

Forward

Religion is a relationship, a relationship with God and with our fellow human beings. A religious person, then, is one who relates well with God and with people. Every relationship consists of at least two people, often referred to as terms. What goes on between these two people, or terms, constitutes the relationship.

We know and interact with others through a variety of relationships. We may simply relate to others as *human beings*; a relationship limited to the acknowledgement of others and to some forms of common courtesy. We relate as *compatriots* with the people of our own country with whom we share some common political, economic, social and environmental interests. In our everyday experience we deal with *coworkers* and often we relate to others as *dependents or supervisors*. In every group we have some kind of division or categories or *equals, subordinates and leaders, teachers and disciples, owners and renters, employers and employees*. To a varying degree all these are different, distinct types of relationships.

The most common types of relationships are those of *family and friends*. The old principle that states "Family are the friends that God gave us, and friends are the family we choose," is very appropriate to our case, because friends and family relationships are very much intertwined. A family is not a real family without friendly relationships, and friendships do not last, unless they form an extended family.

Venerable Fr. Justin Russolillo, Founder of the Vocationist Fathers and Sisters, wants to guide us in the process of establishing and developing to its highest levels our multiple relationship with God. As usual, he goes from the natural to the supernatural, thus guiding us from the familiar to the unfamiliar.

Fr. Justin goes from our human, family relationship: *filial (child-parent), parental (parent-child) and marital (husband-*

wife), to the corresponding relationships of our *soul-daughter*, *soul-mother*, *soul-spouse of God*. Even though the soul, being a spirit, does not have a gender, Fr. Justin refers to the soul as being feminine because in Greek, Latin, Italian and all Romance language soul is feminine.

The Article one of the Constitutions of the Society of Divine Vocations states very emphatically that the first duty of the Vocationist is to be with God. The Article two states that: "The ultimate goal of the Society of Divine Vocations is to lead all its members, and – through them – all souls, to the divine union."

It is relatively easy for us to understand and practice our relationship of children toward God. After all, we are constantly being reminded that God is our Father and that we are his children.

We find it much harder for us to understand and to live the relationship of soul-mother toward God; it is, as Fr. Justin explains, a very limited relationship, a kind of extension or participation in the motherhood of Mary, explicitly limited to the humanity of Jesus and to the giving of a new existence to Jesus in the souls through various forms of evangelization or through the sacraments.

The focus of the following pages is the relationship of soul-spouse of God-Trinity. It may appear as arrogance on our part to even think of it. It may even turn us off because of our sexual implications. Yet, socially, emotionally and legally the marital relationship is the highest, the most important relationship for a human being. This human relationship gives us the best possible idea of how we can relate with, and be united with God.

As in marriage, husband and wife "are no longer two, but one." so we want to be one with God. In marriage the two parties – to some extent – lose their own identity to form the new identity of the family. Thus in our relationship with God, we want to lose our own identity to be immersed totally in him. As in marriage, husband and wife live for the other, try constantly to please the other, offer

themselves totally to the other. So, in our relationship with God, we want to live for him, please him constantly and offer ourselves totally to him. Fr. Justin summarized all this in our formula of the religious vows: "I offer, consecrate and espouse myself to you alone, to you forever."

Fr. Justin did not invent this spouse-relationship. He brings it to focus from the Scriptures, from the liturgy, from the experiences of the saints, from ascetical and mystical theology. He extends this spouse-relationship from Jesus to the Blessed Trinity.

We are all too familiar with the image of Jesus as the bridegroom, the Church as bride of Christ, and often we refer to religious sisters as the brides of Christ. Fr. Justin argues that every action *ad extra* of one of the three persons in the Trinity is also attributed to the other two. If Jesus is the bridegroom, so must also be the Father and the Holy Spirit. The soul cannot espouse Jesus without espousing the Father and the Holy Spirit at the same time.

All Fr. Justin's writings were part of a series of books that he named: "Collana, Sponsa Trinitatis – Series, Spouse of the Trinity." His aim is to create greater awareness in us about this glorious calling and design that the Blessed Trinity has for us. Becoming aware of the initiatives and offers of infinite love that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit make toward us, we should be inflamed by the desire to correspond accordingly and find in the same God the strength we need to pursue this fantastic vocation of ours!

Fr. Justin wrote: "Every member of our religious family considers as addressed to himself the words of the prophet Hosea 'I will marry you for ever' (Ho 2:21), and make them the starting point of our ascensional journey toward the perfect divine union with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

"From this nuptial union with God, the Vocationist will derive like St. Joseph the spiritual fertility to receive and protect those who are chose." (Constitution '73 – Preface)

As we repeat “ Jesus, Mary and Joseph” in greeting one another, we wish and pray that we may enjoy their company and protection, that we may relate to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as they did; and we are reminded that Jesus is the model of our relationship as sons of God; Mary is our model of the soul-mother relationship, and St. Joseph the model of the soul-spouse.

In our community life of prayer, we close every day with the biblical verse: “Eccesponsus venit, exite obviam ei- Behold the bridegroom is coming, let us go to meet him.” May we live and die with this awareness.

Fr. Louis Caputo, S.D.V.
Newark,
Feast of the Immaculate Conception
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[Introduction to the Guidelines](#)

To be Spouse of the Trinity

1. Welcome, Brother

We may reach the determination of really consecrating ourselves to love God and to serve the saints, moved by the desire of love or the desire of holiness; we may be moved by zeal for our own salvation or the salvation of others; we may be moved by a particular devotion to the Blessed Mother or to the saints, or by a special devotion to some mystery of our Lord; we may be moved by external or internal grace, by ordinary or extraordinary graces; we may be prompted by our disappointments with men, or by our being tired of the world. Regardless of the way by which we reach this determination, we must know that this determination of ours is welcomed with great joy by the angels and the saints, our brothers; we must know that the Blessed Mother is always waiting for that

decision, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus is agonizing out of love for us. The adorable Trinity accepts both, our determination and us, with an act of infinite, eternal, immutable, immense love. So, we must open our soul to the minister of God who is in charge of our spiritual well-being, and much more so to the permanent conversation with the saints, the Blessed Mother and God himself by talking and listening, by asking and receiving, by offering ourselves and possessing them.

2 Fundamentals

We must deepen our knowledge of faith of God in the main mysteries of the Unity and Trinity of God, with his infinite perfections and simplicity; likewise we must deepen our knowledge of the incarnation, passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, making sure to see everything in the light of that love which is God in himself and in his works. This knowledge, or vision, at the beginning will be rather generic, and then later, as it serves as theme for entire series of meditations, will become much more detailed.

Likewise we should deepen our knowledge of man's ultimate goal and the last things, and in between mortal and venial sin and imperfections (we should not talk about the imperfections to the beginners, who still need a lot of refining) all in the light of charity. In this we should take great advantage from the Spiritual Exercise of St. Ignatius of Layola, using them as well as posterior supplements.

We want achieve a deeper knowledge of all the ways through which one can arrive at a perfect conversion to God. Likewise, we should aim at reaching a deeper knowledge of the main vocations found in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the history of the Church and (moderately) the hagiography (lives of the saints). Naturally everyone will focus more on that particular vocation to

which God has called him! All this should always be done in a spirit of prayer, uttered with serenity and ardor, and nourished by confidence in God.

3. The Idea of Life

Some see life as a battle to be fought and won; this is true, and it is such also for us.

Some see life as a work as to be done in oneself and outside of oneself, and that is to be presented to the divine artist; this is true, and it is such also for us.

Others consider life as a pilgrimage through the desert, toward the promised land of heaven; Oh, how true that is, and it is such also for us.

Still others consider life as a test and an expiation on a way of crosses leading to a complete sacrifice, in view of the delight of God and our own beatitude, and Oh, how true that is, and it is such also for us.

All this together is life! In everything and above everything we see life as the engagement of the soul with the divine lover, the one God in three persons. Throughout our short span of life on earth, we prepare ourselves for the perfect union of the mystical marriage in eternity.

The nuptial relationship is the relationship of God with mankind from the very beginning; this relationship becomes clearer with the Jewish people, later with the Church and finally with each and every soul. God's goal for creation, redemption and sanctification of souls is divinely fulfilled in the nuptial relationship of the soul with God.

4. Growth

We can reach perfect and stable divine union of love only in the state of glory. Divine union is given to us here on earth in an initial and progressive manner, through grace. It is extremely important that we progress in it, as long as we have life, in every possible way.

The means that help us grow in divine union are generously given to us by the divine lover, who has clearly expressed the desire of his heart that wants us alive and progressive in this life of grace; he has done so by making the commandment of love the synthesis of all the law, the fulfillment of the whole law; the first and greatest commandment.

Since the encounter, the union of the soul and God cannot happen unless the two lovers move in the same way. God is love in himself and in his operations, and the soul must be love in herself and in her operations.

With very frequent visits and gifts, the divine lover wants to lead the beloved soul to the highest possible level of love in the present life, while still here on earth. It is necessary that the soul, leaning on her Beloved, keep advancing forward, advancing according to his infinite desire toward the infinite love-God in order to be united with him as much as possible in the blessed eternity.

5. Behold the Handmaid of the Lord!

The soul called by the Lord to such a height of gifts, to such an intimacy of love, to such a sublimity of union, should always be aware of her nothingness, and of the divinity of the Lord, "veritatem facientes in charitate – living by the truth and in love" (Eph.:4,15), as St. Paul says; and the psalmist never separates mercy from truthfulness in God in his relationship with the soul.

Consequently the soul must stabilize and immerse herself always more in understanding her condition of total, absolute, essential dependency, submission as servant to her Lord God. Regardless of the greatness or height to which the love of the Lord God may raise the soul, this should always feel and say "Ecce ancilla Domini – behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38), "servi inutiles sumus – we are useless servants" (Lk,17: 10). If the soul had the misfortune of offending God, she should always bear this in mind and tremble every day, and all her love should be a love of contrition (it should be so habitually all the time, and often, explicitly). The soul should be opened to , and abandon herself to, an unlimited confidence and trust with the Lord, to every gift, to every height, to every intimacy. "Et nos credidimus charitati – we have put our faith in the love God has for us" (1Jn4: 16). Since God loves me, he has to love me as God! And what cannot be accomplished by the infinite, eternal, immense, immutable love of God? What may I not expect from it? Because of this I can never humble myself enough, I can never repent enough, and I can never trust enough!

6. Forms of love

Grace does not destroy, but only elevates and sanctifies our human nature. Human love burns in our hearts in so many different ways! The soul should know that in all these forms she must love God, all the time and every time according to the grace of the moment. It must be so in order to fulfill the commandment to love him with our whole heart, i.e., with all the powers of our affection, and the Lord may really be everything, all for the soul. As in one God there is the Trinity of persons, so in our love toward God there is a triple relationship. Love of a son toward the Father; love of brother toward the Son; love of spouse toward the Holy Spirit. Since the relationship of spouse supposes the consummation and the end, we like to reserve this form of love to heaven.

While on earth we replace it with the relationship of lover. In these three forms of love are contained all the others, like friend, disciple, etc... The adoring love of a servant should be the foundation of every relationship of love. Each and every relationship of love may be directed and fulfilled in the adorable person of the Incarnate Word. Jesus Christ, who allows all those who do the will of the Father to even love him as a son. This means that we love him with the Father, as if we were his Father! In particular he allows the priest to love him and relate to him (almost like to the Blessed Mother) through the Eucharistic consecration!

