

Psalm 1: 1- 4 1

Happy the man who does not ally himself with the impious nor with sinners, you say.

My God, I am miserable, I fall a hundred times a day; but at the last I do not wholeheartedly go the way of the wicked. As you say further on, "...my will is in the law of the Lord, and I meditate on this law day and night." So I myself am happy, my God, in spite of my endless miseries. By you I am proclaimed happy in spite of my imperfections, my countless falls; and you add "This man will be like the tree planted by the waters; it will bear fruit in its season. Its leaves will not fall and all it does shall prosper..." I then, my God, in spite of so many faults, in spite of this wretchedness into which I feel plunged. Only because my heart does not ally itself with the impious, and because I do not voluntarily stay in sin, but because my will is attached to your law and I meditate on it to fulfill it -- only for that, in your infinite goodness, you tell me, and you tell me repeatedly that it is the first word of the Psalms "Beatus vir..." ("Blessed the man...") you tell me that I will be happy, happy with true happiness, happy on the last day, that as miserable as I am, I am a palm tree planted at the edge of living waters, living waters of the divine will, of the divine word, of the divine love, of grace; and that I will bear my fruit in its due season.

You deign to console me; I feel I am without fruit, I feel I am without good works; I say to myself I was converted eleven years ago; what have I done? What were the works of the saints, and what are mine? I see myself with hands completely empty. You kindly console me: you will bear fruit in your time, you tell me. What is this time? The time for all of us is the hour of judgement. You promise me that if I persist in good will and the battle, poor as I see myself, I will bear fruit in that last hour. And you add you will be a beautiful tree with leaves eternally green and all your works will have a prosperous end, all of it bearing fruit for all eternity. My God, how good you are, how divinely consoling.

O Heart of Jesus, it is as though it was you who dictated the first tender words of the Book of Psalms! You tell us there, as you will say one day in Galilee, "My yoke is sweet and my burden light." Thank you, my God, for your consolations of which our poor hearts have so much need.

Let us then be of good will, since Our Lord promises us beatitude at that price! Let us be of good will! Let us seek the will of God with our whole heart; let us do nothing for our own sake nor for the sake of any creature; everything for the sake of God alone. Let us seek his will and do it, whatever it is. And then, to know this will, let us meditate on the law of God day and night, searching it deeply, trying to know it better, retain it better, understand it better. For this let us meditate on the holy Scriptures, above all on the holy gospels all the days of our lives.

Psalm 1: 5-end

My God, how good you are! Having encouraged your children with promises and having shown them how easy it is for them to merit their fulfillment, to keep them on the way of salvation, you take another way no less strong, the threat of chastisement. You repeat to them several times, one after another, that if they are impious, if they do not have good will, they will be condemned. What love, what goodness ! To permit us to love him and follow him, what a grace! But to command us to do so, and command it under pain of the most rigorous punishments, that is the ultimate grace! My God, how good you are to use all the means of keeping us in your love. How good you are!

We must note that God announces here, from this first psalm, the Resurrection, the Last Judgement, the blessed life of the just in heaven. Then let us consider the fate of the impious in not being among their number; let us think sometimes, often, of the judgement of hell so as not to be numbered among the condemned. Since God recalls it to us, let us think about it.

Who are the impious? those who do not have the desire, the good will to follow God; those who do not love God. "Impious" means one who is not good, who does not love. The impious is one who voluntarily, of his own will, his mind made up, does not love God. Let us not be among those!

Sinners also will be damned, and God tells us in the last verse of this Psalm what he means by "sinner": these are they who settle themselves in the way of sin, who stay there voluntarily, without attempting to get out of it. These are not those people who get lost in the way of sin but hate it and try to leave it. (Sinners are) those who stay on that road and do not want to leave. Let us not be impious, not want to stay in sin.

So as not to fall into this icy frigidity, into this total indifference of wickedness, we must avoid the least tepidity; the gradual cooling of love, little by little, leads to divorce. Let us rather be fervent, increasing in love each day. That does not consist in the sweetness experienced in prayer and in consolations of the heart which feels that it loves. To be fervent is to do at every instant of the day, at every moment of life, what most pleases the loved one, the will of God, the most perfect. It is not within our power to have consolations; true fervor is always within our power to possess.

Let us not settle in sin; for this purpose, let us not begin committing any. Little infractions lead to big ones. Let us never deliberately commit any fault, no matter how venial, small, tiny it may be, (nor) any imperfection on purpose. Let us never put even the tip of our toe

on this road of infidelity; that is how to avoid being settled there. Let us love, let us love looking for only one thing: to do at every moment of our life the will of God, keeping him in mind. Let us seek to know this will, think of it night and day, and do it with all our heart without ever allowing ourselves any cooling, any lukewarmness, any infidelity, any voluntary fault. That is the teaching of this psalm.

Psalm 2: 1-5

My God, how good you are! For the good of our souls, to make us humble, to make us look for you, to teach us the price of your presence, to make us fervent, you sometimes leave us -- perhaps very often -- in dryness and darkness.

All is painful to us on the earth, and the earth also because we have said goodbye to it and that we want absolutely no more of it; and yourself because you hide yourself from us: prayer, office, orison, holy communion, all weighs on us, all costs us, even to tell you that we love you. Painfully we feel our distress, our coldness; it seems to us there is a great abyss between you and us, that you regard us with a severe face and we ask ourselves where we are and where we are going; it seems to us we are sinking in those moving quicksand from which one does not escape. But my God, how good you are: then you cry out "Seek yourself in me" and you show us a secure anchor to which we can attach our joy and attach it in such a way that nothing can tear it away, even to the gates of hell. This anchor is the joy of your happiness, the joy of your infinite blessedness.

To lose oneself in the joy of your glory is what the first verses of this Psalm teach us. "The nations have shuddered; the peoples have meditated insanities, the princes are assembled, the kings are united against the Lord and against his Christ...but he who is in the heavens laughs at them and the Lord mocks them". Yes, my God, you are in heaven, you are God, you are the Lord; you are infinitely powerful and infinitely happy; the offenses of men and my distress cannot reach you, nothing troubles the smile of the blessed and always-tranquil Trinity, and the thought of your happiness which nothing can take from you, this thought which the first verses of this Psalm inspire is one of the greatest graces which you might give us here below. It is to give our joy a basis that no one can take away from us; it is to give us a consolation always ready in all of our sufferings and a foretaste of the happiness of the elect. My God, how good you are to give us this infinite favor.

Joy and confidence...joy of the happiness of God, joy from the idea of this beautiful image of the changeless felicity of God. "He who is in the heavens laughs at them and the Lord mocks them." And at the same time, confidence --confidence in the power of God who loves us, who protects us and whose sovereign power the same verse expresses so well. Who can come against us, be they men or demons? They never will do anything but what God will permit them to do.

"He who is in the heavens laughs at them."

Courage, then, and confidence. Nothing will happen to us except with the permission of our beloved, of our spouse, of the one to whom we have given ourselves, who has chosen us to belong to him, who has filled us with so many graces, and who has said "All that happens, happens for the good of the elect" - and joy. Our beloved is eternally blessed.

Psalm 2: 6-end

My God, how good of you to speak to us in the Old Testament about your Son. Here we are in the time of David and already you are announcing the Gospel: "The Lord said to me, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you...' " And not only do you speak to us of the eternal generation of your Word, but you make us glad by informing us that the reign of Jesus will have no end: "I will give you the ends of the earth for your possession, you will reign with sovereign power." And after revealing to us a part of the mystery of the Trinity, after having put us into a perfect joy in announcing to us the glories of Christ, it still isn't enough for your heart: the last word of the Psalm has to be this infinitely gentle word: "Blessed are they who have confidence in me!" It is enough then, as it were, to have confidence in you, to be blessed on the last day. Unceasing love in this humble confidence will suffice to obtain for us the graces necessary to die in your peace! O sweet word! My God how good you are!

Serve the Lord in fear, exult in him with trembling, embrace discipline. Here are three serious pieces of advice which you give us, my God: to serve God with all our heart, and in fearing him, fearing him as one to be dreaded, for he is our judge; and in fearing him above all as one fears one whom one loves. One fears no one so much as the person one loves; and the more one loves, the more one fears. One fears so much to offend, so much to cause pain, so much to displease, so much to serve poorly, so much not to give all possible pleasure, so much not to serve as well as possible, of not rendering all possible services, so much of not pleasing, so much of not pleasing as much as possible, of not giving the greatest signs of love possible, of not loving enough. One fears also because one respects, and one respects so much when one loves!

Exult in him; yes, let us rejoice in him. God is happy, happy for all eternity; he lacks nothing and will never lack anything. If we love him, we are happy because of his happiness; because he lacks nothing, we lack nothing. Let us forget ourselves, let us not consider ourselves, not have a single glance at ourselves, not look at anything but our beloved. He is blessed, let us rejoice; let us exult with joy, lose ourselves in him in the happiness of his felicity: to forget ourselves and lose ourselves in God in the contemplation and the jubilation of his happiness.

To embrace discipline, make a rule for oneself, embrace a rule, seek how we will glorify God the most, to ask him how he wills that we serve him; and when he has answered, to draw

up our rule of life in accordance with his will, to hold on to it with a steady hand and not let go for a single instant. This is the will of God for us. This is inviolable. Any failure is a lack of love, any fault against our program, this program willed by God, is a disobedience to God, a voluntary distancing from his will, an infidelity, a sin against the love which we owe to our beloved. He wants of us one thing; we do not give it to him. He tells us that one thing pleases him; we do not do it.

Psalm 3: 1-4

My God, how good you are to have given us in the Psalms so vivid an expression of the combats of our soul, and so consoling an image of the victories she wins when she appeals to you. How true it is, how consoling, strengthening: "Lord, how much those who torment me have increased in number; many rise up against me..." How true this is! I feel it every day! How I need to repeat your words every day, even at every hour! And alas, these enemies are so relentless that they hope, not without reason, to discourage me. "Many were saying to my soul 'You have no security in your God!' " How often this voice of discouragement resounds in our ear! It is very much our daily complaint.

But later, my God, your Psalm consoles me; with what force it continues; it answers the enemies of my soul: "But you, Lord, you are my support, you are my glory, you lift up my head. I cried to the Lord and he heard my prayer, from his holy mountain." How consoling this is, how supporting! What confidence these words inspire. My God, how good you are to have inspired these prayers in order to put them on our lips our whole life long.

Let us do as the last of these four verses tells us: when our enemies rise up against us, let us not fight alone; we are sad soldiers. Let us at once call God to our aid; let us cry out to the Lord. From his holy mountain, he will answer our prayer.

The principal artifice of the devil is to distract us by his attacks to the point where we do not think to call God to our aid. The devil tries first to render us mute like the possessed persons in the Gospel, and then he has a fine time of tormenting us; we are so weak when alone. Let us ask often in prayer for the grace of invoking God in temptation; temptations often vanish so quickly when one cries out to the Lord. And when our darkened spirits seek to resist by their own strength without calling on the only true force, temptations last so long and are so dangerous that they can easily make us fall, and fall so low.

Now, first lesson: to take great care to call on God in all temptations from the beginning and as long as they last; and to ask God often to inspire us to pray to him as soon as we are tempted, and to put far from us this mute spirit which seizes us when tempted. Second lesson: if

we are tempted to discouragement, to respond with all our heart "The Lord is my support, my glory; he will know how to make me lift up my head."

Psalm 3: 5-end

My God, how good you are to have inspired these words so divinely consoling! What power they have to console, to strengthen, for these are not human words but your own, O Holy Spirit! It is you, O Holy Spirit, who makes David say, who makes me say, "I fell asleep and I was slumbering..." How true it is, I am deplorably asleep on the road to doing good; I have been sluggish in the practice of virtues. Instead of being a blazing fire in your service, like the angels, I have been cold and drowsy. "But I awoke, for God took me by the hand..." Yes, I can awaken from this slumber, not by myself but by the grace of God who is so good and so strong, and who never ceases to incite me. Trust, then. However miserable I may be, I can leave my torpor. God is there who calls me to trust and gives me his hand; here he is who awakens me.

And I have nothing to fear. Courage! "I shall not fear a thousand foes assembled around me. Arise, Lord; save me, my God." The Lord is there to defend me; with him, what shall I fear? With his aid what can I not do? "Lord, you have struck down my adversaries. Salvation is from God, and his blessing is on his people."

