

NOVENA TO THE SACRED HEART

by St. Alphonsus Liguori

MEDITATION I: The Amiable Heart of Jesus

He who shows himself amiable in everything must necessarily make himself loved. Oh, if we only applied ourselves to discover all the good qualities by which Jesus Christ renders Himself worthy of our love, we should all be under the happy necessity of loving Him. And what heart among all hearts can be found more worthy of love than the Heart of Jesus?

A heart all pure, all holy, all full of love towards God and towards us; because all His desires are only for the Divine glory and our good. This is the heart in which God finds all his delight. Every perfection, every virtue reign in this heart; a most ardent love for God, His Father, united to the greatest humility and respect that can possibly exist; a sovereign confusion for our sins, which He has taken upon Himself, united to the extreme confidence of a most affectionate Son; a sovereign abhorrence of our sins, united to a lively compassion for our miseries; an extreme sorrow, united to a perfect conformity to the will of God.

In Jesus is found everything that there can be most amiable. Some are attracted to love others by their beauty, others by their innocence, others by living with them, others by devotion. But if there were a person in whom all these and other virtues were united, who could help loving him? If we heard that there was in a distant country a foreign prince who was handsome, humble, courteous, devout, full of charity, affable to all, I who rendered good to those who did him evil; then, I although we knew not who he was, and though he knew not us, and though we were not acquainted with him, nor was there any possibility of our ever being so, yet we should be enamored of him, and should be constrained to love him. How is it, then, possible that Jesus Christ, Who possesses in Himself all these virtues, and in the most perfect degree, and Who loves us so tenderly, how is it possible that He should be so little loved by men, and should not be the only object of our love?

O my God, how is it that Jesus, Who alone is worthy of love, and Who has given us so many proofs of the love that He bears us, should be alone, as it were, the unlucky one with us, Who cannot arrive at making us love Him; as if He were not sufficiently worthy of our love! This is what caused floods of tears to St. Rose of Lima, St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Teresa, St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, who, on considering the ingratitude of men, exclaimed, weeping, "Love is not loved, Love is not loved."

Affections and Prayers

O my amiable Redeemer, what object more worthy of love could Thy Eternal Father command me to love than Thee? Thou art the beauty of Paradise, Thou art the love of Thy Father, Thy heart is the throne of all virtues. O amiable heart of my Jesus, Thou dost well deserve the love of all hearts; poor and wretched is that heart which loves Thee not! Thus miserable, O my God, has my heart been during all the time in which it hath not loved Thee. But I will not continue to be thus wretched; I love Thee, I will always continue to love Thee, O my Jesus. O my Lord, I have hitherto forgotten Thee, and now what can I expect? That my ingratitude will oblige Thee to forget me entirely, and forsake me forever? No, my Savior, do not permit this. Thou art the object of the love of God; and shalt Thou not, then, be loved by a miserable sinner, such as I am, who have been so favored and loved by Thee? O lovely flames that burnt in the loving heart of my Jesus, enkindle in my poor heart that holy fire which Jesus came down from Heaven to kindle on earth. Consume and destroy all the impure affections that dwell in my heart, and prevent it from being entirely His. O my God, grant that it may only exist to love Thee, and Thee alone, my dearest Savior. If at one time I despised Thee, Thou art now the only object of my

love. I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee, and I will never love anyone else but Thee. My beloved Lord, do not disdain to accept the love of a heart which has once afflicted Thee by my sins. Let it be Thy glory to exhibit to the Angels a heart now burning with the love of Thee, which hitherto shunned and despised Thee.

Most holy Virgin Mary, my hope, do thou assist me, and I beseech Jesus to make me, by His grace, all that He wishes me to be.

