

# THE GREAT QUESTION

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*Permissu Superiorum*

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Approbation

"I have carefully read over this Little Volume for Children and have found nothing whatsoever in it contrary to the doctrine of Holy Faith; but, on the contrary, a great deal to charm, instruct and edify our youthful classes, for whose benefit it has been written."

William Meagher, Vicar General, Dublin, December 14, 1855.

## CHAPTER I.

### GOD HAS GIVEN YOU A BODY.

*"The Lord God formed man out of the slime of the Earth."* GEN. ii. 7.

WHAT is your body made of? The body is made of the slime and dust of the earth, and yet the body is one of the greatest works of God. St. Augustine says that people wonder at the rivers, and the mountains, but they ought rather to wonder at themselves. It is good, then, for a child to know what a wonderful thing the body is, that it may learn to thank God for giving it a body. (*See the note below.\**) "Your bodies are members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor. vi.

If the body is wonderful now, it will be far more wonderful at the general resurrection, at the end of the world. Then, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet, by an archangel -- *1 Thes. i. 4.* -- the dead shall rise again out of their graves. See what will happen then to the bodies of those who have served God in this life! First, death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow, for the former things are passed away -- *Apoc. xxi. 4.* Secondly, the body which is buried in corruption and frightful to look at, shall rise in glory, and shine like the sun in the kingdom of God -- *1 Cor. xv.; Matt. xiii.* Thirdly, the body, like a spirit, will be able to pass through solid things, through the earth, stones, and doors -- *Cor. xv.* -- As Christ came into the room where the Apostles were, the doors being shut; *John xx.* Fourthly, the body will be able to pass from one place to another, however distant -- from the highest Heaven to the Earth in a moment, for it will become a spiritual body. *Cor. xx.* So "God will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory, according to the operation whereby also he is able to subdue all things unto

himself." *Phil. iii.* Such is the wonderful body which God has created for you out of the slime and dust of the earth.

\* 1. THE BONES -- In the body are hard bones on which the body rests, like a house rests on pillars and props, and would fall down if they were taken away. There are in the body many bones of different sizes and shapes. If the hand, for example, was only one bone, you could not bend your fingers, or take hold of any thing; so in each hand there are 27 bones, beautifully joined together by gristle.

2. BREATHING. -- The air which you breathe goes through the mouth and the nose into the throat; then it goes down the windpipe till it comes to the lungs, which are like bellows for breathing with. But what is the air for? Why do we breathe? The air we breathe mixes with the food which comes from the stomach into the heart, and turns it into blood. The air which your body breathes should remind you how God breathes into the soul the breath of life: Gen. ii.

3. THE VOICE. -- What is the voice? How do we speak and sing? The air we breathe back again out of the lungs, goes up the windpipe in the throat. When the breath comes near the top of the windpipe, it strikes against two little strings of flesh less than an inch long. The striking of the breath against these two strings makes a sound, and that sound is the voice. The vowels, *a e i o u*, are made simply by the breath striking against these strings. The constants *b c d t*, &c, are not made till the breath gets into the mouth, and then they are made with the help of the tongue, teeth, and roof of the mouth, and the nose. For example, the letter *t* is made by breathing and putting the tongue against the roof of the mouth. Singing also is nothing but the sound which comes from the breath striking against the two little strings at the top of the windpipe. In singing, there may be 240 changes of the voice or tones, and in changing from one tone to another the breath passes over only 1-1200th part of an inch. So wonderful, and yet simple is the voice by which we can make known to others our secret thoughts. The thoughts of our heart are so secret that no creature on earth, no spirit in hell or heaven, except God himself, can know them. *Ps. cxxxviii.* "Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off." So wonderful then is the voice of the body. But there is another voice much more wonderful -- it is the voice of the soul we speak to God. The voice of the soul is prayer. We say, "Our father, who art in heaven." and God listens to us.

4. FOOD. -- Why do we eat? The food becomes blood. Let us see how this is done. First -- Your hand puts the food on your tongue, which is flat like a plate, to hold it. The tongue can also tell the different tastes of food, that we may not eat what is bad for us. When you have put a slice of bread on your tongue, you want to divide what is inside of the mouth from what is outside; so in front of the mouth are twelve sharp teeth which, like a knife, cut a piece off the slice, and so you get a mouthful. But you could not swallow the mouthful, for it would be too large to go down the throat. Therefore, on each side of the mouth are ten teeth with flat tops. These flat teeth crush the food and grind it into powder, like millstones crush wheat and grind it into flour. But a dry powder would not go down the throat, so there are three wells of spittle or saliva in the mouth, two under the tongue and one on the side of the right ear. While the teeth are grinding the food into powder, the spittle comes out of the three wells, mixes with the powder, and turns it into paste; so if a hungry man comes near a good dinner, they say his mouth waters. At a single meal six ounces of saliva are thus swallowed. When the food has been made into paste, the tongue pushes it backwards, and sends it into the throat. At the top of the throat is an opening, which is the windpipe, through which we breathe. Now the food must pass over the windpipe, and yet if any of the food falls down into the windpipe we are choked. How then is the food to get over the windpipe? The providence of God has beautifully arranged it. Over the top of the windpipe is a lid or little door, and while the food passes, the lid shuts down, and so the food passes over it. The food then gets into the stomach, and in the stomach it is changed by digestion. Then the food goes into the heart, and mixing with the breath from the lungs, is changed into blood, and the blood feeds the body, which is always wearing out, and so we live. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all for the glory of God." *1 Cor. x.* You say in the Lord's prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." When therefore, you eat the bread which is for the life of the body, think also of the bread which is the life of the soul. What is the bread for the life of the soul? Jesus Christ tells us, *John vi.* "The bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world."

6. THE EYES. -- The eyes are in the head, the highest part of the body, that we may see things far off. The eye is a round white ball. In the middle of this ball is an opening, called the pupil of the eye, for light to pass through. Round this opening is a beautiful net or curtain, called the iris. When the light is too strong, this net becomes larger to let in less light. When there is little light, the curtain becomes smaller to let in more light. This net is black, or brown, or blue, or gray. So we say that a person has black, or brown eyes, &c. How, then, does the eye see things? You must, first of all, know that light travels 200,000 miles every second. The earth is 24,000 miles round, so that the light would go round the earth eight times in a second. The light then comes from a tree, or a house, or anything you are looking at, and brings on it a picture of the thing you are looking at. It passes through the opening or pupil of the eye, and leaves the picture on the back of the eye. The picture goes from the back of the eye to the brain, and from the brain it goes to the soul. In one moment you can see millions of things all at once, trees, leaves, men, houses, towns, &c. And the pictures of these millions of things are all at the same time on the space of half an inch at the back of the eye; and yet they do not get in one another's way. If a man had to paint a million pictures on half an inch of paper it would be all confusion; but the eye is the work of God; *Ps. cxlii.* "To thee have I lifted up my eyes, who dwellest in Heaven. Behold, as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God until he have mercy on us."

6. THE SOUL AND THE BODY. -- If a word comes to your ear, the soul knows it directly; if you see any thing, if you take hold of any thing, if something strikes your foot, or you have a pain, your soul knows all these things instantly. How is this? From the eyes, and the ears, and the hands, and the feet, and from every part of the body, fleshy strings called nerves, go up to the brain; and whatever comes to the eyes, ears, or body, passes along the nerves up to the brain, and there by some means, which we cannot understand, it is made known to the

soul. You move your hand; or you move your foot and walk -- how is this done? The soul wills or determines to walk. This will of the soul is made known to the brain. From the brain, this will or determination of the soul passes quicker than lightning to the foot. The foot obeys and walks. Thus God has given your soul a wonderful power over your body. Your soul commands your foot to walk, and the foot obeys. There is no power on the face of the earth, except your soul, which could make your foot move of itself.