What trust is in all these words. It is the Psalm of the sinner who is surrounded by temptations, whom the demon tries to discourage, who has even fallen asleep on the road to doing good, and has given himself over to spiritual drowsiness, to torpor, to numbness. But the grace of God awakens him; he feels God close to him. He no longer fears; he gains confidence. He throws himself into combat courageously, defying all his enemies and saying "You, Lord, you are my support. I would not fear a thousand foes. In God is salvation. Your blessing is on your people.

Let us never be discouraged. If it happens that we fall asleep, let us not be discouraged on awakening, but on the contrary let us think that this awakening we owe only to the mere goodness of God. This kindness, which awakened us without our asking it of him, will for all the more reason wake us up if we ask him to do so. His goodness has extended its hand to us; it still does, it always is there watching over us, ready to help. The Lord is always in the boat, the Good Shepherd is always near his sheep. "You have struck my adversaries...In God is salvation." He always is there, ready to vanquish all our enemies, ready to save us.

Courage, then; trust! But at the same time, prayer: the psalmist prays "Arise, Lord; save me, my God." Trust always, but prayer always. However low we may have fallen, we can get up again, and rise to the throne of God like St. Mary Magdalene, like St. Paul, like the Good Thief, like St. Thais and so many others; but for that let us pray, let us pray. Let us pray in all

temptations, in difficulties. Let us pray always "Arise, Lord. Save me." Let us often pray to God that we do pray to him in temptation; let us ask him for this special grace of having recourse to him, to call on him as soon as we are tempted; let us ask him not to let us be overcome by temptation to the point of forgetting, in the struggle, to call to our aid him from whom alone victory can come to us. Let us indeed ask this grace which is of prime importance, for the devil, who knows "...that in God is salvation; he strikes our adversaries and breaks their teeth". This devil does all that he can to distract us, overcome us, render us mute and prevent us from calling God to our aid.

Psalm 4: 1-5

How good you are, my God; how divinely consoling are your Psalms. In all those we have seen thus far, what stands out in them is consolation. All are a blend of consolations and counsels to resist temptation. This Psalm is the same: "When I called on the Lord he heard me; he comforted me when I was in trouble."

This is consolation: God hears, God consoles God gladdens, puts at ease. With one glance he puts an end to tribulation. The means come now: first, prayer: "Have mercy on me; hear my prayer." Then good will, courage, the quest for God alone, no longer to be preoccupied with self, nor with creatures which are but vanity, but only with God who alone is truth. "How long will you have a heavy heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after falsehood? Why this lack of courage? Why do you seek after yourselves and seek after creatures? Prayer, purity of intention, to do all for God alone. These are two ways to obtain the help of God in trouble. Here is a third one: "God has glorified his Holy One; God will hear me when I call out to his Holy One, to Jesus"; prayers to Jesus, or to pray to God through Jesus; both always will be heard, as the Gospel repeats to us. The fourth means: repentance and good resolutions" : to become annoyed with oneself because of one's faults, to review them with regret in one's soul and no longer commit any of them.

How consoling this is! First, the assurance of consolation, then these many of ways to gain it. How sweet that is! How good you are, my God, to have inspired these words. Each of these five verses contains a lesson, one thing to practice. Let us have trust, since God condescends to tell us about them with so much kindness.

Let us pray. Let us do all for God alone without any seeking after ourselves or creatures. Let us pray to Jesus and pray through Jesus, in the name of Jesus. Let us repent of our offenses, ask pardon for them, make good resolutions, sin no more, be faithful, fight our least imperfections. Let us examine our consciences and apply ourselves to self-correction. And finally there is a sixth lesson which derives from these five: that it is very necessary to read the

Psalms, to meditate much on them, for they are rich in consolation and instruction.

Psalm 4: 6-end

My God, how good you are, and how you console your poor creatures!
Is there anything more consoling than these last verses of Psalm 4? You remind us there of the greatest, the kindest favors that you have done for us: your incarnation, the sacraments, and then you add these words of sweetness and infinite peace on which you finish the Psalm: "In peace I will fall asleep and I will rest. For you, Lord, have established me in profound hope."

The teaching of this Psalm is hope, joy, peace, resting in God. Hope, because God enjoins it on us: "Hope in the Lord. You have especially established me in hope" and how good he is to command it of us, for in the light of his justice and our sins how could we dare to hope without the command he gave us. Joy -- alas! often it seems to be very far from this poor earth, so incompatible without souls bent down under so many sins and woes, with our souls so fragile, so poor, so suffering. But no sadness -- certain sadnesses are good, coming from God -- "Beati qui lugent..." -- but at the same time joy is there, immense joy. "Many say 'Who will show us good things?' " Alas, yes, everything appears a source of distress around us and in us. "The light of your countenance rests upon us, Lord. You have given joy to our hearts."

Yes, Jesus, the light of your countenance illuminates us, it shines softly upon us. And at this sight, what joy invades our hearts! You are there: it is the beginning of heaven. You are there, Son of God, because God is everywhere. You are there, Son of Man, by your Gospel, the recollection of your life. You are there by your holy Eucharist, and how close to us and how much in us, and with what sweetness and what love. You are there by your grace always, always present. You are there by your love which never abandons us as long as we live, which pardons us seventy-seven times and always wants our salvation, by your love which cherishes us more than the most loving wife cherishes her husband, more than the most tender mother cherishes her child. The light of your countenance shines on us, Lord; you have given us joy.

And so that our joy might be greater still, to crown your gifts and confirm us in hope, you gave us your sacraments "...by the fruit of wheat, of wine, and of oil": the Holy Eucharist first, the supreme good, yourself, my God! Confirmation, the Holy Spirit; Holy Orders which creates your ministers; Extreme Unction which fortifies our last moments. You have forgotten nothing, my God; how good you are! How well you have provided for us! Nothing remains for us but that "...we sleep and rest in peace: for you, Lord, have marvelously confirmed me in hope."

This peace, the peace which comes from hope, this peace which depends upon one thing alone: the mercy of God, but which depends upon it so absolutely that on this mercy, on the Heart of Jesus, our soul rests and sleeps.

Psalm 5: 1-7

My God, how good you are to teach us to pray! So often we don't know how to do it. So often we need to say with the Apostles, "Lord, teach us how to pray." You give us in your Psalms, my God, so many examples of prayers. They are your own words, the indescribable groanings of the Holy Spirit in the soul of David, divine prayer. The Our Father and the prayers reported by the holy gospels are the lessons in prayer that you give us! How good you are to give them to us, to remedy our weakness, our dryness. And to give them to us in such abundance and in designating them yourself for such-and-such state of soul or moment of the day. What a consolation, what a good thing it is for us to be able to pray to you in your own words, in so perfect a way and perfectly appropriate to our condition.

This Psalm is the psalm of morning. The Catholic Church recites it at Lauds on Monday. The first seven verses are divided in a simple and remarkable way: the first three are simply invocations "Lord, I pray you, I pray you, I pray you, listen to me, listen to me." The fourth verse indicates the hour for which this Psalm is composed: "In the morning I will stand before you, Lord, and what will I see? I will see that you hate sin, that the evildoer will not live near you, that the unjust will not be allowed before your eyes. You hate all those who do evil, you curse liars; you abhor the bloodthirsty and the perfidious."

This, then, is how the Holy Spirit wants us to place ourselves upon awakening, in the presence of God. Let us adore him, let us beg him to listen to us, to make us pray to him himself, to make our prayer within us himself, that it may be acceptable; that Jesus continue his life in us, that he may live in us and not we ourselves; that his kingdom may come into our souls, that he may make our thoughts, words and actions, that he may pray to his Father in us.

May this have its place in our morning prayer, since the Holy Spirit himself indicates to us this great and beneficial truth and at the same time this dazzling beauty -- the holiness of God, so formidable to the living, so terrifying to sinners, so sweet to the just, to begin the day and enlighten all our thoughts and our actions until evening -- to the evening of the present day and the evening of life.

Psalm 5: 8-end

How consoling still are these verses, my God, and how good you are to have inspired your prophet for our consolation! You have willed that this Psalm should start with harsh images: "I will stand before you in the morning, and what will I see? A God who hates iniquity." Before all else, you inspire in us a hatred of evil, the fear of sin, fear of your judgments, the fear of offending

you. But you do not want to leave us with only this impression. Having in the first place engraved it on our hearts as the first thing, the most necessary, the most beneficial, you have us make an act of adoration and confidence: "I am surrounded by the multiplicity of your mercies. I will enter your house and adore you in your holy temple." And immediately after, you have us make an act of the detestation of evil, of this evil we have just seen that you hate, and as an act of the renouncement of Satan and his works.

Finally in the last three verses there is the tender and filial expression of confidence in God. It is on this that you want us to end our morning prayer: "All those who hope in you shall rejoice; they will be eternally blessed and you will live in them. All those who love you will be glorified in you, for you bless the just one, Lord. You have spread out your love over our heads like a shield." Is there anything sweeter, anything more consoling? God himself it seems, could not have found a word more tender than the one he chose to end this prayer, and which with his ineffable goodness he orders us to say to him, "You have spread out your love over our heads like a shield."

Let us allow these acts to enter into our orisons; let us always begin by saying to ourselves "I will stand before the Lord and what will I see? A God who hates iniquity." And then let us ask him pardon of our faults, great and small, and let us beg him that we not commit any of them again, not even the least imperfection, because any imperfection displeases him, is an unfaithfulness, a lack of fervor, a lack of love, a sadness for his heart. Afterward should come the act of adoration: "I will adore you in your holy temple." This is the sequence which the priest follows at mass. And after the act of adoration which will last as long as it will please God to make it last, let us finish with an act of the detestation of evil and the renouncement of all that is not willed by God. And finally let us throw ourselves upon the heart of God. Let us thank him for his love, let us tell him that we believe that, poor as we are, we want, we hope to avoid every imperfection, to glorify him as much as possible because he has spread out his love over our heads as a shield, because we can do all in him who strengthens us.

Let us finish our prayer by recalling his kindness, his heart, his mercies. This is an act of gratitude, of necessary confidence in his love, necessary because to give it to God is just, necessary because he will give us the strength to fight the temptations of the day. Moreover, since God makes us do it in this Psalm, we must think thereby that it is very good to do.

Psalm 6: 1-5

How good you are, my God, to have inspired your prophet to prayers with the intention of asking for pardon or pity. We so often, so continually have need to cry out to you for that! What happiness to be able to do so in a truly good way, in a perfect way, with your own words, with

the words and, above all, with the sentiments you yourself have indicated for these states of soul. What happiness to be able to address to you a prayer certain to be acceptable because it is prescribed by you; what happiness to know the sentiments where we must be because you yourself direct us to them! And how consoling these sentiments are! How consoling these words! How good you are, how merciful you are, my God!

Let us often make use of the Psalms, using them frequently in our prayers. It is the word of God. These are prayers ready-made, which his divine goodness has given us to pray to him in a manner acceptable to him, and to encourage sentiments which he wants in us. Most of all, since we are lukewarm, dry, let us have recourse to the Psalms; let us recite them very slowly, attentively mindful of what they express, lifting up our soul to God in prayer frequently.

Thus, when we must ask pardon, if our soul is in darkness or dryness, let us take this Psalm or another penitential Psalm and say "Lord, be not my accuser in your indignation; and in your displeasure do not chastise me. Have pity on me, Lord, for I am weak; cure me, Lord, for I am troubled to my very bones. My soul is deep in trouble, Lord; how long will you leave me in this state? Look at me, my God, and deliver my soul; save me because of your mercy. Save me for your glory, for the condemned no longer love you, and in hell none bless your name."

Let us say these words to God very slowly, entering these sentiments and adding to them whatever our heart will tell us. This will be an excellent way to pray for it will be according to the very will of God, with his own expressions.

Psalm 6: 6-end

How good you are, my God, to tell us so plainly in this Psalm that it is necessary for us really to repent of our sins in the depths of our heart, an important precept of which we have such need. We are so shallow! We would so easily forget this truth that, when one loves, one suffers in having offended the loved one, of whom one asks forgiveness unceasingly, endlessly. It is necessary then to do so if we love you; and as soon as we weep for our faults sincerely, lovingly, you forgive them.

Six verses are used, the first three to show forcefully the tears which must inundate us at the thought of our offenses, the last three show us what cries of joy, what cries of triumph must stir us in the light of the pardon which God grants us.