MEDITATION II: The Loving Heart of Jesus

Oh, if we could but understand the love that burns in the heart of Jesus for us! He has loved us so much, that if all men, all the Angels, and all the Saints were to unite, with all their energies, they could not arrive at the thousandth part of the love that Jesus bears to us. He loves us infinitely more than we love ourselves, He has loved us even to excess: They spoke of His decease (excess) which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem. [Luke ix. 31] And what greater excess of love could there be than for God to die for His creatures? He has loved us to the greatest degree: Having loved His own . . . He loved them unto the end; [John, xiii. 1] since, after having loved us from eternity, ----for there never was a moment from eternity when God did not think of us and did not love each one-of us: I have loved thee with an everlasting love, [Jer. xxxi, 3]----for the love of us He made Himself Man, and chose a life of sufferings and the death of the Cross for our sake. Therefore He has loved us more than His honor, more than His repose, and more than His life; for He sacrificed everything to show us the love that He bears us. And is not this an excess of love sufficient to stupefy with astonishment the Angels of Paradise for all eternity?

This love has induced Him also to remain with us in the Holy Sacrament as on a throne of love; for He remains there under the appearance of a small piece of bread, shut up in a ciborium, where He seems to remain in a perfect annihilation of His majesty, without movement, and without the use of His senses; so that it seems that He performs no other office there than that of loving men. Love makes us desire the constant presence of the object of our love. It is this love and this desire that makes Jesus Christ reside with us in the Most Holy Sacrament. It seemed too short a time to this loving Saviour to have been only thirty-three years with men on earth; therefore, in order to show His desire of being constantly with us, He thought right to perform the greatest of all miracles, in the institution of the Holy Eucharist. But the work of redemption was already completed, men had already become reconciled to God; for what purpose, then, did Jesus remain on earth in this Sacrament? Ah, He remains there because He cannot bear to separate Himself from us, as He has said that He takes a delight in us.

Again, this love has induced Him even to become the food of our souls, so as to unite Himself to us, and to make His heart and ours as one: He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him. [John, vi. 57] O wonder! O excess of Divine love! It was said by a servant of God, if anything could shake my faith in the Eucharist, it would not be the doubt as to how the bread could become flesh, or how Jesus could be in several places and confined into so small a space, because I should answer that God can do everything; but if I were asked how He could love men so much as to make Himself their food, I have nothing else to answer but that this is a mystery of faith above my comprehension, and that the love of Jesus cannot be understood. O love of Jesus, do Thou make Thyself known to men and do Thou make Thyself loved!

Affections and Prayers

O adorable heart of my Jesus, heart inflamed with the love of men, heart created on purpose to love them, how is it possible that Thou canst be despised, and Thy love so ill corresponded to by men? Oh, miserable that I am, I also have been one of those ungrateful ones that have not loved Thee. Forgive me, my Jesus, this great sin of not having loved Thee, Who art so amiable, and Who hast loved me so much that Thou canst do nothing more to oblige me to love Thee. I feel that I deserve to be condemned not to be able to love Thee, for having renounced Thy love, as I have hitherto done. But

no, my dearest Saviour, give me any chastisement, but do not inflict this one upon me. Grant me the grace to love Thee, and then give me any affliction Thou pleasest. But how can I fear such a chastisement, whilst I feel that Thou continuest to give me the sweet, the pleasing precept of loving Thee, my Lord and my God? Love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart. [Matt. xxii. 37] Yes, O my God, Thou wouldst be loved by me, and I will love Thee; indeed I will love none but Thee, Who hast loved me so much. O Love of my Jesus; Thou art my Love. O burning heart of my Jesus, do thou inflame my heart also. Do not permit me in future, even for a single moment, to live without Thy love; rather kill me, destroy me; do not let the world behold the spectacle of such horrid ingratitude as that I, who have been so beloved by Thee, and received so many favors and lights from Thee, should begin again to despise Thy love, No, my Jesus, do not permit this. I trust in the Blood that Thou hast shed for me, that I shall always love Thee, and that Thou wilt always love me, and that this love between Thee and me will not be broken off for eternity.

O Mary, Mother of fair love, thou who desirest so much to see Jesus loved, bind me, unite me to thy Son; but bind me to Him, so that we may never again be separated.