7. The levels of love

The servants should always be aware of the fact that, regardless of the flame that is burning in his heart, all flames of love are not directed to, nor are they meant to directly console, but to sanctify and to beatify the soul with the solid and true service of love. The soul must practice, perfect and advance in all this. The true and solid service of love consists in the union of the human will with that of God until the consummated fusion. The soul should elevate itself from one level of charity to the next higher one, starting with the disposition of doing everything, suffering everything even death in order not to offend grievously the Beloved; then follows the disposition to do anything, to suffer anything even death in order to avoid offending the Beloved even venially. The first and the second level of charity are practiced in order to dispose ourselves to do anything, and to suffer everything even death in order to do in everything what most please God. All this is not in order to avoid punishments or to acquire merits and rewards, not even only for our perfection and glory, but first and foremost –to the point of forgetting oneself in God – to please God. The divine complacence is – more or less – wonderfully manifested to the soul who has reached the third level of charity; it is manifested according to the dispositions of generosity and fidelity of the soul, so that from that

point on it is no longer a question of levels, but of ascensions and assumptions in God!

8. Oh Love!

O blessed grace, progressive participation of the divine nature. O life of love, sublime participation of divine life! O charity, absolutely and effectively gift of all gifts, virtue of all virtues! Blessed is the one who understands you, who embraces you, who abandons himself completely to you!

O holy virgins, spouses of the Lamb, grant to us the gift of such a great good. O you, apostle of love, beloved disciple of Jesus. O Foster Father of the incarnate Word and spouse of Mary! Holy Seraphim, and especially you, O Seven Spirits Assisting at the throne of God, eternal lights of love, in the glory of God-Love!

O Virgin Mary, mother of divine love¹ Smile to these souls who are thirsting for love, and are confused by height and depth of divine love, and yet fully aware of their nothingness and failures! God-Love! God-Father, all love for the Son, we beg you, grant to us the gift of perfect love for the sake of your Son, in view of the fact that you have created us as a gift of love for him!

God-Son, all love for the Father, we beg you, give us the gift of perfect love for the sake of the Father, since you have redeemed us in exchange for the gift of love!

God-Holy Spirit, love and personal gift of the Father and of the Son, for their sake, we beg you, infuse yourself in us, absorb us into your divine fire, baptize us within your fire, make us like unto you!

9. Knowledge of the loved one

The knowledge of our Beloved is found in the proper and daily reception of the sacraments, in participation in the divine sacrifice, in practice of constant prayer, and in the act of love that has become the palpitation and the breath of the soul, food of love.

Throughout the entire life, the soul must study her beloved in himself and in his works, especially in the works of creation, redemption and sanctification of souls. The soul must know him in order to love and serve him always more, always better. The soul trusts the love of her beloved, who somehow will renew all revelation in this study of love, since he, the divine Lord, wants to be known and loved. We cannot know and love the Lord, unless he himself grants it to us. In order to obtain this the soul forgets herself and everything else, and tries to see everything in God. On this journey the soul will consider less than nothing any knowledge that does not lead to the knowledge of God. Everyone should make sure not to waste a single instant of our time, a single atom of our intellect's power in other things.

"Indoctrinis glorificate Dominum! Haec est vita aeterna, ut cognoscant te, Pater, et quem misisti Jesum Christum – Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent!" (Jn 17:3)

10. The way of knowledge

Every avenue of human and divine knowledge is open to the faithful servant. Everyone, according to his talents, should advance and immerse himself in this knowledge, aware that with the key of charity in our hand, we can overcome each and every difficulty. With the light of love we can dissipate every shadow. With open heart we approach our beloved and we long for him in everything and everywhere.

Our meditations and contemplations will be nourished most of all by the divine Scripture, God's love letter to every soul; by the history

of the church and the lives of the saints, who are like so many other pages of Jesus' life; and by the great book of nature.

The soul will attentively listen for the echo of the uncreated Word in every creature, and every moment will capture its message of love and the spark of divine fire.

With the Blessed Mother, the soul will conserve in the heart, meditating on them day and night, the direct words of God contained in the Bible and in the agiography! From the direct words of God we expect to receive the light that enables us to penetrate the sacred mysteries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Blessed Trinity; likewise from them we expect that tranquil and vehement fire that communicates to us the Spirit of God!

In order to get to know God properly the soul should always have present Mary Magdalene who "optimam partem elegit – has chosen the better part" (Lk 10:42), and the words of the Author of Hebrews: "Vivus est enim sermo Dei et efficax – the word of God is something alive and active" (Heb 4:12), and so many other quotations from the Bible.

11. The ways of love

A) If you want to love, you must offer yourself in such a way that you may be accepted. The soul should understand and heartily accept the divine rights of creation, redemption and sanctification. (Grace, as participation of divine nature, represents a right more positive than what is found in natural life). After understanding these basic divine rights the soul adds something of her own, the right of self donation, founded on the freedom given us by God himself. O holy way of ever more generous and total conversions and consecrations! O holy craving of offering oneself ever more! We go from resolutions to promise, from promises to vows.

Everyone should consecrate himself to ever more and ever better know, love and serve the Beloved in each and every one of his gifts, revelations, mysteries, perfections and states. Everyone should have the absolute certainty of being not only accepted, but also of receiving in exchange many other divine gifts of sanctifying action that causes an ever greater and more intimate mutual possession.

May the Lord free us from the illusion of not having anything else to give or not knowing how else to continue to give of ourselves, until death!

We will not limit these progressive consecrations to internal acts, nor to our private person, but we will extend them to our external life, house, relations and society, as far they depend on us. Our consecrations will be directed not only to God; we will extend them to his representatives, to his servants, to our neighbor, to our superiors, to God present in all.

B) If you want to give yourself to God, it is necessary that first you say 'no' to the world and to yourself; and if you want to give yourself always more, you must also abnegate yourself always more. Consecration and abnegation are directly proportionate. In order to enjoy a life of union with God, there must be a complete, absolute detachment from everything and especially from one's own self. Oh! What withdrawal from the world, what mortification of the senses, what abnegation of oneself, what austerity is not required by this way of progressive consecrations!

We are not hunters of emotions. We are not dilettantes of divine love. Love and death! He will act as if he were all brain and heart, oblivious of all the rest! Love makes one see as nothing all the austerities of the saints. All the austerities of the saints are not comparable to the martyrdom of love!

The only restraint to our progressive consecrations may be our obedience, that is, the same will of God expressed to us through his representative. There should be no restraint whatsoever, rather a

constant impulse in the internal detachment, in the holy hatred of self, in the mortification of the senses, until we reach the total extinction of self love, if it were possible.

The love of God, the hatred of self and the war to self love must always be in a parallel. Otherwise the cursed self love is capable of converging on itself even the holy love and the gifts of God. The austerities of the servant, that should not be even called austerities, must be so deeply impregnated of love, that they must be acts of total active and purifying love, since they direct everything toward perfect love.

C) If you want to offer yourself in such a way that you may be accepted, it is necessary that you resemble him! You shall be holy – it is written – not only because I am holy – says the Lord – but also as perfect as your heavenly Father. As matter of fact, love either finds or renders the two lovers alike. He creates us in his own image and likeness, and through grace he perfects even more his resemblance in us. He united himself to our nature in order to unite us to his. Nature is the principle of operation; our nature should not be totally human nor angelic, but human-divine as in the person of Jesus.

The permanent study of Jesus' life should include not only the years of his mortal life, but also the revelation, typology and prophecies of the Old Testament as well as the history of the Church and the Eucharist. No other model but Jesus! Studying the life of Jesus we must understand its totality and its details, seeing everything in the love of the Sacred Heart and in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist the soul will find the compendium of all wonders and perfections, spread in the divine works and emanating from the divine nature which is light and love.

In the Eucharist the soul will find the means to reproduce them all in herself, that is, the passive assimilation of one's being in grace. (If we really surrender ourselves to Jesus, his grace will assimilate

us to him, and thus we have the so called "passive assimilation" in which God is the agent and we the receivers). The soul should prepare herself for this assimilation, should consent to it and live it. No more the soul, but the soul in Jesus Christ! The formation of Jesus in us is our sanctification.

D) So that our assimilation unto God may take place happily and progressively, it is necessary that the soul does not conform to the world and that does not live according to the spirit of the world. It is nature and the world that must conform to the divine exemplar of Jesus, and not vice versa. We should always be on guard against illusory accommodations and compromises with the world, our enemy. For Jesus' sake we will always be crucified to the world, and the world will be a cross for us! The soul shouldn't even try to resemble herself. But with our mind open to every level of truth, and our heart open to every level of charity, we should not hesitate, nor take our sweet time to let go of ideas and feelings that were good at one point in our life, in order to make room for better and more elevated ideas and feelings.

"Ibunt de virtute in virtutem! Emulamini charismata meliora." Even though those were practices of virtues and charisms, we need courage to go forward. In the process of divine imitation and assimilation, can one ever say: Have I made it? Is there anything else for me to do? Every person or event can be a lesson for us, and these lessons vary according to our internal level of grace! Blessed is he who can receive these lessons and put them into practice!
Nonetheless

"Nolite omni spiritu credere sed probate spiritus utrum ex Deo sint – not every spirit is to be trusted, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1Jn 4:1). All this does not mean instability, but improvement, progress, gradual ascensions.

E) Consummated union is our fulfillment and triumph! This divine union must be the object of our constant longing! Let us start to make it now! The soul should have the freedom and possibility to spend all available time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Our

daily schedule, and the arrangement of our things, should facilitate this need and this duty. The soul will cultivate the awareness of God's presence and his indwelling within us, starting from the most simple forms and ascending to the most sublime, according to the grace of the moment. Eucharistic communion will dominate everything, since for us it is true sun and true spring; it is a complete cycle and an entire world for the servants. Communion with the will of God every moment; communion with every word, action, suffering and prayer. Always with the attitude and dispositions of "Ecce ancilla Domini – behold the handmaid of the Lord!" – "Ita Pater quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te – Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do" (Mt 11:26).

Our surrendering to God's will in us, must be a conscious, cooperating and adequate act, not too passive as to become repressive and illusory. The very fact of surrendering ourselves to God's will is the beginning of our union with God in his church, in his hierarchical or private representatives; union with the Holy Family, union with the divine perfections and complacency in creation, redemption, sanctification and glorification; union with the Trinity of persons and with the unity of God! Union that is ever more simple, actual and permanent. O my God and my all! Deus omnia in omnibus! According to the priestly prayer of Jesus, this union will be modeled on the unreachable model of the hypostatic union and of the unity of the three persons in God.

F) Only God! The whole world is "wonders of God, our needs of God" and consequently everything is something that leads us to God and encouragement to love. Nothing can express our gratitude better than love; nothing can express our noble reparation better than love; nothing can be a more effective intercession than love. Regardless of the way that leads us to God, once we have reached him, there is no more worthy adoration than love. The four goals of the sacrifice of Jesus, are also our golden strings that are intertwined to form our bond of love with God. Everything, everything goes through the ways of love. These acts need to be

blended and simplified ever more into one feeling, state, act, so that in the intellect, memory, and will, in the whole internal and external life they may be reduced to – God alone! This takes place in the immolation of love. In our Lord, all this is condensed in the Eucharist. If we are not offered by the priest-love, our Lord does not want us on his altars. The soul should be led to understand the sublimity of the mystical death and the real death as transit in God; daily, from one communion to the other, the soul should immerse herself slowly, losing her own identity in God. Our intellect must be immersed in the divine truth, our will in the divine goodness, our life in the divine life, our name in the very name of God; our action must be total cooperation with God, totally for the one who loves us, for him who is our way and our ultimate goal – only God – God our all!

