

The Education of Conscience with St. Francis de Sales

It was most likely the advent of the Protestant Reformation that brought the issue of conscience—and more precisely, “freedom of conscience”—to the forefront. In a 1597 letter to Clement VIII, the Provost of Sales lamented the “tyranny” that the “state of Geneva” imposed “on the consciences of Catholics.” He asked the Holy See to intervene with the King of France to ensure that the Genevans would be granted “what they call freedom of conscience.” Opposed to military solutions for the Protestant crisis, he glimpsed in *libertas conscientiae* a possible way out of violent confrontation, provided reciprocity was respected. Claimed by Geneva for the Reformation and by Francis de Sales for Catholicism, freedom of conscience was about to become a pillar of modern thought.

The Dignity of the Human Person

The dignity of the individual lies in conscience, and conscience is first and foremost synonymous with sincerity, honesty, frankness, and conviction. The Provost of Sales acknowledged, for example, “to ease his conscience,” that the project of the Controversies had been somewhat imposed on him by others. When presenting his reasons in favour of Catholic doctrine and practice, he took care to specify that he did so “in conscience.” “Tell me in conscience,” he asked his opponents. A “good conscience” ensures one avoids certain acts that contradict oneself.

However, individual subjective conscience cannot always be taken as a guarantee of objective truth. One is not always obliged to believe what someone says in conscience. “Show me clearly,” the Provost said to the lords of Thonon, “that you are not lying at all, that you are not deceiving me when you say that in conscience you had this or that inspiration.” Conscience can fall victim to illusion, whether voluntarily or

involuntarily. "Hardened misers not only do not confess their greed but do not even think in conscience that they are greedy."

The formation of the conscience is an essential task because freedom of conscience carries the risk of "doing good and evil," but "choosing evil is not using, but rather, abusing our freedom." It is a difficult task because conscience sometimes appears as an adversary that "always fights against us and for us." It "steadily resists our bad inclinations," but does so "for our salvation." When one sins, "inner remorse moves against our conscience with a drawn sword," but only to "pierce it with holy fear."

A means to exercise responsible freedom is the practice of the "examination of conscience." Examining one's conscience is like following the example of doves that look at each other "with clear and pure eyes," "groom themselves carefully, and adorn themselves as best they can." Philothea is invited to perform this examination every evening before bed, asking oneself, "how one behaved at various times of the day. To make it easier, one should reflect on where, with whom, and in what occupations one was engaged."

Once a year, we must conduct a thorough examination of the "state of our soul" before God, our neighbour, and ourselves, not forgetting an "examination of our soul's affections." The examination—Francis de Sales tells the Visitandines—will lead you to "probe your conscience deeply."

How to lighten the conscience when burdened by error or fault? Some do so poorly, judging and accusing others "of vices they themselves succumb to," thinking this will "soften their conscience's remorse." This multiplies the risk of rash judgments. Conversely, "those who properly care for their conscience are not at all prone to rash judgments." The case of parents, educators, and public officials deserves special consideration, for "a good part of their conscience consists in carefully watching over the conscience of others."

Self-Respect

From the affirmation of each person's dignity and responsibility must arise self-respect. Socrates and all ancient pagan and Christian thought had already shown the way:

It is a saying of the philosophers, yet held valid by Christian doctors: "Know thyself"—that is, know the excellence of your soul so as not to debase or despise it.

Certain acts offend not only God but also human dignity and reason. Their consequences are deplorable:

The likeness and image of God we bear within us is stained and disfigured, the dignity of our spirit dishonoured, and we are made similar to irrational animals [...], enslaving ourselves to our passions and overturning the order of reason.

There are ecstasies that elevate us above our natural state and others that debase us. "O men, how long will you be so senseless," writes the author of *Theotimus*, "as to trample your natural dignity, voluntarily descending and plunging yourselves into the condition of beasts?"

Self-respect helps avoid two opposite dangers: pride and contempt for one's gifts. In a century where honour was highly exalted, Francis de Sales had to denounce crimes, particularly duelling, which made his "hair stand on end," and even more, the senseless pride behind it. "I am scandalised," he wrote to the wife of a duelling husband; "truly, I cannot fathom how one could have such unbridled courage even over trifles." Fighting a duel is like "becoming each other's executioner." Others, conversely, dare not acknowledge their gifts and thus sin against gratitude. Francis de Sales condemns "a certain false and foolish humility that prevents them from seeing the good in themselves." They are wrong, for "the goods God has placed in us must be acknowledged, valued, and sincerely honoured."

The first neighbour I must respect and love, the Bishop of Geneva seems to say, is myself. True self-love and due respect

demand that I strive for perfection and correct myself if needed, but gently, reasonably, and “following the path of compassion” rather than anger and fury.

There exists a self-love that is not only legitimate but beneficial and commanded, “Charity well-ordered begins with oneself,” says the proverb, reflecting Francis de Sales’ thought—provided one does not confuse self-love with self-centredness. Self-love is good, and Philothea is asked to examine how she loves herself:

Keep good order in loving yourself? For only disordered self-love can ruin us. Ordered love requires that we love the soul more than the body and seek virtue above all else.

Conversely, self-centredness is selfish, “narcissistic” love, fixated on itself, jealous of its beauty, and concerned only with self-interest. “Narcissus, say the profane, was a youth so scornful he would offer his love to none; finally, gazing at his reflection in a clear fountain, he was utterly captivated by his beauty.”

The “Respect Due to Persons”

If one respects oneself, one is better prepared to respect others. Being “the image and likeness of God” implies that “all human beings share the same dignity.” Francis de Sales, though living in a deeply unequal society marked by the ancient regime, promoted thought and practice marked by “respect due to persons.”

Start with children. St. Bernard’s mother—says the author of Philothea—loved her newborns “with respect as something sacred God had entrusted to her.” A grave rebuke from the Bishop of Geneva to pagans concerned their contempt for defenceless lives. Respect for a baby about to be born emerges in a letter written according to the Baroque rhetoric of the time to a pregnant woman. He encourages her by explaining to her that the child forming in her womb is not only “a living image of the Divine Majesty”, but also an image of its mother. He advises another woman:

Offer often to the eternal glory of your Creator the little creature whose formation He has wanted to take you as His cooperator.

Another aspect of respect for others concerns the theme of freedom. The discovery of new lands had as a disastrous consequence, the re-emergence of slavery, that recalled the practice of the ancient romans at the time of paganism. The sale of human beings degraded them to the level of animals.

One day, Marc Antony bought two youths from a merchant; back then, as still happens in some lands, children were sold—men procured and traded them like horses in our countries.

Respect for others is subtly threatened by gossip and slander. Francis de Sales insists heavily on “sins of the tongue.” A chapter in Philothea which deals explicitly with this subject, is titled Honesty in Words and Respect Due to Persons states that ruining someone’s reputation is “spiritual murder,” robbing them of “civil life.” When condemning vice, one should spare the person involved as much as possible.

Certain groups are easily scorned. Francis de Sales defends the dignity of common people, citing the Gospel. He comments that “St. Peter was rough, coarse, an old fisherman of low station; a trader of low condition. Saint John, on the contrary, was a gentleman, sweet, lovable, wise; saint Peter, instead, was ignorant.” Well, it was St Peter who was chosen to guide others and to be the “universal superior”.

He proclaims the dignity of the sick, saying that, “the souls who are on the cross are declared queens.” Denouncing “cruelty towards the poor” and exalting the “dignity of the poor”, he justifies and specifies the attitude to be taken towards them, explaining “how we must honour them and, therefore, visit them as representatives of our Lord.” No one is useless; no one is insignificant. “There is no object in the world that cannot be useful for something; but you must know how to find its use and place.”

The “one-different” Salesian”

The eternal human that has always tormented human society is reconciling individual dignity and freedom with that of the others. Francis de Sales offered an original solution by coining a term. In fact, assuming that the universe is made up of “all things created, visible and invisible” and that “their diversity is brought back into unity”, the Bishop of Geneva proposed to call it “one-diverse”, that is, “unique and diverse, unique with diversity and diverse with unity.”

For him, every being is unique. People are like Pliny’s pearls, “so unique in quality that no two are perfectly equal.” His two major works, *Introduction to the Devout Life* and *Treatise on the Love of God*—are addressed to individuals, Philothea and Theotimus. What variety and diversity among beings! “Without doubt, as we see that two men are never perfectly equal as to the gifts of nature, so they are never perfectly equal as to the supernatural gifts.” The variety also enchanted him from a purely aesthetic point of view, but he feared an indiscreet curiosity about its causes:

If someone asked why God made melons larger than strawberries, or lilies bigger than violets; why rosemary isn’t a rose or a carnation a marigold; why peacocks are prettier than bats, or figs sweet and lemons sour—we’d laugh and say: poor man, the world’s beauty requires variety, it is necessary that in things there are diverse and differentiated perfections and that the one is not the other. This is why some are small, others large; some harsh, others sweet; some more beautiful, others less. [...] All have their value, their grace, their splendour, and all, seen in the totality of their varieties, constitute a wonderful spectacle of beauty.

Diversity does not hinder unity; on the contrary, it makes it richer and more beautiful. Each flower has its characteristics that distinguish it from all the others. “It is not exactly of the roses to be white, it seems to me, because those vermilions are more beautiful and have a better scent, which

however is proper to the lily." Of course, Francis de Sales does not tolerate confusion and disorder, but he is equally an enemy of uniformity. The diversity of beings can lead to dispersion and rupture of communion, but if there is love, "bond of perfection", nothing is lost, on the contrary, diversity is exalted by the union.

In Francis de Sales there is certainly a real culture of the individual, but this is never a closure to the group, the community or society. He spontaneously sees each person marked by their "state of life," which marks the identity and belonging of each one. It will not be possible to establish an equal programme or project for all, simply because it will be applied and implemented in a different way "for the gentleman, the artisan, the servant, the prince, the widow, the maiden, the married." It must also be adapted "to the strengths and duties of each individual. The bishop of Geneva sees society divided into vital spaces characterized by social belonging and group solidarity, as when he deals with "the company of soldiers, the workshop of craftsmen, the court of princes, the family of married people."

Love personalizes and, therefore, individualizes. The affection that binds one person to another is unique, as demonstrated by Francis de Sales in his relationship with Chantal's wife, "Every affection has a peculiarity that differentiates it from the others. What I feel for you possesses a certain particularity that comforts me infinitely, and, to say everything, is very fruitful for me." The sun illuminates each and every one, "illuminating a corner of the earth, it does not illuminate it less than what it would do if it did not shine elsewhere, but only in that corner."

The human being is in a state of becoming

A Christian humanist, Francis de Sales ultimately believed in the human person's capacity for self-improvement. Erasmus had coined the phrase: *Homines non nascuntur sed finguntur* (Men are not born but made). While animals are predetermined beings driven by instinct, humans, in contrast, are in perpetual

evolution. Not only do they change, but they can also change themselves, for better or for worse.

What entirely preoccupied the author of Theotimus was perfecting himself and helping others to perfect themselves, not only in religious matters but in all things. From birth to the grave, man is in a state of apprenticeship. Let us imitate the crocodile, which "never stops growing as long as it lives." Indeed, "remaining in the same state for long is impossible. in this traffic, whoever does not advance falls behind; on this ladder, whoever does not climb, descends; in this battle, whoever does not conquer is conquered." He quotes St. Bernard, who said, "It is written especially for man that he will never be found in the same state: he must either advance or regress." Let us move forward:

Do you not know that you are on a journey and that the path is not made for sitting but for moving forward? He is so made for progress, that moving forward is called walking.

This also means that the human person is educable, capable of learning, correcting themselves, and improving themselves. And this holds true at all levels. Age sometimes has nothing to do with it. Look at these choirboys of the cathedral, who far surpass their bishop's abilities in this domain. "I admire these children," he said, "who can barely speak yet already sing their parts; they understand all musical signs and rules, while I, a grown man who might pass for a great figure, would not know how to manage." No one in this world is perfect:

There are people naturally frivolous, others rude, others still reluctant to listen to others' opinions, and others prone to indignation, others to anger, and others to love. In short, few are free people are free from one or another of these imperfections.

Should we despair of improving our temperament, correcting some of our natural inclinations? Not at all.

For though these traits may be innate and natural in each of us, if they can be corrected and regulated through disciplined effort, or even eradicated, then, I tell you, Philothea, it must be done. Bitter almonds have been made sweet by piercing them at the base to drain their juice; why should we not drain our own perverse inclinations to become better?

Hence, the optimistic yet demanding conclusion. "There is no good nature that cannot be corrupted by vicious habits, nor any nature so perverse that it cannot, first by God's grace and then through diligent effort, be tamed and overcome." If man is educable, we must never despair of anyone and guard ourselves well against prejudice in regard to people:

Do not say: That man is a drunkard, even if you have seen him drunk; 'an adulterer,' for having witnessed his sin; 'incestuous,' for catching him in that disgrace, because one action is not enough to define a thing. [...] And even if a man were long steeped in vice, you'd risk falsehood by calling him vicious.

The human person has never finished tending their garden. This was the lesson the founder of the Visitation nuns instilled when urging them to "cultivate the soil and garden" of their hearts and minds, for no one is "so perfect as to need no effort to grow in perfection or preserve it."

Don Bosco's devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Don Bosco's devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus originated from the revelations to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque in the monastery of Paray-le-Monial: Christ, showing his pierced

Heart crowned with thorns, asked for a feast of reparation on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi. Despite opposition, the cult spread because that Heart, the seat of divine love, recalls the charity manifested on the cross and in the Eucharist. Don Bosco invites young people to honour it constantly, especially in the month of June, by reciting the Crown and performing acts of reparation that obtain copious indulgences and the twelve promises of peace, mercy, and holiness.

Devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is growing every day, listen dear young people, to how it originated. There lived in France, in the monastery of the Visitation in Paray-le-Monial, a humble virgin named Margaret Alacoque, dear to God for her great purity. One day, while she was standing before the Blessed Sacrament to adore the blessed Jesus, she saw her Heavenly Spouse in the act of uncovering his breast and showing her his Most Sacred Heart, radiant with flames, surrounded by thorns, pierced by a wound, and surmounted by a cross. At the same time, she heard Him complain of the monstrous ingratitude of men and ordered her to work to ensure that on the Friday after the Octave of *Corpus Christi*, special worship would be given to His Divine Heart in reparation for the offences He receives in the Most Holy Eucharist. The pious virgin, filled with confusion, explained to Jesus how unfit she was for such a great undertaking, but she was comforted by the Lord to continue her work, and the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was established despite the fierce opposition of her adversaries.

There are many reasons for this devotion: 1) Because Jesus Christ offered us His Sacred Heart as the seat of His affections; 2) Because it is a symbol of the immense charity He showed especially by allowing His Most Sacred Heart to be wounded by a lance; 3) Because from this Heart the faithful are moved to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus Christ and to profess their gratitude to Him.

Let us therefore constantly honour this Divine

Heart, which, for the many and great benefits it has already bestowed upon us and will bestow upon us, well deserves all our most humble and loving veneration.

Month of June

Those who consecrate the entire month of June to the honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with some daily prayer or devout act will gain seven years of indulgence for each day and a Plenary indulgence at the end of the month.

Chaplet to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Intend to recite this Crown to the Divine Heart of Jesus Christ to make reparation for the outrages He receives in the Most Holy Eucharist from infidels, heretics, and bad Christians. Say it alone or with other people gathered together, if possible before an image of the Divine Heart or before the Blessed Sacrament:

V. Deus, in adiutorium meum intende (O God, come to my aid).

R. Domine ad adjuvandum me festina (Lord, make haste to help me).

Glory be to the Father, etc.

1. O most lovable Heart of my Jesus, I humbly adore your sweet kindness, which you show in a special way in the Divine Sacrament to souls who are still sinners. I am sorry to see you so ungratefully repaid, and I intend to make up for the many offences you receive in the Most Holy Eucharist from heretics, infidels, and bad Christians.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

2. O most humble Heart of my Sacramental Jesus, I adore your profound humility in the Divine Eucharist, hiding yourself for our love under the species of bread and wine. I beg you, my Jesus, to instil this beautiful virtue in my heart; meanwhile, I will endeavour to make reparation for the many offences you receive in the Most Holy Sacrament from heretics, infidels, and bad Christians.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

3. O Heart of my Jesus, so eager to suffer, I adore those desires so ardent to encounter your most painful Passion and to subject yourself to those wrongs foreseen by you in the Blessed Sacrament. Ah, my Jesus! I truly intend to make reparation with my very life; I would like to prevent those offences which you unfortunately receive in the Most Holy Eucharist from heretics, infidels, and bad Christians.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

4. O most patient Heart of my Jesus, I humbly venerate your invincible patience in enduring so many pains on the Cross and so many abuses in the Divine Eucharist for love of me. O my dear Jesus! Since I cannot wash with my blood those places where you were so mistreated in both Mysteries, I promise you, O my Supreme Good, to use every means to make reparation to your Divine Heart for the many outrages you receive in the Most Holy Eucharist from heretics, infidels, and bad Christians.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

5. O Heart of my Jesus, most loving of our souls in the admirable institution of the Most Holy Eucharist, I humbly adore that immense love which you bear us in giving us your Divine Body and Divine Blood as our nourishment. What heart is there that should not be consumed at the sight of such immense charity? O my good Jesus, give me abundant tears to weep and make reparation for the many offences you receive in the Most Holy Sacrament from heretics, infidels, and bad Christians.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

6. O Heart of my Jesus, thirsting for our salvation, I humbly venerate that most ardent love which prompted you to perform the ineffable Sacrifice of the Cross, renewing it every day on the Altars in the Holy Mass. Is it possible that the human heart, filled with gratitude, should

not burn with such love? Yes, alas, my God; but for the future I promise to do all I can to make reparation for the many outrages you receive in this Mystery of love from heretics, infidels and bad Christians.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

Whoever recites even the above 6 *Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glory's* before the Blessed Sacrament, the last *Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be*, being said according to the intention of the Supreme Pontiff, will gain 300 days of Indulgence each time.

**Promises made by Jesus Christ
to Blessed Margaret Alacoque for the devotees of his Divine Heart**

I will give them all the graces necessary in their state of life.

I will make peace reign in their families.

I will console them in all their afflictions.

I will be their safe refuge in life, but especially at the hour of death.

I will fill every undertaking with blessings.

Sinners will find in my Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.

Lukewarm souls will become fervent.

Fervent souls will quickly rise to great perfection.

I will bless the house where the image of my Sacred Heart is exposed and honoured.

I will give priests the gift of moving the most hardened hearts.

The names of those who propagate this devotion will be written in my Heart and will never be erased.

Act of reparation against blasphemies.

God be blessed.

Blessed be His Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed be His Most Loving Heart.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary Most Holy.

Blessed be the Name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Blessed be her Holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints.