MEDITATION III: The Heart of Jesus Christ Panting to be Loved

Jesus has no need of us; He is equally happy, equally rich, equally powerful with or without our love; and yet, as St. Thomas says, [Opusc. 63, c. 7] He loves us so, that He desires our love as much as if man was His God, and His felicity depended on that of man. This filled holy Job with astonishment: What is man that Thou shouldst magnify him or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him? [Job vii. 17]

What! Can God desire or ask with such eagerness for the love of a worm? It would have been a great favor if God had only permitted us to love Him. If a vassal were to say to his king, "Sire, I love you," he would be considered impertinent. But what would one say if the king were to tell his vassal, "I desire you to love me"? The princes of the earth do not humble themselves to this; but Jesus, Who is the King of Heaven, is He Who with so much earnestness demands our love: Love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart. [Matt. xxii. 37] So pressingly does He ask for our heart: My son, give Me thy heart. [Prov. xxiii. 26] And if He is driven from a soul, He does not depart, but He stands outside of the door of the heart, and He calls and knocks to be let in: I stand at the gate and knock. [Apoc. iii. 20] And He beseeches her to open to Him, calling her sister and spouse: Open to Me, My sister, My love. [Cant. v. 2] In short, He takes a delight in being loved by us, and is quite consoled when a soul says to Him, and repeats often, "My God, my God, I love Thee."

All this is the effect of the great love He bears us. He who loves necessarily desires to be loved. The heart requires the heart; love seeks love: "Why does God love, but that He might be loved Himself," [In Cant. s. 83] said St. Bernard; and God Himself first said, What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God, . . . and love Him? [Deut. x. 12] Therefore He tells us that He is that Shepherd Who, having found the lost sheep, calls all the others to rejoice with Him: Rejoice with Me, because I have found My sheep that was lost. [Luke xv. 6] He tells us that He is that Father Who, when His lost son returns and throws himself at His feet, not only forgives him, but embraces him tenderly. He tells us that he that loves Him not is condemned to death: He that loveth not abideth in death. [1 John iii. 14] And, on the contrary, that He takes him that loves Him and keeps possession of him: He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him. John iv. 16] Oh, will not such invitations, such entreaties, such threats, and such promises move us to love God, Who so much desires to be loved by us?

Affections and Prayers

My dearest Redeemer, I will say to Thee, with St. Augustine, Thou dost command me to love Thee, and dost threaten me with Hell if I do not love Thee; but what more dreadful Hell, what greater misfortune, can happen to me than to be deprived of Thy love! If, therefore, Thou desirest to frighten me, Thou shouldst threaten me only that I should live without loving Thee; for this threat alone will frighten me more than a thousand hells. If, in the midst of the flames of

Hell, the damned could burn with Thy love, O my God, Hell itself would become a paradise; and if, on the contrary, the blessed in Heaven could not love Thee, Paradise would become hell. Thus St. Augustine expresses himself.

I see, indeed, my dearest Lord, that I, on account of my sins, did deserve to be forsaken by Thy grace, and at the same time condemned to be incapable of loving Thee; but still I understand that Thou dost continue to command me to love Thee, and I also feel within me a great desire to love Thee. This my desire is a gift of Thy grace, and it comes from Thee. Oh, give me also the strength necessary to put it in execution, and make me, from this day forth, say to Thee earnestly, and from the bottom of my heart, and to repeat to Thee always, My God, I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee. Thou desirest my love; I also desire Thine. Blot out, therefore, from thy remembrance, O my Jesus. the offences that in past times I have committed against Thee; let us love each other henceforth forever. I will not leave Thee, and Thou wilt not leave me. Thou wilt always love me, and I will always love Thee. My dearest Saviour, in Thy merits do I place my hope; oh, do Thou make Thyself to beloved forever, and loved greatly, by a sinner who has offended Thee greatly.

O Mary, Immaculate Virgin, do thou help me, do thou beseech Jesus for me.