## **CHAPTER II.**

### **BE THANKFUL TO GOD FOR GIVING YOU A BODY**

1. THERE are few people who ever thank God for their body, for the eyes they see with, for the feet they walk with; *Acts iii*. It was the year in which Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven. One day there was a poor man sitting at one of the gates of the temple of Jerusalem. He was lame; he had never been able to walk since the day of his birth. Each morning his people carried him in their arms, and set him down at this gate. There he sat all the day long, from morning till night. When the people went through the gate into the temple, he asked them to give him something. The people, seeing that he was lame, and not able to walk, had pity on him, and gave him sometimes a half-penny, sometimes a penny -- so the poor cripple was able to buy bread and live. One afternoon, about three o'clock, while he was sitting at this gate, there came two of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, St. Peter and St. John. They were going into the temple to say their prayers. As they passed, the lame man saw them, and asked them to give him something. St. Peter looked at him, and said: "My good man, I have neither gold nor silver, but what I have, I give you. Therefore, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The people who stood near heard the words of St. Peter, and they looked at the lame man to see if he would be cured. The name of Jesus is a name of power and strength. Scarcely had the great name gone out of the mouth of St. Peter, when quick as a flash of lightning, life came into the dead feet of the poor man. He rose up, and with the new life which the name of Jesus enlivened his feet, he walked, following the Apostles into the temple of God. His heart was filled with joy and thankfulness because he had got the use of his feet. With a loud voice he cried out, and thanked God, and all the people of the temple heard him praising and blessing God. Such was the thankfulness of this man, when he had only yet had the use of his feet for a few moments. You, my child, have had the use of your feet for years -- did you ever once thank God for it? Then, for the many blessings you received when God gave you a body, say sometimes: "My God, I thank you, because you gave me a tongue to speak with, and praise your holy name. I thank you, because you gave me ears to hear with, and listen to your blessed word. I thank you, because you gave me hands to work with, and do good works." God has given you a wonderful body, but he has also given you something else, a great deal more wonderful than the body.

## **CHAPTER III.**

### **GOD HAS GIVEN TO YOU A SOUL, AND YOUR SOUL IS A SPIRIT**

*"The Lord God breathed into the face of man the breath of life, and man became a living soul."*

1. A SOUL! How wonderful the soul is! There is something in the soul which strikes fear and dread into the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the air; *Gen. ix.* 2. The soul is the very image and likeness of God himself. The soul is a spirit like God. The soul, like God, is one; yet there are three great powers in the soul -- will, memory, and understanding -- as there are three persons in God -- Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Your soul does not wear away like the rocks, which are the foundations of the earth. Your soul does not fade away like a flower, or as the leaves drop off the trees in the autumn, or as the colors of the rainbow melt away from our sight. Your soul will not be nailed down in a coffin, or buried in the grave; when the body dies, the soul will not die, but it will go out of this world to the God who gave it; *Ecc. xiii.* There was a girl about twelve years of age, who died; she was the daughter of Jairus. St. Luke tells us that Jesus Christ raised her dead body to life again, but he does not say that Jesus raised her soul to life again; but he says that her soul returned, that is, came back from the other world; *Luke viii.* Your soul, like God himself, will live forever and ever, through the endless eternity of the everlasting years. Your soul then is immortal.

Your soul has a memory, which can remember things which are gone away, so that the things which are dead live, as it were, in the memory of the soul. The soul has a will, and, like God, it can say, "I will, or I will not." If a child plays truant, and stops away from school, the child gets a beating, because the child was not obliged to stop away -- it could stop away or not, as it liked; it has free-will. But if a stone drops out of your hand, you do not beat the stone, because the stone could not help it; it has not a will. Your soul thinks -- the thoughts of the soul can pass in a moment up to Heaven and down to Hell, through the length and breadth of the earth, and down to the lowest parts of it. Your thoughts can call back the years that are gone away, and can reach to things to come in the far future, when the last day of this world shall be over, and Eternity shall have begun.

2. The soul is not like those things which can be seen by the eye. You say sometimes, I saw a stone, or I saw a cow, or I saw my foot; but nobody ever said, I saw my soul; because the soul is a spirit, and cannot be seen by the eyes of the body. If you said that your soul was blue, or red, or gray, or that you had round thoughts, or square thoughts; or if you said that your memory weighed a pound, or that you would divide your soul into four quarters, people would laugh at you. We differ from the beasts, because the beasts have no soul or reason. Nobody ever heard of a cow building a house, neither did you ever hear anybody reading a book to a horse or to a cat, because these creatures have no soul or understanding. If a horse breaks through a fence, nobody says, that horse has committed a sin, because a horse has no reason. Your soul is not like your body. Your soul thinks; but nobody ever says, "My hand thinks, or my food remembers." You never heard any one say that his soul had a cough or the measles, or that his soul was getting wrinkles, like an old man.

You have, then, a soul, which is the image and likeness of God; a soul, which can call before

it in its thoughts the past, the present, and the future; a soul, which can think and reason; a soul, which can will and choose whether it will do good or evil; a soul, which will live forever in joy or in pain, according as it has will to do good or to do evil. "Before man is life and death, good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him." *Eccus. xv.*

#### **CHAPTER IV.**

##### **THE SOUL IS BEAUTIFUL ABOVE ALL THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS OF THIS WORLD.**

1. ST. CATHERINE lived in the town of Sienna, in Italy. There was living at the same time, in the same town, a certain woman called Bridget. Bridget was wicked: her life as so scandalous, that the people would not let her live in the town; so she lived in a little cottage out of the town. St. Catherine loved to do works of mercy; and one of the greatest works of mercy is to pray for the conversion of sinners. Thus Moses prayed: "Forgive, O God, the sins of this people according to the greatness of thy mercy. God answered: I have forgiven, according to thy word." *Numb. xiv.* One day St. Catherine was in the chapel, on her knees before the B. Sacrament, praying. Her prayer was for the conversion of a poor sinner. You will be glad to hear what sort of prayer a saint prayed for the conversion of a sinner; and when you know it, you will pray sometimes for the poor sinners. This was the prayer: "My sweet Jesus," she said, "remember the poor Bridget, and have pity on her. You labored and you toiled for thirty-three years to save that soul; you bled on the cross, and died a bitter death, to save that soul; and now, when you are able to save it, will you not save it? Why should that poor soul not be saved? Are its sins so great that your Divine blood is not able to wash them away? O Jesus, be kind to that poor creature -- have pity on her -- speak to her heart, and she will be saved." The prayer of St. Catherine was finished, when, behold, she heard a voice come out of the Tabernacle, where Jesus was in the B. Sacrament. That voice was the voice of Jesus Christ, and thus Jesus spoke to St. Catherine: "My dear Catherine," Jesus said, "I have heard your prayer. I am glad. I thank you for praying for the poor Bridget, because it is my providence, that when anybody prays for sinners, then I have pity on them and convert them. It is well that you have prayed for Bridget, for she will soon die; and, if you had not prayed for her, she would have died in her sins, and gone to Hell. But now, since you have prayed for her, I will have mercy on her, and convert her." God said he would destroy the people of Israel, if Moses had not stood before him to turn away his wrath. *Ps. cv.* The following day Bridget was walking along one of the streets. Her mind, as usual, was on vain and evil things. "The way of a man is not his own," *Jer. x.*; for, behold, suddenly, a thought, a light from Heaven, came into her soul. "Thou, O Lord, enlightenest wonderfully." *Ps. lxxv.* She remembered her past sins, and the light of God showed her the frightfully terrible state of her soul. "All its beauty is departed. It is become vile. It is covered in darkness." *Lam. ii. 3.* She remembered how great and how good God is, and she saw what a dreadful thing it is for a creature to dare, in the presence of its Creator, to break his commandments; to blaspheme him with that breath which he puts into the mouth, to use against him the power and force which he puts into the hands and feet. "Hear, O ye Heavens, and give ear, O Earth, for my people have despised me." *Is. vii.* When Bridget

thought of these things, her heart was filled with bitter sorrow; she burst into tears. "My God," she said, "what a wicked creature I have been! How could I offend you? What harm did you ever do to me? How kind and good you have always been to me, even when I was offending you. You were my Creator; you died for love of me. O my God, I am very, very sorry for sinning against you, for you are so good. Never, O my God, will I sin against you any more -- no, never again." Soon after, Bridget was in the chapel, getting ready for Confession. She carefully examined her conscience about all her mortal sins; how many times she had committed them each day, or week, or month, or year. She then made the most fervent acts of contrition and good resolutions to keep away from the persons and places where she had sinned before. She went to Confession, and accused herself sorrowfully of her sins. She felt ashamed to tell some of them, but she did not mind the shame -- she told them all. Then she humbly asked the priest to give her absolution and pardon through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, who had died for her. Then came the priest's absolution: "By the authority of Jesus Christ, I absolve thee from thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In that moment the virtue and the power of the blood of Jesus came into her soul, and her sins went away as darkness goes away when the light comes. "Whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven them." *John xx*. She carefully remembered the penance given to her by the priest and performed it. Soon afterwards Bridget died. St. Catherine was again in the chapel, and she heard the voice of Jesus Christ from the Tabernacle. "My dear Catherine," Jesus said, "the poor Bridget for whom you prayed is dead; she made a good confession; her sins were forgiven, and now her soul is in Purgatory. You shall go down with your angel-guardian to Purgatory, and see her soul."