An indulgence of *one year* is granted for each time: and *Plenary* to those who recite it for a month, on the day they make Holy Confession and Communion.

Offered to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus before His Holy Image

I, NN., to be grateful to You and to make reparation for my infidelities, I give You my heart and consecrate myself entirely to You, my beloved Jesus, and with your help I resolve never to sin again.

Pope Pius VII granted one hundred days of indulgence once a day, reciting it with a contrite heart, and a plenary indulgence once a month to those who recite it every day.

Prayer to the Most Sacred Heart of Mary

God save you, Most August Queen of Peace, Mother of God; through the Most Sacred Heart of your Son Jesus, Prince of Peace, may His wrath be appeased and may He reign over us in peace. Remember, O Most Pious Virgin Mary, that it has never been heard in the world that anyone who implores your favours has been rejected or abandoned by you. Encouraged by this confidence, I present myself to you: do not

despise my prayers, O Mother of the Eternal Word, but hear them favourably and grant them, O Clement, O Pious, O Sweet Virgin Mary.

Pius IX granted an indulgence of 300 days each time this prayer is recited devoutly, and a plenary indulgence once a month to those who recite it every day.

O Jesus, burning with love,
I never wanted to offend You;
O my sweet and good Jesus,
I never want to offend You again.

Sacred Heart of Mary,
Save my soul.
Sacred Heart of my Jesus,
Make me love you more and more.

To you I give my heart,
Mother of my Jesus – Mother of love.

(Source: 'Il Giovane Provveduto' (The Young Provided for') the practice of his duties in the exercises of Christian piety for the recitation of the Office of the b. Virgin of vespers all year round and the office of the dead with the addition of a choice of sacred lauds, per Priest John Bosco, 101a edition, Turin, 1885, Salesian Printing and Bookstore, S. Benigno Canavese – S. Per d'Arena – Lucca – Nizza Marittima – Marsiglia – Montevideo – Buenos-Aires', pp. 119-124 [Published Works, pp. 247-253])

Photo: Gilded bronze statue of the Sacred Heart on the bell tower of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome, a gift from former Salesian students of Argentina. Erected in 1931, it was crafted in Milan by Riccardo Politi based on a design by sculptor Enrico Cattaneo of Turin.

Is Confession Still Necessary?

The Sacrament of Confession, often overlooked in today's hectic world, remains for the Catholic Church an irreplaceable source of grace and inner renewal. We invite you to rediscover its original meaning: not a mere formal ritual, but a personal encounter with God's mercy, established by Christ himself and entrusted to the ministry of the Church. In an age that downplays sin, Confession proves to be a compass for the conscience, medicine for the soul, and a wide-open door to peace of heart.

The Sacrament of Confession: A Necessity for the Soul

In the Catholic tradition, the Sacrament of Confession—also called the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Penance—holds a central place on the journey of faith. It is not merely a formal act or a practice reserved for a few particularly devout faithful, but a profound necessity involving every Christian called to live in God's grace. In an age that tends to relativize the concept of sin, rediscovering the beauty and liberating power of Confession is fundamental to fully responding to God's love.

Jesus Christ himself instituted the Sacrament of Confession. After His Resurrection, He appeared to the Apostles and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (Jn 20:22-23). These words are not symbolic; they establish a real and concrete power entrusted to the Apostles and, through succession, to their successors, the bishops and priests.

The forgiveness of sins, therefore, does not happen only

privately between man and God, but also passes through the ministry of the Church. God, in His plan of salvation, willed that personal confession before a priest be the ordinary means of receiving His forgiveness.

The Reality of Sin

To understand the necessity of Confession, one must first become aware of the reality of sin.

Saint Paul states, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). And, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn 1:8).

No one can claim immunity from sin, not even after Baptism, which purified us from original sin. Our human nature, wounded by concupiscence, continually leads us to fall, to betray God's love through actions, words, omissions, and thoughts.

Saint Augustine writes, "It is true; man's nature was originally created without fault and without any vice. conversely, the present nature of man, through which everyone is born from Adam, now needs the Physician, because it is not healthy. Certainly, all the goods it possesses in its structure, in its life, senses, and mind, it receives from the supreme God, its creator and maker. The vice, however, which obscures and weakens these natural goods, thus making human nature needy of illumination and care, was not derived from its irreproachable maker, but from original sin which was committed through free will." (Nature and Grace).

Denying the existence of sin is tantamount to denying the truth about ourselves. Only by recognizing our need for forgiveness can we open ourselves to the mercy of God, who never tires of calling us back to Himself.

Confession: Encounter with Divine Mercy

The Sacrament of Confession is, first and foremost, a personal encounter with Divine Mercy. It is not simply self-accusation or a session of self-analysis. It is an act of love from God who, like the father in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32), runs to meet the repentant child, embraces him, and

clothes him with new dignity.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: *“Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God’s mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer cooperates for their conversion.”* (CCC, 1422).

To confess is to allow oneself to be loved, healed, and renewed. It is to welcome the gift of a new heart.

Why Confess to a Priest?

One of the most common objections is, “Why must I confess to a priest? Can’t I confess directly to God?” Certainly, every member of the faithful can – and should – turn directly to God with a prayer of repentance. However, Jesus established a concrete, visible, and sacramental means for forgiveness: confession to an ordained minister. And this applies to every Christian, meaning also priests, bishops, and popes.

The priest acts *in persona Christi*, that is, in the person of Christ Himself. He listens, judges, absolves, and offers spiritual counsel. This is not a human mediation that limits God’s love, but rather a guarantee offered by Christ Himself; forgiveness is communicated visibly, and the faithful can have certainty of it.

Furthermore, confessing before a priest demands humility, an indispensable virtue for spiritual growth. Openly acknowledging one’s faults frees us from the yoke of pride and opens us to the true freedom of the children of God.

It is not enough to confess only once a year, as required by the minimum of ecclesiastical law. The saints and spiritual masters have always recommended frequent confession – even bi-weekly or weekly – as a means of progress in the Christian life.

Saint John Paul II went to confession every week. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, despite being a Carmelite nun living in enclosure, confessed regularly. Frequent confession allows one to refine the conscience, correct ingrained faults, and receive new graces.

Obstacles to Confession

Unfortunately, many faithful today neglect the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Among the main reasons are:

Shame: fearing the priest's judgment. But the priest is not there to condemn, but to be an instrument of mercy.

Fear that confessed sins will be made public: confessors cannot reveal to anyone, under any circumstances (including the highest ecclesiastical authorities), the sins heard in confession, even at the cost of their own lives. If they do, they immediately incur *latae sententiae* excommunication (Canon 1386, Code of Canon Law). The inviolability of the sacramental seal admits no exceptions or dispensations. And the conditions are the same even if the Confession did not end with sacramental absolution. Even after the penitent's death, the confessor is bound to observe the sacramental seal.

Lack of a sense of sin: in a culture that minimizes evil, one risks no longer recognizing the gravity of one's faults.

Spiritual laziness: postponing Confession is a common temptation that leads to a cooling of the relationship with God.

Erroneous theological convictions: some mistakenly believe that simply "repenting in one's heart" is sufficient without the need for sacramental Confession.

Despair of salvation: Some think that for them, there will be no more forgiveness anyway. Saint Augustine says: "Indeed, some, after having fallen into sin, lose themselves even more through despair and not only neglect the medicine of

repentance but become slaves to lusts and wicked desires to satisfy dishonest and reprehensible cravings, as if by not doing so they would lose even that to which lust incites them, convinced they are already on the brink of certain damnation. Against this extremely dangerous and harmful disease, the memory of the sins into which even the just and holy have fallen is beneficial." (ibid.)

To overcome these obstacles, one must seek advice from those who can give it, educate oneself, and pray.

Preparing Well for Confession

A good confession requires adequate preparation, which includes:

- 1. Examination of conscience:** sincerely reflecting on one's sins, perhaps aided by lists based on the Ten Commandments, the capital sins, or the Beatitudes.
- 2. Contrition:** sincere sorrow for having offended God, not just fear of punishment.
- 3. Purpose of amendment:** a real desire to change one's life, to avoid future sin.
- 4. Integral confession of sins:** confessing all mortal sins completely, specifying their nature and number (if possible).
- 5. Penance:** accepting and performing the act of reparation proposed by the confessor.

The Effects of Confession

Confession does not merely produce an external cancellation of sin. The internal effects are profound and transformative:

Reconciliation with God: Sin breaks communion with God; Confession re-establishes it, bringing us back into full divine friendship.

Inner peace and serenity: Receiving absolution brings profound

peace. The conscience is freed from the burden of guilt, and a new joy is experienced.

Spiritual strength: Through sacramental grace, the penitent receives special strength to fight future temptations and grow in virtue.

Reconciliation with the Church: Since every sin also damages the Mystical Body of Christ, Confession also mends our bond with the ecclesial community.

The spiritual vitality of the Church also depends on the personal renewal of its members. Christians who rediscover the Sacrament of Confession become, almost without realizing it, more open to others, more missionary, more capable of radiating the light of the Gospel in the world. Only those who have experienced God's forgiveness can proclaim it convincingly to others.

The Sacrament of Confession is an immense and irreplaceable gift. It is the ordinary way through which Christians can return to God whenever they stray. It is not a burden, but a privilege; not a humiliation, but a liberation.

We are called, therefore, to rediscover this Sacrament in its truth and beauty, to practice it with an open and trusting heart, and to joyfully propose it also to those who have strayed. As the psalmist affirms, "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps 32:1).

Today, more than ever, the world needs purified and reconciled souls, capable of testifying that God's mercy is stronger than sin. If we did not do so at Easter, let us take advantage of the Marian month of May and approach Confession without fear; there awaits us the smile of a Father who never stops loving us.

The way to hell paved with feeble resolutions (1873)

San Giovanni Bosco recounts in a "good night" the result of a long plea to Mary Help of Christians: to understand the main cause of eternal damnation. The answer, received in repeated dreams, is shocking in its simplicity: the lack of a firm, concrete resolution at the end of Confession. Without a sincere decision to change one's life, even the sacrament becomes ineffective and sins are repeated.

A solemn warning: Why do so many go to destruction? Because they do not make good resolutions when they go to confession.

At the "Good Night" on May 31, 1873, Don Bosco gave his pupils a serious warning, which, he said, was "the result of his humble prayers" and came from the Lord:

Throughout the whole month of May-he said-particularly during the novena of Mary, Help of Christians, I constantly offered Masses and prayers to Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin imploring them to let me know what, most of all, drags souls into hell. I do not say now that the Lord did or did not enlighten me. I only say that almost every night I dreamed that this is due to the lack of firm resolves in confessions. I seemed to see boys leaving church after confession, their heads sprouting two horns.

What causes this? I asked myself. *Ah, this is due to feeble resolutions.* That's why so many go frequently to confession but never mend their ways and keep confessing the same sins over and over again. There are some (I am only conjecturing. not going on anything heard in confession,

because of the seal) who at the start of the school year were doing rather poorly in studies and are still doing no better: there are others who griped and are still griping. I thought it best to let you know this, because it is the result of my humble prayers and because it does come from the Lord.

Publicly he gave no other details, but undoubtedly he took advantage of this dream to encourage and admonish. What little he did say and the way he said it constituted a grave warning, such as should frequently be given to our boys.
(*BM X*, 48-49)

Don Bosco promoter of “divine mercy”

As a very young priest, Don Bosco published a booklet, in tiny format, entitled “Exercise of Devotion to God’s Mercy”.

It all began with the Marchioness Barolo

The Marchioness Giulia Colbert di Barolo (1785-1864), declared Venerable by Pope Francis on 12 May 2015, personally cultivated a special devotion to divine mercy, so she had the custom of a week of meditations and prayers on the subject introduced to the religious and educational communities she founded near Valdocco. But she was not satisfied. She wanted this practice to spread elsewhere, especially in parishes, among the people. She sought the consent of the Holy See, which not only granted it, but also granted various indulgences for this devotional practice. At this point, it was a question of making a publication suitable for the purpose.

We are now in the summer of 1846, when Don Bosco,

having overcome the serious crisis of exhaustion that had brought him to the brink of the grave, had withdrawn to spend time with Mamma Margaret at the Becchi to convalesce and had by then “resigned” from his much appreciated service as chaplain to one of the Barolo works, to the great displeasure of the Marchioness herself. But “his young people” called him to the newly rented Pinardi house.

At this point the famous patriot Silvio Pellico, secretary-librarian to the Marchioness and an admirer and friend of Don Bosco, who had set some of his poems to music, intervened. The Salesian memoirs tell us that Pellico, with a certain boldness, proposed to the Marchioness that she commission Don Bosco to do the publication she was interested in. What did the Marchioness do? She accepted, albeit not too enthusiastically. Who knows? Perhaps she wanted to put him to the test. And Don Bosco, too, accepted.

A theme close to his heart

The theme of God’s mercy was among his spiritual interests, those on which he had been formed in the seminary in Chieri and especially at the Turin *Convitto*. Only two years earlier he had finished attending the lessons of his fellow countryman Saint Joseph Cafasso, just four years older than him, but his spiritual director, whose sermons he followed at retreats for priests, but also the formator for half a dozen other founders, some even saints. Well then, Cafasso, although a child of the religious culture of his time – made up of prescriptions and “doing good to escape divine punishment and deserve Paradise” – did not miss an opportunity in both his teaching and preaching to speak of God’s mercy. And how could he not do so when he was constantly devoted to the Sacrament of Penance and to assisting those condemned to death? All the more so since such indulgent devotion at the time was a pastoral reaction against the rigours of Jansenism that supported the predestination of those who were saved.

So, Don Bosco, as soon as he returned from the country at the beginning of November, set to work, following

the pious practices approved by Rome and spread throughout Piedmont. With the help of a few texts that he could easily find in the Convitto library which he knew well, at the end of the year he published at his own expense a small booklet of 111 pages, tiny format, entitled "[Exercise of devotion to God's Mercy](#)". He immediately gave it to the girls, women and Sisters at the Barolo foundations. It is not documented, but logic and gratitude would have it that he also made a gift of it to the Marchioness Barolo, the promoter of the project: but the same logic and gratitude would have it that the Marchioness did not let herself be outdone in generosity, sending him, perhaps anonymously as on other occasions, a contribution of her own to the expenses.

There is no space here to present the "classic" contents of Don Bosco's booklet of meditations and prayers; we would just like to point out that its basic principle is: "everyone must invoke God's Mercy for himself and for all people, because 'we are all sinners' [...] all in need of forgiveness and grace [...] all called to eternal salvation."

Significant, then, is the fact that at the conclusion of each day of the week Don Bosco, by way of "devotional exercises", assigns a practice of piety: invite others to intervene, forgive those who have offended us, make an immediate mortification to obtain mercy from God for all sinners, give some alms or replace them with the recitation of prayers etc. On the last day, the practice is replaced by a nice invitation, perhaps even alluding the Marchioness Barolo, to say "at least one *Hail Mary* for the person who has promoted this devotion!"

Educational practice

But beyond the writings with edifying and formative purposes, one can ask how Don Bosco in fact educated his youngsters to trust in divine mercy. The answer is not difficult and could be documented in many ways. We will limit ourselves to three vital experiences lived at Valdocco: the sacraments of Confession and Communion and his figure of a

“father full of goodness and love”.

Confession

Don Bosco initiated hundreds of young people from Valdocco into adult Christian life. But by what means? Two in particular: Confession and Communion.

Don Bosco, as we know, is one of the great apostles of Confession, and this is first of all because he exercised this ministry to the full, as did, for that matter, his teacher and spiritual director Cafasso mentioned above, and the much admired figure of his almost contemporary the saintly Curé d'Ars (1876-1859). If the latter's life, as has been written, “was spent in the confessional” and if Cafasso was able to offer many hours of the day (“the necessary time”) to listen in confession to “bishops, priests, religious, eminent laymen and simple people who flocked to him”, Don Bosco could not do the same because of the many occupations in which he was immersed. Nevertheless, he made himself available in the confessional for the young people (and the Salesians) every day that religious services were celebrated at Valdocco or in Salesian houses, or on special occasions.

He had begun to do this as soon as he had finished “learning to be a priest” at the Convitto (1841-1844), when on Sundays he would gather the young men in the wandering oratory over two years, when he went to hear confessions at the Consolata or in the Piedmontese parishes to which he was invited, or when he took advantage of carriage or train journeys to hear confessions from coachmen or passengers. He never stopped doing this until the very end, and when asked not to tire himself out with confessions, he replied that by now it was the only thing he could do for his young people. And what was his sorrow when, due to bureaucratic reasons and misunderstandings, his confession licence was not renewed by the archbishop! The testimonies about Don Bosco as a confessor are innumerable and, in fact, the famous photograph depicting him in the act of confessing a young boy surrounded by so many others waiting to do so, must have pleased the saint himself,

who was maybe behind the idea. It still remains a significant and indelible icon of his figure in the collective imagination.

But beyond his experience as a confessor, Don Bosco was a tireless promoter of the sacrament of Reconciliation. He spoke of its necessity, its importance, the usefulness of receiving it frequently. He pointed out the dangers of a celebration lacking the necessary conditions, and illustrated the classic ways of approaching it fruitfully. He did this through lectures, good nights, witty mottos and little words in the ear, circular letters to the young people at the colleges, personal letters, and by recounting numerous dreams focusing on confession, either well or badly done. In accordance with his intelligent catechetical practice, he told them episodes of conversions of great sinners, and also his own personal experiences in this regard.

Don Bosco, who knew the youthful soul in depth, used love and gratitude to God, whom he presented in his infinite goodness, generosity and mercy in order to lead all young people to sincere repentance. Instead, to shake the coldest and most hardened hearts, he described the likely punishments of sin and impressed them with vivid descriptions of divine judgement and Hell. Even in these cases, however, not satisfied with urging the boys to be sorry for their sins, he tried to bring them to the need for divine mercy, an important provision to anticipate their forgiveness even before sacramental confession. Don Bosco, as usual, did not enter into doctrinal matters. He was only interested in a sincere confession, which therapeutically heals the wound of the past, recomposes the spiritual fabric of the present for a future of a "life of grace".

Don Bosco believed in sin, believed in serious sin, believed in hell and spoke of their existence to readers and listeners. But he was also convinced that God is mercy in person, which is why he has given us the sacrament of Reconciliation. And so he insisted on the conditions for receiving it well, and above all on the confessor as "father"

and “doctor” and not so much as “doctor and judge”: “The confessor knows how much greater than your faults is the mercy of God who grants you forgiveness through his intervention” ([Life of Michael Magone](#), pp. 24-25).

According to Salesian memoirs, he often suggested to his youngsters to invoke divine mercy, not to be discouraged after sin, but to return to confession without fear, trusting in the goodness of the Lord and then making firm resolutions for good.

