

1. THE COMPANION OF YOUTH

The first edition of Il giovane provveduto (in English The Companion of Youth) appeared in 1847 and was Don Bosco's greatest publishing success. The year he died it had reached its 119th edition. It was reprinted with minor adaptations until 1961⁵. It is also the book which Don Bosco most liked and constantly recommended.

It represents a point of arrival for his pastoral experiences amongst boys at the early Oratory and is the basis for developments in his plans for youthful holiness. We find in it the content and model of Christian living which he offered the boys, his unmistakable "horizons of youth spirituality."⁶ This was the author's intention, declared right from the preface, where he says he wants to teach "a method of Christian living which is cheerful and content at the same time", "brief and easy, but sufficient" so young people can become "the consolation of their parents, an honour to their town, good citizens on earth to then be the fortunate inhabitants of heaven."

From the point of view of its content the book is split into three parts plus an appendix with hymns. The first part has a series of instructions and reflections on God, his special relationship with the young, Christian duties, eternal truths and the example of St Aloysius Gonzaga.

The second part offers a range of "particular exercises of Christian piety" which are out of the 18th century devotional context but chosen and organised for the special kind of Christian life Don Bosco liked to offer and in tune with his personal sensitivities: morning and evening prayer; suggestions for assisting fruitfully at holy Mass and approaching the sacraments; prayer for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament

⁵ [Giovanni BOSCO], *Il giovane provveduto per la pratica de' suoi doveri, degli esercizi di cristiana piet  per la recita dell'ufficio della beata Vergine e dei principali vesperi dell'anno coll'aggiunta di una scelta di laudi sacre ecc.* Torino, Tipografia Paravia e Comp. 1847; Giovanni BOSCO, *Il giovane provveduto per la pratica de' suoi doveri e degli esercizi di cristiana piet ...* 119a ed. Torino, Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana 1888; ID., *Il giovane provveduto per la pratica dei suoi doveri e degli esercizi di cristiana piet . Latest edition, revision of the original*, adapted for current use in the devotional section. Torino, Societ  Editrice Internazionale 1961.

⁶ Cf. P. STELLA, *Valori spirituali nel "Giovane provveduto"...*, pp. 80-126.

and for spiritual communion; prayers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of Sorrows and other devout practices; prayers for the exercise for a happy death; an instruction on choice of state (included much later, after 1878).

The third part of the Companion of Youth has the Office to Our Lady and prayers for Vespers throughout the year.

Here we include the complete first and second parts of the Companion of Youth, including prayers and devotional practices common to 19th century Catholicism. Even here Don Bosco's publishing work has an unmistakable feel about it. It is very instructive for the reader to retrace the texts the boys at Valdocco used for prayer every day, full of devout affections and spiritual energy, fruitful practical resolutions and ethical responsibility, targeted at ascetic and virtuous activity.

Scholars have identified the authors Don Bosco referred to frequently, but have also noted his criteria for selection or exclusion, his emphases and the connotations which give the work an unmistakable personal imprint⁷. For example, the comment on the traps the devils sets for the boys to distract them from giving themselves to God from their childhood and the statement of perfect harmony between religion and happiness. Especially his insistence on childhood as a favourable time for working on virtue, and on a complete baptismal way of life with good results throughout life. The age of youth, according to Don Bosco, is the "key to one's whole earthly existence"⁸, a responsible and constructive age, a happy occasion for entering into a special relationship with God and for undertaking a virtuous and happy journey to holiness (Servite Domino in laetitia).

Other issues arise, and will recur constantly in the Saint's magisterium: the need to always be ready, because death can come at any moment, by always keeping our eye on our fate; union with God in a loving and self-giving relationship through prayer, devotional practices, and brief thoughts about God, offering things

⁷ Cf. Pietro STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*. Vol. 2. *Mentalità religiosa e spiritualità*. Roma, LAS 1981; Francis DESRAMAUT, *Don Bosco e la vita spirituale*. Leumann (Torino), Elle Di Ci 1970.

⁸ Pietro BRAIDO, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*. Third edition corrected and revised. Roma, LAS 2009, vol. I, p. 232.

up; Marian devotion; the exercise of specific virtues such as love and fear of God, obedience and purity, charity and service; the exact and joyful fulfilment of one's duties of state; seeing to meditation, listening to the word of God, catechetical education; the need to mortify the senses, flee bad companions and occasions of sin; the strategic centrality of the sacraments of confession and communion which are the pillars of the formation approach Don Bosco used.

The importance of the Companion of Youth emerges especially when read in the light of all of Don Bosco's teaching and "his entire system and lifestyle" by which he immerses young people at the Oratory in daily life⁹. The reader can see this by comparing with other texts in this collection, especially the lives of Dominic Savio, Michael Magone and Francis Besucco.

184. The Companion of Youth in the Practice of Religious Duties

Critical ed. in [Giovanni BOSCO], *Il giovane provveduto per la pratica de' suoi doveri degli esercizi di cristiana pietà per la recita dell'ufficio della beata Vergine e dei principali vesperi dell'anno coll'aggiunta di una scelta di laudi sacre ecc.* Torino, Tipografia Paravia e Comp. 1847, pp. 5-143 (OE II, 185-323).

To the young

There are two main snares by which the devil usually tempts young people away from virtue. The first is to convince them that the service of the Lord consists in living a life of melancholy, devoid of all pleasure and enjoyment. This is not the case, my dear friends. I would like to teach you a kind of Christian life that will make you happy and contented. I want to show you what true enjoyment and pleasure is, so that you may follow the advice of the holy prophet David: "Serve the Lord with gladness: *servite Domino in laetitia.*" This, then, is the purpose of the present book: to teach you how to serve God and to be always happy.

The second snare is the hope of a long life, with the expectation of conversion in old age or when death threatens. Be careful, my dear boys, because many have been deceived in this manner. What assurance have we got that we shall

⁹ P. BRAIDO, Don Bosco prete dei giovani..., I, p. 233.

ever reach old age? We cannot expect death to await our convenience at old age, since life and death are in God's hands, and he apportions them as he sees fit. If God, however, grants you a long life, listen to the serious warning that he has uttered: A young man according to his way—even when he is old, he will not depart from it. *Adolescens iuxta viam suam etiam cum senuerit non recedet ab ea*. In other words, if we lead a good life when we are young, we shall be good when we are old, and our death will be happy, the beginning of eternal bliss. On the other hand, if vice takes hold of us in youth, it will gradually grow in the course of the different stages of our life until death, which will be the terrible herald of a most unhappy eternity. That this misfortune may not befall you, I have drawn up a scheme of life, brief and easy enough, which will enable you to be a joy to your parents, and a glory to your country, making you good citizens upon earth, and one day blessed inhabitants of Heaven ...

My friends, I love you with all my heart, and your being young is reason enough for me to love you very much. You will certainly find books written by persons much more virtuous and much more learned than myself; but, I assure you, you would be hard put to find anyone who loves you more than I do in Jesus Christ, or who cares more about your true happiness than I do. May God be always with you, and grant that by the practice of these few suggestions you may save your souls, and thereby increase His glory. That is the sole purpose of the writer of these pages.

Live happily and may the Lord be with you.

Affectionately yours in Jesus Christ,

Fr John Bosco

Part one: Things needed for a young person to become virtuous

Article 1 - An understanding of God

Look around you, my dear children, and see the wonders in the heavens and upon earth. The sun, moon, stars, air, water and fire are things that at one time did not exist. They could not have come into existence of themselves. God in his omnipotence made them out of nothing; hence he is called the

“Creator”. When God, who always was and ever will be, had created what we see in this world of ours, he gave existence to man, who of all visible creation is the most perfect. Therefore our eyes, ears, tongue, hands, and feet are all gifts of God.

Man is distinguished from all other animals in a special manner, for he is endowed with a soul that thinks and reasons, and desires what is good, and judges what is good or what is evil. The soul, since it is a spirit, cannot die with the body; for when the body has been carried to the grave, the soul enters on another life that will never cease. If during its time on earth it has done good, it will be ever happy with God in Paradise, where it will enjoy happiness for all eternity. But if it has done evil, it will be punished with terrible pain in hell, where it will undergo the torments of fire and loss forever.

Bear in mind, my dear children, that we were created for Heaven. God, who is our loving Father, will condemn to Hell only those who deserve it on account of their sins. Oh! How much God loves us! How much God desires that we perform good works, so that we may share in that great joy which he has prepared for all of us in the eternity of Heaven.

Article 2 - God loves the young exceedingly

Since we are persuaded, my dear children, that we are created for Heaven, we should direct all our actions to this great end. The reward that God promises, and the punishment with which He threatens us should move us to act accordingly. Though He loves all people, since they are the work of His hands, still He has a particular love for the young, and tells us that He finds pleasure in their company: *Deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum*. So then you are the delight and the love of the God who created you. God loves you, and He expects many good works of you; He loves you, because you are natural, humble and innocent; in a word, because you have not yet fallen a victim to the snares of the devil.

Our Divine Saviour also shows a special kindness towards you. He assures us that he considers all favours done to you as done to him. He threatens terribly those who give you scandal. Here are his own words: “But he that shall

scandalise one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea.” He wished children to follow him: he called them to himself, he embraced them and gave them his blessing.

Since Our Lord loves you so much as the young people you are, you should form the sincere resolution to act in response to his love by doing whatever pleases him, and by avoiding whatever might offend him?

Article 3 - The salvation of the soul depends greatly upon the time of our youth

Two places have been prepared for us in our future life. Hell for the wicked where they will suffer every pain. Heaven for the good where they will enjoy all sorts of good things. Our Lord also wants you to know that if you practise virtue in your youth, you will be confirmed in it for the remainder of your days, which will be followed by an eternity of glory. On the other hand, if you begin badly in your youth, you will surely continue so until death, and inevitably secure hell for yourself. Therefore, when you see people addicted to the vices of drunkenness, gambling or swearing, you can be sure that these vices began in their youth: *Adolescens juxta viam suam, etiam cum senuerit non recedet ab ea* (Pr 22:6). Ah! “Remember your Creator,” we are admonished, “in the days of your youth”; Indeed, elsewhere he declares that the man who began to observe the commandments from his youth is a happy man.” This truth was well known to the saints, especially to St Rose of Lima and St Aloysius Gonzaga, who very early on began to serve the Lord fervently, and later found no satisfaction save in what pertained to him, and thereby became great saints. The same can be said of the son of Tobias, who from the earliest days of his childhood was always obedient and submissive to his parents. When they died, he continued to live most virtuously until his death.

But some of you may object: if we begin to serve God now, we shall become sad and depressed. This is not true. He who serves the devil is miserable, even if he pretends to be happy, because in his heart he never ceases to hear the reproach: You are unhappy because you are the enemy of God. Who was more affable or more cheerful than St Aloysius Gonzaga? Who was more happy

and joyful than St Philip Neri? And yet we know that their lives were entirely spent in the practice of every virtue. Courage then, my dear friends; employ your time virtuously, and I assure you that your heart will always be happy and contented. As a consequence you will experience how sweet and pleasing it is to serve the Lord.

Article 4 - The first virtue of youth is obedience to parents and superiors

A tender plant, though planted in good soil in the garden, will put down weak roots and finally wither away unless cultivated carefully until it gains strength. So you, my dear children, will surely yield to evil if you do not allow yourselves to be guided by those who have responsibility for guiding you. This guidance is the responsibility of your parents and those who take their place; to them you owe willing obedience. “Honour your father and your mother,” says Our Lord, “that you may have long life upon the land.” But in what does this honour consist? It consists in obeying, respecting, and assisting them. As for obedience, when they give a command you should carry it out promptly, without any show of opposition. Do not act like those who murmur, shrug their shoulders, shake their heads, or worse still answer back insolently. Such children give great offence to their parents and to God himself, for the Will of God is expressed through the commands of our parents. Our Saviour, although all-powerful, submitted himself to the Blessed Virgin and to St Joseph, the humble carpenter, becoming obedient to his Heavenly Father unto death, even to the death on the cross.

You should likewise show great respect to your father and mother, and never undertake anything without their permission. Never show impatience in their presence, and never reveal their faults. St Aloysius always first sought his parents’ permission, or, if they were absent, he even asked leave of the servants. Young Louis Comollo was obliged one day to stay away from home longer than his parents had allowed, but when he returned he humbly and sorrowfully asked pardon for his involuntary disobedience.

You must also be ready to wait on your parents, and assist them when they are in need, both for the domestic services you are capable of doing but even

more by giving them any money, gift, clothing you might receive and other such ways that are open to you. Pray to God for them morning and evening, asking him to grant them every spiritual and temporal good.

What I have said to you about obedience and respect for parents, you should also practise towards your superiors, be they ecclesiastics or lay. Likewise you should obey your teachers with respectful humility and willingly accept instruction, counsel and correction. Be assured that whatever they do is to improve you. Be convinced also that obedience shown to your superiors is, as if it were, shown to Jesus Christ himself and to Mary most holy and to St Aloysius.

I recommend two things to you with all my heart. The first is that you be sincere with your elders, not covering up your failings by pretending, much less denying them. Always tell the truth frankly; as well as offending God, lies make you a child of the devil, prince of lies, and when the truth is known you will then have a reputation as a liar and will not be trusted either by superiors or friends. Secondly, let the advice and warnings of your superiors be your rule of life and work. Blessed are you if you do this; your days will be happy; everything you do will be properly ordered and will edify everyone. So let me conclude by saying to you: give me an obedient child and he will be a saint. Otherwise he will be lacking in every virtue.

Article 5 - The respect due to churches and other things belonging to religion

Obedience to and respect for your superiors needs to be joined by respect for churches and all other things belonging to religion. We are Christians, therefore we should respect everything regarding this state and especially the church which is called the Lord's temple, a place of holiness, a house of prayer where anything we ask God for will be given us. *In ea omnis qui petit accipit* [Lk 11:10]. Ah my dear boys! What great pleasure you give Jesus Christ, what good example you give to the people if you are there devoutly and recollectedly! When Saint Aloysius went to church the people ran there to see him and they were all edified by his modesty and behaviour. When you come into church, without running or making a noise take the holy water and then kneel and adore the Blessed Trinity with three *Glory be to the Fathers* etc.

In case it is not yet time for the sacred functions you can recite the joys of Mary or some other exercise of piety. See that you do not laugh in church, or speak without necessity, because just one word or smile is enough to cause scandal and disturb those present at the sacred functions. Saint Stanislaus Kostka was so devout when he was in church that often he did not hear people call him nor felt them when they pushed him as his servants used to do when they wanted him to return home.

