

APPENDIX

THE LAST RETREAT OF "LAUDEM GLORIÆ"*

FIRST DAY.

"*NESCIVI!*" "I knew not."† So sings the bride of the Canticles after having been brought into the inner cellar. That, it seems to me, should be the song of a "Praise of glory" on the first day of her retreat, when the Master makes her sound the depths of the abyss, that she may learn to fulfil the office which will be hers in *eternity*, but which she also

* We have kept the titles and divisions of these pages, although they do not contain a retreat in the strict sense of the word. What at a first glance appears to be a commentary on the Holy Scriptures, is in reality the dear child's revelation of the secret of her sanctity, the ideal fully realized by her before her life was ended. These confidential notes admit us into the "Holy of holies" of the "little house of God."

Sister Elizabeth's was indeed *a soul of one idea*: to be a "Praise of glory" to the Blessed Trinity. This meant for her that heaven began on earth, as she wrote the day after her profession: "Heaven in faith, with suffering and self-immolation for Him I love." And later on: "I have found my heaven while on earth, for heaven is God, and God is in my soul. On the day I realized this all things were seen by me in a new light. . . ."

In this "retreat" she lifts the veil, and contemplating the action of the blessed as they gaze upon the Beatific Vision, she exclaims:

† Cant. vi. 11.

ought to perform in *time*, which is the beginning of eternity.

Nescivi! I know nothing, I desire nothing but "that I may know Him . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death."* "Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son,"† Who was crucified by love. When I become identified with this Divine Example, dwelling wholly in Him and He in me, I shall fulfil my eternal vocation, by which God chose me in Him, *in principio*, which I shall fulfil *in æternum*, when, in the bosom of the Trinity, I shall be the ceaseless "Praise of His glory" *in laudem gloriæ ejus*.‡

"No man hath seen God at any time : the only begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."§ It might be added that

"It seems to me that it would give immense joy to the Heart of God if we were to imitate, within the heaven of our soul, the ceaseless occupation of the blessed . . . living in the bosom of the tranquil Trinity, in the inner abyss, the invincible fortress of holy recollection spoken of by St. John of the Cross."

Like her incomparable Father, the greater the heights to which Sister Elizabeth rises the more practical she becomes. After having seen in the light of God how infinite is His sanctity, how wondrous the work His grace desires to accomplish in us, and how sublime the union to which we can attain while yet on earth, she became merciless regarding any movement of nature that could prove an obstacle, and pursued *self* into its last strongholds.

The same idea is followed every day in connection with a different text of Holy Scripture, the same end aimed at, the same means given to attain it : *Nescivi!* to know naught but *Him*.

May not these pages be called her "Canticle," and the prelude to the eternal *Sanctus* ?

* Phil. iii. 10.

‡ Eph. i. 12.

† Rom. viii. 29.

§ St. John i. 18.

none has penetrated the mystery of Christ in all its depths, unless it be our Lady. St. Paul often speaks of the "knowledge" * he had received of it, yet all the saints dwell in shadow, compared with our Lady's light! The secret she kept and pondered in her heart is unspeakable; no tongue can tell it, no pen express it.

This Mother of grace will so shape my soul that her little child may be a living, striking image of her "Firstborn," † the Son of the Eternal, the perfect "Praise of the glory" of His Father.

SECOND DAY.

"My soul is always in my hands." ‡ This was the song of my Master's soul, and that is why, in the midst of all His anguish, He remained calm and strong. "My soul is always in my hands." What does that mean except perfect self-control in the presence of the Prince of Peace?

"I will keep my strength to thee," § is another song of Christ's in which I desire to join incessantly. My Rule tells me: "In silence shall be your strength." To "keep our strength" for the Lord is to keep our whole being in unity by interior silence; to collect all our powers, to occupy them in the one work of love, to have the "simple eye" which allows the light of God to enlighten us.

A soul which listens to *self*, which is preoccupied with its sensibilities, which indulges in useless thoughts or desires, scatters its forces. It is not completely under God's sway. Its lyre is not in

* Eph. iii. 4.

† Ps. cxviii. 109.

‡ Col. i. 15.

§ *Ibid.*, lviii. 10.

tune, so that when the Divine Master strikes it, He cannot draw forth celestial harmony; it is too human and discordant.

The soul which reserves anything for self in its interior kingdom, whose powers are not all "enclosed" in God, cannot be a perfect "praise of glory"; it is unfit to sing the *canticum magnum* continually, because it is not in unity. So that, instead of persevering in praise, in simplicity, whatever may happen, it is often obliged to tune the chords of its instrument which have lost their tone.

How necessary is this blessed unity for the soul that craves to live here below the life of the blessed—that is, of simple beings, of spirits! Did not the Divine Master mean to teach this to St. Mary Magdalen when He spoke of the *unum necessarium*? How well that great saint realized it! She had recognized her God by the light of faith under the veil of His humanity, and in the silence, the unity of her powers, "she heard His word,"* and could sing: "My soul is always in my hands," and also the little word "*Nescivi!*"

Yes! she knew nothing but Him: whatever noise and bustle there was around her: "*Nescivi!*" She might be blamed: "*Nescivi!*" Neither care for honour nor exterior things could draw her from her sacred silence.