As an “educator in the youth field” Don Bosco felt the need to insist less on *ex opere operato* and more on *ex opere operantis*, that is, on the dispositions of the penitent. At Valdocco everyone felt invited to make a good confession, all felt the risk of bad confessions and the importance of making a good confession; many of them then felt they were living in a land blessed by the Lord. It was not for nothing that divine mercy had caused a deceased young man to wake up after the funeral shroud had been pulled away so that he could confess his sins (to Don Bosco).

In short, the sacrament of confession, well explained in its specific features and frequently celebrated, was perhaps the most effective means by which the Piedmontese saint led his young people to trust in God’s immense mercy.

Communion

But Communion, the second pillar of Don Bosco’s religious pedagogy, also served its purpose.

Don Bosco is certainly one of the greatest promoters of the sacramental practice of frequent Communion. His doctrine, modelled on the Counter-Reformation way of thinking, gave importance to Communion rather than to the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist, even if there was an evolution in its frequency. In the first twenty years of his priestly life, in the wake of St. Alphonsus, but also of the Council of Trent and before that of Tertullian and St Augustine, he suggested weekly Communion, or several times a week or even daily depending on the perfection of the

dispositions corresponding to the graces of the sacrament. Dominic Savio, who at Valdocco had begun to go to confession and communion every fortnight, then went on to receive it every week, then three times a week, finally, after a year of intense spiritual growth, every day, obviously always following the advice of his confessor, Don Bosco himself.

Later, in the second half of the 1860s, on the basis of his pedagogical experiences and a strong theological current in favour of frequent Communion, which saw the French Bishop de Ségur and the prior of Genoa Fr Giuseppe Frassinetti as leaders, Don Bosco moved on to inviting his young men to receive Communion more often, convinced that it allowed decisive steps in the spiritual life and favoured their growth in the love of God. And in the case of the impossibility of daily Sacramental Communion, he suggested spiritual Communion, perhaps during a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, so much appreciated by St Alphonsus. However, the important thing was to keep the conscience in a state to be able to receive Communion every day: the decision was in a way up to the confessor.

For Don Bosco, every Communion worthily received – the prescribed fasting, state of grace, willingness to detach oneself from sin, a beautiful thanksgiving afterwards – cancels daily faults, strengthens the soul to avoid them in the future, increases confidence in God and in his infinite goodness and mercy; moreover, it is a source of grace to succeed in school and in life, it is help in bearing sufferings and overcoming temptations.

Don Bosco believes that Communion is a necessity for the “good” to keep themselves as such and for the “bad” to become “good”. It is for those who want to become saints, not for the saints, like medicine is given to the sick. Obviously, he knows that its reception alone is not a sure indication of goodness, as there are those who receive it very lukewarmly and out of habit, especially since the very superficiality of young people often does not allow them to understand the full importance of what they are doing.

With Communion then, one can implore from the Lord particular graces for oneself and for others. Don Bosco's letters are full of requests to his young men to pray and receive Communion according to his intention, so that the Lord may grant him good success in the "affairs" of every order in which he finds himself immersed. And he did the same with all his correspondents, who were invited to approach this sacrament to obtain the graces requested, while he would do the same in the celebration of Holy Mass.

Don Bosco cared so much that his boys grew up nourished by the sacraments, but he also wanted the utmost respect for their freedom. And he left precise instructions to his educators in his treatise on the Preventive System: "Never force young people to attend the holy sacraments but only encourage them, and give them the comfort of taking advantage of them."

At the same time, however, he remained adamant in his conviction that the sacraments are of paramount importance. He wrote peremptorily: "Say what you will about the various systems of education, but I find no sure basis except in the frequency of Confession and Communion" ([The Young Shepherd Boy from the Alps, the Life of Francis Besucco from Argentera](#), 1864. p. 100).

Fatherliness and mercy

God's mercy, at work particularly at the time of the sacraments of Confession and Communion, then found its external expression not only in a Don Bosco "father confessor", but also "father, brother, friend" of the young men in ordinary everyday life. With some exaggeration it could be said that their confidence in Don Bosco was such that many of them hardly made a distinction between Don Bosco "confessor" and Don Bosco "friend" and "brother"; others could sometimes exchange the sacramental accusation with the sincere effusions of a son towards his father; on the other hand Don Bosco's knowledge of the young was such that with sober questions he inspired them with extreme confidence and not

infrequently knew how to make the accusation in their place.

The figure of God the father, merciful and provident, who throughout history has shown his goodness from Adam onwards towards men, righteous or sinners, but all in need of help and the object of paternal care, and in any case all called to salvation in Jesus Christ, is thus modulated and reflected in the goodness of Don Bosco "Father of his young people", who only wants their good, who does not abandon them, always ready to understand them, pity them, forgive them. For many of them, orphans, poor and abandoned, accustomed from an early age to hard daily work, the object of very modest manifestations of tenderness, children of an era in which what prevailed was decisive submission and absolute obedience to any constituted authority, Don Bosco was perhaps the caress never experienced by a father, the "tenderness" of which Pope Francis speaks.

His letter to the young men of the Mirabello house at the end of 1864 is still moving: "Those voices, those cheers, that kissing and shaking hands, that cordial smile, that talking to each other about the soul, that encouraging each other to do good are things that embalm my heart, and for that reason I cannot think about them without feeling moved to tears. I will tell you [...] that you are the apple of my eye" (*Epistolario* II edited by F. Motto II, letter no. 792).

Even more moving is his letter to the young men of Lanzo on 3 January 1876: "Let me tell you and let no-one take offence, you are all thieves; I say it and I repeat it – you have stolen everything from me. When I was at Lanzo, you enchanted me with your benevolence and loving kindness, you bound the faculties of my mind with your pity; I was still left with this poor heart, whose affections you had already stolen from me entirely. Now your letter signed by 200 friendly and dearest hands have taken possession of this whole heart of mine, and nothing remains except a lively desire to love you in the Lord, to do you good and save the souls of all of you" (*Epistolario* III, letter no. 1389).

The loving kindness with which he treated and

wanted the Salesians to treat the boys had a divine foundation. He affirmed this by quoting an expression from St. Paul: 'Charity is benign and patient; it suffers all things, but hopes all things, and sustains all troubles'.

Loving kindness was therefore a sign of mercy and divine love that escaped sentimentalism and forms of sensuality because of the theological charity that was its source. Don Bosco communicated this love to individual boys and also to groups of them: "That I bear you much affection, I don't need to tell you, I have given you clear proof of it. That you love me, I do not need to tell you, because you have constantly shown it to me. But on what is this mutual affection of ours founded? [...] So the good of our souls is the foundation of our affection" (Epistolary II, no. 1148). Love of God, the theological *primum*, is thus the foundation of the pedagogical *primum*.

Loving-kindness was also the translation of divine love into truly human love, made up of right sensitivity, amiable cordiality, benevolent and patient affection tending to deep communion of the heart. In short, the effective and affective love that is experienced in a privileged form in the relationship between the educand and the educator, when gestures of friendship and forgiveness on the part of the educator induce the young person, by virtue of the love that guides the educator, to open up to confidence, to feel supported in his effort to surpass himself and to commit himself, to give consent and to adhere in depth to the values that the educator lives personally and proposes to him. The young person understands that this relationship reconstructs and restructures him as a man. The most arduous undertaking of the Preventive System is precisely that of winning the young person's heart, of enjoying his esteem, his trust, of making him a friend. If a young person does not love the educator, he can do very little of the young person and for the young person.

Works of mercy

We could now continue with the works of mercy, which the Catechism distinguishes between corporal and spiritual works, setting out two groups of seven. It would not be difficult to document both how Don Bosco lived, practised and encouraged the practice of these works of mercy and how by his “being and working” he in fact constituted a sign and visible witness, in deeds and words, of God’s love for mankind. Due to space limitations, we limit ourselves to indicating the possibility of research. It remains, however, that today they seem to be abandoned also because of the false opposition between mercy and justice, as if mercy were not a typical way of expressing that love which, as such, can never contradict justice.

Educating the body and its 5 senses with Saint Francis de Sales

A good number of ancient Christian ascetics often considered the body as an enemy, whose decay had to be confronted, in fact, as if it were an object of contempt and given no consideration. Numerous spiritual men of the Middle Ages did not care for the body except to inflict penances upon it. In most schools of the time, nothing was provided to allow “brother donkey” to rest.

For Calvino, human nature that was totally corrupted by original sin, could only be an “outhouse.” On the opposite front, numerous Renaissance writers and artists exalted the body to the point of paying it cult, in which sensuality played a significant role. Rabelais, for his part, glorified the bodies of his giants and took pleasure in

showcasing even their less noble organic functions.

Salesian realism

Between the divinisation of the body and its contempt, Francis de Sales offers a realistic view of human nature. At the end of the first meditation on the theme of the creation of man, “the first being of the visible world,” the author of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* puts on the lips of Philothea this statement that seems to summarise his thought: “I want to feel honoured for the being that he has given me.” Certainly, the body is destined for death. With stark realism, the author describes the soul’s farewell to the body, which it will leave “pale, livid, disfigured, horrid, and foul-smelling,” but this does not constitute a reason to neglect and unjustly denigrate it while one is alive. Saint Bernard was wrong when he announced to those who wanted to follow him “that they should abandon their bodies and go to him only in spirit.” Physical evils should not lead to hating the body: moral evil is far worse.

We surely do not find any oblivion or overshadowing of bodily phenomena in Francis de Sales, as when he speaks of various forms of diseases or when he evokes the manifestations of human love. In a chapter of the *Treatise on the Love of God* titled: “That love tends to union,” he writes, for example, that “one mouth is applied to another in kissing to testify that we would desire to pour out one soul into the other, to unite them reciprocally in a perfect union.” This attitude of Francis de Sales towards the body already provoked scandalised reactions in his time. When Philothea appeared, an Avignonese religious publicly criticised this “little book,” tearing it apart and accusing its author of being a “corrupted and corrupting doctor.” An enemy of excessive modesty, Francis de Sales was not yet aware of the reserve and fears that would emerge in later times. Do medieval customs survive in him or is it simply a manifestation of his “biblical” taste? In any case, there is nothing in him comparable to the trivialities of the “infamous” Rabelais.

The most esteemed natural gifts are beauty, strength, and health. Regarding beauty, Francis de Sales expressed himself while speaking of Saint Brigid: "She was born in Scotland; she was a very beautiful girl, since the Scots are naturally beautiful, and in that country, one finds the most beautiful creatures that exist." Let us also think of the repertoire of images regarding the physical perfections of the bridegroom and the bride, taken from the *Song of Solomon*. Although the representations are sublimated and transferred to a spiritual register, they remain indicative of an atmosphere in which the natural beauty of man and woman is exalted. There were attempts to have him suppress the chapter of *Theotimus* on kissing, in which he demonstrates that "love tends to union," but he always refused to do so. In any case, external beauty is not the most important: the beauty of the daughter of Zion is internal.

The close connection between body and soul

First of all, Francis de Sales affirms that the body is "a part of our person." With a hint of tenderness, a personified soul can also say: "This flesh is my dear half, it is my sister, it is my companion, born with me, nourished with me."

The bishop was very attentive to the existing bond between body and soul, between the health of the body and that of the soul. Thus, he writes of a person under his care, who was in poor health, that the health of her body "depends a lot on that of the soul, and that of the soul depends on spiritual consolations." "Your heart has not weakened – he wrote to a sick woman – rather your body, and, given the very close ties that unite them, your heart has the impression of experiencing the pain of your body." Everyone can see that bodily infirmities "end up creating discomfort even to the spirit, due to the close bonds between the one and the other." Conversely, the spirit acts on the body to the point that "the body perceives the affections that stir in the heart," as occurred with Jesus, who sat by Jacob's well, tired from His

heavy commitment to the service of the Kingdom of God.

However, since “the body and spirit often proceed in opposite directions, and as one weakens, the other strengthens,” and since “the spirit must reign,” “we must support and strengthen it so that it always remains its strongest.” So, if I take care of the body, it is “so that it may serve the spirit.”

In the meantime, we should be fair towards the body. In case of malaise or mistakes, it often happens that the soul accuses the body and mistreats it, as Balaam did with his donkey: “O poor soul! If your flesh could speak, it would say to you, as Balaam’s donkey: why do you beat me, miserable one? It is against you, my soul, that God arms His vengeance; you are the criminal.” When a person reforms their inner self, the conversion will also manifest externally: in all attitudes, in the mouth, in the hands, and “even in the hair.” The practice of virtue makes a person beautiful internally and also externally. Conversely, an external change, a behaviour of the body can favour an inner change. An act of external devotion during meditation can awaken inner devotion. What is said here about spiritual life can easily be applied to education in general.

Love and dominance of the body

Speaking of the attitude one should have towards the body and physical realities, it is not surprising to see Francis de Sales that recommends Philothea, first of all, gratitude for the physical graces that God has given her.

We must love our body for several reasons: because it is necessary for us to perform good works, because it is a part of our person, and because it is destined to participate in eternal happiness. Christians must love their bodies as a living image of that of the incarnate Saviour, as coming from Him by kinship and consanguinity. Especially after we have renewed the covenant, truly receiving the body of the Redeemer in the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist, and, with Baptism,

Confirmation, and the other sacraments, we have dedicated and consecrated ourselves to supreme goodness.

Loving one's own body is part of the love owed to oneself. In truth, the most convincing reason to honour and wisely use the body lies in a vision of faith, which the bishop of Geneva explained to the mother of Chantal after she recovered from an illness: "Take care of this body, for it is of God, my dearest Mother." The Virgin Mary is presented at this point as a model: "With what devotion she must have loved her virginal body! Not only because it was a sweet, humble, pure body, obedient to holy love and totally imbued with a thousand sacred perfumes, but also because it was the living source of that of the Saviour and belonged to Him very closely, with a bond that has no comparison."

The love of the body is indeed recommended, but the body must remain subject to the spirit, as the servant to his master. To control appetite, I must "command my hands not to provide the mouth with food and drink, except in the right measure." To govern sexuality, "one must remove or give to the reproductive faculty the subjects, objects, and foods that excite it, according to the dictates of reason." To the young man who is about to "set sail in the vast sea," the bishop recommends: "I also wish you a vigorous heart that prevents you from pampering your body with excessive delicacies in eating, sleeping, or other things. It is known, in fact, that a generous heart always feels a bit of contempt for bodily delicacies and delights."

In order for the body to remain subject to the law of the spirit, it is advisable to avoid excesses: neither mistreat it nor pamper it. In everything, moderation is necessary. The spirit of charity must prevail over all things. This leads him to write: "If the work you do is necessary for you or is very useful for the glory of God, I would prefer that you endure the pains of work rather than those of fasting." Hence the conclusion: "In general, it is better to have more strength in the body than is needed, rather than

ruin it beyond what is necessary; because it is always possible to ruin it whenever one wants, but to recover it is not always enough to just want it."

What must be avoided is this "tenderness one feels for oneself." With fine irony but in a ruthless manner, he takes it out on an imperfection that is not only "characteristic of children, and, if I may dare to say, of women," but also of cowardly men, of whom he gives this interesting characteristic representation: "There are others who are compassionate towards themselves, and who do nothing but complain, coddle, pamper and look at themselves."

In any case, the bishop of Geneva took care of his body, as was his duty, and obeyed his doctor and the "nurses." He also took care of the health of others, giving advice on appropriate measures. He would write, for example, to the mother of a young student at the college of Annecy: "It is necessary to have Charles examined by doctors, so that his abdominal swelling does not worsen."

Hygiene is at the service of health. Francis de Sales desired that both the heart and the body be clean. He recommended decorum, very different from statements like that of Saint Hilary, according to which "one should not seek cleanliness in our bodies, which are nothing but pestilential carcasses and only full of infection." He was rather of the opinion of Saint Augustine and the ancient people who bathed "to keep their bodies clean from the dirt produced by heat and sweat, and also for health, which is certainly greatly aided by cleanliness."

In order to work and fulfil the duties of one's office, everyone should take care of their body regarding nutrition and rest: "To eat little, work a lot and with much agitation, and deny the body the necessary rest, is like demanding much from a horse that is exhausted without giving it time to chew a bit of fodder." The body needs to rest. This is quite evident. Long evening vigils are "harmful to the head and stomach," while, on the other hand, getting up early in the morning is "useful for both health and holiness."

Educating our senses, especially the eyes and ears

Our senses are wonderful gifts from the Creator. They connect us to the world and open us to all sensitive realities, to nature, to the cosmos. The senses are the door to the spirit, which they provide, so to speak, with the raw material; indeed, as the scholastic tradition says, “nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses.”

When Francis de Sales speaks of the senses, his interest leads him particularly to the educational and moral levels, and his teaching on this matter is connected to what he has presented about the body in general: admiration and vigilance. On the one hand, he says that God gives us “eyes to see the wonders of His works, a tongue to praise Him, and so for all the other faculties,” without ever omitting, and on the other, the recommendation to “set up sentinels for the eyes, the mouth, the ears, the hands, and the sense of smell.”

It is necessary to start with sight, because “among all the external parts of the human body, there is none, in terms of structure and activity, more noble than the eye.” The eye is made for light. This is demonstrated by the fact that the more beautiful, pleasant to the sight, and properly illuminated things are, the more the eye gazes at them with eagerness and liveliness. “From the eyes and words, one knows what the soul and spirit of a man are, for the eyes serve the soul as the dial serves the clock.” It is well known that among lovers, the eyes speak more than the tongue.

We must be vigilant over the eyes, for through them temptation and sin can enter, as happened to Eve, who was enchanted by the beauty of the forbidden fruit, or to David, who fixed his gaze on Uriah’s wife. In certain cases, one must proceed as one does with a bird of prey: to make it return, it is necessary to show it the lure; to calm it, one must cover it with a hood; similarly, to avoid bad looks, “one must turn the eyes away, cover them with the natural hood, and close them.”

Granted that visual images are largely dominant in the works of Francis de Sales, it must be recognised that

auditory images are also quite noteworthy. This highlights the importance he attributed to hearing for both aesthetic and moral reasons. "A sublime melody listened to with great concentration" produces such a magical effect as to "enchant the ears." But be careful not to exceed auditory capacities: music, however beautiful, if loud and too close, bothers us and offends the ear.

Besides, it must be known that "the heart and the ears converse with each other," for it is through the ear that the heart "listens to the thoughts of others." It is also through the ear that suspicious, insulting, lying, or malevolent words enter into the depths of the soul, from which one must be very careful. For souls are poisoned through the ear, just as the body is through the mouth. The honest woman will cover her ears so as not to hear the voice of the enchanter who wants to cunningly seduce her. Remaining in the symbolic realm, Francis de Sales declares that the right ear is the organ through which we hear spiritual messages, good inspirations, and motions, while the left serves to hear worldly and vain discourses. To guard the heart, we must therefore protect the ears with great care.