MEDITATION IV: The Sorrowful Heart of Jesus

It is impossible to consider how afflicted the heart of Jesus was for love of us and not to pity Him. He Himself tells us that His heart was overwhelmed with such such sorrow, that this alone would have sufficed to take His life away, and to make Him die of pure grief, if the virtue of His Divinity had not, by a miracle, prevented His death: My soul is sorrowful even unto death. [Mark xiv. 34]

The principal sorrow which afflicted the heart of Jesus so much was not the sight of the torments and infamy which men were preparing for Him, but the sight of their ingratitude towards His immense love. He distinctly foresaw all the sins which we should commit after all His sufferings and such a bitter and ignominious death. He foresaw, especially, the horrible insults which men would offer to His adorable heart, Which He has left us in the Most Holy Sacrament as a proof of His affection. O my God, what affronts has not Jesus Christ received from men in this Sacrament of love? One has trampled Him under foot, another has thrown Him into the gutters, others have availed themselves of Him to pay homage to the devil!

And yet the sight of all these insults did not prevent Him from leaving us this great pledge of His love. He has a sovereign hatred of sin; but still it seems as if His love towards us had overcome the hatred He bore to sin, since He was content to permit these sacrileges, rather than to deprive the souls that love Him of this Divine food. Shall not all this suffice to make us love a heart that has loved us so much?

Has not Jesus Christ done enough to deserve our love? Ungrateful that we are, shall we still leave Jesus forsaken on the altar, as the majority of men do? And shall we not unite ourselves to those few souls who acknowledge Him, and melt with love more even than the torches melt away which burn round the ciborium? The heart of Jesus remains there, burning with love for us; and shall we not, in His Presence, burn with love for Jesus?

Affections and Prayers

My adorable and dearest Jesus, behold at Thy feet one who has caused so much sorrow to Thy amiable heart. O my God, how could I grieve this heart, Which has loved me so much, and has spared nothing to make Itself loved by me? But console Thyself, I will say, O my Saviour, for my heart having been wounded, through Thy grace, with Thy most holy love, feels now so much regret for the offences I have committed against Thee, that it would fain die of sorrow. Oh; who will give me, my Jesus, that sorrow for my sins which Thou didst feel for them in Thy life! Eternal Father, I offer Thee the sorrow and abhorrence Thy Son felt for my sins; and, for His sake, I beseech Thee to give me so great a sorrow for the offences I have committed against Thee, that I may lead an afflicted and sorrowful life at the thought of having once

despised Thy friendship. And Thou, O my Jesus, do Thou give me, from this day forth, such a horror of sin, that I may abhor even the lightest faults, considering that they displease Thee, Who dost not deserve to be offended much or little, but dost deserve an infinite love. My beloved Lord, I now detest everything that displeases Thee, and in future I will love only Thee, and that which Thou lovest. Oh, help me, give me the strength, give me the grace to invoke Thee constantly, O my Jesus, and always to repeat to Thee this petition: My Jesus, give me Thy love. give me Thy love, give me Thy love.

And thou, most holy Mary, obtain for me the grace to pray to thee continually, and to say to thee, O my Mother, make me love Jesus Christ.

MEDITATION V: The Compassionate Heart of Jesus.

Where shall we ever find a heart more compassionate or tender than the heart of Jesus, or one that had a greater feeling for our miseries?

This pity induced Him to descend from Heaven to this earth; it made Him say that He was that good shepherd Who came to give His life to save His sheep. In order to obtain the pardon of our sins, He would not spare Himself, but would sacrifice Himself on the Cross, that by His sufferings He might satisfy for the chastisement that we have deserved. This pity and compassion makes Him say even now: Why will ye die, O house of Israel? return ye, and live. [Ezek. xviii. 31] O men, He says, my poor children, why will you damn yourselves by flying from Me? Do you not see that by separating yourselves from Me you are hastening to eternal death? I desire not to see you lost; do not despair; as often as you wish to return, return, and you shall recover your life: Return, and live.

