

THE ANNUNCIATION

Have you listened to the word of God? Has this “word” reached your heart?

«Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee» (Lk 1:28).

To have received the word of God in her heart is already a grace for the soul.

By means of a sermon? By means of a book, a conversation, or an inspiration?

It matters not in what form this “word” reached you. It is the “angel of the Lord” who announces the Savior to you.

«Do not be afraid, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God» (Lk 1:30).

If this word of God has “wounded” your heart, *has touched your conscience*, do not be afraid; it is because you have found grace with Him. This is already an election. Oh soul, you are chosen!

«Behold, thou shall conceive in thy womb and shall bring forth a son; and thou shall call his name Jesus» (Lk 1:31).

That this grace, this “election,” may become a reality, conceiving in your bosom the things of God, depends on your liberty.

«How shall this happen, since I do not know man?» (Lk 1:34).

“How shall this happen if I do not know the life of the spirit? How will I be able to change overnight the life I have led until now?” you will ask yourself.

«The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore the Holy

One to be born shall be called the Son of God» (Lk 1:35).

Wait *attentively with faith*, and meditate God's "word" in your heart, for *«the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee,»* to guard you against your spiritual enemies, for that which will begin to sprout in you is work of God and not yours; you have only to be willing, like Mary, to fulfill His Will in each moment of your life.

«Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word» (Lk 1:38).

You ought not forget the "annunciation" that God makes to you, so that you may receive the light of His Spirit, light that will begin to direct your steps, "conceiving" in your bosom the things of God.

(pp. 35-37)

JOHN THE BAPTIST, MODEL FOR THE SOUL

The soul trusts in the Redeemer and surrenders herself to the "death" of the "I"; she surrenders her "head." *"Art thou he who is to come, or do we look for another?"*

"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mk 1:14-15).

After the soul has yielded her place to the Son of God, placing at His service all her faculties, she will, in a way, feel like a prisoner whose wings have been clipped. But Jesus prepares her, announcing to her the "new life." *«The kingdom of God is at hand»* for you, He seems to say to her, and He gives her to "taste" of the Gospel in its true practice, so that,

believing in His words, she may submit herself *unconditionally* to the Will of the Father which He, Christ, will fulfill in her. Only one more thing is needed: that she be “beheaded,” which means the death of her “I,” whose “beheading” will yield its place to the “Head” of her soul, the Bridegroom who must reign in her, because the Bridegroom, Christ, is the Head of the Bride, the soul.

(pp. 89-90)

THE LIBERATION OF THE SOUL

«On that day – it is Yahweh Sabaoth who speaks – I will break the yoke on their necks, and snap their chains. They will no longer be servants of aliens, but will serve Yahweh their God and David their king whom I will raise up for them» (Jer 30:8-9).

What is meant by *«snapping the chains of their yoke»*?

The “chains” are the spirit of evil, and the “yoke” is attachment to ourselves.

This participation by the spirit of Evil, which, because of original sin we receive ever since we come into this world, is what “chains” us to “ourselves” to keep us from reaching God, thus enabling Evil to take the soul. The more a person is *in himself*, the more he partakes of the spirit of “Evil” and the closer he comes to belonging to it.

Only by LIVING the purity of the Gospel can we free ourselves here on earth from the “yoke” or slavery of sin, because this “living” the Gospel would be our identity with Christ, who will give us His Holy Spirit.

(p. 95)

CHRIST, LIGHT OF THE SOUL

«And leaving the town of Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the territory of Zabulon and Nephtalim; that what was spoken through Isaias the prophet might be fulfilled: “Land of Zabulon and land of Nephtalim, by the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light; and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, a light has arisen.” From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”» (Mt 4:13-17).

The soul with Jesus (by following his life of self denial) has crossed *«beyond the Jordan.»* She is “above” the “spirit of the world,” relinquishing its kingdom, even though she lives in the world.