I recommend the highest respect for priests and religious. Accept with respect whatever they suggest to you; take off your cap as a sign of reverence when you are speaking with them or you meet them on the street. But mainly do not show disrespect for them in words or deeds, because when some young men mocked the Prophet Elisha by calling him names, God punished them by letting bears come out from the forest and mauling forty of them. Whoever does not respect the sacred ministers must fear that the Lord will do something bad to them. Whenever you speak about them imitate young Louis Comollo who used to say: “Either speak well of priests or keep quiet.” I should also warn you never to be ashamed of being Christians outside of Church. When you go past a church or statue or picture of Mary, do not fail to take off your cap as a mark of reverence. Thus you will show that you are true Christians and the Lord will fill you with blessings for the good example you have shown to your neighbour.

Article 6 - Reading and the Word of God

As well as the usual morning and evening prayers I also urge you to spend some time reading some books dealing with spiritual matters, like the *Imitation of Christ*, the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales, the *Preparation for Death* by St Alphonsus, *Jesus at the Heart of the Young*¹⁰.

¹⁰ The *Imitation of Christ*, the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by Saint Francis de Sales and the *Preparation for Death* by St Alphonsus Maria de Liguori were commonly known in Don Bosco's day and are even still published today (especially the first two); *Jesus at the Heart of the Young* was a small book by Canon Giuseppe Zama Mellini (1788-1838), written in terms of an affectionate conversation between Jesus and the reader.

If you read some parts of these books indicated above you will find they are of great advantage to your souls. You will have twice the merit before God if you recount what you have read to others, or you read it in their presence, especially if someone cannot read.

A body without food gets sick and dies, and the same thing happens to our soul if we do not give it its food. The Word of God is food, nourishment for the soul, meaning sermons, explanations of the Gospel, and the catechism. So make every effort to be in church when you should be, pay close attention while there and then try to apply the things they offer you to your state in life. It is very important that you attend catechism lessons; it is no good your saying: "I have already been promoted for holy communion" because even then the soul needs food just like the body needs food; and if you deny the soul this food you put yourselves at risk of very serious harm.

I recommend that you make every possible effort to go to your parishes and fulfil these duties of yours. God has given your parish priest the special task of looking after your souls. Be careful too of the snares of the devil when he suggests to you: he is doing this for my friend Peter, or yes, that would be good for Paul. No, my dear friends, the preacher is speaking to you. All the truths he is telling you are intended for you to apply to yourselves. And on the other hand what is not helpful for correcting you will help to keep you away from certain sins.

When you listen to a sermon, try to remember it throughout the day, and in the evening, especially before going to bed, pause a moment to reflect on what you have heard. If you do this it will be of great advantage to your soul.

Things that young people should flee from most

Article 1. - Flee from idleness

Idleness is the principal snare the devil puts before youth, and a sorry source of all other vices. So be convinced, my dear boys, that man was born to work and when he ceases to do so he is off-centre and runs a great risk of offending the Lord. There is nothing that torments the damned in hell more

than having spent the time God gave them to save themselves in idleness. On the contrary there is nothing that consoles the blessed more in heaven than the thought that a little time spent for God has earned them an everlasting good.

However I do not mean you should be busy from morning to evening without a break, for there are many things you can do that can bring delight but also can be very useful.

For example this could be studying history, geography, mechanical or liberal arts, other studies and domestic work. You can enjoy yourself but also gain useful and honest knowledge and keep your superiors happy; and indeed you can also enjoy yourself with games and legitimate amusements which can be recreation and not weigh you down. But do not undertake these amusements without first asking proper permission and prefer ones that give you bodily skills since they are better for your health. Keep far away from certain kinds of chicanery, confidence tricks, sleight of hand, quirky stuff which sows discord and offends charity amongst your friends. While you are playing, or in conversation or other pastime raise your mind to God sometimes, offering these very amusements for his greater honour and glory.

Once St Aloysius was asked, while happily playing with some of his peers, what he would have done at that moment if an angel had warned him that the Lord would be calling him to his fearful judgement in a quarter of an hour's time. He promptly answered that he would have continued his game, "Because I know for sure," he said "that these games please the Lord."

But what I warmly encourage you to do in pastimes and recreations is to keep away from bad companions like the plague.

Article 2 - Fleeing bad companions

There are three kinds of companions. Some are good, others are bad; some are not completely bad but neither are they good. You can be with the first group and it will do you good; you can deal with the last group when there is a need, without becoming too familiar. You have to keep away absolutely from

the bad ones. But who are these bad companions? Pay attention and you will understand who they are. All those boys who are not ashamed of using obscene language in your company, or dubious or scandalous words, murmuring, lies, perjury, curses, blasphemy, or try to keep you away from church or ignore your duty - these are bad companions, ministers of Satan whom, you should avoid like the plague and the devil himself. Ah my dear friends, I beg you with tears in my eyes to flee and abhor companions like these!

Listen to what the Lord says: “The one who walks with virtuous people will also be virtuous. The friend of idiots will also be like them. Avoid the bad companion like you would avoid being bitten by a snake: *tamquam a facie colubri.*” So if you go with the good people, I assure you you will go to heaven with good people. On the contrary if you stay with the bad ones, you will be bad yourself to the irreparable loss of your soul.

Someone will say: there are so many bad companions around that you would have to get away from this world to avoid them all. I know there are many bad companions and that is precisely why I am so warmly recommending your fleeing them. And if that means you have to be alone to avoid them, well, lucky you. You will have Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, your guardian angel as company. Could you find better companions than these? Nonetheless we can also have good companions and these will be ones who frequent the sacraments, go to church, encourage you to do your duty and do not engage in talk that offends the Lord. So go with them and you will draw great profit from it. When the young David began going with a good companion called Jonathan, they became good friends to their mutual advantage; one encouraged the other in practising virtue.

Article 3 - Avoiding bad conversation

How many young people end up in hell because of bad conversations! Saint Paul already preached this truth when he said that filthy things should never come out of the mouth of the Christians, since they are the ruin of good morals: *Currumpunt bonos mores colloquia prava.* Think of these conversations like food: a dish might be good but just one drop of poison in it can kill

whoever eats it; the same goes for obscene language. A word, a gesture, a joke are enough to teach malice to one or more companions and boys that were innocent little lambs of Jesus Christ become the unfortunate prey of the devil.

Someone might say: "I know of the sad consequences of bad conversations but what can we do about it? I find myself at school, in a workshop, in a shop, or doing the work I have to do and there they carry on with this kind of talk." I too know there are these kinds of places, so I am suggesting the rule for getting away without offending the Lord. If these people are less important than you then correct them quite firmly; when they are people you cannot reprimand then get away from them if you can and if you can't, then be quite firm about not taking part, neither with words or a smile and say in your heart: "Jesus, have mercy on me." There will not be any lack of people who laugh at you and mock you, but that does not matter. There will come a time when the laughter and mockery of the evil ones will turn into wailing in hell, and the contempt that the good have felt will change into the most consoling happiness in heaven: *Tristitia vestra vertetur in gaudium* [Jn 16:20]. If you remain firm on the Lord's behalf, it will come to pass that these same scoffers will be forced to appreciate your virtue in such a way that they will no longer dare to trouble you with their perverse reasoning.

Wherever St Aloysius Gonzaga was, no one dared use an indecent word and if someone was about to say something like that he was soon told: keep quiet - Aloysius is here.

Article 4 - Avoid scandal

When the devil does not succeed in catching a boy, he makes use of scandalous individuals. How many grave sins must weigh on the conscience of boys who give scandal in church, on the street, in class or elsewhere in their work? They are guilty in God's eyes for all the sins of the people who have observed them. And then what should we say about those who teach evil to people who are still innocent? Let these wretches hear what the Saviour says to them. Taking a child by the hand one day and turning to the multitudes listening to him, he said: "Woe to the one who scandalises a child;

unfortunately there is scandal in the world, but woe to the one who gives it. It would be better for him to have a millstone around his neck and be thrown into the depths of the sea.” If we could ever remove scandal from the world, how many souls would go to paradise who on the contrary are eternally lost in hell. So watch out for this breed of villains and flee them more than the devil himself. A girl of tender age, when she heard scandalous talk said to the one saying it: away from here, your accursed devil. My dear boys, if you want to be true friends of Jesus Christ and make up for the great evil that scandals cause to souls, try to give good example. So let your conversations be good and modest; be devout in church, obedient and respectful to your superiors. Oh how many souls will imitate you and walk the way to paradise! You will be sure to go there too, because anyone who saves a soul can basically hope to save his own: *Animam salvasti, animam tuam praedestinasti*. These are the main things, my dear boys that you must avoid in the world: they are few but enough to go about life in a virtuous and Christian way. Happy are you if you avoid them. I assure you that you will gain your eternal salvation.

Article 5. - How to act during temptation

Even at your tender age, my dear children, the devil sets snares to steal your soul. You have to be very careful not to fall when you are tempted, or when the devil suggests to you to do something wrong. One way of keeping out of temptation is to avoid occasions of sin, such as evil conversations and immoral public shows, which are not good for you and worse still where you always learn something bad. Always try to keep busy and when you don't know what to do, decorate your little altars with images or holy pictures, or spend some time in healthy amusement, if your parents allow you. When you are tempted, do not trifle with the temptation and let the devil take hold of your soul. Rid yourself of it at once by work or prayer. If the temptation still remains make the Sign of the Cross, kiss some holy object and say: “St Aloysius, help me not to offend God.” I am naming this Saint because he is proposed by the Church as the special protector of the young. In order to conquer temptations he avoided all occasions of sin; he fasted frequently on bread and water; he scourged himself so violently that his clothes, the walls, and the floor were

stained with his innocent blood. Thus St. Aloysius mastered his temptations. In this manner you also will triumph, if you strive to imitate him at least in the mortification of the senses. Above all, in temptations against modesty have recourse to him, and you will keep free from sin.

Article 6 - Some tricks the devil uses to ensnare the young

The first trick the devil uses to trap your soul is to suggest to you, however could it be possible for forty, fifty or sixty years for you to promise you will walk the difficult road of virtue always avoiding all pleasures.

When the devil suggests this you answer him: “Who can assure me I will reach that age? My life is in the Lord’s hands, and even today could be the last one of my life.” How many were once happy, doing well, having fun and today are being taken to their grave? And even when we have had to work hard for some years for the Lord, will we not be abundantly compensated by an eternity of glory and pleasure in heaven? Also we see that those who live in God’s grace are always happy, and even when there are problems their heart is content. On the other hand those who always give themselves to pleasure are upset and make every effort to find peace in their pastimes but are always more unhappy: *Non est pax impiis* [Is 48:22].

Someone might say: “We are young. If we start thinking of eternity, hell, this will make us melancholic, and it might even send us off our head.” I grant that thinking about a happy or unhappy eternity, thinking of never-ending punishment may be a dark and scary thought. But tell me: if just thinking about it sends you off your head, what would it be like going there? Better to think of it now and not end up there in the future; and for sure if we think of it now we will be saved from it. But observe that if the thought of hell is sad, the hope of paradise where we will enjoy everything that is good, fills us with consolation. Therefore the saints, while they thought seriously of an eternity of punishment, lived very happily with a firm trust in God that they could avoid such punishment and one day possess the endless infinite good that the Lord has prepared for those who serve him. So courage my dear boys, try to serve the Lord and then you will see how content your heart will be.

Article 7 - Warnings for boys who have enrolled in some congregation or oratory

If you have the good fortune to be enrolled in some congregation or oratory try to go there regularly and observe all the rules exactly as explained by the superiors. I especially recommend the greatest respect for the directors of these holy places. Always try to ask permission if you have to be absent. Be especially modest and quiet in church, reading or listening to some devout book being read until it is time for the service. Then with your mind uplifted and in recollection sing the Lord's praises. If you are going to confession or holy communion always try to do it in your congregation or oratory, since this will contribute much to good example and will encourage others to frequent the sacraments.

Then if your oratory has good things like recreation on Sundays take part willingly and avoid fights, using nicknames or showing dissatisfaction with the games that are given out. If you hear of something in that holy place that is going wrong, run quickly and tell the superior quietly so he can prevent any other wrongdoing that might eventuate.

It would be wonderful if those who are better instructed could tell some stories to the others.

Be sincere in your words and avoid telling lies, because if you are caught lying, other than offending God, you are disgraced before your friends and your superiors. I also encourage you to have a childlike confidence in your director turning to him when you have some doubt of conscience. Be very respectful also to your superiors especially if they are priests, and when you meet them doff your cap and kiss their hand reverently. When they speak to you answer their questions humbly and sincerely. Those who have some task as cantors, assistants and the like should take care to be the most devout and zealous in everything regarding the practices of piety. I encourage everyone to be very exact in observance of the rules, each vying to show himself the most devout, the most modest and the most accurate in the exercises of devotion.

Seven reflections for each day of the week

Since I would really like you to do a little spiritual reading each day, and not everyone can have the right books, I am giving you seven very brief reflections, one for each day of the week. They should be helpful for those who do not have the right books. When you are kneeling down say: “My God, I am sorry with all my heart for having offended you. Give me the grace to understand well the truths I am about to reflect on. Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, pray for me.”

First reflection for Sunday: The purpose of man

1. Consider, my son, that this body of yours, this soul of yours were given to you by God without any merit of yours, creating you in his image. He made you his child by holy baptism. He loved you and does love you as a tender father, and the only purpose for which he created you is to be loved and served in this life, to then be happy in heaven. You are not in the world only to enjoy, become rich, to eat, drink and sleep, like the animals but your purpose is to love your God and save your soul. If you do this, how much consolation you will have at the moment of your death! On the contrary, if you do not serve God, how much remorse you will feel at the end of your life when you realise that your wealth, pleasures have only saddened your heart! You will regret having wasted so much time with no benefit for your soul. My son, see that you are not one of these that only think of pleasure, amusements and at the final hour will be eternally lost. A secretary of the King of England when he was dying said: poor me! I used so much paper writing letters for my King but never used a single sheet writing down my sins to make a good confession.

2. You should also consider that if you save your soul, everything will go well and you will rejoice forever, but if you err, you will lose body and soul, God and Heaven and will be forever damned. See that you are not amongst those who say: “I will commit this sin then confess it afterwards”, since God condemns the one who sins while hoping for forgiveness: *maledictus homo qui peccat in spe*. Everyone in hell had some hope of amending their behaviour, but now they are eternally lost. Who knows if he will have time to confess?

Who can assure you that you will not die soon after sinning and that your soul will not go straight to hell? And besides, how stupid can it be to catch a disease in the hope that there will be a doctor to cure you? So let go of sin. It is the worst of all evils and deprives you of everything that is good.

