



# IN THY PRESENCE

Fr. Lev Gillet

These meditations are written in the form of God speaking to the reader as to His loved and valued child in order to reveal the nature of His love more clearly in its depth, its splendor and its tenderness. Some of them open our minds to the immense energy of Love in the universe. Others reveal the presence of Love in human tribulations and suffering or illuminate the most commonplace actions of daily life. In all of them, tenderness towards each created being touches the real hunger and hope of our lives for a relationship of loving communion with God, for a journey with a transcendent destination.

There are also meditations on the presence of Christ. The actions of our daily lives, which so often threaten to become a meaningless routine, here are considered one by one. Each is brought into the light of a related incident in the life of Christ. Each is considered as if carried out in His immediate presence. What for us has so often become dulled or meaningless is shown as capable of transfiguration, of being potentially the action of an heir of God, of someone who transmits the intention of God to this world.

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PRESENCE

*by*

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**PART I**  
**LIMITLESS LOVE**



## **TO THEE, WHOSOEVER THOU ART. . . .**

Whoever thou mayest be, whatsoever thou mayest be, says the Lord Love, at this very moment, My hand rests on thee.

This gesture means that I love thee and that I call thee.

I have never stopped loving thee, speaking to thee, calling thee. Sometimes it was in silence and in solitude; sometimes where others were gathered together in My name.

Often thou didst not hear this call, because thou wast not listening. Often too, thou didst perceive it, but only in a way that was vague and confused. Sometimes thou didst come very near to giving Me the answer of acceptance. Sometimes thou didst indeed give Me this answer, but with no lasting result. Thou didst cling to the emotion of hearing Me. Thou didst draw back when faced with the decision.

Never yet hast thou committed thyself finally, in a way that is total and exclusive, to listen to Love.

But now, once again, I come to thee. I wish to speak to thee again. I want thee wholly. I shall repeat it, Love desires thee totally and exclusively.

I will speak to thee in secret, in trust, intimately. My mouth is close to thy ear. Listen to what my lips will whisper to thee, what they want to murmur for thee.

I am Love, thy Lord. Dost thou desire to enter into the life of Love?

This has nothing in common with an atmosphere of lukewarm tenderness. It concerns entering into the white heat of Love.

In this only does true conversion lie, in conversion

to incandescent Love.

Dost thou wish to become something other than what thou hast been, than what thou art? Dost thou wish to be the one who is for others and, before all else, for that Other and with that Other through whom each being has existence? Dost thou desire to be the universal brother, and brother of the universe?

Listen to what my Love desires to say to thee.

## BUT I KNOW THEE

My child, thou hast not known what thou art. Thou dost not know thyself yet. By this I mean: thou has not really known thyself as the object of My Love. And, as a result, thou hast not known what thou art in Me, nor all that is potentially in thee.

Wake up from out of thy sleep and from thy bad dreams. Thou seest of thyself, in certain moments of truth, only the failures and the defeats, the falls, the defilements, perhaps the crimes. But all this is not thee. That is not thy real 'self', thy deepest 'self'.

Under all that, behind all that, under thy sin and behind all thy transgressions and all thy failings, I Myself see thee.

I see thee and I love thee. It is thy own self that I love. It is not the wrong thou doest—that wrong which one must neither ignore, nor deny, nor extenuate (can black be white?). But underneath, at a greater depth, I see something else, something that is still alive.

The masks that thou dost wear, the disguises with which thou dost clothe thyself, may serve to conceal thee from the eyes of others and even from thine own eyes. But they cannot hide thee from Me. I pursue thee to a greater depth than anyone has ever pursued thee before.

That look—thy look—which is no longer clear and open, and thy feverish, breathless greed for what seems important to thee, all those uncertain contortions, and thy hard and miserly heart—all that, I separate from thee. I cut it away from thee. I cast it far away from thee.

Listen. No one really understands thee. But I under-

stand thee. I could say such splendid, such beautiful things about thee! Of thee I could say them: not of that 'thee' that the power of darkness has so often led astray, but of the thee such as I desired it to be, of the 'thee' who livè in Me, concept and purpose of love, of the 'thee' which could still visibly exist.

Become visibly what thou art in My thought. Be the fulfilled reality of thyself. Allow the powers that I have put in thee to become active.

In no man or woman is there the possibility of any interior beauty or goodness that does not also exist in thee. There is no divine gift whatsoever to which thou mayest not aspire. For thou shalt receive them all if thou lovest with Me and in Me.

Whatever thou mayest have done in thy past, I sever thy bonds. And if I sever thy bonds, who can prevent thee from getting up and walking?

## A NEW CREATION

My child, do not expect a new Revelation. I shall only speak to thee of the things which have been told to men from the beginning.

What may be new will be the particular attention given to certain aspects of the eternal truth.

The time will come when the deepening of Love will make an irresistible call to the piety of many men.

They will discover Love, the Lord-Love, Love which is universal and limitless. This will not be a new message or another Revelation. But those who open themselves to this vision, putting their whole heart into it, will help Me to build the new heaven and the new earth towards which I do not cease to work.

And thus the discovery of Love, the acceptance in ourselves of infinite Love will be a new creation. At every moment, Love wants to create amongst you yet more love.

## THIS GREAT VISION

The flames shoot forth from the bush which burns, and yet the fire in no way destroys the bush.

Draw near to the Burning Bush, My child, and think about this great vision, and why the bush burns yet is not consumed.

The fire which burns the bush without consuming it is a fire which does not feed on any fuel that is extraneous to itself. Unaided it continues to exist. And of its own accord it spreads, spreads to infinity.

This fire does not destroy the wood of the bush. It purifies the wood. It makes what is merely briar or thorn in the bush disappear. But it is not deforming, for it respects the original structure, even while the superfluous growths are vanishing. It renews without killing. The wood itself becomes fire, and this fire endures.

Interpreting this in the simplest and most elementary way, thou canst no doubt see in the Burning Bush a manifestation of that divine protection which maintains life through all the sufferings and all the burns. Thou canst see in it, My child, the affirmation of a supreme Pity, of a preserving Mercy. Thou canst also see in it the sign of a divine Purification, which, though painful, liberates.

The Burning Bush, however, has a still deeper meaning to it. It carries in it a Revelation relating to thy God, relating to thy Lord Himself.

The Burning Bush represents one aspect of the divine nature. In the fire of the bush, thou canst glimpse what I am. For is not thy Lord, the Lord Love, a devouring fire?



Like the flame of the Bush, I am that Love which gives without ever exhausting itself. I am that generosity which knows no measure. One cannot say to My Love: only so far, and no further.

I am that Love whose nature it is always to incorporate and assimilate whatever human elements it meets (and which is the origin of those elements). I do not destroy the men I have created any more than the fire destroys the wood of the bush. I want only to bring about the disappearance of those things which, in a man, contradict the essence of Love.

I take and I make Mine. I transform and I transfigure. I bring life. I transpose to another plane, to a higher plane.

He who loves unites himself to those he loves. I unite Myself to you, My beloved ones. Yet even so, there can be no confusion between Me—I who am Love—and you, those who have love.

Oh, dost thou now see the great vision? Dost thou see the flame, lit by no one, blazing forth from My very Heart, the flame which I am? Dost thou see the divine fire spreading over the world? The whole universe is the Burning Bush.

## THE LOVE WHICH HAS NO LIMITS

My child, thou hast seen the Bush which burns without being consumed. Thou hast recognised in it the Love which is a devouring fire and which wants thy whole self. The 'great vision' of the Burning Bush can help thee to give me a name which in some ways is a new one; it does not do away with the name or names which, until now, thou hast mainly used, but, like lightning in the night, it may, by its living light, give a new view of the whole landscape.

Often thou hast called Me by a name which was not Mine. Or, rather, that eternal name was certainly Mine, but it did not give clear expression to what the divine life manifests most intensely, nor did it translate what I would have wished to reveal to thee of Myself in the moment of thy prayer—that special aspect of My being under which thou shouldst then have addressed thyself to Me.

Thou callest Me God. This traditional name has been adored and blessed by numberless souls. To these souls it has brought, and does not cease to bring, emotion and strength. He who tried to depreciate it would indeed be foolish, and impious he who tried to eliminate it. Adore Me as thy God. Revere this name by which I am known.

Thou wilt not diminish thy reverence by noticing that, in terms of language, this name itself has no clearly defined content. It lacks precision. Those meanings which have been added to it later were not necessarily linked to the word. It is such a vast word, one which is capable of such extension, that it may some-

times—due to human weakness—seem somehow empty. . . .

And then a mechanical, routine use has often been made of My name. Many have kept the formula. They no longer know how to give it meaning.

You say: God, my God, Thou who art God, Lord God. And, from the ancient source, from the sacred Name, you can assuredly draw new strengths. But you could find a true stimulus in attempting to specify in My name the meaning which would be appropriate to the moment or the immediate need.

You could then turn to that particular aspect of Mine which the given circumstances revealed to you. Accordingly, you would then say to Me: Thou who art Beauty, or: Thou who art Truth, or: Thou who art my Purity, or: Thou who art my Light, or: Thou who art my Strength. You could also say: Thou who art Love.

This last expression would approximate your language most nearly to My Heart. You could then say to Me: Lord Love. Or still more simply: Love.

And here I would suggest, putting forward the idea for you to reflect on, putting it to your sense of reverence, a term which could, if you wished it to, become the sun—the sun without evening—of your lives. My beloved ones, I am Limitless Love.

Limitless Love. . . . I am beyond and above all names. Yet precisely the adjective 'limitless' expresses that My Person and My Love elude all the categories to which human thought is accustomed. For I am supreme Love, universal Love, absolute Love, infinite Love.

If, now, I rather stress the word 'limitless', it is to awaken in your minds the perception of something 'unlimited', of a Love which, like a violent wind, like a hurricane, comes to break down all obstacles. I am that Love which nothing can stop, which cannot be contained or restrained by anything.

The enemy to be overcome is not death. It is the negation with which man can oppose My Love. For nothing can destroy or diminish the loving purpose and action of the mighty God.

My beloved ones, I am not teaching you anything new here. I do not bring you a definition or a doctrine. I am only saying again what has been said since the beginning. I am indicating one channel of access. But all channels are good if they lead as far as Me.

## THE SOURCE

Love has received a personal name. He has taken a human face. He has trodden our roads. He has become one of us, without ceasing to be divinely Himself. 'Jesus-Love'....

But the exploration we are engaged in goes 'beyond' one divine Person, or the divine Persons, towards what is in them, their inner identity, and does not seek for the special attributes of each. Now it is a question of contemplating the 'divine essence', of catching a glimpse of what is in God, of what was the first generating emotion. This, we have called Love, and furthermore Limitless Love.

It is to the Source itself that we wish to make our way. No doubt it would be inspiring to discern and to follow oriented and distinct outpourings of this Source; to tarry near the three symbolic figures, equally young and equally beautiful, seated at Abraham's table under the tree at Mamre; to listen to the cantata of three voices wherein each voice, with its own modulations, sings the same Love. But of such things, of the personal relations within the divine essence, there will be no mention here. It would go beyond our present purpose, beyond what is feasible. We shall therefore speak of our Lord Love without differentiating.

