J. M. J.

CIRCULAR

of the

REV. SUPERIOR of N.D. du LAC

to

ALL THE MEMBERS of the INSTITUTION

No. 1st.

Notre—Dame—du—Lac.

1845.

N. D. du-lac Oct. 13th, 1845.

J. M. J.

To the Priests, Brothers and Sisters of N. D. du-lac.

Scarcely do I need to repeat that your generous and affectionate feelings towards me, most surely meet in my bosom with a faithful echo. It is particularly on such occasions that I feel with the Apostle, my heart open and enlarged for you. Truly and sincerely may I address you, in answer to your pious and fervent wishes for my happiness in the words of the same Apostle: "my dearly beloved brethren most desired, my joy and my crown, grace be to you and peace. I give thanks to God always for you all; making a remembrance of you in my prayers without ceasing, being mindful of the work of your faith and labor and charity. Be glad, I repeat to you rejoice in the Lord, who blessed you with a holy call. With great difficulty could I find expressions, to convey you the obundant consolations of my soul during these short days of retirement in meditating on the wonderful blessings with which our humble ministry has been attended among you. Yes, my dear friends, we are comforted in you in all our necessity and tri-

bulation, now we live if you stand in the Lord for what thanks can we return to God for you, in all the joy wherewith we rejoice for you before our God. Oh! may the Lord multiply you and make you abound in charity towards one another and towards all men; as we do also towards you.

The more Divine Providence is pleased to bless and to increase our little flock, and at the same time to perfect your good will and dispositions, the more also do I feel the weight of my responsibilities and the pressing necessity of sanctifying myself, lest I should be a stumbling block to you or an obstacle to the diffusion of God's graces upon your unceasing exertions. Could affection alone qualify me for all your wants, I should not feel inferior to the task. But when I consider, in the presence of God and of our Lord, J. C. the immense good which may be done, the multitude of souls that may be saved from eternal destruction if we are faithful to our holy call, while it fills my heart with an unspeakable admiration and gratitude, I cannot help trembling through all the faculties of my being and then would I cry to you with St. Paul to the Romans: "I beseech you therefore brethren, through our Lord J. C. and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, that you assist me in your prayers for me to God". In-

deed if these first blessings, numerous and abundant as they are, may be considered as the beginning of the dispensation of those boundless mercies which have been prepared for us from all eternity, who will not fear never to be able, sufficiently to answer such an infinite liberality? which of us would have even thought a few years ago of what Providence has done since before our eyes. Who could say the additional blessings which Almighty God has resolved to pour down on his work during the three ensuing years, if we be faithful to our holy vocation? whoever will seriously consider what the merciful hand of God has worked amongst us will readily confess with the Spsalmist: "this hath be done by the Lord, it is admirable in our e e ,, as for us, my dearly beloved friends we would only add: confirm, O Lord what thou hast begun with us. Let it be well understood; this is but the beginning of God's endless mercies. We, also, I trust have seriously begun to offer and to consecrate ourselves to do the will of him who has sent us.— But we ought not to stop here; an immense race is before us, ere we can say that we have run our course and fought the good battle. Thanks be to the Almighty, we are still young and full of strength and vigor while we have time, we will do good and because our

undertaking is great and the success thereof far above human efforts, we will humble our souls and trust in the Lord. Such must be indeed our confidence in Divine Protection as not to be shaken by any adversity or trial whatever. Being now convinced as we must be, that God is with us, whom shall we fear? nor is it always the better to be freed here below from all troubles: for patience is perfected through trial and trial worketh hope and hope confoundeth not wherefore, my dear friends, should heaven againtry our Infant Mission with new afflictions and sorrows; should again some other painful sacrifices be required, we belong to God and must humbly submit to his holy will, bearing in mind, that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, and also that we can enter into heaven but through many tribulations. Then so, in compliance with the divine will, (whereby we shall beyond any doubt procure the glory of our creator, and the salvation of many together with our own sanctification).—I beseech you dearly beloved brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God. Be not conformed to this world, but be ye reformed in the newness of your mind; that you may prove what is the good, the acceptable and perfect will of God. If we have to labor and to

suffer, and would to God that our labors and sufferings were multiplied and prolonged. If so, let us remember that the sufferings of this life, bear no comparison with the eternal weight of glory, they work for us in heaven.— Oh then let every one of us labor as a good soldier. Let every one faithfully correspond with the divine grace, by a constant and most perfect compliance with the holy rules of the Institution, do this and you will live.