Thus it is with the soul dwelling in the fortress of holy recollection. By the light of faith she sees her God present, dwelling within her; and He, on His part, is so present to her in her beautiful simplicity that He guards her with a jealous care. Then, whatever turmoil there may be outside or

* St. Luke x. 39.

tempests within, however her honour may be assailed: “*Nescivi!*” God may hide Himself, withdraw His sensible grace: “*Nescivi!*” . . . “For Him I have suffered the loss of all things!”* she exclaims. Henceforth the Master has full liberty—liberty to infuse Himself within her, to give Himself *in His own measure*, and the soul, thus simplified, unified, becomes the throne of Him Who changes not, because unity is the throne of the Blessed Trinity.

THIRD DAY.

“In Whom we are also called by lot, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things according to the counsel of His will. That we may be unto the praise of His glory.” †

It is St. Paul who makes known to us this divine election—St. Paul, who penetrated so deeply into the secret hidden within the Heart of God. Let us listen to him as he enlightens us regarding “this vocation to which we are called.”

“God,” he says, “chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity.” ‡

On comparing these two explanations of the divine plan, I conclude that, if I am worthily to fulfil my office of *Laudem gloriæ*, I must keep myself, whatever happens, in the *presence of God*. The Apostle also says “*in charitate*,” that is to say, in God, “*Deus charitas est*,” and it is contact with the Divinity which will make me “holy and unspotted in His sight.”

* Phil. iii. 8.

† Eph. i. 11, 12.

‡ *Ibid.*, 4.

I apply this to the beautiful virtue of simplicity "which gives to the soul the repose of the abyss"—that is, rest in God—the unfathomable abyss, the prelude to the eternal Sabbath of which St. Paul speaks: "For we who have believed shall enter into rest."*

Glorified souls have this "rest in the abyss" because they contemplate God in the simplicity of His Essence. "They know even as they are known"† by Him—that is, by intuitive vision, and they are "transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."‡ There they are a ceaseless praise of glory to the Divine Being, Who contemplates His own splendour in them.

I believe that we should give an immense joy to the Heart of God by imitating, in the heaven of our soul, this occupation of the blessed, adhering to Him by the simple contemplation which resembles the state of innocence in which man was created.

"God created man to His own image."§ Such was the plan of the Creator, that He might view Himself in His creature, and might see His own perfections and beauty reflected through him as through a pure and flawless crystal. Is not that a kind of extension of His own glory?

The soul, by the simplicity of gaze which it fixes upon its Divine Object, is separated from all around it, and above all from self. Henceforth it is resplendent with "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God,"|| because it allows the Divinity to reflect Himself within it. Such a soul is truly "the

* Heb. iv. 3. † 1 Cor. xiii. 12. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 18.
§ Gen. i. 27. || 2 Cor. iv. 6.

Praise of glory" of all His gifts ; it sings without cessation whatever happens, and during the most commonplace employments, the "*canticum magnum*," the "*canticum novum*," and this canticle thrills God to His very depths.

"Thy light," we may say to this soul, "shall rise up in darkness, and thy darkness shall be as the noonday : And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy soul with brightness, and deliver thy bones : and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water, whose waters shall not fail. . . . I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth."*

FOURTH DAY.

Yesterday, St. Paul raised the veil a little way so that I could catch a glimpse "of the lot of the saints in light," and ascertain how they employ themselves, and that I might try, as far as possible, to conform my life to theirs, and fulfil my vocation of *Laudem Gloriæ*.

To-day it is St. John who will partly open the "eternal gates" † for me, that my soul may rest in "Jerusalem the holy," the sweet "vision of peace!" ‡ He tells me, to begin with, that "the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof."§

If I wish my interior city to agree with, to resemble that of the "immortal King of ages,"|| and

* Isa. lviii. 10-14.

† Ps. xxiii. 7.

‡ Office of the Dedication.

§ Apoc. xxi. 23.

|| 1 Tim. i. 17.

to shine with the great illumination given by God, I must first extinguish every other light, so that the Lamb may be its only Lamp.

Here faith, the fair light of faith, appears to me. That, and no other, ought to enlighten me to go to meet the Bridegroom. The Psalmist sings that "He made darkness His covert,"* but seems to contradict himself by saying elsewhere that He is "clothed with light as with a garment."† This apparent contradiction appears to mean that I ought to plunge into the sacred darkness, keeping all my powers in night and emptiness; then I shall meet my Master, and the light which "clothes Him as a garment" will enwrap me too, for He wishes His bride to be luminous with His light, and with His light alone, "having the glory of God."‡

It is said of Moses that "he endured as seeing Him that is invisible";§ such should be the attitude of a "Praise of glory" who desires to persevere in her hymn of thanksgiving whatever happens; to be enduring in her faith, as if she saw Him Who is invisible; enduring in her faith in His "exceeding charity"! "We have known and have believed the charity which God hath to us."||

"Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things unseen."¶

What does it matter to the soul that retires within itself, enlightened by this word, whether it feels or does not feel, whether it is in light or darkness, enjoys or does not enjoy? It is struck by a kind of shame at making any difference between such things,

* Ps. xvii. 12.