«The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light; and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, a light has arisen.» The soul, who sat in darkness under the action of the spirit of evil, saw a great light, upon placing her liberty in Christ, Light of the world; and for the souls who still *«sit in the region and shadow of death, a light has arisen,»* because, through her, the Light, Christ Jesus, which came to illuminate the world of the souls, will manifest itself.

Repent, He will say to all souls of good will, *«the kingdom of heaven is at hand,»* for each soul who lets me reign in her, cooperates in its coming by sweeping along many other souls.

« “I am the light of the world. He who follows me does not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.” The Pharisees therefore said to him, “Thou bearest witness to thyself. Thy witness is not true.” Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I bear witness to myself, my witness is true, because I know where I came from and where I go. But you

do not know where I came from or where I go”» (Jn 8:12-14).

It is Christ in Jesus who is the light of the world, not the soul; she, *by following Him*, will not walk in darkness, *«but will have the light of life.»* And it is He who will bear witness to Himself and to the soul, for His witness is true, because He knows where she comes from and where she is going, while she, the soul, cannot know where she comes from or where she is going, since Christ in Jesus will take her along according to the Will of the Father, which only He knows, and He alone knows how to fulfill it perfectly.

(pp. 97-99)

GOD AND MAMMON

«No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will stand by the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon» (Mt 6:24).

«No one can serve two masters,» and the “master” that hides in the “glory” and “power” of this world is none other than Satan; and he gives it to whoever worships before him: *«Therefore, if thou wilt worship before me, the whole shall be thine.»* But as he is father of lies and deceit, he does not say that he gives it in exchange for the soul. This is why the first thing he does in those whom he begins to win over is to make them forget “their” soul – but this is not the “self-forgetfulness” for fulfilling the Will of God that we mentioned earlier; it is just the opposite: it could be that Satan is interested in their not forgetting the *life of the soul* – but this would be with regard to the souls of others, not their own. This is how he has gained access into the realm of the souls of “good will.”

Unable to win them over through ambition for the “power” and “glory” of this world because they seek to enter through Love, he devises this line of reasoning for some: “You need to win many souls in order to save yourself, to think about your own salvation is egoism”; and for others: “Your mission is to win souls for God; by this you will save your own; you must “work” hard; many “apostolic works” are needed.” And he even quotes some words from the Gospel, such as: “The harvest is plentiful... , the workers are few.” And since all this is partly true, though not the truth *of his intention*, souls fall into error. He makes them see that this is not a “time for prayer, but for much action.” He, Satan, knows better than anyone that action without prayer and penance (the denial of self) is “victuals for his table.”

As a logical consequence, whoever betrays his conscience in order to accept the “power” and the “glory” of this world will end up hating what is of God, which is the opposite of that power and glory which he enjoys for having chosen his “convenience.” But, is it not God who places this temporal power in the hands of men? Yes, but “power” in God’s Will is one thing, and “power” in God’s Permission, when man’s will chooses it, seeking his “self-interest,” is quite another; God gives him that power because his liberty has chosen it, and man, choosing “power” instead of “Love,” clings to the “master” Satan, desiring the same thing Satan desired, despising the Master Christ who, following the way of LOVE, *«annihilated Himself by taking the form of servant.»* No man, therefore, can serve two masters, least of all two such opposite masters, for *«either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will stand by the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.»*

Are not power and glory the most coveted “riches” of this world?

JESUS AND THE LAW

«Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished (Mt 5:17-18).

It is a mistake to think that Christ came to liberate us from having to *fulfill* the Law; His words are quite clear: «... *till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.*»