Let us do this: let us weep for our sins -- blessed are those who weep! This is understood of those who weep for their sins, those of others, the sufferings of others, their own sufferings, those

of Our Lord, those who weep for love, of desire to see God, of thanksgiving for his benefits, of happiness at his happiness.

The first, the most indispensable of all tears are those that the suffering of Jesus must cause us. But following that, there are none more necessary, more connected to love, more natural to a loving heart than those that flow because of our sins. One suffers so much, when one loves, to have offended the beloved! Let us then shed these tears. Let us recall how the saints asked pardon, Catherine of Siena weeping for three days for a small lack of sincerity, very small indeed. Here, moreover, it is God who speaks. What tears there are in the Psalms! How often God repeats there that weeping is necessary. And if he says that one must weep out of love, desire, emotion at the simple thought of the beloved, how much more does he repeat and repeat that one must weep for one's sins.

Otherwise also they are the tears of love, of pure love : we do not weep because we are bad, nor because we are on the road to our ruin, nor because we have afflicted, offended our neighbor, but because we are other than we would like to be. We weep because we love God, that we have offended him, that we have saddened his heart, that we have badly served him, and this thought makes us suffer infinitely, even makes us suffer to the actual extent of our love for him. These are the tears of love, of pure love, which flow only because of our love, and which become more abundant as our love is more ardent.

"I am tired of moaning; I have each night drenched my bed with tears; I have soaked my couch with weeping. My eyes suffer with the pain..." One must weep profoundly yet never be discouraged; and having wept, to get up with new strength, like a traveler who after having struck a rock and fallen, gets up and runs the faster to make up for lost time. One must weep, but following that, trust, confidence and courage. This is what God wants to tell us. He wants also that after so many tears we should break into a kind of triumphal song. He wants us to sound the charge against these enemies who made us fall and that, from our beds damp with tears, we should rise like lions with confidence, ardor, and absolute courage. "Go far from me, you who made me do evil! For God has listened to the voice of my tears. God has listened to my prayer; God has heard my supplications. Let the devils tremble and be confused in their turn. Let them redden with shame and flee the faster."

Psalm 7: 1-8

How good you are, my God, to teach us that it is necessary to pray to you against the temptations of the devil, and how one must pray to you against them. How necessary this double teaching is to us! How important it is to us in temptation to think of calling you to our aid! It is a tactic of the devil to render us mute at that moment; by means of temptation, not only

does he tempt us, but distracts us, absorbs us, tries to prevent our thinking of you because he knows that you are our strength, that with you we can do all, and without you nothing. You also warn us of this danger in presenting this Psalm to us. How good of you to do it, and how useful a lesson!

And what goodness to give us the model, the example, the formula of what we have to say to you in temptation, the manner of calling you to our aid! We are so dry, so cold, so powerless! Now at the time of temptation especially, we are so paralyzed! But you make everything easy for us: we have only to open our book and read this Psalm. These are the expressions which the Holy Spirit himself tells us to use to by invoke you against the evil spirit. What a blessing! How happy we are! How good you are!

Let us pray, let us pray without respite from the start of every temptation and as long as it lasts. And in this prayer let us frequently use the Psalms which the Holy Spirit offers us for this purpose, this one and some others. Our Lord gives us some as a kind of example: in the temptations in the desert it is with the words of holy Scripture that he drives away the devil. On the cross he again uses some words of a Psalm. We can say nothing better than to repeat the words of the Holy Spirit. Let us use them, then, when the occasion for which they were spoken presents itself: this Psalm, for example, in temptation. Not reciting it quickly, to be done with it; oh, no, but saying it slowly, weighing the words and applying the sense to ourselves, making it our own. Let us speak the inspired words as we would say the words of a mental prayer.

Psalm 7: 9 - end

How good you are, my God! This prayer which you want me to address to you to be rescued by you from temptation, you want me to say with such assurance of being heard that the entire second half is used to express that assurance, and its last words are like a cry of triumph: "I will praise the Lord for his justice; I will sing the name of the Lord Most High." My God, how good you are to enjoin on us this confidence in your help, this confidence that you will grant the prayer we address to you when we are tempted!

Let us pray in temptation; let us pray without stopping until it ceases, since God so plainly makes clear that when we invoke him against the devil, he will always hear us. "The wickedness of the father of sin will be destroyed and you will guide the one who seeks justice...The Lord will give me his help...God is a just God, strong and patient... If you flee not, devils, he will make his sword flash. He draws his bow against you; his arrows are ready. The devil has conceived injustice, he will give birth to suffering. He has dug a pit to throw me in; he will fall into it himself. The suffering he wanted for me will fall back in upon him, and his evil will fall back upon his head. As for me, I will praise the Lord for his justice, and I will sing the name of the Most High."

This trust is, besides, that which Our Lord has so often told us to have in our prayers: "All that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it will be given you." (Mk 11:24) "If you ask me something in my name, I will do it." (Jn 14:14) "Ask and you shall receive...If you who are evil give good things to your sons, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who pray to him?" Our Lord affirms to us again that he will give the good spirit to those who ask him for it; and this promise is repeated by the Holy Spirit in one of the Epistles...

Let us pray, then, in temptation, since prayer is so powerful, so certainly efficacious and victorious, and let us pray with an *absolute trust* that we will vanquish the devil if we persevere in prayer. And, the temptation passed, let us thank God as the last word of the Psalm invites us to do. Let us never forget thanksgiving, gratitude after the grace obtained. Oh! Thanksgiving must play an important role in our prayers. We receive so much, and so much at every moment!

Psalm 8: 1-4

How good you are, my God, to place at our disposition divine prayers, issuing from your own Spirit, infinitely perfect, totally agreeable to you for all the situations of our life and all the sentiments of our souls! We are so dry, so cold, so much in darkness; we are so speechless before you! What happiness always to have the means of speaking to you, to speak well to you, to speak to you perfectly, to speak to you in a manner certain to please you!

Let us then very often speak to God in Psalms! Each time that we are tepid, dry, mute before him, when we do not know what to say to him (and alas! how often that happens!) let us open our Psalter and read slowly, weighing all the words as if they came from our own depths, one or several of the Psalms appropriate to the state of our soul. Here, we have the Psalm of admiration, of praise, of gratitude, the Psalm one recites in adoring God on seeing the starry sky, and returning from this contemplation to those of the favors that this God, so great, has condescended to heap upon his frail creature.

My God, who are you and who am I? That was the prayer of St. Teresa, the exclamation of St. Colette. It is in two words this double story, the story of which must so often, so continually be the subject of our prayers: the list of the benefits of God to our soul and the list of our ingratitude

"Lord, our God, how admirable is your name in all the earth! How your magnificence is elevated above the heavens! The children, the little ones at the breast will give you perfect praise. I contemplate the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you have put in place..." Let us admire the beauties of nature, all beautiful and good since they are

the work of God, and let them lead us to admire and to praise their author. If nature, if man, if virtue, if the soul are so beautiful, what is the beauty of him of whom these borrowed beauties are but a pale reflection! But let us not stop at these created beauties; they are beneath us. Let us go immediately to the Eternal Beauty!

Psalm 8: 5-end

How good you are, my God! This is indeed the moment to say it to you since the end of this Psalm is nothing but a song of thanksgiving : *miser cordias domini in aeternum cantabo* . How sweet it is to sing this tune! How well it suits us! How very much is the subject appropriate to us! At what time of our life have we not had to say thank you? Is there ever any time when your grace abandons us, when your heart ceases to love us, when your divine body ceases to be there for us in the tabernacle, when your angels cease to watch over us, when your good inspirations are lacking to us, when your Providence does not sustain our souls and our bodies?

And who are we to receive so many graces? It is this double narrative of your benefits and our miseries which this Psalm lets us glimpse. "What is man that you should be mindful of him? What is the son of man that you should visit him? You have made him a little less than the angels and have crowned him with glory and honor; you have given him rule over the works of your hand, you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the fish in the sea. Lord our God, how admirable is your name in all the earth!"

Let us love to repeat this Psalm which so well expresses feelings which must fill our hearts without ceasing; and in prayer let us express these sentiments to God. Let us tell him often, let us tell him each day, *Quis est homo?* "What is man that you should be mindful of him, that you should visit him, that you should pay attention to him?." as another Psalm says. How great you are, beautiful, holy! *Adstabo tibi mane et videbo ...* And you so holy, so great, how is it that you remember me, so small, so ugly, so sinful! And not only do you remember me, but you visit me, you make yourself known to me, and in what manner!

You and I! What are you and what am I? What is your greatness and what is my smallness? What are your favors and what is my ingratitude? And after this double narrative, let us sing the song of thanksgiving and praise.

Psalm 9: 1-21

Here is a long prayer to ask your help against temptations! How good you are to give us several models of prayer for the situations that most frequently occur; and how often this one

occurs! You allow us to be tempted, and that for our greatest good, in order to train us in the virtues we are tempted against, and to make us practice them more perfectly. But you do not expose us unarmed to the tempter: in the Gospel you tell us continually "watch and pray"; and here you repeat to us "pray, pray" in giving us so many types of prayer to recite when tempted. Thank you, my God!

When we are tempted, let us say the Psalms which the good God gives us to call to him for help. Let us recite them very slowly, reflecting on them, lengthening them according to the impulses the good God will inspire in us, making of them a source, as it were, of mental prayer. And then, when we pray, let us be inspired by the sentiments which are expressed in them, the sentiments which the Holy Spirit himself proposes to us.

Let us inspire ourselves also with even the form of the Psalms. Let us imitate this holy freedom, this ease with which the Holy Spirit teaches us; even while praying for a specific reason, not to neglect the good thoughts that the good God suggests to us, even though they may not directly concern the object of our prayer. Thus, if in a prayer to ask help against temptation, God suggests to us thoughts of gratitude, of love, of desire, of admiration, of penance, let us not push them away because they do not concern the subject at hand. Let us receive them, offer them to God, allow these grains of incense to burn before him and give all their perfume; and when we notice that they are no longer burning, let us go back to our subject. Let us allow ourselves to be carried by grace, let us receive every good thought like a gift of God. Let us allow ourselves to be directed by the Holy Spirit and not take the reins of our prayer except when the Holy Spirit puts them anew into our hands.

This Psalm gives us the example of this way of praying, which is the method to follow always in prayer. It is made in order to ask God for help against temptation, but it contains many other things. "I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart. I will recount all your wonders. I will rejoice and be glad in you. I will sing in your Name, O God Most High! Sing to the Lord who lives in Sion! Announce to all the peoples the extent of his love!"

Psalm 9:22-end

The end, like the beginning, of this Psalm is written in order to ask for your help against temptation; there the tempted soul is called "poor". In effect that is exactly what we are. By ourselves how poor we are! We are nothingness. And in spite of the gifts of God already given, how poor we are if he does not ceaselessly add more to them, hour by hour, from moment to moment. At what moment are we not poor in grace and have not a need to beg it of him? Thank you, my God, for reminding me of my poverty; this is so good for me; and for inviting me at the same time to go to you in all my needs. What consolation for a needy one to hear within himself "You are poor, but come to me each time you will have some need; I will always give you what you need." This is what you tell me, my God! How good you are! What a happy poor one I am!

Not only must one recite this Psalm or others similar to it in temptation, not only must one make of them a framework, a subject, a model of prayer, but moreover one must take notice, hold onto, write down, remark when necessary, the verses which speak most insistently to one's heart, which contain a more useful truth, a stronger impetus, a more consoling thought. One must imprint on the memory these outstanding words among all those God has pronounced so that they will return to us in need as they did to Jesus. He used them frequently, whether to drive away temptations, whether to complain to his Father, or whether to blend them into his teachings.

In the same (way) they will help us to enrich our prayers, to repress temptation, to direct us in life, to guide us in the pursuit of truth, in the choice of actions, in what conduct to maintain. They will serve us also to console us in tribulation, to fortify us, to encourage us. Here, for example, let us remember these words: "The poor man abandons himself into your hands. I am an orphan. You are my help." "The Lord has granted the wish of the poor. Your ear has heard the cry of their heart!" "Judge, Lord, the cause of the little one and the orphan, and let no living thing any longer glorify itself before you on the earth!"