## THE SOUL IN PURGATORY

2. ABOUT Purgatory we read many things in the Holy Scriptures, and other things in books written by holy men. Purgatory is a prison of fire; *Matt. v.*; *1 Cor. iii*. Nothing defiled with sin can enter into Heaven; *Apoc. xiv*. Those who die with any, even the least venial sin in their soul, must have it forgiven in the world to come; *Matt. xii. 32*. Therefore -- First, those who die with venial sins in their soul, burn in Purgatory until they are cleansed, and so they are loosed from their sin; *2. Mach. xii*. Secondly, those who have their mortal sins forgiven, but have not satisfied the justice of God, and done enough penance for their sins, remain in Purgatory until they have paid the last farthing of the debt they owe to God's justice, *Matt. v.*; And thus they are saved, yet so as by fire. *1 Cor. iii*.

When the doors of Purgatory were opened to St. Catherine and the angel, the first thing she saw was fire! Never before had she seen such a dreadful, raging, piercing, tormenting fire -- a fire which penetrated and burnt the inmost soul. It seemed as if the flames of Hell could not burn more fiercely than the flames of Purgatory. "The arrows of the Lord are in me, and the rage of them drinketh up my spirit." *Job vi*. She saw many, countless multitudes, thick as the leaves of the forest, burning in the flames of Purgatory. She saw there even some who had led most holy lives in the world. There are few, very few, who go to Heaven without

first going to Purgatory, "For if the stars are not pure in His sight, how much less the soul of mortal man." *Job. xxv.* All these souls looked very patient in their sufferings, and resigned to the will of God. Their prayer was ever: "O God, may thy will be done." *Matt. vi.* They seemed even to rejoice in their sufferings, which bring them each moment nearer to Heaven. "God is compassionate, and will forgive sins in the day of tribulation." *Eccus. ii.* So, like St. Paul, they say: "I abound with joy in tribulation," *2. Cor. vii.*; and often they would say: "Thy rod, O God, has comforted me." *Ps. xxii.* She saw that in the midst of their sufferings they had many other consolations. They knew that God loved them, and was with them. "I will fear no evils, for thou art with me." *Ps. xxii.* They knew that their sufferings would sometime come to an end. Many times they were gladdened by the visits of the dear angels of Heaven, who refreshed them as the dews of the night refresh the thirsty plant, or as, when Jesus was in an agony of suffering in the Garden of Gethsemani, and his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground, then there appeared to him an angel from Heaven, giving him strength, *Luke xxii.*; or as, when Jesus himself, after his death on the cross, went and spoke kind words to his dear souls in Purgatory, *1 Pet. iii.* It seems that many souls went to Heaven before the time fixed for their punishment was ended. "God delivered them out of their distresses." *Ps. cv.* Of these she found that some had themselves, when alive, prayed much for the souls in Purgatory. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." *Matt. v.* She saw that the time of punishment for these souls was very much shortened by the prayers offered for them on earth. She perceived that they rejoiced, especially when the Holy Mass was said for them, and the precious blood of Jesus Christ offered for them on the altar. When they saw day by day souls taken from the midst of them, out of this terrible prison, and going to Heaven on account of that Holy Sacrifice, they knew well the force of those words of the Prophet: "*Thou also, O Christ, by the Blood of Thy Testament, hast sent forth the prisoners out of the pit in which there was no water.*" *Zach. ix.* She saw also that great numbers of souls were delivered from Purgatory, because somebody on earth had gone round the Stations, or the Way of the Cross for them, and had prayed that the precious blood of Jesus Christ spilt on that sorrowful way might be instead of the sufferings of the poor souls in Purgatory. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." *1 John i.* She saw that the prayers for which the Church has given Indulgences for the souls in Purgatory, did wonderful things. "Whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, shall be loosed in heaven." *Matt. xviii.* For example, the prayer, "*Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul,*" for which there are one hundred days of Indulgence for the souls in Purgatory. Sometimes a little child on earth offered some good work for the souls in Purgatory. One child would say, "My Jesus, for the love of you I am going to learn my school lessons, and I offer this for the souls in Purgatory." Another child would say, "My Jesus, for the love of you, I am going to sew, or to take a walk, and I offer this for the souls in Purgatory." Another child would do an act of self-mortification. It would say, "My Jesus, for the love of you I will not eat this sweet thing, and I offer this for the souls in Purgatory." As St. Paul said, "I rejoice in my sufferings for the Church." *1 Col. i.* If the children only knew how, when they do so, they take away the sufferings of the poor souls in Purgatory, they would always be offering all their good works for the souls in Purgatory. Sometime a prayer which had been

said, or a good work which had been done for some particular soul, was not given to that soul. Perhaps that soul was already gone out of Purgatory, or for some other reason known to God. But still that prayer was not lost, for it was given to some other soul according as it pleased God. When anybody on earth was praying for the souls in Purgatory, Almighty God seemed very much pleased and grateful to that person for praying for the dear souls in Purgatory. But nothing could equal the thankfulness of these poor souls themselves when they felt that somebody was praying for them in the world. The spirits which are in the other world know things which are done on this earth. "The angels of God know and rejoice when a sinner on earth does penance." *Luke xv*. Long and fervently did the souls in Purgatory pray for those who on earth prayed for them. How God listens to the prayers of his dear souls in Purgatory, St. Catherine of Bologna tells us. She says that she obtained, by the prayers of the souls in Purgatory, many things for which she had prayed to the saints in Heaven, and had not received them.

Sometimes in Purgatory there was heard a lamentation -- a sorrowful cry. It was not like a cry of impatience, but a gentle complaint. What could be the reason? Why did these souls complain? Was it because they could no longer bear the fierce burning of that terrible fire? No, that was not the reason; for still these souls looked patient and even glad that the fire burnt fiercely and purified them from their sins. What they could it be? St. Catherine listened to their complaints, and she heard them complaining that people in the world had forgotten to pray for them. Some had given orders for masses to be said for them, and those masses had not been said. There were also parents in Purgatory, for whom their children living on the earth had forgotten to pray. There were children forgotten by parents. Brothers and sisters who had forgotten to pray for each other. Many also had been very kind and good to people on earth when alive on the earth, and they had hoped people would pray for them after death; but they had been forgotten. Then these souls in Purgatory would say, sorrowfully, "I am forgotten as one dead from the heart." *Ps. xxx*. "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me." *Job xix*. It was most beautiful to see how these souls left Purgatory and went to Heaven. Suddenly an angel from Heaven, enlightened with the glory of God, would come into Purgatory, and he would say that there was a soul whose sufferings were ended, and God wished it to come to Heaven. Then each soul would hope that, perhaps, itself might be that happy soul. Now the angel makes known which is the soul to be delivered out of Purgatory. "Blessed soul," he says, "many years more of torments waited for you, but some one on earth prayed for you; and now, by the command of our merciful God, you are free." "Arise my beloved one, make haste; the winter is past." *Cant. ii. 2*. "God has turned thy mourning into joy, and compassed thee with gladness." *Ps. cxxix*. "Rejoice, for we are going into the House of the Lord." *Ps. cxxi*. "Come in before his presence with exceeding joy." *Ps. cxix*. Instantly the chains which held the soul bound in the flames drop off it. It is out of the fire: no more fire, no more pain, no more tears. Now the angel leads the blessed soul on its way to Heaven. It is going out from the midst of the suffering souls. They look at it with delight, they salute it as it passes. Farewell! they say; farewell, happy soul! when you shall come