3. How many there are in the world who think of everything except saving themselves! If I tell someone to go to the sacraments, do some prayer each day and he answers: "I have other things to do. I have to work, I have to enjoy myself." Oh God! Do you not have a soul? So whatever you do, say or think, see that it is all for your soul, because it would be the greatest imprudence to think seriously about something that is going to soon come to an end and think so little about eternity which never ends. Saint Aloysius could enjoy pleasures, riches and honours but gave everything up saying: "How does this help me for eternity? *Quid haec ad aeternitatem.*"

You should also conclude: "I have a soul; if I lose it I have lost everything. Even though I gain the whole world, if it does harm to my soul what have I gained? If I become a great man, if I acquire riches, if I gain a reputation for wisdom and know all the arts and sciences of mechanics, music but I lose my soul, what good does it do me? All the wisdom of Solomon is of no use if you are lost. So only the soul should be the purpose for all my activity. It is a case of being always blessed or always unhappy, so let everything go as long as I am saved. Oh my God, forgive me my sins and see that I never ever have the disgrace of offending you, and that indeed I may faithfully serve you in the future. Mary, my hope, intercede for me."

Monday: On mortal sin

1. Oh if only you knew, my dear children, what you do when you commit a mortal sin! You turn your back on God who created you, and who has granted you so many favours. You despise his grace and his friendship. The sinner in fact says to Our Lord: "Depart from me, I no longer wish to obey you; no longer do I want to serve you, to recognise you as my Lord: *Non serviam.* I want no other God than pleasure, vengeance, anger, bad talk or blasphemy." Can one imagine an ingratitude more monstrous than this? And yet you do this every time you offend your Creator.

2. Greater still will this ingratitude appear to you when you reflect that, in sinning, you employ those very gifts God gave you. Ears, eyes, mouth, tongue, hands, feet—they are all gifts of God, and you made use of them to offend Him. Imagine Our Lord speaking to you: “My child, I created you out of nothing; I gave you all that you have; through me you were baptised, and brought up in a good Catholic atmosphere. I gave you everything you have. You were condemned to death by sin, and I died for you. I shed my blood to save you, and you still wish to offend me?” Who is not overcome with sorrow for having offered so great an insult to God, who is so good and so gracious towards us, his wayward creatures?

3. Moreover you should consider that this God, who is so good, always feels greatly indignant when you offend him. Hence you should greatly fear lest your sins become so numerous that he will finally abandon you. *In plenitudine peccatorum puniet*. Not only will the divine mercy be withheld from you, but you will also lack time to seek it, because he who abuses the mercy of God in order to offend him, does not deserve mercy. How many have hoped in conversion and not having had time to adjust their conscience, on the approach of death have been eternally lost? Take heed lest the same fate befall you. After Our Lord has pardoned you so many times, you should rightly fear lest, for a fresh mortal sin, the divine wrath may strike you and send you to hell. Thank God for withholding his judgement, and make a firm resolution, saying: “Too often, Lord, I have sinned against you. I do not want to spend the few remaining years of my life offending you. Instead I will spend them in loving you and repenting for my sins. I am heartily sorry for them all. My Jesus, I want to love you. Give me strength. Most holy Virgin and my Mother, help me. Amen.”

Tuesday: Death

1. Death is the departure of the soul from the body, and complete separation from the things of this world. Consider, therefore, my child, that your soul will one day have to leave your body. You do not know whether death will come to you in bed, at your work, in the street or elsewhere. The bursting of a vein, a bad cold, a haemorrhage, a fever, a wound, a fall, an

earthquake, a stroke of lightning – any of these is enough to deprive you of life. Death may take place a year hence; within a month, a week, an hour, or perhaps a moment after finishing the reading of this meditation. How many there are who have gone to sleep at night feeling well and in the morning have been found dead! How many there are who meet with some accident and die instantly; and then what is their fate? Happy are they who have been in the grace of God for they are eternally happy, but if instead they were in mortal sin, they are eternally lost. Tell me, my dear child, if you were to die at this moment, what would happen to your soul? If you are unprepared take heed of this warning. He who today is unprepared runs the great risk of dying in mortal sin.

2. Although the time and place of your death is uncertain, yet there is nothing more certain than that death will come. However let us hope that the final hour of your life may not come unexpectedly or violently but gradually and with the usual sickness. A day will come at any rate when you will find yourself stretched on a bed, awaiting your departure to eternity. You will be assisted by a priest who will recommend your soul to God. Your gaze will be fixed on a crucifix and in your hand you will hold a candle lighted for you by another. Around will stand your weeping relatives. Your head will be in dreadful pain, your sight weak, your tongue parched, your mouth closed, your chest congested, your blood chilled, your body worn out, and your heart laden with sorrow and depression. When you have breathed your last your body will be wrapped in a few rags and lowered into a grave. There your flesh will decay and be consumed until only the bones and a little dust will be all that remains of you. Open a tomb and see what has become of a youth who, perhaps, was once rich, proud and ambitious. Read this, my child, and prepare for a good death. Now the devil, to induce you to sin, will try to cover and belittle your faults, telling you there is no great evil in such and such a pleasure, in disobedience, in missing Mass on Sundays, but in death you will discover the seriousness of your sins and they will all be brought before you. And what will you do then at the point of your departure for eternity? Woe to those, who at that moment are not in the state of Grace.

3. Consider that your eternal happiness or your eternal damnation depend on that fateful moment. On the brink of eternity, as the last sighs escape our lips, in the light of that candle how many things will be known! Twice is a lighted candle held before us; once at baptism and then at the moment of our death. The first time, that we may know the precepts of Divine Law, which we are to keep; the second to let us see if we have kept them. Then, my child, in the light of that candle you will see if you have loved your God or neglected him; if you have honoured his Holy Name or if you have taken it in vain. You will see if you have misspent the Holy days of Obligation and failed to attend Mass on Sundays. You will see all the disobedience to superiors, and scandal given to your companions. You will see the pride which deceived you; you will see everything in that moment on the threshold of eternity: *momentum a quo pendet aeternitas*. Oh awful, terrible moment on which depends eternal glory or eternal misery! Do you understand what I am saying? On that moment depends whether you go to heaven or to hell; whether you will be always happy or always tormented; whether you will be forever a child of God or a slave of the devil; whether you will rejoice with the angels and the saints in heaven or groan and burn with the damned in hell for all eternity. These are great issues for your soul and reflect that upon a good life depends a happy death and eternal glory. Therefore delay no longer but prepare to make a good confession and to put your conscience in order. Promise God to forgive your enemies, to repair the scandal you have given, to be more obedient, to abstain from meat on the appointed days, to waste no more time, to keep the Holy days of Obligation in a worthy manner, to fulfil the duties of your state. Meanwhile place yourself in the presence of God and tell him with all your heart: "My God, from this moment I return to you. I love you and I want to love and serve you unto death. Most Holy Virgin, my Mother, help me in that moment. Jesus, Joseph and Mary, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you."

Wednesday: Judgement

1. As soon as your soul has left your body you will immediately stand before the Divine Judge. The first thing that renders this appearance terrible

to the sinner's soul is that it stands alone before the God it has despised, who knows every secret of the heart and every thought. What do you bring with you? You shall bring as much good and evil as you have done in life: *refert unusquisque prout gessit sive bonum, sive malum* [2 Cor 5:10]. One can then find no excuse or pretext. You will see before you an angry Judge. On one side will appear the sins that accuse you, and on the other the devils ready to lead you away to condemnation. Your conscience will trouble and torment you. At your feet a gaping hell will be ready to engulf you. In such straits where will you turn, where will you flee to? Happy will you be my child if you have done good things in life. The Divine Judge will open the book of conscience and begin the scrutiny: *Iudicium sedit et libri aperti sunt*.

2. Then the examining Judge will say: "Who are you?" "I am a Catholic", you will answer. "Very well," he will reply "if you are a Catholic let us see if you have acted as one." Then he will begin to remind you of the promises made at Holy Baptism, in which you renounced the devil, the world and the flesh. He will remind you of the grace bestowed upon you, the sacraments you frequented, the sermons, instructions, counsels of your confessors, corrections from your parents. Everything will be laid open before you. "But," the Divine Judge will say, "you have despised many of my gifts and graces. Oh, how badly you have corresponded to your Christian profession! At the time when you had hardly begun to know me, you began to offend me with lies, with lack of respect in church, with disobedience to your parents and with many other transgressions. At least with the increase of your years you could have regulated your actions better; but no! With your years you also grew in disregard for my Law. Masses missed, Holy days ignored, blasphemy, confessions badly made, communions often made sacrilegiously, scandal given to your companions; this is what you did instead of serving me." He will then turn with anger to the scandal-giver and say: "Do you see that soul treading the path of sin? By your scandalous talk you are the cause of that. As a Catholic you should have shown your companions the way to heaven by your good example; but instead, betraying my Blood, you have shown them the way to perdition. Do you see that soul down there in hell? It was you who by your evil counsel snatched that soul away from me and handed it to the devil. You were the

reason for it going to eternal perdition. Render up your own soul now for the soul you have lost by your scandal: *Repetam animam tuam pro anima illius.*” What are your thoughts, my child, at this scrutiny? What is your conscience telling you? There is still time, ask God forgiveness for your sins with a sincere promise never to sin again. Whatever heat, cold, hunger, thirst, illness or displeasure you have to suffer, do it for the Lord as penance for the sins you have committed.

3. To this rigorous account that the Supreme Judge exacts, the sinner will try to present some excuse or pretext. He will plead that he did not know he had to undergo such a strict examination. But he will receive the answer: “And did you hear no sermons? In the catechism did you not read that I would exact a strict account of everything?” The unfortunate one will then commend himself to the Divine Mercy but it will be in vain because the time for mercy is over. He will turn to the angels, the saints, to Mary Most Holy, and she will answer in the name of them all: “Do you seek my help now? You did not want me for your mother in life and now I cannot have you as my child. I know you not: *nescio vos.*” The sinner, finding no escape, will cry to the mountains, the stones to cover him and they will not stir. He will call upon hell and he will see it open: *Inferius horrendum chaos.* At that moment the inexorable Judge will pronounce the terrible sentence: “Unfaithful son, depart from me. My heavenly Father has condemned you; I also condemn you. Depart and go into eternal fire to weep and suffer with demons for all eternity: *Ite, maledicti, in ignem aeternum* [Mt 25:41].” When these words are uttered the soul is abandoned into the demons’ hands. They will take it away, plunge it into the abyss of suffering, pain and torment for eternity. Do you not fear a judgement such as this? Ah for the love of Jesus and Mary prepare a favourable sentence for yourself by good works. Remember that though the condemnation pronounced against the wicked is a terrible one the invitation of Jesus will be a consolation to the one who has lived as a good Christian. “Come,” he will say, “posses the glory I have prepared for you. You served me, now you shall rejoice eternally: *Intra in gaudium Domini tui*” [Mt 25:21]. “My Jesus, grant me the grace to be one day numbered amongst the blessed in heaven. Most Holy Virgin, help me; protect me in life and in death, and especially when I present myself before your Divine Son to be judged.”

Thursday: Hell

1. Hell is a place destined by Divine Judgement for the eternal punishment of those who have died in mortal sin. The first pain the damned suffer in hell is to find themselves in an abyss of fire. Fire in the eyes, fire in the mouth, fire in every part. Every sense will suffer its own pain. The eyes are blinded by fire and darkness, terrified by the sight of the devils and other lost souls. The ears, day and night, hear nothing but continual howling, lamenting and blasphemy. The sense of smell suffers terribly from the suffocating fumes of sulphur and burning pitch. The mouth is afflicted with a burning thirst and ravenous hunger: *famem patientur ut canes* [Ps 58:7]. The rich man, in the midst of these torments, raised his eyes towards heaven and begged for just a tiny drop of water to moisten his parched tongue, and a drop of water was denied him. Then those unfortunate souls, burning with thirst, devoured by hunger, tormented by fire will cry out moaning and despairing. Oh hell, hell, how unhappy are the souls that fall into it! What do you say my child? If you died at this moment, where would you go? If now you cannot hold your finger over a candle flame, cannot suffer a spark of fire on your hand without crying out, how will you stand those flames for all eternity?

2. Consider, my child, the remorse that the conscience of the damned will feel. They will continually remember the reason why they are lost; for some pleasure, giving vent to some passion; this is the worm that will never die: *vermis eorum non moritur* [Mk 9:45]. They will remember the time given them by God to save themselves from eternal perdition, the good example of their companions, the good resolutions they made and never carried out but will see this at a time when there is no remedy. The will can no longer have what it desires; on the contrary it suffers every evil. The intellect will know the great good it has lost, meaning paradise. Oh God! Who could put up with such torment! My child, if you care not now whether you win or lose paradise and God, you will know your blindness when you see so many of your more ignorant companions and people poorer than you are in triumph, enjoying the kingdom of heaven while you, condemned by God, are being sent away from that blessed land, the enjoyment of God himself, from the company of the Blessed Virgin, the angels and the saints. Do penance now, do not wait

until there is no time left. Give yourself to God. Who knows but this may be the last call, and if you do not correspond, God may abandon you and let you plunge headlong into eternal suffering.

Friday: Eternity of suffering

1. Consider my child, that if you go to hell you will never leave it. There all pains are suffered throughout eternity. A hundred years will pass after you are sent to hell; a thousand will go by and hell will be only beginning; a hundred thousand, a hundred million years, millions and millions of centuries will pass and even then hell will still only be beginning. If an angel were to bring the damned news that God would free them from hell after so many millions of centuries as there are drops of water in the sea, or leaves on trees or grains of sand on the shore and the earth, these tidings would bring them the greatest consolation: "It is true," they would say, "that all these centuries of torment have yet to come, but one day they will come to an end." But all these centuries will go by and all the time imaginable, and hell will always be at the beginning. Each lost soul would willingly make this covenant with God: "Lord increase my pains as much as you wish, let me suffer these torments as long as you want, only give me the hope that one day they will end." But no, this end will never come. If only this lost soul could deceive and delude himself, saying: "Who knows, maybe one day God will have mercy on me and release me from this abyss!" No, he will always see written before him the sentence of eternal unhappiness. So he will say: "All these pains, this fire, these agonising cries, will they have no end for me?" "No," will be the answer, "never." "Will they last forever?" "Always, for eternity." 'Forever', he will see written in the eternal flames that burn him; 'forever', he will see written on the blades of the swords that pierce him; 'forever', will flash from the eyes of the devils who torment him; forever will be stamped on those doors closed for him for eternity. Oh accursed sin! What a terrible punishment is in store for those who sin! Ah! There shall be no more sin in my life.