Psalm 10: 1-4

I trust in the Lord. Why do you say to me, "Take flight to the mountain like a sparrow, for the sinners bend their bows and ready their arrows against the just, for all you made has been destroyed"?

What will the just one do? He will say "The Lord is in his Tabernacle. The Lord is in heaven." Thank you, my God, for commanding me, by these sweet words, to trust! I trust in the Lord; I abandon myself to him; I rely on him. These are the first words of this Psalm and this is its whole subject. The rest of the Psalm does nothing but develop this theme. I trust in the Lord; I abandon myself to him.

To entrust oneself to one's beloved, to abandon oneself to him; no longer to think of oneself, to rely entirely on him whom one loves -- what felicity and it is to this that you invite me, Lord!

Let us do that; let us accomplish all that we should, all that we know that Our Lord wants of us; and then for the rest let us abandon ourselves. All which is duty, the will of God, let us accomplish it; and for the rest, let us allow ourselves to be led. Let us fear nothing, let us not flee, not move away, unless we know that it is the will of God. But except in this case let us run from nothing; never flee. Let us not fly off like a bird.

Let us trust in God -- he is there. All happenings are in his hands; he guides them for our good. Why fear? Why tire ourselves out by fleeing? Let us say simply with the just "I entrust myself to the Lord. The Lord is here in his Tabernacle, and he is in heaven; he protects me; he arranges everything for the good of my soul." Let us abandon ourselves.

My God, you are there; I fear nothing; I bless you for everything, for all comes from your hand; all that happens is allowed, prepared, arranged by you for the greatest good. Let us abandon ourselves!

Psalm 10: 5-end

How good you are, my God, and what words of consolation your Psalms hold. You take it upon yourself to strengthen me with them against discouragement. What do you say to me here? "The eyes of the Lord gaze at the poor one; they examine all the children of mankind... The Lord sees the just and the wicked...The Lord is just; he loves justice, and his gaze rests on equity." How consoling this is for the one who seeks righteousness! The eyes of the Lord gaze upon the poor one; they rest with a gentleness, a special tenderness on those who, having nothing in the world, await all from him, those who no longer say "my father Bernardone" but "my father who is in heaven". The poor, the two Testaments proclaim and sing, have always been the favorite children of the good God. How sweet that is. And what happiness for all mankind, since all, rich and poor, can so easily be the Lord's favorite children. It is enough for some to stay as they are and to bless God for it for others, to unburden themselves of this encumbering baggage, which is infinitely easy. My God, how good you are to have made it so easy for your favorite child to acquire this incomparable well-being.

You add that you have other children on whom your eyes always gaze with love: these are all the just. And also that it is easy to be among them. Everybody can be so; one need only to obey your commandments, to do your will: what is easier and sweeter! We always have sufficient grace to do so. And if we love you as we must, how sweet that is! My God, how good you are to attach your favors to deeds so easy and so sweet!

Let us then be poor, truly poor, poor like Jesus our model; like Saint Paul of whom the Holy Spirit says "...that he is a faithful imitator of Jesus". Let us not fear to feel hunger, thirst, nakedness, injuries, insults, the burden of hard labor. These are the companions of poverty. One does not always feel them; Jesus did not feel them all of the time but sometimes he did feel them. Let us desire to feel them with him, and when he allows us to feel them, let us thank him abundantly. Let us not become impatient but thank him from the depths of our heart for the blessed favor he does us in letting us share his suffering and allowing us to walk with him, our hand in his hand. It is then that we are truly his spouses, crowned with the same crown as he is.

And let us be just; we owe it to God. We must be just for the sake of God for he commands it. And he adds here that in fulfilling these duties we will receive the greatest blessings; and in neglecting them we will fall into the greatest evils. Promises, threats -- this good God uses everything to save us!

Psalm 11: 1-4

"Save me, Lord, for there are no longer any saints; the truth no longer is known except by very few among the children of men."

Thank you, my God, for putting this prayer on our lips. You want, then, that even at this time when there are almost no more saints, that we be holy, since you invite us to ask it! You want that at this time when truth almost is no longer known, that we should know it -- we, since you call us to ask you for it, to be saved in the midst of this sea of evil. You wish, then, that we be the privileged, the elect, your favored ones, your saints -- we on whose lips you place this prayer, we whom you invite to meditate on it.

How good you are, my God; what a destiny you desire for us! We, so miserable, so unworthy, so ungrateful, so poor; we who have abused so many graces; we who have been to this very day so unfaithful, and so lukewarm, so lazy, so indifferent; to us -- you call us to become holy, to embrace pure truth, to be its defenders, its supporters, to be the first among your children. To us -- you call us to it and by so doing you give us all that is necessary to do these things!

May this goodness, this infinite grace from God enter again within ourselves. There, my God, is what you want for me, and I -- what do I do in response to this appeal? You want holiness from me -- do I live as the saints did? Alas, what a mockery. You want from me what is most perfect -- alas, I am nothing but imperfections, weaknesses, and faults. My God, help me, convert me; see this cowardice, this pride, this good opinion of myself; see this subjection to my body, this fear of suffering, this gluttony, this laziness; see this pleasure in being praised, this fear of being despised, this impatience with all contradiction, with all opposition. See all this and the rest -- this tepidity in prayer, coldness toward the neighbor, this selfishness, this lack of courage, the ease with which I fall, this tendency toward falsehood. See all this, my God, all this and the rest. Here I am -- look at what I am. Help me, my Lord, you who desire that I become a saint; look at the road that I have to cover. Help me, my God; show me how I am to begin, how I must continue.

Lead me, Lord, in this way of truth, in this way of perfection where I have been so seldom

up to now. Make me rise out of my mud and lead me by the hand on the road of the saints, all of us happy ones who are inspired by you to recite this Psalm!

Psalm 11: 5-end

My God, how good you are! This Psalm is a prayer to ask your help against the enemies of our soul -- men and devils, the ungodly giving bad example, and spirits of darkness. Is it possible to offer us on this subject any words more consoling than those of this Psalm? Here are a few of the last verses: "Because of the distress of the poor and the groanings of the destitute, I will arise," says the Lord. I will put them in a safe place... The words of God are truthful words; (they) are silver tried in fire, purified seven times. Yes, Lord, you will save us and you will protect us from this perverse generation.

The ungodly hover around us to ruin us. According to the depths of your wisdom, my God, you have multiplied men, making the good ones and permitting the wicked ones for the sake of the sanctification of the former and the increase of your glory. How consoling all this is, my God, and how good to be able to tell us and have us repeat it. You see our distress and, because of our distress and of our moaning, you rise up and disperse our enemies; and you put us in a safe place in this life, in a place where we are secure for our well-being, in a place where you fill us with graces. We have to do no more than cry out toward you, to groan, and allow ourselves to be carried along. You put us in a safe place where we shall be at an advantage to serve you, where we will be able to say "The sparrow has found a house, the turtledove has found a nest..."

If all of us must say these divine words with faith, who is it who must say them with a more lively faith, a gratitude more profound than I, O my God? Who has been poorer, more destitute than I? more without shelter? And to whom have you given a sweeter nest than to me? Who can say better than I "The sparrow has found a house, the turtledove has found a nest"? This nest of Nazareth, this nest so appropriate in Nazareth itself, this nest seemingly prepared for me, this nest where I find so correctly all spiritual and temporal graces, this nest where you have put me to fulfill all my dreams and all my desires. My God, how good you are and how happy am I!

My God, near whom I am, to whom I speak, who is in me and around me, who looks at me and at whom I look, whom I adore from the deepest part of my soul and whom I want to love with all my heart, make me pray to you as I ought; put into my soul the sentiments that you want there, glorify yourself in your poor and unworthy creature.

How many lessons there are in this Psalm. Yes, my God, it is in your wisdom that you have made the good and the wicked -- the wicked that they may serve to train the good, for their

sanctification, and thereby to your glory. Thus all is directed to your glory and to the well-being of the elect, even the wicked, even the devils, even the temptations and the persecutions suffered by the just. My God, how good you are, and how happy are we!

Psalm 12: 1-3

"How long, Lord, will you forget me? How long will you turn your face away from me? How long shall I be restless in my soul, forming project after project, thinking all day long of my pain? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look at me and hear me favorably, Lord, my God."

Thank you, my God for putting into my mouth yourself these words which suit my soul so well, which express so exactly its habitual state. If the Psalms can be said often, it seems that this one can be said always, since it pictures well my usual state, my distress, my weakness, my powerlessness, this state of oppression under the weight of evil, which saddens me and makes me continually sigh. This Psalm is the Psalm of trusting sadness; it is the the soul's sigh toward God, the sigh of a soul that knows itself loved by the heavenly Father but nonetheless feels the weight of exile, and groans in this valley of tears. Thank you, my God, for having given me these words that so well fit the usual condition of my soul.

Yes, it is one of my misfortunes, one of my weaknesses, to turn plans over in my soul, and go back over my suffering in my heart. These are two defects I must correct in myself. It is not by making resolution after resolution that I will become better; it is in following faithfully those I have made once and for all, and which I know are agreeable to God. Not that one cannot sometimes change certain things, but there must not be this continual change. When one sees oneself unfaithful, one must not seek the remedy in a change of method, in new resolutions. One must humble oneself and continue the struggle to better follow in the future what one has resolved.

One must take great care to make resolutions well, submit them to our director when we can, and afterward retain them faithfully without changing them as long as the conditions where we are do not change, and when the will of God does not clearly indicate another direction. Without this fidelity we will waste time turning over plan after plan in our spirit; as the Psalm says, we will spend our time, our good will, our suffering, our life in a thousand daydreams and in a perpetual distress, without serving God, without advancing in virtue.

Let us profit well from this word of the Psalm. Let us not continually form plans, but let us be faithful to follow, in spite of temptation, difficulties, discouragements, obstacles, those resolutions we have made and which have the approval of God. And let us not brood all day

over our suffering. That paralyzes us, weakens us. Let us think of our faults to bitterly regret them and to humble ourselves because of them; but not at the same time when we have just committed them. At that moment let us regret; let us ask pardon, arise in peace, humility, courage, without dwelling on our faults so as not to allow ourselves to be troubled, and showing our regret in having committed it, less by acts of sorrow that we make than by acts of good intention, the resolution not to fall into them again and the extreme vigilance no longer to commit it.

An excessive, disturbed grief often comes from love of self; it is thus imperfect. One who loves God suffers seeing divinity offended, but then remembers that God is God, that he is infinitely happy. And re-assuming joy and peace in that thought, on this solid basis he thinks of nothing but the means of preventing God's being offended in the future, and of henceforth bringing about his glory. He will be able to return later to this offense to regret it again and become stronger in humility, vigilance, gratitude, good resolves; but he will return to it in prayer during such times as he will judge useful, without turmoil, in full possession of himself.

This will not be the uneasy grief that disturbs the soul all day long, this annoying sorrow trouble that forms plan after plan. This distress, anxious and disordered, comes from love of self and the pride which does not resign itself to having failed. The calm, humble regret which suffers but reaffirms itself in the thought of the perfection and the happiness of God, putting there all its joy, is neither astonished nor worried at seeing its own abjection -- that regret indeed comes from the love of God.

Psalm 12: 4-end

"Enlighten my eyes that I sleep not in death and that my enemy say not 'I have overcome him.'" Those who torment me will rejoice if I fall; but I myself hope in your mercy. My heart trembles with joy in the saving help you give me. I will sing of the Lord who has filled me with good things. I will sing the name of the Lord most high."

Here again are very consoling words, my God. You know our weakness; you know from what mud we are formed and how difficult for us are trust, faith and courage; and how easily we allow ourselves to be discouraged. Also, in all your holy books you cry out to us "Courage". In the holy gospels you repeat ceaselessly "Have confidence. Why do you fear, people of little faith?" "Pray and you will obtain all." "Only believe." and we see how many of your Psalms are full of words of hope, of trust.

This one (Psalm) ends with the sweetest words and in presenting it to us to ask for your help, you want the last words to be words of hope and even of jubilation and of triumph. What a consoler you are, my God. How good you are!

Let us do in temptation, in trials, in difficulty, the three things which these last verses of the Psalm indicate: 1) to ask the help of God, to cry out "Help!" 2) to hope firmly that God will wake us up, protect us, give us victory. 3) Let us thank God for the help given, graces received; let us thank him fervently.