The best service we can ask of the ears is to hear the word of God, the object of preaching, which requires attentive listeners eager to let it penetrate their hearts so that it may bear fruit. Philothea is invited to "let it drip" into the ear, first of one and then of the other, and to pray to God in the depths of her soul, that He may enjoy letting that holy dew penetrate the hearts of those who listen.

The other senses

Also, as regards the sense of smell, the abundance of olfactory images has been noted. The perfumes are as diverse as the fragrant substances, such as milk, wine, balm, oil, myrrh, incense, aromatic wood, spikenard, ointment, rose, onion, lily, violet, pansy, mandrake, cinnamon... It is even more astonishing to observe the results produced by the making of scented water:

Basil, rosemary, marjoram, hyssop, cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, lemons, and musk, mixed together and crushed, do indeed give off a very pleasant fragrance from the mixture of their odours. However, it is not even comparable to that of the water distilled from them, in which the aromas of all these ingredients, isolated from their cores, blend more perfectly, giving rise to an exquisite fragrance that penetrates the sense of smell much more than would happen if the material parts were present along with the water.

There are numerous olfactory images drawn from the Song of Solomon, an oriental poem where perfumes occupy a prominent place and where one of the biblical verses most commented on by Francis de Sales is the heartfelt cry of the bride: "Draw me to you, we will walk and run together in the wake of your perfumes." And how refined is this note: "The sweet fragrance of the rose is made more subtle by the proximity of the garlic planted near the rose bushes!".

However, let us not confuse the sacred balm with the perfumes of this world. There is indeed a spiritual sense of smell, which we should cultivate in our interest. It allows us to perceive the spiritual presence of the beloved subject, and also ensures that we do not let ourselves be distracted by the bad odours of others. The model is the father who welcomes the prodigal son returning to him "semi-nude, dirty, filthy, and stinking of filth from long association with pigs." Another realistic image appears in reference to certain worldly criticisms. Let us not be surprised, Francis de Sales advises Giovanna di Chantal, it is necessary "that the little ointment we have seems stinking to the nostrils of the world."

Regarding taste, certain observations by the bishop of Geneva might lead us to think that he was a born gourmand, indeed an educator of taste: "Who does not know that the sweetness of honey increasingly unites our sense of taste with a continuous progression of flavour, when, keeping it in the mouth for a long time instead of swallowing it immediately, its flavour penetrates more deeply into our sense

of taste?" Granted the sweetness of honey, however, it is necessary to appreciate salt more, for the fact that it is more commonly used. In the name of sobriety and temperance, Francis de Sales recommended knowing how to renounce personal taste, eating what is "put before us."

Finally, regarding touch, Francis de Sales speaks of it especially in a spiritual and mystical sense. Thus, he recommends touching Our Lord crucified: the head, the holy hands, the precious body, the heart. To the young man about to set sail into the vast sea of the world, he requires that he govern himself vigorously and to despise softness, bodily delights, and daintiness: "I would like you to sometimes treat your body harshly to make it experience some harshness and toughness, despising delicacies and things pleasant to the senses; for it is necessary that sometimes reason exercises its superiority and the authority it has to regulate sensual appetites."

The body and spiritual life

The body is also called to participate in the spiritual life that is expressed primarily in prayer: "It is true, the essence of prayer is in the soul, but the voice, gestures, and other external signs, through which the innermost part of hearts is revealed, are noble appurtenances and very useful properties of prayer. They are effects and operations. The soul is not satisfied with praying if man does not pray in his entirety; it prays together with the eyes, the hands, the knees."

He adds that "the soul prostrated before God easily makes the entire body bend over itself; it raises the eyes where it elevates the heart, lifts the hands there, from where it awaits help." Francis de Sales also explains that "to pray in spirit and truth is to pray willingly and affectionately, without pretence or hypocrisy, and engaging the whole person, soul and body, so that what God has joined is not separated." "The whole person must pray," he repeats to the visiting sisters. But the best prayer is that of

Philothea, when she decides to consecrate to God not only her soul, spirit, and heart, but also her “body with all its senses”. This is how she will truly love and serve Him with all her being.

The Jubilee and devout practises for visiting churches. Dialogue

Saint John Bosco fully understood the importance of Jubilees in the life of the Church. If, in 1850, due to various historical events, it had not been possible to celebrate the Jubilee, Pope Pius IX proclaimed an extraordinary one on the occasion of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (December 8, 1854). This Jubilee lasted six months, from December 8, 1854, to June 8, 1855. Don Bosco did not miss the opportunity and published, precisely in 1854, the volume “The Jubilee and Devout Practises for Visiting Churches”.

With the promulgation of the Encyclical “Quanta Cura” and the “Syllabus of Errors” Pope Pius IX proclaimed another extraordinary Jubilee, again lasting six months, from December 8, 1864, to June 8, 1865. On that occasion, Don Bosco proposed, in the Catholic Readings, the “Dialogues on the Institution of the Jubilee”.

In view of the ordinary Jubilee of 1875, Don Bosco republished his text under the title “The Jubilee of 1875, its Institution and Devout Practises for Visiting Churches,” always attentive to offering the faithful a guide for these celebrations rich with extraordinary graces.

Here follows the latest version, dated 1875.

DIALOGUE I. About the Jubilee in general

Giuliano – I greet you, Mr. Provost, I am here to ask you to practise a bit of patience.

Provost – Welcome, dear Giuliano, I am always pleased when you come to see me, and, as I have said several times, I am always at your beck and call in everything I can do for the spiritual benefit of all my parishioners and especially for you, who, having recently approached the Catholic faith, have a greater need to be instructed on many things.

Giul. – I have been told that the Pope has granted the Jubilee. I have never done it before, and I would like to be instructed on how to do it well.

Prov. – You wisely thought to seek being instructed in time, because since you became a Catholic, no Jubilee has ever taken place. In the circumstance of your renunciation, since you have never spoken about this practise of the Catholic Church, there is great concern that you have quite a few errors in your mind. Therefore, tell me what you want to know most, and I will try to satisfy you by making any observations that I think will be useful for your spiritual benefit.

Giul. – First of all, I would need you to tell me in an easy and clear manner what the word Jubilee means and what sense Catholics give to it, because unfortunately when I was Protestant, I heard all kinds of things being said against the Jubilee and against Indulgences.

Prov. – Two things, dear Giuliano, you desire from me: the explanation of the word Jubilee, and in what sense it is perceived by us as a religious practise proposed by the Catholic Church.

As for the meaning of the word, I do not need to dwell too long, for it is sufficient for us to know, what is intended with this term. However, I will cite the main explanations given by our holy Fathers.

St. Jerome and others say that the word Jubilee derives from *Iubal*, the inventor of musical instruments, or

from *Iobel*, which means horn, because the year of Jubilee among the Jews was proclaimed with a trumpet made in the shape of a ram's horn.

Some others claim Jubilee originates from the word *Habil*, which means to restore with joy, because in that year the things bought, lent, or pawned were returned to the first owner, and this brought great joy.

Others say that the word Jubilee derives from *Iobil*, which also means joy, because on these occasions good Christians have serious reasons to rejoice for the spiritual treasures they can enrich themselves with.

Giul. – This is the explanation of the word Jubilee in general, but I would like to know how it is defined by the Church as a practise of piety, to which Indulgences are attached.

Prov. – I will gladly satisfy you. The Jubilee, recognised as a practise established by the Church, is a plenary Indulgence granted by the Supreme Pontiff to the universal Church with full remission of all sins to those who worthily acquire it by fulfilling the prescribed actions.

First of all, *Plenary Indulgence*, is called as such to distinguish it from partial Indulgence, which is usually granted by the Supreme Pontiffs for certain practises of Christian piety, certain prayers, and certain acts of religion.

This Indulgence is called extraordinary because it is usually granted only rarely and in serious cases, such as when wars, plagues, and earthquakes threaten. The Supreme Pontiff Pius IX grants in this year the ordinary Jubilee, which usually occurs every twenty-five years, in order to encourage Christian faithful from all over the world to pray for the present needs of religion and especially for the conversion of sinners, for the uprooting of heresies, and to remove many errors that some seek to spread among the faithful through writings, books, or other means that, sadly, the devil knows how to suggest to the detriment of souls.

Giul. – I am very pleased with the definition you

have given me of the Jubilee, but it is called by such a variety of names that I remain quite confused – Holy Year, centenary year, secular, jubilar, particular Jubilee, universal Jubilee, great Jubilee, Indulgence in the form of Jubilee – these are the names by which I hear the Jubilee called promiscuously. Please be kind enough to explain them to me.

Prov. – These names, although sometimes used to express the same thing, nevertheless have meanings that are somewhat different from one another. – I will give you a brief explanation.

The Jubilee is called Jubilar Year, Holy Year because in that year (as I will tell you later) the Jews were to cease from all kinds of work and occupy themselves exclusively in works of virtue and holiness. So, all Christian faithful are equally invited, without being obliged to abandon their ordinary temporal occupations. It is also called centenary or hundredth year because for its first institution, it was celebrated every one hundred years.

The Jubilee is called partial when it is granted only in certain designated places, as would be in Rome, or in Santiago de Compostela in Spain. This Jubilee is also called general when it is granted to the faithful in every place of Christendom.

Yet, it is properly called General Jubilee or Great Jubilee when it is celebrated in the year fixed by the Church. For the Jews, it occurred every fifty years. Among Christians, in the beginning, it was every hundred years, then every fifty, and now every twenty-five.

The Jubilee is called extraordinary and also Indulgence in the form of Jubilee when, for some serious reason, it is granted outside the holy year.

The Supreme Pontiffs, when they are elevated to their dignity, usually solemnise this event with a plenary Indulgence, or an extraordinary Jubilee.

The difference between the great Jubilee and the particular Jubilee lies in the fact that the former lasts a

whole year, while the latter lasts only part of the year. For example, the one that reigning Pius IX granted in 1865 lasted only three months, but the same favours of the present Jubilee, which lasts for the whole year of 1875, were attached to it.

The brief explanation I have given you of these words, I believe will be even better clarified by the other things that I hope to be able to present to you in other discussions. In the meantime, oh beloved Giuliano, rest assured that the Jubilee is a great treasure for Christians, so much so that the learned Cardinal Gaetani in his treatise on the Jubilee (c. 15) wrote these beautiful words: "Blessed is that people which knows what the Jubilee is; wretched are those who, through negligence or inconsideration, neglect it with the hope of reaching another one." (Those who wish for more detailed information on what has been briefly mentioned above may consult: MORONI: Holy Year and Jubilee – BERGIER article Jubilee – The work: *Magnum theatrum vitae humanae article Iubileum*. – NAVARRO *de Iubileo* note 1° Benzonio book 3, chap 4. Vittorelli – Turrecremata – Sarnelli tom. X. St. Isidore in the *Origins* book 5.).

DIALOGUE II. The Jubilee among the Jews

Giul. – I have listened with pleasure to what you have told me about the various meanings that are usually given to the word Jubilee, and about the great advantages that can derive from it. But this is not enough for me, if I have to give a response to my former companions in religion. This is because, using the Bible alone as the norm of their faith, they are set in asserting that the Jubilee is a novelty in the Church, of which there is no trace in the Bible. Therefore, I would like to be instructed on this matter.

Prov. – When your ancient ministers and companions in religion asserted that the sacred Scripture does not speak of Jubilee, they sought to hide the truth from you, or they themselves were unaware of it.

However, before I explain to you what the Bible

says about the Jubilee, I must point out to you how there is in the Catholic Church an infallible authority that comes from God and is directed by God Himself. This is evident from many texts of Sacred Scripture and especially from the words spoken by the Saviour to Saint Peter when he established him as head of the Church, saying: – “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (*St. Matthew* 18). Therefore, we can confidently accept everything that this authority establishes for the good of Christians without fear of error. Moreover, it is a maxim accepted by all Catholics that when we encounter some truth believed and practised at all times in the Church, and there is no time or place in which it has been instituted, we must believe it as revealed by God Himself and transmitted in words or in writings from the beginning of the Church to our days.

Giul. – I believe this too. This is because, given the infallible authority of the Church, it does not matter whether it proposes things written in the Bible or transmitted by tradition. However, I would greatly like to know what is in the Bible regarding the Jubilee, and I desire this all the more because a short time ago an old Protestant friend of mine began to mock me about the novelty of the Jubilee, of which, he said, there is no mention in the Bible.

Prov. – I am ready to satisfy this just desire of yours. Let us open the Bible together and read here in the book of Leviticus in Chapter XXV, and we will find the institution of the Jubilee, as it was practised among the Jews.

The sacred text says this:

“You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, that gives forty-nine years; and on the tenth day of the seventh month –on the day of atonement– you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. That

fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces. In this year of jubilee, you shall return, every one of you, to your property”.

To this point these are the words of Leviticus, concerning which I believe that no lengthy explanation is needed to make you understand how ancient the institution of the Jubilee is, that is, since the earliest times when the Jews were about to enter the Promised Land, around the year 2500 of that world.

The Jubilee is also mentioned in many other places in the Bible; as in the same book of Leviticus, in Chapter XXVII; in the book of Numbers, in Chapter XXXVI, in that of Joshua in Chapter VI. But let it suffice what we have said, which is extremely clear in itself.

Giul. – I was very pleased to see these words from the Bible, and I rejoice greatly that the Bible not only speaks of the Jubilee, but commands its observance to all the Jews. I would like you to explain to me somewhat extensively the words of the sacred text, to know what purpose God had in commanding the Jubilee.

Prov. – From the Bible it is clear what purpose God had in commanding Moses to observe the Jubilee. First of all, God, who is all charity, wanted that people to become accustomed to being kind and merciful to their neighbours. Therefore, in the year of Jubilee, all debts were forgiven. Those who had sold or mortgaged houses, vineyards, fields, or other things, in that year regained everything as first owners. Exiles returned to their homeland, and slaves were set free without any ransom. In this way, the rich were prevented from making excessive purchases, the poor could preserve the inheritance of their ancestors, and slavery, so practised in those times among pagan nations, was prevented. Moreover, since the people had to cease from temporal occupations, they could freely devote an entire year to matters concerning divine worship, and thus rich and poor, slaves and masters

united in one heart and one soul to bless and thank the Lord for the benefits received.

Giul. – Perhaps this is not appropriate, but I have a doubt: if in the year of Jubilee no sowing was done, nor were the fruits of the fields gathered, what could the people eat?

Prov. – On that occasion, that is, in the year of Jubilee, an extraordinary event occurred, which is a true miracle. In the previous year, the Lord made the earth produce such an abundance of all kinds of fruits that was enough for the entire year 49 and 50 and part of 51. In this, we must admire the goodness of God, who, while commanding us to occupy ourselves with things concerning His divine worship, thinks of everything we may need for our bodies. This maxim was later confirmed several times in the Gospel, especially when Jesus Christ said: Do not worry about tomorrow, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' Rather, strive first for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well".

Giul. – Another doubt arises in this moment: is the year of Jubilee still preceded by that abundance in some place on earth?

Prov. – No, oh Giuliano, the material abundance of the Jewish Jubilee lasted among that people only until the coming of the Messiah. From then on, having fulfilled what the ancient Jubilee foreshadowed, that material abundance ceased to give way to the abundance of graces and blessings that Christians can enjoy in the holy Catholic Religion.

Giul. – I am very satisfied with what you have told me. (On this matter, one can consult CALMET DELL' AQUILA Great Dictionary of the Holy Bible under the article Jubilee. – MENOCHIO: On the fiftieth year of the Jubilee of the Jews).

DIALOGUE III. The Jubilee among Christians

Giul. – I will try to remember how the Jubilee was practised among the Jews, and how it is a source of heavenly

blessings in determined times. Now I would also like to know if there is mention of Jubilee in the New Testament, because if there is any text on this matter, the Protestants are in a bind and will have to agree that Catholics practise the Jubilee according to the Gospel.

Prov. – Although it should suffice for every Christian that a truth is recorded anywhere in the Bible for it to be a rule of faith for him or her, in this case we can be abundantly satisfied with the authority of the Old and the New Testaments.

St. Luke in Chapter four (v. 19) recounts the following event about the Saviour. When Jesus went to Nazareth, His homeland, the Bible was presented to Him so that He could explain some passages to the people. He opened the book of the prophet Isaiah and among other things applied the following words to Himself: The Spirit of the Lord has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance.

From these words, oh Giuliano, you know how the Saviour recalls the ancient Jubilee, which was entirely material, and dignifies it in a moral sense, saying that He proclaimed the true year of retribution, a pleasant year in which through His miracles, with His passion and death, He would give true freedom to the peoples enslaved by sin with the abundance of graces and blessings that are found in the Christian religion (see MARTINI in St. Luke).

Also, St. Paul in his Second Letter to the Corinthians speaks of this acceptable time, the time of salvation and sanctification (c. 6, 2).

From these words and from other facts of the New Testament, we conclude: 1) that the ancient Jubilee, which was entirely material, has in fact passed into the new law, as entirely spiritual; 2) the freedom that the people of God granted to the slaves symbolised the complete liberation that we will acquire by the grace of God, by which we are freed from the harsh slavery of the devil; 3) that the year of

retribution, or Jubilee, was confirmed in the Gospel, received by the Church and practised according to the needs of the faithful, and as the opportunities of the times allowed.

Giul. – I am increasingly convinced of a truth that I firmly believe, because it is recorded in the Old and the New Testaments. Now I would like to know how this religious practise has been preserved in the Catholic Church.

Prov. – This is a matter of great importance, and I will try to satisfy you. Since the year of Jubilee among the Jews was a year of remission and forgiveness, so it was also established the year of Jubilee among Christians, in which great indulgences, that is, remission and forgiveness of sins, are granted. Hence, it happened that the year of Jubilee among Christians was called a *holy year*, both for the many works of piety that Christians usually perform in that year as well as for the great heavenly favours that in such a circumstance everyone can procure.

Giul. – That is not what I meant to say. I would like to hear about the way in which this Jubilee was introduced among Christians.

Prov. – To understand how the Jubilee was introduced and preserved among Christians, I must point out a religious belief followed since the early days of the Church. It consisted of a great veneration that in the Jubilee year – called in the Gospel as the year of retribution, and by St. Paul as the acceptable year, the time of salvation, one could obtain a plenary indulgence, or the remission of all gratification due to God for sins. It is believed that the first Jubilee was granted by the holy Apostles themselves in the year 50 of the common era (see Scaligero and Petavius).

The first Popes, who succeeded St. Peter in governing the Church, continued to keep this religious practise alive, granting great favours to those who at certain times went to Rome to visit the Church where the body of St. Peter was buried (see Rutilius, *De Iubileo*. Laurea, Navarro, Vittorelli and others).

For it was always the belief among Christians,

even in the early centuries, that by visiting the Church of St. Peter in the Vatican, where the body of that Prince of the Apostles was buried, one could gain extraordinary spiritual favours, which we call indulgences.