This compassion even makes Him say that He is that loving Father Who, though He sees Himself despised by His son, yet, if that son returns a penitent, He cannot reject him, but embraces him tenderly and forgets all the injuries He has received: I will not remember all his iniquities. [Ibid. 22] It is not thus that men behave; for though they may forgive, yet they nevertheless retain the remembrance of the offence received, and feel inclined to revenge themselves; and even if they do not revenge themselves, because they fear God, at least they always feel a great repugnance against conversing and entertaining themselves with those persons who have vilified them.

O my Jesus, Thou dost pardon the penitent sinners, and dost not refuse in this world to give them everything in Holy Communion during their life, and everything in the other world, even in Heaven, with eternal glory, without retaining the slightest repugnance towards being united to the soul that has offended Thee, for all eternity. Where, then, is there to be found a heart so amiable and compassionate as Thine, O my dearest Saviour?

Affections and Prayers

O compassionate heart of my Jesus, have pity on me: "Most sweet Jesus, have mercy on me." I say so now, and beseech Thee to give me the grace always to say to Thee, "Most sweet Jesus, have mercy on me." Even before I offended Thee, O my Redeemer, I certainly did not deserve any of the favors Thou hast bestowed upon me. Thou hast created me, Thou hast given me so much light and knowledge; and all without any merit of mine. But after I had offended Thee. I not only did not deserve Thy favor, but I deserved to be forsaken by Thee and cast into Hell. Thy compassion has made Thee wait for me and preserve my life even when I had offended Thee. Thy compassion has enlightened me, and offered me pardon; it has given me sorrow for my sins, and the desire of loving Thee; and now I hope from Thy mercy to remain always in Thy grace. O my Jesus, cease not to show Thy compassion towards me. The mercy which I implore of Thee is that Thou wouldst grant me light and strength to be no longer ungrateful towards Thee. No, O my love, I do not expect that Thou shouldst again forgive me, if I again turn my back towards Thee; this would be presumption, and would prevent Thee from showing mercy to me any more. For what pity could I expect any more from Thee if I were so ungrateful as to despise Thy friendship again, and to separate myself from Thee. No, my Jesus; I love Thee, and I will

always love Thee; and this is the mercy which I hope for and seek from Thee: "Permit me not to be separated from Thee, permit me not to be separated from Thee."

And I beseech thee also, O Mary my Mother, permit me not to be ever again separated from my God.

MEDITATION VI: The Generous Heart of Jesus.

It is the characteristic of good-hearted people to desire to make everybody happy, and especially those most distressed and afflicted. But who can ever find one who has a better heart than Jesus Christ? He is infinite goodness, and has therefore a sovereign desire to communicate to us His riches: With Me are riches, that I may enrich them that love Me.

He for this purpose made Himself poor, as the Apostle says, that He might make us rich: He became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich. [2 Cor. viii. 9] For this purpose also He chose to remain with us in the most Holy Sacrament, where He remains constantly with His hands full of graces, as was seen by Father Balthazar Alvarez, to dispense them to those who come to visit Him. For this reason also He gives Himself wholly to us in Holy Communion, giving us to understand from this that He cannot refuse us any good gifts, since He even gives Himself entirely to us: How hath He not also, with Him, given us all things? [Rom. viii. 32]

For in the heart of Jesus we receive every good, every grace that we desire: In all things you are made rich in Christ, . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace. [1 Cor. 1. 5, 7] And we must understand that we are debtors to the heart of Jesus for all the graces we have received -----graces of redemption, of vocation, of light, of pardon, the grace to resist temptations, and to bear patiently with contradictions; for without His assistance we could not do anything good: Without Me you can do nothing. [John xv. 5] And if hitherto, says our Saviour, you have not received more graces, do not complain of Me, but blame yourself, who has neglected to seek them of Me: Hitherto you have not asked anything; . . . ask, and you shall receive. [John xvi. 24] Oh, how rich and liberal is the heart of Jesus towards everyone that has recourse to Him! Rich unto all that call upon Him. [Rom. x. 12] Oh, what great mercies do those souls receive who are earnest in asking help of Jesus Christ. David said, For Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous to all who call upon Thee. [Ps. lxxxv. 5] Let us therefore always go to this heart, and ask with confidence, and we shall obtain all we want.