12. Be vigilant

A) The divine imperatives of the gospels place upon us the obligation to stay spiritually awake, to control our own selves, and to be recollected. To be the prey of distractions, of the impression of our senses, of the digressions of our imagination without the control of our reason enlightened by faith, without the control of our will moved by love, over all our internal and external acts, is like sleeping with open eyes; the only difference between this day-dreaming, and the regular night sleep and dreams, is that we are accountable for the first. While we are day dreaming the enemy comes and sows his seeds in our soul; the tempter comes, and the soul falls in its nets... Let us stay awake!

We stay awake because we cannot trust ourselves; we stay awake and alert to guard ourselves against temptation that always finds some betraying allies within us. We stay awake awaiting for the test that we cannot, and do not want to, escape; we do not want to be excused from this test, so that we can give greater glory to God!

We stay awake because we love our beloved, and we wait for his visits, his gifts, his absolutions, his communions, daily, from mystery to mystery until the final and decisive visit, when he will take us with him. He loves to see us awake, alert, ready and waiting for him. He loves to surprise us with surprises of love. What would happen if we were not ready to open the doors for him promptly, when he comes? What would happen if we were not alert and able to recognize him when he comes incognito, as he so often loves to do?

B) Let us stay awake in the presence of the Blessed Trinity, indwelling in us! Let us not turn off our lamps not even for one minute, as we should never extinguish the vigil light by the Blessed Sacrament, and the seven lamps of our thought and affections in the presence of the divinity within the soul! May all our thoughts be as many Cherubim contemplating the Lord in us, and may all our affections be as many Seraphim providing their court of love to the Lord in us; and may all our senses be as many angels serving the Lord in us! Spiritual life, both ascetical and mystical life, is the most intense and real life; it is the most laborious, the most productive; the one most filled by the "spirit of ardor" of which Isaiah speaks. God is act, eternal, infinite, immense, immutable act, the most simple, the most pure, the most perfect act. The more a soul gets closer to God, the more active she becomes; the more a soul becomes part of God, the more active she becomes; the more a soul is united with God, the more active she becomes. The soul becomes active in the present moment, realized in the present moment. The divine present! In God there is neither past nor future, but everything is present. Neither the past nor the future is divine, only the present is divine. This staying awake of the soul is its realization in the present, in God; we make reparations for the past in the present; we prepare ourselves for the future in the present, uniting ourselves to God in the present.

SYNTHESIS

1. You, Lord, made a marvelous synthesis, because everything must be in your image and likeness.
2. As you are one and triune, so you want the Trinity to shine in everything, and you love to reduce everything to unity.
3. You wanted the synthesis of all graces of creation, redemption and sanctification, and so you gave us the Virgin Mary!
4. You wanted the synthesis of all mysteries, of all the teachings and of all the acts of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, and so you gave us the Holy Mass, the Eucharist.
5. You wanted the synthesis of all authority, of all teachings, of all the functions of Jesus Christ, and so you gave us the pope.
6. You wanted likewise the synthesis of all holy deeds, of all religious families, of all Christian schools of spirituality.
7. You wanted they synthesis of all vocations, of all missions, of all functions, of all inspirations, of all directions, of all relationships.
8. So, you gave us the Society of Divine Vocations, as mother and teacher of the chosen ones with special vocations, to continue the work of the Holy Family, and to foster the growth of Jesus in them.
9. You gave us divine union with the holy Church, with the Holy Family, with you, adorable Trinity, and so we have the divine union of the soul, spouse of the Trinity.

FORMULAS

Royal soul, imperial soul, soul spouse of the Trinity.

Priestly soul, pontifical soul, Soul spouse of the Trinity.

Integral soul, universal soul, soul spouse of the Trinity.

2

Concerning the glory, love and will of God Trinity:

All that I can do, I must do.

All that I can do, I want to do.

All that I want ... gets done.

GOAL'S GUIDELINES

CHAPTER 1

1. The Star of God

To what shall we compare the human soul, even while here on earth? Throughout the whole created universe, there is nothing so beautiful, great and good that in a comparison may outshine the human soul. All created things are immensely inferior to the human soul. To help ourselves with tangible comparisons, we say that as in the material universe everything appears spheric in its volume, and circular in its motions, so in the spiritual world, we may imagine the soul as one of those immense fiery stars, launched and traveling in the skies. The soul is like a star. A great starry world, all a flame of bloody fire, and emanating splendor, fragrance and harmony; a world to which God has not yet set any boundaries, because he wants the soul to be ever more shining with splendor and colors,

songs and harmony, fragrances and perfumes, flying within an ever larger orbit, with an ever higher elevation, and an ever more marvelous spiral. It is as if she were destined to reach the unreachable God, to embrace the limitless God, and be the star of glory, of the blessedness of God. In truth, only God is her principle, her center, her goal.

2. The Orbit of God's Star

Only God is our principle, our center, our goal. Creating the soul and elevating her to the supernatural, - with that first imperative: "grow" - the Lord has placed the soul on the way toward the goal which is God himself, in such a way that when it seems that somehow we have reached it, we see him always before us and elevating himself (and us) to ever new heights; and yet rather than getting discouraged we are attracted to possess him in an ever higher level. In order to better understand and reach God, the soul cannot find a better way or direction than turning to her principle; from this deeper vision the soul receives a greater charge and higher elevations in the sky-ward journey, toward the ultimate goal. And so we go, always forward and upward, in a perennial, circular progression, but to an ever higher sphere, through an ever larger orbit, until we reach heaven. This attraction and relation with God is called "charity" - as it really is. The attraction of the soul to, and the relation with God as her principle, is called "humility," - as it really is. If the soul progresses, and if she wants to progress always more and always better, it goes from charity to humility and from humility to charity.

From humility to an ever higher charity, and from charity to an ever deeper humility; so the soul goes from God to God, that is, from God as her principle to God as her final goal, and vice versa, but always in God and with God. In God, participating always more of his nature, with his grace; and with God, always better following his

Spirit, in this supernatural circulation of divine life. The higher and faster are these spiritual progresses of the soul, the more hearts she attracts to her sphere, the more souls she carries in her orbit, the more it assimilates the universe in her life.

3. The Sphere of God's Star

We are not a simple line, in the living halo of God's glory. The Lord God is not principle and end of only one human soul. From all eternity he was wanted an innumerable quantity of creatures, that he has created in time. All things, from the angels to atoms, rotate around him, as in their own immense sphere; all gravitate around him, as the very center of all beings; each and every creature is attracted to him according to its nature, in the universal harmony of his glory, by the universal force of attraction of his love.

The soul who wants to progress, in God and with God, is carried, in the current of grace, by the impetus of the Spirit. The more the soul progresses, the more she encounters and keeps in touch with the creatures that gravitate around God as their center, and moves in the sphere of the immensity of God. Every creature has received from God the mission to enrich the soul that progresses with ever new beauty, sweetness and greatness. Every creature, at every encounter with the soul that progresses, rather than detaining her, does propel her in a new, progressive spiral movement toward God; so that every contact with creatures turns out to be only an impulse towards the creator. So, from every encounter and contact with creatures, especially souls – and souls that are, or are called to be, more intimately united with God – the soul bounces back to her God enlarged and more inflamed. Once the soul reaches God at this higher level, in this new dilated capacity of goodness, she receives such a new fullness and abundance of life, that she cannot contain in herself only; then the soul, from God as her center, returns to the creatures, to share with them the effusions of divine goodness of

which she has been made treasurer and minister. So it generated another movement of life, that takes the soul from the creatures to God; this is a new attraction and relationship of humility; and from God to the creatures, and this is a new attraction and relationship of charity.

4. The three Virtues

Throughout the liturgical cycle, within the Catholic Church, the soul goes from the incarnation to the ascension, that is, from the descent of the Man- God to earth, to the ascent of the Man- God into heaven. The faithful constantly go from annunciations to ever higher ascensions, toward the fullness of Christ. Everything is accomplished in the work of the Holy Spirit who forms the Man-God- Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and who through a perennial Pentecost makes man holy in the church. So the flow of our spiritual life, in its fervor and splendor, - considered in the supernatural world of our relation with God, - goes from God principle to God end, and from God end to God principle. Considered in the supernatural world of our relation with the universe and with our neighbor, - goes from the center-God to the periphery-creature, and from the periphery-creature to the center-God.

In all this circulation of divine life, in the currents of grace, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, above all stand out charity, which is the queen of theological virtues, and humility, which is the most important among the moral virtues; with all their marvelous fertility of acts and variety of states. The human being does not have the time, nor the way (likewise he does not have the duty, nor the right) to stop and converge on himself, to seek and reproduce himself. He keeps going, going and going, always to higher heights, to his God, who is his all. From among all creatures, the creature that the human being meets more often, and lives constantly in contact with, is its body, spirit and person. Likewise it is true that

the human being cannot receive from any other creature, as he does from his own self, the constant, distinct, powerful impulse to go to God through knowledge and love, so that he may establish himself in the fervor of progress and in the progress of fervor. The abnegation of self, which is the end result of humility and charity, is called purity, in broadest, beautiful and proper meaning, as act, state and function.

5. Functions of the three Virtues

This abnegation of self, which we call purity, in its broadest, beautiful and proper meaning, is not only the end result of humility and charity, but it is also a necessary prerequisite to the acts, states and function of humility and charity. Seeking or enjoying moral or physical satisfaction, indulging or reclining upon one's own self, whether in the form of vanity or sensuality, first slow down, then diverts and finally interrupts that flow of the soul from God principle to God end and vice versa. The movement toward God must be continuous and progressive, always in act and fervor. Sanctification of self, indulging or reclining upon one's self – with a flow that is perpetual, but totally out of order, is progressive, but down-ward, is in act, but destructive, is in fervor but in a state of corruption, - will take the soul from its own self to the creatures, and from the creatures to its own self. In this state of affair the soul cannot find in herself but misery and emptiness; to the creatures the soul cannot bring but misery and emptiness, since she has subtracted herself from God, who is the only good in herself. The soul, in this state of affairs, sees and considers all creatures without God, (who is the only good for all creatures,) and consequently cannot find in herself or in the creatures anything but darkness and emptiness, misery and tears. Purity, with charity and humility constitute the unity and trinity of virtues that are indispensable for the relationship of the soul with God and with our neighbor. Holy humility renders theocentric our whole spiritual life. Holy Charity places our

whole life in complete theocracy. Purity, which at the same time is the end result and necessary prerequisite for charity and humility, frees us from any external slavery and from any internal obstacle. It disposes us, opens and thrusts us in the circulation of divine life, in the currents of grace, under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

6. Circulation of life

From the first moment of our creation we are elevated to the supernatural state, and yet, at the same time, we find ourselves in our own life, in our own environment, in the consortium of divine nature. We find ourselves in an ocean and sky without banks and without bottom, through which, - as rivers in the ocean and as currents in the sky, circulate the currents of grace that come from God, our principle, and lead us to God, our end.

The divine nature exists only in the divine persons. Consequently there can be no consortium with divine nature without union with the divine persons. The divine persons are eternal, infinite relations of love, and this requires an eternal and infinite circulation of life between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This grace, consortium with the divine nature and union with the divine persons, immerses and carries the soul in supernatural currents of divine life. The soul is wholly elevated to the supernatural in her nature by grace; she is also elevated to the supernatural in her faculties by the theological and cardinal virtues, as well as by the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which enable and prepare her to practice those virtues, supernaturally and naturally, according to the human way of acting and according to a way which is above the human way, according to the norms of the superior reason of the spirit of God.