The heavenly favours that were hoped for, the great respect that all Catholics had for the glorious St. Peter, the desire to visit the Church, the chains, and the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, drew people from all parts of the world. In certain years, one could see old, young, rich, and poor departing from very distant lands, overcoming the greatest hardships of the roads to get to Rome, fully convinced of obtaining great indulgences.

St. Gregory the Great, wishing to support the religious spirit among Christians, and at the same time wanting to regulate their frequent gatherings in Rome, in the Sixth Century established that every hundred years one could gain the plenary indulgence, or Jubilee, from all those who in the secular year, also called the holy year, went to Rome to visit the Vatican Basilica, where the Prince of the Apostles was buried.

Giul. – Here I encounter a difficulty. I have read in some small books that the Jubilee was instituted only in the year 1300 by a Pope named Boniface VIII, and according to what you say, it would be much further back in time.

Prov. – I also know that there are some printed booklets which assert that Boniface VIII was the originator of the Jubilee. However, what they say is inaccurate, because this Pope was rather the first to publish the holy year with a Bull, that is, the plenary indulgence of the Jubilee. Yet, in this very Bull, he assures that he did nothing but establish in writing what was already universally practised among Christians.

DIALOGUE IV. First solemn publication of the Jubilee, or holy year

Giul. – This first publication of the Jubilee or the holy year is such a serious and solemn matter that I would

like to hear it recounted with the most notable circumstances.

Prov. – Since you like stories, I think it appropriate to explain the reasons that led Pope Boniface VIII to solemnly publish a Bull regarding the first solemn Jubilee. – It was the year 1300 when an extraordinary number of people from the Roman State and abroad flocked to Rome in such large numbers that it seemed as if the gates of Heaven had opened there. At the beginning of January, there was such a crowd of people in the streets of that city that one could hardly walk. Moved by this fact, the Pope commanded that everything possible be sought regarding this in ancient records. Then he called some of the oldest people who had come there to find out what had moved them. Among these was a noble and wealthy Savoyard aged one hundred and seven years. The Pope himself, in the presence of several Cardinals, wanted to question him accordingly: How old are you? – One hundred and seven. – Why have you come to Rome? – To gain the great Indulgences. – Who told you? – My father. – When? – One hundred years ago my father took me with him to Rome, and told me that every hundred years in Rome one could obtain great Indulgences, and that if I were still alive a hundred years later, I should not neglect to visit the Basilica of the Prince of the Apostles.

After this man, others, both old and young from various nations, were also brought in, who, when questioned by the same Supreme Pontiff, all agreed in asserting that they had always understood that by visiting the Basilica of St. Peter every secular year, they would earn great Indulgences with the remission of all sins. In view of that universal and constant belief, the Pope promulgated a Bull confirming what had been practised until then by oral tradition. A writer of those times, familiar with Pope Boniface, assures that he heard that Pope say that he was moved to publish his Bull by the belief spread and accepted throughout the Christian world, namely that since the birth of Christ, a great Indulgence was usually granted every secular year (Cardinal John Monaco).

Giul. – Since I see that you have read a lot, bring me some excerpts from that Bull, so that I can be well-

instructed about this universal practise of the Church.

Prov. – It would be too long to report it all. I will convey to you the beginning, and I believe that will suffice for you. Here are the words of the Pope: “An ancient and faithful tradition of men who lived a long time ago assures that to those who come to visit the honourable Basilica of the Prince of the Apostles in Rome, great Indulgences and remission of sins are granted. We therefore, who by the duty of our office desire and strive with all our heart to procure the salvation of souls, by our apostolic authority approve and confirm all the mentioned Indulgences, and renew them by authenticating them with this our writing”. After this, the Pope explains the reasons that led him to grant such Indulgences, and what obligations must be fulfilled by those who wish to acquire them.

Once the Bull of the Pope was known, it is incredible the enthusiasm that arose from every place to make the pilgrimage to Rome. From France, from England, from Spain, from Germany, pilgrims of every age and condition, nobles and sovereigns came in crowds. The number of foreigners in Rome reached up to two million at the same time. This would have caused a serious famine if the Pope had not provided in a timely manner for the needs by bringing food from other countries.

Giul. – Now I understand very well how ancient the practise of the Jubilee is in the Church, but what we celebrate today seems very different to me, both because it is spoken of more often, and because one no longer goes to Rome to acquire it.

Prov. – You make an appropriate observation. In this regard, I will tell you that the Jubilee, according to the Bull of Pope Boniface, was to take place every hundred years. But since such a span of time is too long and human life is too short for everyone to benefit from it, it was reduced by a Pope named Clement VI to every fifty years, just as it was for the Jews. Then another Pope named Gregory XI restricted it to every thirty-three years in memory of the

thirty-three years of the Saviour's life. Finally, Pope Paul II, to ensure that even those who die young could acquire the Indulgence of the Jubilee, established that it should take place every twenty-five years. Hence, it has been practised accordingly in the Church until today. Furthermore, the obligation to go to Rome prevented many from benefiting from the spiritual favours of the Jubilee, either due to distance, age, or illness. For this reason, the Roman Pontiffs granted the same Indulgence, but instead of the obligation of going to Rome, they usually impose some obligations to be fulfilled by those who wish to make the holy Jubilee.

We have already recorded 20 holy years throughout ecclesiastical history, that is, twenty years in which the favour of the Jubilee was published by the Popes at different times.

The last of these was celebrated by Leo XII in the year 1825. It was also supposed to be published in the year 1850, but the public turmoil of that time did not allow it to be done. Now we are celebrating that of the Supreme Pontiff Pius IX, which is truly the holy year of 1875.

Giul. – Why was the present Jubilee granted by the Pope?

Prov. – What the Pope has granted at present is an ordinary Jubilee. The reasons for this Jubilee are the conversion of sinners, particularly heretics, peace among Christian princes and the triumph of the holy Catholic Religion over heresy. In addition, the Holy Father has also proposed the goal of obtaining from God particular insights for understanding many erroneous propositions that have been spreading among the faithful for some time, gravely damaging faith and having the danger of eternal damnation for many. The Pope in his Encyclical explains the reasons for his actions. Finally, he prescribes the works to be performed to acquire the holy Indulgences.

Giul. – Do you think, Mr. Provost, that religious matters are going so badly? Heretics convert from time to time in large numbers to the Catholic Religion. Catholicism

triumphs and progresses greatly in foreign missions.

Prov. – This is true, my good Giuliano, that the Catholic Religion prospers greatly in foreign missions. It is also true that in recent years, many Jews, heretics, particularly Protestants, have renounced their errors to embrace the holy Catholic Religion, and precisely for these advances, the devil makes all his efforts to sustain and spread heresy and impiety. Moreover, in so many ways religion is despised today in public and private, in speeches, in newspapers, in books! There is no holy and venerable thing that is not targeted and criticised and mocked. Take this: I give you the letter that the Pope writes to all the Bishops of Christendom. Read it at your convenience. In it, the efforts that hell makes against the Church in these times are mentioned, what favours can be enjoyed in the circumstance of the Jubilee, and what things must be done to acquire them. In the meantime, you should keep in mind that the Jubilee was a divine institution. It was God who commanded it to Moses. This institution passed on to Christians and was practised in the early days of the Church with some modifications, until Boniface VIII established it regularly with a Bull. Other Popes then reduced it to the form in which it is observed today. Therefore, we practise something commanded by God, and we do it because it is ordained by the Church for our particular needs. Thus, we should be eager to take advantage of it and profess feelings of utmost gratitude towards God, who in so many ways shows His lively desire that we take advantage of His favours and think of the salvation of our souls. Plus, at the same time, we must profess a lively veneration for the Vicar of Jesus Christ, fulfilling with the utmost diligence what He prescribes, in order to procure for ourselves the heavenly favours (For more extensive information on the aforementioned, see Cardinal GAETANI: *Dell'anno centesimo* [On the Hundredth Year]. – MANNI: *Storia dell'anno santo* [History of the Holy Year] – ZACCARIA: *Dell'Anno Santo Trattato* [On the Holy Year]).

DIALOGUE V. On Indulgences

Giul. – We are at a difficult point, of which I have always heard my ancient heretic companions speak ill, I mean, that of Indulgences. Therefore, I would like to be instructed about them, smoothing out those difficulties that will present themselves to my mind.

Prov. – I am not surprised that your ancient companions in heresy have spoken and still speak with disdain of the Indulgences, because the Protestants used the Indulgences as a pretext to separate from the Catholic Church. When you, my Julian, have a proper understanding of the Indulgences, you will certainly be satisfied, and you will bless divine mercy, which offers us such an easy means to gain divine treasures.

Giul. – Please explain to me what these Indulgences are, and I will strive to derive benefit from them.

Prov. – To help you understand what Indulgence means, it is good to remember how sin produces two bitter effects in our soul: the *guilt* that deprives us of grace and friendship with God, and the *punishment* that follows, which prevents entry into paradise. This punishment is of two kinds: eternal and temporal. Guilt, together with eternal punishment, is totally remitted through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of Penance, provided that we approach it with the right dispositions. Since the temporal punishment is not always completely remitted in the abovementioned Sacrament, it remains to be satisfied in this life through good works and penance, or in the next life through the fire of purgatory. It is on this truth that the severe canonical penances were founded, which the Church imposed on repentant sinners in the early centuries. Three, seven, ten, up to fifteen and twenty years of fasting on bread and water, of deprivations and humiliations, sometimes for an entire lifetime. This is what the Church imposed for a single sin, and it did not believe that those satisfactions exceeded the measure of what the sinner owed to the justice of God. And who

can measure the injury that guilt does to the supreme God and the malice of sin? Who can penetrate the profound eternal secrets and know how much divine justice requires from us in this life to satisfy our debts? How long will we have to stay in the fire of purgatory? In order to shorten the time we would have to remain in that place of purification and alleviate the penance we should do in the present life, there are the treasures of holy Indulgences. And these are like a substitute for the severe canonical penances which, for many years, and sometimes for an entire lifetime, as I said, the Church used to inflict on repentant sinners.

Giul. – It seems reasonable to me that after the forgiveness of sin, divine justice still requires satisfaction through some penance; but what exactly are the Indulgences?

Prov. – Indulgences are the remission of the temporal punishment due for our sins, which is done through the spiritual treasures entrusted by God to the Church.

Giul. – What are these spiritual treasures of the Church?

Prov. – These spiritual treasures are the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, those of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, as we profess in the Apostles' Creed when we say: *I believe in the Communion of Saints*. Since the merits of Jesus Christ are infinite, the merits of the Most Holy Mary, who, conceived without sin and lived without sin, owed nothing to divine justice for her sins. Also, there are Martyrs and other Saints, who satisfied more than was necessary for their own account through their sufferings, in union with those of Jesus Christ. All these satisfactions before God are like an inexhaustible treasure, which the Roman Pontiff dispenses according to the opportunity of the times and according to the needs of Christians.

Giul. – Here we reach a great difficulty: Sacred Scripture does not speak to us of Indulgences. Who then can grant Indulgences?

Prov. – The faculty to dispense holy Indulgences resides in the Supreme Pontiff. Since in every society, in

every government, one of the most noble prerogatives of the Head of State is the right to grant pardons and to commute punishments. Now the Supreme Pontiff, representative of Jesus Christ on Earth, Head of the great Christian society, undoubtedly has the right to give grace, to commute, remit in whole or in part the punishment incurred for sin, in favour of those who sincerely return to God.

Giul. – On what basis is this power of the Supreme Pontiff founded?

Prov. – This power, or authority of the Supreme Pontiff in dispensing Indulgences, is based on the very words of Jesus Christ. In the act of appointing Saint Peter to govern the Church, he said these words: “I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”. This faculty undoubtedly encompasses a right to grant Christians everything that can contribute to the good of their souls.

Giul. – These words seem magical to me. They establish Saint Peter as the head of the Church, give him the faculty to remit sins, the faculty to make precepts, to grant Indulgences, and all this in those few words!

Prov. – The words spoken by Jesus Christ to Saint Peter confer a full and absolute power, and this full and absolute power constitutes Saint Peter as the Head of the Church, Vicar of Jesus Christ, dispenser of all heavenly favours, therefore also of holy Indulgences. This is evident since the Lord gave him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: *Tibi dabo claves regni coelorum*; and from the words with which he commanded Saint Peter to be a shepherd, that is, to dispense to Christians what people and times would require from him for their spiritual and eternal good. These words of the Saviour conclude that the power given to Saint Peter and his successors excludes any doubt about the faculty to grant Indulgences.

Giul. – I understand very well that with these words the Saviour gave great powers especially to Saint Peter,

among which the faculty to remit sins. However, I cannot understand that the faculty to dispense Indulgences was given.

Prov. – If you understand very well that with those words the Saviour gave especially to Saint Peter (as with other similar ones he also gave to the other Apostles) the faculty to remit sins, that is, to forgive eternal punishment, must we then say that the faculty to remit temporal punishment through Indulgences, which in comparison to that can be said to be infinitely lesser, was not given?

Giul. – This is true; this is true. Just tell me if those words were understood in this sense by the Apostles.

Prov. – This is certain, and I can present you with more facts noted in the Bible. I will limit myself to mentioning just one. This is from Saint Paul, and it concerns the faithful of Corinth. Among those fervent Christians, a young man had committed a grave sin for which he deserved to be excommunicated. He soon showed that he was repentant, expressing a strong desire to fulfil the penance due. Then the Corinthians prayed Saint Paul to absolve him. This Apostle used indulgence, that is, he freed him from excommunication and restored him to the bosom of the Church, although, due to the gravity of the sin, and according to the discipline in force at that time, he should have remained separated from the Church for a long time. From these words and others of the same Saint Paul, it appears that he himself bound and loosed, that is, used rigor and indulgence, depending on how he judged it would be more beneficial for souls.

Giul. – I am very pleased with what you have narrated to me about Indulgences, as is included in Sacred Scripture. I am completely sure and at peace in believing that God has given the Church the faculty to dispense Indulgences. I would also be very pleased if you could tell me whether the dispensing of these has always taken place in the Church, because the Protestants say that in the early times there was no talk of Indulgences.

Prov. – Even in this, the Protestants are mistaken, and ecclesiastical history is full of facts that

demonstrate the divine institution of Indulgences and their constant use since the early times of the Church. And since I know that you like facts very much, I want to recount some to confirm what I am saying.

Giul. – I like facts very much, even more than reasons, and if many are recounted, I will be very pleased.

Prov. – After the time of the Apostles, the use of Indulgences continued. In the first century of the Common Era, we have mention of this fact. In the second century, we read that during the persecution, when a sinner returned to the Church, they were first obliged to confess their sins. Then a time was imposed upon them, during which, if they fervently engaged in works of penance, they would obtain Indulgence, that is, their time of penance would be shortened. To obtain this more easily, it was recommended to those who were led to martyrdom to pray to the bishop, or to write him a note, begging him to grant them indulgence in view of the sufferings of the martyrs and thus, grant them peace with God and with the Church (Tertullian, *Ad maj.* 1, I).

In the third century, Saint Cyprian, writing to the faithful detained in prison, warns them not to intercede too easily for Indulgence for those who ask for it, but to wait until they show sufficient signs of sorrow and repentance for their own faults. From these words, it appears that in the times of Saint Cyprian, Indulgences were in use, and that the Saint recommended to the martyrs to be cautious not to intercede with the Bishops except for those who showed sincere repentance (Ep. 21, 22, 23).

In the fourth century, in the year 325, a general Council was convened in the city of Nicaea, in which many matters concerning the universal good of the Church were discussed. When the time came to speak of Indulgences, it was established that those who do penance could obtain Indulgence from the Bishop and that those most negligent should do their penance within the established time. This means nothing other than granting Indulgence to some and denying it to others (Council of Nicaea, Canon 11, 12).

In later times, the facts are countless. Saint Gregory the Great, in a letter written to the King of the Visigoths, sent a small key that had touched the body of Saint Peter, and contained a bit of filings from the chains with which that holy Apostle had been bound, *so that, says the Pope, what had served to bind the Apostle's neck when he went to martyrdom, may absolve you from all your sins.* This is how the Holy Fathers interpret the sense of plenary Indulgence, which the Pope sent along with that blessed key.

In the year 803, Saint Leo the Great, having travelled with a large assembly of cardinals, archbishops and prelates to the court of the Emperor Charlemagne, was received by the pious sovereign with the utmost honours. That monarch asked for and obtained, as a particular favour, that he dedicate the royal palace of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) to the Blessed Virgin, and that he enrich it with many indulgences to be gained by those who went to visit it. If you want me to recount other facts, I could recite almost the entire ecclesiastical history, especially the history of the Crusades, the circumstances during which the Popes granted plenary Indulgence to those who enlisted to go to Palestine to liberate the Holy Places.

In conclusion and confirmation of what I have said so far, I present here the Doctrine of the Catholic Church regarding Indulgences as defined in the Council of Trent:

“Having been granted by Christ to the Church, the faculty to dispense Indulgences has been used by the Church since very remote times; therefore, the sacred Council commands and teaches that it should be held that Indulgences are useful for the salvation of Christians, as proven by the authority of the Councils. Whoever says that Indulgences are useless, or denies that there is the faculty to dispense them in the Church, let him be anathema: let him be excommunicated (Sess. 25, chap. 21)”.

Giul. – Enough, enough, if the faculty to dispense Indulgences was given by God to the Church, was practised by the Apostles and has always been in use in the Church in every

century up to our days, we must say plainly that the Protestants are in grave error when they criticise the Catholic Church for dispensing holy Indulgences, as if the use of them had not been practised in the early times of the Church.

DIALOGUE VI. Acquisition of Indulgences

Prov. – While we admire God's goodness in dispensing the holy Indulgences, in granting heavenly treasures that do not diminish, nor will they ever, if anything they spread, like an immense ocean that does not become reduced no matter how much water is drawn from it, we must, however, fulfil certain obligations for the acquisition of the same. First of all, it is good to emphasise that it is not within the freedom of each Christian to use these divine treasures at will. One will enjoy them only when, how, and in that greater or lesser quantity, that the holy Church and the Supreme Pontiff determine. Thus, Indulgences are commonly distinguished into two classes: partial, that is, of some days, months, or years, and plenary. For example, by saying: My Jesus, mercy, one earns a hundred days of Indulgence. When one says: Mary, help of Christians, pray for us, one earns 300 days. Every time one accompanies the Viaticum to a sick person, one can earn seven years of Indulgence. These indulgences are partial. The plenary Indulgence is that for which all the punishment, for which we are indebted to God for our sins, is remitted. This is precisely what the Pope grants on the occasion of this Jubilee. By earning this indulgence, you return to be before God, as you were when you were born, that is, when you were baptised, so that, if one were to die after earning the Jubilee Indulgence, they would go to heaven without touching the pains of purgatory.

Giul. – I wholeheartedly desire to earn this plenary Indulgence. Just let me know what I must do.