before the throne of God do not forget us. Speak dear words from us to our Blessed Lady, the Mother of God, to St. Joseph, to our Angel Guardians and Patron Saints, and to all the Angels and Saints. Ask them to pray for us. Farewell, happy soul! we shall see you in Heaven. Now the soul is out of Purgatory -- it is surrounded with choirs of angels. But the soul cannot go into the presence of the Majesty of God, "who dwelleth in light inaccessible," *John i.*, until it is clothed with the light of glory. See, the angel clothes the happy soul with the white robes of the Saints, the stole of glory, the crown of precious stones. "His glory is great in thy salvation: glory and great beauty shalt thou lay upon him." *Ps. xx.* Oh, beautiful soul! its brightness eclipses the sun, and puts out the light of the stars. It is at the door of Heaven. All Heaven rejoices to see it. "Who is it," they say in Heaven, "that cometh up to us as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun?" *Cant. viii.* Then there is one more word in the mouth of all the Blessed in Heaven: "Who," they say, "took that soul out of Purgatory by his prayers, and sent it to Heaven? May all the blessings of God come upon him, who by his prayers has sent this sister spirit to give us joy." Now the soul is before the throne of the Blessed Trinity, "It sees the face of God." *Matt. xviii.* "It sees God in his glory." *Ps. ci.* It offers up its first prayer in Heaven to God! Heaven is silent! Whom does it pray for? Listen! -- "My God," it says, "have mercy on him who, by his prayers, took my soul out of the flames of Purgatory. O God! do not let his soul go into the flames of Hell." All Heaven listens, and God does not turn a deaf ear to the first prayer of the blessed spirit when it has just entered into the kingdom of Heaven -- that soul which, by your prayers or good works, you have sent from the flames of Purgatory to Heaven, will never forget you day or night. When you are in trouble, in distress, in temptation, in the agony of death, it will pray for you.

And now St. Catherine saw another wonderful sight in Purgatory. Suddenly the Angel lifted up his hand and pointed to one of the souls in the flames. Look, he said, Catherine, look! there is the soul of Bridget, who led a wicked life, but made a good confession, and died. St. Catherine had been so taken up with the wonderful things in Purgatory, that she had scarcely looked at any of the souls attentively. Now, she looks attentively at the soul of Bridget. Till then she knew not how wonderful a soul is. She was astonished at the beauty of that soul. It is true, there were some dark spots and stains in it which the fire was burning away, as people can sometimes see dark spots on the bright sun. But still that soul was beautiful beyond all the beautiful things that were ever seen in the world. What could she compare it to? She thought of the sweet light of the morning and of the beautiful colors of the rainbow: but that soul was far more beautiful. She remembered the dazzling beams of the noonday sun; but the light which beamed from that soul was far brighter. It seemed as if the sunlight, in comparison to the light of that soul, was but a dark shadow. She thought of the glittering stars in the blue skies; but that soul was far more glittering. She remembered the pure whiteness of the Spring lily, and of the fresh snow; but that was only an earthly whiteness. In Bridget's soul it was the whiteness of Heaven, "such as there is not on earth." *Mark. ix.* Catherine had often trembled with fear when she heard the thunders rolling in the dark clouds, and saw the flashes of forked lightning; but there was something more awful in the beauty of that soul -- a majesty before which she stood with fear and delight. So, Moses

and Elias were seen in majesty with Jesus Christ on Mount Thabor, *Luke ix.*; she would have been glad to stop there for ever, wondering and loving the beauty of that soul. That soul, she thought, must have been made a partaker of the Divine nature; *2 Pet. i.* She asked the Angel what made that soul so beautiful? and he answered, that it was the image and likeness of God in that soul, and the Divine grace, which made it so beautiful.

So, my child, you have in your soul the image and likeness of God; and if his grace be in your soul, and you love and serve him, then your soul is also beautiful above all the beautiful things of this world. But still you cannot know what a great thing it is to have received a soul from God, unless you know the price paid for your soul.

## **CHAPTER V.**

### **THE PRICE OF THE SOUL**

1. WHAT is meant by the price or cost of any thing? A little girl wanted to buy some thread. She went to a shop where thread was sold, and said, "Please, I want to buy some thread." The people of the shop showed her some thread. She took as much as she wanted. Then she said, "What is the price of this thread -- what does it cost?" The people looked at the thread and said, "The thread costs a penny." So a penny was the price of the thread.

My dear child, your soul was bought by Almighty God as much as the thread was bought by this girl. "You are bought with a great price." *1 Cor. vi.* So now we must try to find out what was the price which God paid for your soul, for every soul, for the soul of a little baby, for the soul of an idiot who has not his senses.

Did God, then, buy your soul with gold and silver, as you buy a house or a field? No. All the gold and silver in the mines of Australia and California -- all the gold and silver on the earth, and under the earth -- all the rich and beautiful things in all the shops in the world; the rich silks, and velvets, and diamonds, and pearls, and precious stones -- all the riches of the world put together in one vast heap, could not buy the soul of one baby which has no sense. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold and silver." *1 Pet. i.* Did God buy your soul with the bright sun and sparkling stars? No. Neither the sun, nor the stars, nor the world, nor ten millions of suns, and stars, and worlds, could buy one soul. There is nothing in this world equal to the soul. Let us then lift up our thoughts to Heaven. There are in Heaven riches very different from the riches of the Earth. Such riches as are in Heaven "the eye hath not seen, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to know them." *1 Cor. ii.* Did God, then, buy your soul with the riches of Heaven? No. All the riches of Heaven, even the Throne of Glory itself, the seat of the Most Blessed Trinity, -- "that Throne which is for ever and ever," *Heb. i.* -- could not buy the soul of one poor idiot who has no sense. What then was the price which God paid for a soul? Oh! the price of a soul! "Man knoweth not the price thereof." *Job.* What tongue can tell it? What then was the price which God paid for your soul? Listen! -- Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. His going out is from the ways of Eternity, and He lives for ever and ever. By Him the world was

made, and at his word Heaven and Earth will pass. Now lift up your eyes and look -- at the Cross! On that cross hangs Jesus the Son of God! He has taken a body and soul like ours, and He is nailed to the cross! From His hands and His feet four streams of blood go down upon the earth, and all the earth round the cross on Calvary is red with the Divine blood. There -- the Son of God hangs between Heaven and Earth, on four great hooks, bleeding! Look again at Jesus, his head is bowed down, it has sunk on his breast -- his soul is gone away! Jesus Christ the Son of God hangs dead on the cross! The people who lived in those days saw the God who created them nailed to the wooden cross on Calvary -- they saw him bleeding in cruel pain -- they heard his sorrowful sighs -- they saw him breathe out his last breath and die. Then the sun became dark, and the earth was torn with earthquakes, and the graves opened and the dead arose! Now let a little child come and kneel before the cross and pray, because Jesus is glad when the little children speak to him. "My sweet Jesus," the little child says, "I see you bleeding and dying on the cross. Oh the wonderful sight. Tell me, my Jesus, how can it be? why is it that you -- God, the Creator, should hang dead on a cross? Why did you let your creatures, to whom you gave life, take away your own life?" The child has spoken. It is silent. Jesus answers: "My dear child, your soul is very beautiful and precious. I wanted to have it -- to buy it. I looked through all my works in Heaven and on Earth to see if there was any thing I could buy it with, and there was nothing. Then I knew that I could not buy your soul except with my blood and my own life! I thought what a terrible thing it would be for me, the Creator, to die; but I remembered that if I died I should have your soul, and then I was content to bleed and to die."

Now, my child, I can tell you the price of a soul. The price of a soul is -- the Blood and Life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God! I get a pair of scales. I put as it were into one scale the precious Blood and the Life of the Son of God. I put into the other scale a soul. Oh, wonderful the balance stands equal -- the soul is equal to the Blood and Life of the Son of God! Surely when you meet any creature which has a soul, you would look and bow down with reverence before a soul bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

See that poor orphan child in rags, without shoes, without bread to eat, homeless and friendless. Poor child, as you wander through the streets, you say to yourself, "Nobody cares for me, nobody takes any notice of me." You know not, O orphan child, that the light of Heaven is shining on your soul; you know not that God and his angels have their eyes fixed on you -- that God is speaking to the angels about you and is saying, "Oh, the blessed soul of that little child! I would give Heaven and Earth, I would give the Divine Blood of my Son Jesus to have the soul of that poor little child."

Now turn away your eyes from the cross and look over the four quarters of the earth -- Europe, Asia, Africa, America. What do you see? You see countless millions of souls for which Christ died. They lie scattered about the earth, and neglected like stones and sticks, and the bones of dead beasts; or as old rags or bits of rusty iron; or as an old shoe thrown away, which nobody will pick up. Yet each one of these souls is precious before God, and dear to him as the blood of his only Son Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ, seated in Heaven,

with a sorrowful heart, looks down on the earth because there are few who help him to save these dear souls which He bought with His own blood.