The Spirit always guides the soul in accordance with the dogmatic, moral, liturgical, legal, ascetical and mystical laws of the Church, out of which there is no salvation; this happens whether the soul

just walks through the foot-path of the commandments, or flies through the sky-way of the counsels. Within the mystical body and the soul of the holy, catholic church, the soul finds those innumerable habitual, sacramental and actual graces, as well as sacred characters, charisms, theological and cardinal virtues, gifts, fruits and beatitudes of the Holy Spirit.

Each of these graces is more fertile than the soil, brighter than the sun, larger than the sky, rivers of living pearls, whirlwind of living stars that carry the soul through the ocean and the sky without banks and without bottom – God – in the action and motion of the Holy Spirit to the union with God in an ineffable way and level.

7. The Supreme Type

In the flow of supernatural life between God and his creatures, we cannot reach the center – God – and the periphery – creature – without passing through a multiplicity of beings; the closer these beings are to God, the more elevated they are. These beings are the active and effective instruments of divine action in the souls, because the more they are united to God, the more they participate in his divine good, and consequently the more they want to make it known and accessible to the souls who seek God in them. Likewise they want and can shower it upon the souls who unite themselves to God in them.

The Holy Spirit uses these beings as a ship to transport the soul – through the currents of grace – from her principle to her end, and from her end to her principle. He takes us from God to the creatures, and from the creatures to God, through the pathways of knowledge and love in the communication and effusion of divine good. Near God we find the saints and the angels, and even closer we find the Seven Spirits Assisting at the throne of the Trinity, and even closer St. Joseph and the Virgin, Mother of God. More than close to God, in God himself we find human nature, in Jesus Christ,

the God man, supreme synthesis of all communication of God to man, of all the elevations of man to God. In Jesus as God we contemplate, in its greatest splendor, our ultimate goal, in its primary aspect, that is the glory of God. In Jesus as man we contemplate, in its greatest fervor, our ultimate goal in its secondary aspect, that is, the happiness of man.

The wisdom of God has given us, realized in our Lord Jesus Christ, our ultimate goal in its primary and secondary aspect. He has given us the whole series of intermediary goals realized in the saints and in the angels.

St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother are so united to the Trinity in that supreme revelation and communication which is Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, that they are the most sublime model for every soul who wants to achieve the ultimate goal, and the most powerful help in the achievement of the same. In as much as they not only reveal to us, but actualize in us the knowledge, love and service of Jesus Christ, as well as that life of intimacy, of assimilation and relation with Jesus Christ, in which one reaches – the relatively perfect –divine union with the Blessed Trinity.

8. Two Throbs

In the flow of supernatural life the soul in the state of fervor – in whatever direction and on whatever level – one must always distinguish the love of God, with all its forms of desire and joy and the hatred for anything that is against God, with all its forms of fear and sorrow. Love launches us toward God. Hatred for things against God generates flight from all evil. Love kindles itself in flames of divine zeal toward the achievement of all that pleases God the most; hatred that kindles itself in flames of war for the destruction of whatever displeases God even minimally. Love that attracts to itself for the sake of God the souls, in whom God is most pleased, and to whom he opens paradise forever; hatred that for the sake of

God pushes away from oneself sins and devils, who represent all that is opposed to God, and confines them into the abyss, wanting to shut down hell forever. Love is always awake and active, looking for all possible occasions to please God; hatred is likewise always awake and active trying to avoid all occasions of sin – from the nearest to the most remote – to make sure that God is not displeased.

Love is ever awake and active, in enriching, and beautifying, while getting bigger with all the perfections of the good that can be assimilated in the supernatural universe. Hatred is ever awake and active in freeing, purifying and immunizing itself against all imperfections of evil, that may cling to us from the whole natural universe. Love and hatred are so strictly connected that they are always directly proportioned. One is infallibly an indication and measure of the other. Alone they can neither exist nor grow. Love and hatred that divide the whole world of things, actions and relations, in two camps sharply separated; they never allow the soul to stand neutral in the middle. They render meritorious or blameworthy whatever is wanted or done by the soul, even those things that per se are indifferent. Love and hatred are the two flames of the internal fire, the two notes of the internal song, the two wings of the spiritual flight, the two throbs of the human heart, the two beams of the personal cross, the two phases on the inner struggle, the two arms of daily work. Morning and afternoon of the same pole toward which the soul in the state of progress is constantly carried in the circulation of divine life by the currents of grace and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Every grace renews, enlarges and elevates that double throb of holy love and holy hatred.

9. Divine Revealing Words

Having received this divine grace and following the breath of the Holy Spirit, we feel that we are being carried forward to a

knowledge of God, our principle, center and end; knowledge that is ever higher, more intimate and deeper, that is ever more convincing, more attractive, more transforming. Only such a progressive knowledge can generate in our will that holy impulse toward God and neighbor, all rapture of fervor, humility and charity in purity. With this divine rapture we reach the various stages of spiritual life, the various levels of possession of, and union with God, since it is proper of the ultimate goal to move us to do, and to communicate goodness and merit to every act. The more our vision of the ultimate goal is complete and the more we keep it in mind, the more our impulse of supernatural life will be constant, direct and rapid; the more our acts of supernatural life will be elevated, intense and meritorious; the more our being will be well disposed, dilated and made worthy of greater infusions of grace, virtue and gifts.

Since God has made us in his own image and likeness, it is only fitting for us to elevate ourselves to the knowledge of his being, and persons, and demands, not only from all other creatures, going from the effect to the cause, but from our own selves, because of all visible creatures, we are the only ones made in his image and likeness.

We begin with the same divine words used to recount the story of creation, and also used to reveal to us how we were elevated to the supernatural, that is, to the participation of the divine nature, to the union with the divine persons. God was pleased to give us simultaneously, nature and grace. In these divine words and in all other concerning man, we will discover ever deeper revelations of our principle, center and goal, God. If God reveals himself in all his divine words, much more he reveals himself in those words through which he creates and elevates, ordains and directs, sanctifies and glorifies man, his favorite creature. He created man in his own image and likeness and destined him to become ever more in his image and likeness.

10 Not Division but union

In our spiritual work we must be careful not to divide what God has united, not to insubordinate what God has subordinated. Since Satan divided himself from God through the disorder of sin, he continues to instigate divisions and disorder in everything, starting with the ideas of man; because he is well aware that in confusion, and division there is weakness, slavery and death. In order and in union there is strength, freedom and life.

The Lord wants our intellect to be always connected and united with the will; likewise, the thought should be connected with the word, the theory with the practice, nature with grace, what is internal with what is external, affection with effectiveness, what is dogmatic with what is moral. Since we are limited and successive, we cannot understand and practice everything at the same time. Yet we are capable of gathering our notions and making a synthesis of them.

Thus we will find and possess them in a way that is clearer and more effective. Concerning our ultimate goal, we do not divide in theory the primary from the secondary ultimate goal, because even though the secondary is subordinate to the primary, it remains still inseparably united to it.

11. Always more, Always better

Oh! May we always long for an ever greater enthusiasm of an ever more intense fervor, in each one of its various levels! In our natural life and tendency - relatively to our needs and ability of the present - we always feel an attraction for more-quantity wise, and better-quality wise. The soul feels and carries the same attraction to more and better in spiritual matters. These attractions to more and better lead us to new achievements for the kingdom of God, to the

ongoing renewal of the old man, till we become like Jesus; they lead us to higher ascensions from virtue to virtue, till we reach the full possession of God. Naturally, something that is exactly as it has been is not new. Something that leaves us exactly where we were, is not an ascension. Something that does not add anything to what we have, or are, is not an achievement.

We must safeguard ourselves from extremely dangerous situations with extreme precautions. We must overcome extreme evils with extreme remedies. Due to the nature of our implacable adversaries and the steepness of the descent toward the abyss, it is so easy and so quick to precipitate in the abyss, without any possibility of stopping half way down, or without the possibility of a comfortable rest on a plain. We ascend, step by step, and if at every step we do not apply all the power of God's grace to each of our efforts, instead of going a step forward, we end up sliding backward. In everything, everywhere and at all times we must seek ever more and better to achieve our ultimate goal, that is, God's glory and our happiness. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are our model of perfection; in their mold we want to form our own selves. The progressive consortium of the divine, requires nature an ever increasing divine action; the progressive relationship with the divine persons requires an ever growing divine assimilation; the growth of God's kingdom, for which we are responsible, and the innumerable needs of the souls entrusted to us, require from us whatever is more and better at the time and at the level in which we are. Likewise humility that can never reach the bottom of one's own ego, in which we keep failing; charity that never reaches the very depth of God, to whom it constantly elevates us, purity, which always finds in us something of the world and of our own ego, from which it separates us constantly; the Spirit of God which guides us to God, and to live in God, requires the most and the best we can offer in every situation, according to the time and the condition in which we live.

Only the ideal of the most perfect, that Jesus has pointed out to us in God the Father, infuses in us a perennial enthusiasm toward the

highest possible enthusiasm, at each level. Any lower ideal does not satisfy us, does not touch us, does not fit us, and consequently is not our goal.

12. Reality and Practicality

Everything in God is reality of life, act and relation, Since our goal is to be near God, in God himself, everything in us must be reality of life, act and relation. As a matter of fact, that is the supreme reality of which we are capable, that we must reach, and toward which we are now moving, and in which we will establish ourselves for all eternity. Since we have been created for this, the practicality in all things, which is experienced particularly by the souls in a state of fervor, is for us a special grace and our criterion in all things.

From among all thing and people, actions and relationships in the world, only practicality helps us to discern an disregard as being false and vain, illusory and useless toward our goal, whatever projects shadows and obstacles between us and our goal, or misleads and moves us away from it; only practicality helps us to discern and embrace, not only as true in itself, but also as useful to us, those things and people, actions and relationships to which the reality of our goal radiates and communicates its morality, and the dignity of the goal itself, and creates the golden chain of the intermediate goals. Oh! How important and necessary it is that the supreme reality of life, act and relationship which is our goal, be always present to the intellect in such a way that it conquers the same intellect; thus it is necessary not to mislead us, or to extinguish our fervor, or render us alien in our journey through our intermediary goals. The reality of our goal should always be present to our will with such a force that it conquers the same will; always present to our will with such a force that it conquers the same will; always present in our life with such a sweetness that it may be fused totally in its form. Now we commit ourselves to make sure

that our goal will always be present and shining in our mind, that it will always be a concrete practical ideal of friendship, as the one that better expresses the reality of our supreme relationship. We commit ourselves to constantly propose our goal to our will, as a concrete-practical duty, that better corresponds to the reality of our supreme life.

We would love to come up with a living formula that expresses the reality of our goal as life, act and relationship, and we would like to condense it in one word that might have the power to enthuse and rapture us, give us peace as the goal that it reminds us of and that reveals to us.

RECAPITULATION

1. What is the star of God's glory?

My soul is the star of God's glory¹ A living, personal star; a star that emanates light, perfume and melody; a star that is getting ever bigger, more beautiful and more sweet.

2. What is its orbit and sphere?

I cover my orbit flying eternally from God my principle to God my end; I form my sphere with the eternal fight from my center- God to my periphery-the creatures; in the function of supernatural purity, humility and charity.

3. How does this circulation happen?

This double circulation of life takes place in the action of grace, virtues and gifts, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Grace deifies my being; the virtues and gifts deify my faculties; the inspiration then places in motion nature and faculties, the supernatural acts.

4. Where does this motion lead me?

This divine-human motion of this natural-supernatural life, in this work and action of the Spirit of God in cooperation with the human spirit, tends to form me as another Jesus Christ in the communion of the Church and of the Holy Family for the union with the Blessed Trinity.

5. How does our cooperation begin?

Our cooperation starts with our commitment to know more completely our own goal, which is God, utilizing all creatures who reveal him as the effect reveals the cause; especially utilizing our own self and our heart, since from among all creatures, we are the only ones made in the image and likeness of God.