We will speak of Love in the simplest way. We will speak of those of His aspects which are the simplest. In this first, direct approach, which is free (though not separate) from what is perceptible by the senses and from modes of manifestation, we shall find ourselves on the same ground as so many souls, themselves very simple too, who, ignoring theories, know only how to

love, and who sigh for the meeting of the loved one with the Lover, of the soul with Love.

Is it true, my child, that thou desirest nothing other than Love?—It is true, Lord.—Is it true that thou desirest only to love and be loved?—It is true, Lord.—Then, my child, because thou hast this thirst, come thou to the waters. Come to the primal water. Come and drink at the Source.

## THE ESSENTIAL BOND

My child, widen thy vision to the dimensions of universal Love, to the dimensions of My Heart.

Limitless Love does not end in man. The entire universe is upheld by My Love. It is the essential bond between all beings, between all things, and the One who gives them life.

Be swept away by the immense tide of limitless Love, by that energy, by that hope with which the whole of nature waits, groaning, to be delivered from the consequences of the fall.

Man reaches upward toward Me. But do not lose sight of My reaching down to man, to all things.

Take a flower in thy hand. Take a stone. Think about them, not from a scientific point of view, but from the point of view of Love. They form a summary of the evolution of the world. They symbolise Love aspiring to its heights and also Love coming to us down the centuries, disclosing itself to us, giving itself to us, coming ever closer to us.

See the Beauty of Love in a blade of grass, in a leaf, in a branch. Make an offering of a scent or a colour. Include thy life in the life of the universe, submitting it to the same divine plan. Think of mountains and of the sea, of the winds and storms, of wild beasts and of very small animals. All of them have their place in My Heart. Make room for them in thy prayer. That through them it may be guided into wider avenues than that of a piety in which the universe has no part.

Learn to recognise Love's purpose in every creature. I have loved each grain of sand, each tree, each animal. Each one of them represents a reaching upward and a

stooping down. Enter into all this and yield thyself to it. Give thanks in the name of nature which cannot speak. Let thy response to limitless Love be reverence as vast as the world.

Dost thou love the sun? Dost thou love the stars? Dost thou love the galaxies? Dost thou give thanks to Me for their creation and their presence? Dost thou enter into divine Love for all that exists?

Perhaps this is difficult for thee. To love snakes.... Even if thou wert bitten by a snake, thou shouldst try to love it at the very moment of its biting thee. Animals are not culpable. They only act in accordance with the needs of their nature. They, too, are the victims of man's original fall. But I do not cease from loving them all.

The stone which is thrown into water causes ever-widening circles to be set in motion. This invisible movement affects all the molecules of the universe. Thus is it with my limitless Love. My Love is an emotion which spreads to infinity, and unites in essence all that exists.



## THE LIVING GOD

Lord Love, if I call Thee Love, if I find limitless Love in Thee, I do not want, because of that, in any way to deify a 'feeling'.

Limitless Love is not a feeling of love, a human and subjective feeling.

Thou, my Love, are not a metaphysical attribute, Thou are not a psychological experience, Thou art not a moral imperative. Thou art not an impersonal entity, a shadow that passes, an image that fades.

My limitless Love, Thou are the supreme Living Being, the Living God. I come to Thee as to the First Lover. I come to Thee as to the passionate Lover (a passionate Lover who cannot be subject to any passion but who bears within Him, to the maximum, the active energy of passion). I come to Thee as to the Lover from whom flows all love.

My Beloved comes to me. And it is because He draws near to me that I am enabled to go towards Him. I hear the sound of His feet. I hear His voice. He comes, He comes for ever.

## THE DEPTHS OF THE WORLD

My child, this world is a world of signs. It is for thee to decipher the secret writing.

It is good that at each step thou shouldst discover and admire the beauty of the world and that thou shouldst be reminded of the act of creation. But, after a certain time, this is no longer enough. This splendour must be reinstated into its total context, into its passionate context, which is both suffering and victorious.

If thou hast perceived that the mystery of the universe is limitless Love, but Love which has sacrificed itself for us, thou canst no longer see things as they seemed to thee before. 'Natural' beauty pales before the vision of the Sacrifice of Love.

Thou seest the sun. Think of Him who is the Light of the World, overshadowed by darkness.

Thou seest the trees and their branches, made green again each year by spring. Think of Him who, hanging from the wood, draws everything to Him.

Thou seest the stones, the rocks. Think of that stone which, in a garden, blocked the entrance to a sepulchre. It was rolled away, and since then the entrance to this tomb has never been closed.

Thou seest the sheep and the lambs. Innocent as they are, they let themselves be taken to the slaughter and do not open their mouths. Think of Him who, in a way that was unique, willed to be the Lamb of God.

Thou dost admire the rosy stains that redden the whiteness of certain petals. Think of the precious Blood which gushed out from absolute Purity.

## ON WHAT SUPPORT

Poor children, you want to manage without Me. What then will you look to for support?

Poor child, thou thinkest to escape me by plunging into what thou dost believe to be nature, into what thou callest nature. But what thou dost clasp is not nature in its truth, in its depth.

Thou thinkest to live a fuller life by estranging thyself from the Love which goes beyond all limits and loves beyond the visible. Thou desirest to give thyself exclusively to the visible. Thou dost speak of asserting thy personality, of realising thyself. Thou dost speak of earthly foods, and expect from them harmony and joy.

But thou wilt run up against the refusal with which all the elements of creation will oppose thee. The universe gives no peace to him who professes to separate any situation or person from total Love.

Thou seekest the support of reality. Thou dost conceive of nature alone as being what is real. Thou dost want to lean on a reed, and this reed will pierce thy hand.

In a world where everything is bound by a Love that is limitless, all the creatures which thou dost desire to separate and grasp by themselves, without reference to absolute Love, will withdraw from thee, one after another. Thou wilt be left alone, wounded, lying helpless on the road. Everything will abandon thee at the moment when thou dost abandon Me.

Poor child, whom wilt thou find to save thee, if not Me? Whom wilt thou find to love thee, if not Me?

## THE DOOR OF HOPE

My child, from the moment when thou sayest these words: 'Limitless Love', from the moment when thou dost give a place in thy heart to this supreme reality, thou openest a door, the door which gives entry to the kingdom of freedom and light.

It is the door of hope, the threshold to the infinite growth of thy being.

Hope: the expectation of what is to come, of the One who comes. An expectation filled with love, founded on love. For we hope only for that which we love.

Do not confuse thy 'hopes', in the plural, and thy 'hope', in the singular. Thy hopes, that is for particular, limited things which thou wishest to see realised, often only reflect some egoistic desire. Success in this or that, for example, or a special healing. These are hopes. It is not Hope.

Hope: a wish, a desire, an expectation that is not directed only at a specific objective, but encompasses thy whole destiny. It is no mere section of a curve which is concerned but the totality of that curve.

If thou lookest only at a fragment of the curve of thy life, thou couldst have the impression of lack of success, of defeat, of failure. But look at the whole line of thy life with the confidence which love inspires. Death itself, of such great importance, is but a moment, a point on that curve. Love does not die. Nothing that is Love is ever lost.

The door of Hope stands open before thee, and no one will be able to close it. But how, in fact, does this door manifest itself? It is the door of the opportunity which Love, at each moment, offers thee.

Thou thinkest afterwards of the opportunities missed during thy life. Sometimes thou sayest to thyself: 'Ah, had I but known! Ah, if only that could be done again!...' It is not possible to undo what has been done. Indeed, there have been lost opportunities. They will not come again. But those lost opportunities are as nothing when compared to what exists now, in comparison to those that I shall still offer thee, to those I offer thee this very instant.

The door of the present opportunity, which is also the door of Hope, is therefore in front of thee every minute. It differs according to each person. Do not sit at the door, believing it to be shut, and wait for someone to come and open it. Thou hast but to push it lightly, and it will open wide.

From the moment thou dost cross that threshold, limitless Love comes to thee. On my side, it is already more than promised Love. It is already given Love. But, in this world, as long as thou art in this life, thou hast the power to break the union. It remains imperfect. It is still a betrothal. It is Hope rather than possession. But go forward with the Hope that thou hast, with thy young, springtime Hope, thy newly-budding Hope. Hope in thy Lord Love, even when it seems thou must be crushed. The summit of Hope is to hope against all Hope.

Hope is limitless, because it proceeds from limitless Love and opens on to it. Has limitless Love already placed on thy finger the ring of betrothal which is limitless Hope?

## **AND THE EVENING AND THE MORNING WERE THE FIRST DAY**

No less than six times in the first chapter of the first of the sacred books of the Hebrews, God is portrayed creating the days of the week and setting the evening as the starting point.

The way in which men these days calculate time is not Thy way, Lord. Men, as if instinctively, take morning as the start of the day.

Thus day begins with the pale glimmer of dawn. Then comes the joy of daybreak, the rising of the sun, the glory of midday, the waning and shadow, the sadness of dusk and, last, the obliteration and terror of darkness.

With Thee, Lord, it is not thus. Thou dost proclaim that there was first evening and then followed the morning.

Thy day begins in the evening, with the darkness of night, and moves on toward the morning, toward the light, toward the blaze of the Burning Bush and the sun of midday.

So our love, always beginning, always so weak, uncertain and threatened, will unfold towards the radiance of limitless Love.

Evening will, of course, return. But an abyss separates the vision of a day which goes down toward night and that of a day which rises toward the morning.

What matters, Lord, is the meaning that Thou givest to the rhythm of the days. From the order that they follow, Thou hast made a symbol for us. From the beginning Thou hast oriented the evolution of time toward Thy luminous plenitude. Thou dost orient us toward the morning.

Lord, make me more aware of what becomes of my days. Despite all that is obscure at the moment, give me an intuition of the rising Sun of Love. Open wide my hope to the approach and summons of the day without evening which is Thy Kingdom.

## MORNING DEW

My child, I want thee to feel thyself in communion with the greatness of my universe, with its unformed aspiration, with its unformed thanksgiving. But above all, in those moments when thou seekest to become one with limitless Love, I want thee to be very humble.

Thou hast seen the morning dew. It forms trembling pearls on the blades of grass and on the leaves, before or shortly after the rising of the sun.

Dew is abundant where the earth is humid and exposed, when the weather is fine and perfectly calm.

Each small iridescent drop mirrors the colours of the rainbow. No matter how minute, it reflects the basic colours of the universe.

My child, be thou this infinitesimal drop of dew coming to life on the humid earth of tenderness, as the sun rises in a loving heart.

Be this drop which for all its smallness, in its whole extent, reflects the beauty of the world.

And then be re-absorbed thyself into the light and heat of the sun. Because it is the sun that gives the dew-drops their being.



## **FIRST THING IN THE MORNING, LORD. . . .**

Lord Love, may my first word this morning go out to Thee, blessing Thy Name!

As this day begins, I believe, I feel, that Thy immense Goodness is falling on all that exists. The spring of Love continues to pour forth even when we seem to see nothing but evil and suffering around us. Whether it be visibly, whether it be secretly, Thou art never weary of helping and of loving. Today, again, Thou wilt be fighting for us.