Nor should we think that this liberation means giving free rein to the flesh – “the old man” – as was thought by men of old, men who were expecting a Messiah invested with temporal power, who would liberate them from the Roman yoke, as well as from the “burden” of the Law. Jesus came to liberate us from the spirit of slavery: sin is the spirit of slavery, and it is this spirit that makes the Law “burdensome” for us. We will find this liberation in the very fulfillment of the Law, but this *total* liberation will not become a reality until we fulfill *all* of it, for it is not enough to fulfill a part of the Gospel, we must *live* it all – this is the fulfillment of the Law – fulfilling it in order to attain the liberty of sons of God. Then we will no longer be “bound” to the Law, because God is Spirit, and where there is the Spirit of God, Spirit who will take us to live the Gospel, there the liberty is to be found. This is the Christian liberty of which St. Paul speaks, for one is not a Christian through baptism alone, but through one’s identification with the life of Christ. He who does not *live* his baptism fails to be a Christian. It is not baptism that supercedes the Law but Charity, because Charity is God’s *acting*; but if we do not let the Holy Spirit “act” in us, we have no

charity; therefore, we are bound to the Law. What “binds” us is not the Law, but the “flesh,” our attachment to self, which makes the fulfillment of the Law impossible for us, and this is why we say that the Law “binds” us, because in having it and not fulfilling it, we feel guilty, and the Law itself testifies against us in our conscience – testifies to the fact that we are transgressors.

As souls liberate themselves *on earth* from the spirit of slavery, through their fulfillment of the Gospel, which is to “*enter*” into Christ, living the life that He lived on earth, the whole of creation also becomes liberated – those creatures who, as St. Paul says, were «*made subject to vanity, not of their own will but by reason of him who made them subject.*» And just as the Holy Spirit has come to accomplish this liberation in the souls, so will He come to accomplish it in the whole of creation. But the Holy Spirit cannot *manifest Himself* until the souls have done their part. Until all the “elect” have entered into Christ, the Son of God, the Holy Spirit cannot manifest Himself in the world.

The last of the “elect” will be true saints on earth, and among them the Holy Spirit Will “manifest” Himself; just as among the wicked, “the man of iniquity” – who will be the person of Satan, the Antichrist – will manifest himself.

(pp. 140-143)

MOLDED INTO THE IMAGE OF THE SON

It is up to the soul simply to “watch and pray” *constantly* in order not to lose the presence of God and fall into temptation, so that she may always know what the Will of her Lord is. Not to *fall* into temptation does not mean that she will not have temptations; she cannot be without them while “all

justice” has not been fulfilled, for there lies the price exacted by Divine Justice for overcoming the “tempter”...

To those souls who have not yet allowed themselves to be “molded” by grace, submitting themselves *constantly* to its regenerating force, all this will seem like an illusion, impossible to put into practice, for it is only in that *constant submission* to the Divine Will that one can savor the effects produced by grace; it is like living a continuous “miracle”; it is like seeing the hand of God ever “creating” in us, molding in us the image of His Son so as to give us also His “likeness” in our doing, moved by His very Spirit.

(pp. 166-167)

LOVE OF ENEMIES

«You have heard that it was said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and shall hate thy enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, who makes his sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and the unjust» (Mt 5:43-45).

How will we *truly* love our enemies and pray *wholeheartedly* for those who persecute us? By not forgetting that there is only one “enemy” common to us all: Satan, who is opposition to Love; and that it is he who sets the souls against each other, so that by their accepting hatred and discord, which are proper to him, they may separate themselves from God, giving Divine Justice cause to permit him to tempt them further.

The souls belong to God; they were created by Him to His image so that they might also receive from Him His likeness

in their way of behaving, “moved” by Love, His Holy Spirit. If we love God above all things, we will also love the souls, and we will not want them to end up in the hands of the “enemy,” accepting his “promptings” of hatred and resentment; we will then do *all* we can to liberate those souls, our sisters, who have fallen into the temptation by receiving the poison of hatred, becoming our enemies and persecutors, deceived by Satan, that they may serve as his instruments and not God’s. We will attain this “liberation” through love and prayer, our self-offering: praying and offering ourselves to the Redeemer for them, in order to attain their redemption as he attained it for us. Then we will be “sons of God,” because *in our works* we will identify ourselves with His Son.

«For if you love those that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans do that? And if you salute your brethren only, what are you doing more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do that? You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect» (Mt 5:46-48).