6. What are the qualities of the human cooperation?

Our human cooperation must: 1) be in the hatred against evil and in the love for what is good; 2) tend always to be more in quantity and to be better in quality; 3) know and use all things only in their practicality, ordaining them toward the immediate goal to be achieved, and then direct this immediate goal toward the ultimate Goal, in which we may rest.

7. What are some of pitfalls to be avoided?

One must be cautious not to stop before what is inconvenient, without paying the due attention to its reasoning; not to be content with a part without reaching the whole; One must

make sure not to be happy with the satisfaction of the intellect in the theory, without also conquering the satisfaction of the will in the practical reality of things; in other words, we cannot divide what God has joined together.

Examination of Conscience and Prayer

1. Lord Show me my ultimate goal, so that I may understand what is still missing to its total achievement! Lord, let me see the impending end of my life on earth, so that I may hasten to achieve what is missing to the full realization of the purpose of my life.
2. I believe that you, my Lord, are my ultimate goal, just as you are my beginning and the center of my being. You are the principle, the center and the end of all creatures, of all souls, of every life. I do not possess the fullness of faith, grant it to me Lord, so that it may be alive and operating in me.
3. Even though I keep saying that I want to do everything for the greater glory of your love, often I discover that I say this only after having wondered through so many other motivations, after having done things for other purposes.
4. My intention cannot be what has been formulated after having made my decisions, what I have recited after my actions; the goal of doing everything for your glory is not a short prayer. Doing so I get tired without any profit for my soul.
5. Yet this ultimate goal of mine is in itself so sublime that it is kind of taken you out of your own self, in order to reverse yourself out of the Blessed Trinity. Oh! How much my ultimate goal should take me out of myself and carry me – out of my own self – into you!
6. This ultimate goal is in itself such a sublime good, that you yourself have wanted to conquer; you have worked and fought for

it; and once you have achieved it, you have rested in it. Oh! How much more should I do to achieve it!

7. Yet, even I feel an attraction toward what is beautiful, great and sweet. I would be totally conquered by my ultimate goal if it were to appear to me in all its greatness, beauty and sweetness; I would not be able to rest any more before achieving its total possession!

8. I beg you, Lord, show me my ultimate goal in all its greatness, beauty and sweetness; expand always more my mind so that I may understand it; expand always more my heart so that I may love it; expand more my life so that I may possess it. Show me my goal!

9. You show me the whole universe, the entire humanity. You call me to live always more my communion with the Church and the Holy Family, yet that is not my ultimate goal. O my God, lead me to the full possession of my ultimate goal in your eternal Sabbath!

10. O my Trinity, O my God and my All, your will be done, your love reign, your glory shine in me and everyone always more as in yourself! O Father, Son and Holy Spirit, my God and my All!

FORMULA

1. Universe and humanity is the sky of God's glory. The Catholic Church and the Holy Family is heaven's heaven of God's glory.

2. The microcosm of the universe lives in our humanity with nature and in the divinity with grace, shines before us as a star that brightens and ascends in the skies.

3. It is born in the Church, grows within the Holy Family, in their communion it prepares itself to the relationship of union with the Blessed Trinity, its orbit and its sphere.

Chapter II

1. Formation of the Spouse

“It is not right that the man should be alone” (Gn 2:18), said the Lord talking about Adam, the first man, and about every other individual human being who is represented by the first man. It was not right for Adam, because he could not fully enjoy his happiness in the terrestrial paradise without another life, another person, another heart with whom he could have shared it.

It was not right for the glory that he had to render to God, because it was not perfect image and likeness of God who is not alone but in three persons. It was not good, because alone he could not have perpetuated on earth the family of those who worship and glorify our good Lord. It was not right, because God wanted to grant him the glory of cooperating with him in the work of creation through procreation.

Since from among all living beings that surrounded him, Adam could not find a suitable partner, God said: “I shall make him a helper” (Gn 2:18). So the first woman was created. When she was presented to Adam, he exclaimed: “This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh! She is to be called woman, because she was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his father and his mother and becomes attached to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gn 2:23-24). Thus the first two human beings were created one for the other and both for the glory of God. As spouses they had the object of their complacency in the other, and likewise the created end of their growth process. As spouses they found in their

union the sum of all other relationships and the exercise of all their human faculties.

As spouses they did not have to desire any other from among all the good beings that had been created; one gloried in the other; one rested in the other; and from then on both were and enjoyed, one life in one operation, directed to the formation of the other people, who would carry on their ministry of God's glory on earth.

2. Final Relationship

With the creation of the woman, the Lord completed the creation of the visible world, he lead man to the relationship of spouse and settle him in the state of the nuptial relationship; the Lord then entered again the Sabbath of his eternal rest. Since then, every child that comes into this world, notwithstanding all charm and beauty of childhood, does not want to remain a child, but hastens to become a teenager. Notwithstanding all the charm and beauty of adolescence, the teenager does not want to remain a teenager, but hastens to become a young adult. And then, notwithstanding the charm and beauty of the springtime of his life, the young adult is not satisfied with the flowers; he longs for the fruits and makes his transition into virility and marries.

The charm and beauty of every stage, in the life of a man consists precisely in this progressive blooming of childhood into teenager, into youth, into adulthood, in the perfect virility. Likewise, and simultaneously, a man is born as a son, but notwithstanding all the sweetness of the filial relationship, he does not want to be only a son, and he is not satisfied within the sole native family. He tends to develop other relationships, as friend, with an ever growing number of people, and so he forms a larger family, and – at times it seems – a more sweet family of election. Notwithstanding all the sweetness of friendship, or better, because he is totally taken by the sweetness of friendship, he does not want to be only a friend,

and he is not longer fully satisfied with his larger family of election, but he tends to the relationship of spouse with the person that seems to embody the ideal and the synthesis of all the goodness that humanity may offer. With this person, more friend than all other friends, he forms the family of his heart, where he can finally rest for all his life, in the sweet and strong exercise of the dominion of his conquering love.

3. The soul Spouse

Oh! How much light we receive in every question from that sublime principle, that "nature symbolizes grace, and that grace does not destroy but elevates nature, and natural life gives us an idea of the supernatural life". If we remain healthy and fully of fervor, even in our supernatural life we pass from spiritual childhood to adolescence, youth and full virility. The soul is not satisfied with just the filial relationship, but perfects this filial relationship with that of friendship. Later she crowns it with marital relationship.

Since we are made in the image and likeness of God, we are given license to think that God himself is not satisfied with simply possessing the soul he loves infinitely with just any relationship. As God through grace has elevated the soul from the simple natural relationship of subject and servant to the filial relationship; so he wants to elevate the soul ever more to himself in the relationship of friendship; if the soul responds as God desires, God will then unite the soul to himself as a spouse; and we dare to think of him what he said of us: "It is not right for God to be alone. Let him have a suitable partner."

God, in himself, has never been alone, and he is always infinitely sufficient to himself, since in God there is always the unity of nature and the Trinity of persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Out of God here is no one like him; outside of God, who is everything, there is nothing! As God is not alone in himself, so he did not want to remain alone outside of himself.

As in himself, God always lives in and with the other divine persons. Outside of himself, he wanted to live with an endless and ever growing number of other persons, who would be the glory of the adorable unity and Trinity. As in himself, God finds his infinite sufficiency in the three divine persons, so he wanted to find outside of himself, in every soul and person, a suitable partner, one like himself, with whom he may share the glory of being Father of souls through grace, as a new sufficiency and rest; this is offered to God only by the soul- spouse.

4. God does not want to be alone

"It is not right for God to be alone. Let him have a helper like himself." As ad intra (in himself), God is not alone, so ad extra (outside of himself) does not want to be alone. (Oh! The poverty of our expressions! Oh! Insufficiency of our ideas!) From nothingness God created innumerable worlds and populated them with so many beings.

All creatures were called to pass before the Lord as in a parade. At the sound of the divine word the stars spread their light, in their respective stations. Once they were called they answered "Here we are!" joyfully shining for him who had created them. Yet, in the skies was not shining the one that was going to be "The star of the heart of God." From among all lifeless and alive creatures, God could not find one that was like him. Then he said: " Let us make man in our own image in the likeness of ourselves" (Gn 1:26). And man was created in the image and likeness of God. As God is in himself every created goodness, so man is the synthesis of all created goodness. As all other creatures were primarily created for man, so man was created primarily for God. As Eve was formed

from the rib of Adam, so the soul was formed from the heart of the Spirit of God. Oh! How we love to see, listen, feel in the very words of the creation of the soul "inspiravit spiraculum vitae – breathed the breath of life" (Gn 2:7), almost as an echo or reflection of the eternal spiration of the Holy Spirit; and think of the soul as the image and likeness of God in third divine person, that is the substantial love of the Father and of the Son, the soul destined to be the love of the Trinity! As Eve, formed to be the helper of her suitable partner, was presented and given to Adam as his spouse; so the soul must present and offer herself to God as her suitable helper, and as his spouse in the supernatural order. The work of creation was only completed with the creation of the woman and the nuptial state of man in his spousal relationship. The work of our sanctification, to be totally completed and rest in the eternal Sabbath of Paradise, must form the soul spouse of God, and establish her in this divine union.

5. Infinite Bounty

It was not good for God to remain alone; not even ad extra, since he is infinite bounty. Since this divine infinite bounty is essentially diffusive, it necessarily wants and needs a receiver. These infinite, divine effusions of the bounty, that is God himself, go eternally and adequately from one person of the Trinity to the other, in the divine unity. Because they are infinite effusions of the infinite bounty, they did not want to be contained - so to speak - "within the limitless boundaries of the unlimited Trinity", they pour themselves out in their infinite overabundance, outside of the divinity. It was as if the all had found in the nothingness the capacity of receiving him. It was as if the all had fallen in love with nothingness; as if the all were to marry the nothingness. Doing so he gave an existence to nothingness, an existence that by nature had to be limited, and yet capable of receiving successively and indefinitely the effusions of the love of God. As a consequence of the effusion of the All, the nothingness kept becoming an ever better and more alive image of

the All... So in the natural state we have the divine bounty revealed in the creation of the soul, made in the image and likeness of God. In the supernatural state the divine bounty communicates itself in the elevation of the souls, made in the likeness of God.

Creation and elevation of the soul took place simultaneously, as a sign of the loving impetuosity of the effusions of the bounty of God toward this creature of his; toward his image and likeness. In this nothingness that became a living and personal being through the omnipotence and wisdom of the divine bounty; in this nothingness became a living and personal being that is total, essential dependency from the All, that is God; in this nothingness that has been wanted and loved specifically for its passive capacity to receive the effusions of love, we see the progressive formation of the spouse of the one and triune God, the soul in the divine attractions, toward the divine union.

6. For his glory

It was not good for God to remain alone, not even ad extra. Good for God is the glory of God. Glory of God is his own being made of infinite perfections, his own divine truth, thus only God is the glory of God! Only the Son is the glory of the Father, and only the Father is the glory of the Son' Only the Holy Spirit is the glory of the Father and of the Son, and only the Father and the Son are the glory of the Holy Spirit. Internal, essential glory ad intra. Even the external glory "ad extra" is good for God, not an essential, necessary good, but still good. This good would have been if God had remained alone. The creatures came into being as an external irradiation of the internal, divine glory. The soul became the masterpiece of all creation.

The soul had to be the glory of God in the two ways possible, First, by manifesting in itself the divine perfections of the divine nature, as the effect that reveals the greatness of its first cause. The more

the soul is united with God the more it reveals him as the first cause; grace united the soul to God with the most intimate union and espoused it to the divine truth as the word is espoused to the truth, with the glory of the divine nature, the unity of God.