We await from Thee the graces needed for this day. With our earthly bread, give us Thy heavenly food, the pure wheat of Thy limitless Love, the true substance of our life. With trust, we place in Thy hands our practical difficulties, our sorrows, our fears born of little faith.

We have no other succour, we have no other hope than Thy Love. May it guide our steps today, a column of light going forward into the heart of apparent darkness!

Lord, a sense of life that is given, of sacrifice, inspires everything which, each day, comes to us from Thee. Redeeming Love wished to suffer for us, to die for us. Make me share this desire to give the life I have received.

Lord, may the purifying action of Redeeming Love wash from my soul the multitude of my sins. Unite around Thy Love, in Thy Love, those who know Thee, those who seek Thee without knowing Thee, and those for whom Thou seekest. We want to be Thine. Take us.

## THE RISING OF THE SUN

Hast thou wrestled all night with the angel? Hast thou battled with limitless Love, refusing to let Him go until He has blessed thee?

Hast thy fierce desire to possess Love, or rather, to be possessed by Love been fulfilled? And at the same time, so that thou dost not forget thy state, has Love inflicted on thee its wound, the wound of which one is never healed?

Hast thou crossed the ford which leads from the 'separated self' to the 'self' which opens itself and offers itself? Hast thou, straight afterwards, met thy brother and seen in the face of thy brother the face of God? Hast thou sealed this recognition with a kiss?

Hast thou received the divine *ephphatha*, the Opening, and hast thou said: 'From now on let the whole world walk into my heart!'

If all this has come to pass, the real sun, of which the sun we see is but a coarse shadow, has risen for thee. The Sun of Love lights for thee another path, a new day.

## THOU ART LOVED

My child, what I am saying to thee now leads thee into the very heart of the Burning Bush. Thou art no longer at the threshold of the mystery. Thou art loved. These three words, if thou dost truly wish to receive them, can overturn and transform thy whole life.

Thou art loved. But one must begin at the beginning. One must give first place to My Love, My limitless Love for men. The love that man has for God is no more than a response to My Love. It is I who, first, loved. It is always I who take the initiative.

How couldst thou love Me, if thou hadst not first gained a revelation of the Love which I have for thee? At some time, thou dost need to feel, as a shock, the passionate Love that I offer thee. And, if thou dost wish to preach My Gospel, thou must first go out to men very simply, saying to each: 'Thou art loved'. Everything flows from that. It is the starting point.

What does 'to love' mean, when it is God who loves, God, essential Love? All love is the movement of one being towards another, with the desire for some kind of union. The directions that this movement takes, its modes, its variants, are innumerable. They range from what is less than human to what is more than human. But there is always a tendency toward union, a desire for union, whether it be possessive or whether it be sacrificial.

My Love for men is a movement of My Self toward them, not simply to be known by them or to be, to a certain extent, imitated by them, but to unite Myself to them, to give Myself to them.

My Love, Love in its incorruptible essence, limitless

Love, is never entirely absent. God is never absent. Sometimes Love seems hardly to exist, to be almost imperceptible, covered over by hatred, by all sorts of perversions, by a layer of instinctive brutality. But through what is there, I work. I make even the most deformed love capable of raising itself into a conscious and total giving. Love has many aspects. But there is only one Love.

Thou art loved. Is there anywhere for someone who is vile in the fire of the Burning Bush? A soul, a person who is loved by Me is not vile. Thou art loved. It is 'thee' who art loved. Deepen the worth of that 'thee'. Now, I am no longer speaking to the many. I am not now saying: 'You are all loved.'

Of course, all of you whom my Love has created are, in a very precise sense, My beloved ones. You are all members of the same body, which is My body. But here, My child, I am speaking to one person, to thyself. And I name thee by a name which I give to no one else.

Yes, I call thee by a secret name. From all eternity, this name has been reserved for thee. It is a different name from the one by which men call thee. It is the name written on a white stone, which no one knows except (if he is attentive to the gift) he who receives it.

In the divine thought, it is given to each one of you to discover and make visible to others a different facet of the unique Diamond. Thou art that facet. Whatever thy life has made of thee, thou art still one of these aspects, a different aspect, of the bond that joins each man to personal Love. Thou art a ray of Love, issuing from Love, even if the ray seems shattered.

By what kind of Love, then, art thou loved? I do not say to thee: 'Thou hast been loved.' Nor do I say to thee: 'Thou wilt be loved.' I did not only love thee yesterday or the day before that. I shall not only love thee tomorrow or the day after. It is today, it is now, this minute, that thou art loved.

This is so in the case of every single person. Thou art astonished My child, and dost question Me: 'Truly? In every case?' Yes, in all cases. Thou dost continue: 'Lord, how can it be so? Could he who sins against Thee, in the moment of sinning, be loved by Thee?' Yes, My child. If I did not continue to love the sinner, would I let him exist before Me? Love is seated like a beggar at the door of someone who does not love. He waits. He will wait. The length of My waiting outdoes all human forecasts. Do not attempt to penetrate the mystery. I wait. And who can separate Me from My dear sinner.

So see, My child, by what Love thou art loved. I do not say to thee that thou art greatly loved, very much loved, loved more or less than someone else. Thou hast heard it said that I love certain people, that I hate certain people, that I love according to very varying degrees. I have had to speak to men in human ways, using human language, in a manner that could teach them, with very poor human words which are incapable of giving expression to the divine realities. But, in My indivisible Love, there is no 'more' or 'less'. My Love is pure quality. There is nothing quantitative, nothing measurable in it. It is offered to all in its infinity. I can love only divinely, that is wholly, giving all of Myself. It is men who open themselves more or less, or close themselves to Love.

I will make use of an image. Divine Love resembles atmospheric pressure which surrounds, encloses and weighs on each being. It lays siege to each man, wanting to take him. It seeks to create an opening for itself, to find a way leading to the heart which will allow it to penetrate the whole. The difference between the sinner and the saint is that the sinner closes his heart to Love, while the saint opens himself to this Love. But it is all the same Love, the same pressure. The one rejects, the other accepts. There can be no acceptance without

grace, but then this grace does not give itself by measure.

My child, I shall say it to thee again. I love each one at the same time differently and wholly. I love each person 'otherwise'. There is room here for divine intentions and loving purposes, for graces, for callings, for choices none of which resemble any other.

Thyself, My child, I love differently from anyone else. I love thee with a Love the like of which is given to no one else. I love thee with an incomparable, unique, love. Thy sins can wound the Love I have for thee. They cannot lessen it.

Should I say that I love man 'with all My Heart'? These words are not appropriate to God, for they imply something quantitative. My Heart has neither a totality, nor a half, nor a third. It is limitless. Whereas the love that comes from man is limited, for man himself is a finite creature.

Nevertheless, My child, thou canst, symbolically, speak of a divine 'with all Thy Heart'. This would mean that Love draws near thee without restrictions, in its immensity, its absoluteness, its unlimitedness. Each one of you, each creature, each grain of sand, each entity seen under a microscope is loved by Me. Dost thou believe this?

My child, thou art at this very moment a point in the universe upon which limitless Love is bearing down. I, thy God, thy Lord, am bent over thee. The divine Being is, in a way, concentrated on thee, as it is on every other existence, but, yet, as if thou wert alone in its eyes. In this thought, in this reality, there is that which can fire thee, which can overthrow thee. Thou art loved. Repeat these words to thyself and let them nourish thee. Receive My declaration of Love with a joyful humility and trust, and then thy soul will go on its way singing.

## VIOLENT ANNUNCIATION

Limitless Love forces open doors. Perhaps I had achieved some sort of peaceful co-existence with God. Perhaps I had succeeded in believing that, as far as my soul was concerned, I was more or less 'in good order', and so had come to feel more or less at rest. Perhaps I had been looking forward to a peaceful, happy evening to my life.

And now all those presuppositions have been turned upside down by a divine intrusion. God asks something from me that I am quite unprepared for. It is like the news of an unwanted child.

To listen to this demand, to take that costly decision, ah! but why? everything seemed to be going so well! Must I have new uncertainties and anxieties? Must the vicissitudes of the first call (which was quite some time ago now) be lived through again? Ought I to leave the land I am used to and go off, without knowing where God will lead me?

I have not said these things to God, but I have thought them. Of course, I have not said 'no' to the Lord, but I have given Him an answer which is equivalent to a respectful refusal: 'Oh, that the man that I **am** might live before Thee.'

The man that I am. . . . That man represents an existing state, a well-defined situation, a whole setting in which I am established, and perhaps a relationship with God which seems adequately good to me. What more could I ask for?

And now limitless Love wants to erupt into my life. It comes to upset everything in it. It comes to break up

what seemed stable and to open new horizons—to which I had never given a thought.

Shall I refuse? Shall I run away from the annunciation which is made to me? If I refuse perhaps I shall not be estranged from all love. But the love in which I shall establish myself will be a relative and limited love. It will be the rejection of absolute Love and its daring. It will be a stagnant lake instead of the high seas.

Lord Love, sunder with Thine own hand the moorings that hold me. To the familiar shore—the too familiar shore—I shall never return. Oh, Lord Love, that the man I shall be might live before Thee!



## THE TRANSCENDENT

My child, I shall not leave thee in peace. I want to teach thee to transcend.

Take pleasure in all harmonious beauty. It is good. But thou must learn how to tear thyself away from it, so that what is sublime in it can be seen.

Do not blaspheme against intelligence, for I am both the origin and the summit of Thought. But I do not want thee chained for ever to the tedious discipline of reasoning. I wish to give thee vision.

Hold to obedience and to piety, qualities so many people make mock of these days. But I do not want thee to doze off into a comfortable morality or piety. I wish to inspire thee to sacrifice.

Thou dost realise the distance which lies between thy God and thyself. And it is right that thou shouldst. But be careful not to calculate that distance in order to keep to it strictly, adopting the stance that requires least effort.

My child, I wish to reveal to thee, day by day, God become man; thy Lord Love taking flesh, taking thy flesh.

It is in assuming human nature, without any confusion, it is in becoming one of us without ever ceasing to be Himself that limitless Love supremely shatters all limits.

## ASCENTS

My child, limitless Love also shatters the limits imposed by words.

I form in thy heart and on thy lips such yearnings that all thy words explode upwards, so that each one of them surpasses the last and leads thee on to a yet more excellent mission.

Thou 'goest'. Mayest thou feel 'sent', the bearer of a divine message, wheresoever thou goest.

Thou 'comest'. Wheresoever thou comest, feel thyself 'awaited'. Feel that thou goest towards an appointed end and that, already, thou art inwardly linked to that end. Hasten thyself towards the meeting that I have prepared for thee.

Thou 'seest'. I desire that thou shouldst 'look', and that all vision in thee become an attentive contemplation.

Thou 'hearest'. I desire that thou shouldst 'listen', or give ear, and that, beyond 'perceiving', thou shouldst be willing to 'receive'.

Thou 'speakest'. I would rather that thou shouldst 'talk unto', and thus transform the neutral word into a personal and intimate communication.

Thou canst see how these verbs rise from clarity to clarity. But at the summit is a verb beyond which one cannot go. It is the verb 'to give'. For in the giving, all personal possession is abolished.