† Apoc. xxi. 11.

|| 1 St. John iv. 16.

‡ Ps. ciii. 2.

§ Heb. xi. 27.

¶ Heb. xi. 1.

and despising itself utterly for such want of love, it turns at once to its Master for deliverance! "It exalts Him upon the highest summit of the heart"—that is to say, above the sweetness and consolations which flow from Him, having resolved to pass by all else to obtain union with Him it loves.

To this soul, this enduring believer in the God of love, may be applied the words of the prince of the Apostles: "In Whom . . . believing, you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified."*

FIFTH DAY.

"I saw a great multitude, which no man could number. . . . These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple: and He, that sitteth on the throne, shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."†

All these elect souls, palm in hand, bathed in the light of God, must needs have first passed through "great tribulation," and known the sorrow "great as the sea,"‡ sung by the prophet. Before contemplating the glory of the Lord "face to face," they have shared the abjection of His Christ: before

* St. Peter i. 8. † Apoc. vii. 9, 14-17. ‡ Lam. ii. 13.

being "transformed from glory to glory into the image of the divine" they have been conformed to that of the Word incarnate, crucified by love.

The soul that longs to serve God day and night in His temple, in the inner sanctuary of which St. Paul speaks when he says: "The temple of God is holy, which temple you are"*—such a soul must be resolved to take a real share in the Passion of its Master. It is a ransom which in its turn will ransom other souls. Therefore it will sing to its lyre: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"†. . . "With Christ I am nailed to the cross."‡ And again: "I . . . fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His Body, which is the Church."§

"The queen stood on thy right hand."|| Such is the attitude of this soul; it walks on the road to Calvary at the right hand of the crucified, crushed, and humbled King, Who, strong, calm, and full of majesty, goes to His Passion, to show forth "the glory of His grace."¶

He desires His bride to join in His work of redemption, and the way of sorrow which she treads seems to her the way of beatitude, not only because it leads there, but also because her holy Teacher makes her understand that she must pass beyond the bitterness of suffering, to find her rest in it, as He did.

Then she can "serve God day and night in His temple." Neither interior nor exterior trials can make

* 1 Cor. iii. 17.

† Gal. ii. 19.

|| Ps. xlv. 10.

‡ Gal. vi. 14.

§ Col. i. 24.

¶ Eph. i. 6.

her leave the fortress in which He has enclosed her. She no longer thirsts nor hungers, for in spite of her overwhelming longings for heaven she is satisfied with the food that was her Master's—the will of the Father. She no longer feels the “sun fall on her”—that is, she does not suffer from suffering, and the “Lamb . . . can lead her to the fountains of the waters of life,” where He will, as He will, for she looks not at the path whereon she walks, but at the Shepherd Who guides her.

God, bending down towards this soul, His adopted daughter who so closely resembles His Son, “the first-born of every creature,”* recognizes it as one whom He has predestinated, called, justified; and His Fatherly heart thrills at the thought of perfecting His work—that is, glorifying it by transferring it to His kingdom, there to sing through endless ages “the praise of His glory!”

SIXTH DAY.

“And I beheld : and lo a Lamb stood upon Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder : and the voice, which I heard, was as the voice of harpers, harping on their harps. And they sang as it were a new canticle, before the throne, . . . and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty - four thousand . . . for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.”†

* Col. i. 15.

† Apoc. xiv. 1-4.

There are some, pure as the light, who even here on earth belong to this generation. They already bear the name of the Lamb and of the Father written on their foreheads. The name of the Lamb by their resemblance and conformity with Him Whom St. John calls the "Faithful and True," Whom he shows us clothed in a robe stained with blood. These Christians are also faithful and true, and their robes are stained with the blood of their perpetual immolation. "The name of the Father," because He radiates the beauty of His perfection in them, all His divine attributes being reflected in such souls, which are like so many strings of an instrument, vibrating and giving forth the *canticum novum*.

"They follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," not only by the wide and level roads but by the thorny paths, among the brambles by the way. They are virgins—that is, free, set apart, detached. . . ."

"Free from all except from their love," separated from all, above all from self, detached from all, both in the supernatural and natural order. What a going out from self does that imply! What a death to all! As St. Paul says: "I die daily!"*

The great saint wrote to the Colossians: "You are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God."† This is the condition: we must be *dead*; otherwise, we may be hidden in God at certain times, but we do not habitually *live* in the Divinity, because our feelings, our self-seeking and the rest, draw us forth from Him.

The soul that gazes upon its Master with the simple eye which makes the whole body full of light,

* 1 Cor. xv. 31.

† Col. iii. 3.

is "kept from the iniquity"* within it. The Lord makes it enter the "spacious place,"† which is nothing else than Himself; there all is pure, all is holy.

O, blessed death in God! O, sweet and delightful loss of self within Him Whom we love! Henceforth the creature can say: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me."‡

SEVENTH DAY.