For if we love only those who love us, how is our life different from that of others? What reward will we have? Do not they also do this who live by the spirit of the world and do not yet know God? And if we forgive and pray only for those who behave as we do, what are we doing that the others are not? Are not they who are in danger of getting lost, because they act influenced by the action of Evil, the ones who most have need of our prayers and our love? Just as God makes the sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and the unjust, let us make our love to be the fire that will melt the hardness of their hearts, and our prayers and sacrifice to bring down upon them the shower of grace that will wash away their resentments.

«You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.» The Lord invites us not to remain in our mediocrity, but rather to be *perfect*, as our heavenly Father,

from whom we proceed, is perfect. So that we might reach this “perfection,” the Son of God became man, introducing Himself into “Time” in order to give us, in addition to Redemption, an example of the true life. Let us then, aided by His grace, *live* the life that He lived in this world, fulfilling the Will of the Father. In our fulfillment of His Will, we will find everything else. Then will we love and forgive our friends, and our enemies and persecutors, drawing them toward the Father, and we will feel the joy of a true son of God who rejoices for the brother that returns to the Father’s house.

(pp. 171-174)

THE LOST SHEEP

«But he spoke to them this parable, saying, “What man of you having a hundred sheep, and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders rejoicing. And on coming home he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.’ I say to you that, even so, there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over ninety-nine just who have no need of repentance”» (Lk 15:3-7).

All the parables of the Lord contain profound teachings, each one different from the other. He did not say one more word than was necessary, as it is believed when it is thought that the repeating in the Gospels is a repetition of the same thing.

The shepherd left the ninety-nine sheep that were “in the desert” in order to go after the one that was lost. Most likely this “little sheep” was “thirsty” and “hungry” because there

was no “water” or “pasture” in “the desert,” and in searching for the “spring” and the “grass,” it became lost. And the shepherd, understanding the “need” of the stray sheep, goes in search of it and does not worry about the ninety-nine that are *content* in “the desert” and are not moved by the “need” for “food” because they feel no “hunger” or “thirst.”

These are the lukewarm souls who are satisfied with the minimum – a mediocre spiritual life – and, not having that “hunger” and “thirst” for God, they do not strive through prayer and penance (self-denial) to attain anything better: some of them because of spiritual laziness – they believe they need do nothing more to save themselves; others because they think that those are “dangerous roads” and that they can go astray on them. They do not trust in the Love of the Shepherd who, knowing his sheep, will not let the little lamb get lost, lamb which, hungering and thirsting after Him, going off in search of the things of God, met the “enemy” who led her astray, will go after that sheep *«until he finds it. and when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders rejoicing. And on coming home he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.”»* God will “make merry” with the saints and angels over that soul who, having “hungered” and “thirsted” after Him, was not content—like the others – “in the desert” of a mediocre spiritual life, and she risked her life to find Him.

For this reason the Lord says: *«I say to you that, even so, there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over ninety-nine just who have no need of repentance.»* These “just,” “who have no need of repentance,” are those souls who believe they need nothing more to save themselves other than to *halfway* fulfill the commandments, or to fulfill “what is commanded.” There is no certainty that these ninety-nine will be with the Bridegroom on the Wedding Day.

TRUST IN PROVIDENCE

«But he said to his disciples, “Therefore I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, what you shall eat; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. The life is a greater thing than the food, and the body than the clothing” (Lk 12:22-23).

Not everyone can understand this but only those to whom God gives the grace for believing in the love of a Father who is capable of doing for men the same thing he does with the birds of the sky and the lilies of the field. For those who still worry about the life of the body, about health, food, a roof, and dress, it is preferable that they humbly confess that they have not yet received this grace, rather than start giving all kinds of explanations that are outside of the truth; for the Lord will call them to account for this, which He would not do for their not having lived “a grace” that He has not given them, because no one can live this if he does not have the grace. This “living” is a consequence of grace, and God gives it to whomever He wants and whenever He wants.

« Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storeroom nor barn; yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than they! But which of you by being anxious about it can add to his stature a single cubit? Therefore if you are not able to do even a very little thing, why are you anxious concerning the rest? Consider how the lilies grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass which flourishes in the field today but tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more you, O you of little faith!» (Lk 12:24-28).

The words of the Son of God are carefully measured; there

is not one too many or one too few; just as He said it, that's how it is and not as men attempt to accommodate it, changing the meaning of His words: «*Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storeroom nor barn.*» Men think that they can have “storerooms and barns” (accumulated food provisions), and because they neither “sow nor reap” (because they do not toil to acquire them) they think that they are living like the birds and the lilies of the field. Having “storeroom and barn” – provisions stored for tomorrow – means that they have not received the grace to *live* by faith in the providence of the Father who feeds the birds of the sky and arrays the lilies of the field: «*Therefore if you are not able to do even a very little thing, why are you anxious concerning the rest?*» The first thing that “this grace” does is to bestow a “helplessness” for *doing*, as well as a “helplessness” for being concerned about food, clothing, and everything else; it is a “*non-living*” other than the actual minute. This is the grace; the rest is a consequence.

To presume that people who live this have chosen a more convenient path is not to have understood God's way of doing things. It would be easier for these people to work in order to assure themselves of their bread, roof, and clothing each day, than to live in the void, dangling by an invisible thread called Will of God. This does not mean that these people live in idleness and do not work. They sometimes work much harder than they did when they had to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. In those days they were subject to a work schedule and had their hours and days of rest. In this new “work,” there are no hours off, least of all days. Their present Boss does not know what is “rest” – in the sense that men rest – for He Himself is “working” continuously, and they, along with Him, must also work; and in order to receive His orders, they must abide in constant vigilance, for any carelessness could cost them their life, for if they lose the “thread” that sustains them, they will end up in the void.

«But if God so clothes the grass which flourishes in the field today but tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more you, O you of little faith!» It is faith – a living faith – that works the miracle for seeing the work achieved by the Father’s hand, “clothing” and “feeding” those who have received the grace of a “helplessness” to feed and clothe themselves on their own.

«And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also» (Lk 12:29-34).

«And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind.» As a person is faithful to grace by *abiding* in his helplessness, without forcing himself “to do,” his soul gradually receives a new grace – which is like a security *in God alone* – for not going about seeking in *any way*, neither “working” nor “begging” nor expecting anything from any creature, because she knows that God will come through in the moment He wants to and however He wants. It falls to the person only to be faithful in the fulfillment of his Lord’s Will; everything else shall be his as well: *«Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well.»* But we cannot expect “these things as well” if we are seeking other things that are alien to “His kingdom.” With this *security* in God, all anxiety of mind disappears, and the soul begins to live outside of “Time,” participating, even now in this world, in the kingdom of God, “eternity,” because it is from eternity that everything comes to her and towards which her life is directed: *«For where your treasure is, there will*

your heart be also.»

«*Sell your possessions, and give alms.*» Until now, these words of the Lord's have been interpreted literally, but this is not how it is; Jesus was not speaking of any kind of material "affairs" – buying or selling – not even for gaining the kingdom of heaven. Previously the Lord has said: «*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom,*» and then: «*Sell your possessions, and give alms....*» The Lord meant that we should *detach* ourselves from material possessions which, compared with the kingdom of God, are equivalent to a beggar's alms, something so paltry that it does not cover our needs: «*Provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail*» – that we place our hearts on eternal things, «*where no thief approaches and no moth destroys*»: where the devil cannot tempt, nor greed impair the good of the soul, because the "enemy" finds no cause by which to trip up the soul who has placed her heart in God alone; all temptations will always be to the benefit of the soul. «*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*» By having her heart in God, nothing can enter it that is not God.