Furthermore, within the giving itself, calls resound that are more and more exacting. The divine logic of giving—My logic—moves on from the partial gift to the total gift, from the giving of a thing to the giving of oneself.

My child, let me place the words on thy lips. Learn to make each one of them into as many stanzas of a hymn as there are stages to a journey, a journey at the end of which, at the last bend of the road, thou shalt catch sight of the lost land, the awaited land, the Promised Land.

## SPARKS

A man walks in the dark night. A winter's night. The cold is icy. Snow is falling. The countryside and the weather between them seem to shut out all hope.

Yet, behold, suddenly amidst the snowflakes that bite into the traveller's hand, sparks appear.

Where can these sparks possibly come from? Is there then a flame, does this mean a fire is close by? So there is a possibility of warming oneself, there is a source of light and heat!

There is a flame, there is a fire, very near—infinately near.

## I COME TO THEE IN SMALL THINGS

I come to thee, My child, in the very smallest things, in the humblest details. Each one of thy gestures can in itself become an expression of limitless Love.

Thou dost wash a plate. Thou dost dry it. Let these actions carry within them love toward all those who have eaten off this plate, toward all those who will eat off it.

A woman goes out of doors. She goes to hang the washing on the line so it will dry. Does this rapid movement of service not remind thee of something? Those two arms, spread out for an instant, do they not make thee think of two other arms which were stretched out on sacred Wood?

Everything becomes sacred, if thy love transfigures it. Love Himself is amongst us as He who serves.

## THE COLLAPSE OF THE WALLS

A fortified town, encircled by ramparts, into which one cannot enter and from which one cannot go out, is a striking image of separation. It represents the very negation of limitless Love.

All separation that results from a failure to love is sin, whatever form it may take. And all sin is separation. Separation is 'the' sin.

To cut oneself off, to become, or to remain, a stranger to the 'other', goes against the whole meaning of the evolution of life. Primitive forms of animal life isolated themselves under heavy carapaces. They sheltered behind their powerful weapons of defence. Gradually, increasingly, they lost their means of defence, and instead their nervous systems developed. They widened their contacts. Man is the least protected of all living things, but the most open to communication. All this has been willed by the Lord Love.

The walled city is, in certain cases, a person or a group of people that we would like to come close to and with whom we would like to enter into an authentic and loving relationship. But the city has shut its gates to us.

What can be done? Should we storm its ramparts? No. Several times, seven times, seventy-seven times, we must go round the fortress, in silence, with a respectful and affectionate reserve, without being troubled by the stones or insults which may be hurled at us. And, above all, in this circling, we must carry with us the ark of our covenant with the Lord Love; that is to say, with everything of our inmost selves that is most holy, most generous.

And this we must do until the Lord says to us: 'I have now committed this person, or those people, into thy hands. I have destroyed the wall of separation. I give them to thee. I give thee to them.'

Perhaps we shall come to the end of our lives without seeing those capitulate to whose love we were calling in vain. But in what concerns us, we shall, somehow, be conquerors. For, in laying siege to those who choose to isolate themselves, armed with Love alone, we shall have brought about the downfall of our own walls.

For, in fact, was it not our own self, too, that was barricaded against Love? The hostile fortress is, first of all, myself.

The walls of the closed city were not built in a day. Such constructions require years. It is often by a slow accumulation of secreted matter that an ear becomes deaf. In the same way, it is stone by stone, day by day, year by year, that I have raised ever higher a wall of egoism.

I have isolated myself by a double defensive wall. First the rampart, visible to all, of my negative words and actions. Then the invisible rampart, even more pernicious, of my thoughts so obstinately fixed on myself.

The fortified city that I have built has been besieged. Our closed cities, the ones that belong to each of us—who then besieges them? They are besieged by other people. They are besieged by Love.

We ourselves are incapable of destroying our own walls with any ease. We cannot lift off the stones, one by one. But the Lord Love is constantly and patiently circling round us. Our ramparts will not be demolished by the hand of man. Slight readjustments will not suffice. A fundamental upheaval is needed to free us. It took an earthquake to roll away the stone which sealed the tomb in the garden. Our walls will not collapse unless their very foundations are shaken.

Oh, Lord Love, give me that great initial shock!  
The striking of one stone against another shoots off  
sparks. May the shock produced by the collapse of the  
walls of separation spark off in me the longed for blaze  
that will make me a part of the Burning Bush! May all  
those despicable limits be swept away by the great  
Entrance of Limitless Love!



## THE STRANGER

As night was falling, he came to one of the big centres of the suburb. He hired a room for several days.

To all he showed himself smiling and at ease, friendly and yet reserved. Each person to whom he spoke had the impression that he had known them for a long time, and that in his eyes they had real existence, and were of supreme importance to him.

His words went straight to what, in each one, was deepest and most secret. His unexpected questions were sometimes as disconcerting as a shock. They seemed as disquieting as they were desirable.

A woman asked him: 'Tell me frankly, what do you think of me?'—'You don't do justice to yourself.' 'What do you mean?'—'And you, tell me why do you put so much red on your lips and so much black on your eyelids?' 'I am getting older, and I want to look beautiful.'—'If you knew how beautiful you are, you would no longer resort to such means. There is hidden in you the possibility of beauty such as you cannot imagine. You have not awoken to the loveliness in yourself, so it has not been able to show itself in your face. Let your inner beauty rule you. It will shine out through your eyes. And you will become radiantly beautiful.'

To a servant-girl, a young refugee, he said: 'You seem so alone.' 'I have no one. I did not even know my parents.'—'I have known your parents well.' 'What? You knew them?'—'They did not know me. But I knew them all the same, without their seeing me. I have never lost sight of them.' 'Have I ever been spoken of to you?'—'In my Father's house, you are often mentioned.' 'But I was a foundling. I do not even know where I was

born.'—'Do you know that a god was born in a manger? Where one is born does not matter very much.' 'But I am never sure of having shelter. In that house of your Father's, would there be somewhere for me?'—'Yes, in my Father's house there are many mansions.' 'But where then do you live?'—'If you come with me, you will see.'

To a very respectable woman who was going to a place of prayer, the Holy Bible in her hands, he said: 'Do you know how to use that book? It plays a great part in your life. You open it to find an answer to your questions, for hope in your anxieties, as a consolation in your suffering. All this is good. But it is not the primary reason for that book's existence. It does not exist for you to put your questions to it. The book must question you about yourself and transmit a word, very likely a quite unexpected one, to you. Do not be too interested in whether the book is listening to you, but try to listen to it as you would listen for the voice crying in the wilderness.'

To a young woman who welcomed all advances without finding any happiness, he said: 'Your mistake is not that you love too much. On the contrary, you do not love enough. You think you have freed yourself from all restrictions, and let you only love within restrictions, replacing one set of them by another. Each time you imagine you love, you cut yourself off, you shut yourself into a prison for two, as if only the two of you existed. So you interrupt the great flow of Love which has to give life to all souls. You suffocate yourself. Open your windows and love in dependence on absolute Love, in communion with infinite Love, with God.'

After several days, the Stranger announced that he was about to go. Those who had talked with him felt saddened. Someone asked him: 'Why must you go?'—'Because I have finished what I came to do here.'

I must go elsewhere and do the same thing there.' 'But what did you come here for?'—'I came here to love. For no other reason.' 'We feel we have become very fond of you. You have changed something here. How much we shall miss you!'—'I am going away, but I shall not be absent. You will not be without me.' 'What do you mean?'—'If you try to think and to act in the same spirit as me, you will find I am always amongst you.' 'But who are you then? Oh, can it be...?'—'I shall not tell you my name now. But to those who desire to live in remembrance of me, and to those only, it will be given to learn who I am.'

## **ATTENTIVE GRACE, EXACTING GRACE**

Lord Love, do not go so fast! I cannot follow Thee. Thou goest too fast for me. Wait for me, let me catch up with Thee. But, Lord, Thou hast neither stopped, nor slowed Thy pace.

Lord, I see Thee take the road to my house. Lord, do not give Thyself the trouble of going all the way to my home. I am hurrying toward Thee. We could speak on the way, or stop for a little while. It would be less tiring for me (and I should feel less confused). But Thou art already going into my garden.

Lord, I am too unworthy to have Thee come under my roof! But Thou hast already opened the door and crossed the threshold.

Lord, nothing at home is ready, nothing in me is ready to receive Thee! But Limitless Love is already in the room and says to me: 'Sit down at table, I wish to sup with thee.'

## **SHE WHO IS THE FRIEND OF THE BELOVED**

She moves without a sound, swiftly and gracefully, amidst turmoil.

Sometimes she breaks the silence, but she herself seems always wrapped in silence.

She is in this world, but seems to belong entirely to a world of grace.

Her face is always softly lit by the invisible light, but to those who look at her it becomes in itself a light.

With a strong and gentle hand, she touches and controls what we touch. She sees what we see. She hears what we hear. She is never diminished by it.

She tends wounds. She serves at table. Her movements are deliberate and precise.

She herself stands amongst those who lie down to rest. At night her heart keeps watch over those who sleep.

She keeps watch. And she awakens. She awakens Love even in those who are without Love. She communicates Love to those whom her hand touches or upon whom her glance alights.

Without ceasing she drinks at the Source.

With passionate attention, she gives herself.

## IN THE FURNACE

My child, My beloved ones, I know the difficulties you come up against in trying to reconcile limitless Love with men's afflictions, with the suffering of the world.

I want to help you enter into this mystery. What I am going to say to you could be summed up in this phrase: Love is a suffering God. I will speak to you of the suffering of Love.

Can a God suffer? Do not imagine for a single instant that I can be diminished or overcome. Repudiate any notion of a limited, finite, God. Limitless Love cannot be a limited God. Without ceasing to believe in My essential omnipotence, try to come to a fuller understanding of the conditions under which I exercise it.

There is no question of there being suffering which could be imposed on God to which God would have to submit. Nothing can be imposed on Me. I am not able to submit to any exterior constraint.

Your Lord Love is a God who overcomes. I take upon Myself, I take into Myself, all human suffering. But this is in order to surmount it. I do not submit to suffering. Rather, freely and spontaneously I take suffering upon Me, in a manner which is Mine alone.

Rid yourselves of any image of a God who sits on a heavenly throne, impassively witnessing the battles that rage on earth. I am in the midst of the combatants. I am involved in the fight against the Powers of Darkness, against the Prince of this world, the battle in which all evil and all suffering are but episodes. I say that I fight. And this means that I do not deprive men of the freedom to decide for Love or against Love, since Love does not know how to impose itself by force. My

hands are tied. The only weapons I use are those of persuasion and grace.

In the course of the battle, it sometimes happens that wounds are inflicted on Me. I am wounded each time negations are set up in opposition to Love. But the wounds are not inflicted on Me as if on a passive victim. I go out to meet them. I do not receive them. I 'take' them in the literal sense of the word. My divine nature is not diminished, but I am wounded in the nature I share with humanity. The storm rages at the foot of the mountain. The mountain peaks remain bathed in light.

It may so happen that, to all appearance, I am killed in this or that soul, where nothing seems to remain alive of Love. But God cannot be killed. Death itself, that last enemy, will be overcome, for Love is stronger than death, and great waters cannot quench it. The Passion and the Resurrection are indissolubly united. When thou dost say truly: 'I love,' and especially: 'I love Love,' thou hast already gained an experience of what is eternal.

