. Yes," says this great saint, "seek for a love that does not manifest itself in works, and you will find none."

What! could it be, O my God, that Your love alone should be barren, and that the Divine fire, which ought to enkindle the whole world, should be without activity and without strength?

When you love a person, you show him the more or less affection according as the ardor of your love for him is more or less great. See, my children, what the saints were like, who were all filled with the love of the good God: nothing cost them too much; they joyfully made the greatest sacrifices; they distributed their goods to the poor, rendered services to their enemies, led a hard and penitential life; tore themselves from the pleasures of the world, from the conveniences of life, to bury themselves alive in solitude; they hastened to torments and to death, as people hasten to a feast. Such were the effects which the love of the good God produced in the saints; such ought it to produce in us. But, my children, we are not penetrated with the love of God; we do not love the

good God. Can anyone say, indeed, that he loves the good God, who is so easily frightened, and who is repulsed by the least difficulty? Alas! what would have become of us if Jesus Christ had loved us only as we love Him? But, no. Triumphant over the agonies of the Cross, the bitterness of death, the shame of the most ignominious tortures, nothing costs Him too dearly when He has to prove that He loves us. That is our only model. If our love is active, it will manifest itself by the works which are the effects of love, because the love of the good God is not only a love of preference, but a pious affection, a love of obedience, which makes us practice His Commandments; an active love, which makes us fulfil all the duties of a good Christian. Such is the love, my children, which God requires from us, to which He is greatly entitled, which He has purchased by so many benefits heaped upon us by His death for us upon the Cross. What happiness, my children, to love the good God! There is no joy, no happiness, no peace, in the heart of those who do not love the good God on earth. We desire Heaven, we aspire to it; but, that we may be sure to attain to it, let us begin to love the good God here below, in order to be able to love Him, to possess Him eternally in His holy Paradise.

## **CHAPTER 16: On Paradise**

"Blessed, O Lord, are those who dwell in Your house: they shall praise You for ever and ever."

To DWELL in the house of the good God, to enjoy the presence of the good God, to be happy with the happiness of the good God -- oh, what happiness, my children! Who can understand all the joy and consolation with which the saints are inebriated in Paradise? St. Paul, who was taken up into the third heaven, tells us that there are things above which he cannot reveal to us, and which we cannot comprehend.... Indeed, my children, we can never form a true idea of Heaven till we shall be there. It is a hidden treasure, an abundance of secret sweetness, a plenitude of joy, which may be felt, but which our poor tongue cannot explain....O God! the happiness You promise us is such that the eyes of man cannot see it, his ears cannot hear it, nor his heart conceive it.

Yes, my children, the happiness of Heaven is incomprehensible.... No more death! The good God will be in us the Principle of everlasting life. No more sickness, no more sadness, no more pains, no more grief. You who are afflicted, rejoice! Your fears and your weeping will not extend beyond the grave. . . . The good God will Himself wipe away your tears! Rejoice, O you whom the world persecutes! your sorrows will soon be over, and for a moment of tribulation, you will have in Heaven an immense weight of glory. Rejoice! for



you possess all good things in one -- the source of all good, the good God Himself.

Can anyone be unhappy when he is with the good God....

As St. Paul says, my children, we shall see God face to face, because then there will be no veil between Him and us. We shall possess Him without uneasiness, for we shall no longer fear to lose Him. We shall love Him with an uninterrupted and undivided love, because He alone will occupy our whole heart. We shall enjoy Him without weariness, because we shall discover in Him ever new perfections; and in proportion as we penetrate into that immense abyss of wisdom, of goodness, of mercy, of justice, of grandeur, and of holiness, we shall plunge ourselves in it with fresh eagerness. If an interior consolation, if a grace from the good God, gives us so much pleasure in this world that it diminishes our troubles, that it helps us to bear our crosses, that it gives to so many martyrs strength to suffer the most cruel torments -- what will be the happiness of Heaven, where consolations and delights are given, not drop by drop, but by torrents!

....The possession of Heaven, my children, can never weary us; we possess the good God, the Author of all perfections. See, the more we possess God, the more He pleases; the more we know Him, the more attractions and charms we find in the knowledge of Him. We shall always see Him and shall always desire to see Him; we shall always taste the pleasure there is in enjoying the good God, and we shall never be satiated with it. The blessed will be enveloped in the Divine Immensity, they will revel in delights and be all surrounded with them, and, as it were, inebriated. Such is the happiness which the good God destines for us.

We can all, my children, acquire this happiness. The good God wills the salvation of the whole world; He has merited Heaven for us by His death, and by the effusion of all His Blood. What a happiness to be able to say, "Jesus Christ died for me; He has opened Heaven for me; it is my inheritance. . . . Jesus has prepared a place for me; it only depends on me to go and occupy it. *Vado vobis parare locum* -- I go to prepare a place for you. The good God has given us faith, and with this virtue we can attain to eternal life. For, though the good God wills the salvation of all men, He particularly wills that of the Christians who believe in Him: *Qui credit, habeat vitam aeternam* -- He that believes has life everlasting. Let us, then, thank the good God, my children; let us rejoice -- our names are written in Heaven, like those of the Apostles. Yes, they are written in the Book of Life: if we choose, they will be there forever, since we have the means of reaching Heaven.

The happiness of Heaven, my children, is easy to acquire; the good God has furnished us with so many means of doing it! See, there is not a single creature

which does not furnish us with the means of attaining to the good God; if any of them become an obstacle, it is only by our abuse of them. The goods and the miseries of this life, even the chastisements made use of by the good God to punish our infidelities, serve to our salvation. The good God, as St. Paul says, makes all things turn to the good of His elect; even our very faults may be useful to us; even bad examples and temptations. Job was saved in the midst of an idolatrous people. All the saints have been tempted. If these things are, in the hands of God, an assistance in reaching Heaven, what will happen if we have recourse to the Sacraments, to that never-failing source of all good, to that fountain of grace supplied by the good God Himself! ....

We possess Jesus Christ in the Eucharist; He is continually with us, He is ready to grant us whatever we ask, He is waiting for us; we have only to ask... Alas! we do everything for this world, and nothing for the other! What labor, what trouble, what cares, what sorrows, in order to gather up a little fortune! See, my children, of what use are our perishable goods? Solomon, the greatest, the richest, the most fortunate of kings, said, in the height of the most brilliant fortune: "I have seen all things that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." And these are the goods to acquire which we labor so much, while we never think of the goods of Heaven! How shameful for us not to labor to acquire it, and to neglect so many means of reaching it! If the fig tree was cast into the fire for not having profited by the care that had been taken to render it fertile; if the unprofitable servant was reprov'd for having hidden the talent that he had received, what fate awaits us, who have so often abused the aids which might have taken us to Heaven? If we have abused the graces that the good God has given us, let us make haste to repair the past by great fidelity, and let us endeavour to acquire merits worthy of eternal life.