Prov. – To earn this, as with any other Indulgence, it is first required that one be in a state of grace with God, because one who is guilty of a grave sin and

eternal punishment before God is certainly not, nor can be, capable of receiving the remission of temporal punishment. It is therefore excellent advice that every Christian who wishes to acquire indulgences when and how they are granted should approach the Sacrament of Confession, striving to excite true sorrow within themselves, and make a firm resolution not to offend God any more in the future.

The second condition is the fulfilment of what the Roman Pontiff prescribes. In opening the treasure of holy Indulgences, the holy Church always obliges the faithful to some good work to be done at a determined time and place. This is to prepare our hearts to receive those extraordinary favours that God's mercy has prepared for us. Thus, to acquire the Indulgence of this Jubilee, the supreme Pontiff wants everyone to approach the Sacraments of Confession and Communion, to devoutly visit four churches for 15 consecutive times or alternately, praying according to their intention, for the exaltation and prosperity of our holy mother Church, for the eradication of heresy, for the peace and concord of Christian principles, for the peace and unity of all Christian people.

Giul. – Are these things enough to earn the Jubilee Indulgence?

Prov. – These two things are not enough, there is still one more, which is the main one. It is required that all sins, even venial ones, be detested, and moreover, that one renounce affection for all and each of them. And we will certainly do this if we prepare ourselves to practise those things that the confessor will impose on us, but above all if we make a firm and effective resolution never to commit any sin again, if we avoid the occasions and practise the means to not fall back. The Supreme Pontiff Clement VI, to encourage Christians all over the world to acquire the Jubilee, said: "Jesus Christ, with His grace and the overflowing merits of His passion, left to the Church militant here on earth an infinite treasure not hidden within a sheet, nor buried in a field, rather entrusted to be healthily dispensed to the

faithful, entrusted to blessed Peter, who holds the keys of Heaven, and to his successors, Vicars of Jesus Christ on earth; to which treasure the merits of the blessed Mother of God and of all the elect contribute”.

Now, my dear Giuliano, you have learned what is necessary to acquire this plenary Indulgence, and since among other things it is prescribed to make a visit to four churches, I will now provide you with the necessary devotional practises that may serve you in each of these visits (Those who wish to learn more about the holy indulgences may consult MORONI article: *Indulgences. Magnum Theatrum vitae humanae. Artic. Indulgentia.* – BERGIER *Indulgences.* – FERRARI in *Biblioteca* [Library]).

For greater convenience, the intentions of the Church in promulgating this Jubilee, the favours granted during it, and the conditions for acquiring the Plenary Indulgence are summarised here.

INTENTIONS OF THE CHURCH IN PROMULGATING THE JUBILEE

The intentions of the Church in inviting us to participate in the Jubilee are: 1) to renew the memory of our Redemption and to excite us to a dynamic gratitude towards the Divine Saviour; 2) to revive in us the sentiments of faith, religion, and piety; 3) to prepare ourselves through the most abundant lights that the Lord grants in this time of salvation, against errors, impiety, corruption, and scandals that surround us from all sides; 4) to awaken and increase the spirit of prayer, which is the weapon of the Christian; 5) to excite us to heartfelt penance, to amend our ways, and to redeem with good works the sins that have drawn down God’s wrath upon us; 6) to obtain through this conversion of sinners and the greater perfection of the just, that God may hasten in His mercy the triumph of the Church amidst the cruel war waged against her by her enemies. To these intentions, we must also associate ourselves in our prayers.

SPECIAL FAVOURS GRANTED DURING THE JUBILEE

To encourage sinners to participate in the Jubilee, this holy year every confessor is given the faculty to absolve from any sin, even those reserved to the Bishop or the Pope, as well as to commute into other works of piety the vows of almost every kind, which one may have made and cannot observe.

Moreover, everyone, fulfilling the conditions indicated below, can in this circumstance acquire not only the remission of all their sins but also the *Plenary Indulgence*, that is, the remission of all the temporal punishment that would still remain to be expiated in this world or in purgatory.

Such indulgence is applicable to the souls in Purgatory, but it can be acquired only once during the Jubilee.

The time of the Jubilee began on January 1st and ends on December 31st, 1875.

CONDITIONS FOR ACQUIRING THE JUBILEE INDULGENCE

1st *Going to confession with the proper dispositions*, earning absolution with true repentance.

2nd *Approaching Communion worthily*: those who have not yet been admitted may have it commuted through a pious work by the confessor. A single Communion is not enough to satisfy both the Easter precept and to acquire the Jubilee at the same time.

3rd *Visiting four Churches for fifteen consecutive days or intermittently* with the intention of attaining the Jubilee. It is sufficient to make this intention once at the beginning. The visit must be made to all four Churches (For Turin, the Churches of St. John, the Consolata, the Holy Martyrs, and St. Philip are designated. In other places, each should consult their own parish priest or director) on the same day. However, the time from the first Vespers of one day until the end of the following day can be counted as one day.

Thus, for example, from noon today to the end of tomorrow can be counted as one day. It would not be sufficient to visit one Church per day. However, in case of serious impediment, confessors have the faculty to modify the visits or even commute them into other pious works. The visits can be made before or after Confession and Communion, or even in between. It is not necessary, but it is highly desirable that they be made in a state of grace, that is, without mortal sin on one's conscience.

No special prayers are prescribed when making these visits, and it may suffice for one to remain for about a quarter of an hour in each Church reciting the *Acts of Faith, Hope*, etc., with five *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys*, and *Glorias*, praying according to the intention of the Church and the Pope.

For the convenience of the devout, some considerations are provided here that may serve as reading material during these visits.

VISIT TO THE FIRST CHURCH. Confession

A great aspect of God's mercy towards sinners is found in the Sacrament of Confession. If God had said to forgive our sins only through Baptism, and not those that, unfortunately, would be committed after receiving this Sacrament, oh! how many Christians would go to eternal perdition! But God, knowing our misery, established another Sacrament, through which sins committed after Baptism are forgiven. This is the Sacrament of Confession. Here is what the Gospel says: Eight days after His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples and said to them: Peace be with you. As the heavenly Father sent me, so I send you, that is, the authority given to me by the Heavenly Father to do what is good for the salvation of souls, I give to you. Then the Saviour, breathing on them, said: Receive the Holy Spirit; those whose sins you forgive are forgiven; those whose sins you retain are retained. Everyone understands that the words retain or not retain mean *to give or not give absolution*. This

is the great authority given by God to His Apostles and their successors in the administration of the Holy Sacraments.

From these words of the Saviour arises an obligation for the sacred Ministers to listen to confessions, and equally the obligation for Christians to confess their sins arises, so that it is known when to give or not give absolution, what advice to suggest to remedy the evil done, in short, to give all those paternal warnings that are necessary to repair the evils of the past life and not to commit them again in the future.

Confession too was not something practised only at some time and in some place. As soon as the Apostles began to preach the Gospel, the Sacrament of Penance began to be practised. We read that when St. Paul preached in Ephesus, many faithful, who had already embraced the faith came to the feet of the Apostles and confessed their sins. *Confitentes et annunciantes actus suos*. [Confessing and announcing their deeds]. From the time of the Apostles until now, the practise of this venerable Sacrament has always been observed. Throughout the ages the Catholic Church has condemned as heretical anyone who dared to deny this truth. Nor is there anyone who has been able to do without it. Rich and poor, servants and masters, kings, monarchs, emperors, priests, bishops, the same Supreme Pontiffs, all must kneel at the feet of a sacred minister to obtain forgiveness for those sins they may have committed after Baptism. But alas! How many Christians take poor advantage of this Sacrament! Some approach it without preparing themselves, others confess indifferently, without sorrow or resolution; others tend to leave out important things in confession, or do not fulfil the obligations imposed by the confessor. These people take the most holy and useful thing to use it for their own ruin. St. Teresa had a tremendous revelation on this matter. She saw that souls were falling into hell like snow falls in winter on the slopes of the mountains. Frightened by that vision, she asked Jesus Christ for an explanation, and received in response that they were going to perdition because of poorly

made confessions in their lives.

To encourage us to go to confess with complete sincerity, let us consider that the priest, who awaits us in the tribunal of Penance, awaits us in the name of God and in the name of God he forgives the sins of men. If there were a condemned criminal sentenced to death for a serious crime, and at the moment of being led to the gallows, the minister of the king presented himself saying: Your guilt is forgiven; the king grants you mercy for your life, and welcomes you among his friends, and so that you do not doubt what I say, here is the decree that authorises me to revoke your death sentence, what feelings of gratitude and love this guilty person would express towards the king and his minister! This is exactly what happens to us. We are the true guilty ones who, by sinning, have deserved the eternal punishment of hell. The minister of the King of kings, in the name of God in the tribunal of Penance, tells us: God sends me to you to absolve you from your sins, to close hell to you, to open Paradise for you, to restore you to friendship with God. And so that you not doubt the authority given to me, here is a decree signed by the same Jesus Christ, which authorises me to recall from you the death sentence. The decree is expressed as follows: Those whose sins you forgive are forgiven; those whose sins you retain are retained. *Quorum remisistis peccata, remittuntur eis, quorum retinueritis, retenta sunt.* With what esteem and reverence must we approach a minister who, in the name of God, can do us so much good and prevent us from so much evil!

There must be a special reason that encourages us to tell every sin to the confessor, and that is that on the occasion of Jubilee he has the authority to absolve from any sin, even reserved ones. Anyone who has incurred censures, excommunications, and other ecclesiastical penalties can be absolved by any confessor without resorting to the Bishop or the Pope.

Nor should the fear that the confessor will reveal to others the things heard in confession keep us away from

confession. No, this has never been the case in the past, nor will it ever be so in the future. A good father undoubtedly keeps the confidences of his children secret. The confessor is a true spiritual father; therefore, even speaking humanly, he keeps under strict secrecy what we reveal to him. But there is more. An absolute, natural, ecclesiastical, and divine precept binds the confessor to silence about anything heard in confession. Even if it were to prevent a serious evil, to free himself and the whole world from death, he cannot use information obtained in confession, unless the penitent expressly gives him the authority to speak about it. Therefore, go, oh Christian, go often to this friend. The more often you go to him, the more you will ensure that you walk the path to Heaven. The more often you go to Him, the more you will be assured of the forgiveness of your sins, and you will be assured of that eternal happiness promised by the same Jesus Christ, who gave such great power to His ministers. Do not let the multitude or the seriousness of your sins hold you back. The priest is a minister of God's mercy, which is infinite. Therefore, He can absolve any number of sins, no matter how serious they are. Let us only present a humbled and contrite heart, and then we will certainly have forgiveness. *Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies:*

PRAYER

O my Jesus, who died on the cross for me, I thank you with all my heart that you did not let me die in sin. From this moment I turn to you. I promise to leave sin and to faithfully observe your commandments for all the time you allow me to live. I am sorry for having offended you. In the future, I want to love and serve you until death. Holy Virgin, my Mother, help me in that last moment of life. Jesus, Joseph, Mary, may my soul rest in peace with you! – Three *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys*, and *Glorias*.

VISIT TO THE SECOND CHURCH. Holy Communion

Do you understand, oh Christian, what it means to

receive Holy Communion? It means approaching the table of angels to receive the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is given as food to our soul under the appearances of consecrated bread and wine. At Mass, during the moment the priest pronounces the words of consecration over the bread and wine, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The words used by our Divine Saviour in instituting this Sacrament are: This is my Body, this is my Blood: *Hoc est corpus meum, hic est calix sanguinis mei*.

These words are used by priests in the name of Jesus Christ in the sacrifice of the Holy Mass. Therefore, when we go to receive Communion, we receive the same Jesus Christ in body, blood, soul, and divinity, that is, true God and true man, alive as He is in Heaven. It is not His image, nor His figure, as is a statue, a crucifix, but it is Jesus Christ Himself as He was born of the Immaculate Virgin Mary and died for us on the Cross. Jesus Christ Himself assured us of this real presence in the Holy Eucharist when He said: This is my Body, which will be given for the salvation of men: *Corpus quod pro vobis tradetur*. This is the living bread that came down from Heaven: *Hic est panis vivus qui de coelo descendit*. The bread that I will give is my flesh. The drink that I will give is my true blood. Whoever does not eat of this body and does not drink of this blood has no life in him/her.

Having instituted this Sacrament for the good of our souls, Jesus desires that we approach it often. Here are the words with which He invites us: "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest: *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos*. Elsewhere He said to the Hebrews: Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and died, but whoever eats the food represented by the manna, that food which I give, that food which is my Body and my Blood, he/she will not die. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him; for my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink". Who could resist these loving invitations from the divine Saviour?

To respond to these invitations, the Christians of the early days went every day to listen to the Word of God and every day they approached Holy Communion. It is in this sacrament that the martyrs found their strength, the virgins their fervour, the saints their courage.

And we, how often do we approach this heavenly food? If we examine the desires of Jesus Christ and our needs, we must receive Communion very often. Just as the manna served as daily food for the Hebrews throughout the time they lived in the desert until they were led into the Promised Land, so Holy Communion should be our comfort, our daily food in the dangers of this world to guide us to the true promised land of Paradise. St. Augustine says: If every day we ask God for bodily bread, why do we not also strive to nourish ourselves every day with spiritual bread through Holy Communion? St. Philip Neri encouraged Christians to confess every eight days and to communicate even more often according to the advice of the confessor. Finally, the holy Church expresses the living desire for frequent Communion in the Council of Trent, where it says: "It would be highly desirable for every faithful Christian to maintain such a state of conscience that he/she could receive Holy Communion not only spiritually but sacramentally every time he/she attends holy Mass".

Some people would say: I am too sinful. If you are a sinner, try to put yourself in grace with the Sacrament of Confession, and then approach Holy Communion, and you will receive great help. Another would say: I take communion rarely to have greater fervour. And this is a deception. Things that are done rarely are mostly done poorly. On the other hand, since your needs are frequent, the help for your soul must be frequent. Some add: I am full of spiritual infirmities and do not dare to take communion often. Jesus Christ replies: Those who are well do not need a doctor. Therefore, those who are most subject to discomfort need to be visited often by the doctor. Courage then, oh Christian, if you want to perform the most glorious action for God, the most pleasing to all the saints in Heaven, the most effective for overcoming

temptations, the most secure for making you persevere in good, it is certainly Holy Communion.

PRAYER

Why, oh my Jesus, does your Church, my mother, want me to rejoice this year? Is there perhaps a reason for joy more than at other times? Ah! Your being here on earth, being able to unite with You in Holy Communion, is it not a reason above all others to make us rejoice continuously? For me, I see nothing else that brings joy to my heart outside of You, true Spouse of the triumphant Church, only consoler and fortifier of the militant Church. But how then was it established to designate a year in particular for rejoicing? Ah, too sadly, oh my Jesus, we do not make enough fuss of this great good of Communion that we should! Too sadly, we easily forget this incomprehensible treasure, for which your spouse, our dearest Mother, is forced from time to time to awaken our attention to bring us back to you. Here, here is why she wants me to rejoice. She does not want me to rejoice only this year, but through this means she wants to call me back to You, whom I should never have lost and from whom I should never have distanced myself. Oh! Bind me to You in Holy Communion with such a bond that it may never be dissolved for all eternity. Three *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys* and *Glorias*.

VISIT TO THE THIRD CHURCH. Almsgiving

A very effective means, yet greatly neglected by people to gain paradise, is almsgiving. By almsgiving, I mean any act of mercy exercised towards one's neighbour for the love of God. God says in the Holy Scripture that almsgiving obtains the forgiveness of sins, even if they are in great multitude: *Charitas operit multitudinem peccatorum*. The divine Saviour says in the Gospel: "*Quod superest date pauperibus*". What exceeds your needs, give to the poor. Whoever has two coats should give one to the needy, and whoever has more than necessary should share with those who are hungry (*Lk 3*). God assures us that whatever we do for the poor, He considers it

as done to Himself: "All that you do to one of my least brothers, you have done to me" (Mt 25). Do you then desire that God forgive your sins and free you from eternal death? Give alms. "*Eleemosyna ab omni peccato et a morte liberat*". Do you want to prevent your soul from going to the darkness of hell? Give alms. "*Eleemosyna non partietur animam ire ad tenebras*" (Tb 4). Thus, God assures us that almsgiving is a very effective means to obtain the forgiveness of our sins, to find mercy in His eyes, and to lead us to eternal life. "*Eleemosyna est quae purgat a peccato, facit invenire misericordiam et vitam aeternam*".

If you desire that God show mercy to you, begin to show it to the poor. You would say: I do what I can. But be careful that the Lord tells you to give to the poor all that is superfluous: "*Quod superest date pauperibus*". Therefore, I say to you that those purchases and increases in riches that you make year after year are superfluous. It is superfluous that exquisiteness you seek for tableware, meals, carpets, and clothing that could serve those who are hungry, those who are thirsty, and to cover the naked. Superfluous is that luxury in travels, theatres, dances, and other entertainments where it can be said that the wealth of the poor is being squandered.

It seems appropriate to note here the interpretation that some give to the precept of the superfluous, certainly not according to the words of Jesus Christ: It is a counsel, they say, therefore, having given a part of the superfluous in almsgiving, we can spend the rest as we please. I respond that the Saviour did not designate any percentage. His words are positive, clear, and without distinction: "*Quod superest date pauperibus*". Give the superfluous to the poor. This was done so that everyone would be persuaded that the severity of His command was motivated by the abuse that many make of it and for which they run a serious risk of being eternally lost. He wanted to add these other words: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved", thus condemning the vain pretexts with which those who possess temporal goods

try to excuse themselves from giving the superfluous to the poor.

Some then truthfully say: I have no riches. If you have no riches, give what you can. Moreover, you do not lack means and ways to give alms. Are there not the sick to visit, to assist, to watch over? Are there not abandoned youth to welcome, instruct, shelter in your home, if you can, or at least take them where they can learn the science of salvation? Are there not sinners to admonish, the doubtful to counsel, the afflicted to console, quarrels to calm, injuries to forgive? See how many means you have to give alms and earn eternal life! Moreover, can you not say some prayers, make some confessions, receive communion, recite a rosary, listen to a Mass in suffrage for the souls in purgatory, for the conversion of sinners, or that the infidels may be enlightened and come to the faith? Is it not also a great almsgiving to burn perverse books, spread good books, and speak as much as you can in honour of our holy Catholic Religion?

Another reason that should urge you to give alms is what the Saviour mentions in the Holy Gospel. He says: "You will not give the poor a glass of fresh water without the heavenly Father giving you the reward". Of all that you give to the poor, you will receive a hundredfold in this life and a reward in eternal life. Thus, giving something to the poor in this present life is a multiplication. In other words, it means giving a hundred to one loan even in this present life, with a full reward that God reserves for us in the other life.