But, to be more precise, how is it possible for Me to enter into human suffering (for it is not suffering that enters into Me)? I am Being, I give being, everything that has being has it through Me. Everything that affects received or shared being, wherever it may be, in whomsoever it may be, also affects—differently, but in a real way—My Being. Being 'knows' everything that is. It does not know it from the outside, externally, as men have knowledge of things, but it knows it inwardly, from the interior. It is not enough to say that such knowledge is sympathy. It is coincidence, identification, life, with everything that takes place, since it is I who supply all existences with their very fabric.

I therefore know all suffering more intimately, more deeply, than even the sufferer himself. I know 'vitally' what each being experiences, yet without it in any way

altering My Being. There is no aspect of any suffering whatever that is foreign to Me, that is outside Me. I am afflicted in all the afflictions of men, espousing them to the maximum, without their being able to erode My nature either by corrupting it or by diminishing it. Each human affliction releases in Me a new impulse of Love which wants to sweep into its vortex everything negative. Thou, mother who hast lost thy child, woman who hast lost thy husband, young girl who hast lost thy sweetheart, thou who art tortured by cancer, thou who art prisoner in a concentration camp, another the prisoner of alcohol, or of drugs, or of an egoistic sexuality, I am bowed over your misery, ah! if you but knew that I did not will such things, that they result from the work of the enemy, and that, invisibly, I am fighting for you! The outcome I prepare for you is one of light. Now is the hour and the power of darkness; and the time of their undoing must still remain hidden. But My Love will overcome their resistance and will wipe away all the tears. The veil will be lifted. Then you will see, you will understand. You will make your choice.

Did you really believe that the God-Love could be indifferent to the cries of men? You know so little about your God! Love came down to you, taking the form of the suffering Servant, whose given, sacrificed life bore visible witness to the great divine desire. Long before that, from all eternity, a sacrifice had been accepted and prepared in My Heart. Even today there is a secret and continuous Passion of Love brought about by the refusal of its inspirations, the rejection of its initiatives. The Dove can find no place to rest on muddy land. Your Lord Love has but one desire: it is to give His life, again and always, for all of you whom He loves. There is no greater love. . . .

These things can only be poorly expressed in human language. The divine realities go so far beyond the



words of men! The secrets of My Heart do not display themselves. They can, to some extent, be guessed at by the intuitions and the revelations which are granted to those who wish to love and to serve love. I do not suffer humanly. I suffer 'divinely'. You cannot, at your present stage, give intellectual precision to these terms. What words cannot express, an image or a symbol can sometimes suggest more effectively. Remember the king of Babylon who had three young men thrown into the fiery furnace, because they refused to worship him. The king came to see what had happened to them. And behold, he found the three young men walking in the furnace and, with them, a fourth, a stranger, whose form was like the Son of God.

## A SMILE, A LOOK. . . .

Limitless Love uses the simplest ways to establish a contact. Not even words are necessary. A smile or a look, if they are pure and true, suffice.

A smile, a look. . . . Two means of infinite expression. The silent and deep expression of ourselves. Union, with those to whom we shall perhaps never speak a word or that perhaps we shall never see again.

I look at thee, thou unknown man or unknown woman, whom God has placed in my path. And behold, God, in silence, makes thee come alive to me, present to me. In thy eyes, I have glimpsed thy soul. My look has borne my soul to thee.

Plunged in the 'other'. I am in thee. Thou dost enter into me. Between us communion becomes a reality. Its bond, its ultimate end, is the Face of God, seen transparently through our faces.

A smile is exchanged. This smile causes lips which were closed and teeth which were firmly clenched to relax. Something between us has been started, something whose future we leave in the hands of God. A door has opened.

Thou from whom I received a smile or a look that was true and pure today, thou who hast received from me a smile or a look that was true and pure—I repeat these words which are so important: true and pure—I bless thee in silence.

And I ask of the Lord Love that, springing from the wordless meeting of our souls, a golden light may illumine this day.

## BLIND AND DEAF

Lord Love, I have asked Thee to open me to others. However, Thou hast made me understand that Thy servant must be both blind and deaf, seeing but as if not seeing, hearing but as if not hearing.

Love, make me deaf. Close my ears to the accusations, to all the mockeries that I hear uttered against others.

Love, make me blind. Close my eyes to the failings of others. Of course I must reject what makes an act or a word evil, but I do not have the right to judge and to condemn the speaker or the doer. Thou only, Lord, Thou knowest. Thou knowest all things.

Thy Christ did not want to look at the woman taken in adultery while she was being accused. He only looked at her when they were left alone. As long as the accusation lasted, He stooped down over the earth. He kept silent and wrote. By this attitude, He silenced the accusers. By this attitude He has forever, unto the ages of ages, silenced all accusations.

## THE STAR OF THE SEA

My child, all is Grace, and this generation is not mistaken when it protests against a judicial concept of salvation.

But to take only the present circumstances into consideration, however, can lead to a dead end. One wants to speak of a liberating Love, and instead imprisons oneself in a moment of time. One wants to ignore everything that goes beyond the actual case and, far from joining limitless Love, one has imposed new limits.

It is true that, in the world of the soul, the same circumstances are never repeated. Each situation is unique. Each calls for a unique response. None can be fitted into a rigid frame.

But he who wants to be concerned only with the demands of the moment risks becoming no more than the instrument of his own desires.

It is necessary to go beyond both the isolated instance and the unvarying formula. Above the law which is only a law, above the incident which is no more than an incident, one must find an 'inspiration', looking to a transcendent reality which is at the same time supple enough to adapt itself to particular circumstances, and yet universal, so that it is able to 'illuminate' all instances.

Limitless Love answers these two requirements. It does not refer one to a dry text. It offers both 'inspiration' and 'orientation'. To all the practical questions that thou canst put to it, Love will offer the same answer: 'Thou shalt love. Thou shalt love with all thy heart.' It does not give precise instructions, but it points to the spirit. And in each case, it is the supreme

criterion. The choice which calls for the most Love is always the best.

I speak, My child, of an authentic love, of the Love which comes from God and which goes toward God, passing through men. We are concerned with Love, true and bestowed, something entirely different from the emotional upheaval of a moment.

My child, learn to discern where Love is. Look at and appraise situations in the full light of Love. An incident may seem 'correct' in the eyes of men and yet may not be at all correct in My eyes. Some occurrence may be valid in the eyes of the law and yet be invalid before Me. Conversely, a state of affairs which men might judge to be unacceptable or sinful may be blameless before God. No human authority is the judge of Love. It is I, the Lord Love, who am the only infallible judge of hearts.

Remember this always. Look at the way My poor children struggle in confusion when problems of the most personal and intimate kinds are concerned. They fail to discern the inner truth of a situation. They do not realise where genuine Love lies. For example, look at their attitudes towards marriage, divorce, adultery. . . . Where does the truth lie, what is the intention, where is the true consent? Beyond that, behind the most correct external forms, how often everything is based on lies! Where is the letter—where the spirit? Where lies the falsehood that kills—the truth which gives life? My child, walk in the truth. Walk in the light.

This decision or that could entail great suffering for thyself. But very often this suffering, once accepted, opens the way to the solution of the problem. In the majority of cases, the best solution is the one that does call for real sacrifice. Thou hast still to learn the 'assets of loss'. Sacrifice, which overthrows the most accepted, the most apparently secure boundaries, is the fullest possible expression of Love.

My child, a sailor can navigate his craft in many ways. He can navigate 'by guesswork', trusting only to the immediate look of the sea and to his past experience, and setting his sail as seems best to him. This method may lead him to port or to shipwreck. A sailor can also set his course by planning it with maps and instruments. But if, in some circumstances, he does not decide to alter his plans and diverge a little from the route he plotted at the start of the voyage, he too may be heading for catastrophe. The primitive method of sailing a ship which relied solely on observation of the stars provided a sure guide, but one which allowed free choice of the means by which to follow the directions given by the stars.

In this same way Love avoids both unprincipled conduct and mechanical conduct. It is the star of the sea. It shines for us, guiding without imposing itself.

The star itself has a fixed trajectory. Ardent and constant, it moves to its goal without deviating. But, generous and limitless, its rays shine out in all directions. It is thus with My Love.

## INTO THE IMMENSE SEA

The river flows into the sea. And straight away, that river ceases to exist.

The river ceases to exist as a river, and yet each drop of its water still exists in the sea into which it has poured itself.

The drops of river water have become intimately fused with the drops of sea water. They have lost their form, their own identity. They have become profoundly transformed. Yet what they were has not ceased to be.

The essence of each drop of the river water still subsists. It cannot perish. But these drops have now become part of the water of the sea. Their former limits have fallen away, and who could now define their present dimensions? They have become 'sublimated' into a vaster reality, whose properties are entirely new.

Limitless Love does away with rules in so far as they are rules. At the same time, it works towards the greatest fulfilment of the deep purpose of the rule.

Thus is it with the law and with grace, with the letter and the spirit, with the formula and the result, with the stylised image and the living call of God become man.

Would those to whom the written commandments were given have needed tables of stone if they had cast themselves into the flame of the Burning Bush?

Limitless Love is the immense sea in which the law, being perfected, has its end.

## THE PURE AND THE IMPURE

O Lord Love, I too, like thy servant Peter on the terrace at Joppa, see the vision of a sheet, knotted at its four corners, let down from heaven and filled with all the beasts of the earth.

From this I understand that the beasts are those things I see around me which men desire, the things by which they seem to live. Many of them are good. But many of them, while claiming Love as their source, yet contradict Love.

Lord, the whole question of the pure and the impure, in its widest context, presents itself to me in this way.

Must I, with a sweeping gesture, reject this whole mixture of things and declare: 'Away with all this! I shall not touch anything which is soiled'? Should I thus set myself apart from all those men and women for whom the distinction has never existed, or no longer exists? Shall I say to them: 'I do not wish to know you. I shall ignore both you and what you do'?

Or must I try to go down their path with them, to the furthest possible extent? Should I commit myself to a way that involves mental, if not physical, compromise? Lord Love, what must I do?

My child, I wish to teach thee what too few people know. I want to teach thee to adore limitless Love even in the very sin that the sinner commits.

However, let us be quite clear about this. My child, thou knowest that I cannot approve of sin. I cannot encourage a sinner to sin. Of this there can be no question. But am I not, in some way, present and at work in the very act of sinning?



By this, I do not only wish to say that, while condemning the sinful act I continue nevertheless to love the sinner. There is more to it than that.

Everything that happens, the bad as well as the good, has roots in the divine being. It is because God gives being—or rather lends it—to men that they continue to exist even at the very instant they sin. At that moment, My child, I could withdraw their being from them. I could destroy them. But I maintain in them the existence they have received from Me, even if they turn My gift against Me.