## **CHAPTER VI.**

### **THE VOICE OF CREATURES TO THE SOUL.**

LOOK at the bright sun in the heavens, the sparkling stars, the green grass, the flowers, the fruits on the trees, the seas, the rivers, the beasts in the fields, the fishes in the sea, the birds in the air, the day and the night, the storm and the sunshine, the drops of rain, the dew on the grass. These creatures have a tongue, a voice which speaks to your soul. "There are no speeches nor languages where their voices are not heard. Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world." *Ps. xviii.* Oh, creatures of God, what have you to say for us? Speak, for the Creature has bid you to speak to us. What then is that voice? what those words which the Creator has commanded you to say to us? Hearken, my child, those creatures speak. They say to us: "O immortal souls, created in the image and likeness of God, we are not as you; we have not a soul to understand, neither did our Creator die for us; and yet, we ever do the will of our Creator, and serve Him." Oh, immortal souls, do the will of God who created you; oh, this very day begin to do His will, for you know not if you will live till to-morrow. The day of your life is passing, and the night of death is coming; *Job. ix.* "Ask the beasts and they shall teach thee, and the birds of the air and they shall tell thee; speak to the earth and it shall answer thee."

## **CHAPTER VII.**

### **THE GREAT QUESTION.**

THERE is a great thought -- a great question. It is the greatest of all questions -- the question of questions. Listen to the great question. This, then, is the Great Question: "Almighty God has created you. He has given you a body and an immortal soul, redeemed with the blood of Jesus Christ. You live in the world for a few short years, then you pass away, and nobody sees you any more. Why, then, did God create you? Why did he put you in this world? What are you for? What is the great thing you have to do here? What is your great affair? your great business in this world?" Behold, then, the Great Question: "*Why did God create you?*" Very few people ever think about the great question. But those who are wise often ask themselves the great question. Hear what the monks do. At midday they go into the chapel, and, kneeling down they ask themselves the great question. "Why," they say, "did God create me? have I this morning been doing what God created me for?" The night comes, and again, on their knees in the chapel, they ask themselves the great question: "Why did God create me? did I this afternoon do what God created me for?" Once every month there is one whole day, and all that day they do nothing but ask themselves the great question: "Why did God create me? have I this month been doing what God created me for?" Once every year there are ten whole days. During those ten days they are silent, they preach not, they hear no confessions, they speak not to any human creature. They spend the whole ten days

in asking themselves the great question: "Why did God create me? have I this year been doing what God created me for?" This question, "Why did God create me?" is a question which all wise men put often to themselves. So, if they read, if they eat, if they walk, during the works of the day, during the silence of the night, the great thought comes before them -- "Why did God create me?" Let us, then, my child, try to find the answer to this question -- "*Why did God create you?*"

## **CHAPTER VIII.**

### **DID GOD CREATE YOU TO BE RICH, TO GET MONEY?**

I GO into a great town, Dublin or London. I see many people walking about everywhere. There is something in their faces which shows that they are not idle, that they have some great business, some great affair on their hands. There seems to be something which takes up their thoughts, and fills their whole soul. I stop one of these people and speak to him. "My good man," I say to him, "tell me what is it? what is the great business, the great affair which fills all your thoughts and takes up all your time?" My great affair, he answers, the great thing I have to do, is -- *to get money, to be rich*. I go on further, I see a little boy running along the street. I say to him, stop a moment, my boy, what is the matter? what are you running for? I am running on an errand, the boy answers. And why do you run on an errand? The boy answers: *I want to get money*. I pass on, and walk into a shop. I see there a man, very busy from morning till night; his whole time is filled up; he has scarcely a moment to get any thing to eat. I say to him: Why do you work so hard all the days of your life? what is it for? what is to be the end of it? what do you want? He answers; *I want to get money, and to be rich*. So the will, and the memory, and the understanding, and the thoughts, and the desires of men, are always turning on money, as the earth is always turning on its axis. So it is with all, young and old, rich and poor, everywhere, in every place, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. I stop, then, for a moment, and again I ask myself the great question: "Why did God create us? what is the great thing we have to do on this earth?" And when I see all men spending all their time, and breath, and strength, and health, and life, in trying to get money, I say to myself: Perhaps this is what God created us for -- the great thing we have to do -- to get money, to be rich. Is it so? Let us see.

In the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus died on the cross, there once lived a very rich man. He had such an abundance of riches, that he scarcely knew himself all he possessed. He had gold and silver, lands and possessions, without end. He lived in a splendid house. Those who travel now to Jerusalem see the place where his house once stood. The remembrance of that fine house has come down from father to son, and so the people living there still show the traveler where it once was. They say -- here stood the house of the rich man. The grand house stood close to the Sorrowful Way, near the fourth station, where Jesus met his blessed Mother as he went on his sorrowful journey, carrying the cross, from the house of Pilate to Calvary. The rooms of this splendid house were most beautiful. They were filled with the most costly furniture. There were chairs and tables made of the richest woods, of

the cedar of Lebanon, and of the palm tree of Gades. There you would see the brightest marbles of every color; carpets from Persia, and curtains of rich velvet; precious stones, and sparkling gems; the whitest ivory, glasses, and pictures so costly that nobody could tell the price of them. When the rich man went abroad, there was a long train of beautiful carriages, drawn by the finest horses in the world. If the rich man walked in the streets of Jerusalem, every eye was fixed upon him, for he was clothed in purple and fine linen, white as the snow. There was great feasting in that grand house. Every day that rich man feasted sumptuously. The most expensive wines, the most delicate and rich meats which money could buy, were on his table. The people called the rich man happy. Often, when they passed his grand house, they looked up at it, and said: How happy that man must be, because he is so rich; I wish I was as rich as he is. "They have called the people happy that hath these things." *Ps. cxliii.*

One day the rich man was very ill, for sickness comes to the rich man as well as to the poor man. The doctor was sent for in haste to cure him. The doctor comes without loss of time; he enters the room where the rich man was lying sick, and walks up to the bed-side. The doctor looks at him, feels his pulse, examines his tongue. He is silent for a few moments, then he says: "I think, sir, you are very ill, but I will send you a bottle of medicine, and I hope that in a few days you will be well." Then the rich man was happy again, for he thought that he would soon be cured. The bottle of medicine was brought to the house of the rich man. He drank the medicine, and a few days after, this rich man -- died! Then his body lay on a fine bed, pale, breathless, lifeless, cold, even as the dead body of a poor man lies dead in a lowly cabin. But his soul! What became of his soul? The very instant in which the rich man breathed out his last breath, his soul was buried forever in Hell, buried in the fire of Hell. Even as you bury a body in earth, so the rich man's soul was buried in fire. Then there was mourning in that grand house, because the rich man was dead; the great man was gone -- he was no more! If on that day, you had walked into the rich man's house, you would have seen a large, beautiful room. It was a wonderful thing to see that room. There was something strange in it. It was midday, and the sun was shining brightly and beautifully, as it shines in those countries; but into that large room no sun-light came. The white blinds were down, and the shutters of the windows were fast shut. Yet that room was not dark, it was lighted with many hundreds of lights; but the darkness of the walls, covered with black cloth, seemed to draw away the very brightness of the light, leaving only a deathlike mournful light. The persons who were in that room moved about slowly and sadly. If they spoke, it was only in a low whisper, which could scarcely be heard, so that you would have thought perhaps the dead man was only asleep, and they were afraid to awaken him. Yes, he had slept his last sleep, from which he will never awaken again. But turn your eyes to the upper end of that large room, where there are many lights. Every eye seems to be looking there. What is it? There is a rich and splendid coffin. That coffin is made of cedar, the richest of all woods. It is covered with folds of black silk velvet. Amidst the rich velvet you can see gold and silver sparkling, and almost blazing in the lights which hang above it and round it. The inside of that coffin is lined with satin, and silk, with a fringe of gold. But what is that

coffin for? In that grand coffin is lying -- the dead body of the rich man! But down in Hell the soul of the rich man is lying in a coffin of fire! Around the coffin in that room stood the people of the world, the friends of the rich man. They talked together; they spoke of the coffin -- How beautiful it was, they said, what a fine coffin! But in Hell, the devils were standing round the coffin of fire, and they talked also, and said -- What a hot coffin, what a burning coffin this is! How terrible to be shut up in this coffin of fire for ever and ever, and never to come out of it again! Such was the end of the rich man. He lived in riches, and he died, and he was buried in the fire of Hell. But why did that rich man go to Hell? what was the reason? The reason was, because the rich man did not know the great thing he had to do while he lived. He made a great mistake. He thought the great thing of all was -- to be rich; and he was rich, and he went to Hell.