But before I close my retreat, I would have you know what manner of care I have for you all without any acception of persons. Being deprived of the daily communications of our *Saintly Founder*, I have thought it would be equally gratifying and benoficial to you all to receive as a token of his great solicitude for us all his own explanation of the method of meditation, to which I shall add a few reflections to make you still more sensible if I can of the exceedingly great favors we may derive from that source of all graces. Besides it being my farther design in thus addressing you, to send you, as occasion may require a series of communications in the same form. I wish you keep them carefully, to make of them, with time, the *manual* of the Institution, and that I may be the more at liberty to convey you, through this medium, whatever might interest

the members of our little family. I must not allow you to show them to any person except to your Directors. They will generally contain *seven meditations*, on which I *invite* you all, to *meditate* for a week at least. Now my dearly beloved friends, listen to the Apostle: Be instant in prayer; watching in it with thanksgiving In all things show yourselves an example of good works, that he who is on the contrary part, may be afraid having no evil to say of us.

Explanation of St. Ignatius's method of meditation.

1. Meditation is a spiritual exercise in which we apply the three faculties of our souls to the contemplation of a truth relative to our salvation. Now, altho' those truths which the Catholic Church teaches are innumerable, they may still be reduced into three classes, according to the three degrees of christian perfection, and the three different states of those who follow this path. Some are only in the purgative or expiatory state, so called because therein they wash away their former sins by penitential tears and mortifications and for these persons it is proper to choose such meditations as may excite them to compunction, to the detestation of their faults and the amendment of their lives,

such as the offence committed against God's majesty, Christ's passion and death, the turpitude of and the punishment due to sin, and the four last things.

Others have already made some progress and are in the illuminative state, so called because free from the slavery of concupiscence which blinds the mind, from vicious habits and wordly vanities which conceal righteousness from our view, with the assistance of the lights of the Holy Ghost who dwells within them with all his gifts, they are sensibly enlightened upon whatever has reference to justice and piety and powerfully moved to the practice of every virtue until the time of their admittance to the beatific contemplation of God in heaven. Now the subjects of meditation adapted to these persons are those derived from the charms of virtue, the example of the saints, particularly the mysteries of the public and private life of Jesus Christ, he being the model of every virtue and the source of *all* justice.

Others, in fine, reach the summit of perfection and are in the unitive state, so called because their will being as it were identified with God's, they are united with him by the bonds of the most ardent charity and in a manner transformed into him. Now these must preferably meditate on the love of God, his wisdom and in

a word all his perfections, and consequently on the glorious mysteries of Jesus Christ, such as his resurrection, ascension and eternal glory.

2. By this we may understand the excellence and advantages of meditation; for what can be more excellent, what more salutary to man than to be purified from his sins, enlightened in the ways of salvation and united with the sovereign good by the most perfect love? What, on the other hand, can be more consoling to an afflicted heart than to disclose itself to the best of fathers in order to be comforted by him; to a poor man than to be admitted to the table of a rich compassionate grandee; to a sick man than to be assisted by a skilful physician; and to a frightened child than to be received into the arms and bosom of its mother?—What happiness was it not for the patriarchs and prophets to converse with God, as Moses and Abraham did? But is not meditation a familiar conversation with God, since we have not only to speak to him therein, but also to listen to him? Taste and see how sweet the Lord is (33rd psalm) for his conversation has no bitterness."

3. Although the Holy Ghost does not observe any rule in his operations with in our souls, and breathesw here he will and in the manner it pleases him to do it, however we must follow a

method taught by the saints and of which they have made a successful experiment. Moreover is it not written: "Before prayer prepare thy soul?" Now is it possible thus to prepare ourselves without following some method or other; and what other method could we prudently adopt, than that of godly men who have taught it, after having practised it themselves? otherwise should we not resemble a man who would ask God for infused science and would consequently refuse to study or work? would it not be tempting God? And besides the Holy Ghost does not generally raise souls to a superior state of meditation before having conducted them by the beaten path, and when he acts otherwise with some persons on account of their innocence, their vocation or a special predilection, he often sends them to a man every way inferior to them in perfection, either to keep them humble or to give them some new lights. In a word every method of meditation is subject to many illusions of the devil; and sometimes the Holy Ghost, after having rapt souls to the third heaven, suddenly deprives them of all his particular gifts in order to humble them or to oblige them to have again recourse to the common method and suffer themselves to be directed as others are.