Even further, in My infinite mercy, in My limitless Love for men, I let certain positive elements which are free from egoism and which can open into self-giving, into authentic tenderness, enter into a sin without becoming confused with it. A spark from the Burning Bush can penetrate into that sin. Understand Me well, My child. I do not say that such a spark has abolished what was a violation of absolute Love. Nor do I say that it has a redemptive effect bearing on the whole sinful act (conversion to Love makes its own clear demands). But limitless Love has opened a door. It has in some way made an entry. It has infiltrated, as it were, into an incident which was 'separated' from total love. It has left in a soul, perhaps in two souls, powerful seeds which could, one day, grow into the fruits of salvation.

My child, amongst those so-called 'impure' things, there are not only those which I have purified and those which are not purified. There are also—and this is so often ignored—the things which I am in the process of purifying.

The important thing is the adoring acknowledgment of My presence in a 'sinful' act and at the same time, to separate radically from that presence all that is foreign to limitless Love, all that is opposed to it. Learn to recognise the unexpected and ever new channels

through which I, without alteration or confusion, reveal Myself, the Compassionate One.

My child, when confronted with the sheet filled with so many different things, the pure with the impure, be as if thy hand wielded a sword that separated those elements which are entirely negative from such positive elements as may be present in or around a fault. Take to thyself everything in the sinner which, however deviously, comes from Me and continues to be Mine. Discover in the midst of the visible impurities and egoisms the secret action of My absolute Purity, and of the generosity of Love. Unite thyself to My effort to transfigure what is not of Me. By thy brotherly prayer, by thy sympathy, not for the sin but for the sinner, join in My work of purification.

## NOTHING ELSE MATTERS

My child, I have already told thee, true conversion lies in conversion to Love.

Nothing else matters. If thou hast that, thou hast all. Thou hast all the law and all the prophets. Thou hast already entered (albeit not finally) into eternal life.

Nothing else matters. Ah, what if others are more intelligent than thee! What if others are more attractive! What if others are more sensitive than thee to all exterior beauty! That others make fun of thy mediocrity and thy awkwardness!

Accept all this very willingly, very humbly. Nothing of it matters, if thou hast Love. Slip very cheerfully, without a sound, into the lowest place. To thee it is given to love. Thy portion is Love. In that will lie thy joy. Let this joy dwell in thee.

Conceal thy treasure within thee. For thou hast found the hidden treasure, the one thing needful. No one can take it away from thee. Thou mayest be judged poorest of all. But I, thy Love, thy Lord, make thee infinitely rich.

For behold! thou has acquired the precious pearl. Thou hast found the piece of silver which was lost. Stay humble and silent, even though possessing the world. Thou dost indeed possess the world, because thou lovest.

Too late camest thou to know limitless Love. Too late camest thou to the divine secret of the universe. Too long hast thou wandered around the centre, without seeing the centre. And now thou must take no other road than the one which leads to Me.

Man only lives where he can breathe. Thou canst say rather: 'I live only when I can love, where I can love.'

## LOVE, TEACH US TO PRAY

My child, do not debate what form prayer should take. Leave to others the distinguishing of stages and techniques. But for thy part, while being grateful to those who have known how to communicate the richness, the living flame of their prayers, be wary of theories which fetter or entangle the simple impulse of love.

My child, everything is so simple! Prayer is nothing other than that impulse of love which can express infinity in a fraction of a second.

The kernel of all prayer is an act of love. Some words, very few words, one word only will suffice to direct a loving impulse toward Me.

As soon as thou hast said with thy whole soul: 'I love Thee,' or 'Give me Thy Love,' or simply: 'I love,' when thou hast thus united thyself with universal Love, thou hast said all.

According to the place or the circumstances, and to avoid embarrassing others, thou canst use paraphrases and discreet adaptations of this impulse of love: but it is in this impulse that the essential abides.

Infinite Love, place on my lips the word of love which is addressed to Love.

## BEARER OF THE FIRE

Lord Love, I shall go out to meet those who have come to grief and who are pierced by the cold.

I shall light a fire of living coals for them round which they will find greeting and welcome. I shall bring them into my own home, without regard to who they are. I shall open all the doors to them. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory, Limitless Love, shall come in.

I shall carry a burning coal with me, to light hearths everywhere. In the morning, on leaving my house, I shall ask myself: What barriers will my Lord break down today to make way for greater Love? What doors shall I open to limitless Love today? Today, what fire am I going to light? For whom shall I light a fire?

Ten thousand torches, and ten thousand more, and then still more than I can count are kindled by the unique Flame. Everywhere, I see the blaze of fires lit by the same Love.

Wherever any soul allows itself to be set alight by the Lord Love; wherever, too—in the streets, in public places, in the hedgerows; amongst the poor and the weak, the prisoners, the vagrants and the homeless—an impulse of sacrifice moves men and women to alleviate distress or to stand out against injustice, there the sacred flame is spread. There are found the servants of Love.

Lord Love, so often I come across men and women whom I have never met, but whose simple nobility I can see. Perhaps they do not believe. Perhaps they know nothing of what I know. But I say to them in-

wardly: 'May you be blessed! You have done me so much good! How I wish I could do you a little good!'

Shall I ever be able to do what these men and women do?

How do I dare to dream of lighting hearths, I, who have in my hands nothing but a poor stick of damp, green wood and some dying embers? I, who fail to do even good and ordinary things, how could I ever do extraordinary ones?

My child, what is important is not the poverty of what thou holdest in thy hands. It is to approach the true hearth, the only hearth, which is My Heart, with what little thou hast. Then thy dying embers will glow again and thy green wood become dry. Thou thinkest there is almost nothing thou canst do; then try to do this almost nothing in an extraordinary way. I do not say in a spectacular way. Concentrate thyself on the most ordinary, the most lowly. But do the ordinary things in an extraordinary way, that is, do them lovingly—with an extraordinary Love. Then the spark will blaze. Then the fire will 'take'. Then the fire will take 'thee'. Then thou wilt begin to be a bearer of the Fire.

## THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

Lord Love, I give thanks to Thee for the Feminine Principle which Thou hast introduced into Thy universe and which Thou hast intimately linked to the salvation of the world. Through it rather than through masculine energy Thou hast often revealed to us certain aspects of divine Love, of human Love, of cosmic Love.

O Woman, thou who art often impulsive, often rash, thou who hast often been seduced, and often been the seducer, blessed be thou, when, often too, thou art the inspiration of what is best!

Blessed be thou, when intuitively and with ease, thou enterest into the depths and dost catch hold of the highest values, gently drawing us toward them!

Blessed be thou, Woman who often, beyond all that is logical and objective, knowest how to join the divine Thought, Love, thinking and soaring so far above pure reason; thou who, having the gift of sympathy, canst so swiftly be in harmony with others.

Blessed be thou, Woman, who art welcoming and receptive, whose portion is not that of concern for profit, of output, of working at things, but is the quick feeling and devoted care for all that is alive!

To think of thee in these terms no doubt provokes the irony of many men and the irritation of many women, but I shall persist in seeing in thee, before all else, the Woman clothed with the sun.

And above all, blessed amongst all women be thou, unique Woman who art in thyself at once the perfect Virgin, the loved and loving Bride made fruitful by the Spirit, the Mother of God become man, sister to us all, Mother to us all!

Blessed be thou, in whom is no heaviness but in whom all is grace, thou who art spread over the world like a veil of spun gold, who dost fill the universe with invisible goodness, thou whose presence we can breathe like gentle air and a pure breeze, thou who dost watch over our fragile bodies and upholdest our feeble hearts!  
O, teach us thy Tenderness every day!



## GIVE ME THY HEART

So then, Lord, it is this? It is truly this? It is only this? This is the whole law and all the prophets? To love with all one's heart. . . . To love Him who first loved us, to love everything that He loves, all men, all women, all creatures. . . .

Yes, My child, that is it, and that is all. Everything 'else' has value only in as much as it is the expression, the carrying out—under so many various forms—of that initial impulse which is My limitless Love.

In that lies the criterion of all good thought, all good speech, all good action. In admitting this or that thought, in speaking this word, in performing that action, canst thou say that thou lovest with all thy heart?

My child, I am not saying to thee: 'It is easy.' The strainer has a fine mesh. But I do say: 'It is simple. It is so simple!' It is a question of integrity.

It is a question of offering thy heart to Love wholly, a heart of which one can say that it is pure in the same way that one speaks of a wine being pure, a heart that is not divided, that is not mixed with anything else, that is not shared.

Purity and chastity are too often spoken of in a negative way, as if they entailed only abstinence. But a heart that is really pure, truly chaste, is a whole heart, one that is integrated, without any fissure, and which offers itself to Love—to God and to men—totally, in its 'wholeness'.

The essence of sinning against purity, My child, is to offer or seem to offer—be it to God, or to a man, or to a woman—a spurious love, a love which is not or

cannot be whole, a heart which is not unified.

My child, in the beginning there was, as there always is, a Heart—a Heart which has not ceased to beat for men, to beat for thee. Dost thou wish to give Me thy heart?

The heart transplants, which in our day have become possible, are a wonderful sign of a spiritual reality. To give one's heart to another, to accept the heart of another. . . . It is the parable of limitless Love's triumph. But there is still a need for the whole organism to be prepared to receive the new heart.

Give me thy heart. My child, it is the whole universe which thus cries out to thee. It is all human suffering, every opening of human good will, all human contortions which need thy understanding and thy intercession, however unworthy thou art. Dost thou not hear the great cry?

Give me thy heart. But, also, do thou ask Me for Mine. If thou dost offer thy heart to Me, I will let it share in the beating of My Heart, which beats for all people and all things.

My child, receive this word and drink of the Cup—with all thy heart, with My Heart.

## LOVE SPEAKS

From the heart of the Burning Bush, Love speaks:

My beloved ones, I wish to reveal My essence, My presence to you, so that a vision of Myself becomes alive to you.

I am Limitless Love. I know no limit whatever in time. I know no limit whatever in space. There is no place where I am not. There is no instant in which I am not giving expression to what I am, who I am. I am the origin, and the deep root, and the impetus (too often refused or turned aside from) of what you yourselves are. I am your true life.

The world does not contain Me, but, without My being in any way confused with it, the world is contained in Me. I am in no way confused with you, and yet, because you derive your being and all grace from Me, I am in you, I am yourselves.

Many are those who, while thus deriving from Me, are unaware of that immense impulsion of Love which comes from Me and which upholds the universe. Their eyes have only a restricted, diminished field of vision. They do not feel the earth tremble and the whole world vibrate under the breath of the Spirit.

My beloved ones, adjust your feelings to the divine breath, the divine touch. Let yourselves be the vibrant notes that transmit My limitless Love. Put yourselves in concord with every human voice. Strive to traverse the whole range of sounds that each voice can emit, until your voices, pure and true, echo the same song.

I want to say something to you which at first may astonish or even scandalise you. Be what I am. You will say that the creature can never be what his Creator is. This is true; divine nature and human nature cannot

identify, nor can they be confused. But there is the Gift. There is communication. I have sought to communicate to you what is within myself. I have wished to enter into an interior communion, and into visible community, with you. I have sought to make you participants of My ardour and My incandescence; briefly, of My Love.

Be what I am. I am Love. Be love. To achieve the fullness of Love is not possible for you. But it is always possible for each one to orient himself or herself toward it, to reach out to it, to take a few steps on the sacred way. There will be many obstacles, many falls, many accidents. But every act of will that is aimed at giving oneself to Love, every true movement of Love, has an infinite value. Failures may mount up. But one must always begin to love once again.