Second, it must be the glory of God to render to him the praise that comes from the knowledge and love, as created echo on the uncreated Word of the Father and of the uncreated Spirit of the Father and of the Son. Since the soul would be able to know, praise and love him only proportionately to its intimate, personal relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through grace the soul is espoused to the divine charity which is all the glory of the divine persons, the Trinity of God. For both forms of glory the soul had to be an image and likeness of God, capable of becoming ever more such, in order to be able to glorify him ever more remaining true that it will never be able to glorify him enough. So we have the spouse relationship that better reveals, not only the divine perfections for the highest possible likeness that it implies, but also in a way that is ever higher and more ardent praises and sings the divine perfections, because it is the most sublime union of love.

7. Because he is love

It was not good for God to be alone, not even ad extra, since he is love and he graciously reveals himself as he needed the creatures to find the loved one and the lover, the object of his love and the one who would respond to his love! He is all love in his nature: His will is all love, and love is all his glory! He is all love in his persons, since each one of the three divine persons is but a relationship of love as contained in the very name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit! This divine Trinity reveals to us that only God is the love of God. Only the Son is all the love of the Father, and only the Father is all the love of the Son, and only the Holy Spirit is all the love of the Father and of the Son, as only the Father and the Son are all the

love of the Holy Spirit! We see this in that eternal act of love that is the generation of the Word from the unique principle, the Father, by way of intellect and knowledge. We see it also In that eternal act of love that is the spiration of the Holy Spirit, from the unique principle Father and Son by way of will and love.

The same love lives in the eternal act of love that is the creation and elevation of the souls, in time, from the unique principle: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Out of love, they made the soul as their own living and personal image and likeness, and out of love they elevated, attracted and united the soul to themselves in a totally free relationship as image, likeness and halo of the necessary divine relationships. As the Father is the only principle of the Son, and as Father and Son are the only principle of the Holy Spirit, so, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit together are the unique principle of other beings, capable of revealing how only God is the love of God, since they are nothing but the image and likeness of God. At the same time the divine, necessary relationships of love are crowned with the only other possible and free relationship of love that is that of spouse of the soul-spouse.

8. Gift of God to God

With the desire of going ourselves further, with every possible reverence and adoration, we think that things are thus according to our way of understanding and of expression. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, on account of the infinite love that one person has for the other, or better, on account of the infinite love that one person is for the other, (as if it were not enough to give all one's own self to the other), wanted to give each other a gift that would be worthy of them, that would express what the giver himself is, and what the receiver esteems, appreciates and holds most dear. Outside of God there can be nothing better than the image of God; for each divine person there is nothing that one person, besides the

other divine person, esteems and loves more than their image. It was as if the Father were saying: "I do not hold anything dear other than the Son, and outside of him, I only love his image." Likewise, for the Son there is nothing that he loves more than the Father, and outside the Father he only loves the image of the Father. Then one makes of this image and likeness a gift to the other. Since each divine person loves the other, each one held dear the created soul, attracted and united her to himself with such intimacy that can be pallidly expressed only by the name and idea of the nuptial union. So, for example, the Son of God, to manifest how much he loved that image, made it his own by assuming it in his very person. The Father was very pleased with this and he wanted it, the Holy Spirit was pleased with it, cooperated with it and he realized it; thus the Son of God became man, body and soul like us! Image and likeness of God, he who is the substantial, uncreated image of God, generated by the Father. Since the Son of God found these divine images and likenesses desecrated, made ugly, sold out, he wanted to re-conquer, re-consecrate and remake them precious again, and finally espouse them to himself in his blood! All this is not any less work of the Father and of the Holy Spirit than it is of the Son. It was the Father who sent Jesus. The Holy Spirit formed him, directed him and finally offered him with a special, totally divine cooperation.

9. Sacrifice of God to God

Things went this way, according to our own poor way of understanding and expressing things. The divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, wanted to offer one another a sacrifice fitting the unique and true divinity, which is their divinity. Even in this only God is worthy of God, as always, as in everything. God cannot be sacrificed to God in his unique nature, and so another nature that would be like a substitute for God was needed, so that it could be offered from God to God, and while remaining unchanged could be offered by God in honor of God according to the

nature and exigency of sacrifice. There is nothing more qualified to substitute for God than his very image and likeness. The soul was created and at the same time was offered to God, and was transformed in honor of God. It is not changed with death, because the very idea of death is infinitely away from God. It is changed with its elevation to a supernatural state.

Creation is like the offertory; the elevation to the supernatural is like the immolation. The relationship of spouse of God is the communion of this sacrifice that each divine person offers to the other. It is God himself who became man in the second person. The Son, Jesus Christ wanted to be in his and our human nature all offertory, immolation and communion, all a sacrifice; because the luck and the life, the act and state of the bridegroom and of the bride is, and must be, one; as one is the principle of their relation and union - love -. Love is like the priest that offers, sacrifices and relates one to the other, these two terms of the nuptial relationship; "Amor sacerdos immolat - The love-priest offers the sacrifice". This nuptial relationship with all its effects, with all its consummation - literally taken - is the most true and the most beautiful, the most complete and worthy idea of the sacrifice; on the other side the sacrifice in its highest cause and in its highest way which is love, gives us the most truthful, the most beautiful, the most complete and worthy idea of the soul-spouse.

10. Grace is the union

According to our poor way of understanding and expressing ourselves things went this way and they are so. In creating his masterpiece of the universe, that is, the soul, eternally envisioned and present in the mind and in the love of the Lord God, unity and Trinity, as a ray of his bounty and glory, as his own image and likeness, as a gift and sacrifice worthy of him, as another him, the love of God was so pleased with it that immediately, he attracted

and elevated it to himself; embraces and kissed her forever, and in the most truthful way he espoused her to himself, united her to his own divine nature, sharing it with her as a supernatural gift. The first effusion of grace in the soul, through which the soul from subject and servant was immediately elevated to the condition and relationship of daughter and friend, was in reality also the first, radical and essential betrothal of the soul with the Lord. It was the dawn and the sunrise of that supernatural nuptial relationship that had been ever more enkindled in the light and warmth of love, until it becomes a perfect day in the blue sky. True love (and which love is more real than the infinite love?) never says "enough" until it reaches the ultimate, highest possible level of union, in the full possession and enjoyment of the loved one.

The Lord is not satisfied, nor is satisfied the soul in any level of grace as long as it is possible to reach a higher level. The spirit of love leads them to that union, possession and enjoyment expressed by the Sacred Heart "Ut sint consummati in unum"! I wouldn't know what these words mean, if they do not mean the supreme relationship of the soul-spouse of God. To this soul the Lord entrusts such missions that find their proper reason only in the relationship of spouse. As a king to his sweet queen, the Lord entrusts to her the dominion of the world and the governance of the family. The Lord grants and commands that this soul cooperate, through a spiritual motherhood, to the conversion and sanctification of souls, which is a true generation, education and condition of the children of God, the Father of the souls, the bridegroom of the church.

11. The soul-spouse in the Scriptures

As in the natural world, in the inferior creatures that only carry a pallid idea of God, and in the superior creatures, made in the image and likeness of God, everywhere stand out signs of the unity and Trinity of God, as well as signs of infinite power and wisdom, and of

the divine bounty. Likewise in the whole supernatural world, everywhere is revealed that God wants to be the spouse of the souls. Marital relationship is that of God with the chosen people in the Old Testament. Even better in the New Testament, marital relationship is that of the Lord God, Jesus Christ with his church, the kingdom of heaven. Because of this marital relationship every sin is labeled as adultery, in the flaming language of love, of the Scripture of the God who reveals and calls himself a jealous God, proper of the jealousy of the divine spouse, because he is infinite love.

If what is said of humanity in general applies to each individual in particular, and if what is said of the people of God - Synagogue or Catholic church - applies to every soul and especially for every elect, much more must be applied to every soul all that concerns relationships, whose objective cannot be the community but the person, as the filial relationship as the marital relationship. These relationships must be taken in a metaphoric sense only when they refer to the community and in a real sense when they refer to the individual. This on account of that reality, that is the infinite love of God, and on account of that supernatural reality that is grace, union with the divine nature, in force of which we are not only called children of God, but we are such in reality; likewise we not only can be called "spouse of God", we can really be one. Because of this, all creatures are for us, ambassadors of love, places of encounters with the Lord and marital bed for the union with God! That is why in the gospel life is presented as the nuptial banquet that God offers to the souls with his Son. The whole mission of the ministers of God consists in inviting the souls to this banquet, even compelling them to show up, and embellishing them with the nuptial dress.

12. The soul-spouse in the Saints

Among the saints, to stay just to their external life, or better at the surface of their exterior life, it seems that we find many of them

who directed and channeled, and then rested in another type of relationship with God. Some developed the relationship of most faithful servant, others that of most valiant soldier, still others that of the most zealous minister in the various ministries of the divine glory and of the divine kingdom. This is what appears. If, however, we consider, as saints, those who have practiced heroically the Christian virtues as acts and as states, it follows that every saint has practiced heroically the virtues of love for God and neighbor as acts and as state, since charity is the queen and soul of all other virtues. We understand as heroism, the highest possible level of every virtue; in the case of charity we understand the highest level of intensity of acts, the highest level of intimacy of state and consequently the highest relationship of love. All this naturally is not the absolute maximum in everything, because the creature cannot reach the absolute maximum in everything, but the maximum of which every creature is capable and accordingly the supernatural mission entrusted to the same creature. In these acts, state and relationship the soul and the Lord have met, have been united and pleased to rest in their mutual love.

As marital relationship in general, we understand the most possible intimate union with God that a soul can and must achieve according to her calling and grace. The Lord wants to find every soul in the highest and most intimate possible relationship with him, at least at the end of her life on earth, so that he may establish her forever in heaven in that state. This relationship and this most intimate union must necessarily be somewhat different for each soul, as every individual is distinct from any other individual both in nature and in grace, and in physical and moral physiognomy. This difference may consist in details that seem meaningless to others, yet they are most important for the individuals and for their creators, since these details constitute their identifying difference or uniqueness. Every soul living within the Church enjoys the supernatural dignity of being spouse of Christ, and through Jesus, spouse of the Trinity. This relationship may be (and should be so explicitly) the program and ideal of our whole life, vocation and mission.

RECAPITULATION

Through which relationship does the Lord want to unite our soul to him?

1. Through his grace, the Lord wants to render the soul worthy of him, as his

beautiful image and likeness, in order to make her his mystical spouse. Once the soul reaches the perfection of the mystical, marital relationship, the soul and the Spirit of God will rest in each other.

2. Why does God in his unity want the soul as his spouse?

The Lord God, in his unity, wants the soul as his spouse only for the effusions of his bounty, for the splendor of his glory, for the complacency of his love which never stops halfway.

3. Why does God Trinity want the soul as his spouse?

Each person of God Trinity has wanted to make a gift and sacrifice to the other; to this end each person of the Trinity has deemed opportune to make his own image and likeness, and unite her to himself in such a way that the two would be one.

4. How does the idea of Sacrifice fit in with this mystical marriage? Nothing can represent God better than the soul that is his own image and

likeness; thus, creation becomes like the offertory; the elevation to the supernatural becomes the immolation, and the mystical marriage becomes the communion of this sacrifice. All this happens simultaneously and in virtue of the same Love that is the one and triune God.

5. What the principles that enlighten us in these things?

We are guided and helped by the principle that nature is a symbol of grace, and that grace does not destroy but elevates nature; the natural gives us an idea of the supernatural.