2. What ought to keep you from this terrible fate is the thought that this horrible furnace is always open before your feet and that a single mortal sin is enough to make you fall into it. What could you do, what could you say

in the midst of those flames, far from your God, deprived of heaven forever? You would turn your gaze for the last time to heaven and at the height of your desolation you would say: “Goodbye my companions, goodbye friends living in the kingdom of glory; goodbye father, mother, brothers, sisters rejoicing forever. I will be always in torment; goodbye guardian angel, all the angels and saints in paradise, I will never see you again; goodbye my Saviour, goodbye holy cross, goodbye blood spilt for me in vain. I will never see you again.” Right then I cease to be a child of God and will be forever a slave of the devils in hell. Do you understand, my child, what you are reading? Eternal punishment for just one mortal sin. So do everything to avoid it. If your conscience disturbs you because of some sin go quickly to confession and commence a good life. Put into practice all the means the confessor suggests to you. Fly from dangerous occasions of sin, bad companions and if God also calls you to leave this world behind, comply immediately. Whatever one may do to escape an eternity of pain is little, nothing: *Nulla nimia securitas ubi periclitatur aeternitas* (Saint Bernard). Oh, how many have left the world, their country, their family and have sought solitude in caves, in deserts living only on bread and water, and a few roots and herbs, and all this to avoid hell! And what are you doing after deserving hell so often by your sin? Kneel at the feet of God and say: “Lord, here I am ready to do your will; let me suffer any pain in this life so long as I save my soul.”

Saturday: Heaven

1. Just as the thought and consideration of hell is terrible, so is the thought of the heaven prepared for you consoling. To form an idea of heaven consider a clear night. How beautiful it is to see the sky sparkling with stars of great number and variety! Add to this the vision of a beautiful day, but such that the splendour of the sun does not hinder you from seeing the stars and the moon. Try to imagine all the beauty that can be found in the sea, on land, in the country, in cities and in Kings’ and monarchs’ palaces all over the world. Add to this every delicious drink, tasty food, beautiful music, the sweetest harmony, and all this together is nothing compared with the excellence of heaven. Oh how desirable and wonderful is this place where enjoyment is

complete! The blessed can only cry out: “I am filled with the glory of the Lord: *Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua.*” [Ps 16:15].

2. Consider then the joy your soul will experience on entering heaven. The meeting and reunion of parents and friends; the nobility and beauty of the multitudes of Cherubim and Seraphim and all the angels, saints who in their myriads praise and bless their Creator. The choir of the Apostles, the immense array of Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins. There is to be seen also that glorious multitude of the young, who because they preserved the virtue of purity sing a hymn to God that no one else can sing. Oh how they rejoice in that kingdom of the blessed! They are always happy, there is no sickness, no trouble, no anxieties to disturb their happiness and peace.

3. Observe, my child, that all this is as nothing compared to the wonderful consolation experienced at the sight of God. He consoles the blessed with his glances of love and floods their hearts with an ocean of joy. Just as the sun illumines and beautifies the world, so God with his presence brightens paradise and fills all with an inexpressible gladness. For that reason the choirs of angels and the blessed sing his glory: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, to Him be honour and glory forever.” So courage, my child. Suffering may come to you in this world but that does not matter. Your reward in heaven will infinitely compensate for all you have to suffer in this life. What consolation will be yours when you find yourself in heaven in the company of your parents, friends, the saints and the blessed and you will say: “I will be with the Lord forever: *Semper cum Domino erimus.*” [1 Ts 4:17]. Then it is that you will bless the day on which you renounced sin, made a good confession and frequented the sacraments; when you forsook bad company and devoted yourself to the practice of virtue. Full of gratitude you will turn towards God and sing his praise forever and ever. Amen.

Devotion to Mary Most Holy

It is a great support for you, my children, to have devotion to Mary Most Holy. Listen to her inviting you: “*Si quis est parvulus veniat ad me.* If you are a child, come to me.” She will assure you that if you are devoted to her as well as

filling you with blessings in this world, you will gain heaven in the next. *Qui elucidant me vitam aeternam habebunt* [Sir 24:31]. So be fully convinced that all the graces you ask of this good Mother will be granted you, so long as you do not ask for things that could harm you.

In a particular way you should immediately ask for three graces which everyone absolutely needs, but you especially at a young age. The first is that of *never committing a mortal sin in your life*. I want you to implore this grace through Mary's intercession at any cost, because without this one any other grace would be of little avail.

Do you know what it means to fall into mortal sin? It means refusing to be children of God and becoming children of Satan. It means losing the beauty that makes us as beautiful as the angels in God's eyes, and taking on the deformities of the devils in his sight. It means losing all the merits you have already gained for eternal life; it means dangling above the jaws of hell, being held there only by a slender thread; and it means reviling his infinite goodness, which is the greatest evil imaginable. Ah! If Mary obtained many graces for you but not that of ever falling into mortal sin, she would have obtained very little. You must implore this grace morning and evening and in all your exercise of piety.

The second grace that you should ask for is to *preserve the holy and precious virtue of purity*. If you keep guard over such a beautiful virtue you will be very like the angels in Heaven, and your guardian angel will regard you as his brother since he will enjoy your company so much.

And since I have it very much at heart that you preserve this virtue, I would like to indicate some ways for preserving it from the poison that could infect it. First of all avoid the company of persons of the opposite sex. Understand this well: I am trying to say that boys should not become very familiar with girls; this virtue would be at great risk.

Something that helps very much to preserve it is custody of the senses and especially the eyes. You should therefore avoid all excess in eating and drinking, theatre, balls and similar pastimes which are the ruin of morals. The

eyes are the windows through which sin makes its way into our hearts and by which the devil comes to take possession of our soul. So never stop to look at even the least little things contrary to modesty. Saint Aloysius Gonzaga did not even want to look at his feet when he went to bed or got up. He did not allow himself to stare at his own mother. He spent seven years with the Queen of Spain as a page of honour but he never looked her in the face.

Another young man when asked why he was so careful in his looks gave this answer: "I have resolved never to look at a woman to preserve my eyes to look for the first time (if I am worthy to) at the beautiful face of the mother of purity, Mary Most Holy."

Secondly, flee the company of boys who engage in bad talk, that is topics which you would not raise in the presence of your parents or some other good person. Keep far away from them even if they are your relatives. I can assure you that the company of a devil would sometimes not be as bad as the harm that company of this kind can cause you.

And from this comes the need for the third grace that will also be of very great help to you in preserving the virtue of purity. It is the grace of *running away from bad companions*. How happy you will be, my dear boys, if you flee the company of the wicked! By doing this you will be sure of taking the road to paradise; otherwise you run the grave risk of being lost for eternity. Therefore, when you hear your friends swearing, blaspheming, or putting down religion, or trying to draw you away from the Church, or worse still speaking in language that is contrary to the virtue of modesty, keep away from them like the plague, and be sure that the purer is your gaze, your speech, the more pleased Mary will be with you and the more graces she will obtain for you from her Son and our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

These are the three graces that are needed more than any other, at your age, and they are enough to keep you on the right path from your youth. They will ensure that you will be men of honour in old age, and are a sure pledge of the eternal glory that Mary undoubtedly procures for those who are devoted to her. What should you do for Mary to obtain the graces indicated above? Very

little is needed. If you can, say the Rosary, but at least never forget to say three *Hail Marys* and three *Glory be to the Fathers* adding: “Dear Mother Mary, ever a Virgin, help me to save my soul.”

The six Sundays and the novena to St Aloysius Gonzaga

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga is proposed as an example of innocence and virtue to all, but especially to the young for whom he has at all times obtained very many favours from Our Lord.

In order to increase devotion to this great saint, the Roman Pontiffs have granted a plenary indulgence on each of six Sundays to all those who perform some special practice of devotion in his honour on any six consecutive Sundays of the year. The indulgence may be gained on any one of these Sundays. In order that you may know the required works and prayers I have here arranged some exercises of piety that may be used for the six Sundays and the novena of St Aloysius. Thus you will be able to share in the wonderful graces and favours which the great model of youth every day obtains for his devotees.

First Sunday - First day of the novena: Saint Aloysius weeps for his sins

Although it can be said that St Aloysius never committed a deliberate sin, he wept bitterly for what he considered an offence against God. On one occasion when he was four or five years old, he took a small quantity of gunpowder from his father’s soldiers in order to fire a small canon of his and besides, uttered some unbecoming words he had heard from the soldiers, but which he did not understand. He wept all his life for these two lapses and when he confessed them for the first time he fainted at the feet of his confessor. He could not go on with his confession that day nor could he ever recall them in the years to come without shedding tears. What shame ought we not feel who have committed so many and grievous sins, yet we laugh about them and show no sign of repentance. Ah! If only we could stop to consider that a single sin outrages God, who is infinitely good; that it makes us lose heaven which contains everything that is good, makes us deserving of hell with all its evil within. Who could hold back tears at such thoughts? This is what made St Aloysius weep.

Brief prayer: My amiable protector, you who had so little to weep for and yet continually shed so many bitter tears, obtain for me the grace to weep for my sins and detest them, in order to obtain God's pardon.

Practice: If you find that your conscience reproaches you on account of some sin, heartily beg Our Lord's forgiveness and promise him to go to confession as soon as possible.

Prayer: O Saint Aloysius, adorned with angelic virtue, I your most unworthy suppliant, kneeling humbly before you, adore the Infinite Majesty which raised you to such glory; I bless the Holy Trinity a thousand times over for granting you such innocence and adorning you with so many heroic virtues. Pray! for so many superhuman gifts, for your innocence and penitence, for the love you bore God on earth, I humbly beg you today to accept me amongst your devotees and obtain for me true contrition for my sins, a purity of heart far from every fault or offence to my God. I beg you to be my protector in every action in life and especially at the moment of death, when I will have greater need of your patronage. And you, Mary, great Queen of heaven, who so loved and encouraged Aloysius while he was alive on earth, make these prayers of mine effective, listen to them, not for any merit of my own but for the merit of Aloysius and because of your maternal love. Dear Mother, may I imitate Aloysius in life and after a holy death be part of that happiness enjoyed forever and ever by the blessed in heaven. Amen.

Six Our Fathers, six Hail Marys, and six Glory Bes etc.

Second Sunday - Second day of the novena: Penance of St Aloysius

The life of St Aloysius is a summary of the virtues which he preserved and perfected by very severe penance. Even when a boy he used to punish his body by very long fasts. By degrees he cut down his food to very small quantities. He used to scourge himself till the blood began to flow: he placed pieces of wood in his bed that he might suffer even while he slept and wore spurs under his clothes because he had no hair-shirt. Whether standing, sitting or walking he chose the most uncomfortable position. Aloysius' desire for penance went so far that when he was dying, he begged his superior in tears

to be scourged without mercy from head to foot. When this was denied him he asked at least to be laid upon the bare ground and thus to die as a true penitent out of love for the one who died for him upon the hard wood of the Cross. If Aloysius, a prince, and a pure and innocent youth of delicate health, performed such penance, what must be the confusion of those young people who find a thousand excuses to fly from every occasion of doing acts of penance or abstinence for the love of God who suffered so much for us!

Brief prayer: O glorious St Aloysius, obtain for me an ardent desire to do penance for my many sins, so that I may not have to weep uselessly for them in the next life with the torments of hell.

Practice: Do not put off penance till your old age, when your health will no longer be able to stand it. If anyone tells you that it is of no use to chastise your body, tell him that he who does not suffer with Jesus Christ upon earth will not rejoice with Jesus Christ in heaven.

Prayer: O Saint Aloysius, etc.

Third Sunday - Day three of novena: St Aloysius, model of holy Purity

Every virtue was practised by St Aloysius to an heroic degree, but the radiance of his purity outshone all the others. He was commonly called a little angel, an angel in human flesh, an angelic youth. Whenever conversations in the least improper were being held, on the approach of Aloysius no one dared to continue the subject, for fear of offending his modesty and innocence. It must be noticed however that in order to preserve this beautiful virtue, St Aloysius kept a strict watch over his external senses and especially his eyes. For years he was at his post every day as page of honour with the Empress of Austria, yet he never gazed at her face. Indeed even in the presence of his mother he kept his eyes lowered, so that he did not know what she looked like. Once when invited to a ball he fled away and hid himself in a room where he scourged himself until he bled. He was only ten years old when he came to know the great worth of this virtue, and he offered it by vow to the Queen of virgins, Mary Most Holy. To show him how much she appreciated this vow she obtained for St Aloysius the grace of being forever free of

temptations against this virtue. Thus he had the grace of bearing his baptismal robe unspotted to heaven. My dear children, if you too wish to preserve this virtue which renders you so pleasing to God, to the Blessed Virgin, to all the angels, place yourselves as he did under the special protection of Mary and she will be the faithful guardian of your purity. Oh how much she loves souls that are pure and chaste, more than any others! How much she obtains for them! However this virtue can never be preserved without fleeing from bad talk and bad companions and if we do not keep a guard over our senses, especially the eyes.

Brief prayer: Obtain for me the grace, St Aloysius, to flee from those companions who by their improper conversations seek the ruin of my soul.

Practice: Resolve never more to look at dangerous objects or to speak of things contrary to the virtue we have just spoken about.

Prayer: O Saint Aloysius, etc.

Fourth Sunday - Fourth day of the novena: St Aloysius detached from earthly goods

St Aloysius regarded all the goods of this earth as nothing. He looked with compassion on the rich and the great in this world, who seek goods so vile and frail and often times for a little money or a piece of land run the risk of losing their eternal salvation. He despised all human respect and although he was often scorned and derided, he never ceased to appear humbly dressed even in important places. He let everyone say what he would but he was modest at home, on the streets and especially in church where the only thing that mattered was to frequent the sacraments and everything concerning God's honour. But since he was in the midst of wealth and luxury, and because his heart was in danger of being attached to earthly goods, he abandoned his princely life, his family and friends and after being so much attacked by those who loved the world he became a religious with the Jesuits, where he achieved a high degree of Christian perfection. If we also wish to detach our hearts from the vanities of this world and attach ourselves to God, let us begin to despise worldly goods which are a hindrance to our salvation saying

with St Aloysius: “That which is not eternal is nothing: *Quod aeternum non est nihil est.*” We shall easily do this if, despising human respect, we attend to those things which regard the love of God and especially to frequenting the sacraments of confession and communion which are the two most effective means of overcoming human respect and withdrawing our hearts from earthly things and inspiring them with the love of the things of heaven.

Brief prayer: Dear St Aloysius, through the merits of the intimate union you had with God, obtain for me the grace for the future to think of nothing but the things of heaven and ever to despise the things of earth.

Practice: Let us resolve today to go to confession and communion as often as possible.

Prayer: O Saint Aloysius, etc.