Yes, it is one of my misfortunes, one of my weaknesses, to turn plans over in my soul, and go back over my suffering in my heart. These are two defects I must correct in myself. It is not by making resolution after resolution that I will become better; it is in following faithfully those I have made once and for all, and which I know are agreeable to God. Not that one cannot sometimes change certain things, but there must not be this continual change. When one sees oneself unfaithful, one must not seek the remedy in a change of method, in new resolutions. One must humble oneself and continue the struggle to better follow in the future what one has resolved.

One must take great care to make resolutions well, submit them to our director when we can, and afterward retain them faithfully without changing them as long as the conditions where we are do not change, and when the will of God does not clearly indicate another direction. Without this fidelity we will waste time turning over plan after plan in our spirit; as the Psalm says, we will spend our time, our good will, our suffering, our life in a thousand daydreams and in a perpetual distress, without serving God, without advancing in virtue.

Psalm 13: 1 - 5

The first lines of this Psalm show the folly, the wretched, horrible state of those who do not seek God. They are demented, corrupt, abominable, something diseased and poisonous. It is this state of a soul in mortal sin which God showed to St. Teresa in a vision that struck her with such terror and such compassion.

Thank you, my God, for showing us this lamentable state here in such vivid colors. It can appear seductive to the worldly, but to your eyes what is it? "...like an open sepulcher, like the tongue of serpents..." Thank you, my God, for showing us things in their true light unmasking the evil. Alas, sometimes the speech of those who seek you not, adorned with natural gifts that come from you, may be able to please us in some ways. "It is an open sepulcher, a serpent's poison..." you tell us. Thank you, my God, for this salutary truth, this warning.

Let us have nothing to do with the enemies of God; let us love these wayward children, let us try to lead them back by such means as are at our disposal, but not take pleasure in their discourse, not love their conversation. "Their mouth is an open sepulcher, the poison of a serpent..." It is the Holy Spirit who says it. Let us not see them except as much as is necessary for

the good of their souls, if it is our duty to see them.

Let us have great compassion for those who are in this lamentable state. They are children of God, bought at the price of his blood; let us do what we can for their conversion; let us desire it ardently for the sake of God.

And we -- let us humble ourselves; we would be in that state if God did not constantly sustain us. "You who are standing, take care not to fall..."; let us be careful not to fall; and to that end let us seek God, for it is in not seeking him that we fall. Let us seek him at every moment. Let us at every moment seek his will so as to do it. To do the will of God at every moment is to do what is most perfect at every moment. The greatest perfection is nothing else but this: the will of God at the present moment.

Let us do at every moment of our life this very holy will, such as it is presented to us, moment by moment. This is to revere the name of God; it is to let him reign; it is to glorify him; it is to love him. It is our aim on earth, for our aim is to glorify God as much as it is possible for us to do.

Psalm 13: 6 - end

Thank you, my God, for depicting for me in such poignant terms, the misfortune of those who do not seek you. "Remorse and pain are in their path, and they do not know peace. They do not invoke God, and they tremble with fear where there is nothing to fear. And thank you also for these consoling words with which you end this Psalm. "When will the salvation of Israel come from Sion? When the Lord will have delivered his people from the yoke of captivity, Jacob will be in jubilation and Israel will rejoice." This Psalm was entirely filled with terrible images of the condition of the sinner, of the state of the soul which does not seek God. But you are so good, my God, that you insist on always finishing your Psalms with consoling words. You know we are weak and you know it is necessary to leave us on a note of encouragement. How good you are!

Let us never be afraid, we who know God. We know he is here, with us, close to us; we know that not a hair on our head will fall without his permission. Let us invoke him in danger. Nothing will happen to us without his permission, nothing which is not willed by him, nothing that is not for our good. Let us invoke him, but with perfect submission to his will, an absolute conformity to this divine will. Let us tell him when danger threatens, "Lord, deliver us from this hour... however, not my will but yours."

And then let us have a deep compassion for those who do not seek God, who do not know

him. Let us pray to the best of our ability for their conversion. God has come to seek not the just but sinners. We must do as he does, enter into his work, continue it, make it live in us, extend its existence. Let us then pray for these sinners, for those unaware of God, of whom he paints such a sad picture for us; and let us do all that, according to our condition, it is our duty to do to convert them.

Psalm 14: 1 - 3

"Lord, who will live in the eternal tabernacles? Who will rest on the holy mountain, in the heavenly Jerusalem? It will be he who keeps himself without stain, who practices justice, who speaks the truth from a sincere heart, who seeks not to deceive with his words."

Thank you, my God, for these so very useful lessons. What is more helpful for us than to know the virtues on which you have set your heart, those on which we must examine ourselves more thoroughly, where we must make greater efforts. You tell us so in this Psalm. What bliss for us! What a good God you are! How truly you give us all that we need. You think of everything. Nothing is missing in these varied Psalms! Here it is prayer, there consolation, elsewhere instruction. Nothing is lacking. "Open your mouth and I will fill it." This is just what you do; we have only to receive. Thank you, my God, with all my heart!

Let us practice with great care what God tells us here: to keep oneself without stain, to avoid sin great or small, and also every imperfection for it leads to sin; to watch over oneself, to examine one's conscience, to examine one's deeds not twice a day but all day long, as one does them, to avoid the occasions of sin; to know on occasion the need to cut off one's right hand if it scandalizes us; to practice justice, do our duty; to give to each his due: to God whom we owe all, every moment, all our actions, all our being, all we have, all that we are. To creatures we owe what God determines that we must do for them, and that differs according to our conditions, our circumstances. To ourselves, as to other creatures, we owe what God determines we must do for ourselves, and that varies according to the circumstances in which God places us.

To speak the truth: truth is God. One cannot lie without directly offending God, without directly acting in opposition to him, without making oneself absolutely dissimilar to him, since he is necessarily the truth.

Let us then inviolably hold to the truth in the greatest and in the smallest things, since it is impossible to distance oneself from it without at the same time and in the same measure distancing oneself from you, my God, to whom I want to be so completely united in time and in eternity, whom I want always, always to embrace with all my strength, in union, in love, in the presence, in the will of whom I want never, never to separate myself in anything whatever.

Not to seek to deceive, even when we must as it happen, alas -- to be wise as the serpent, let us be simple as the dove. Let us not surrender oneself, give up all, when there is no need to do so, but let us not deceive. Let us drive far away all that smells of trickery, deceit, duplicity.

If it is necessary to be prudent, let us be reserved, let us be silent, but not deceive, not employ trickery, duplicity. Let us be prudent but simple. Let us never separate ourselves from this holy simplicity. God forbids it. What offends simplicity, moreover, is a thing like lying, which is in opposition to him; it has something base, vile, cowardly, fearful about it, contrary to his truth and his dignity.

Whatever the difficulties, do what you ought, come what may; let us be prudent but perfectly simple and entrust all to God. It is he who has charge of us; once we do our duty we have nothing further to do with what may come, but we should believe firmly that what happens will be for the greatest glory of God, and at the same time, since God wills that this be inseparable from it, for our greatest good.

Psalm 14: 4 - end

"Who will dwell in your tabernacles? He who does no harm to his neighbor, who does not welcome calumny nor slander against his neighbor; who pays no attention to the wicked one nor has any fear of him, and gives him no consideration, but on the contrary glorifies those who fear God; one who does not renege the vows he had made; who does not lend his money at usury, who does not accept bribes to oppress the innocent."

Thank you, my God, for making known to me a certain number of especially important points concerning which you want me to be above reproach. How good you are, my God, to indicate to me the means of pleasing you. What can you do for me that is sweeter than to say to me, "My child, if you want to please me, if you want to be united to me forever and possess me for all eternity, if you want to enjoy me always, always, in a love and happiness without end, here is what you must do..." How good you are, how sweet are your words. "They are like honey in my throat."

Let us examine ourselves on these different points; let us see whether we are faithful; let us correct ourselves if we are not:

Not to do harm to one's neighbor, neither in thought nor in words nor in action. Alas, in thought I do so very often, and in words too often also. My God, help me so that I may correct myself on this point. I must watch over myself, to get rid of uncharitable thoughts as soon as

they present themselves by replacing them, calling to mind my own unworthiness and above all, of the presence of God and by adoring him. One must talk less, speak as little as possible, and keep watch over the very few indispensable words.

Not to welcome slander about one's neighbor, to reject it directly, coming to the neighbor's defense or advising against slander, or indirectly by changing the subject or showing disapproval by a cold silence.

Not to pay any attention to the wicked; having pity on them, doing some good to their souls, to their bodies when one can because, in spite of everything, these are children dear to God. But do not honor them for they are enemies of our beloved; nor fear them, because we must fear only our master; nor esteem them for, on the contrary, they are to be pitied. Witness to them a certain charity because they are children of God, but at the same time be cool because they show themselves his enemies; to guide myself as to what is best for their souls and the souls of others, but not to have a patronizing attitude toward them for their vices; and never to betray God by favoring or respecting their vices.

To glorify those who fear God, those who serve God by their profession -- clerics, religious, etc. or by their virtues, however small and humble they may be in the eyes of the world; to honor them in thought, in words, and in actions, for the sake of God because they doubly belong to him, because they are the faithful children of our Father, our beloved brothers, the consolation of our Father.

Not to elude our vows, neither those made to God nor those made to men.

Not to loan money at usury.

Not to accept bribes against the innocent one to oppress him; in the category of bribes one must include flattery.

Psalm 15: 1 - 6

My God, how good you are! How good you are to let me come thus to your feet to hear your word, to converse *tete-a-tete* with you, during the silence and the shadow of the night. Everything is at rest, and you allow me to watch at your feet, to tell you that I love you, that I adore you, that I would like to love you a thousand times more.

My God, my love is nothing. Increase it. Make me begin to love you! Give me a heart of flesh in place of my heart of stone. Make me love you! Make me now profit from these blessed hours, from these hours of grace. Ah! my God, all hours are hours of grace; at every hour of the day and of the night you are with me; my bliss is always complete. I have only to enjoy it, but it pleases you that I should enjoy it more in these more recollected hours, and that among the totally blessed hours, these of nocturnal meditation should have a sweetness stronger still.

But, my God, make me profit from it. I prayed to you very poorly today during the day; I

fell asleep in church; I had a thousand distractions there; while working, I was little aware of your presence. You were there and I did not think of you. This morning, from the first hours, I was unfaithful in not rising quickly enough; you gave me the grace of waking me to let me hear the Angelus -- I did not get up at once; pardon, pardon, pardon! Pardon all these infidelities and so many others! Make me faithful this evening at least, my God, that I may stay lovingly at your feet -- that I may I love you, love you, love you -- and that I may finish a day badly begun in the manner most consoling to your heart.

What are you telling me this evening, my God? Oh! sweet words, sweet among all others. This Psalm 15 where these words are found: "The Lord has made known in an admirable way (illegible word) his desires regarding the faithful who are on earth. Their weaknesses have been numerous, but then they ran in the way of perfection." And these: "The Lord is my inheritance; it is you, Lord, who are my inheritance; destiny gave me a blessed share; oh! how blessed is my lot to me!"

What sweet words, my God, are these last, and how well they express my happiness! Inheritance, share, lot of all religious souls, of all those who are consecrated to you, how happy you make them!, how for them you make earth the beginning of heaven! How truly alive are those who live in you, and by you, at the same time as they live for you. What happiness is ours. Thank you, thank you, thank you without measure. My God, you are my inheritance. How blessed is my lot.

Let us take note of this Psalm 15. Let us repeat it often, for it expresses so well the delights of the religious life, the infinite joy it is to belong entirely to God. Let us give an important part in our prayers to thanksgiving. It seems that our prayers should be divided into four parts: adoration, thanksgiving, acts of contrition, and petitions. The first thing to do as we put ourselves at God's feet is to adore him; acts of adoration, of love, of praise. The second is to thank him, since his kindnesses outnumber our offenses and are in the past; we do not continually offend him, and from our birth. The third is to ask pardon, pardon for the past and the present, for ourselves and for others. Alas! How much there is to ask pardon for! Then we must ask all the necessary graces for ourselves, for those close to us, those for whom we are responsible, the Church, all mankind. Let us heartily thank him, thank him a great deal, we who receive so very much: Baptism, First Communion, conversion, the religious life, Nazareth, my present life, such graces! And while thanking him I can recall other words of this Psalm: "The Lord has made known his wishes concerning his faithful ones in a marvelous way; they have greatly sinned, but afterward they have run on the road of righteousness."