Perhaps some little boy who reads this book, when he grows up to be a man, may work hard and become rich. Now I ask that boy a question. My dear boy, when you shall come to lie on your death-bed, will you say to yourself, "I have laboured hard in my lifetime, and worked much, and now I am rich? I am going to die, and because I am rich I die contented and happy?" My boy, I will answer the question for you -- "The rich man died, and he was buried in Hell."

What is a needle? A little child answers: "A needle is a thing to sew with, having a little hole at one end called the eye of the needle; and this little hole is so small that you can only just get one single thread through it." Very well, my little child, now tell me what a camel is? "A camel is a great large beast, much larger than a horse; it can bear thirst for a long time, so when travelers go through sandy deserts where there is no water, they go on camels." Very well. I am now going to talk to you about a needle and a camel. Let us go to the camel. Pluck one single hair, only one hair, from the camel's back, and try to put it through the eye of the needle. There, the hair goes through the eye of the needle quite easily. Now, another thing, take up into your hands the great, large, broad foot of the camel, and try to put it through the little eye of the needle. You cannot. Now, something else. Put a rope round the great camel's neck, and lead it up to the needle, and try to make it pass, with all its great body through the little eye of the needle. It is impossible. Jesus Christ says that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to go into Heaven; *Luke xviii*. Therefore, to get money, and to be rich, is not the great thing you have to do in this world. It was not for this that God created you. Did God create man for that which ruins him? Without doubt it is possible for a rich man to be saved. For even among the saints are to be found those who are rich. But they made a good use of their riches; they used it in the service of God; they were kind to the poor, they led good lives. But why is it so difficult for a rich man to go to Heaven? Is there something bad in gold and silver. Were not gold and silver created by God like the stones and the trees? Gold and silver are not bad in themselves, but people generally make a bad use of them, and commit sins because they have riches, or want too much to get them. Therefore, Jesus Christ says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven;" *Matt. v*. But it is not only those who have money whom God accounts as rich. At the day of judgment many of the poor will be

condemned as rich. But how can a poor man be called rich? He has no money in his pocket, his chest is empty. It is true he has no money; but it is true also that he has in his heart a great strong desire of money. This great desire of money leads people into many sins. For example, there are many poor men whose thoughts are all about money. Then they forget God, and think no more about going to Mass and the Sacraments. A man is out at work, he loses his wages, he becomes impatient, and blasphemes God. Another man takes a false oath in order to get what does not belong to him. Here is a man who loves to drink in the public-house, so he steals and robs, and cheats, that he may have money to spend in the public-house. There are people who were friends; they had a quarrel about money, and now they have a deadly hatred against one another. So it is money, money, money! and then -- blasphemes, false oaths, stealing, cheating, drunkenness, neglect of God and the soul, and then -- Hell! Therefore, St. Paul says, *1 Tim. vi.*; "They that will become rich fall into temptation and the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evil."

God, then, did not create us to get money, to be rich. Therefore, those people are mistaken who live in this world as if the one great thing they have to do is to get money and be rich. Death will come, and then their money will pass away from them like a dream. In one moment they will go down into Hell, and, when they are buried in Hell, they will find out their mistake when it is too late. "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?" *Matt. xvi.*

## **CHAPTER IX.**

### **DID GOD CREATE US TO EAT AND DRINK AND ENJOY OURSELVES?**

MANY people think that the great thing in this life is to eat and drink and enjoy themselves. "Their God is their belly; their end is destruction." *Phil. iii.* There was once a man who spoke thus to himself. *Luke xii.*: "My soul," he said, "we have much goods laid up for many years, let us eat and drink and enjoy ourselves." When it was night, Almighty God came to that man and said to him: You fool, you fool, because you thought that you were made to eat and drink and enjoy yourself -- you fool, because you did not know what you were created for -- you fool, this night you will die! and those goods which you have laid up for many years, whose shall they be? *Luke xii.* The number of fools is infinite; *Eccus. i.* Then God did not create you to get money. He did not create you to eat and drink and enjoy yourself. Then why did God create you? Why did he give you a body and soul? Why did he put you in this world? What was it for? What are you for? You know very well what other things are for. Your hat you know is for your head; your shoes for your feet; a spade to dig with; a spoon to drink with. No child is so ignorant as to drink with a spade and dig with a spoon. You know what other things are for. Thus what are you for yourself? Why did God create you? This great question shall now be answered.



## CHAPTER X.

### THE ANSWER TO THE GREAT QUESTION.

THERE is a little book. You have seen this book sometime in your life. Perhaps it is long since you saw it, and you no longer remember it. The book is called, *the Catechism*. One of the first questions in the Catechism is this. Who made you? The answer to this question is: *God made me*. Then comes the next question: Why did God make you? The answer: *God made me to know him, and love him, and serve him in this life, and to be happy with him forever in the next life*. Behold, then, the *answer to the great question*: God made you to serve him. This is the one great thing you have to do while you live, "the one thing necessary," *Luke x., to serve God!* To serve God with your body -- to serve God with your eyes, with your tongue, with your hands, with your feet -- to serve God with your soul -- to serve God by day and by night, in the light and in the dark -- to serve God with every breath that you breathe -- to serve God in holiness and justice before Him all your days, *Luc. i.*, till you breathe out your last breath! A fish is made to swim, a bird to fly; but you are made to serve God. *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve, Matt. v.* To serve God, St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi says, is to be a king. If you serve God, you will be happy for ever in Heaven; if you will not serve God, you will burn for ever in Hell.

## CHAPTER XI.

### TO SERVE GOD -- WHAT IS IT?

A CHILD says: I would be very glad to serve God, but I do not know how to serve God. What does that mean -- to serve God? Listen, my child, and I will tell you what it is to serve God. To commit no sin against the commandments of God -- that is to serve God; *for thou, O God, hast commanded thy commandments to be kept most diligently; Ps. cxviii.* Not to consult fortune-tellers, for *the Lord abhorreth these things; Deut. xviii.* Not to tempt the Lord thy God by despair or presumption; *Matt. iv.* Not to behave ill to what is holy; for *every man that approacheth sinfully to what is holy shall perish before the Lord; Levit. xxii.* Not to blaspheme the name of God, for *his name is holy and terrible; Ps. cx.* Not to curse your neighbor: *Bless, and curse not; Rom. xiv.* Not to swear either by the name of God or by any of his creatures, but *let your speech be yea, yea, and non, non; Matt. v.* Not to refuse to your parents love, honor, and obedience: *He that honoreth his father shall be a comfort to his mother; Eccus. iii.* And you, parents, *bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord; Ephes. vi.* Not to keep spite in your heart, nor to render to any man evil for evil, nor to revenge yourself; but, *if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he be thirsty, give him to drink; Rom. xii.* Not to scandalize or ruin any soul for which Christ died -- *For woe to that man by whom scandal cometh; Matt. xviii.* Nor yet to follow bad example; but be even as Tobias, who, when all went to adore the golden calves, he alone fled the company of all; *Tob. i.* Not to get drunk -- *For drunkards shall not obtain the kingdom of heaven; Gal. v.* To do no immodest thing -- "Put away evil from thy flesh;" *Eccus. xi.* "With all watchfulness keep thy heart;" *Prov. iv.* "Turn away thy eyes that they behold not vanity;" *Ps. cxviii.* "Make a covenant with