Fifth Sunday - Fifth day of the novena: St Aloysius' charity towards his neighbour

The love we have for our neighbour is the measure of our love for God. Not only did St Aloysius have a great love for his neighbour, but he knew marvellously well how to bear with the defects of everyone. Even from his earliest years he bore insults, outrages, and ill-treatment from his companions that far from taking offence he rejoiced and loved most of all the one who had made him suffer most. As soon as he found out that there was a poor man at the door he would immediately go to see him and he would run joyfully to the Marchioness, his mother, to have something to give him. Having obtained it he would go himself to give it to the poor beggar. More ardent still was his charity for the spiritual needs of his neighbour. When he was still in the world he used to teach catechism to the ignorant. He always tried to correct their defects and find ways to settle their discords and quarrels. As a Religious he went through the streets of Rome instructing the beggars and bringing them himself to the priests that they might be freed from their sins and receive God's grace. Wanting to do the best he could for his neighbour by giving his own life, he did this too. A plague was raging in Rome and he obtained

permissions to serve the victims of the disease. Aloysius gladly lent his services where they were in the worst condition. Hanging some bags around his neck he went through the city begging alms from door to door, then he returned to the hospital to help the poor wretches, performing the very lowest services for them. It was not long before the Lord satisfied Aloysius' vow and allowed him to contract the terrible disease, which slowly consumed him and eventually took his life. We also, my dear boys, can imitate this great Saint in his work of charity, if we bear patiently with the defects of our companions and forgive those who have offended us. But our charity will be much greater if we instruct them as to what is needed for eternal salvation, or at least take them to places where they can be instructed. How many souls we will then save from perdition and bring back to the path that leads to salvation; and then how many graces we shall receive from God through the intercession of St Aloysius!

Brief prayer: O most loving St Aloysius, inflame my heart with true love of my neighbour that the love of God may ever increase in me.

Practice: Endeavour to lead one of your companions to listen to the Word of God or receive the sacrament of confession.

Prayer: O Saint Aloysius, etc.

Sixth Sunday - Sixth day of the novena: St Aloysius' love of God

In his love of God St Aloysius was truly seraphic. So burning was his love that even when he thought he heard someone speak of God he would almost fall into a swoon. He had a very particular love for Jesus crucified. Every time he was despised by others or suffered a headache or some other pain, he was very happy and desired only to suffer more for the love of God. How great was his love towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! He spent many hours before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament. He spent three days preparing for holy communion, then three days making his thanksgiving. When receiving the Sacred Host he often burst into such a flood of tears that his strength gave way and he was unable to rise from the ground. Why is it that we feel such little

taste for spiritual things? The reason lies in the fact that our hearts are so little inflamed with the love of Jesus crucified and that we receive holy communion so seldom or perhaps unworthily. It is impossible to approach these two inexhaustible fires of God's love and not be inflamed nor feel comfort and contentment. Let us therefore draw near to Jesus in the future with hearts kindled with burning love and fervent acts of faith, hope and sorrow. and we shall also experience the delights and joys of St Aloysius.

Brief prayer: O great Seraph of love, inflame my heart with true Divine love, so that I may desire nothing but to love God and serve him alone.

Practice: Endeavour to say your morning and evening prayers before an image of Jesus crucified and kiss it often. The Supreme Pontiffs have granted many indulgences to those who kiss the crucifix. Try to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament often, especially when exposed for the Forty Hours devotion.

Prayer: O Saint Aloysius, etc.

Three considerations which serve to complete the novena to St Aloysius

Seventh day: St Aloysius gave himself to God at an early age

Usually it is not until we have lost it that we realise the value of divine grace, and many have to remedy the past by weeping for the sins they have committed. It was not so with St Aloysius. As soon as he was able to come to know God he immediately began to love him. His first words were the sweet names of Jesus and Mary. His first inclinations were towards piety. His first delights were exercises of sincere devotion. And thus he lived until his death. "My son," his mother said, "was always a little angel." From his seventh year until the moment of his death he always led a holy life, the life of an angel and the true ideal of perfect holiness. God is pleased with us in a very special way when we serve him in the time of our youth. St Aloysius knew this and the Lord filled him with many graces and he became a great saint. If St Aloysius had waited until old age to give himself to God undoubtedly he would not have become such a great saint, since he died very young and it could even

have happened that he would not have been saved. Why then not consecrate the springtime of our life to God, as he so much wants you to? Why delay from day to day to renounce sin and begin to live as a true Christian? All those now in hell had the intention of turning to God 'later on', but death prevented them and now they are lost forever; they are crying out amidst the flames: "We fools were mistaken: *nos insensati erravimus.*"

Brief prayer: Obtain for me, St Aloysius the grace to lament the time that I have lost and to employ all that God may yet grant me in serving him.

Practice: Flee from bad companions who are the sad reason for so much lost time and every day begin a new life that is pleasing to God.

Prayer: O Saint Aloysius, etc.

Eighth day: St Aloysius, a model of prayer

The gifts and sublime virtues that adorned St Aloysius must also be said to be the fruit of his prayers. Enlightened by God he knew that whatever we ask for our souls is granted us: *petite et accipietis* [Lk 11:9]. As soon as he was able to say the words of a prayer suggested to him by his mother, he loved them greatly. At the age of four he would withdraw from the company of the others and would be found by his mother kneeling on the ground in some corner with his hands joined fervently in prayer. So absorbed was he in the delight he found in talking to God that he could hardly hear those who called him. This manner of life became so perfect as Aloysius grew older that he obtained from heaven the rare privilege of being free from distractions in his prayers. It was a great penance for him to interrupt his prayer. By this means he reached a sublime degree of holiness that is almost without parallel. Let us also strive to acquire this spirit of prayer. In all our needs, sufferings, troubles, and difficult undertakings let us never fail to have recourse to God. But above all let us call trustingly on him for the needs of our soul and we can be sure we will be heard. Let us also beg God to let us know the state of life he wants us to serve him with, that we may spend the time which has been given to us well and on which depends our eternal salvation.

Brief prayer: O glorious St Aloysius, obtain for me a spark of your devotion and an increase in the spirit of prayer and devotion.

Practice: Examine how you have been with prayer in the past and try to be more fervent, mostly by saying some brief prayer to God during the day and to your advocate, St Aloysius.

Prayer: O Saint Aloysius, etc.

Ninth day: St Aloysius' happy death

What causes us most trouble at the point of death is our past sins and the fear of God's punishment in the next life. St Aloysius had nothing of this to fear. His life was a continual thinking about death which he considered as the only means of ending his exile on earth and going to possess the heavenly goods he so much desired. After so many fasts, such severe penances, such long meditations and prayers, in a word, after a truly angelic life, what had he to fear? Hence when he was advised he was dying he sang the *Te Deum*, and filled with happiness kept on saying: "Let us go rejoicing: *Laetantes imus*." God revealed to him the moment of his death and he enjoyed the glory of paradise in an ecstasy which though it lasted the whole night, seemed to him to last only a moment. Then after promising all those present to intercede for them with God, Mary, the other saints, he kissed Jesus crucified and peacefully breathed his last. What a beautiful way to die! Without doubt we admire the wonderful death of St Aloysius. If only we wish it ours can be the same. But be aware that at the point of death we gather what we have sown during our life. If we have done good works, then happy are we, death will find us content, heaven will be opened for us. But woe to us if we have done otherwise. Remorse of conscience and hell await us: *quae seminaverit homo haec et metet* [Gal 6:8].

Brief prayer: O glorious St Aloysius, obtain for me the grace to lead a good life so I can die a holy death.

Practice: Every evening think of what would be your lot if you were to die that night.

Prayer: O Saint Aloysius, etc.

Feast of St Aloysius: The glory of St Aloysius in heaven

The glory which a soul enjoys in heaven is in proportion to the innocence of its life: its penance and its charity. These virtues shone brilliantly in St Aloysius. In his whole life we cannot find one fault that was committed deliberately. No sooner had he reached the use of reason than he turned to God to love him. To innocence he added very rigorous penance. Now, if in heaven even a glass of water given for God is taken into account, what of so much blood shed by St Aloysius who drenched his clothes with blood from his scourging? What of his praying at night when he knelt on the bare ground shivering with cold? What of his austere fasts? What of the many sufferings he devised to punish his innocent flesh? What glory all these must have merited for St Aloysius in heaven! His love for God and his neighbour was so intense that his whole life from the time of the use of reason until death was naught but an act of love for God. No great wonder then that St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, rapt in a vision and contemplating the happiness of the blessed, upon seeing St Aloysius cried out that she had never believed such glory existed in heaven as that which adorned him.

Behold my dear friends, the fruits of a good and virtuous life, a blessed eternity of delight, incomparable glory in seeing God face to face, where we will praise him, bless him together with Mary, the angels and all the blessed forever. Have courage then and let us begin to work early for Our Lord. We shall have to endure some pains in this world, but our reward in the next life will be forever.

Brief prayer: O most merciful St Aloysius, obtain for me the grace to be a saint so that I may join with your glory in heaven.

Practice: Offer the saint all your exercises of devotion today to obtain the grace of final perseverance.

Prayer: O Saint Aloysius, etc.

Second part - Particular exercises of Christian piety

Morning and evening prayers

A good boy, as soon as he awakens, should make the sign of the cross, and offer his heart to God saying: “Jesus, Mary and Joseph I give you my heart and my soul.” Then he should rise and dress himself with the greatest modesty. St Aloysius Gonzaga did not even want to look at his bare feet, because he looked on the virtue of purity as a spotless mirror that is tarnished by the least breath.

While dressing you could say: “Angel of the Lord, by his merciful providence you are my guardian. Watch over me through this day, enlighten my intellect, rule my affections, govern my feelings, so that I will not offend the Lord my God. Amen. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world with out end. Amen.” By saying this prayer you will earn many indulgences.

When you have dressed, kneel down before an image of Jesus crucified or of the Blessed Virgin, and then say the following prayers:

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

“My Lord and my God, I give you my whole heart.

I adore you and I love you with all my heart. I thank you for having created me, made me a Christian and preserved me through the night. I offer you all my actions and I beg you to give me the grace never to offend you, especially today.”

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.”

“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

“I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in

Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary: Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead: He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church: the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen.”

“Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O merciful, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.”

The ten commandments of God are: 1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before Me. 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. 3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day. 4. Honour your father and your mother. 5. You shall not kill. 6. You shall not commit adultery. 7. You shall not steal. 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. 9. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife. 10. You shall not covet your neighbour’s goods.

There are five commandments of the holy Church: 1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation. 2. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church. 3. You shall confess your sins at least once a year and go to communion at Easter. 4. You shall not celebrate weddings on days that are forbidden. 5. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

Act of Faith: “I firmly believe that there is one God who rewards the good and punishes the bad. I believe that there are three really distinct persons in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe that the Son of God became man in the pure womb of the Virgin Mary by the work of the Holy Spirit: as man he died on the cross for our sins, and on the third day he rose again. I believe

these and all the other truths of our holy Faith, because the one true God revealed them to the holy Church and through the Church teaches them to us.”

Act of Hope: “My God you are all powerful, merciful and faithful, I hope that you will give me pardon for my sins, the grace to live and die well, and heaven, that you promised me through the merits of Jesus Christ, if I do the work of a good Christian, as I resolve to do with your help.”

Act of Charity: “My God, I love you above all things, I love you for the good things I have received from you, and I love you for what I hope to receive from you; but I love you mainly because you are an infinitely good God and therefore are worthy to be loved above all things. I love my neighbour as myself for love of you.”

Act of Contrition: “O my God, I am sorry and beg pardon for all my sins and detest them above all things, because they deserve your dreadful punishments, because they have crucified my loving Saviour, Jesus Christ, and most of all because they offend Your infinite goodness. And I firmly resolve by the help of your grace, never to offend you again and carefully to avoid the occasions of sin. Jesus, have mercy on me.” (The reigning Pius IX grants an indulgence of 100 days every time you say: Jesus, have mercy on me).

Throughout the day: “Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, St Aloysius Gonzaga, help me to be a saint.” When you have finished your prayers go to your parents to see what they tell you to do and do not do anything without their permission.

In the evening say the rosary (if you have not already said it during the day) with your brothers and sisters, but do so devoutly, not in too much of a hurry, or in an unbecoming posture. When you do not have enough time to say the rosary, say at least three Hail Marys etc. to obtain her protection. Then say the same prayers as in the morning, adding this prayer to St Aloysius Gonzaga: “O glorious St Aloysius, I humbly beg you to take me under your protection and obtain for me from the Lord the help to practise your virtues in life so I can die a holy death and one day be partaker of your glory in heaven. Amen.”
Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be.

Pause for a few moments to consider the state of your conscience and if you find that your conscience reproaches you on account of some sin, heartily beg Our Lord's forgiveness and promise him to go to confession as soon as possible. While you are undressing imagine that you see the soldiers stripping Jesus of his clothing to whip him. As soon as you are in bed say: "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe my soul in peace with you." Then thinking of the presence of God go to sleep with your hands joined upon your breast.

During the day, or after morning and evening prayers read something from a life of a saint, like Saint Aloysius, or one of the meditations on page 31 [*Seven meditations for each day of the week*], or think of the advice your confessor gave you at your last confession.

During the day a good child should diligently attend to the things regarding his proper state and direct every action to the Lord, saying: "Lord I offer you this work. Give it your holy blessing."

In the morning, at midday and in the evening when you hear the *Angelus bell* kneel (except for Saturday, Sunday and at Easter, when you stand) and say the following prayer:

Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae, et concepit de Spiritu Sancto. Ave Maria etc.

Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. Ave Maria etc.

Et verbum caro factum est, et habitavit, in nobis. Ave Maria etc. Three *Glory be to the Fathers*.

Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genitrix.

Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.

Oremus: *Gratiam tuam, quaesumus, Domine, mentibus nostris infunde, ut qui, angelo nuntiante, Christi filii tui incarnationem cognovimus, per passionem eius et crucem ad resurrectionis gloriam perducamur. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.*

Benedict XIV granted 100 days indulgence every time you do this devotion. There are also some indulgences for someone who accompanies the holy Viaticum, when it is taken to the sick, or if you cannot go, say an *Our Father and Hail Mary*. At the moment of death there are many other indulgences that can be gained when someone goes to church and prays for the dying person and says at least an *Our Father and Hail Mary*. The same goes at the moment of death for whoever says three *Requiem aeternams* in suffrage for that soul.

Before meals make the sign of the cross and say: “Bless us O Lord and these your gifts, which of thy bounty we are about to receive, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.” Before sitting down to his meal one day St Benedict saw his wine glass in which poison had been put by an enemy break into pieces, just as he was blessing himself according to his usual custom.

After meals: “We give you thanks, Almighty God, for all your benefits, who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.”