Cæli enarrant gloriam Dei.§ This is what the heavens declare: "*the glory of God.*"

Since my soul is a heaven wherein I dwell, while awaiting the heavenly Jerusalem, this heaven, too, must sing the glory of the Eternal: nothing but the glory of the Eternal. "Day to day uttereth speech."|| All the light, the communications from God to my soul, are this "day" which "uttereth speech" of His glory to "the day." "The commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes,"¶ sings the Psalmist. Consequently, my fidelity to all His commandments and interior promptings causes me to live in the light; it is also the "speech" which "uttereth" His glory. But what a sweet mystery! "Lord, he who looks upon Thee doth shine."** The soul which, by its far-seeing inner gaze, contemplates God with a

* Ps. xvii. 24.

† Ps. xvii. 20.

‡ Gal. ii. 19, 20.

§ Ps. xviii. 1.

|| *Ibid.*, 2.

¶ *Ibid.*, 9.

** D'Fyragues, Ps. xxxiv. 6.

simplicity that separates it from all else, "shines"; it is a "day that uttereth speech to-day" of His glory. "Night to night showeth knowledge."* How consoling this is! My helplessness, my repugnances, my ignorance, my very faults themselves declare the glory of the Eternal! And my sufferings of body and soul "show forth the glory of God!"

"What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that He hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation."† If I take this chalice, crimsoned with the Blood of my Master, and in joyous thanksgiving mingle my own blood with that of the sacred Victim Who gives it a share of His own infinity, it may bring wonderful glory to the Father; then my suffering is a "speech" which transmits the glory of the Eternal.

There, in the soul which "shows forth His glory," "He has set His tabernacle in the sun." The "Sun" is the Word—the Bridegroom. If He finds my soul empty of all that is not included in the two words—His love, His glory—He chooses it for His "bridechamber." He enters it impetuously, "rejoicing as a giant to run the way," so that I cannot "hide myself from His heat."‡ This is the "consuming fire"§ which will work that blessed transformation spoken of by St. John of the Cross. "Each of them *seems to be the other*, and they are both but one"—a "Praise of glory" to the Father.

* Ps. xviii. 3.

† Ps. xviii. 6, 7, 8.

‡ Ps. cxv. 12, 13.

§ Heb. xii. 29.

EIGHTH DAY.

“They rested not day and night, saying : Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was, and Who is, and Who is to come. . . . The four-and-twenty ancients fell down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and adored Him That liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying : Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honour, and power. . . .”*

How can I imitate, within the heaven of my soul, the ceaseless work of the blessed in the heaven of glory? How can I maintain this constant praise, this uninterrupted adoration? St. Paul enlightens me when he writes to his disciples: “That the Father . . . would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened . . . unto the inward man. That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts; that being rooted and founded in charity. . . .”†

“To be rooted and founded in charity” is, it seems to me, the necessary condition of worthily fulfilling the office of a *Laudem Glorix*. The soul that enters into, that dwells in “the deep things of God,” that consequently does all “by Him, with Him, in Him,” with the purity of intention that gives it a certain resemblance to the one, simple Being—this soul, by its every aspiration, every action, every movement, however commonplace, becomes more deeply rooted in Him it loves. Everything within it renders homage to the thrice-holy God; it may be called a perpetual *Sanctus*, a perpetual “Praise of glory.”

* Apoc. iv. 8, 10, 11.

† Eph. iii. 14, 16, 17.

"They fell down, . . . and adored . . . and cast their crowns before the throne."

And first of all the soul should "fall down," should plunge into the abyss of its own nothingness, so sinking into it that, according to the beautiful expression of a mystic writer, "it finds the true, invincible, and perfect peace that naught can trouble, for it has cast itself so low that none will descend to follow it." Then, it can *adore!*

Adoration! Ah! that word comes from heaven. It seems to me that it can be defined as the ecstasy of love; love crushed by the beauty, the strength, the vast grandeur of Him it loves. It falls into a kind of swoon, into a profound and deep silence—that silence of which David spoke when he cried: "Silence is Thy praise."* Yes! that is the most perfect praise, for it is sung eternally in the bosom of the tranquil Trinity; it is also "the final effort of the soul that overflows and can speak no more."

"Exalt ye the Lord . . . for the Lord our God is holy,"† as the psalm says. And again: "They shall always adore Him for His own sake."‡ A soul which meditates upon these thoughts, which understands their meaning with the "mind of the Lord," lives in heaven beforehand, above all that is passing around it, above the clouds, above itself!

It knows that He Whom it adores possesses in Himself all happiness, all glory, and "casting its crown" before Him, as do the blessed, it despises self, loses sight of self, and finds its beatitude in Him Whom it adores, whatever its sufferings or

* D'Eyragues, Ps. lxxv. 2.

† *Ibid.*, xcvi: 9.

‡ *Ibid.*, lxxi. 15 (French version).

grief, for it has gone out from self and passed into Another. The soul, in this attitude of adoration, resembles the well, spoken of by St. John of the Cross, which receives the waters flowing from Lebanon, so that those who look on it may exclaim : "The stream of the river maketh glad the city of God."*

NINTH DAY.

"Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy."† Who is He Who can give such a command? He Himself has revealed His name, the name proper to Him, which He alone may own. "God said to Moses : I AM WHO AM ;" the One Who lives, the Principle of all beings. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being."‡

"Be ye holy, because I am holy," is, it seems to me, the wish expressed on the day of the creation by the words of God : "Let us make man to Our image and likeness."§ The Creator's idea has always been to associate and to identify His creature with Himself.