Affections and Prayers

Ah, my Jesus, Thou hast not refused to give me Thy Blood and Thy life, and shall I refuse to give Thee my miserable heart? No, my dearest Redeemer, I offer it entirely to Thee. I give Thee all my will; do Thou accept it, and dispose of it at Thy pleasure. I can do nothing, and have nothing; but I have this heart which Thou hast given me, and of which no one can deprive me. I may be deprived of my goods, my blood, my life, but not of my heart. With this heart I can love Thee; I with this heart I will love Thee. I beseech Thee, O my God, teach me a perfect forgetfulness of myself; teach me what I must do to arrive at Thy pure love, of which Thou in Thy goodness hast inspired me with the desire. I feel in myself a determination to please Thee; but in order to put my resolve into execution, I expect and implore help from Thee. It depends on Thee. O loving heart of Jesus, to make entirely Thine my poor heart, which hitherto has been so ungrateful, and through my own fault deprived of Thy love. Oh, grant that my heart may be all on fire with the love of Thee, even as Thine is on fire with the love of me. Grant that my will may be entirely united to Thine, so that I may will nothing but what Thou wilt, and that from this day forth Thy holy will may be the rule of all my actions, of all my thoughts, and of all my desires. I trust, O my Saviour, that Thou wilt not refuse me Thy grace to fulfill this resolution which I now make prostrate at Thy feet, to receive with submission whatever Thou mayest ordain for me and my affairs, as well in life as in death.

Blessed art thou, O Immaculate Mary, who hadst thy heart always and entirely united to the heart of Jesus; obtain for me, O my Mother, that in future I may wish and desire that which Jesus wills and thou wilt.

MEDITATION VII: The Grateful Heart of Jesus

The heart of Jesus is so grateful, that it cannot behold the most trifling works done for the love of Him -----our smallest word spoken for His glory, a single good thought directed towards pleasing Him-----without giving to each its own reward. He is besides so grateful, that He always returns a hundredfold for one: You shall receive a hundredfold. Men, when they are grateful, and recompense any benefit done to them, recompense it only once; they, as it were, divest themselves of all the obligation, and then they think no more of it. Jesus Christ does not do thus. with us; He not only recompenses a hundredfold in this life every good action that we perform to please Him, but in the next life He recompenses it an infinite number of times throughout eternity. And who will be so negligent as not to do as much as he can to please this most grateful heart?

But, O my God, how do men try to please Jesus Christ? Or rather, I will say, how can we be so ungrateful towards this our Saviour? If He had only shed a single drop of Blood, or one tear alone for our salvation, yet we should be under infinite obligation to Him; because this drop and this tear would have been of infinite value in the sight of God towards obtaining for us every grace. But Jesus would employ for us every moment of His life. He has given us all His merits, all His sufferings, all His ignominies, all His Blood, and His life; so that we are under, not one, but infinite, obligations to love Him.

But alas! we are grateful even towards animals: if a little dog shows us any sign of affection, it seems to constrain us to love it. How, then, can we be so ungrateful towards God? It seems as if the benefits of God towards men change their nature, and become ill-usage; for, instead of gratitude and love, they obtain nothing but offences and injuries. Do Thou, O Lord, enlighten these ungrateful ones, to know the love that Thou bearest them.