Practical way of assisting with profit at holy Mass

Notice: Mass is the offering and sacrifice of the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which is offered and distributed under the species of consecrated bread and wine. Understand well, my dear children, that when you assist at Holy Mass it is as if you saw the Divine Saviour leaving Jerusalem and carrying the Cross up to Calvary, where he was crucified after the most barbarous torments, and shedding his blood to the last drop. The priest renews this same sacrifice when he celebrates Holy Mass with the difference however that the sacrifice on Calvary was painful to Jesus and accompanied by the shedding of blood, while that of the Mass is unbloody, that is without the shedding of blood. As one cannot imagine anything more holy, more precious than the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, so, while you are assisting at Mass you ought to be convinced that you are performing a great and holy act, which redounds to the glory of God and the good of your soul. At Mass Jesus Christ comes in person to apply to each one of us in particular the merits of that most adorable blood, shed for us on the Cross at Calvary.

This ought to inspire us with the greatest reverence for Holy Mass together with a lively desire of assisting at it worthily. It is however no uncommon thing to see young people wilfully distracted at Holy Mass, behaving without decorum, attention, respect, often fidgeting and looking about. They renew the crucifixion of Jesus, giving scandal to their companions and causing harm to our holy religion!

To avoid such a great evil, enter with the dispositions of a true Christian in the spirit of Jesus Christ and imagine you see him beginning his awful passion, exposed to the most barbarous treatment for our salvation. During Mass behave with modesty and recollection so that you may avoid distraction. Let your mind, heart and sentiments be intent on honouring God. I recommend to you the practice of assisting at Holy Mass every day even at the cost of making some sacrifice. Saint Isidore, who was a farm labourer, used to rise very early in order to go to Mass so that he might get back in time to do his master's work. In this way he drew upon himself many blessings and all his work succeeded very well.

At the beginning of Mass: "My Lord Jesus Christ, I offer you this holy sacrifice for your greater glory and for the spiritual good of my soul. Grant me the grace that my heart and my soul may have no other thought than of you. My soul, drive away every idle thought and prepare me to assist at this Holy Mass with the greatest recollection."

At the Confiteor: "I confess to almighty God, to Blessed Mary ever Virgin, to Blessed Michael the Archangel, to Blessed John the Baptist, to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed. Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, Blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul and all the saints to pray to the Lord our God for me."

As the priest goes up to the altar: "May all the earth adore you O Lord and sing praise to your holy name. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen."

At the Kyrie eleison: “My Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on this poor soul of mine.”

At the Gloria: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will, because God alone is worthy to be praised and glorified forever.”

At the Oremus: “Receive, O Lord, the prayers addressed to you for us by the priest. Grant me the grace to live and die as a good Christian in the bosom of holy Mother Church.”

At the Epistle: “Inflame O Lord my heart with your holy love, so that I may love and serve you all the days of my life.”

At the Gospel: “I am ready, O Lord, to confess the faith of the Gospel at the cost of my life, and to confess the great truths contained therein. Give me the grace to do your will and to flee from sin and all occasions of sin.”

At the Credo: “My God I firmly believe all that you have revealed to your Church because you are infallible truth. Increase in me the spirit of lively faith, firm hope and ardent charity.

At the Offertory: “I offer to you, my God, through the hands of the priest, the bread and wine which are to be changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. I offer to you at the same time my heart and my tongue, so that for the future I may desire nothing and say nothing, but what regards your holy service.”

At the Orate fratres: “Receive, O Lord, this sacrifice to the honour and glory of your holy name, to my advantage and for that of the holy Church.”

At the Preface: “Raise my heart up to God O my soul and consider what Jesus Christ has suffered on account of your sins.”

At the Sanctus: “O my soul join in spirit with the chorus of the angels and sing a single hymn of glory saying: ‘Holy, holy holy Lord, God of hosts.’ May you be glorified and blessed forever.”

At the Commemoration of the living: “I beseech you, Jesus, to bless my parents, friends, benefactors and even my enemies; remember especially the

sovereign Pontiff, the whole church and all authority spiritual or temporal. May there be peace, harmony and blessing.”

At the elevation of the Host: “My Lord Jesus, prostrate with all humility, I adore you and firmly believe that you are present in this sacred host. O wondrous mystery that God should come down from heaven for my salvation! Blessed and praised every moment be the most Holy and Divine Sacrament.” (100 days indulgence every time).

At the elevation of the Chalice: “My Lord, Jesus Christ, I adore the blood you shed for the salvation of my soul. I offer it to you in memory of his passion, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. Receive it in expiation for my sins and for the needs of holy Church.”

At the commemoration of the dead: “Remember, O Lord, the souls in purgatory especially those of my relatives and benefactors, spiritual and temporal. Free them as soon as possible from those torments and grant to all the glory of paradise.”

At the Our Father: “I thank you, my Jesus, for this wonderful prayer you have given me. Grant me the grace to say it with the attention and devotion it deserves. Grant also those graces which the celebrant asks of you in it for me, and above all that I may not fall into mortal sin which is the greatest and only evil that can ruin me for all eternity.” Say the *Our Father*, etc.

At the Agnus Dei: “Jesus, Immaculate Lamb, I beseech you to have mercy on me and on all the people in the world so that they may return to you and enjoy the true peace that is given to those who live in your grace.”

At the Domine non sum dignus: “O Lord, because of the number of my sins I am not worthy that you should come to dwell in my soul; say but the word and all my sins will be forgiven. I am very sorry for having offended you. Grant me the grace to never displease you again.”

At the communion: If you are not going to receive Holy Communion sacramentally, at least make a spiritual communion, which consists in an ardent desire of receiving Jesus into your heart, and say: “My dear Jesus, since I cannot receive your holy Sacrament this morning, come and take possession

of me by your grace, that I may always live in your holy love. The grace that I particularly ask is to be able to avoid bad companions, because if I have the fortune to associate only with good companions, I too will be good and will save my soul.”

At the Postcommunion: “I thank you, my God for having offered yourself as a sacrifice for me. Grant that I may from this moment give myself wholly to you. Sorrows, fatigue, heat, cold, hunger, thirst and even death I will willingly accept from your hands. I am ready to sacrifice everything and to lose everything if only I can fulfil your holy Law.”

At the Blessing: “Bless O Lord my good resolutions. Bless me by the hand of your minister and grant that the effects of this blessing may always remain with me. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

At the last Gospel: “Eternal Word, made flesh to save my soul, I adore you with deep respect and I thank you for having suffered for me. Grant me the grace to preserve the fruits of this Holy Mass; forgive me if I have not assisted with due attention and grant that when I leave this church my eyes, tongue and all my senses will recoil in horror at anything opposed to the truth of your holy Gospel.”

Say a *Hail Holy Queen* to the Blessed Virgin and an *Our Father* to St Aloysius so they may help you keep the resolutions you have made and especially avoid improper conversations.

Practical way of approaching the sacrament of confession worthily

Dear boys, if you do not learn how to confess well when you are young, you run the risk of never learning how to do so again during your lifetime, and as a result, of never going to Confession as you should, which will be harmful to you and could even put your eternal salvation at risk. But firstly I would like you to be convinced that anything you may have on your conscience will be forgiven in Confession, so long as you approach it with the correct dispositions.

The first of these is the examination of conscience, meaning that you go back over what you have done to find out what was good and what was sinful. Begin by *asking the Lord to enlighten you* saying: “My Lord Jesus Christ, my Redeemer, I put myself at your feet and beg you to have pity and mercy on me. Enlighten me with your grace so that I may recognise my sins as I would if I were to present myself to you at the time of judgement. My God, may I detest them with true sorrow and may I be forgiven through the infinite merits of the most precious blood of Jesus Christ, shed for me on the cross. Most Holy Virgin, St Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for me that I may make a good Confession.”

Examine yourself to see whether you have spoken badly of religious matters; or if you have blasphemed, taken the Lord’s name in vain. Did you attend Mass on Sundays or holy days? Have you performed works of mercy on those days or did you work instead, as is forbidden? Examine whether you have been disobedient at home, or to your superiors or teachers, or if you have answered them back. Have you acted badly in church or outside, especially through bad talk or by giving bad advice? Have you stolen anything at home or outside? Note that ‘stealing’ also includes the misuse of time that should be spent on things you have been asked to do. Have you thought of, listened to, done or allowed others to do or even just considered things that are dishonest? I must tell you that this examination is not only about discovering what sins, but you should also say the number of times you committed this or that other sin. For example: it is not enough to say: I disobeyed my parents, but you should add, I disobeyed them two or three times, that is give a precise or an approximate number of times your were disobedient. Do the same with other sins.

These are the main things you should examine your conscience about. But again, it is not enough just to make a good Confession. You must also *be truly sorry* and seriously consider that sin is a real evil. Sin opens up hell beneath your feet. What an evil; how terrible this is! It locks you out of heaven: what a terrible loss this is! It makes you God’s enemy and slaves of the devil. Every one of your sins is the cause of acute pain to the loving heart of Jesus, who was whipped for you, crowned with thorns, and shed his blood on the cross; and you treated him this way, looked down on him, did these things. Sin is

an offence against the God who is so good to you and so loving by nature. He created you and sustains you in life. Holiness, the air you breathe, the bread you eat are all gifts that God gives you. He has preserved you from constant misfortune and from hell itself which you have so often deserved. And your response to his goodness has so often been monstrous ingratitude by committing these sins and offending him.

In view of the great evil you do by sinning, you should be very sorry for whenever you have offended God because it is worse than any other terrible thing that might have happened to you, or than any punishment you might have received from your parents or others. Your sorrow should lead you to *a good resolution*, a promise never to offend God again in future. For example: you have said bad words, or were disobedient, so if your confession is to be real you should promise the Lord that you will never commit these sins again even at the cost of suffering.

After these reflections, make an act of contrition and then humbly approach your confessor, and if you need to wait, don't waste time talking or smiling or looking around, but recollect yourself and wait until it is your turn. I must warn you *never to remain silent about some sins in confession*. Before you sinned, the devil was telling you that doing such and such was not a bad thing; afterwards he does what he can to make you feel ashamed so you will keep quiet about it and make a sacrilegious confession. So never be afraid of what your confessor may think. He will be happy knowing that you confide in him about what you have done. You can also be certain that the priest can never tell anyone what you have confessed, nor can he make use of anything you have said even if it means his avoiding death. So courage then, and first confess the sin that weighs upon you most.

Once you have entered the confessional make the sign of the cross and say: "Bless me Father, for I have sinned." Then tell him how long it is since you last confessed and tell him the state of your conscience, giving him the number and kind of your sins. When you have finished, listen to what he tells you, and while he is giving you absolution, consider that this is precisely the moment when the blood of Jesus Christ is being shed for you. Then make a sincere act

of contrition. When you have finished your confession, remain by yourself and thank the Lord for the good things he has done for you.

After Confession. Heartily renew the act of sorrow you made in Confession, promising the Lord that you want to do everything suggested by the confessor to avoid falling into sin again and make these three resolutions: 1. To behave very well in church; 2. To be readily obedient to your parents and to your other superiors; 3. To be ready to do all of your duties according to your state in life and that you want to work for the glory of God and the salvation of your soul. Devoutly say this

Prayer, “Oh my God, how grateful I should be for the mercy you have shown me in forgiving all my sins! You love me and may you love me even more if I am faithful in serving you. Oh! I really do want to make amends. I promise to avoid all occasions of sin. I will never forget that you are everywhere, and that you see and know everything I do and think. Help me and may I die rather than offend you again. Mary, my dearest mother, never let me offend my good Jesus again through sin. My guardian angel, all the saints, help me and watch over me always.”

Three Angel of God and three Glory be.

Preparing for Holy Communion

Before presenting yourself to receive the adorable body of Jesus Christ you should consider whether you have the correct disposition of heart. Know then that the child who does not want to make amends after sinning, meaning that he wants to offend the Lord again, is not worthy of being enriched by grace; instead he becomes even more guilty and worthy of greater punishment.

On the other hand if you do correct your ways, go and receive the food of the angels and you will give Jesus Christ much pleasure. When he was on this earth he invited people to follow him, but showed special kindness to good and innocent children, saying: “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them”, and he blessed them. So heed his loving invitation and go not only to receive his blessing, but to him in person.

Prayers before Communion

“My Lord Jesus Christ, I keenly believe that you are really present in the Blessed Sacrament in your body and blood, soul and divinity. Lord, I adore you in this Sacrament and I acknowledge that you are my creator, redeemer, sovereign, master, my highest and only good.”

“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed. Lord I detest all my sins. They make me unworthy of receiving you into my heart but with your grace I resolve not to commit them in future, to avoid the occasions of sin and to do penance for them.”

“Lord I hope that by giving yourself totally to me in this divine Sacrament you will show mercy on me and grant me all the graces I need for my eternal salvation. Lord, you are infinitely lovable, you are my Father, my Redeemer and my God, therefore I love you with all my heart above all things and because of your love I love my neighbour as myself and heartily forgive anyone who has offended me.”

“Lord, I earnestly want you to come into my heart, so that I may never be separated from you and that you may always remain with me through your divine grace.”

“Immaculate Virgin, through the love you showed to your child Jesus, make me always worthy of receiving him; and when I approach the altar to receive the sacred host, I will consider that I am receiving him from your very hands accompanied by the choirs of angels who praise and bless him in Heaven. My Guardian Angel, St Aloysius Gonzaga, my special protectors, pray to the Lord for me and obtain for me the grace of making a holy Communion. *Omnes sancti et sanctae Dei, intercedite pro nobis.*”

Then pause for a while to consider who you are to receive him. This is Jesus Christ, God so great and of infinite majesty, God of kindness and mercy who comes to you, poor miserable creature, poor sinner that you are; and he comes to be your father, brother, friend and spouse of your soul. He wants to heal you, to be your teacher and your food. Oh how good he is! Oh such love! Oh such infinite mercy!

After Communion

“My God, creator and redeemer of my soul, I adore you with profound respect and deepest reverence. Oh how great is your kindness! Such pure majesty, so holy and infinite but you come in person to visit such a miserable creature, a handful of dust, an ungrateful sinner. My dear and good Jesus, I thank you for such a great favour, I praise you and bless you within me. All the power of my being, all the sentiments of my body, exult in the presence of your God. One heart, O my good Jesus, is too little to love you, praise you and thank you for so many benefits and especially for having given me as food for my soul your body, blood, soul and divinity.”

“If only I had the heart of the Seraphim in Heaven, so that my heart could burn forever with the love of my God who has deigned to choose my poor soul for his dwelling, for his delight! Ah, dear Jesus, how sweet and precious is this visit of yours, this time spent with me, this union with you!”