It is therefore very important, for all these

motives, to learn the method which we undertake to explain, were it but to teach it to others.

4. Let us first observe that the end of this method as of all others, being to excite the will to certain acts, if this faculty be moved and produce affections at the simple remembrance of the subject of meditation, without any reflections of the understanding, we must suffer it to produce them and not lose our time in reasoning upon the subject of meditation, otherwise we would resemble a man who would continue striking with the steel of his tinder-box after having obtained the desired light.

For the same reason, if our will be moved to proper sentiments by the sole consideration of the first point of meditation we must not pass to the following before having entirely exhausted these sentiments or felt their disappearance, even if we did not remember our thoughts and figures which must not trouble us as long as the pious affections of our will last. If on the contrary we experience nothing either in the first or second point of our meditation, we must, if we meditate privately, change place and position, and read over with attention the whole subject of meditation, or repass it in order in our minds. If, after this operation of the understanding we still experience nothing, we must examine whether it is our fault or a

trial sent us by God. However it may be, we must not then be discouraged, but persevere in our meditation, saying with the prophet: "Lord give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments." I am as a beast of burden before thee and still am always with thee.

5. Remote Preparation. It is so called because it removes previously the three great obstacles that may hinder the meditation viz: 1st sin, and especially that of pride, for it is written God resits the proud, and gives his grace to the humble. With the simple, he likes to converse. He looks down upon the humble, but he keeps at a distance from the haughty. And that of impurity: "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God.,, Wisdom will not enter into a wicked soul nor will it dwell in a body full of sins. Every sin, even venial, is like a gluing birdlime that ties the wings of the soul, and prevents it from flying up to God. 2. Passions or natural inclinations to evil; for according to St. Ambrose, he who does not master his passions, is carried away like an unruly horse, thrown down and smashed into pieces and killed. Is it possible to meditate in such a state? 3. Dissipation; for it is impossible to a soul given up to the impressions of its senses and to its fancies, seriously to meditate. Behold, I went afare off flying, and I re-

mained in solitude. Frequent is his visit to the interior man. I will lead her to the wilderness, and there will I speak to her heart.

Nothing can be discerned in troubled water; hence the so often recommended necessity of keeping silence and modesty, particularly morning and night.

6. Nearer Preparation: It consists in listening to, or reading the subject of meditation, the night previous; it is advisable to point out the special fruit, you wish to derive from it, considering the actual want of your soul. For this you must remember briefly the subject, before you fall asleep; and at your awaking, in dressing yourself, and in every leisure moment; on your fidelity to those pious precautions depends in a great measure the success of your meditation. Thus also you prepare yourself daily to death of which your sleep is a striking image, and to the resurrection figured in the awaking.

7. Nearest Preparation. Here you must while going to the place of meditation and in about as much time as the recitation of an Our father,, would require, make an act of faith on the presence of God, whom you are going to speak to, as it were by audience, and much does

it import you, to be deeply penetrated with the holy presence of God, before you kneel down, an act of contrition at the sight of your sins, and particularly of those committed the day previous, or of such as you deem most grievously opposed to the success of meditation; finally an act of hope and confidence in J. C. Persuaded that after all you also may, with the help of God succeed in meditating well, notwithstanding your imperfections and miseries. I can do all things with him who is my assistance; then you will pray fervently, that all your faculties may be wholly consecrated to the glory of God; a favor which is particularized, but in the 3rd prelude. 6. Preludes of Meditation. After reciting or listening attentively to the vocal prayer, which is said in common. You must remember briefly the subject of the meditation, fix your imagination by the construction of the place; and ask God the fruit, which may be derived from it.—First you must briefly recollect the subject of the meditation. There is a great difference between the mere remembrance of a subject and a close inspection of it; the same as if a man recollect that a portrait is the likeness of such or such a person, or if he consider that portrait, examining attentively its features, its colours, dimensions, &c. c. As for the construction of the place, its object is to represent the thing as ac-

tually passing before your eyes in a sensible manner. For instance if you wish to meditate upon our Savior's death, you will fancy yourself to be present on Mount Calvary, looking at the wounds, at the nails; hearing the blasphemies of the multitude &c You will see Mary the Mother of Jesus, St. John, Mary Magdalena, &c And thus, your imagination will be interested. If you have to meditate upon a subject which is not sensible, as upon sin or any virtue; you may represent sin to your mind as a monster; or the sinner as a man possessed of the devil. Or again the soul as a prisoner in its body. If it is upon a history or a parable, you will then briefly recollect the whole of the history or of the parable; without stopping on any part of it in particular. This prelude ought to be assigned the night before: Then you beg of God for the fruit which you intend deriving, or which naturally proceeds from the meditation.