Only God knows what "price" "our temporal possessions" have towards acquiring the "eternal possessions," the kingdom that our Father will give us. Let us, then, leave these temporal possessions in God's hands (in a total self-renunciation) and accept with love – to the extent that we possibly can – whatever He does with those temporal possessions, in humble trust that this, however absurd it may seem, is what is *needed* for obtaining the kingdom of heaven. «*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*»

(pp. 335-342)

THE SPIRIT OF BENEVOLENCE

«And he spoke a parable also to them, “Can a blind man guide a blind man? Will not both fall into a pit? No disciple is above his teacher, but when perfected, everyone will be like his teacher. But why dost thou see the speck in thy brother’s eye, and yet dost not consider the beam in thine own eye? And how canst thou say to thy brother, “Brother, let me cast out the speck from thine eye,” while thou thyself dost not see the beam in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam from thine own eye, and then thou wilt see clearly to cast out the speck from thy brother’s eye”» (Lk 6:39-42).

«Can a blind man guide a blind man? Will not both fall into a pit?» The world is nothing more than this: a procession of blind men guiding one another. This is why the whole of humanity is headed toward the abyss and death. Men talk of peace, and each day hatred among men is given more impetus, triggering war; they talk of unity, and there is ever-greater division among them; they talk of justice and love for their fellowmen, and one sees only cruelty and egoism.

«No disciple is above his teacher, but when perfected, everyone will be like his teacher.» This humanity has forgotten the Teacher, attempting to bypass Him, forgetting that He is God, Creator of all things, visible and invisible. The Son of God came to give us an example of the true life so that each one might *live* it, and it was for this that the Gospel was written. The Gospel is not what men think: the narration of a past event, one more “historical account,” the importance of which lies in the fact that its protagonist is the Son of God, and this is why we admire it and can imitate it if we wish, but which we have no *obligation* to live in order to save ourselves. The Evangelists were not just some men who wished

to leave a record of an event known to them, as some writers who have taken it upon themselves to write about the Gospels would have us believe. Those men were “instruments” of the Holy Spirit and wrote what the Holy Spirit inspired them individually to write as a *norm of life for all generations*: «*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name,*» Jesus said to his disciples, «*he will teach you all things, and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you*» (Jn 14:26), and this is how it was. They *remembered* the things that the Holy Spirit *brought to their minds*, because this was what all generations would need in order to be saved. So it is that in the Gospels there is not one word too many or one word too few; what one Evangelist did not write, the other did, and what was lacking in one was completed by the other. The form of expression is according to the “instrument,” and this expression can change with time and the customs of each nation, but the sense is one only for all the ages, races, or peoples. Any person who is so bold as to change the sense of the Gospel goes against the Holy Spirit, and by this time, he knows what the Lord says of one who speaks against the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, those men who have not bypassed the Teacher, ignoring or disregarding His teachings, have attempted to be “teachers” themselves. Supplanting Christ, they expect to teach without having “received” the lesson themselves, and those of us who receive the lesson do likewise: we learn the lesson by heart and make ourselves “teachers” of others. Only the saints have been “disciples” and have identified themselves with the Teacher: «... *but when perfected, everyone will be like his teacher,*» that is, like the Teacher, Christ, for no other is perfect.

Until we become “disciples” of the Teacher and live His teachings, we will not remove the “beam” that blinds us, and we will continue to stumble along, seeking to cast out the speck that is in the other’s eye. If each one were to apply to

himself the lessons he receives, the world would even now be a Paradise, because Christ would reign in all souls. If each person were to undertake to be a disciple of the Teacher and teach only his own soul, not even the children would need to be taught because they too would learn from the example.

«Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam from thine own eye, and then thou wilt see clearly to cast out the speck from thy brother's eye.» He who sincerely takes it upon himself to cast out the beam from his own eye will, when he goes to cast out the speck from his brother's eye, find that the speck no longer exists, for while he was casting out his own beam, by his example he also removed the speck from his brother's eye.