“I am not worthy of such great favour, nor do I know what to offer as thanksgiving but relying on your infinite merits I offer you these very same merits. I thank you with all my heart and I claim that in the future you will always be my hope, my comfort, my only wealth, my pleasure, rest for my soul. You are my only good, my possession, and my heart’s treasure. I would like to be able to give you all the praise and glory the Saints give you in Heaven; but since I cannot do everything I offer you my entire self; I offer you my will so that it may want nothing other than what pleases you; I offer you my hands, my feet, my eyes, my tongue, my mouth, my mind, my heart: I offer them all to you. Watch over all my feelings so that every thought and action may have no other aim than to do what is to your greatest glory and to the spiritual advantage of my soul.”

“Most holy Virgin, dear mother of my Jesus, Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, my Guardian Angel, obtain this grace for me, my family, my companions, friends and enemies, and especially for the people who are here in church today.”

“O Virgin Mary, believing that I am yours I consecrate all of my life to you, my eyes, ears, tongue, heart and all my being. I want to be all yours;

defend me as your own. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my soul with all my heart. Jesus, Mary and Joseph assist me in my last agony. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe my soul in peace with you.”

Visit to the Blessed Sacrament

Always remember, my dear young friends, that Jesus is always present in the Most Holy Sacrament and that he has an abundance of graces ready to bestow on anyone who asks him for them. One day when St John Berchmans was visiting the Blessed Sacrament, he saw Our Lord in the form of a little child holding in his hands a crown of roses. The saint asked what the roses meant and received this reply from Jesus: “These roses are the graces which I give to those who come to ask for them.”

Prayers during a visit to the Blessed Sacrament

“My Lord Jesus Christ, who for the love you bear for us remain day and night in this Sacrament, full of mercy and love, inviting, awaiting and receiving all those who come to visit you, I believe that you are present in the Sacred Host which is your body, blood, soul and divinity. I adore you humbly and thank you for all the good things you have given me, especially for having given me yourself in this Sacrament, for having given me your holy Mother Mary as my advocate and for having called me to visit you in this church. I salute your most loving heart and I desire to do so for three reasons: 1. In thanksgiving for this great gift; 2. To atone for the injuries you have received in this Sacrament from people without faith, heretics and all bad Christians; 3. To adore you in all places where you are least honoured and most neglected in this Holy Sacrament.”

“O my Jesus, I love you with all my heart. I am sorry for having hitherto displeased your infinite goodness. I resolve with the help of your grace never to offend you again. From now on I wish to be all yours; do with me whatever you wish, I only ask for your love, perseverance in doing good and perfect fulfilment of your will.”

“I recommend to you the souls in purgatory, especially those who were most devoted to the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Most Holy; I recommend to you also all poor sinners. I unite all my affections with those of your most loving Heart and thus united I offer them to the eternal Father and I beseech him in your name to accept and hear them. May the most holy and Blessed Sacrament be praised at every moment.” Three *Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory* etc.

Chaplet of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Say this chaplet to the Divine Heart of Jesus to make up for the outrages he receives in the Holy Eucharist from heretics, unfaithful people and unworthy Christians. Either alone or with others if you can say this prayer before an image of the Sacred Heart or before the Blessed Sacrament.

V/ Deus, in adiutorium meum intende.

R/ Domine, ad adiuvandum me festina. Gloria Patri etc.

1. “O most amiable heart of my Jesus, I humbly adore you in the Blessed Sacrament where you show such wondrous mercy and sweetness to all poor sinners. I grieve to see you so ungratefully requited and I will endeavour to console you for the many insults you receive in the most Holy Eucharist from heretics, unfaithful people and unworthy Christians.” *Our Father* etc.

2. “O most humble Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I adore your profound humility in this Blessed Sacrament, hiding your divinity for us under the species of bread and wine. Grant I beseech you, my Jesus that such a beautiful virtue be in my heart too; meanwhile I will try to make up for all the offences you receive in the most Holy Eucharist from heretics, unfaithful people and unworthy Christians.” *Our Father* etc.

3. “O Heart of my Jesus who has suffered so much, I adore you in your passion so ardently embraced for love of us and in the Blessed Sacrament where you receive, as you foresaw, so many injuries in return for your love. My Jesus I resolve to make reparation with my own life; I would like to prevent

those offences that unfortunately you receive in the Eucharist from heretics, unfaithful people and unworthy Christians.” *Our Father* etc.

4. “O most patient Heart of my Jesus, I humbly venerate your invincible patience in bearing for love of me such great pain on the Cross and so many insults in the Eucharist. O my dear Jesus! Since I am not able to wash with my blood those places where you were so cruelly treated in both of these Divine Mysteries, I promise you, good and kind Jesus, to use every means in my power to make up for the many outrages your Divine Heart has received, and that you receive in the Eucharist from heretics, unfaithful people and unworthy Christians.” *Our Father* etc.

5. “O Heart of my Jesus, who so lovingly condescended to institute the most Holy Eucharist, I adore you and thank you for the immense love you bore us by giving us your divine body and blood as food. Our hearts should be consumed at the thought of such immense charity. O my dear Jesus fill my heart with sorrow and compassion and grant that I may console you for the offences you receive in the Blessed Sacrament from heretics, unfaithful people and unworthy Christians.” *Our Father* etc.

6. “O Heart of Jesus thirsting for our salvation, I humbly venerate the love which has prompted you to sacrifice yourself so completely for us on the Cross, renewed every day on the altars in Holy Mass. Why are not our hearts burning with gratitude at the sight of so much love? Unfortunately not, my God; I promise to do all in my power to make up for so many outrages you have received in this mystery of love from heretics, unfaithful people and unworthy Christians.” *Our Father* etc. (This exercise can serve as a novena for the Feasts of Our Lord Jesus Christ).

Prayer to the most Sacred Heart of Mary

“God save you, august Queen of Peace, Mother of God; by the Sacred Heart of your Son, Jesus, prince of peace, grant that his anger may soften and he may reign over us in peace. Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I

fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee do I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me.” (*Pius IX grants an indulgence of 300 days every time you devoutly say this prayer*).

“Sweet and good Jesus, I do not wish to offend you again.”

“Sacred Heart of Mary, grant that I may save my soul. Sacred Heart of Jesus, grant that I may love you more and more.”

...¹¹

Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady

Preparation. Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, let us make our usual exercises by meditating on the bitter sorrows that the Blessed Virgin Mary suffered in the life and death of her beloved Son, our Divine Saviour. Imagine that we are close to Jesus hanging from the Cross and that his afflicted Mother tells each of us: Come and see if there is any sorrow equal to mine. Convinced that this merciful Mother wishes to grant us special protection and meditating on her sorrows we invoke divine help with the following prayers:

Veni, Sancte Spiritus, reple tuorum corda fidelium et tui amoris in eis ignem accende.

Vl. Emitte spiritum tuum et creabuntur,

R. Et renovatis faciem terrae.

Vl. Memento congregationis tuae,

R. Quam possedisti ab initio.

Vl. Domine, exaudi orationem meam,

R. Et clamor meus ad te veniat.

Oremus: Mentis nostras; quaesumus, Domine, lumine tuae claritatis illustra, ut videre possimus, quae agenda sunt, et quae recta sunt agere valeamus. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. R. Amen.

¹¹ This is followed by the mysteries of the Rosary and the Litany of Our Lady, which we leave out here.

First sorrow: *The Prophecy of Simeon*. The Blessed Virgin Mary suffered the first sorrow when she presented her only Son, Jesus, in the Temple. As she laid him in the arms of the holy man, Simeon, he said to her: And your own soul a sword shall pierce; meaning the passion and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. An *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

Second sorrow: *Flight into Egypt*. The Blessed Virgin suffered this sorrow when they had to fly to Egypt because of cruel Herod's persecution who impiously sought to kill her beloved Son. An *Our Father* etc.

Third sorrow: *Jesus lost in the Temple*. The Blessed Virgin suffered her third sorrow at the time of the Pasch after she went with her spouse Joseph and her beloved Son to Jerusalem. On her way back to her poor home she missed her Son and sought him sorrowing for three days. An *Our Father* etc.

Fourth sorrow: *Meeting Jesus carrying the Cross*. The Blessed Virgin suffered her fourth sorrow when she met her beloved Son carrying a heavy Cross upon his delicate shoulders on the way to Mount Calvary to be crucified for our salvation. An *Our Father* etc.

Fifth sorrow: *Crucifixion of Jesus*. The Blessed Virgin suffered her fifth sorrow when she beheld her Son Jesus lifted up on the hard Cross shedding blood from every member of his sacred body. An *Our Father* etc.

Sixth sorrow: *The descent from the Cross*. The Blessed Virgin suffered her sixth sorrow when her beloved Son, after being pierced with a lance and taken down from the Cross after death, was placed in her arms. An *Our Father* etc.

Seventh sorrow: *The burial of Jesus*. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady and advocate of poor sinners, suffered her seventh sorrow when she accompanied the sacred body of her son to the tomb. An *Our Father* etc.

Say 3 *Hail Marys* in profound veneration of the tears shed by the Blessed Virgin in all her sorrows to obtain true sorrow for our sins. *Hail Mary* etc.

At the end of this chaplet sing the hymn: *Stabat Mater dolorosa* ...

Vl. Ora pro nobis, Virgo dolorosissima!

R. *Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.*

Oremus: *Interveniatur pro nobis, quaesumus, Domine Iesu Christe, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae apud tuam clementiam beata Virgo Maria Mater tua, cuius sacratissimam animam in hora tuae passionis doloris gladius pertransivit. Per te, Iesu Christe salvator mundi, qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum.* R. Amen.

The Seven Joys of Mary in heaven

1. Rejoice O Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Spirit, with the joy that is yours in heaven, because through your purity and virginity you have been exalted above all the angels and raised above all the saints. *Hail Mary* etc. *Glory* etc.

2. Rejoice O Mother of God with the joy you experience in heaven, because as the sun illumines the whole earth here below so do you adorn and render all heaven resplendent with your radiant beauty. *Hail Mary* etc.

3. Rejoice O Daughter of God, on account of the happiness you enjoy in heaven. All the choirs of Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, and all the blessed spirits honour you, revere you and acknowledge you as the Mother of their Creator and are most obedient at the least sign from you. *Hail Mary* etc.

4. Rejoice O Handmaid of the Most Holy Trinity, on account of the joy you experience in heaven, whereby all the graces you ask of your divine Son are instantly granted you; even more so as St Bernard says, that no grace is granted here on earth without first passing through your most holy hands. *Hail Mary* etc.

5. Rejoice O most August Queen, because you alone did merit to sit at the right hand of your most holy Son, who sits at the right hand of the Eternal Father. *Hail Mary* etc.

6. Rejoice O Refuge of Sinners, comforter of the afflicted, for the heights to which you have been elevated in heaven, so that all those who praise and revere you in this world, the Eternal Father will reward with his holy grace and his immense glory. *Hail Mary* etc.

7. Rejoice O Mother, Spouse and Daughter of God, because all the graces, glories, joys and privileges that you now enjoy in heaven, far from diminishing will continue to increase until the day of judgement and endure through all eternity. *Hail Mary* etc.

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin: O glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of my Lord, source of all our consolation, I beseech you through these your joys which with all devotion I now recall to mind, obtain for me from God the remission of my sins and the continual aid of his holy grace. May I never become unworthy of your protection but may have the happiness of receiving the heavenly blessings which you obtain and bestow upon all who devoutly meditate upon the joys that fill your Immaculate Heart, O immortal Queen of heaven.

Devotion to our Guardian Angel

1. “My Guardian Angel, you did not disdain to take good care of me, a miserable sinner! I beseech you, animate my soul with a lively faith, firm hope and an ardent charity, so that despising the world I may think only of loving and serving God.” *Three Angel of Gods and three Glory bes.*

2. “O most noble prince of the Heavenly Court, you take such good care of my poor soul. Defend it from the snares and assaults of the devil, that I may never more offend my God.” *Three Angel of Gods* etc.

3. “O most glorious spirit who watches over my poor soul with such tender and constant care obtain for me the grace ever to be devoted to you, and faithfully to put into practice the counsels which you suggest to my mind and inspire in my heart.” *Three Angel of Gods* etc.

4. “O most loving guardian of my soul who humbled yourself so much in descending from heaven to minister to a creature so vile, grant that I too may obtain a love of true humility fully persuaded that I can do nothing without your help and the grace of God.” *Three Angel of Gods* etc.

5. “O most kind spirit who labours so much for the salvation of my soul, obtain for me from God that at the end of my life my soul may pass from your hands into the loving arms of Jesus.” *Three Angel of Gods* etc.

Prayer: “O most loving Guardian, since all you do for me in this world has no other purpose than the salvation of my soul grant I beseech you, that when I am on my deathbed, deprived of my senses, and plunged into the abyss of agony, you will protect my soul as it is about to leave my body to appear before its Creator; defend it from its enemies and lead it victorious with you to enjoy forever the glory of paradise. Amen.”

Short form of the Way of the Cross

Vl. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

Oremus: Respice, quaesumus, Domine, super hanc familiam tuam, pro qua Dominus noster Iesus Christus non dubitavit manibus tradi nocentium et crucis subire tormentum. Qui tecum vivit et regnat in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Act of contrition: My Redeemer and my God, behold me at your feet, repenting of my sins with all my heart, because they are an offence to your infinite goodness. I would rather die than offend you again because I love you above all things. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant that the Lord’s wounds may be impressed on my heart.

Stabat Mater dolorosa / iuxta crucem lacrymosa / dum pendebat Filius.

Station I

Vl. Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem, et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

The first station presents us with the Praetorium of Pilate where our Divine redeemer is condemned to death. Consider O my soul how Pilate condemned to the death of the Cross Jesus the most innocent, and how he willingly submitted to this sentence in order that we might be free from eternal damnation. Oh Jesus! I thank you for so much love and I beseech you to cancel the sentence of eternal death which I deserve for my sins, so that I may be made worthy to enjoy eternal life. *Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be etc. Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant that the Lord's wounds may be impressed on my heart.

Cuius animam gementem, / contristatam et dolentem / pertransivit gladius.

Station II

Vl. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

The second station recalls to our minds how Jesus was loaded with the heavy weight of the Cross. Consider O my soul how Jesus took upon his shoulders the Cross which was made heavy by your numerous and grievous sins. Oh Jesus! Pardon me and give me the grace not to wound you again for the rest of my life by sin, but rather to bear constantly the cross of true repentance. Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

O quam tristis et afflicta / fuit illa benedicta / Mater Unigeniti!

Station III

Vl. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

The third station represents to us how Jesus fell the first time beneath the weight of the Cross. Consider O my soul, how Jesus, not being able to bear the heavy weight, fell beneath the Cross thus experiencing excessive pain. My Jesus, my repeated falls into sin are the cause of your suffering. Grant I beseech you, the grace never to renew your pain by any more sins. Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Quae maerebat et dolebat, / pia mater dum videbat / nati paenas inclyti.