6. What are the sources from which we get these ideas?

The sacred Scripture of the Old and New Testament is like the message of divine love and the marriage bed of the mystical nuptials of God with his people and his Church, with the sacred humanity of Jesus, with Mary and with every chosen soul.

7. Is there a gradation and progression in this marital relationship?

Until death the soul may always progress, elevate and perfect herself in this relationship with her God, because grace is the marriage of the soul with God and until death the soul can ever more grow in this divine grace that the Lord so lavishly and variously showers on the soul.

EXAMINATION AND PRAYER

1. You have created us for yourself, Lord, I believe it! For your goodness, for your glory, for your love; and to make of us your gift and your sacrifice to yourself!

2. Because of this you have made us in your own image and likeness; you have elevated us to the consortium with your nature, to the union with your persons, in the relationship and state of your spouse.

3. I was restless. Now my intellect finds peace only in this special vision of my ultimate goal; my will - at last - finds peace only in this special relationship with you.

4. Only from this point of view do I understand all the value of life, all that you are and have done for me, all that you expect from me and all that you want me to be for you!

5. Oh! How unworthy of the soul destined to be spouse of the great King, is any other relationship and occupation which is not ordained to this goal and which tries to find and enjoy elsewhere her satisfaction. I want to be only in you, o my divine love!

6. Neither a town, nor a metropolis, nor a capital city can satisfy the soul to whom the Lord entrusts the whole world of the souls, being a real queen and his true spouse!

7. Form in me, O Lord, this great mind and heart, this great life and work in this great state of this great relationship with you, O my God-Trinity, O my All!

8. Somehow all things in their own way announce Jesus, the Son of God; they announce Mary, the Mother of God; the Church and the chosen soul, spouse of God. You, Lord, remain the only creator of all things and all people.

9. You are the only interior teacher, the only sanctifier, the only glorifier, as you are the only God. For the infinite love that you are, for the infinite love that you deserve, make me worthy of your divine complacency.

10. O my Trinity, O my God, and my All, may your will be done, your love reign, your glory shine in me and in everyone always more as in your own self, O my Father, Son and Holy Spirit. O my God and my All.

CHAPTER III

1. Parables of the Kingdom

With the use of many a parable, our Lord Jesus wants to give us a complete idea of the kingdom of God on earth, i.e., of his Church in its militant condition. First he gives us the idea of the beginning of this kingdom in the simile of the seed and of the difficulties this seed has to overcome, especially on account of the weeds. Later it becomes a big shrub, capable of offering shelter for the birds. Later it places the whole earth in divine ferment, as the yeast - even in a very small quantity - does for the whole mass of dough. Then he talks about the esteem that it deserves on account of its value, with the simile of the exceptionally precious pearl and of the hidden treasure in the field. Still, with the image of the net and the catch he describes the elimination that is done at the end, of all those who are not worthy of the kingdom. He declares who are the greatest in the kingdom of God and how they reached that level. He continues talking about the work that must be done in this kingdom, and how all, and at every hour, are being called to do this work. As to conclude and crown these parables he presents the parable of the royal marriage feast, to which so many are invited, and the other of the ten virgins, destined to welcome the bridegroom. If this sequence of ideas in the teaching of the divine Master is not completely vain or casual, it follows that the souls who have received, nurtured and developed the divine seed of the kingdom, those who have sold everything to buy this pearl and obtain the hidden treasure, and who purified themselves of every unholy element, and that very early went to work in the vineyard through the road of humility, so that they are later chosen for the reception of the bridegroom and be the first invited guests, these souls can and must enter, live and work in the environment of the nuptial banquet; these souls are - at least - the "friends of the groom" of which John the Baptist and Jesus talk about, and among these souls there will also be much elections.

2. Nuptial Epiphany

There is a time that stands out on account of three wonders. The star leads the wise men to the manger. God, the Father, reveals his Son in the baptism at the Jordan. The Son changes water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. In a well formulated synthesis, going above the time span, the liturgy sings: "Today the Church is united to her celestial bridegroom, since Christ has made her all beauty in the washing at the Jordan. The wise men participate to this royal, nuptial banquet, bringing their precious gifts, and they enjoy the vine of the miracle. These are the three epiphanies that complete each other.

The epiphany, or revelation of Jesus, made by the Holy Spirit, the angels and the stars. The epiphany or revelation of Jesus made by the Father with his voice and with the dove. The Epiphany that Jesus makes of himself with his first miracles; as it is written: "This was the first of Jesus' signs; it was at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him." (Jn 2:11) This is when our Lord left behind the hidden life and started his public life.

He had formed his family of friends, the college of his apostles. As his first public appearance, as his first official act, preceded by his mother, he participates in a wedding feast. Responding to the intercession of his mother he embellishes, fulfills and glorifies the wedding feast with his first miracle. Oh! How all this reveals to us the divine friend of humankind, in his intention of establishing the relationship of spouse! More clearly and more evocatively he speaks of himself as the bridegroom in the gospel with the parable of the prudent and foolish virgins, and even more in the parable of the king who celebrates the wedding of his Son.

"Simile est regnum coelorum homini regi qui fecit nuptias filio suo - The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding." (Mt 22:2)

3. Our Kingdom of Heaven

The Gospel expression "Kingdom of heaven" usually refers to the holy militant Church on earth; with good reasons and with spiritual profit we may refer the expression "kingdom of heaven" to that part of Christianity in which we have been called to life, to faith and to holiness. So, kingdom of God within the Church is our diocese, even closer our parish and our religious family. There are so many other spheres of this heaven, or better, the kingdom of heaven considered from our point of view and from our own side. What a sublime concept of our world and of our life within the Catholic Church! The Kingdom of heaven! The kingdom of heaven which was already ours by divine disposition and by divine inheritance, but lost on account of our sins and precluded by adversary powers, now must be conquered by violence. Once we conquer it by violence, we can possess it in peace and joy, as a great wedding banquet.

If the Church is the kingdom of heaven, the children of the Church are the children and princes of the kingdom, who should not be surprised by their destination to form the personal glory and joy of the great King and of his Son. The children and princes of the kingdom have been created, not to serve but to reign, with the great King; not to serve but to please their Lord and their God; or, if you so wish, to serve yes, but in this sense and in these ways: Reigning with God and pleasing their Lord in the most intimate and most high relationship of love.

4. The Person of the Bride and Groom

The kingdom of heaven then, i.e., the holy, militant Church, and consequently our life and every soul pilgrim in time and space is the great feast and wedding banquet prepared by the great King for the marriage of his Son to which every soul is invited and compelled to attend. The bride and groom, for whom the celebration takes place and to whom the banquet is offered are the first invited guests. All the other invited guests with their presence do honor them. It is

clear that the bridegroom is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. The great King is God the Father himself.

(When talking about the divine works ad extra, in Jesus we must always see and consider the other divine persons. Jesus is the immediate term of this relationship of spouse, but Jesus as Mediator, and supreme revelation and communication of the Divine Trinity). Who is that wonderful creature that is so favored by the Trinity, to be desired as his spouse?

There is no clear mention of the bride, on account of a sweet and great quality of the wisdom of the Word. In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins who are supposed to solemnly welcome the bride and groom there is no mention of the chosen bride of the Son of God. Why? Maybe to adorn this name and this, person with the silence, which was very appropriately called the pomp of holiness? No. Through that sweet and serious way of proceeding of the wisdom of the Word, and through that silence the Spirit of Love wants to lead every soul to understand this one thing... This thing that is so glorious and so delightful, but also so mysterious, that while it is addressed to every soul, only a few really understand it. May the Lord grant us the grace to be among those who understand it.

5. Jesus and Humankind

Some say (with a lot of truthfulness and justice!) that the wedding feast in question celebrates the marriage of the Son of God with human nature in the mystery of the incarnation that took place through the work of the Holy Spirit in the ever virgin Mary, true mother of God. Properly so, because of all the human happenings no one could give a less inadequate or improper idea of the union of the divine nature with the human nature in the person of the incarnate Word than the marriage bond that unites two human individuals in one juridic personality -the family - and the two

persons will be no longer two but one flesh. As the assumption of the human nature by the incarnate Word constitutes his marriage with humankind, so the participation of the divine nature to the soul through grace constitutes the marriage of mankind with the divinity. Marriage is celebrated not between two natures in one person, but between two persons in one nature, in order to form a unique principle of operation.

The Son of God takes human nature to celebrate his wedding with the creature, chosen to be his spouse. The creature in turn must assume the divine nature, participated to her through grace. So we consider the incarnation also the immediate preparation of the bridegroom, and as the meritorious exemplar of the immediate preparation of the bride. In a certain sense, even if not completely correct, we can say that God has espoused human nature and through it all living persons while they are still in human nature and live according to the way of God. Meanwhile we move forward to the discovery of that human person that God wants to espouse to himself in a stricter and more appropriate sense; even though we can hardly see it, this remains the highest spiritual reality.

6. Jesus and the Holy Church

Some say (and with a lot of truth and justice) that the wedding feast in question celebrates the marriage of Jesus with the Holy Catholic Church, mostly because St. Paul points out the love of Jesus for his Church as the type of love that a man owes to his spouse, in the great sacrament of marriage. This same marriage has been elevated by Jesus to be the symbol of his love and his union with the Holy, Catholic Church. Talking more accurately, Jesus is the divine head of the mystical body of humankind, of the holy, Catholic Church which has followed him, and has been so intimately united to him to form his mystical body. Jesus breaths life into his mystical body, and communicates to it all his value, all his merits

and all his work. In this head of humanity and of the Church, Jesus calls himself the bridegroom, as the husband is the moral, juridical head of the woman, his wife, who has followed him and has united herself to him for ever. If we want to insist on the name and reality of wife, we can see humanity in general and the holy, Catholic Church in particular considered as the spouse of the Son of God, as being the genus and the species relative to the beings that live in the Church.

The bride cannot be a moral entity, the community, the abstraction, the species, but, as the groom, the Son of God is a specific, distinct and real person; likewise the other term of this relationship, the bride, must be a particular, distinct and real person. Therefore the holy, Catholic Church is the big family of the great King in which are found the nobility and richness needed by the soul chosen to be the spouse and queen of the Son of the great King.

The Church provides for us the best image of the human term of this great relationship that we envision.

7. Jesus and Mary, most holy

Could we say with the same justice and truthfulness that the wedding in question celebrates the marriage of the Son of God with the soul of the Immaculate Virgin Mary? The relationship totally proper of the Blessed Mother is the motherhood of the Son of God, in his human nature. Even though the motherly relationship is so ineffably beautiful and sweet, intimate and sublime, it should not be confused with the marital relationship. The soul of the Virgin Mary was totally elevated, realized, absorbed in the relationship and function of mother of Jesus; any other relationship as servant and disciple, daughter and spouse with each and every one of her acts and states received meaning and value from the divine motherhood.

Oh! How we enjoy visualizing Mary on the side of the great King, on the side of God the Father, as queen and mother totally intent in preparing and solemnizing the wedding feast of her Son. We would love to be able to see the divine bridegroom in the glory of that special diadem, with which his mother crowned him on the day of his betrothal, in exchange of the crown of twelve stars, with which he had first crowned his mother. We would love to know the part and role of the queen and mother of the Son, in the search, selection and preparation of the bride for her Son; this bride is destined to become queen and mother of a great multitude of souls, rather than of one family. We can admit that in the depth of a human heart searching a bride, there is like an instinct that guides us to choose and somehow, to some extent, produce the resemblance and virtues of his mother in the bride. Certainly the Son of God is so pleased with his mother, that he wants to find her virtues in the soul chosen to be the joy of his life. Mary herself is naturally charged with the duty of forming such a soul, according to her own regal and motherly type, so that she may please Jesus.