And there is an hypocrisy so subtle and blind as to make one believe that receiving in order to transmit to others and forgetting about oneself is "charity" and "selflessness." It is the "self" of sin that makes one forget the self of the soul, so that the soul may not be liberated from her yoke. It is the most subtle trick employed by the enemy of the souls for diverting their attention from their own shortcomings, enabling the enemy to continue working. Let us consider that each flaw that we see in our neighbor is a reflection of "*our own shortcomings,*" and that that person is, as it were, a magnifying mirror for us, a mirror that God places before us so that we may see what we cannot see directly. In this way we will correct ourselves and will correct our brother by our example.

«For there is no good tree that bears bad fruit, nor is there a bad tree that bears good fruit. For every tree is known by its fruit. For from thorns men do not gather figs, neither from a bramble do they harvest grapes. The good man from the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and the evil man from the evil treasure brings forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. But why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not practice the things that I say?» (Lk 6:43-46).

Very often, in fact most of the time, the flaws that we see in our neighbor are triggered by our own defects, because we see things according to what we are and not according to what that person really is: *«For there is no good tree that bears bad fruit, nor is there a bad tree that bears good fruit.»* A good action can be seen as bad if the “tree,” the person seeing, does not have a pure heart. In contrast, a person pure of heart, a good “tree,” can see an apparently bad action and see it as good, because *«the good man from the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and the bad man from the evil treasure brings forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.»* Therefore, this can be a start for us to begin to know ourselves: according to how we judge the actions of our neighbor we can know what there is in our own hearts, and this should *immediately* take us to a sincere and humble examination before God so that He may purify us. This has to be *sincere*: it’s not that we are going to *pretend* that we see nothing bad in what others do so that they may believe us to be pure of heart. This would mean making incurable the ill from which we suffer, and we would only be deceiving and harming ourselves. This would mean to cut off the branches so that they will not be seen from the outside – a pruning job that would only strengthen the roots which are within. It is preferable that we be sincere in our judgments, letting them be known by others so that those others will not take us for something we are not, and they will then help us to intercede with the Divine Gardener to come and pull out the root. The more bothersome the “branches,” for us as well as for those around us, the sooner those others will ask for divine help on our behalf, and we ourselves, if we have seen our ill, will also ask.

«But why do you call me, “Lord, Lord,” and do not practice the things that I say?» Let us endeavor to *live* the teachings of the Lord each day. Then we will be heard in all that we ask of Him according to His Will, and we will be

truly taught by Him, because He will consider us disciples when He sees that we desire to learn rather than to teach.

«Any man who desires to come to me will hear my words and put them into practice, I will show you with whom he is to be compared. He may be likened to the man who, in building a house, digging deeply, laid the foundation on a rock. When the flood came, the torrent rushed in on the house, but failed to shake it because of its solid foundation» (Lk 6:47-48).

Everyone who reads, hears, or perceives through his conscience the word of Christ and puts it into practice, “digging deeply,” meditating on that which is communicated to him, is unshakable in his faith and in the truth because he is founded on his works and on the deep knowledge of this truth that he has meditated, not on words that are gone with the wind. Though many temptations and even persecutions should come his way, nothing will make him lose heart because his life is founded on the truth that he knows through practice and not merely in theory. And not only will he be unshakable from without, but before himself he will not be disheartened when he discovers – or someone else points out to him – his shortcomings, which he thought he had overcome.

«On the other hand, anyone who has heard my words but does not put them into practice is like the man who built his house on the ground without any foundation. When the torrent rushed upon it, it immediately fell, and the ruin of that house was great» (Lk 6:49).