9. *The middle or body of the Meditation.* *Memory.* This faculty will recall to your mind the subject of meditation. Not all at once as in the prelude, but part of it at first. For instance if your subject is a maxim or a truth contained in the gospel, after representing to your mind in the construction of the place, the blessed Redeemer, or a voice from above, teach-

ing us this maxim or truth. You will apply your memory in listening to it, asking yourself the following questions: Who is speaking? what does he say? where? why? when? how? by what means?. Do not forget that the subject must be considered by part; for if you wish to meditate upon this sentence: *what does it avail a man to gain the whole world, if he loose his own soul:* You will exercise your memory in the following manner. Behold what has been revealed by J. C. himself, the eternal wisdom; who came down from heaven to show me the way &. c.? And what does he say? *what does it avail a man* It is of no avail whatever, even to possess the whole world with all its riches, honors, pleasures, &. c. even when possessed altogether by the same individual in preference to any other of his fellow-beings, if the soul be lost for ever. Indeed, all this will soon pass away, and the soul shall live for an eternity; this is what J. C. says, and I believe him. Thus if you meditate on the death or passion of J. C. You will ask for compunction, tears and compassion to his sufferings. If on his resurrection, you will beg a sentiment of spiritual joy. If it is on some sins, you must ask for confusion, shame, sorrow at the sight of so many millions of men damned for a single mortal sin: for he cannot deceive me, nor be deceived.

If I wish to meditate on the death of J. C. I will thus exercise my memory. 1. Who is the king of glory, the splendor of the father, joy of the angels? 2. where? on the cross, on that bed of unspeakable tortures; whereon he is attached with large nails. 3. Why? to atone for my iniquities; to reconcile me with his father, to redeem my soul from hell. 4. How? how can he bear so much for me wretched sinner? out of his infinitive love for me. 5. When? 1800 years ago; and I have not yet begun to acknowledge his infinite mercy, when he was pouring upon me the greatest favors. I have myself crucified for him almost every day of my life.

10th Understanding. After having thus exercised the memory, you will pass to the operations of your understanding, which must reflect and reason on the proposed matter, in order to draw from it some practical consequences through a personal application of it to your soul, and to examine whether you have so far acted in consequence of it. Then you may ask yourself what you have done till the present moment; and what you must do in future. For instance, to continue the same matter. *What does it avail a man*, thus will you say to yourself: The whole world is nothing but contempt with all its riches, honours and pleasures: as it will soon be use-

less to have been possessed of them. Then so, I ought not in the least to do any harm to my soul for all the riches, honours and pleasures of this world: much less for a foolish praise, for a momentary, sensual gratification, for a certain possession of land or of money. But it is of the utmost importance to every individual, to draw from his meditation some practical consequence, according to the present need of his soul, and not only a general resolution. In the above cited example, should you be satisfied with considering, that you must despise the whole world, without coming to any detail, and particular, you should resemble him, who would fire a cannon or a gun in the air, without ever reaching the enemies, for, such resolutions as these never serve to overcome passions, nor to remove obstacles, you may meet with in the way of salvation; nor is it sufficient to come to a detail, in general but to what regards this very virtue or vice, which you wish to acquire or to get rid off. Should you find for instance, that you are full of pride, or of vanity, you should conclude from the above sentence; *what does it avail a man* the contempt of vain glory. With this simple and clear argument, if it is true that we must despise the whole world, how much more this vain esteem, which vitiates my good actions

and does my soul so much harm. For after all, should all men admire me, what will it serve me at the moment of my death? will then the praise of this, or of that individual serve me more? I will not then do this or that action of the day through mere vanity. I will do it by purer and more solid motives; you may say the same of the love of money or of sensuality.

11th Motives.

Convenient, useful, agreeable, easy, necessary.