8. The Man, Son of God

“Fecit nuptias filio suo. - Gave a feast for his son’s wedding” (Mtt 22:2). Listening to this talk about the wedding feast offered by God for his Son, and meditating on this expression, our thought goes to man. Man is indeed son of God by grace. The divine Shepherd who has created man and elevated him to the supernatural state, wants to lead him to the fullest development of the life of grace, as it is expressed and envisioned in the nuptial state and acts. In natural life, God has disposed that the creature, as animated body, may be united to another creature in the nuptial state and acts for the purpose of procreating children, which are the greatest good in the natural order, both for the individual and for the species. In the life of the spirit, considering man as soul, in vain would he try to find among those like him, one with whom he could

be united totally; one with whom he could blend himself in one form of life.

The Lord does not allow one soul to belong totally to another soul. There can never be a marriage between two souls. Not even the very intimate and sweet relationship of the soul with her guardian angel, who was assigned totally to her and forever, so much so that everyone can say "my angel" with much more truth than a woman can say my man". From the beginning of the world, and of time, what has been happening to the soul is what has been written that will happen to man after the resurrection of the body. "The children of this world take husbands and wives, but those who are judged worthy of a place in the other world and in the resurrection from the dead do not marry because they can no longer die, for they are the same as the angels, and being children of the resurrection they are children of God" (Lk 20:34-36). "At the resurrection men and women do not marry; no, they are like the angels in heaven." (Mt 22:30) The marriage that the souls desires, longs for and is immensely capable of, cannot take place with another soul, nor with an angel, nor any other creature. The soul can celebrate this marriage only with God, who wants to be absolutely our All, and that is why he became a man.

9. Jesus, Son of man

What keeps us from seeing in this man-king, the only man who has each and every right to be the supreme king, Jesus himself? Then, even more clearly, we can see the human soul, spouse of her God in that beloved Son whose wedding feast is celebrated by the man-king. As the God-man, in his role as Father, celebrates a feast and banquet of love for the sinner who repents, comes back home and becomes again his son, so this God-man in his role as king celebrates a greater feast and banquet of love for the faithful son who elevates himself to higher union with him. God elevates him

from the supernatural filial relationship to the supernatural marital relationship. I deem convenient and appropriate to see in this divine relationship the "hundredfold" that Jesus promises even in this life to the one who abandons wealth, father, mother and even wife and children for his sake! Jesus seems to refer to this marital relationship when he says: "Anyone who comes to me without hating father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, cannot be my disciple." (Lk 14:26) Tracing the thought of the first Adam at the sight of his wife: "A man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife" (Gn 2:25), Jesus, the new Adam, does not demand less affection and lesser consequences from his elect. From among all those who were following him, Jesus chose seventy-two disciples with a higher calling, and then with an even higher election chose the twelve apostles and constituted them as his family. He wants his disciples to share his joy: "Surely the bridegroom's attendants cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is still with them." Then, with still higher predilection he chose the three he loved the most and finally the beloved disciple whom he loved the most and united him to himself. "Qui supra pectus eius in caenarecubuit - The one who had leaned back close to his chest at the supper" (Jn 21:20). This external, particular act of intimacy says something also about a special, internal state!... The beloved disciple has obtained his "hundredfold" also

in the present life. If for the sake of Jesus he has left nets, boat, father and mother, he has found the heart of every fatherhood and motherhood. If for the sake of Jesus he has renounced a marital relationship among the creatures, he has found it in his God. Oh! How blessed is he!

10. What is needed on both parties

In general it can be said, and it is true, that every soul in grace may be considered as elected to the relationship of spouse of God and sharer of this relationship with humankind and the Church. The simple state of grace, however, at any - even minimum - level , is not enough to constitute a soul-spouse in a stricter and proper sense. Baptism is sufficient for a Christian to share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, however in order for a man to be ordained to the ministerial priesthood and be constituted in the extraordinary status of Christian-priest, (that is so much higher than the ordinary status of the lay-Christian,) a special vocation from God, and a special consecration from the Church is needed. Likewise the state of grace is enough for the soul to participate of the marital relationship of humankind and of the Church with Jesus Christ, but for a personal relationship of spouse, a special vocation is needed on the part of God and a special consecration on the part of the soul. The bond of universal brotherhood in humanity and in the Church is enough to give the individuals the duty and the right to love our neighbor, called precisely brotherly love, but in order to have the duty and the right of a more intense love, as the love of a father or spouse toward the specific family members, a special, more intimate bond is needed. Likewise the common elevation to the supernatural state is enough to enable us to know and to love God as a father with filial love, but to know and love him as a spouse a greater elevation in grace is needed, a "special supernatural" or what could be called the "nuptial supernatural."

11. Different levels in the supernatural

In our unique human nature we have different states, constituted by different relationships, so it is also with grace, our super-nature. Grace is essentially participation and imitation of divine nature. So, even in grace we have different states, constituted by different relationships that come to be image and likeness of the divine relationships, in the same divine nature. Based on the pattern of the

divine relationships, in the supernatural order we may distinguish the filial supernatural and the marital supernatural, It is impossible to have a fatherly relationship with God the Father, absolutely the first principle. Strictly speaking we are not granted to have the fatherly relationship with the souls, neither in the natural nor in the supernatural order.

It is written: "You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven" (Mt 23:9). In the human nature assumed by the incarnate Word, there is a sovereign soul, a truly privileged person who is truly mother of God, Jesus, who is the Son in the divinity and in humanity, graciously extends to his elect the motherly relationship of Mary and his filial love for Mary. This happens when he sees them cooperating with the Holy Spirit and with Mary, in giving him a new existence in the souls. Likewise, he extends the motherly relationship To his chosen ones, when he sees them as being really one with his Father. It is written: "Anyone who does the will of my Father, that person is my brother and sister and mother." The true mother, however, is only one and that cannot be communicated to others.

It remains then the filial supernatural and the nuptial supernatural. The filial supernatural is necessary for eternal life and all are elevated to it by the divine bounty, but to be constituted and perfected in it, all must cooperate. The marital supernatural is absolutely free, as it depends completely by the free acceptance of the message of the divine love on the part of the soul, not any less than by the election vocation of the divine love.

12. Marital Supernatural

It seems to us that with this expression "marital supernatural" we may call the state, acts and works of the highest union and of the purest love between the soul and the Lord. It is not vain trying to

see in the soul, and in its powers the image and likeness of God, both as unity of nature and as Trinity of persons, since God created the soul to be and to become ever more his image and likeness.

We discover that the soul, in her indivisible unity of person, gives us the image of the unity of God's nature, and that through her life, is the image of the Father, eternal principle of life. With her thought is image of the Word of God; with her love is image of the Holy Spirit. We conclude that the soul with the marital relationship is espoused to the Holy Spirit with her love, to the Word through the thought, and to the Father through life. In each person the human nature is espoused to the divine nature that she shares through grace in the likeness of Jesus. The difference is that Jesus, in the unique divine person of the Word, possesses the whole human nature and the whole divine nature, the soul has only a participation of the divine nature.

This participation may always grow, but it remains always only partial participation, since the soul can never possess the whole which cannot be communicated ad extra of the divine persons. In this consummated height and intimacy of union we reach, or better, we are assumed to the highest supernatural state, since the relationship of spouse is the farthest from any force or exigency of the human nature. It is the most elevated participation of the divine nature and divine life. It is the level of indwelling of the Trinity in the soul that is more like the "Circumsession" of each of the divine persons in the other. It is the principle of the highest activity of cooperation of the soul to the redemption and sanctification of our neighbor.

RECAPITULATION

1. What idea of life gives us the Gospel?

According to the Gospel our present life on the part of the great King is like a big celebration and wedding banquet, to which we are invited by him; many participate in it, but few are chosen.

2. For what bridegroom and bride is this wedding feast offered?

The bridegroom is the Son of God in human nature, The incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, but in him we see the whole Blessed Trinity, as we do in all the works of God ad extra.

3. Who is the bride?

The bride in general terms is all mankind to whom God united himself in the incarnation of the Word; in a more specific way it is the holy, Catholic Church, founded by Jesus Christ and ennobled by his blood, so that she might be all holy and worthy to be united to her head.

4. Who can be considered bride in a stricter sense?

In a stricter and more proper sense, true spouse of God is every soul in the state of grace, with which she accumulates in herself the perfection of humanity and of the Church, and consequently is also the term of this marital relationship with God.

5. Is enough any level of grace for this relationship?

Any level of grace is sufficient to constitute us in the friendship of God; but in order to reach this relationship of spouse, which is the supreme friendship with God, one must reach the highest possible level of grace, which must be exercised to the utmost.

6. What happens in this supreme level of grace?

What happens initially with the lowest level of grace, happens perfectly and in the most consummate manner in the highest level

of grace, that is the marriage and the union of the soul with God in the supernatural, which may be called "marital supernatural".

7. What kinds of union can we distinguish in the divine union?

The person of the soul-spouse, receiving through grace participation in the divine nature is disposed to the divine persons, living in that unique, divine nature and so, in her life is united to the Father, in her intellect to the Word, in her will to the Spirit; these, however, are not three unions but one divine union.

EXAMINATION AND PRAYER

1. O my God and my All, split the darkness of all passions, illusions and temptations of the world, which try to keep me in idleness, in the cold of death and grant that I may enter in the real life of your kingdom, of which you give us such a great, beautiful and sweet idea in the divine gospel.

2. The illusions, passions and worldly passions could not destroy the great wedding banquet, which is your kingdom, yet they have altered its idea in the mind and in the heart, and have deviated our attention to other celebrations, to other banquets, all false and illicit as of sterile hybridism.

3. All false and illicit, because our intellect was made and given to us only to unite itself to you, O divine Word. Our will was made and given to us only to be united to you, O Holy Spirit. Life was made and given to us only to unite us to you, O God Father, in a marriage of supreme union. The soul cannot have any other marriage!

4. That is why there is so much emptiness in our life; so much unhappiness in our hearts; so many shadows in our minds, so many errors in our behavior, so much sterility in our actions and such a dryness in our prayers. I could not find my place in life, nor did I

know myself in life, since I was unable to find you nor did I know you.

5. We cannot find, nor know well one term of a relationship, without knowing the other. Nor can one term of the relationship live well or prosper without the other with whom it should be united. This is the situation of our soul, when on account of our faults, she does not find and does not know her spouse.

6. While for you, my Lord, the human soul, my soul, is but the term of a totally free relationship on your part, yet you graciously show an infinite desire for her. Send constantly your messengers to look for her, to invite her, to compel her to come, since everything is ready on your part for the union.

7. My soul on her part, while having in you the necessary term of a relationship essentially necessary for the soul, yet does not want to move, because she does not want to understand, or gets excited about other objects or other goods. Finally my soul has come, but nothing is ready or well prepared in her!

8. Blessed be eternally the one who has found favor in your presence, O Lord God, O Spouse-God! Blessed be the one whom you have chosen, called and assumed to the highest levels of this relationship; you will make him dwell in your tent, lean on your chest and reign in your heart, O Spouse-God!

9. Blessed be you eternally because your predilections are the result of your free elections, of our dispositions and preparations. It is up to me now to correspond to this divine grace and apply myself to respond in the most perfect way to this invitation which I have received, to this banquet that is offered and prepared for me.

O my God and my All! O my Father, Son and Holy Spirit! May your will be done, your love reign, your glory shine in me and in everyone one, always more, as in yourself, O Father, Son and Holy Spirit. O my God and my All! Amen! Alleluia!