He who hears or reads the Gospel and learns it by memory in order to let others know about it and does not put it into practice or meditate it in his heart is like the man who builds upon sand because he does not have a foundation of works, and any temptation, persecution, or threat from an authority makes him lose heart. The latter, the authority, may be fulfilling God’s Will in testing the “foundation” of that soul. God almost always permits this in souls that belong to Him, so that

their deeds may be seen, this being a testimony that the Son of God gives to the soul who has become identified with Him through her deeds. Those persons who learn things by memory fall into believing that they are already living this and have transcended what they have memorized; and when someone makes them see the truth, they feel offended, or else, when they are not so proud as to feel offended and have the humility to acknowledge that they still do not know or live what they preach, they become demoralized and discouraged, thinking that for them it is impossible to live this. *«Anyone who has heard my words but has not put them into practice is like the man who built his house on the ground without any foundation. When the torrent rushed upon it, it immediately fell, and the ruin of that house was great.»*

If we have the humility to recognize that we have erected many buildings on sand and we let God destroy them before “time” and “work” come to an end and the time of mercy is up, He Himself will build in us an unshakable and eternal structure that we will be able to present on the day of His justice, in order to be confirmed in the purity of Love and Truth.

(pp. 343-352)

THE PROMISE OF LIVING WATER

«Now on the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’”» (Jn 7:37-38).

The person who *in earnest* becomes interested in receiving the teachings of the Master in order to *live* His doctrine, will see Jesus’ promise fulfilled in him: *«He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, “Out of his heart there shall flow rivers of living water.”»* A true spring will well up within him, but this

cannot be attained except by those who are thirsty for something different from what they “drink” in the world. This “something” cannot be pinpointed until the person begins to drink the “living water”; then the soul comes to understand that what was wrong with him was that he was thirsty for God: *«If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.»* That is the great day – day of festivity for the person – when he has felt the living water welling up within him, water that takes him to “relish” eternal life, because he begins to know the action of the Holy Spirit.

«He said this, however, of the Spirit whom they who believed in him were to receive; for the Spirit had not yet been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified» (Jn 7:39).

Even though Jesus has now been glorified and the Holy Spirit is acting in souls, this “action” has to be accepted by the liberty of the person for him to be able to “feel” its effects. The Holy Spirit cannot act if the person with his liberty is accepting the action of the “spirit of the world.” It is a mistake to think that both can act jointly; they can, it’s true, act alternately. In the moment that the person accepts the promptings of the Holy Spirit, He acts in him, but the very instant that he accepts the promptings of the “spirit of the world,” the Holy Spirit will cease to act, in order for the “spirit of the world” to go into action. As the Book of Wisdom says: *«For the Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful, and will withdraw himself from thoughts that are without understanding; he shall not abide when iniquity cometh in»* (Wis 1:5). Of this we have a vivid example in St. Peter when he avows that Jesus is the Messiah and then tries to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem.

(pp. 373-375)

LAYING UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN

One way of gradually “laying up treasures in heaven” is in this learning to suffer, and offering up those sufferings for uniting oneself with Christ. When people are very concerned over their bodies and their health, they gradually forget their souls, and they set their hearts on something that is subject to corruption, for however much they do for their body’s health, sooner or later they will have to leave it in the earth, where it will decay. On the other hand, by setting one’s heart on that which endures unto eternity – the soul – one can benefit from that “weakness” of the body for strengthening the life of the soul. This would be doing excellent “business” with the body, taking advantage of the temporal in order to fortify the eternal.

Also, when people are very concerned over temporal things and become overly eager to acquire them, they place their souls in jeopardy, for the enemy distracts them by giving them these earthly concerns so that he can rob them of their souls, for in dedicating all their time to material work, they have no time left to dedicate to their spiritual life, and so little by little they lose the life of their soul – which is their true wealth – for the things of this world, which are fleeting: *«Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume, and where thieves break in and steal.»* We must not, then, set our hearts on the things of this world but, rather, on eternity, which is the objective of our souls. Our life in eternity will be according to the use we have made of our time in this world. If we have worked only for the body, forgetting about the soul, we will find that the body we worked for became dust and ashes, and the soul, which is eternal, ended up in the hands of the “thief,” the enemy, and we will suffer eternally the consequences of our materialism. Thus, for the sake of justice we will suffer eternally the consequences of sin, because we set our hearts on the body, which was subject to the consequences of sin. *«For where thy treasure is, there also will thy heart be.»*

(pp. 412-414)