Here is the reason why we see so many families giving abundant alms from all over and continually growing in wealth and prosperity. The reason is given by God: give to the poor, and it will be given to you: "*date, et dabitur vobis*". You will be given a hundredfold in this life, and eternal life in the other: "*centuplum accipiet in hac vita et vitam aeternam possidebit*".

PRAYER

Oh my Jesus, I am fully convinced of the necessity I have to

give alms, but how will I do it, when I have such a scarcity of true goods, that is, spiritual ones, that I can barely live? How will I pray for the infidels and for the heretics if I barely believe in the truths taught by your holy Church? How will I pray for sinners if I myself love sin? How will I pray for Your Church, for Your Vicar, if I hardly notice that they are persecuted, so blinded am I by worldly occupations? Ah, Lord! By your sacred Heart, I implore you to grant me a little almsgiving, to give me a bit of that charity that animated your original disciples, of that charity that burned in the hearts of Saint John the Almsgiver, Francis Xavier, Vincent de Paul. Then indeed all that I have will be for all my brothers, and, as far as it depends on me, I will truly celebrate the Year of Jubilee, sharing with those who are without the goods received from You, so that I may rejoice and celebrate with them in your riches. Three *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys* and *Glorias*.

VISIT TO THE FOURTH CHURCH. Thoughts of salvation

In the eyes of faith, the thought of salvation is most essential, but in the face of the world, it is the most neglected. Therefore, while you are in this Church, oh Christian, direct your gaze upon a Crucifix, and listen to what Jesus tells you. He loosens His tongue and speaks to you thus: one thing alone, oh man, is necessary: to save your soul: "*unum est necessarium*". If you acquire honours, glory, riches, knowledge, and then do not save your soul, all is lost for you. "*Quid prodest homini si mundum universum lucretur, animae vero suae detrimentum patiatur?*" (Mt 16:26).

This thought has determined many young people to leave the world, many rich to distribute their wealth to the poor, many missionaries to abandon their homeland, to go to faraway lands, many martyrs to give their lives for the faith. All these thought that if they lost their souls, nothing would benefit them from all the goods of the world for eternal life. For this reason, St. Paul urged Christians to think seriously about the issue of salvation: "We urge you," he writes, "Oh

brothers, to pay attention to the great affairs of salvation" (1 Thess 10,4).

But of what affairs is St. Paul speaking here? He spoke, says St. Jerome, of the affairs that include everything, affairs that if unsuccessful, the eternal kingdom of Paradise is lost, and nothing remains but to be thrown into a pit of torments that will have no end.

Therefore, St. Philip Neri was right to call all those, who in this life attend to procuring honours and lucrative positions, riches, and pay little attention to saving their souls, fools. Every loss of property, reputation, relatives, health, even life, can be repaired in this world. But with what good of the world, with what fortune can one repair the loss of the soul? Listen, Oh Christian, it is Jesus Christ who calls you: listen to His voice. He wants to grant you mercy or forgiveness for your sins, and the remission of the penalty due for those same sins. However, keep firmly in mind that he who today does not think of saving himself runs a serious risk of being tomorrow with the damned in hell and being lost for all eternity.

But consider that at this moment, while you are in church thinking about your soul, many are dying and perhaps going to hell. How many from the beginning of the world until our days have died of every age and condition and have gone eternally lost! It may be that they had the will to be damned? I do not believe that any of them had this intention. The deception was in deferring their conversion. They died in sin, and now they are damned. Keep this maxim well in mind: a man in this world does much if he saves himself, and knows much if he has the knowledge of salvation. But he does nothing if he loses his soul, and knows nothing if he ignores those things that can eternally save him.

PRAYER

Oh my Redeemer, you have shed your blood to obtain my soul, and I have lost it so many times through sin! I thank you for giving me time to put myself in your grace. Oh my God, I am

sorry for having offended you. I wish I had died before and never displeased a God as good as you are. Yes, my God, I offer you all of myself, I hide my iniquities in your most sacred wounds, and I know with certainty, oh my God, that you do not despise a heart that humbles and repents. Oh Mary, refuge of sinners, help a sinner who commends himself to you and trusts in you. – Three *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys* and *Glorias*, with the exclamation: Jesus my, mercy.

With the permission of the ecclesiastical authority.

Wonders of the Mother of God invoked under the title of Mary Help of Christians (13/13)

[\(continuation from previous article\)](#)

Graces obtained through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians.

I. Grace received from Mary Help of Christians.

It was the year of our Lord 1866 when my wife, in the month of October, was struck by a very serious illness, namely a severe inflammation combined with great congestion, and a parasitic infection. In these painful circumstances, we first turned to the experts of the art, who quickly declared that the illness was extremely dangerous. Seeing that the illness was getting much worse, and that human remedies were of little or no use, I suggested to my companion that she

recommend herself to Mary Help of Christians, and that she would certainly grant her health if it was necessary for the soul; at the same time I added the promise that if she obtained health, as soon as the church was finished, which was being built in Turin, I would take us both to visit her and make some donation. She replied that she could recommend herself to some Shrine closer so as not to be obliged to go so far away; to this I replied that one should not look so much at convenience as at the greatness of the benefit one hopes for.

She then prayed as recommended and promised what she proposed. O power of Mary! Barely 30 minutes after she had made her promise I asked her how she was, and she said: "I am feeling much better, my mind is clearer, my stomach is no longer oppressed, I feel an aversion to ice which I had so craved before, and I am more inclined to have broth which I previously found so distasteful."

At these words I felt myself born to new life, and if it had not been at night I would immediately have left my room to publish the grace received from the Blessed Virgin Mary. The fact is that she passed the night peacefully, and on the following morning the doctor appeared and declared her free from all danger. Who healed her if not Mary Help of Christians? In fact, after a few days she left her bed and took up domestic chores. Now we anxiously await the completion of the church dedicated to her, and thus fulfil the promise made.

I have written this, as a humble son of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, and I desire that all such publicity be given to it as will be judged good for the greater glory of God and the august Mother of the Saviour.

Luigi COSTAMAGNA
of Caramagna.

II. Mary Help of Christians Protectress of the countryside.

Mornese is a small village in the diocese of Acqui, province of Alessandria, of about one thousand inhabitants. This village of ours, like so many others, was sadly plagued by phomopsis cane (a grape disease), which for over twenty years had devoured almost the entire grape harvest, our main wealth. We had already used many kinds of things to ward it off, but to no avail. When word spread that some peasants from neighbouring towns had promised a portion of the fruit from their vineyards for the continuation of the work on the church dedicated to Mary Help of Christians in Turin, they were wonderfully favoured and had grapes in abundance. Moved by the hope of a better harvest and even more by the thought of contributing to a work of religion, the people from Mornese decided to offer the tenth part of the harvest for this purpose. The protection of the Holy Virgin made itself felt among us in a truly merciful way. We had the abundance of happier times, and we were very happy to be able to scrupulously offer in kind or in money what we had promised. When we invited the construction manager for the church to come and collect the offerings, there was a feast of true joy and public exultation.

He appeared deeply moved by the promptness and selflessness with which the offerings were made, and by the Christian words with which they were accompanied. But one of our patriots spoke loudly in the name of all of what was happening. He said that we owe great things to the Holy Virgin Help of Christians. Last year, many people from this area, having to go to war, placed themselves under the protection of Mary Help of Christians, most of them wearing a medal around their necks. They went bravely, and had to face the gravest dangers, but none fell victim to that scourge of the Lord. Moreover, in the neighbouring districts there was a plague of cholera, hail and drought, and we were spared all of that. Hardly any of our neighbours' harvests survived, and we were blessed with such abundance, more than for or twenty years. For these reasons we are happy to be able to manifest our indelible gratitude to the great Protectress of mankind in

this way.

I believe I am a faithful interpreter of my fellow-citizens in asserting that what we have done now, we will also do in the future, convinced that we will thus make ourselves ever more worthy of heavenly blessings.

25 March 1868

An inhabitant of Mornese.

III. Prompt recovery.

Young Giovanni Bonetti from Asti in the College at Lanzo had the following grace. On the evening of the 23rd of December last, he suddenly entered the director's room with uncertain steps and a distraught face. He approached him, leaned his body against the pious priest, and with his right hand rubbed his forehead without saying a word. The priest, astonished to see him so distressed, supported him bidding him sit down he asked what it was he wanted. In response to the repeated questions, the poor man could only sigh more laboriously and deeply. The priest then looked more closely at his face and saw that his eyes were motionless, his lips pale, and his body, succumbing to the weight of his head, threatened to collapse. Seeing then in what life-threatening danger the young man was, they immediately sent for the doctor. Meanwhile, his condition worsened by the moment; his face became distorted and no longer looked the same as before, his arms, legs, and forehead were cold, phlegm choked him, his breathing grew increasingly shallow, and his pulse could barely be felt. He remained in this state for five agonising hours.

The Doctor arrived, applied various remedies, but always to no avail. No hope, the doctor said sorrowfully, before morning this young man will be dead.

Thus, in defiance of human hopes, the good priest turned to heaven, praying that if it was not his will that the young man should live, he would at least give him a little

time for confession and communion. He then took a small medal of Mary Help of Christians. The graces he had already obtained from invoking the Virgin with that medal were many, and increased his hope of obtaining help from the heavenly Protectress. Full of confidence in her, he knelt down, placed the medal on his heart and, together with other pious people who had come, said a few prayers to Mary and the Blessed Sacrament. And Mary listened to the prayers that were raised to her with such confidence. Little John's breathing became freer, and his eyes, which had been as if petrified, turned lovingly around to look at and thank the onlookers for the compassionate care they were giving him. Nor was the improvement short-lived; on the contrary, everyone held his recovery to be ensured. The doctor himself, astonished at what had happened, exclaimed: "It was the grace of God that wrought his recovery. In my long career I have seen a great number of sick and dying people, but I have never seen any of those who were at Bonetti's point recover. Without the beneficent intervention of heaven, this is for me an inexplicable fact. And science, used nowadays to breaking that admirable bond that unites it to God, paid humble homage to him, judging itself powerless to achieve what God alone had accomplished. The young man who was the object of the Virgin's glory continues to this day to be very well. He tells and preaches to all that he owes his life doubly to God and to his most powerful Mother, from whose valid intercession he obtained this grace. He would consider himself ungrateful of heart if he did not give public testimony of gratitude, and thus invite others and other unfortunates who in this valley of tears suffer and go in search of comfort and help.

(From the newspaper: *La Vergine*).

IV. Mary Help of Christians frees one of her devotees from a severe toothache.

In an educational institution in Turin, there was

a young man of 19 or 20 years who had been suffering from severe toothaches for several days. All the usual medical treatments for such cases had already been tried without any success. As a result, the poor young man was reduced to such a state of agony that he aroused the pity of all who heard him. While the day seemed dreadful to him, the night appeared eternal and most wretched, during which he could not close his eyes to sleep except for brief and interrupted moments. What a deplorable state his was! It continued like this for some time, but on the evening of April 29th, the pain seemed to become far worse. The young man groaned incessantly in his bed, sighed and cried out loudly without anyone being able to relieve him. His companions, concerned about his unhappy condition, went to the director to ask if he would come and comfort him. He came and attempted to soothe him and his companions with words, essential for him to regain calm and for his companions to find rest. However, the intensity of the pain was so overwhelming that, despite being obedient, he couldn't cease his lamenting. He expressed that he doubted if even in hell itself one could endure more excruciating agony. Recognising the severity of the situation, the superior decided to place him under the protection of Mary Help of Christians, whose honour is upheld by a majestic church in our city. We all knelt down and said a short prayer. And? Mary's help was not long in coming. As the priest bestowed the blessing on the desolate young man, he was instantly calm, and fell into a deep and placid sleep. At that instant a terrible suspicion flashed into our minds; that the poor young man had succumbed to illness but no, he had already fallen deeply asleep, and Mary had heard the prayer of her devotee, and God the blessing of his minister.

Several months passed, and the young man subject to the toothache was no longer troubled by it.

(By the same).

V. Some of Mary Help of Christians' wonders.

I believe that your noble periodical will take a good look at some of the events that have taken place among us, which I set out in honour of Mary Help of Christians. I will only select a few that I witnessed in this city, omitting many others that are recounted every day.

The first concerns a lady from Milan who for five months had been consumed by pneumonia combined with the fact that her whole life was ebbing away.

Passing through these parts, Fr B. advised her to have recourse to Mary Help of Christians by means of a novena of prayer in her honour, with the promise of some donation to continue the work on the church which was being built in Turin under the title of Mary Help of Christians. This donation was only to be made once the grace had been obtained.

How marvellous! On that very day, the sick woman was able to resume her ordinary and serious occupations, eating all kinds of food, going for walks, entering and leaving the house freely as if she had never been ill. When the novena was over, she was in a flourishing state of health, such as she never remembered having enjoyed before.

Another Lady had been suffering from palpitations for three years, with many of the problems that go hand in hand with this illness. A fever and a kind of dropsy had rendered her immobile in bed. Her illness had reached such a point that when the aforementioned priest gave her his blessing, her husband had to hold her hand so that she could make the sign of the holy cross. A novena in honour of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians was also recommended, with the promise of some donation for the aforementioned sacred edifice, but only after the grace had been given. On the very day on which the novena ended, the sick woman was free of all illness, and she herself was able to compile the narrative of her illness, in which I read the following:

“Mary Help of Christians has cured me of an illness, for which all doctors’ advice and ministrations has been useless. Today, the last day of the novena, I am free

from all illness, and I can join my family at table, something I had not been able to do for three years. As long as I live, I shall not cease to glorify the power and goodness of the august Queen of Heaven, and I shall endeavour to promote devotion to her, especially in the church that is being built in Turin."

Let me add yet another fact, which is even more marvellous than the preceding ones.

A young man in the prime of life was in the midst of one of the most luminous careers in the sciences when he was struck down by a cruel illness in one of his hands. In spite of every treatment, every solicitude of the most accredited doctors, no improvement could be achieved, nor could the progress of the disease be halted. All the conclusions of the experts in this skill concurred that amputation was necessary to prevent the total ruin of the body. Frightened by this judgement, he decided to have recourse to Mary Help of Christians, applying the same spiritual remedies that others had practised so fruitfully. The acuteness of the pains ceased instantly, wounds were mitigated, and in a short time the healing appeared complete. Whoever wished to satisfy his curiosity could admire that hand with the indentations and holes of the healed sores, which recall the severity of his illness and the marvellous healing of it. He wanted to go to Turin to offer his donation in person, to further demonstrate his gratitude to the august Queen of Heaven.

I have many other stories of this kind which I will tell you in other letters, if you judge this to be appropriate for your periodical. I beg you to omit the names of the persons to whom the facts refer, so as not to expose them to importunate questions and observations. However, may these facts serve to revive trust in the protection of Mary Help of Christians more and more among Christians, to increase her devotees on earth, and to have one day a more glorious crown of her devotees in heaven.

(From the *Vera Buona Novella*, Florence).

With Ecclesiastical approval.

End

Wonders of the Mother of God invoked under the title of Mary Help of Christians (12/13)

[*\(continuation from previous article\)*](#)

A memento of the ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone of the church consecrated to Mary Help of Christians on 27 April 1865.

PHILIP, BENEDICT, CRISPIN AND THEODORE.

Phil. What a fabulous celebration it is today

Cris. Yes, it is fabulous; I've been in this Oratory for many years, but I have never seen a celebration like it before, and I don't think we will ever have another one like it.

Ben. Let me introduce myself to you, my friends. I'm gob-smacked: I just can't get over it.

Phil. Get over what?

Ben. I can't get over what I've seen.

Theo. Who are you? Where do you come from? What have you seen?

Ben. I'm a kid from way outa town. I left my place to join the boys at the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. When I rocked up to Turin, I asked to be taken here but the moment I walked in,

I saw these flash carriages, horses, footmen, and coachies, all done up to the nines. "Is it possible", I asked myself, "that this is the house where I, a poor orphan, am coming to live?" Then I step into the Oratory grounds, and I see a mob of young kids yelling, buzzing with joy, and almost going bonkers: "Viva, glory, triumph" getting cheers and good vibes from everyone, all the time. Then I raise my gaze towards the bell tower and see a small bell moving in all directions producing a harmonious ringing with all its effort. In the courtyard, it's a symphony of sound: tunes coming from here, tunes coming from there. Some kids tearing around, some leaping about, some belting out songs, and others getting stuck into games. So I say to myself, "what the hell's goin on?"

Phil. Here's why in just a few words. Today the cornerstone of our new church was blessed. His Royal Highness Prince Amedeo has been good enough to lay down the first brick. His Lordship the Bishop of Susa shows up to do the religious part. And there's a crowd of well-to-do people and our top-notch benefactors who've come to show respect to the King's son and make this solemn day even more grand.

Ben. Now it all makes sense why everyone's in such high spirits, and you lot have every reason to throw a top-notch party. But, mate, if you'll permit me to point out something, I reckon you've slipped up on the main bit. On a day as big as this, to welcome so many bigwigs, including the royal Heir, you'd reckon there'd be some fair dinkum grand preparations sorted. You should've thrown up triumphal arches, thrown flowers all over the streets, decked out every nook with roses, laid out classy frescoes on every wall, and a thousand other fancy touches.

Theo. You are right, dear Ben, you are right. This is what we all wanted to do. But think about it. As the battlers we are, us young guys weren't held back by a lack of keenness, but by our lack of muscle.

Phil. To give our beloved Prince a decent welcome, we all got together a few days back to yarn about what needed sorting for

this big day. One of us piped up, saying, "If I had a kingdom to spare, I'd throw it his way, 'cause he's really worthy of it." "Spot on!" we all chimed in, "But strewth, we're as broke as a bloke without a bob." "That's right" our mates jumped in, "If we haven't got no kingdom to hand over, we can at least crown him King of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales." "Lucky us!" the whole mob yelled, "Then we'd be laughing! No more misery, just one big endless festa!" Then another kid, seeing that the others' ideas were a bit far-fetched, reckoned we could make him the king of our hearts, the boss of our affections. And since a few of our mates are already taking orders from him in the military, we could offer up our loyalty, our full attention when it's our turn to serve in the regiment he's running.

Ben. What did your mates say to that?

Phil. Everyone happily agreed with the plan. When it came to sorting out how to welcome him, we all agreed without a second thought: These gents are used to the high life, seeing grandeur and magnificence wherever they go, and they'll understand our humble setup and be gentle with us. We've got every reason to reckon they'll come through with flying colours, given the generosity and kindness we know they're made of.

Ben. Great. You've put it well.

Theo. Yep. I reckon you've got it right. But it wouldn't go astray, would it, to give 'em a word of thanks, a few kind words to show our appreciation?

Ben. OK mates, but first I've got a few questions about the Oratories and what goes on in 'em that I need to get sorted.

Phil. But that would mean that our kind benefactors will have to be pretty patient.

Ben. True, but I reckon they'd love to hear it. Since they've been and still are our main benefactors, they'll be chuffed to bits to hear from those who've been on the receiving end of their generosity.