Our will being always moved by the understanding, we must form resolutions, but in conformity with the motives which our understanding comprehends. But, such motives may be either merely convenient, useful, or agreeable, or easy, or necessary. For example, it is becoming for a reasonable man, for a christian; for a religious, for a priest, whose duty it is to imitate J. C. to despise the vanities of the world; it is useful to his future, nay to his present life, not to run after the smoke of pride of riches, and pleasures. It is far more agreeable and sweet to renounce the world, in order to serve J. C. than to enjoy the world. My joke is sweet, my burden is light, my precepts are not difficult: on the contrary, the impious will confess, that they have walked in hard ways; that they have fatigued themselves in the path of ini-

quity; and in the end, an eternal weight of glory for that short moment of tribulation. Finally should all the obligations imposed upon us by religion, vocation or reason be neither useful nor agreeable, nor easy, &c. &c. would we make our lot for ever miserable in neglecting them? for after all, we must, I must myself fall into an eternity either happy or miserable. Necessity urges me. Wo to me, if I do not preach; wo to me, if I am not chaste, humble, obedient, detached; wo to me. *How did I observe it so far?*

Now, you come to examine what conduct you have held thus far in regard to the virtue or truth you have just meditated upon. If your conscience bear you a good testimony, you will return thanks to God for it. But let every one here take heed for fear of some deception or illusion. Let every one descend, even to the most particular details. Not being contented with examining, whether he has thought little of the world in general, or whether he does so actually at least; but rather what he feels, when humbled, or contradicted; or despised, or proclaimed in chapters, or denied in his demands, or rebuked. How he feels, at receiving some income, or in changing his room, or at wearing a poor or coarse habit.

What is to be done in future? Here you must see in looking over the actions of the day, what you may do, the best to secure the effect of your meditation, paying a special attention to particular cases and to the most difficult you might meet with; in order to resolve upon the conduct to be kept therein.

What obstacles to be removed? Here you may ask yourselves: what has hindered me so far from observing this precept, or that moral? what means, to do better in future? The chief obstacles, may always be reduced to pride, sensuality and dissipation. The best remedies thereto will always be humility, mortification and recollection. To them you may add the presence of God, ejaculatory-prayers, the remembrance of the most striking motives, which made a more lasting impression in the meditation, and the foresight of the circumstances of the day, in which you may be more exposed to forget yourselves.

12th. *Will.* After the exercises of the understanding upon the above questions, the will has to produce two different acts; namely, the affections and the resolutions. This exercise of the will is so necessary, that without it, the meditation will be a mere speculation or study; and not at all a mental prayer. But these pious af-

fections with which the whole meditation should be animated must vary, and naturally proceed from the subject of the meditation, so that we may produce acts of either praise or adoration or thanksgiving or sorrow, or humility, &c. as the subject requires. Then it is better to use the word of the Holy Ghost: *What shall I return to the Lord? Bless the Lord, O my soul. Truly I am so miserable and wretched; have mercy on me O God.* To this effect it is good to gather some short maxims of the Holy writ, of the Fathers, of the liturgy of the Church, of the lives of the Saints, in conformity with the sentiments that may be desired; and when instead of the exercise of your memory, you will feel these affectionate and pious motions, you will favor them.

As to the purpose of amendment, it being the chief fruit you can derive from your meditation as you consecrate an hour a day but to do away with your vices, correct your defects; practice some virtues, confirm your vocation and become stronger against difficulties, you must form your resolutions at the close of its practical consideration it being the answer to what shall I do in future? what obstacles shall I remove? what means shall I take? Let your resolutions be particular; for example I shall be patient in this or that case, this being very little in comparison

of hell that I have deserved. Accommodated to your present obedience, even to the present day grounded on firm motives, full of diffidence on your part and strenghtened by fervent prayers.

End. You terminate your meditation with the usual vocal prayers; but previously to this, you must resume all your resolutions if you have taken several; then pray to J. M. J. either for being faithful to them or for recommending them the wants of the Institution: then examine the preparation to the meditation, the preludes, the exercises of the memory, understanding and will: again recall to your mind the abridgment or anolysis of your meditation; compose the spiritual nosegay, write down some particular lights you may have received and the resolutions you would have taken.

THE MEDITATION Consists in:

Preparation.
Preludes.
andthe Body.