St. Peter writes that we are to be "made partakers of the divine nature."|| St. Paul recommends us to "hold the beginning of His substance firm unto the end";¶ and the Apostle of love declares : "We are now the sons of God ; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him : because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone that hath this hope in him sanctifieth himself, as He also is holy."**

* Ps. xlv. 5.

† Lev. xix. 2.

‡ Acts xvii. 28.

§ Gen. i. 26.

|| St. Peter ii. 1, 4.

¶ Heb. iii. 14.

** 1 St. John iii. 2, 3.

To be holy, even as God is holy, is the measure for the children of His love. Has not the Master said: "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect"? God said to Abraham: "Walk before Me and be perfect."* This, then, is the means by which to attain the perfection that our heavenly Father requires of us. St. Paul, after having penetrated the divine counsels, reveals this to us clearly in the words: "God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity, Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children."†

I seek light again from the same saint in order to walk unerringly on this magnificent way of the presence of God, in which the soul travels "alone with the One," led by the help of His "right hand,"‡ "overshadowed with His shoulders, trusting under His wings, . . . not afraid of the terror of the night, of the arrow that flieth in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark: of invasion, or of the noon-day devil."§

"Put off, according to former conversation, the old man . . . and be renewed according to the spirit of your mind: and put on the new man, who according to God, is created in justice, and holiness of truth."||

The path is traced for us. We have but to deny ourselves, to die to self, to lose sight of self. Is not that the Master's meaning when He says: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me"?¶

* Gen. xvii. 1.

† Ps. xix. 7

|| Eph. iv. 22-24.

† Eph. i. 4, 5.

§ *Ibid.*, xc. 4, 5, 6.

¶ St. Matt. xvi. 24.

“If you live according to the flesh,” continues the Apostle, “you shall die. But if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.”* This is the death that God demands, of which St. Paul says: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”† “O death, I will be thy death!” says the Lord ‡ —that is to say: “Soul, My adopted daughter, look on Me, and thou wilt lose sight of self; flow wholly into Me. Come, die in Me, that I may live in thee!”

TENTH DAY.

“Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.”§ When my Master makes me hear this sentence in the depths of my soul, I realize that He is asking me to live, like the Father, in an *eternal present*, with no past, no future, but, in unity of being, solely in the *eternal present*.

What is this present? David tells me: “They shall adore Him continually for His own sake.” This is the “eternal present” in which a “Praise of glory” should abide. But if her attitude of adorer is to be real, so that she can sing: “I will arise early,”|| she must also be able to say: “For Him I have suffered the loss of all things”¶—that is, for His sake, that I may incessantly adore Him, I have isolated, separated, stripped myself of all things, natural and supernatural, as regards the gifts of God. For unless a soul has destroyed and become emancipated from self, it must necessarily, at certain times, be commonplace and natural, which is unworthy of a

* Rom. viii. 13.

† Osee xiii. 14.

|| Ps. lvi. 9.

† 1 Cor. xv. 54.

§ St. Matt. v. 48.

¶ Phil. iii. 8.

child of God, a bride of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Ghost.

As a protection against living according to nature, the soul must have a lively faith, and must keep its eyes fixed upon the Master; then it can say: "I walked in the innocence of my heart, in the midst of my house."* It will adore God for His own sake, and will dwell like Him, as He does, by His example, in the "eternal present" in which He lives.

"Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." "God," says St. Denis, "is *the great Solitary*." My Master bids me imitate this perfection, to render Him homage by living in strict solitude. The Divinity dwells in eternal and profound solitude; He cares for the needs of His creatures without in any way leaving it, for He never goes out from Himself, and this solitude is nothing but His Divinity.

I must guard against being withdrawn from this holy interior silence by keeping myself always in the same state, the same isolation, the same retirement, the same detachment. If my desires, my fears, my joys, or my sorrows, if all the impulses coming from these four passions are not completely subjected to God, I shall not be solitary: there will be turmoil within me. Therefore calm, the slumber of the powers, the unity of the whole being, are needed.

"Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty."†

This injunction is a call to keep silence: "Hearken . . . incline thine ear." But in order to listen we

* Ps. c. 3

† *Ibid.*, xliv. 11, 12.

must forget our "father's house"—that is, whatever pertains to the natural life, of which the Apostle says: "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die."*

To forget our people is more difficult, for this "people" is that world which is, as it were, a part of ourselves. It includes our feelings, memories, impressions, etc.—in a word, it is *self*. We must forget it, give it up, and when the soul has broken with it and is wholly delivered from all it means, "the King greatly desires its beauty," for beauty is *unity*, at least as regards divine beauty.

ELEVENTH DAY.

"The Lord . . . brought me forth into a vast space . . . because He was well pleased with me."†

The Creator, seeing that silence reigns within His creature which is deeply recollected in its interior solitude, greatly desires its beauty. He leads it into that immense and infinite solitude, into that "vast space" of which the Psalmist sings, which is His very Self: "I will enter into the powers of the Lord."‡

The Lord said by His prophet: "I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness; and I will speak to her heart."§ The soul has now entered that vast solitude in which God will make His voice heard. "The word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword: and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow."||

* Rom. viii. 13. † Ps. xvii. 20. ‡ *Ibid.*, lxx. 16.
§ Osee ii. 14. || Heb. iv. 12.