Lift up your eyes to the highest summits of Love. You will, however, see them all the more clearly for being plunged into an abyss of humility, casting yourselves before Love with the trust of a small child, asking forgiveness for all, hoping for all, loving all. The more lowly you are, the more gentle and simple you will become, and the more clearly the Flame of limitless Love will light your horizon, enabling you to see all things in their place, in their truth, as I Myself see them.

My beloved ones are found on diverse planes, at different levels. But I am the Beloved of all. I am found on all planes and at all levels. I am for all. I am the Shepherd who lets no sheep go astray without seeking for it. I am with you from the beginning. Your life is Mine.

Speak with My voice. Speak with the voice of Love, and utter the words of Love. I shall put My words into your mouths. Even in the hours when you do not hear Me, even when you are not listening, I never stop whispering in your ear.

I have come to cast on earth the fire of Limitless Love.

The Lebanon, Easter 1970

PART II  
THY PRESENCE TODAY



## THY PRESENCE TODAY

They . . . abode with him that day.

John 1.39

Lord Jesus, Thou hast bestowed on Thy disciples the permanent gift of Thy Presence. Thou hast said to them: 'And behold I am with you always, until the end of time.' Oh! that I were capable of living in the constant awareness of this Presence. Or even if I lacked that 'awareness', would that my faith were sufficiently living to believe, always and deeply, that Thou art here with me, so that my whole way of life should be conformed to such a certainty! . . .

But, Lord, though so many years have passed, I have hardly begun. I am so weak. I need to disintoxicate myself, so eliminate so many poisons! But perhaps I could, at least, be born into Thy Presence, and grow in it. It is with this desire that I draw near to Thee today.

Thy two first disciples, having left the Forerunner, followed Thee in silence. Then Thou didst invite them to accompany Thee: 'Come and see.' So they came. They saw where Thou didst live. And the Gospel says that they stayed with Thee 'that day'. They did not then and there decide to remain in Thy Presence, for we read from what follows that they took up their ordinary work again, and that only later did they leave everything to follow Thee. But, on 'that day', they made the discovery of Thy Presence. They made a preliminary exploration, if I may put it like that. They learnt what it is to be with Thee. Lord, today, now, I too want to make such an experiment.

Accept and bless my intention to pass 'a day' with Thee, Lord. I want to see if I can, and how I can, live with Thee for a whole day. I should like to try a sort of 'retreat' which will be conducted by Thee, Thyself alone, in the most intimate communion. Obviously, it will be a very short retreat, but from it I might be able to work out the broad outlines of an itinerary to follow.

Lord, Thou hast already granted me a precious privilege: for I have both the time and the material possibility of isolating myself with Thee, of looking at Thee, and of listening to Thee, without being too much beset by pressing outside commitments. But what a responsibility will be mine if I do not use this privilege to its fullest. Others are called to seek Thee, and to find Thee, under different circumstances. Perhaps it is in their married life, or in caring for their children, that they meet Thee (and often with greater sacrifice and depth than those who are 'privileged'). The experience of Thy Presence that I would wish to gain or, more properly, the grace of Thy Presence that I would wish to obtain is other than theirs. Nevertheless, many aspects of these two very different experiences are similar, and, if some of those who are engaged in 'normal' life read these lines, I hope they will find that many of the things said here do not seem at all foreign to them. As for me, Lord Jesus, because I am one of those whose calling Thou hast set apart from the ways followed by the majority of men, strengthen in me the conviction that my immediate and exclusive goal is Thee, Thee only, and that at this moment I must draw near to Thy Person in a direct way.

And how shall I approach Thee? I can but do it as simply as possible. I shall read in Thy Gospel what Thou hast said and what Thou hast done. I shall try—very simply, I repeat—to let today's actions be 'penetrated by the Gospel'.

I revere those who know more than I do, and who act



better. But I know my limits. I shall not aspire here to the high summits of a reflection on doctrine. Nor shall I try here to plumb the great mysteries of our incorporation in Christ and their ecclesiastical and sacramental manifestations. Far be it from me to ignore or undervalue the worth of the great and infinitely rich outpouring that is thus offered to us. But what I do want is to come today and drink at the source, as Thy disciples knew it at the very beginning. Small, poor and weak as I am, I want to come only to follow and serve, and humbly cleave to Jesus in His humility, *humilis humillem*.

Yes, I want for one day at least to keep to Thee, to catch hold of Thee, to 'obtain' Thee. I wish for 'Thy Presence, today'. Master, let this day, which I shall try to spend close to Thee, affect my life like that small amount of leaven which raises the whole measure of meal.

## IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

This do in remembrance of me.

Luke 22.19

Lord, Thou didst say to Thy disciples during the Last Supper: 'This do in remembrance of me.' This saying had a very special meaning. It referred to the bread and wine offered, to Thy Body which was broken and Thy Blood which was shed.

I shall dare to give to this saying a wider, though (please God) not a sacrilegious, application. While not confusing the unique act of Thy Supper with any other action, and while keeping each reality in its proper order, I would like to extend those words—'This do in remembrance of me'—to all the daily actions that Thou didst make and that we ourselves make.

May everything that I do, Lord, be done in remembrance of Thee. And especially so, during this 'day of the Gospel', this 'day of Presence' during which I ask that all my actions should be conformed to Thine.

And, just as in our re-enactment of the Last Supper, we are not concerned simply with a commemoration, but with a present and effective mystery, so—in quite a different category and on a quite different level—I pray that this 'remembrance of Thee' when it is associated with our simplest actions will, through the life-giving Spirit, bring me an actual and contemporary reality which is divine and in accordance with the Gospel.

So that Thou mayest become present in every part of my life, or rather, so that I may discern Thy Presence in it more clearly, I shall first of all unite myself to Thee in all the most ordinary, most everyday actions.

What men do each day, what I do today, Thou didst also do during Thy earthly existence. Thou didst sleep and Thou didst wake up. Thou didst wash Thyself and Thou didst dress Thyself. Thou didst work with Thy hands and Thou didst rest. Thou didst read and Thou didst write. Thou didst walk our roads. Thou didst take part in the conversations of men. Thou didst eat and drink with them. And now Thou sayest to me: 'My child, do all these things in remembrance of Me.'

It is Thy wish that I should establish a living relationship between each of these actions, which were Thine, and what I myself do every day when I wash and dress, when I read and write, when I work and rest, when I eat and drink, when I go among men, when I sleep and when I wake up. These words give a certain outline to the areas that my search for Thy Presence will try to explore.

What, O Master, is the nature of this living relationship? A magnificent theme opens to our thought.

Would it be enough simply to say that all the human actions of the Son of Man remain for ever the models for our actions?

Or, to take it further, could one not say that Thy human actions were more than just elements which made up Thy own life? Could one not say that each one of our own actions has its spiritual meaning, its root and its power, in some corresponding act previously performed by Thee? Could one perhaps say (as did certain of the Fathers) that Thou didst eat so that our food might be blessed, that Thou didst sleep to bless our sleep, that Thou wast wearied in order to bless our weariness?

Going still further, could one say that each of Thy actions which is described in the Gospels remains somehow eternally present and actual, to the same extent that the human realities of those acts were in touch with Thy divine nature—which transcends time and

space? Could one, from this, say that each gospel episode which concerns Thy Presence is as real to us today as it was to those who were involved in it, so that we too can be embodied in it, enter into it ourselves, not only spiritually and in a mysterious way, but also, somehow, physically?

Master, I shall not go into such speculations, nor try to solve these problems. I mean to stop at the threshold of such questions. A theologian could take it further, for it is his field to investigate whether the gospel episodes of Thy life, in themselves, of their own nature, remain wholly actual and eternal, or whether they belong to a historical past from which only the supernatural effects survive. What I believe firmly, Lord, is that, *by gift and by grace*, Thy Holy Spirit can make all the actions of Thy earthly life immediately present and communicable to me. I believe that, through the Spirit and in the Spirit, I shall be enabled to take part in the episodes of the Gospels. I believe that the Holy Spirit can, should he so wish, thus write a 'life of Jesus' in my soul and make me live it. I believe that, supernaturally, there is a sort of osmosis and contiguity between the human acts of my Saviour and my own actions. What is needed is for me to insert myself wholly into each of these episodes in the life of Jesus Christ and to insert each of these episodes wholly into my own existence.

This is what I ask that this day spent with the Master should reveal to me.

Before going into detail, however, I must consider one possible objection.

Would not our union with Christ be strangely diminished and lowered by expressing it in terms of the everyday events of the Gospel? Is it right that we should concentrate on those actions which are common to Jesus and to other men? Surely the great redeeming acts of Christ were the Incarnation, and the death on the Cross, and the Resurrection on the third day—all of

which go so totally beyond human possibilities.

Certainly: that first Easter at Jerusalem was the central act and the consummation of Jesus's ministry, of this there is no doubt. But Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and Gennesaret were all of them preparations for it, they were necessary steps on the way. I shall make my way into the mystery of Jesus through the narrow door of littleness and of simplicity. And, for those who are able to understand, for those who are able to contemplate, the whole mystery of salvation—the cradle, Golgotha and the empty tomb—is to be found, in a veiled way, under the aspects that I shall choose here (although it is true that all choice involves an impoverishment, and an exclusion or diminishment of other aspects cannot be avoided).

'In remembrance of me. . . .' This most certainly has nothing to do with any mechanical copying or servile imitation of the actions of the Master. Nor shall I try to draw up a rule or a timetable based on this day that I desire to spend with Thee. What I ask for, what I hope to receive from this day, is a powerful inspiration, an orientation—not a 'rule of life', but a 'way of life'.

## **IF I DO NOT WASH THEE. . . .**

If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

John 13.8

Washing removes dirt and cleans what is soiled. It refreshes and revives. Lord Jesus, at the start of the day Thou dost bid me seek Thee in this water that washes me.

Thou art not only the giver of water. Thou Thyself, Lord, art this living water, which Thou dost describe as springing up everlastingly. Thou art the water which brings fertility to the arid and parched earth. At the beginning of the day, Thou art the dew which makes my soul able to bear leaves and fruit. Thou art the water which quenches and renews the thirsty soul. I shall come to the water with respect and desire because I see in it one of the essential signs of Thy action. At the time of the Creation, the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters. And, now, in all water and especially in this morning water which in some way snatches me from the drowsiness of sleep, I meet Thy Presence.

I ask, Lord, that the first and principal effect of this water that Thou givest, of this water that Thou art, shall be for the grace of purifying my soul. I come to this water that is going to wash me. This water is no more than a symbol, but at the same time I say to Thee: 'Wash me.' In that lies the reality. When Thou didst take it upon Thyself to wash the feet of Thy disciples and came to Simon Peter, who in humility protested, Thou didst answer him: 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.' Lord, my whole desire is to have a part with Thee. So, wash me. Wash me com-

pletely. I am not like Thy disciples who were already pure: as Thou didst say to them, it was from their feet only that the dust of the road had to be cleaned. Wash Thou my hands and my head. Wash my whole body. Bathe me. Give Thy spotlessness to all which in my thought, in my will, in my emotions, in my senses, needs purifying.