Preparation	Remote avoids	pride, impurity Passions Dissipation

- **Preparation**
  - Nearer
    - reads the subject
    - points out fruit
    - disposes matter.
  - Nearest
    - Act of faith in God's presence
    - Acts of contrition, hope and confidence
    - consecration to God
- **Preludes**
  - first——mere remembrance
  - second——construction of the place
  - third——Prayer for the fruit
- **The Body of the Meditation**
  - Memory—proposes the subject: who? what? where? how? why?
  - Understanding—what to believe, to consider, to conclude, what motives? convenient, useful, agreable, easy and necessary. How observed thus far? how to be observed in future? what obstacles are to be removed? what means to be taken?
  - Will—It produces acts of love, praise, admiration, sorrow, resignation, zeal &c. Takes resolutions in general and in particular, holds a colloquy, examines the meditation and colls a spiritual nosegay.

1st Meditation.

We must pray in compliance with the precept and wishes of J. C.

Are you ready to obey the command of J. C? do you believe in his promises? Among the precepts of the Blessed Redeemer, there is one laid in the clearest terms, the fulfilment of which is absolutely necessary to your salvation. There is also a promise of J. C a beautiful and most liberal one indeed; and to either of these perhaps have you never paid a serious attention, although they particularly concern you. What is that precept, what is that promise? imagine J. C. present by you and listen to what he wishes to reveal to you: "*without me you can do nothing*;, therefore "*you must always pray and never cease*,; *watch ye and pray that you enter not into temptation*; whose words are these: those of the son of God himself, whom we are commanded to *listen to*; for *he has the words of eternal life*; while he lays the command, he himself enforces it by his example "*And when he had dismissed the multitude, he went up into a mountain alone to pray*. And again: "*He was spending the whole night in prayer*,. And again: "*and being in agony, he prayed the longer*. Was he in any need?. Surely not, but he wanted to show us thereby the necessity of praying; that after giving us an example, so also we might do.

2. Do you believe that holy Baptism has perfectly washed away your sins? do you believe that J. C, is really present in the blessed Eucharist? in a word, do you believe in J. C.? then consider well the following most liberal and solemn promises: "*Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you,, and which of you, if he asks his father bread, will he give him a stone? or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he reach him a scorpion? If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father from Heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask him?* And again: *Amen amen, I say to you; Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be Glorified in the Son. If you shall ask me anything in my Name, that I will do.* Who made such promises? J. C himself, who assures us in the Gospel that Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away. Shall we not say to the Divine Redeemer, with his Apostles: O Lord, teach us how to pray.

2nd Meditation.

What is prayer?

It is, as the Saints call it, the key of heaven, by which all the treasures of Divine grace are thrown

open, or a golden channel through which all the merits of the Blessed Redeemer's life, passion and death are daily conveyed to our souls; it is the mysterious ladder which the patriarch Jacob saw, the top of which reached heaven and which the Angels were continually ascending and descending. It is also the spiritual chain which unites the earth with heaven, the soul of a christian with his God. Prayer says St. Gregory of Nyssa, is the saveguard of purity, the seal of virginity, the remedy against pride and anger, the gate of heaven. By it Jonas found an asylum within the belly of the whale; Ezechias was rescued from the brink of the tomb to perfect health; the three young Hebrews changed burning flames into a cooling breeze; Israel overcame the Amalecites, and the exterminating Angel destroyed a hundred and eighty five thousand Assyrians. Prayer is to a sensible soul, what an abundant rain is to dry ground, a rich table to the hungry, an inexhaustible source of consolations and comfort to the desolate and bereaved heart, and a soothing balm to the most excruciating tortures; prayer is the food of the soul and the life of piety and of all other virtues. Do you understand now what prayer is? Did you ever know the exceedingly great value of the treasure you had in your possession? weht

use did you make of it? for you also, prayer might have been as it was for the Saints, a universal remedy against all your spiritual maladies, a strengthening virtue for your good but frail will, a tower of refuge against all your enemies and temptations. Do you know that whenever you fall on your knees to pray, Almighty God himself is listening to every petition of your heart? and that he presents himself as it were, to fulfil his promises? that the angels of heaven are presenting before the throne of mercy all the wishes of your soul. Oh therefore whenever you pray, do it well.

3rd MEDITATION.

What did the Saints think of Prayer?