It is, then, this word itself which will finish the work of stripping the soul, having for its characteristic and peculiar property the operation and creation of what it makes known, provided the soul yields its consent.

To know, however, is not all that is requisite. The soul must keep the word, and by this keeping it is sanctified in the truth, according to the will of the Divine Master: "Sanctify them in thy truth. Thy word is truth."* To those who keep His word He has promised: "My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode *in him*."†

The Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity dwell within the soul which loves Them "*in truth*"—that is, by keeping Their word. And when this soul realizes what riches it possesses, whatever natural or supernatural joy it feels only induces it to enter within itself to enjoy the substantial good it owns, which is nothing else but God Himself. So that St. John of the Cross declares "it has a certain resemblance to the Divinity."

"Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." St. Paul tells me that He "worketh all things according to the counsel of His will,"‡ and my Master asks me again to render Him homage in this manner: "To do all things according to the counsel of My will"; never to let myself be led by my impressions, by the first impulses of nature, but to control myself by my will. For this will to be free, it must be "enshrined within the will of God"; then I shall be "led by the spirit of God."§

* St. John xvii. 17.

‡ Eph. i. 11.

† *Ibid.*, xiv. 23.

§ Rom. viii. 14.

All that I do will partake of the divine, the eternal, and, like Him Who changes not, I shall dwell here on earth in an *eternal present*.

TWELFTH DAY.

“*Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis.*”* God has said: “Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy,” but He remained inaccessible and hidden. The creature needed that He should descend to it, that He should live its life, so that, setting its feet in His footsteps it might mount up to Him, sanctifying itself by His sanctity.

“For them I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”† I have now before me “the mystery which hath been hidden from the ages and generations . . . this mystery which is Christ, in you the hope of glory,”‡ says St. Paul, adding that the mystery had been manifested to him. It is, then, from this great Apostle that I shall learn this wisdom “which surpasseth all knowledge—the charity of Christ.”§

Firstly, he tells me: “He is my peace,” that “by Him we have access . . . to the Father,”|| “because in Him it hath well pleased *the Father* that all fullness should dwell: and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, making peace through the Blood of His cross, both as to the things that are on earth, and the things that are in heaven.”¶ “And you are filled in Him,” continues the Apostle, “. . . buried with Him in baptism, in Whom also you are

* St. John i. 14.

† Col. i. 26, 27.

|| Eph. ii. 18.

† *Ibid.*, xvii. 19.

§ Eph. iii. 19.

¶ Col. i. 19, 20.

risen again by the faith of the operation of God . . . and you . . . He hath quickened together with Him ; forgiving you all offences: blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross: and despoiling the principalities and powers, He hath exposed them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in Himself* . . . to present you holy and unspotted and blameless before Him."† This is the work of Christ as regards every soul of good will—the work which the Father, in His immense, His "exceeding charity," urges Him to do for me.

He desires to be my peace, so that nothing can distract my attention nor draw me forth from the invincible fortress of holy recollection. There He will give me "access to the Father," and will keep me as stable and tranquil in His presence as if my soul were already in eternity. By the Blood of the cross He will make peace in my little heaven, that it may be indeed the place of repose of the Holy Trinity. . . . He will fill me with Himself ; He will absorb me into Himself, making me live with Him by His life : "*Mihi vivere Christus est.*"‡

Though I may continually fall, in trustful faith I will ask Him to raise me, knowing that He will forgive me and with jealous care will cleanse me perfectly. More than that, He will strip me, will deliver me from my miseries, from all that offers an obstacle to the divine action upon me. He will draw my powers to Him and make them captive, triumphing over them as they dwell in Him. Then

* Col. ii. 10, 12-15. † *Ibid.*, i. 22. ‡ Phil. i. 21.

I shall have passed completely into Him and shall be able to say : “ *Now* I live, now not I ; but Christ liveth in me,” and I shall be “ holy, and unspotted, and blameless before Him.”

THIRTEENTH DAY.

“ *Instaurare omnia in Christo.*” * Again it is St. Paul who teaches me. He, who has just been immersed in the divine counsels, tells me that “ God hath purposed . . . to re-establish all things in Christ.”

The Apostle comes to my aid again, to help me to fully realize this divine plan, and gives me a rule of life : “ Walk in Jesus Christ the Lord, rooted and built up in Him, and confirmed in the faith, as also you have learned, abounding in Him in thanksgiving.” †

“ Walk in Jesus Christ ” appears to me to mean to go out from self, to lose sight of, to forsake self, that we may enter more deeply into Him every moment—enter so profoundly as to be “ rooted ” in Him, and that we may boldly challenge all events with the defiant cry : “ Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ ? ” When the soul is so deeply fixed in Him as to be rooted in Him, the divine sap flows freely through it and destroys whatever in its life was trivial, imperfect, unspiritual : “ Mortality is absorbed in life.” Thus stripped of self and clothed with Jesus Christ, the spirit has nothing to fear from without or within ; all such things, far from being an impediment, only root it more firmly in its love for its Master. Throughout

* Eph. i. 10.