Phil. I'm a bit limited in what I can do, you see, 'cause I've only been around for about a year, give or take. Maybe

Crispin, one of the older ones, will be able to satisfy us; is that right, Cris?

Cris. If you reckon I'm up to the task, I'll give it my best shot to meet your expectations. First off, I'll say that back in 1841, these Oratories were just a bunch of youngsters, mostly from out of town, who'd turn up on Sundays to certain spots to get schooled in the Catechism. Then, when they scored better lodgings, these Oratories in 1844 turned into spots where kids could hang out and enjoy themselves in proper ways after doing their religious part. So, our idea of a good time was playing, having a laugh, jumping about, running amok, singing our hearts out, and belting out tunes on the trumpet and drums. Soon afterwards (1846) Sunday school was added, then (1847) evening classes followed. The first Oratory is the one where we are now, called St Francis de Sales. After this another was opened at Porta Nuova, then another one later in Vanchiglia, and a few years ago the St Joseph's Oratory in St Salvano.

Ben. You're telling me about the history of the festive Oratories, and that's great, I like it, but I would like to know something about this one. So what's the deal for the kids taken in here? What are they up to?

Cris. I can fill you in on that. Among the kids at the Oratories, and even some who roll in from other places outside of town, you've got some who, either 'cause they're completely on their own or 'cause they're flat broke and haven't got much to their name, would be staring down the barrel of a bleak future if someone with a bit of heart didn't take 'em under their wing, look out for 'em like a dad, and sort 'em out with the basics for life.

Ben. From what you're telling me, it seems that this place is for poor kids, but I can see you are all spruced up like little gents. What gives?

Cris. Check it out, Ben. Knowing we've got this massive show on today, everyone's gone all out, showing up in their fanciest stuff, making sure we're all looking spick and span, if not downright flashy.

Ben. Are there many of you in this house?

Cris. There's about eight hundred of us.

Ben. Eight hundred! Eight hundred, you said! And how do you reckon you're gonna fill the bellies of all these ravenous loaf demolishers?

Cris. Not our problem, that's for the baker to work out.

Ben. But who coughs up the cash?

Cris. Just cast your eyes around at all these good people who are lending us their ears, and you'll figure out who's stepping up to the plate and how – sorting us out with grub, gear, and anything else we need to make this happen.

Ben. But I can't get over that number – eight hundred! What can all these kids possibly be doing, both day and night!

Cris. It's a breeze to keep them busy at night. They're all asleep in their own bunk, keeping to the rules, everything tidy, and as quiet as a mouse till the morning.

Ben. You gotta be joking.

Cris. I thought you were the one joking. If you're keen to know what we get up to each day, I'll give it to you in a nutshell. There's two groups. One is the working boys, the other is the students. The working boys (they call them artisans) here are flat out with lots of trades – tailoring, cobbling, smithing, woodworking, bookbinding, composing, typesetting, doing music, and painting. For example, these lithographs, these paintings are their work. This book was printed here, and was bound in our workshop.

So, basically, they're all students since they're all attending evening classes, but the ones who really shine and behave well usually get the nod from our superiors to focus solely on their studies. That's why it's pretty sweet having all kinds around here from among us. Some are docs, others are notaries, lawyers, teachers, professors, and even a few priests in the mix.

Ben. Is this music all from the kids from this house?

Cris. Yeah, those lads who just belted out a tune or played a riff are from right here in the house. In fact, most of the music you hear is cooked up right here in the Oratory. See,

every day at a set time, there's a class just for music, so everyone, on top of their regular trade or book learnin', can level up their musical skills.

That's why we're chuffed to have a bunch of our mates holding down top-notch civil and military roles, thanks to their smarts. Plus, loads of 'em are dabbling in music in different regiments, the National Guard, and even in His Royal Highness's Regiment, Prince Amedeo's.

Ben. Stoked to hear that! So, the smart ones can really flex their brains and nurture their talents, instead of being held back by poverty or having to do stuff that's not their cup of tea. But tell me one more thing: when I came in I saw a beautiful church already built and decked out, and you told me you need another one: Why do you need this?

Cris. The reason is very simple. The church we have so far used was meant especially for the kids from outside who come on Sundays. But with the number of young kids we're taking in skyrocketing, our church is chockers, and there's barely any room for outsiders. We reckon that not even a third of the ones who would like to come can find a place. Imagine! We've had to send lots of 'em away, leaving 'em to stir up trouble in the squares, all because there's no more space left in the church!

I reckon it's also worth mentioning that from the parish church of Borgo Dora to St Donato, there's a whole bunch of houses and thousands of people living there, but there's not a church or chapel in sight – not a small one, nor a big one. And there's heaps of kids and grown-ups who'd really benefit from having one around. So there was a real need for a big enough church that could fit all the kids and still have room for the adults. That urgent, genuine need is what got us cracking on building the church that's the centerpiece of all our celebrations.

Ben. The stuff you've filled me in on paints a clear picture of what the Oratories are all about and why we're building this church, and I reckon it'll sit well with these gents, knowing where their kindness is headed. I don't really have

the gift of the gab or able to spin poetry to come up with a good speech or deep bit of poetry about what you have told me, but hey, even a few heartfelt words of thanks can go a long way in showing these people how much we appreciate their help.

Theo. I'd love to do it, but I have just learned about lines and rhymes in poems; it's all a bit tricky. So on behalf of my mates and beloved superiors, I'll just say this to H.R.H. Prince Amedeo and all the others: We reckon this celebration was great. We're even planning on engraving it in gold letters, saying:

May this day live on forever!

Sooner shall the sun reverse
Journey eastward in its course;
Every river backward flow

To its source begin to go,

Than this day be lost or fade
From our hearts, where it shall stay,
Among the fairest ever made.

And to you, Your Royal Highness, I want to say that we've got a real soft spot for you. Your visit means the world to us, and whenever we're lucky enough to catch sight of you in the city or anywhere else, or even just hear people talking about you, it'll always be a source of pride, honour, and genuine joy for us. But before we part ways, I've got a little request from my esteemed superiors and my mates. We'd be over the moon if you'd be up for swinging by again in the future, so we can remember what a great time we've had.

And you, Your Lordship the Bishop, if you could keep showing us that same fatherly kindness you've been showing so far, we'd be forever grateful. And you, Mr Mayor, who've played a big role in looking out for us, please keep watching our backs and see if you can arrange to have Via Cottolengo rerouted in front of the new church. We'll make sure to double down on our heartfelt thanks to you.

And to you, our Parish Priest, please keep seeing us not just

as parishioners, but as your own dear kids, always finding in you a caring and gentle father. We urge all of you to keep up the stellar work as renowned benefactors, just as you've been in the past, especially when it comes to finishing up that church we're celebrating today.

The work's already underway, rising up from the ground, and that in itself calls out to the generous souls among us to lend a hand and see it through to the finish. Lastly, rest assured that the memory of this splendid day will be forever cherished in our hearts. We all join together in praying to the Queen of Heaven, to whom the new church is dedicated, asking her to bless you with a long life and many joyous days ahead, bestowed by the Source of all blessings.

[\(continued\)](#)

Wonders of the Mother of God invoked under the title of Mary Help of Christians (11/13)

[\(continuation from previous article\)](#)

Appendix

I. Ancient custom of consecrating churches

Once a church has been built, it is not possible to sing the divine offices, celebrate the holy sacrifice and other ecclesiastical functions in it unless it is first blessed or consecrated. The bishop, with a multiplicity of

signs of the cross and the sprinkling of holy water, intends to purge and sanctify the place through exorcisms against evil spirits. This blessing can be performed by the bishop or a simple priest, but with different rites. Where the anointing of the sacred chrism and holy oils is involved, the blessing is the responsibility of the bishop, and it is called solemn, royal and consecutive because it is the completion of all the others, and even more so because blessed and consecrated things cannot be converted into profane use; hence it is strictly called consecration. If then in such ceremonies only certain prayers are performed with similar rites and ceremonies, the function can be performed by a priest, and it is called a blessing.

The blessing can be performed by any priest, with the permission of the Ordinary, but the consecration belongs to the Pope, and to the bishop alone. The rite of consecrating churches is very ancient and filled with serious mysteries, and Christ as a child sanctified its observance while his cave and crib were changed into a church in the offering made by the Magi. The cave therefore became a church, and the crib an altar. St Cyril tells us that the upper room where they received the Holy Spirit was consecrated by the apostles into a church, a hall that also represented the universal Church. Indeed, according to Nicephorus Calistus, hist. lib. 2, ch. 33, such was the apostles' solicitude that in every place where they preached the gospel they consecrated some church or oratory. The Pontiff St Clement I, Pope in the year 93, successor no less than disciple of St Peter, among his other orders decreed that all places of prayer should be consecrated to God. Certainly in St Paul's time the churches were consecrated, as some of the scholars say, writing to the Corinthians in c. III, *aut Ecclesiam Dei contemnitis?* St. Urban I, elected in the year 226, consecrated the house of St. Cecilia into a church, as Burius *in vita eius* wrote. St. Marcellus I, Pope in the year 304, consecrated the church of St. Lucina, as Pope St. Damasus relates. It is also true that the solemnity with which the consecration is performed today,

increased in time, after Constantine, in restoring peace to the Church, built sumptuous basilicas. Even the temples of the Gentiles, formerly the habitation of false gods and nest of lies, were converted into churches with the approval of the pious emperor, and were consecrated with the sanctity of the venerable relics of the martyrs. Thereupon, according to the prescriptions of his predecessors, Pope St Silvester I established the solemn rite which was expanded and confirmed by other popes, especially by St Felix III. St Innocent I established that churches should not be consecrated more than once. The Pontiff St. John I on his way to Constantinople to deal with the Arian question consecrated the churches of the heretics as Catholic churches, as we read in Bernini^[i].

II. Explanation of the main ceremonies used in the consecration of churches.

It would take too long to describe the mystical explanations that the holy Fathers and Doctors give of the rites and ceremonies of church consecration. Cecconi speaks of them in chapters X and XI, and Father Galluzzi in chapter IV, from which we can summarise the following.

The holy Doctors therefore did not hesitate to assert that the consecration of the church is one of the greatest of ecclesiastical sacred functions, as can be deduced from the sermons of the holy Fathers, and from the liturgical treatises of the most famous authors, demonstrating the excellence and nobility that encompasses such a beautiful function, all directed towards making the house of God respected and venerated. The vigils, fasts and prayers are preached in order to prepare for exorcisms against the devil. The relics represent our saints. And so that we always have them in mind and in our hearts, they are placed in a receptacle with three grains of incense. The steps by which the bishop ascends to the anointing of the twelve crosses reminds us that our final and primary goal is Paradise. The sins of the cross and candles signify the twelve Apostles, the

twelve Patriarchs, and the twelve Prophets who are the guide and pillars of the Church.

Furthermore, the consecration involves the anointing of the twelve crosses in as many places distributed on the walls, and the church and its walls are said to be consecrated, as St. Augustine notes, lib. Augustine, lib. 4, *Contra Crescent*. The church is closed to represent the heavenly Sion, where one does not enter unless purged of all imperfection, and the help of the saints and the light of the Holy Spirit is invoked with various prayers. The bishop goes around the church three times, in unity with the clergy, alluding to the turns that the priests made with the ark around the walls of Jericho, not so that the walls of the church might fall, but so that the pride of the devil and his power might be destroyed through the invocation of God, and the repetition of the sacred prayers which are far more effective than the trumpets of the ancient priests or Levites. The three blows that the bishop gives with the tip of his crozier at the threshold on the door show us the power of the Redeemer over his Church, as well as the priestly dignity that the bishop exercises. The Greek and Latin alphabet depicts the ancient union of the two peoples produced by the cross of the Redeemer; and the writing that the bishop does with the tip of the crosier signifies the apostolic doctrine and ministry. The form then of this writing signifies the cross, which must be the ordinary and principal object of all learning of faithful Christians. It signifies also the belief and faith of Christ passed from the Jews to the Gentiles, and transmitted to us from them. All blessings are filled with grave significance, as are all things that are employed in this august service. The sacred anointing with which the altar and the walls of the church are imbued signifies the grace of the Holy Spirit, which cannot enrich the mystical temple of our soul unless it is first cleansed of its stains. The service ends with the blessing in the style of the holy Church, which always begins its actions with the blessing of God and ends them with it, because everything begins with God and ends in God. It is

accomplished through the sacrifice not only to fulfil the pontifical decree of St Hyginus, but because there is no consecration accomplished where the victim is not also entirely consumed in the Mass.

From the grandeur of the sacred rite, from the eloquence of its mystical signification, we can easily see how much importance the holy Church our mother attaches to it, and therefore how much importance we must attach to it. But what must increase our veneration for the house of the Lord is to see how much this rite is founded on and informed by the true spirit of the Lord revealed in the Old Testament. The spirit that guides the Church today to surround the churches of Catholic worship with such veneration is the same spirit that inspired Jacob to sanctify with oil the place where he had the vision of the ladder; it is the same spirit that inspired Moses and David, Solomon and Judas Maccabaeus to honour with special rites the places destined for the divine mysteries. Oh how much this union of spirit of one and the other Testament, of one and the other Church teaches us and comforts us! It shows us how much God likes to be worshipped and invoked in his churches, so how willingly he answers the prayers we address to him in them. How much respect for a place, the profanation of which armed the hand of God with a scourge and changed him from a meek lamb into a severe punisher!

Let us therefore come to the holy church but frequently, for the need we have of God is a daily one. Let us go there, but with confidence and with religious fear. With confidence since we find there a Father ready to hear us, to multiply the bread of his graces to us as on the mountain, to embrace us like the prodigal son, to console us like the Canaanite woman, in temporal needs as at the wedding in Cana, in spiritual needs as on Calvary; with fear, for the Father does not cease to be our judge, and if he has ears to hear our prayers, he also has eyes to see our offences, and if he is silent now as a patient lamb in his tabernacle, he will speak with a terrible voice on the great day of judgement. If we offend him outside the church, we shall still have the church

to escape to for forgiveness; but if we offend him within the church, where shall we go to be forgiven?

In the church divine justice is appeased, divine mercy is received, *suscepimus divinam misericordiam tuam in medio templi tui*. In the church Mary and Joseph found Jesus when they had lost him, in the church we shall find him if we seek him with that spirit of holy trust and holy fear with which Mary and Joseph sought him.

Copy of the inscription sealed in the corner stone of the church dedicated to Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco.

D. O. M.

UT VOLUNTATIS ET PIETATIS NOSTRAE
SOLEMNE TESTIMONIUM POSTERIS EXTARET
IN MARIAM AGUSTAM GENITRICEM
CHRISTIANI NOMINIS POTENTEM
TEMPLUM HOC AB INCHOATO EXTRUERE
DIVINA PROVIDENTIA UNICE FRETIS
IN ANIMO FUIT
QUINTA TANDEM CAL. MAI. AN. MDCCCLXV
DUM NOMEN CHRISTIANUM REGERET
SAPIENTIA AC FORTITUDINE
PIUS PAPA IX PONTIFEX MAXIMUS
ANGULAREM AEDIS LAPIDEM
IOAN. ANT. ODO EPISCOPUS SEGUSINORUM
DEUM PRECATUS AQUA LUSTRALI
RITE EXPIAVIT
ET AMADEUS ALLOBROGICUS V. EMM. II FILIUS
EAM PRIMUM IN LOCO SUO CONDIDIT
MAGNO APPARATU AC FREQUENTI CIVIUM CONCURSU
HELLO O VIRGO PARENS
VOLENS PROPITIA TUOS CLIENTES
MAIESTATI TUAE DEVOTOS
E SUPERIS PRAESENTI SOSPITES AUXILIO.

I. B. Francesia scripsit.

Translation.

As a solemn testimony for posterity of our benevolence and religion regarding the august Mother of God, Mary Help of Christians, we resolved to build this church from its foundations on 27 April of the year MDCCCLXV, when the Catholic Church was governed with wisdom and fortitude by the Supreme Pontiff Pius IX . The cornerstone of the church was blessed according to the religious rites by Giovanni Antonio Odone bishop of Susa, and Amedeo of Savoy son of Vittorio E. II put it in place for the first time amidst great pomp and large crowds of people. Hail, O Virgin Mother, graciously succour those devoted to your majesty and defend them from heaven with efficacious help.

Hymn read during the solemn blessing of the cornerstone.

When the worshipper of idols

Moved to wage war on Jesus,
Oh how many fearless thousands
Stained the earth with blood!
From fierce battles unscathed,
the Church of God came out
spreading still its life,
from one sea to the other.

And it boasts its own martyrs

in this humble valley,
Ottavio died here,
and Solutor fell.
Beautiful immortal victory!
Rises on the bloody ground
Of the Martyrs
perhaps the divine altar.

And here the afflicted youth

opens his sighs,

Finding solace for his soul
in his martyrs;
Here the scorned widow
with a devout and holy heart
Places her humble tears
in the bosom of the King of Kings,

And to you who often conquer
More than a thousand swords,
To You who boast glories
In all lands,
To You powerful and humble
OF whom Your name speaks,
MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS,
we build a church to You.

So, O merciful Virgin,
So great to your devotees,
Above them in abundance
Ah! pour out your favours.
Already with tender pupil
Keep the youth in mind,
Who aspires to your laurels,
Oh Mother of the Redeemer!

He, of mind and nature,
of noble feeling,
gives himself to You, O Virgin,
in flourishing of his youth;
he, with constant devotion
hears sacred songs to You,
and now desires the
usual sound of arms.

The glory of Amedeo,
The great virtues of Umberto
Nourish in the heart, and remember
Their heavenly garland;

And from the white clouds,
From the heavenly hosts
Of the blessed Mother
He listens to the pious speech.

Dear and beloved Prince,
A host of holy heroes,
What beneficent thought
Brings you here among us?
Use to the aurate royalty,
Of the world's lofty splendour
Of miserable squalor
Did you deign to visit?

Beautiful hope to the people,
In whose midst thou comest,
May your days live
Calm, sweet and serene:
Never on thy young head
On thy secure soul
Let not misfortune shriek,
Let no bitter day dawn.

Wise and zealous prelate,
And noble lords,
How much does the Eternal One like
Your holy ardours?
Blessed life and placid
He lives who for the decorum
Of the Temple his treasure
Or the work he lavished.

O sweet and pious spectacle!
O memorable day!
Most beautiful and noble day!
What was ever seen and when?
Well you speak to my soul:
Of this even more beautiful

The day will surely be
That the Temple opens to heaven.

In the difficult work
Gilded benefits,
And soon come to an end,
With joy in God you rest;
And then melting fervently
On my zither a song:
Praise we will say to the Holy One
To the Fortress of Israel.

[\(continued\)](#)

^[i] Compendium of Heresies p. 170. On temples of Gentiles converted into churches, see *Butler Lives*, November, p. 10.