How deliciously true the first words are for me: how much I come in contact with the truth, I who have been pushed here by you, led here by you with my eyes closed, as it were. Only grant, my God, that the last (words) be true also and that after having sinner so much I may run

on the road of righteousness.

Psalm 15: 7 - end

"I will bless the Lord who has given me understanding. Even in the night he has taught me by the motions of my heart. I see God constantly in my presence; he is at my side so that I may not be disturbed. Because of this my heart is joyous and my tongue, because of joy, is not restrained. Even my flesh rests in the hope of resurrection. You will not leave my soul to hell, and you will not permit your holy one to undergo corruption. You have made known to me the path to life; you will fill me with joy in seeing your face; you will make me taste endless happiness."

I will bless you, Lord, you who have given me understanding. Oh yes, my God, how many blessings I owe to you, you who by your pure goodness have given me the awareness of the emptiness of the world, of the truth of your religion, of the only true way which is to love you with all of one's heart, and not to live for anything but you; of the one thing necessary which is to listen to your word and look at you; the knowledge of life, which consists in living you alone; the knowledge of our end, which is to glorify you as much as possible in this world and in the next; the knowledge of our happiness, which is to love you with all our strength for your own sake alone.

Oh! my God, how I must bless you for this understanding which comes only from you, which I have so long been without, and which one day you gave me without my having done anything for it, by pure generosity, by the pure goodness of your heart... And what an infinite gift, this understanding. How good you are and how happy am I!

And how you teach me, even in the middle of the night by the secret movements of my heart; in the middle of the night of this life which is nothing but darkness; in the night of the world, which is so dark, where we are so blinded by a thousand prejudices, vanities, false ideas, ignorances, but where you speak in secret to our heart and enlighten us by your secret inspirations, by the understanding you give us of your word. As another Psalm says, "...and the night itself will glow, even in the darkness."

It is thus that your grace illuminates the darkness of my soul, the darkness of the night of sin by repentance, remorse, the disgust with which you deign to inspire me; you give me the understanding of its ugliness in the middle of the darkness into which it has plunged me. In the middle of the natural night you give me understanding, whether during the involuntary sleeplessness which you send me, during which you compel me to pray to you, to bless you, to implore you, to unite myself to you in spite of myself, be it above all by these sweet vigils during

which you permit me to remain at your feet.

O my creator, mine, lowly creature to whom you say "Stay here close to me. Here we are, tete-a-tete. Stay and tell me that you love me; it pleases me to hear your voice; tell me that you love me and repeat it to me. I also love you and I do not tire of being with you. Open your heart to me; let your soul flow into my breast. Love me, my child; love me more. Ask to love me. Look at me; I love you and it pleases me that you look at me, and it pleases me that you rejoice in me. I love you, and I love you to the point of giving all of my blood for you; I love you and I love you to the point of giving you my entire body each morning. I give myself to you Body and Soul every day. I unite my flesh to your flesh.

"See whether I love you: I prove it and I tell you so. When one loves, one likes to be paid back. Love me, my child, tell me that you love me and prove it to me. Ask to love me, ask to tell me so, ask to prove it to me, ask to please me always, to console my heart always. My heart has suffered or rejoiced every moment of your life. My child, what has your past been? How much it has made my heart suffer! Ask to console it now. Lean upon it and beg to console me always.

"Are you there? Have I given you enough delights? Are these evenings sweet enough? Who is in this room? There are you and there am I; we are alone; the door is closed. It is night. I speak to your heart; I teach you by the secret workings of your heart. How truly the Psalm speaks, and how sweet this is. You will always remember, my child, the sweet evenings that I made happen here. How I caress you! How I sustain you! How I let you hear sweet words in secret. Are you happy and is your night illuminated with a sweet enough light? Rejoice in my heart; rejoice in these blessed moments; take from them strength to love me better, to serve me better, and recollect yourself with gratitude. May your faith grow in feeling me so near, feeling that it is so easy for me to teach you at night in these secret workings of your heart, in feeling that my hand is so gentle, in feeling that I flood you with so many graces." My God, how good you are, how good you are to teach me with so many delights at night by the secret "movements of my heart".

The rest of the Psalm is heard wonderfully well by two senses: it can be heard by the faithful soul, and thus understood it says things marvelously sweet: the Presence of God, his continual company, his help at every instant of the present moment, the hope of the Resurrection and of a future happiness without end. In this sense the Saint is one completely faithful; and in effect one completely faithful is a holy saint through Baptism, the sacraments, the the grace of Jesus, by the Eucharist above all since the Body of God is within his body. In the other sense, the Psalm is sweeter still since it is not of our happinesses that it speaks but those of our beloved. St. Peter and St. Paul have explained it in this sense. It is therefore a truly prophetic Psalm, truly Messianic. It predicts with admirable clarity the incorruptibility of the Body of Our Lord, his Resurrection, his glory at the right hand of his Father.

This Psalm is one of those we must repeat the most often, must especially love for two reasons: because of certain verses where he wonderfully pictures the favors which God does the soul of the religious in calling him and in giving him understanding; and because of messianic prophecies which, wherever we find them, must be infinitely dear to us since they speak to us of our beloved.

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Psalm 16: 1-10

This Psalm is made for asking you for help, my God, for help against temptations. How good you are to give us so many Psalms having the same purpose foreseeing how much we would need to call to you for help, and recommending, even by the number of Psalms written in that sense, that we call on you ceaselessly in the hour of temptation; not to remain mute when we are tempted, but as soon as the enemy appears to cry out to you. But thank you for making us appeal to you in terms so consoling, in terms of such sweet, child-like trust. How tactfully, charmingly this trust is brought out in this Psalm! "I cry out because you hear me, Lord. Keep me as the apple of your eye. Protect me in the shadow of your wings."

Two verses above all the rest are remarkable and instructive in the first half of this Psalm: "In order that my mouth not speak according to the works of men, because of your word, Lord, I have followed the difficult ways (so as) not to follow the ways of the flesh, the paths, the sentiments of the world, but to conform myself to your words, I have embraced mortification -- mortification, the cross. It is necessary to carry the cross for two reasons: to obey the words of God, and to keep from falling into the traps of lust, into that lust where the perverse world is drowned.

The second teaching is still more remarkable; it follows upon the first: How will we follow the hard ways? How are we to embrace mortification? How will we obey you and save ourselves from the concupiscence of the world? By imitating you, my God; in following you step by step, Lord Jesus; by following your example step by step; in living your kind of life -- interior and exterior; in doing, insofar as we can, all that you did. Interiorly you loved God and mankind; you were humble, courageous, truthful; you prayed ceaselessly; you always acted for the sake of God alone. Exteriorly, you were chaste, obedient, poor, abject, working with your hands, penitent, living the hidden life.

We will try to follow all these examples, my Lord, as well as all your other examples, and all your teachings. We will try to imitate you in the most perfect way, to live your life as the apostles lived it, to walk hand in hand with you as your little brother, to put our feet into your footprints, as this Psalm says so well. This is a verse we must repeat very often: "Let me place my

feet perfectly in your footprints, so that I may walk securely."

Psalm 16: 11-end

My God, how good you are to furnish us with so many prayers to call you to our aid in temptation. This great number of Psalms all having the same sense, is an eloquent and powerful way of telling us "Pray, pray in temptation; pray so as not to succumb to temptation. How truly you are the God of the Gospel, the God who will one day say to us "Pray not to enter into temptation, for the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."; "Watch and pray..."; "Say 'Let us not succumb to temptation'" "Pray always and do not stop."; "I say to all of you, 'Watch'". "Ask in prayer."; "Ask and you shall receive."

It is as if we were told also that we can do nothing without you, that you are our only refuge, our only support; that we have but one thing to do in temptation, in trial, in trouble: that is to call on you for help. And actually, as the Holy Spirit says it by the mouth of St. John, "All good things that we receive come to us from heaven." Thank you, my God, for repeating to us so often such useful teachings and for making prayer so easy for us by giving us infinitely perfect set patterns coming from your very mouth!

The last verse is very sweet, very instructive; it raises very high: "I shall be satisfied when your glory appears." Yes, I shall be satisfied, I shall be happy when in heaven I shall see your glory. If I love you, my God, your happiness is my happiness; to see you happy is all the happiness of heaven; to know you are happy is all the happiness of earth. The only fulfillment which we can have here below, awaiting the great fulfillment of heaven, is to tell ourselves "God is happy, I love him, therefore I have all that I need; I am happy." As all our happiness in heaven will be to see God and to say "God is happy, I love him, I see his glory. I see him as he is. I am very happy."

Psalm 17: 1-20

This is a Psalm of thanksgiving. How good you are, my God, to teach us to say thank you, we who must say it so much!

"I love you, Lord, who are my strength! Lord, you are my support, my refuge and my liberator. The Lord is my help and I will hope in him. He is my protector, my salvation, my Savior. I will invoke the Lord and I will praise him, and he will save me from my enemies. The pains of death have surrounded me, the torrents of iniquity have swept down on my soul and have disturbed it. The pains of hell have surrounded me; death has held me in its nets. In my

tribulation I invoked the Lord. He heard me from his holy temple; my cry ascended to him and he heard it."

"The earth quaked. It was agitated. The foundations of the mountains were shaken; they trembled because you became angry; your anger made clouds of smoke pour out, and your glances made whirlwinds of fire; they ignited coals. You have lowered the heavens and come down. A cloud was under your feet. You ascended upon the cherubim and you flew. You flew on the wings of the wind. You gathered the darkness around you and you surrounded yourself with it as a tent; you soared amid the dark clouds of aerial waters. The radiance of your presence has melted the clouds away, and from them hail and coals of fire go forth. And God has thundered from the heights of heaven, and the Most High let his voice be heard from the midst of the hail and the fiery coals. You have sent forth your flashes and you have scattered them; you have hurled your thunderbolts and you have annihilated them. Springs of water appeared from their depths, the foundations of the earth have been brought to light. All that was done at your very threat, Lord, at the breath of your anger. "

"He has reached down from the heights of heaven and brought me back, and he drew me from the deep waters. He snatched me from my powerful enemies and from those who hated me. They were stronger than I; they had attacked me on a day of affliction. But God made himself my protector; he led me away from peril. He saved me because he loved me." This first part of the Psalm can be divided into four groups of verses. In the first we praise God our Savior; in the second we tell of our danger and his help; in the third we praise and we describe his power, admiring him in the storms he creates in order to throw "...fortunate and lively alarms " into the heart of the wicked; in the fourth we repeat what we said in the second, our dangers and his help.

Let us say this Psalm when he delivers us from temptation, a peril, a difficulty. Let us say it, making a prayer of its verses. And let us say it with so much more love, so much more respect that the greatest part can apply to our Lord and his Passion. Even his persecutors applied the twentieth verse to him: "Let him save him because he loves him." they were saying at the foot of the cross. And actually Jesus could say of God his Father that he was his strength and his support, that he was drawing him from the deep waters and from an abyss of evils, that he was shaking the earth, was gathering the darkness, the clouds, and making the storm rage while he was on the cross; that he was sheltering him, was drawing him from the hands of his enemies, was leading him out of peril, was saving him because he loved him.

Then let us have a special devotion for this Psalm; let us say it with great love, since it applies not only to us but also to you, my beloved savior; and that in reality, these twenty verses really can be understood as messianic and prophetic.

Psalm 17: 21-end

"God will reward me according to my justice; he will reward me according to the cleanness of my hands. For I have kept the ways of the Lord. I have not committed impiety, I have not departed from my God. I have kept his judgments before my eyes; I have not set aside the memory of his justice. I have been spotless before him; I have kept myself from all injustice.

"God will reward me according to my justice; he will reward me according to the cleanness of my hands. Lord, you will be good to the good; you will do no harm to him who has done no harm; you will be perfect with the perfect; and you will be severe with the severe. It is you, Lord, who save the lowly, and you humble the haughty. You it is who will draw me out of the trial. My God will make me overcome all obstacles. The way of my God is pure; his words are true and faithful; he protects all those who hope in him.