Station IV

Vl. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

This fourth station represents to us the sorrowful meeting between the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son. Consider O my soul how deeply wounded was the heart of Our Blessed Lady at the sight of Jesus, and the Heart of Jesus on seeing his Sorrowing Mother. You were the cause of this sorrow for Jesus and Mary by your sins. Oh Jesus! Oh Mary! Grant that I may feel true sorrow for my sins, so that I may repent of them all my life and may merit your pity at the hour of my death. Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Quis est homo, qui non fleret / matrem Christi si videret / in tanto supplicio?

Station V

Vl. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

This fifth station represents to us how Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the Cross after Jesus. Consider O my soul how Jesus had no longer the strength to carry the Cross, and the Jews out of a pretended compassion relieved him of its enormous weight. Oh Jesus! It is I who should bear the Cross on account of my sins. Grant that I may at least accompany you by bearing for your love the cross of all adversities. *Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be* etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Quis non posset contristari / piam matrem contemplari / dolentem cum Filio?

Station VI

VI. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

This sixth station represents to us Veronica as she wiped the face of Jesus. Consider, O my soul, the homage rendered to Jesus by this pious woman and how he at once rewarded it by imprinting his sacred countenance on the cloth. My Jesus, grant me the grace to cleanse my soul from every stain and to imprint on my mind and heart your most sacred passion. *Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be* etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Pro peccatis suae gentis / vidit Iesum in tormentis / et flagellis subditum.

Station VII

VI. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

This seventh station represents to us the second fall of Jesus, which increased his torture and ignominy. Consider O my soul, the sufferings of Jesus in this new fall, inflicted by my repeated falls into sin. Oh Jesus, I am covered with confusion before you and I beg you to give me the grace so to rise from my falls that I may never again relapse into them. *Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be* etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Vidit suum dulcem natum / morientem desolatum / dum emisit spiritum.

Station VIII

VI. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

This eighth station represents to us when Jesus met the women who were weeping over him. Consider O my soul, how Jesus told these women not to cry over him but over themselves, in order that we might learn to grieve for

our sins before feeling sorry for his sufferings. Oh Jesus, grant me the tears of true contrition so that my sympathy with your sorrows may be meritorious. *Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be* etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Eia, Mater fons amoris, / me sentire vim doloris / fac, ut tecum lugeam.

Station IX

VI. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

This ninth station represents to us the third fall of Jesus, bringing him fresh wounds and further sufferings. Consider O my soul, how the good Jesus fell a third time because our obstinacy in sin has caused us to fall so repeatedly. Oh Jesus, I am determined to renounce sin once and for all to bring you consolation. Grant that I may strengthen my resolution and make it effective through your grace. *Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be* etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Fac ut ardeat cor meum / in amando Christum Deum, / ut sibi complaceam.

Station X

VI. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

This tenth station represents to us how Jesus, as soon as he reached Mount Calvary, was stripped of his clothing and given bitter gall to drink. Consider O my soul, the deep confusion of Jesus on being stripped of his clothes and his suffering at being forced to drink the bitter mixture of gall and myrrh. He suffered because of my immodesty and intemperance. Oh Jesus, I am sorry for the many liberties I have taken in the past and resolve never more to afflict you in such a manner but to practise modesty and temperance. This I am confident of doing with the help of your grace. *Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be* etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Sancta Mater, istud agas, / Crucifixi fige plagas / cordi meo valide.

Station XI

Vl. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

This eleventh station represents to us how Jesus was nailed to the Cross in the presence of his afflicted Mother. Consider O my soul, the racking pain that Jesus suffered as he felt the nails pierce his hands and his feet. Oh the cruelty of those Jews! Oh what love Jesus has for us! My Jesus, you suffered so much for me yet I avoid every pain. Grant that I may nail my will to your holy Cross so that it may be resolved never again to offend you but rather to suffer every pain for your love. *Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be* etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Tui nati vulnerati / tam dignati pro me pati / paenas mecum divide.

Station XII

Vl. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

This twelfth station represents to us the death of Jesus on the Cross. Consider O my soul, that after three hours of agony our redeemer died upon the Cross for our salvation. My Jesus, very justly should I spend the remainder of my life for you who sacrificed yours amidst such tortures for me. This I resolve to do. Help me by your grace through the merits of your death. *Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be* etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Fac me tecum pie flere, / Crucifixo condolere / donec ego vixero.

Station XIII

Vl. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

The thirteenth station represents for us how the most sacred body of Jesus was taken down from the Cross and laid in the arms of his Blessed Mother. Consider O my soul, the overwhelming grief of Mary as she beheld her divine Son in her arms. Ah most holy Virgin! Through the merits of Jesus obtain for me the grace never to renew the reason for his death in my life, but that he may always live in me by his divine grace. *Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be* etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Iuxta crucem tecum stare / et me tibi sociare / in planctu desidero.

Last station

Vl. Adoramus te, Christe et benedicimus tibi.

R. Quia per sanctam Crucem et mortem tuam redemisti mundum.

This last station represents to us the burial of our Redeemer. Consider O my soul, how the most sacred Body of Jesus was buried in the new sepulchre prepared for him. My Jesus, I thank you for all you have suffered for me and I beg of you the grace to prepare my heart well to receive you well in Holy Communion and thus to make my soul your habitation forever. *Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be* etc. *Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.*

Holy Mother, grant etc.

Quando corpus morietur, / fac ut animae donetur / paradisi gloria.

Vl. Salva nos, Christe Salvator, per virtutem crucis.

R. Qui salvasti Petrum in mari, miserere nobis.

Oremus: *Deus, qui unigeniti Filii tui pretioso sanguine vivificae crucis vexillum sanctificare voluisti, concede, quaesumus, eos qui eiusdem sanctae crucis gaudent honore, tua quoque ubique protectione gaudere. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. R. Amen.*

VI. Divinum auxilium maneat semper nobiscum.

R. Amen

Prayer of Pope Benedict XIII to implore from God the grace of not dying an unprepared for death

“Most merciful Lord Jesus, by your agony and sweat of blood and by your death deliver me, I beseech you, from a sudden and unprovided death.

Most benign Jesus, by your cruel and ignominious scourging and crowning with thorns, by your Cross and most bitter Passion, and by your goodness, I humbly beseech you not to let me die an unprovided death nor to pass away from this life without the sacraments.

My most loving Jesus, my Lord and my God, by all your sufferings and sorrows, by your precious blood and most sacred wounds and by your last words, : *Deus, Deus meus, ut qui dereliquisti me?* [Mk 15:34]. and by that loud cry: *Father into your hands I commend my spirit;* I most earnestly entreat you to preserve me from a sudden death. Your hands, O my Redeemer, have entirely made and fashioned me. I beg you to give me time for repentance and a happy death in your grace, that I may love, praise and bless you for eternity.

My Lord Jesus Christ, by those five wounds which you received on the Cross for love of us, help your servants redeemed by your most precious Blood... *Sanguinisque pretiosi quem in mundi pretium.* Amen.”

Prayer to St Joseph

“O most glorious St Joseph, fortunate spouse of Mary, you who merited being the guardian of the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, and embracing him tenderly already enjoyed heaven in anticipation! Obtain for me from the Lord complete forgiveness of my sins, the grace to imitate your virtues, so that I may always walk on the way that leads to heaven. Since you merited having Jesus and Mary around your bed at the point of death and sweetly breathed your last in their arms, I beg you to defend me from the enemies of my soul at the end of my life; so that consoled by the hope of flying with you to possess

eternal glory in heaven I may breathe my last pronouncing the holy names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.”

Prayer for a happy death

“Lord Jesus, God of goodness and Father of mercies, I approach you with a contrite and humble heart: to you I recommend my last hour and the decision of my eternal doom.

When my feet, benumbed, shall warn me that my mortal course is drawing to a close, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my hands, cold and trembling, shall no longer be able to clasp the crucifix, and against my will I am forced to let it fall on my bed of suffering, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my eyes, dim and troubled at the approach of death shall fix themselves on you, my last and only support, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my lips, cold and quivering, shall pronounce for the last time your adorable name, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my face, pale and livid, shall inspire the bystanders with compassion and awe, and my hair, bathed in the sweat of death, and stiffening on my head, shall forebode my approaching end, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my ears, soon to be shut forever to the words of men, shall be open to hear your voice pronouncing the sentence by which my condition is to be fixed irrevocably for all eternity, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my imagination, agitated by fearful and horrible spectres, shall be drowned in an abyss of anguish; and my spirit, troubled with the memory of my ill-doings, and the fear of your justice, shall wrestle with the powers of darkness, who will strive to take from me the consoling sight of your mercies and plunge me into the pit of despair, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my weak heart, weighed down with the pain of my illness, shall be overtaken with the horror of death, and be exhausted by the efforts it has made against the enemies of my salvation, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When I shall have shed my last tear, the sign of my dissolution, receive it as a sacrifice of expiation so that I may expire a victim of penance, and then in that dreadful moment, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When those present encircling my bed shall be moved with compassion for me, and invoke your clemency on my behalf, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When I shall have lost the use of my senses and when the world shall have vanished from my sight; when my agonising soul shall feel the sorrows of death, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my last sigh shall summon my soul from my body, accept it as a sign of holy impatience to come to you, and you, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When my soul, trembling on my lips, shall bid adieu to this world, and leave my body lifeless, pale and cold, receive this separation as a homage which I willingly pay to your Divine Majesty and then, *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

When at length my soul, admitted to your presence, shall first behold the immortal splendour of your Majesty, reject it not but receive me into the loving bosom of your mercy where I may ever sing your praises: *merciful Jesus, have mercy on me.*

Let us pray: Oh God, who have doomed all men to die but concealed from all the hour of their death, grant that I may pass my days in the practice of holiness and justice and that I may deserve to quit this world in your holiness and love. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord, who lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit ... Amen." (*Pius VII granted an indulgence of 100 days to whoever recites this prayer every day and a plenary indulgence if you do so for a month.*)

Prayer for the souls in purgatory

“O almighty God, who by the love which you bear for men deigned to take our humanity, to live laboriously, to suffer a most cruel Passion and finally to die on a Cross! I beseech you by the infinite merits purchased for us by your Precious Blood, look mercifully on the torments suffered by those

holy souls in purgatory who, having departed this vale of tears in your grace, still suffer in cruel flames in order to atone for the sins for which they have not yet made full satisfaction to your Divine Justice. Accept, O merciful God the prayers which I offer for them, deliver them from that dark prison and call them to the glory of heaven. I recommend to you the souls of my relations and benefactors, spiritual and temporal, and in a special way those for whom I have been an occasion of sin by my bad example. Most Holy Virgin, Mother of Mercy, Comforter of the afflicted, intercede for those souls, that by your powerful intercession, they may be admitted to enjoy the kingdom which is prepared for them.”

Vl. Te ergo, quaesumus, famulis tuis subveni.

R. Quos pretioso Sanguine redemisti. Pater, Ave e Requiem.

On the choice of a state of life

Critical ed. in Giovanni BOSCO, *Il giovane provveduto per la pratica dei suoi doveri negli esercizi di cristiana pietà per la recita dell'Uffizio della B. Vergine, dei Vespri di tutto l'anno e dell'Uffizio dei morti coll'aggiunta di una scelta di laudi sacre*. Torino, Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana 1880, pp. 75-78.

In His eternal decrees, God has destined each one of us to a state of life with its corresponding graces. Accordingly, as in every other case, so also in this all-important matter, the good Catholic should seek to discover the will of God following the example of Jesus Christ who said in fact that his sole purpose in coming down to us was to comply with the will of his eternal Father. It is then most important, dear children, that you choose your vocation wisely, so that you may enter the career for which the Lord has destined you.

Some souls, whom God wishes to favour particularly, receive a clear indication of the state to which he calls them. You cannot expect so much, but you have the consoling guarantee that God will direct you in the right way, provided you do not neglect the right means for making a prudent choice.

One of these means is to spend your childhood and youth without offending God, or else to atone by sincere penance for the time misspent in

sin. Another means is humble and persevering prayer. Often repeat with St Paul: “*Lord, what is it that you wish me to do?*” Or with Samuel: “*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*” Or with the Psalmist: “*Teach me to do your will, for you are my God.*” Or use some other aspiration of love.

When the time has arrived for a decision, have recourse to God in frequent and very fervent prayer. Pray for guidance during the Holy Mass at which you assist, and offer up each Communion for the same purpose. You could also make a novena or a triduum, perform some act of mortification, or go on a pilgrimage to some noted shrine. Pray to the Blessed Virgin, who is the Mother of Good Counsel, ask the help of St. Joseph, her spouse, who faithfully kept the divine commandments; pray to your Guardian Angel and to your Patron Saints. It would be well also to prepare for your decision in such an important matter by making a retreat or a day of recollection.

Resolve to follow God’s will whatever happens, and despite the disapproval of those who might give you more secular advice.

Should your parents or other individuals begin to oppose what you perceive to be the will of God in your regard, remember that this is the occasion to put into practice the great advice to obey God and not human beings. Conduct yourselves towards your parents respectfully and honourably; answer and treat them submissively and humbly, but without putting at risk the supreme welfare of your soul. Seek good advice on what to do, and then confide in him who can do all things. Consult experienced and God-fearing persons, and especially your confessor, to whom you should confide your vocation and your dispositions.

The young man who is faithful to his vocation

When St Francis de Sales understood at home that God was calling him to the priesthood, his parents observed that as the first born son he ought support and sustain them, and that his inclination to the clergy came from an indiscreet devotion and that he could also be holy in secular life. They felt it was better if he followed their intentions to offer him an honourable and advantageous marriage. But nothing could move him from his holy resolution.

He constantly put God's will before that of his father and mother, and while he loved them tenderly and respected them deeply he preferred renouncing all the temporal advantages before lessening the grace of his vocation. His parents, notwithstanding their worldly outlook, were pious people and later were happy with their son's resolve.

Prayer to know one's proper vocation

Here I am at your feet, O merciful Virgin, to implore from you the most important grace of my state in life. I only want to perfectly do the will of your Divine Son throughout my life. I ardently desire to choose the state that will most console me at the hour of my death. Grant Mother of Good Counsel, that I may hear a voice which removes every doubt from my mind. Since you are the Mother of my Saviour, also be the Mother of my salvation; because if you, O Mary, do not enlighten me, who will? If you do not instruct me, Mother of Wisdom, who will teach me? Hear then, Mary, my humble prayers. Guide me, doubtful and vacillating, put me on the right path that leads to eternal life, because you are the only hope of virtue and life, the fruits of which are nothing but the fruits of honour and honesty. Three 'Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory bes'.