Affections and Prayers

O my beloved Jesus, behold at Thy feet an ungrateful sinner. I have been grateful indeed towards creatures; but to Thee, alone I have been ungrateful to Thee, Who hast died for me, and hast done the utmost that Thou couldst do to oblige me to love Thee. But the thought that I have to do with a heart full of goodness and infinite in mercy, of one Who proclaims that He forgives all the offences of the sinner who repents and loves Him, consoles me and gives me courage. My dearest Jesus, I have in times past offended Thee and despised Thee; but now I love Thee more than everything -----more than myself. Tell me what Thou wouldst have me to do; for I am ready to do everything with Thy help. I believe that Thou hast created me, Thou hast given Thy blood and Thy life for the love of me. I believe also that for my sake Thou dost remain in the Blessed Sacrament; I thank Thee for it, O my love. Oh, permit me not to be ungrateful in future for so many benefits and proofs of Thy love. Oh, bind me, unite me to Thy heart; and permit me not, during the years that remain to me, to offend Thee or grieve Thee any more. I have displeased Thee sufficiently. O my Jesus, it is time that I should love Thee now. Oh, that those years that I have lost would return! But they will return no more, and the life that remains for me may be short; but whether it be short or long, my God, I desire to spend it all in loving Thee, my sovereign good, Who dost deserve an eternal and infinite love.

O Mary, my Mother, let me never again be ungrateful to thy Son. Pray to Jesus for me.

MEDITATION VIII: The Despised Heart of Jesus

There is not a greater sorrow for a heart that loves, than to see its love despised: and so much the more when the proofs given of this love have been great, and, on the other hand, the ingratitude great.

If every human being were to renounce all his goods, and to go and live in the desert, to feed on herbs, to sleep on the bare earth, to macerate himself with penances, and at last give himself up to be murdered for Christ's sake, what recompense could he render for the sufferings, the Blood, the life that this great Son of God has given for his sake? If we

were to sacrifice ourselves every moment unto death, we should certainly not recompense in the smallest degree the love that Jesus Christ has shown us, by giving Himself to us in the most Holy Sacrament. Only conceive that God should conceal Himself under the species of bread to become the food of one of His creatures!

But, O my God, what recompense and gratitude do men render to Jesus Christ? What but ill-treatment, contempt of His laws and His maxims, ----- injuries such as they would not commit towards their enemy, or their slave, or the greatest villain upon earth. And can we think of all these injuries which Jesus Christ has received, and still receives every day, and not feel sorrow for them? And not endeavor, by our love, to recompense the infinite love of His Divine heart, which remains in the most Holy Sacrament, inflamed with the same love towards us, and anxious to communicate every good gift to us, and to give Himself entirely to us, ever ready to receive us into His heart whenever we go to Him? Him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out. [John vi. 37]

We have been accustomed to hear of the Creation, Incarnation, Redemption, of Jesus born in a stable, of Jesus dead on the Cross. O my God, if we knew that another man had conferred on us any of these benefits, we could not help loving him. It seems that God alone has, to to say, this bad luck with men, that, though hH has done His utmost to make them love Him, yet He cannot attain this end, and, instead of being loved, He sees Himself despised and neglected. All this arises from the forgetfulness of men of the love of God.

Affections and Prayers

O Heart of Jesus, abyss of mercy and love, how is it that, at the sight of the goodness Thou hast shown me, and of my ingratitude, I do not die of sorrow? Thou, O my Saviour, after having given me my being, hast given me all Thy Blood and Thy life, giving Thyself up for my sake, to ignominy and death; and, not content with this, Thou hast invented the mode of sacrificing Thyself every day for me in the Holy Eucharist, not refusing to expose Thyself to the injuries which Thou shouldst receive, and which Thou didst foresee, in this Sacrament of love. O my God, how can I see myself so ungrateful to Thee without dying with confusion! O Lord, put an end, I pray Thee, to my ingratitude, by wounding my heart with Thy love, and making me entirely Thine. Remember the Blood and the tears that Thou hast shed for me, and forgive me. Oh, let not all Thy sufferings be lost upon me. But though Thou hast seen: how ungrateful and unworthy of Thy love I have been, yet Thou didst not cease to love me even when I did not love Thee, nor even desire that Thou shouldst love me; how much rather, then, may I not hope for Thy love, now that I desire and sigh after nothing but to love Thee, and to be loved by Thee. Oh, do Thou fully satisfy this my desire; or rather this Thy desire, for it is Thou that hast given it to me. Grant that this day may be the day of my thorough conversion; so that I may begin to love Thee, and may never cease to love Thee, my sovereign good. Make me die in everything to myself, in order that I may live only to Thee, and that I may always burn with Thy love.