† Col. ii. 6, 7.

whatever happens, for or against it, the soul is ready to "adore Him always for His own sake," being free, liberated from self and all else. It can sing with the Psalmist: "If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident. . . . For He hath hidden me in His tabernacle"*—that is, in Himself.

I think this is the meaning of St. Paul's words, "be rooted in Jesus Christ."

Now, what is it to be "built up" in Him? The prophet continues: "He hath exalted me upon a rock, and now He hath lifted up my head above my enemies."† Is not that a figure of the soul "built up" in Jesus Christ? He is that Rock on which it is exalted above self, the senses, and nature; above consolations or sufferings; above all that is not *Him* alone! There, with perfect self-mastery, it controls self, rising above self and all else.

St. Paul also counsels me to be "confirmed in the faith"; in the faith which never permits the soul to slumber, but keeps it watchful under the eye of its Master, recollected as it listens to His creative word; in its faith in the "exceeding charity" which allows God to fill the soul "according to His fulness."

Finally, the Apostle desires me to "abound in Jesus Christ in thanksgiving," for all ought to end in this. "Father, I give Thee thanks," was the song of Christ's soul, and He wishes to hear it echoed in mine. But I think that the *canticum novum* which will best please and charm my God is that of a soul detached from all things, delivered from self, wherein He can reflect all that He is and He can dispose of

* Ps. xxvi. 3, 5.

† *Ibid.*, 6.

it as He will. Such a soul waits to be touched by Him as though it were a lyre, and all the gifts it has received are like so many strings which vibrate to give forth, day and night, the "praise of His glory."

FOURTEENTH DAY.

"I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord: for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things . . . that I may gain Christ: and may be found in Him not having my justice, which is of the law, but that . . . which is of God, justice in faith: that I may know Him . . . the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death. . . . I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus. . . . One thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus."*

The Apostle has often revealed the grandeur of this vocation: "God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity."† "We being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things according to the counsel of His will: that we may be unto the praise of His glory."‡

How are we to respond to the dignity of our vocation? This is the secret: "*Mihi vivere Christus est.*§ *Vivo enim, jam non ego, vivit vero*

* Phil. iii. 8-10, 12-14.

† Eph. 11, 12.

‡ Eph. i. 4.

§ Phil. i. 21.

in me Christus. . . ."* We must be transformed into Jesus Christ, and study this divine model, so thoroughly identifying ourselves with Him that we can incessantly represent Him before the eyes of His Father.

What were His first words on entering the world? "Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God." †

The first oblation of the divine Master was a real one; His life was but its consequence. He delighted in saying: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." ‡ This should be the meat of the bride, and at the same time, the sword that immolates her.

"Father, all things are possible to Thee, remove this chalice from Me, but not what I will, but what Thou wilt." § Then, serenely peaceful, she goes to meet all sacrifices with her Master, rejoicing at "having been known" by the Father, since He crucifies her with His Son. By never leaving Him, by keeping in close contact with Him, the secret *virtue* will go forth from her which delivers and saves souls. Detached, freed from self and all things, she will follow her Master to the mountain, to join with His soul in "the prayer of God." || Then, through the divine Adorer, she will "offer the sacrifice of praise always to God—that is to say, the fruit of her lips confessing to His Name." ¶ And she will "speak of the might of His terrible acts and will declare His greatness."**

In the hour of humiliation, of oppression, she will remember the short sentence: "*Jesus autem*

* Gal. ii. 20.

† Heb. x. 9.

‡ St. John iv. 34.

§ St. Mark xiv. 36.

|| St. Luke vi. 12.

¶ Heb. xiii. 15.

** Ps. cxliv. 6.

tacebat,"* and she, too, will be silent, "keeping all her strength for the Lord"—the strength we draw from silence.

When she is abandoned, forsaken, in anguish, such as drew forth from Christ the loud cry: "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"† she will remember the prayer: "That they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves."‡ And, drinking to the very dregs the chalice given by the Father,§ she will find a heavenly sweetness in its bitterness.

Then, after having repeated again and again: "I thirst"—thirst to possess Thee in glory—she will die, exclaiming: "It is consummated|| . . . into Thy hands I commend my spirit."¶ Then the Father will come to take her into His heritage, where "in Thy light we shall see light."** "Know ye also that the Lord hath made His holy One wonderful,"†† sang David. Yes, in the case of such a soul, God's holy One is glorified indeed, for He has destroyed all else to clothe it with Himself, and it has conformed its life to the words of the Precursor: "He must increase, but I must decrease."‡‡

FIFTEENTH DAY.§§

Nearer than all to Jesus Christ, though at a distance which is infinite, there exists a created being

* St. Mark xv. 5.

† *Ibid.*, 34.

‡ St. John xvii. 13.

§ St. John xviii. 11.

|| *Ibid.*, xix. 30.

¶ St. Luke xxiii. 46.

** Ps. xxxv. 10.

†† Ps. iv. 4. (In the French: "hath marvellously glorified His holy One.")

‡‡ St. John iii. 30.