"What God is there beside my God? Who is God beside the Lord? The Lord who has girded me with strength, who has rendered my way spotless, who gave me the feet of the deer and made me rise so high; who taught... (unfinished) "I will pursue my enemies and conquer them, and I shall not stop until they are annihilated; I will break them; they will not be able to resist; they will fall beneath my feet; I will chase them like dust before the face of the wind; I will crush them like the dust of the road. You will draw me out of the disagreements of the people; you will set me up as the leader of nations. A people I have not known will serve me; they will obey me as soon as they hear my voice. My children have become strangers to me. They have been unfaithful to me. My sons have made themselves strangers to me; they have become callous; they have withdrawn from the road they were supposed to follow. "Long live the Lord! Blessed be my God! Be exalted, God, my Savior; God who avenges me and who subjects the peoples to me! My liberator from my fierce enemies; you who raise me very high above those who have revolted against me; and who snatch me from the hands of the evil one. I will proclaim your name among all the nations, Lord. I will sing a Psalm in your name, you who save the king and glorify him; you who are merciful to your anointed, David, and to his posterity forever."

Thank you, my God, for these verses by which we can so well thank your goodness in having so often saved us from the devil, and in which we can above all see a prayer of Jesus to his Father, a prophecy concerning our beloved Savior. The Gospel applies to Our Lord the twentieth verse; St. Paul applies to him the fiftieth one. It, then, certainly is a messianic Psalm, a Psalm which speaks to us of Jesus, our beloved; consequently it must be (a Psalm) infinitely dear to us, of which we must particularly love to read, to meditate; it speaks to us of our loves. We follow there the footprints of our spouse.

One can divide this second part (of the Psalm) into several sections: 1) Jesus says that God will reward him according to his justice, and he describes his justice (as) "spotless"; 2) Jesus enunciates this general principle that God will be good to the good, severe to the severe, rendering to each according to his works; 3) Jesus says to his Father, prefiguring the Magnificat, "You save the lowly and humble the proud". Then he makes an admirable commendation of God -- it is all praise; 4) Jesus enumerates the graces that God has given him; 5) he prophesies his total victory over his enemies; 6) he prophesies the conversion of the Gentiles and the infidelity and rejection by the Jews. 7) Finally Jesus ends with the new and wonderful praises of God in which he prophesies again the conversion of all nations. This Psalm is therefore messianic, prophetic. It speaks to us of our beloved and predicts to us several characteristics of his reign.

Psalm 18: 1-7

"The heavens tell of the glory of God; the firmament announces the work of his hands. Day speaks of his glory to day; night retells it to night. There are no words nor discourses there whose sound is not heard. This resounds throughout all the earth. This voice speaks to the ends of the earth. he has placed the sun as his tent; and the sun resembles the groom coming forth from the bridal chamber, to rush like a giant to run his course. It comes out from the height of heaven and runs to the other end; nothing can escape its heat."

Thank you, my God, for this marvelous description of your works, of your works which tell of your glory. Thank you for this so useful teaching that you give us by it to seek you always beyond your creatures, and as soon as one of them strikes our senses to use it in order to climb up closer to you. This the lesson of this Psalm, a beautiful and important lesson: not to stop at creatures but always raise ourselves from them to the Creator, to love them, for they "are good" since they are the work of God, for they all contain a reflection of his beauty, something of him; for they are a gift of his goodness which his heart has given us; but not to love them for themselves -- to love them for him; and not stopping there, to ascend immediately from them to him, and thus to do what they themselves do: voluntarily and with all our heart and with all our soul to do what every creature does, voluntarily or involuntarily, since that is its purpose and it achieves it always, one way or another; to do what this Psalm tells us, to do what the heavens do, to "tell of the glory of God."

Let us take care not to stop at creatures. They are unworthy of us. They cannot fill our heart. They leave it always thirsty, always empty. The more one enjoys (a creature) the more one hungers, the less one finds satisfaction, one's fulfillment, one peace, for we made for another end. The finite cannot fill the soul made for the infinite. Let us then never stop at creatures, but use them as a stepping stone to ascend from them to God, supreme beauty, perfect beauty, creative beauty.

Psalm 18: 8-end

In this second part of the Psalm one rises from creatures to the Creator, from the beauties of nature to the divine law; one ascends the rungs of the ladder of the levels of being, one goes from the material to the immaterial. What a wonderful ladder! How thrilling it is to climb it! To go from creatures without reason, already so beautiful and harmonious, to rational creatures, to the human soul before which all other visible beauties disappear as if they were nothing; and from this human soul, so beautiful though imperfect, to the fullness of perfections which are there only in a seminal form.

It is to God himself that we climb in this Psalm, for it is at his word, at his law, at his will, at the words which he has inspired in the authors of the holy books, created words, creatures and not God himself, but certain of his words express eternal truths which are part of the very essence of God, his eternal thoughts... Thank you, my God, for giving us this lesson and for teaching us in this Psalm how to climb this divine ladder of the levels of beings.

"The law of God is faultless, perfect, converting souls; the testimony of God is faithful trustworthy, giving wisdom to little ones."

He gives it to the humble; he gives it also to the ignorant for whom it suffices to know and to practice this divine word to be infinitely wise, a thousand times wiser than the learned of the world. He gives it to children for whom it suffices to practice it with innocence, simplicity, love in order to also be as wise as wise old men.

"The commandments of God are just; they rejoice hearts. The precepts of God are luminous; they enlighten souls."

Yes, my God, your yoke is sweet and light and the only joy of man in this world is to bear it. The yoke fills one with joy, and it alone can do this; for to do your will is the only thing which can give to the soul a pure and true joy in this exile. It illumines our souls. It is only in your words that we find the light -- your will, your words which make us know it, is the light of our life, the light which is absolutely indispensable to us. (We are obliged also to see clearly and to obey a director interpreting your will, and to meditate on your sacred books, so as to fill ourselves with your thoughts, with your spirit.)

"The fear of God is holy; it will endure eternally. His words are true; they justify themselves."

Yes, my God, the fear of you is holy; it will endure forever for it is indissolubly connected to your love. No one fears more than the one who loves, and the more one loves the more one fears. One fears not punishment, but to cause pain, to displease; one fears not pleasing enough,

not proving one's love enough, not doing enough for the one whom one loves. One wants so much to do all that one ought for the one whom one loves. One so much dreads the least disapproval from him! The being one fears the most in the world is the one whom one loves; with one look he can cause us so much suffering!

"My God, your law is a great deal more desirable than gold, more than the precious stone; it is sweeter than honey, than the honeycomb."

Oh yes, my God, for the one who loves you it is a thousand times more desirable to know your will than to have all riches! To know your will -- how sweet that is to us!

"Your servant will fulfill it ; this fulfillment carries in itself its rich reward."

For by it one avoids sin, one avoids what the soul who loves you most dreads -- to offend you, to displease you.

"Who will be able to understand the ugliness of sin? Cleanse me, my God, from all my sins; from those I know and from those I do not and which my eyes do not see."

"Protect me from those who are no strangers to you -- the worldly. If the things of the world do not dominate me, if they do not take hold of my spirit, I am without stain and I am saved from a great evil. Then my words will be able to please you and the meditation of my heart will be always in your presence."

Yes, one of my great dangers is the spirit of the world. Let the worldly things not give their spirit to me, and I will avoid a great danger. The world is the concupiscence of the flesh, that of the eyes and of pride, says St. John; sensuality, curiosity, pride. The world is human wisdom, opposed to the Gospel, to divine wisdom which it treats as folly. The world is selfishness, avarice, unbelief. It seeks to invade us on every side. It crawls in over walls and through closed doors. The devil constantly breathes to us this worldly spirit. People communicate it to us in most of the relationships we have with them. Alas, in our own depths we find it. We are impregnated with it and every motion raises to the surface of our soul this mud lying in its depths.

Let us with all our strength keep ourselves from it, and to that purpose let us use

1) Prayer : Let us beg God to render us foolish -- foolish with the Gospel, foolish with divine wisdom -- folly in the eyes of men.

2) Let us fill ourselves with reading and meditation on the Holy Gospel: let us fill ourselves with it, know it so that its maxims come unceasingly to our lips and fill our spirits and our hearts.

3) Holy poverty: the opposite of the spirit of the world. The more we will cultivate her, the more we will distance ourselves from the world, and the more the world -- which has a horror of her -- will distance itself from us.

4) Abjection: one can say of it everything which we have just said of poverty.

- 5) Solitude: The less we see people, the less they can give us their spirit.
- 6) Penance
- 7) Pious reading: books written by saints and consequently full of the spirit of God, of a spirit opposed to that of the world; and the story of the saints, that is, the stories of souls who were enemies of the world, who spent their lives in opposition to the maxims of the world, whose examples are those of a mortal combat against the world.
- 8) To distance ourselves from the way of lifestyle of worldly people in their way of doing, speaking, thinking. In so doing, one plainly declares that one is not of the world; one declares oneself in a state of war with it. This means is very powerful, but what perseverance, what faith is needed to put it into regular practice!
- 9) Above all else, the love of God. He it is who chases from our souls all phantoms, all those follies of worldly ideas; it is he who enlightens us, gives us intelligence, makes us realize the truth, gives us a loathing of vanities, sensualities, curiosities, of terrestrial goods; it is he who makes us see the whole world, and what the world values, to be as mud; and makes us value but one thing: our Savior Jesus, his examples and his words, which we love as passionately as we profoundly despise all the rest.

In lumine tuo videbimus lumen. "It is in the light of your love that we will see the light."
O Jesus, "my Lord, my support and my Redeemer!"

Psalm 19: 1-5

My God, how good you are to give us this beautiful Psalm to pray that the intentions of your heart may be accomplished, for since it is that accomplishment which we desire above all, it is natural that we should think primarily to pray for that. It is what comes to your mind first and last.

This prayer contains all the others. It is necessary and it satisfies our heart. Your intentions...that is all we need. However, this Psalm also can be used to pray for one's neighbor, for your children, and to intercede for him and ask for all that is good for him, for your sake. Then let us say it often; it is so beautiful, so clear, so simple! It expresses so well what we need to desire, whether we pray in a general way for your intentions, my Lord Jesus, or whether we pray for some one of our brothers.

"May the Lord protect you in the day of tribulation; may the God of Jacob protect you! May he come from the depths of his sanctuary to your assistance; from the heights of Sion may he protect you! My he remember all your sacrifice; may your holocaust be precious to him! May he give to your according to the desires of your heart! May he fulfill all your wishes!"

Yes, my God, fulfill all the good desires of all your children, all their desires which consistent with yours. But above all, carry out the desires of the heart of our Lord Jesus! Remember his sacrifice! Remember the holocaust that he offered to you, and its infinite price!

Psalm 19: 6-end

My Lord Jesus, you who are here present, you who are here within me, around me, next to me; I will allow myself to complain to you today. Blessed Jeanne de Valois used to say to the Annunciation Sisters that when you did not listen to them they were to complain about it softly to you, as wives to their husbands. I allow my miserable, unworthy self to pray thus in great humility, and awareness of my faults, and recognizing that all that happens to me is good, and that there is only one bad thing in me, that is, myself. Yet I will say to you, my God: I beg you, support me a little more in the evening; for at least four evenings I have fallen asleep while writing these little meditations, and that I spend a very long time in deep slumber..

My God, how painful this is! To waste such a very precious time! The time wherein you allow me to stay so completely at your feet, in such a sweet tete-a-tete! You know, my God, how much I love these evening hours which I spend so alone with you. You know that they are the treasure of my day, that I await them with impatience and that I see them arrive with delight. And then when the time is come, you permit me to be so miserable that I do not benefit from them, that I waste them so unworthily! I beg you, my God, support me; me; make me spend my evenings well.

My God, I know that you do for me a thousand times more than I deserve. You call me, you invite me to stay at your feet during these hours, in this tete-a-tete, in the midst of this deep calm. It is the delight of delights, the grace of graces. It is the infinite, and nevertheless, my God, my sorrow is so great that it is not yet enough for me. You still must give me more graces to make me profit from these hours so blessed, so dear. You must sustain me during this most fortunate time so that I may delight in it with the love, fervor, ardor which you want from me. Do me this favor, my God, I beg you. Do not allow me to sleep, neither in body nor soul. **That your name may be sanctified** Glorify yourself in me by inflaming me, consuming me at your feet.

May your kingdom come into me; live in me; prolong your life in me. I have given you my body and my soul; live in them, reign in them. May your will be done in me as in your angels! O my God, how they love you! How fervent they are! How attentive and lovingly they conduct themselves at your feet. How they look at you! Make me to do your will as they do it. Your will is that I love you and that I look at you, and that my heart watch and pray, burning for you!