O Mary, thy heart was the blessed altar that was always on fire with Divine love: my dearest Mother, make me like to thee; obtain this from thy Son, Who delights in honoring thee, by denying thee nothing that thou askest of Him.

MEDITATION IX: The Faithful Heart of Jesus

Oh, how faithful is the beautiful heart of Jesus towards those whom He calls to His love: He is faithful Who hath called you, Who also will perform.' [1 Thess. v. 24]

The faithfulness of God gives us confidence to hope all things, although we deserve nothing. If we have driven God from our heart, let us open the door to Him, and He will immediately enter, according to the promise He has made: If anyone open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him. [Apoc. iii. 20] If we wish for graces, let us ask for them of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, and He has promised us that we shall obtain them: If you shall ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you. [John xvi. 23] If we are tempted, let us trust in His merits, and He will not

permit our enemies to strive with us beyond our strength: God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able. [1 Cor. x. 13]

Oh, how much better it is to have to do with God than with men! How often do men promise and then fail, either because they tell lies in making their promises, or because, after having made the promise, they change their minds: God is not as man, says the Holy Spirit, that He should lie; or as the Son of Man, that He should be changed. [Num. xxiii. 19] God cannot be unfaithful to His promises, because, being Truth itself, He cannot lie; nor can He change His mind, because all that He wills is just and right. He has promised to receive all that come to Him, to give help to him that asks it, to love him that loves Him; and shall He then not do it? Hath He said, then, and will He not do it? [Ibid.]

Oh, that we were as faithful with God as He is with us! Oh, how often have we, in times past, promised Him to be His, to serve Him and love Him; and then have betrayed Him, and, renouncing His service, have sold ourselves as slaves to the devil! Oh, let us beseech Him to give us strength to be faithful to Him for the future! Oh, how blessed shall we be if we are faithful to Jesus Christ in the few things that He commands us to do; He will, indeed, be faithful in remunerating us with infinitely great rewards; and He will declare to us what He has promised to His faithful servants: Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. [Matt. xxv. 21]

Affections and Prayers

Oh, that I had been as faithful towards Thee, my dearest Redeemer, as Thou hast been faithful to me. Whenever I have opened my heart to Thee, Thou hast entered in, to forgive me and to receive me into Thy favor; whenever I have called Thee, Thou hast hastened to my assistance. Thou hast been faithful with me, but I have been exceedingly unfaithful towards Thee. I have promised Thee my love, and then have many times refused it to Thee; as if Thou, my God, Who hast created and redeemed me, wert less worthy of being loved than Thy creatures and those miserable pleasures for which I have forsaken Thee. Forgive me, O my Jesus. I know my ingratitude, and abhor it. I know that Thou art infinite goodness; Who deservest an infinite love, especially from me, whom Thou hast so much loved, even after all the offences I have committed against Thee. Unhappy me if I should damn myself; the graces Thou hast vouchsafed to me, and the proofs of the singular affection which Thou hast shown me, would be, O God, the hell of hells to me, Ah, no, my love, have pity on me; suffer me not to forsake Thee again, and then by damning myself, as I should deserve, continue to repay in Hell with injuries and hatred the love that Thou hast borne me. O loving and faithful heart of Jesus, inflame, I beseech Thee, my miserable heart, so that it may burn with love for Thee, as Thine dost for me, My Jesus. It seems to me that now I love Thee; but I love Thee but little. Make me love Thee exceedingly, and remain faithful to Thee until death. I ask of Thee this grace, together with that of always praying to Thee for it. Grant that I may die, rather than ever betray Thee again.

O Mary, my Mother, help me to be faithful to thy Son.