thy eyes not to *think* of what is evil;" *Job xxxi*. "Hedge in thy *ears* with thorns that they hear not a wicked tongue, and make doors and bars to thy own *mouth*;" *Eccus. xxviii*. Not to go into bad company -- "Go not into the way of ruin;" *Eccus xxii*. "Flee from it, and save your life;" *Jer. xiviii*. Not to steal -- "Thou shalt not steal;" *Exod. xx*. "Goods unjustly gotten shall not profit thee;" *Eccus. v*. Not to detract, or calumniate, or slander, or backbite your neighbor -- "Speak evil of no man;" *Tit. iii*. "The tongue is an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison;" *James iii*. Not to tell lies -- "Speak ye the truth every man with his neighbor;" *Ephes. iv*. Not to commit any of these sins IS -- to serve God. To keep the commandments of the Church, and not to break the abstinence or the fast -- that is to serve God. "For he who will not hear the Church is as a heathen and publican;" *Matt. xviii*. To say your morning and night prayers -- to go to Mass on Sundays -- to go every month to the Sacrament -- to do all, whatsoever you do, in word or in work, for the glory of God; *Col. iii*. Bring to the Lord glory and honor, *Ps. xxviii*; and be not as the heathens, who, when they knew God, have not glorified him as God, and, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; wherefore God gave them up to a reprobate sense; *Rom. i*. You shall know now what it is to serve God. "Do this, and thou shalt live," *Luke x*. Do you want to know what it is to serve God? See that servant -- she is in place, in a situation, in the service of her mistress. She takes care, first of all, never to do any thing which she knows will displease her mistress. From the morning till night she does the will of her mistress. Whatever her mistress bids her to do she does it. Does her mistress bid her to go to the market -- she goes to the market. Does her mistress bid her to stop at home -- she stops at home. Does her mistress bid her to get the food ready for the household -- she gets it ready. Does her mistress bid her to wash or sew -- she washes or sews. Even as the centurion said to Jesus Christ: "I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it;" *Matt. viii*. That servant, moreover, watches carefully to see that nobody does any harm to the goods of her mistress. Why does that servant work so hard in the service of her mistress? In order to get a small monthly wage. Do you work as hard in the service of God as that servant in the service of her mistress, and you will not get a small monthly wage, but an everlasting reward in the Kingdom of Heaven -- life everlasting; *Matt. xix*.

## **CHAPTER XII.**

### **DO PEOPLE SERVE GOD.**

1. GOD has created men to serve him. Do they serve him? Look at the world. See the little children. How many are there of them, seven or eight years of age, never going to Mass on Sundays? How many, ten or twelve years of age, who never went to Confession? See that child, it never says its morning prayers, and seldom its night prayers. On Monday morning it is sent to school with its school wages. It stops away from school, and steals the school wages. Watch it when it is at home; you will see it putting its hand into its mother's pocket, and stealing the pennies. It is sent to the shop, and gets too much money in change, and this it steals. What does the child do with the money it steals? Does it give it to the poor? No such thing; it spends the money in buying taffy and sweet things. The child is sent on an

errand; it begins to cry, or it says, "I shan't go, I won't go." Would you believe that this child has a habit of telling lies? The child is corrected by its mother; it gets sulky, or it gives back answers, or it looks cross. The child has run out of the house. Where is it? They seek it, and find it playing about the streets with naughty companions. Is this serving God?

Now, let us go to persons from the age of ten or twelve to the age of twenty. A great many of them are working in the factories and mills. Do they serve God? See that factory boy. I will tell you his history. He left school when he was about nine years of age; he was then a half-timer. Now he is older, about eighteen, in full work. What is his life? It is a week-day morning. He sleeps till it is time to go to the factory; he sets off to the factory in a hurry, without one word of prayer to God, who has preserved him during the night. Now, he is coming into the factory. Does he offer his work to God? or does he pray to God to take care of him, or say a Hail Mary lest he should be *caught* by some rope or strap, and lose one of his limbs, or, perhaps, even his life? No he never thinks of it. At the first trifle which vexes him, he says some scandalous curse. Does he watch over his eyes or his thoughts for fear of temptation? No; but you will hear from his mouth continually bad, shameful words, such as St. Paul forbids to be even named amongst Christians. But there is something worse than this. He does in the factory wicked actions, and he has been known, when he left the factory, to lie in wait in the streets -- what for? To ruin souls for which Christ died. He comes home to his meals, perhaps they are not ready; again you will hear him cursing in his impatience. In the evening you will not find him at home. Where is he? In the dancing-house, or he is keeping company out of the sight of his parents. It is Saturday evening. He has received his wages. He keeps back part of them. What does he do with the money? Look at him; he is walking through the street which leads to the public house, or the whiskey-shop. Sunday morning has come. The last Mass is over at the chapel. The factory boy is still in bed. At last he is risen, and had his breakfast, and sets off. Where does he go to? is it to the chapel to pray? No, he sets off to join some idle company, and he spends in gambling, in pitch-and-toss, what he stole of his wages, while his little brothers and sisters have no shoes on their feet, and are crying for bread. Is he found at the Sunday School? Go there, and you will see that his place is empty. It is Sunday evening.

Where is the factory girl? Is she at chapel? No; she is walking the dark streets, or on a lonesome road; keeping company, without the knowledge of her parents, or against their will, or against her own conscience. There is another factory boy. He lives no longer with his father and mother; he left them. He got 10s. a week. One night he came home late, for which his father scolded him. The boy said to himself: I will not be scolded by my father any more. So he went away from his father, and took lodgings for himself. So it is with many factory boys and girls; and so it is with many boys and girls who work in shops, or at the docks, or in the fields, or who polish shoes, or carry baskets. There are other children to whom God gives the blessings of a good education in a house where they hear Mass every day, and can go often to the Sacraments, where they do not meet with the temptations which come upon the children of the poor; where they are trained to good habits by the discipline of wise rules for their conduct. God has given these advantages for this, and this

only -- that they may learn to serve Him. To whom much is given, of him much will be required; *Luke xii*. Yet, what is the fruit of these advantages in some of those who possess them? That boy who, in his youth, is indifferent about Mass, and careless about the Sacraments, is it wonderful if, in his manhood, he gives scandal by an irreligious life? If, in a house where it is almost impossible to meet with bad company, he sought the company of those who gave the least edification, are you surprised if, when he is gone into the world, he is to be found in the company of those whose ways are evil, and who ruin him?

2. It is bad company which most frequently draws people from the service of God. "Evil communications corrupt good manners;" *1 Cor. xv*. Bad company is an evil thing in childhood, although it is commonly a worse thing in youth. You shall hear the history of a little girl who went into bad company, mentioned by St. Alphonsus. This little girl lived in a certain town, and went every day to learn her lessons at the Convent school, taught by the nuns. One morning, after breakfast, she took the little bag in which she carried her books, opened the street door, and set off to the Convent school. She was going along the street which leads to the Convent, when it happened that a wicked boy met her. He stopped her and said: Little girl, where are you going? The girl answered: I am going to the Convent school. But, said the boy, look what a fine day it is, how brightly the sun shines! You had better come along with me, and we will go and play in the fields. Nobody will know any thing about it. Very well, said the little foolish little girl, I will go along with you, and we will play in the fields. Now she has got into bad company! They set off, walked out of the town, and went into the fields. They stayed in the fields all the morning. In the middle of that morning they did a very wicked thing -- they committed a mortal sin. It is not said what the mortal sin was. They knew that it was a mortal sin, and that they deserved to go to Hell for it. The morning was over. They went back to the town. The boy went away. The little girl never saw him any more. She went home. The child did not tell its parents where it had been, nor what it had been doing. She sat down and ate her dinner as usual. In the evening the little girl felt very poorly, and was put to bed. Next morning, she was much worse. It happened that a woman, one of the neighbors, came into the house. As soon as the woman had seen the child, she said to the mother: "For God's sake, send directly for the priest, your child is dying." One of the brothers was sent off in haste to call the priest. When the boy came to the priest's house, he found the priest was not at home; he had gone a long way off to see somebody else who was sick, and so the priest was not able to come before the poor child died.

Now you will hear how this child, who went into bad company, died. Already the paleness of death was on the child's face. Death was coming on it fast. It might be about a quarter of an hour before it died. The mother was standing at the window, looking out anxiously to see was the priest coming. Suddenly the mother heard the little child scream. She ran to the bedside, and found the child sitting up in the bed. My poor child, said the mother, what is the matter, why did you scream? The little girl lifted up her finger and pointed to one side of the bed, and said: Look there, mother, do you not see them? No, said the mother, I do not see any thing. Then the child pointed again and said: "There mother, there they are, the

black people, they are standing close to me." Again the child screamed. Then the mother said: My poor child, do not mind the black people; the priest will soon come, and he will send the black people away. Then the mother gently laid the little child's head down on the pillow. Be quiet, my dear child, she said, all will be right when the priest comes. The mother went back to the window to watch for the priest. She had been there only a few minutes when there was another most frightful scream. The mother ran quickly to the bed-side. It was frightful to see the poor thing. She was sitting up as before, but she did not look into her mother's face any more. Her eyes, which seemed like two fireballs, were fixed fast on something she was looking at near the bed-side. The mother laid her hand on the forehead of the child. She could feel the blood beating against it in the inside. Still the child did not look at its mother. It neither stirred nor spoke. The mother knew not what to think, she remained silent. Suddenly the little child turned its head round, and looking up into its mother's face screamed out: "Oh, mother! the black people have come back again; they are -- they speak to me -- they tell me that they are the devils, that that they are come to fetch my poor soul to Hell!" As soon as the little girl had said these words, she fell back on her pillow. Her mother looked at her -- she was dead, and the devils had carried her soul to Hell to burn there for ever and ever!