Give me your daily bread. May this bread be to do your will, your will which is that I love you, that I contemplate you. Let it also be your grace, bread of which I have so much need

always, whose need I feel so profoundly in this great misery on my part each evening at these hours, and which on your part are filled with so many benefits! And while awaiting the time of receiving your Body in the Holy Eucharist, give me the bread of your presence. While waiting to receive you corporally, let me be conscious of you spiritually. O my God, you are there, you are with me, you are in me; make these evening hours a long spiritual communion. Teach me to give myself to you in them, to receive you into myself, to offer you the poor house of my soul.

O my spouse, since truly you want to give yourself to me at all times, since truly you want me to love you with the greatest love, inspire me, give me that love. It can come only from you I am poor and begging. I stretch out my hand to you, my spouse. Give me love so that I may be able to give it back to you.

You have said, "Whoever asks, receives." I will give good sense. I will not refuse wisdom.. I ask for this good sense -- this wisdom. I am begging: give me the one thing necessary: love. Give me as you have told me to give -- in full measure, running over. Give me love, my spouse!

Having said that to you, I admit my unworthiness; I avow that if you leave me so miserable, so sluggish at your feet during these blessed evening hours, it is my fault, my fault, my most grievous fault. Thus you abandon me through goodness, through pure goodness; you are so good. You do it to warn me. You tell me "Do not abandon me by day, and I will not abandon you by night. Think of me by day, and I will make you think of me by night. If you faithfully were to keep my presence in mind by day, you would not be so lukewarm at night. By day also I am tete-a-tete with you. All that you do from your rising you must do for me and with me. I am constantly with you, looking at you, listening to you. Why do you not pay more attention to me? Why are you so lukewarm, so mute with me? Why do you let your soul wander in so many foolish thoughts? It is as if you barely glance at me now and then.

And your prayers -- what are they? Are you saying them the best you can? If you treat me so poorly, if you are so little loving during the day, why should I not follow at night this sad path which you yourself have chosen? Make an effort to be fervent by day; I will help you. And I will not permit you to lack strength at night after a day of fidelity; grace is never wanting to you.. It is you who forsake grace. And then you have known for a long time that I delight in rewarding fasting, the great sobriety of the evening meal, by a greater facility of watching at my feet, and yet you eat a great deal. Be more mortified, give less to your body and in exchange for that little sacrifice made out of love for me, I will give more to your soul.

If you want to watch in the evening, be faithful in three things: keep in mind faithfully, lovingly my presence during the day, during that long tete-a-tete during which I do not cease to look at you, say your prayers well, do your spiritual exercises well, and eat very little in the evening. And then pray to me and commend yourself to your guardian angel.

Thank you, my God; thank you for making me, by my own faults, by my lukewarmness, see my miseries, my unworthiness. I resolve to be more faithful, to be as faithful as I shall be able, to obey you the best I can on these three points. Help me, Lord, you who know my weakness. Help me so that I may be faithful in the accomplishment of these duties so clear, so evident, so simple; and which I have nonetheless have fulfilled so poorly and so unworthily up to now. Thank you, pardon me, help me, O God of my heart, my creator, my master, my judge, my beloved, my spouse, you whom I adore with all my soul!

"We will rejoice in your salvation; we will glory in the name of our God. May the Lord fulfill all your desires. I know now that God has saved his Christ; he heard him from the height of heaven. With his hand he saves him. Those here have put their hope in their chariots; those there put it in their horses. We ourselves invoke the name of our God. They have fallen; we ourselves have arisen and have stood upright. Lord, save the king, and hear us in the day when we call on you." How good you are, my God, to put this Psalm of joy in our mouths. Thank you, my God, for inviting us to joy, and for showing us the motives we have for surrendering ourselves to it.

This second part of the Psalm can also be applied to Jesus. Let us recite it while thinking of him, while asking that all his desires be fulfilled. There is a verse which we must know by heart and repeat all the time. It is this one: "Some have put their hope in their chariots; some in their horses; we ourselves call upon the name of our God." We do not look for our support in anything human, but in God alone.

Psalm 20: 1-7

My beloved, why are my meditations on the Psalms so few in number? Why do I so rarely open this notebook? You know it is because so often I fall asleep while speaking to you in the evening, so that not enough time is left to open the Psalter. My divine master, how unworthy on my part to fall asleep while chatting with you, to spend in this death of sleep part of the blessed time that you permit me to spend at your feet. My beloved, help me! I know that if you do not assist me more, if you allow me to succumb so often, it is that I am unworthy of your assistance, it is that my infidelities call for this abandonment which is a warning, a punishment which makes me open my eyes.

Pardon me, my God; pardon all my daily infidelities! Pardon for being so lazy on rising in the morning; pardon for praying so badly to you; pardon for being so little aware of your presence all day long; pardon for not making visits to you in the Blessed Sacrament frequently enough; pardon for the excessive attention that I give to physical works; pardon for dedicating

too much time to work, not enough to prayer; pardon for being gluttonous, for overeating in the evening. Pardon me for behaving so badly, with so much indifference, whether in church or elsewhere, where I am always in your presence, my God! Pardon for thinking about what others will say of me, for having a desire for people's esteem. for esteeming myself, alas! Pardon all this pride. Pardon for loving the cross so little, for desiring it so little, for fleeing from it so much; pardon for having so little desire to suffer and to be despised for you! Pardon for all that and all the rest.

My God, it is so true that so many faults, so many infidelities call for a punishment. But I beg you, my God, that this punishment not be to sleep at your feet in the evening. Do not abandon me because of my faults, but help me so that I may emerge from them. However, not my will but yours. If this is the punishment you have chosen, I bless it, I kiss it, I accept it with all my heart. However, it remains true that you call me to keep vigil, that I must watch well; and consequently you call me to ask you to make me assiduous in my watching, since it is only with your help that I can do it. I beg you, then, protect the sweet time of the evening vigil. Let sleep not overtake me then; make my heart burn then, and let my spirit be attached to you. Let it be that while all is sleep I remain lovingly in *tete-a-tete* with you, bowed at your knees, listening to your word, telling you that I love you, and rejoicing in your presence. My beloved, I commend to you our night vigils, you who make them, who allow them for me, who call me there; support me in these so sweet *tete-a-tetes*.

How sweet are these night hours: you are there, my creator; you are in me, around me; you fill up my tiny cell; you envelop me. Everything outside keeps silence; everything sleeps; shadow envelops all beings and you allow me to keep vigil at your feet, that, alone in this death of nature, I may live for you, that I may be at my table for hours, talking to you. O my beloved, how good you are! Who am I to be chosen by you for this privileged destiny? How many times already have I been privileged? And behold now how privileged I continue to be by the infinite favor of this night prayer!

My beloved, when everything is asleep, how sweet it is to tell you that one loves you, that one adores you, that one wants not to live except for you alone. You alone, my beloved, not for my own sake but for yours. O my beloved, I want to make a request of you, the only one that I may make: that all your children console your heart as much as possible at every moment of their lives; that your sacred heart may be consoled, as much as possible. This request contains everything, my God; it includes all my desires. I ask this of you, my beloved, and with all my heart; I ask it of you for your own sake. Grant this to me and I can ask for nothing more, desire nothing more, for this contains all your good; and what do I desire, my God, other than your good?

And I thank you for for everything, my God, for all that you do and what you permit, for

everything, everything. Also for these naps, these evening slumbers at the hour when I should so much like to keep vigil. Willed or permitted, they do me good; they make me put my finger on my numberless infidelities. You use them to make me see my faults, stir up my repentance, urge me to vigilance. And thus out of this evil, you bring out your infinite goodness, a good of which my very great misery has a profound need. Thank you, my God, thank you for everything. How divinely good you are, my beloved. And how good of you to tolerate my calling you by this name of beloved -- I, your creature, and one so ungrateful, so faithless, so sinful a creature! Thank you for your infinite, incomprehensible divine goodness! Pardon! Help me!

Thank you for all your Holy Scriptures, my God. It is your word, and a word falling from the lips of the beloved; what worth does it not have! And this beloved is God; his words are perfect and their value infinite. But above all, thank you for those (words) that not only come from you but speak about you; above all, I want to say, especially those which, in the two Testaments, concern Jesus! Thank you therefore with all my heart for this Psalm which is messianic and which speaks so well of your glory, O beloved Jesus, my divine Master.

Let us often repeat this Psalm that St. Benedict wanted said first at the Sunday Matins as celebrating the resurrection of the Lord! And let us rejoice in the glories of our Master. His glory will be our blessedness in heaven. May it already be our consolation on earth; let us think of it with blessings. "We give you thanks, Lord, because of your great glory" and let us rejoice in it. You are happy, Lord; I love you; I want to forget myself, to love nothing but you. All my happiness is that you may be happy. You are happy; therefore I am happy. You are infinitely, eternally happy; I too, my God. My happiness is perfect.

"Lord, you have given him the desire of his heart. You have laden him with blessings and infinite sweetness. You have placed on his head a crown of precious stones. He lives now and will live forever. His glory is infinite in the abode of salvation. You have heaped upon him glory and fame. Here he is in your blessings for eternity. He will rejoice in a happiness without end in the sight of your face."

Psalm 20: 7-end

How good you are, my God! O my beloved spouse, how truly are you the spouse of all souls! You who have known how to be the joy, the perfect joy of all of them. "The friend of the bridegroom hears the voice of the groom, and thereby is his joy perfect," St. John used to say. This voice of the groom which you let St. John hear by your presence; you let it be heard from a distance by his forefathers; you let it resound in our ears across the centuries. You, beloved spouse, were the the joy and sanctity of the ancestors by expectation ; you are the joy and sanctity of the children by presence and remembrance. We hear you, we see you in the Holy Scriptures;

we touch you, we feel you, we possess you, we taste you in the Holy Eucharist. How happy we are; how good you are, our beloved spouse!

In how many ways you give yourself to us! You give yourself to us in this Psalm which speaks of nothing but you! Thank you for speaking to us about yourself this way in every line of the two Testaments. How sweet it is to hear the voice of the spouse and to hear him speak to us of himself. What thoughtfulness on his part to choose this subject! It is so much this which says the most to our heart. And what can someone who knows himself loved say to one who loves him that is sweeter than things concerning this loved being himself? To tell of his life, his thoughts, to state what he is, to speak intimately of himself, to let himself be known intimately in his depths, to give a host of details about himself -- this is what the groom can best say to prove his tenderness to the bride. My God, how good you are to speak of yourself to me in this Psalm!

Let us rejoice in the joy of Jesus. It is the last word of this Psalm; it is one of the occupations of our life; it is the great, the true consolation of our pilgrimage and it will be the eternal happiness of the heavenly homeland. "We will sing and we will repeat your glories..." We will do so without end in a perfect happiness in heaven above. Let us do so every day here below. Let us do it every day because it is one of the tokens of love we owe to the spouse. We must each day 1) adore him 2) thank him 3) ask pardon of him 4) ask him for what we need, we and what our neighbor needs.

"To thank him for his great glory..." is a part of thanksgiving. It is the first, the principal thing for which he must be thanked; the one which is closest to our heart, the one which most causes our joy, the greatest good in itself, the most lasting good. It is the perfect good of our spouse. It is our perfect good, our all. He is blessed; we love him. What do we lack? He is happy; it is he whom we love above all and not ourselves. His happiness is our supreme happiness if he is our supreme love.

To love is to desire the good of what is loved. If he is blessed, if we love him, our desires are fulfilled; what do we lack? Our beloved is blessed; we are happy in the same measure that we love him. If we loved him perfectly here below, we would be blessed down here. The more we will love him here below, the more will we be happy here below. And since we will love him perfectly in heaven, we will be perfectly happy in heaven. "It will be given to you in the same measure which you yourselves have used." The measure of love which we give is the measure of happiness which is given to us, by the very nature of things, since we share in the happiness of our beloved in the measure that we love him. His happiness is our own to the same degree that we love him. On the day we love him perfectly, his happiness renders us perfectly happy.

Let us then thank him for his happiness in which we love him. Let us not fear to prolong such acts of thanksgiving. Let them continue as long as we feel ourselves so inclined, as grace

will inspire us, which we will do with devotion. For one must not fear to do without end what angels and saints endlessly will do for all eternity.