§§ Although we have made several quotations from this devout meditation on our Lady, we give it entirely for the fifteenth day, consecrated to it by Elizabeth in her little retreat.

who was also the great "Praise of glory" of the Blessed Trinity. She responded fully to the divine vocation of which the Apostle speaks ; she was always holy, unspotted, blameless, in the sight of the thrice holy God.

Her soul is so simple, its movements are so profound, that they cannot be detected ; she seems to reproduce on earth the life of the Divinity, the simple Being. And she is so transparent, so luminous, that she might be taken for the light itself ; yet she is but the mirror of the Sun of justice (*Spæculum justitiæ*).

"His Mother kept all these words in her heart."* Her whole history can be summed up in these few words. It was within her own heart that she dwelt, and so deeply did she enter it that no human eye can follow her.

When I read in the Gospel that Mary "went into the hill-country with haste into a city of Juda,"† to perform her charitable office to her cousin Elizabeth, I picture her to myself as she passes—beautiful, calm, majestic, absorbed in communion with the Word of God within her. Like Him, her prayer was always : "Ecce !"—"Here am I !" Who ? "The handmaid of the Lord," the last of His creatures, she, His Mother !

Her humility was so genuine ! For she was always self-forgetful, knowing nothing, freed from self, so that she could sing : "Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me !"‡

This Queen of virgins is the Queen of martyrs

* St. Luke ii. 51.

† *Ibid.*, i. 39.

‡ *Ibid.*, 48, 49.

too ; but it was within her heart that the sword transpierced her, for with her everything took place within her soul.

Oh ! how beautiful she is to contemplate during her long martyrdom, enveloped in a majesty both strong and sweet, for she has learnt from the Word how those should suffer who are chosen as victims by the Father ; those whom He has elected as associates in the great work of the redemption ; whom He has known and “predestinated to be conformed to His Christ,” crucified by love.

She is there, at the foot of the cross ; she *stands* in her strength and courage, and my Master tells me : “*Ecce Mater tua.*” He gives her to me for my Mother ! And now that He has returned to His Father, that He has put me in His place on the cross, so that I may “fill up those things which are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for His Body, which is the Church,” our Lady is there still, to teach me to suffer as He did, to let me hear the last song of His soul which no one but His Mother could overhear.

When I shall have said my *consummatum est*, it will be she again, *Janua cæli*, who will introduce me into the eternal courts as she utters the mysterious words : “*Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi, in domum Domini ibimus.*”

SIXTEENTH DAY.

“As the hart panteth after the fountains of water : so my soul panteth after thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God ; when shall I come and appear before the face of God ?”*

* Ps. xli. 1, 2.

"Yet, as the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself where she may lay her young";* so, while waiting to be taken to the holy city of Jerusalem, "*Beata pacis visio*,"† *Laudem Gloriæ* has found her retreat, her beatitude, heaven beforehand, where she already begins her life of eternity.

"In God my soul is silent, it is from Him I expect my deliverance. Surely He is the rock where I find salvation, my citadel, and I shall be moved no more!"‡

This is the mystery to which my lyre is tuned to-day. My divine Master has said to me, as to Zaccheus: "Make haste, and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house."§ Make haste and descend, but where? Into the innermost depths of my being, after having left self, separated from self, stripped myself of self—in a word, without self.

"I must abide in thy house." It is my Master Who utters this; my Master Who desires to abide in me with the Father and His Spirit of Love so that I may "have fellowship" with Them. "Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners . . . but you are the domestics of God,"|| as St. Paul says.

I think that to be a domestic of God is to abide in the bosom of the tranquil Trinity, in my innermost depths, in the invincible fortress of holy recollection described by St. John of the Cross.

"My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord."¶

* Ps. lxxxiii. 4.

† Vespers, Hymn of the Dedication.

‡ D'Eragues, Ps. lxii. 2, 3.

§ St. Luke xix. 5.

|| Eph. ii. 19.

¶ Ps. lxxxiii. 1.

Such should be the feeling of my whole soul when it enters its interior "courts" to contemplate its God and keep in closest contact with Him. It faints in a divine swoon before this all-powerful love, this infinite Majesty which dwells within it. It is not that life forsakes it, but the soul itself disdains this natural life and withdraws from it. Feeling such life to be unworthy of a spirit raised to such dignity, it dies to this life and flows into its God.

How beautiful is the creature thus stripped and freed! It is "disposed to ascend by steps to pass from the vale of tears to the place which is its end"* —that is, from all that is less than God, that "vast space" which is the unfathomable Trinity: "*Immensus Pater, immensus Filius, immensus Spiritus Sanctus.*"†

It rises, ascending above the senses, above nature, above self. It passes beyond all joy and all sorrow, passes through the clouds, never to rest until it has penetrated *within* Him Whom it loves, Who will Himself give it the "repose of the abyss." And all this will be done without leaving the "holy fortress." The Divine Master has said to it: "Make haste and come down."

Nor will the soul leave it when at last it lives, like the immutable Trinity, in an "eternal present," adoring God eternally for His own sake, and becoming, by a gaze that ever grows more simple, more unifying, "the brightness of His glory,"‡ or, in other words, the ceaseless "Praise of glory" of His adorable perfections.

* Ps. lxxxiii. 6, French version.

† Athanasian Creed.

‡ Heb. i. 3.