Understand how this was. God had created this child to serve him, and the child knew that it ought to serve God. Then there came a moment in the life of that child. In that moment, the devil brought a temptation to lead the child away from the service of God. Then the child thought to itself: Shall I go on serving God, or shall I consent to this temptation and serve God no longer? I know that this is a mortal sin, and that if I consent to it, I shall deserve to go to Hell for it. Then the child knowingly and willingly consented to the temptation. Therefore the devils came when the child was dying and took the soul to Hell. Poor child, you died without confession, you died without contrition; you were frightened when the devils came to you; but that was not enough; you ought to have been sorry for your sin. If, with a sincere heart, you had said when you were dying, "Oh, my God! I am very sorry that I have sinned against thee, because thou art so good, and I will not sin again," then God would have forgiven your sin, although the priest could not come to you. But you died without contrition, and therefore you must burn forever in Hell! Poor child, we would pray for you, if by praying we could get you out of Hell. But the time for praying for you is passed -- you are fixed forever in Hell because you would not serve God.

Poor little child, we can almost hear your voice. Yes, we hear you crying out to the other little children who are still living in the world: "Ah! little children," you say, "you who are still alive in this world, take warning from me; remember my sad example. Keep out of bad company, for it is bad company which takes people away from the service of God, and makes them come into Hell."

Farewell then, poor little child, farewell! We shall only see you once more at the day of judgement, and after that we shall never see you again. Great God, have mercy on the souls of the poor children! Remember that they often sin through ignorance, and scarce know any

better. Forget not that Jesus died also for the little children. Then be very merciful and kind to these poor creatures; and, at least in their dying moments, put into their hearts sorrow, and an act of contrition for their sins, which may save their souls.

My dear child, serve God while yet you are a little child, and then God will not forsake you when you grow old. There was a man who was a servant of the King of England. He was a good and faithful servant of the king, his master. He served him in health and in sickness, by day and by night, for many long years. When that servant became old, and his hair was gray, the king sent him away from his service. Then the old man's heart was broken, because the king had forsaken him in his old age. He went to lie down on his bed and die. When he was dying he said: "If I had served God as I have served my king, he would not have forsaken me in my gray hairs." Be wise, then, my child, and serve the great and good God who never forsakes those who serve him.

### **CHAPTER XIII.**

#### **TWO THINGS TO BE REMEMBERED.**

1. TELL me, does a child not listen to the word of its father? Does a servant not listen to the word of her mistress? Does a senseless beast not hear the word of its keeper? You, my child, will you not listen to the word which God your Creator speaks to you? What is that word? This is the word which God speaks: *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve; Matt. iv.* God has written this word on the pages of his holy book, and there you may read it -- *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.* Oftentimes God himself puts into your heart that word -- *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.* The angels whisper in your soul -- *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.* The sound of that word goes down even into the deep places of the conscience of the sinner. The curse of God is upon him who forgets the word -- *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve;* and God's blessing is upon him who remembers it. In the early morning, then, remember -- *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.* When the sun has gone down, and it is night, forget not -- *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.* In the silence of the night let your heart dwell upon those words -- *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.* In all your ways, and in all your works, in school, in the factory, in the street, remember -- *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.* If bad companions come to tempt you to leave the service of God, and serve your passions and the evil, say in your heart -- *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.* In all the various things and changes of this life, its joys and its ills, its ups and its downs, fix your eyes on some bright star which may lead you safely to heaven. That star, what shall it be? It shall be that blessed word -- *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.*

2. You know that you were made to serve God. But the other created things -- the sun, moon, stars, flowers, beasts, sickness, pains, works, and actions of all kinds -- what were

they made for? They were not made to serve God, as you are, for they have neither sense, nor will, nor memory, nor understanding to serve God. Then, what were they made for? They were made for one thing and that was to *help* you to serve God. But the creatures and things which are around you do not always help you to serve God. When these things shall help you to serve God, then make use of them. When they shall draw you away from the service of God, then leave them; go away from them. A beautiful flower helps you to think of the power and goodness of God. It is good; make use of the flower. But you are at Mass, and a beautiful flower distracts you from your prayers. The flower draws you from the service of God -- leave it. The food you take helps you to live, and do your duties to God and your neighbor. Then make use of the food. But you eat or drink too much, or what does not belong to you, then the food draws you away from the service of God -- leave it. You dress according to your state of life and condition. It is good, such is the will of God. But there is a girl who dresses herself through vain glory, that others may look at her and admire her -- she spends on dress money which should buy bread for her little brothers and sisters. This fine dressing that draws that girl away from the service of God -- she must give it up. You work in a shop or a factory. It is good. God has said: "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken;" *Gen. iii*. But you work in a shop or a factory, where there is a person who has often led you into mortal sin. Many good resolutions you have made not to consent to the temptation any more. You have been often to the Sacraments to strengthen yourself against the temptation. You have put in practice the advice which your Confessor gave you about it. Still you find that you are so weak that, after all this, you still often consent to the temptation. Then you must leave the shop or factory where that person is who tempts you, and get work elsewhere, because that place turns you from the service of God, and ruins your soul. "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out." *Matt. v*. You take up a book to read. It is a good book, which helps you to serve God. It is well -- read it. You meet another book; it is a bad book; it will lead you from the service of God -- cast it away. In fine, if you are rich or poor, or your friend dies, or you lose something, or whatsoever affliction comes upon you, be ready to make use of these things by being patient when they come, because they help you to serve God; and, therefore, remember -- 1st. That you were made to serve God. 2nd. That all other things were made to help you serve God. 3rd. That among the things you meet with, some help you to serve God, but some of them draw you away from God's service. 4th. Be ready always to make use of those things, which help you in God's service; leave -- go away from those things which draw you away from God's service. "If any man will be my disciple let him deny himself;" *Matt. xvi*.

Now, you have a rule by which you may know what to do about any thing you meet with in life. You will say to yourself: "I care not about one thing more than another. I wish only -- to serve God. What am I going to do, or make use of, will it help me to serve God, or will it draw me away from his service? If it helps me to serve God, I will make use of it; if it will draw me away from God's service, I will leave it." Should it happen that you cannot tell whether something is for the service of God or not, ask your Confessor.

## **CHAPTER XIV.**

### **CONCLUSION.**

MY dear child, in the evening, when the sun is going down, if a traveler finds that he has gone astray out of the right road, and got into a wrong path, what does he do? He goes back again as quickly as he can into the right road. Do the same. Look into your past life, and perhaps you will see that not once only, but many times, you have gone astray from the service of God. Perhaps, even at this moment you are not serving God. What must you do? Go back to the service of God, and, with a sorrowful heart, beg his pardon, because you left his service.

### **PRAYER.**

MY God, you are my Creator. You gave me a body and a soul. You commanded me to serve you, and you told me that if I would not serve you, I must burn forever in the fire of hell. My God, I know it, I confess it, that I have not served you. For my sins, I deserve to go to hell. From my early childhood I have broken your commandments in thought, in word, and in work. But, O merciful God, you have pity on little children who confess that they have done wrong, remembering that Jesus died also for the little children. Then, my God, not for any good thing that I have done, but for the sake of the sweet Jesus who died for the love of me, a little child, have pity on me, and forgive my sins. Too late have I known you, my blessed God; too late have I loved you. But now, my God, with your help, I will begin to serve you. I will serve you with my body, with my soul; I will serve you by day and by night, in sickness and in health; yes, I will serve you, my God, with every breath that I breathe, till, for the love of you, my God, I breathe out my last breath. Amen.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

*The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.*

He who commits a "mortal sin" refuses to serve God, as you will read in the Third Book.

PRAISED BE JESUS AND MARY.