First, see the Apostles: they had been particularly commissioned by J. C. to preach the Gospel, to teach and baptize all nations. The whole world was to be converted by them.—Surely to fulfil this immense mission, every moment of their life was required. Now what will they do? will they go forth and preach incessantly.....no; but mindful of the precept of J. C. and conscious of their inability for such a task, they will first begin by devoting a great part of their time to prayer: "as for us, do they say, "we shall be instant in prayer,". It is true, there is not a word said of prayer in the last

command of their Divine master; but they had been taught previously by J. C. himself that no precept can be complied with, without prayer.— What do they seem to have taught the first christians? above all, the necessity of praying to God. Hence do we see those fervent neophytes spending the greatest part of their life in praying; and in the course of ages, what did the Saints think of prayer? "Alas! what is our life, if compared to theirs? The Saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nackedness, in prayers and holy meditations. How strict and mortified a life did the holy fathers lead in the desert! What frequent and fervent prayers did they offer to God! They labored all the day, and in the nights, they gave themselves to long prayers; though even they were at work, they ceased not from mental prayer; they spent all their time profitably; every hour seemed short, which they spend with God; and through the great sweetness of divine contemplation, they forgot even the necessity of their bodily refreshment.,, Every one knows that St. Teresa had taken prayer as the foundation of her reform: my Lord and my God! does she exclaim, who art the joy of the angels, I cannot think of the favor of conversing with thee through meditation, without I wish to melt

as the wax, in the fire of thy Divine love. Ah! how great is thy bounty, in thus suffering, nay in surrounding with thy choicest blessings, so unworthy a creature. Thou placest to her credit the moments she tries to show thee her love, and an instant of sorrow she obtains from thee a full pardon. I have experienced it myself, O my God, and I do not understand why every one does not come to thee through meditation, to share in thy favors.

4th Meditation Power of Prayer.

Are you well aware of what you can do, when you pray? the following examples will convince you of the power of prayer: Almighty God is about to destroy the prevaricating people of Israel. See, says he, to Moses; this people is stiff-necked, let me alone, that my wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them. Moses beseeches, intreats and supplicates. The justice of God is restrained, the indignation of the Lord is appeased and the whole nation is saved. Elias prays to God and the fire comes down from heaven upon the messengers of Ochozias. Eliseus prays and calls back to life the son of the Sunamitess. The Ninivites pray and their sighs penetrate heaven. Suzanna prays and the Lord comes to her assistance. Daniel prays and is delivered from the lion's den. Who will say the unnumberless miracles which fervent souls in prayer

have obtained? If we pass to the new testament, we may easily perceive that J. C. after commanding and giving himself the example of prayer, encourages our confidence in a most liberal manner by granting, according to his promise whatever he is asked. The centurion requests him to come and to heal his servant, and instantly the servant is cured. The two blind men sitting on way side, when Jesus was passing, cry out: Jesus, son of David, have mercy on us; and Jesus having compassion on them touches their eyes and immediately they receive sight and follow him. Who could read with an insensible heart the following passage? "when Jesus was going into the confines of Cyre and Sidon, behold a woman of Canaan who came out of those parts, crying out, said to him:,, "have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David; my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil,,; "but he, answered her not a word,, "and his disciples came and besought him:,, "send her away, for she crieth after us.,, And he answering said:,, "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel;,, "but she came and worshipped him saying:,, "Lord, help me, but he answered and said: ,, "it is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs; and she said:,, "yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters: then Jesus ans-

wering said to her:,, "O woman, great is thy faith.,, "Be it done to thee as thou wilt, and her daughter was cured from that hour.,,— Jesus may delay to grant our petitions, but he has pledged his sacred word to grant.

5th Meditation.

Importance of Prayer.

Be mindful of these words of our Blessed Redeemer, "without me, you can do nothing —- Were you possessed of superior talents and of a considerable wealth, were all human means at your disposal all this would avail you nothing in procuring the glory of God and securing your eternity, if it were not consecrated by prayer. Besides other prayers, you are permitted to spend every day some minutes before the Blessed Sacrament If you knew the gift of God, as you will know it one day; if your faith is firm, active, complete and perfect, you will do wonders for yourself. You may become sensible of the most important revealed truths, in which wordly persons believe and deny by their conduct; you may obtain the understanding of the maxims of the Gospel, of our holy mysteries and the spirit of the Church in all her festivals and ceremonies; you can thereby obtain a complete victory over your evil inclinations, defeat all your enemies, cure all your spiritual maladies. You can also by the same means obtain humility purity of heart, obedience, poverty, charity,

&c. for others oh! how many blessings you could draw from heaven on the country, on this Institution and on every member of it! you could shut the gate of hell itself against many of your fellow-beings and secure others the eternal enjoyment of heaven. You might put an end to the excruciating tortures of friends or relations actually burning in the fire of purgatory, and bring them up to the bosom of God. If one of those most afflicted souls were permitted to come back to live upon earth and to spend in prayer a few minutes in the presence of a tabernacle, how fervent and ardent would not her suplications be? how deeply would she not feel the importance of such a favor whereby she might so easily move the heart of God with compassion and mercy; imagine, if you can what would pass in that happy soul, what burning wishes she would pour before God for herself, for her friends, for sinners, for infidels, for all men. Good God, give me now, to understand, what I shall certainly know some day, but only to increase my sorrows and my torments.

6th. MEDITATION. EXCELLENCE OF PRAYER.

Early in the morning the voice of your creator calls on you to consecrate to his honour and glory the first moments of the day. Like another Samuel you rise and come down, saying, thou hast called me, O Lord, behold I have

come, speak to thy servant. The same voice has been heard by the whole Community; all have diligently corresponded to the holy call.— You are assembled together to pray. Then *J. C.* is in the middle of your assembly; "wherever you will be two or three gathered in my name I shall be amongst you.,, What! you have met before a tabernacle, where our Blessed Redeemer is residing day and night.— Listen to the eternal Father: here is my beloved Son in whom I have placed all my complacencies; and he himself invites you to come to him for he is there to relieve all your wants. The holy sacrifice commences; once more *J. C.* offers himself to consummate your redemption; at the close of the great action you proceed towards the holy table and kneel down; the priest comes to you with the sacred host. *J. C.* enters your heart; you retire in silence and resume your place. You fall again on your knees to meditate and to pray. Now you possess *J. C.* in your soul, the Creator of Heaven and earth has just given himself to you, with an unspeakable bounty; "he himself invites you to beg of Him: "hitherto you have not asked any thing;, "ask and you will receive,, O incomprehensible prerogative of prayer; who would ever have thought of such favor. What will he refuse to your prayers when he gives himself to you with no reserve? O then pray, ask with confi-

dence, and whatever you will ask for, shall be given to you Amen.

7th MEDITATION.

Indispenability of Prayer.

All the good ever done in the Church may be justly attributed to prayer; the same cause may be assigned with equal ground to most of the miracles and wonders wrought among men.— Whenever we meet with some extraordinary blessing from above, we can easily discover the fervent prayers by which it has been obtained. It has ever been a general and firm conviction among the Saints, that they advanced more the execution of God's designs in praying before a tabernacle than by any human excertions.— Remember St. Francis Xaverius in Goda spending the greatest part of the nights in prayer after having devoted the whole day to the painful labors of the holy Ministry. Remember Moses on the mount lifting up his hands to Heaven, whilst the people were fighting in the field.— Whence so much indifference among Christians, whence so many defeats? from the neglect of prayer. The land is desolated with desolation because there is none who reflects in his heart; because in other words none pray; therefore a great many believers, whose faith is sound and whole and are utterly void of good works, because they neglect prayer. What will it avail them to have known the truth and to have seen the light

whilst they hate it and hide themselves from it.—Will their condition be better than that of Pagans and Infidels? their very faith will turn to their eternal ruin, instead of justifying them.—Judas believed, perhaps as firmly as St. Peter and St. John, in the divinity of J. C. the devils themselves believe innumerable souls now forever buried in hell believed exactly the same truth,s by which all the Saints of Heaven were delivered and saved. How then can you rely on your faith, if your conduct contradicts it? Oh! how great is the difference between mere barren faith and the efficacious spirit of faith!—Let us bear this in mind; if we are not truly given up to prayer, we can never do any thing either for the Church of God, or for ourselves; our very faith will be the cause of our eternal reprobation. What! so many favors of God, so many confessions and communions, so many divine calls and blessings never bestowed on others, will certainly not save me, but turn against me, if I am not addicted to prayer.

N.B. I am glad to inform you that the Constitutions of the Brothers and those of the Sisters will soon be ready; until they appear, I invite, I beseech you all in the name of J. M. J. to conform toperfectly what you know to be the foundation of a religious life, the spirit of obedience,

A. P.—

of poverty, of chastity and above all that of charity.

"Peace be to you and love with faith from God the father and the Lord J. C. grace with all that love the Lord J. C. in sincerity Amen."

E. SORIN.