Lord, behold, the water runs over me. I remember my sins. From my heart the words of the psalmist rise toward Thee: 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' And I seem to hear Thy answer. With faith, with joy, I repeat what the prophet Isaiah proclaimed in Thy name: 'Come now . . . though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Oh, might I receive this assurance of salvation each morning, when I first wash myself.

Lord, as the water wets my sinful flesh, I see Thee in front of me, girded with a towel, washing my feet and drying them. I enter into the Gospel and seem to become one of the disciples in the upper chamber. Thou dost dry my feet, and the towel with which Thou art girded absorbs into itself the dust that dirtied them. Thus, Lord, dost Thou take my stains upon Thyself. Thou transferest to Thyself my sins. My impurities are thrown into the fire of purity.

All this, O my Saviour, has already taken place at my baptism. Every time I wash I should be reminded of that baptismal grace. Thou didst say: 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' But, as I know only too well, baptismal grace can be lost. In Thy mercy, Thou dost allow it to be renewed and able once more to be fruitful. And not only can it become alive again, if certain interior and exterior conditions obtain, but it can,

each day, be quickened and intensified in the secret places of the heart. O quicken it in me now, as I wash myself.

The water runs over me, and I see Thee in the Jordan, Lord, being baptised by John. Thou didst desire to receive that baptism not for Thyself, but for the sake of men. Thou didst receive John's baptism for my sake. Thou didst desire in all our names, in my name, as our representative and in place of us, to take repentance upon Thyself. It was the only moment of Thy life when Thou didst wish to appear a repentant sinner. For they were our sins which Thou didst bring to the imperfect baptism of John, anticipating the perfect baptism. I unite myself to Thee, in this baptism that Thou didst receive for me. And especially I unite myself to Thee so that through the strength of my desire there may be a renewal of that other baptism which I received from Thy disciples, in Thy name, in the name of Thy Father, in the name of Thy Spirit. Thou Thyself, through human hands, baptised me. And it was into Thee that I was baptised.

The grace of a second baptism—the baptism of repentance—is also symbolised by water. But this time it is the water of tears. Thou didst abase Thyself in front of me, Lord, to wash my feet. And I, with Mary Magdalene, kneel before Thee and, in my turn, wash Thy feet. I wash them with the tears that I shed, or with the tears that I ask for. Have I any tears? Oh, give them to me! Break my heart! This baptism of burning tears, how powerful it is, for it can bring about repeatedly what the first baptism brought about once. In the baptism of tears, as in the first baptism of water, Thou art the baptiser. I shall not wash myself without thinking, first thing in the morning, that another water is there, ready to spring from my eyes—should the Lord but strike the rock. Strike, Lord, strike. . . .

Jesus, Thou didst say: 'I have a baptism to be bap-



tised with; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished!' Thou didst thus foretell Thy Passion. To the ancient Greeks, the word 'baptism' meant a deep and dangerous plunge, even a catastrophe by which a ship was swallowed up by the waves. The new birth in Thee, Lord, means that there must first have been death and burial with Thee. Am I able to be baptised with such a baptism? When my daily contact with water calls to mind this purifying contact with Thee, have I decided to die to myself, today, now? Can I see clearly, over and above a rather too general and vague resolve, the points at which, during this day, Thy will must victoriously (and perhaps painfully) be substituted for mine?

Water that purifies cannot be thought of apart from Thy Blood. The Blood shed for us, for me. . . . Blood and Water poured out together from the side which was pierced by the spear. And thus the mystery of water leads us into the mystery of Blood. The water of Jordan mingles with the Blood of Calvary.

Lord, make me alive to the possible transfigurations of my daily washing. If Thou dost wash me, Lord, I shall have a part with Thee. To have a part with Thee is to have a share in the joy of Thy Kingdom, but also to have a share in Thy sacrifice. When, each morning and during the day, I let water run over me, I can at the same time be washed, in spirit, by the Water and the Blood of the Saviour. I am in touch both with the Master who washes His soiled disciple and with the Redeemer who sheds His Blood for men.

## **THIS GARMENT WHICH IS THE CHRIST**

The father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.

Luke 15.22

To get dressed is one of life's necessities. He who has woken from sleep and got up, and who has washed himself, must still dress himself. I have tried to meet Jesus in washing myself. I can also meet Him in the daily actions by which I cover my body with clothes.

One must dress oneself in front of the Lord, in the Lord. And it is also necessary to know how to undress in front of the Lord. The clothes which the Lord gives me are new clothes. I cannot wear them unless my old skin has been cast off.

When the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened, when our first parents knew that they were naked, they 'sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons'. And when God, walking in the garden, towards evening, called Adam and said to him, 'Where art thou?', Adam answered, 'I heard thy voice . . . and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' The fig leaves of Adam and Eve are the type of 'false clothing', of pathetic apparent covering which offers no guarantee of strength or durability, and which is nothing, in fact, but precarious pretention and excuse. We, too, clothe ourselves with fig leaves each time that we want to seem, in the eyes of God or in the eyes of men, something other than we truly are. If we become humble and true, our first care will be to put far away from ourselves all affectations designed to deceive, all dress which is a disguise, and to show ourselves in our moral

nakedness—just as we are. God said to Adam, 'Who told thee that thou wast naked?' Lord Jesus, Thou Thyself dost show me my nakedness, my lie. I no longer want to cover myself with false appearances. I no longer want to use clothes that I have chosen or made myself. It is by Thee alone that I wish to be dressed. Therefore I pray Thee to undress me, so that Thou mayest then clothe me afresh.

I must also, Master, be able to strip off my clothes when they hinder me from following Thee. When Thou wast seized at Gethsemane, a young man was following Thee who had only a linen cloth wrapped round his body. The soldiers caught hold of him, but he, leaving his cloth, 'fled from them naked'. That young man, in order to join or to follow Thee—at the very moment when Thy disciples were abandoning Thee and fleeing—that young man had left his room and probably his bed. He had wasted no time getting dressed. He simply threw a cloth over his body. When Thy Presence calls me (and words are not necessary for this: Thy Presence itself is a call), I must not encumber myself with clothes, that is to say with material, or intellectual, or emotional possessions which hinder me. I must run straight towards Thee, freed of everything except Thyself.

Lord, I also cast my garments before Thee, under Thy feet, like one of the crowd 'spread their garments in the way' in Jerusalem, at the time of Thy triumphal entry. With this multitude, in the same burst of homage and enthusiasm, I too cry: 'Hosanna to the son of David.' Let my garments be trampled by the feet of the ass that carried Thee! Would that all I have might be Thine, and always humbly submitted to Thee.

Lord, pierce me with these thoughts, every evening when I undress.

And now, Jesus, here I stand before Thee. And Thou Thyself art going to dress me. I am deeply moved by

reading the divine words recorded by the prophet Ezekiel, and I apply them to myself: 'And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood. . . . I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I annointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.'

These very beautiful words link up with the verse from the Gospel that I set at the head of this meditation. In them, we hear the voice of the father of the former prodigal, the now repentant son, calling for 'the best robe' to be brought out, in order to clothe the child he had found again.

The father's words must be carefully weighed. He does not say: 'Bring *his* best robe.' He says: 'Bring *the* best robe.' There is no question of searching for the best amongst such clothes as the prodigal son might have left at home. The father wants to give his child the best robe that can be found, the best robe available, wherever it might be. And so it is that, when the Son of Man searches for and saves 'that which was lost' in my being, He is not concerned with re-instating me as I was. He does not only wish to give back to me the treasures which I had abandoned and dissipated, He wants to add to them. He wants even better riches for me; He wants to impart to me every good gift and every perfect gift. Lord, clothe me with the best robe.

What then is this robe, which, of all robes, is the most beautiful? Lord, Thou dost wish to give me nothing less than Thyself. The mystery of the garment has been formulated for us most concisely and most power-

fully by Thy servant Paul: 'For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ.' And so this mystery of the garment finds itself linked to the mystery of water, of washing.

God did not allow Adam and Eve, expelled from the earthly paradise, to go on covering themselves with their pathetic fig-leaves. 'Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them.' I hope I am not being too fantastic and rash if, going beyond the literal sense, I dare to see, in these clothes of skin that God Himself gave to our first parents, a prefiguring of the flesh of the paschal Lamb, the spotless Lamb, sacrificed for the life and salvation of the world.

The mystery of the garment conceals still further depths. I will point them out with restraint. The prophet Isaiah said: 'My soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.' This brief allusion reveals to us the nuptial aspect of the bond which unites the soul to its Saviour.

Each time that I dress myself, I take upon me Jesus Christ. I cover myself with the Beloved. I can make each act of dressing into a sort of private 'taking of the habit'. I can make every garment into a sign and a vehicle of grace. Clothe me truly with Thyself, each morning, O Thou who art for every man 'the finest robe'.

## HE STOOD UP FOR TO READ

He stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book. . . .

Luke 4.16-17

Lord Jesus, should a day pass when, through my fault, I have not opened the Book, that day would have a gaping emptiness in it. I would have missed a meeting with Thee, a meeting which Thou hast both prepared and desired.

The Book: that is to say Thy Book, the Word of God, the Word that Thy prophets, Thy evangelists, Thy apostles recorded in writing and that Thou hast entrusted to Thy Church. When a lawyer asked thee: 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' it was to the Book that Thou didst refer him, to the Book from which each of those who are Thine should nourish themselves daily. Thou didst say to that lawyer: 'What is written in the Law?' Thy will is that I should know, to the full measure of my capacities, what is contained in Thy holy Scriptures.

But no sooner is the question 'What is written in the law?' put to the lawyer than Thou dost add another question, 'How readest thou?' (Greek: *pós anagin-öskeis*, Latin: *quomodo legis*).

It is not only on the objective content of the Book that Thou dost question the lawyer. Thy questioning goes further, and is—above all—concerned with how Thy Word is received by him, personally. One would have expected the question, 'What dost thou read there?' But no. What matters is the way in which the reader understands and 'receives' Thy supreme truths.

Similarly, when in the Temple Thou wast seated opposite the treasury, Thou didst watch 'how the people cast money' into it—not only what they put in—and it was thus that while 'many that were rich cast in much', the two small coins of a poor widow gained a far greater value in Thy eyes than all the other gifts.

Thou dost want me to read; and Thou dost want me to read in a particular way. The words of the Gospel which are the text of this chapter might suggest that I was going to consider 'my own' reading of the Book. And indeed this saying would be very appropriate. 'He got up for to read': at the moment of waking, my first duty should be to open the holy Books and to seek Thee in them. 'There was delivered unto him the Book': the Church never stops drawing my attention, my meditation, to the holy Scriptures, and it is from the Church, with respect and faith, that I receive the Book.

However, it is not on 'my' reading, but surely on 'Thy' reading of the Book that I want to try and fix my thoughts. It is in seeing Thee read, in listening to Thee read, that I shall try to learn 'how' to read. The roles are reversed. It is to Thee that Thy servant now puts the question: 'How readest Thou?'

Lord, allow me to live a page of the Gospel with Thee, mingling with Thy disciples.

Thou comest to Nazareth. It is the sabbath day, and as is Thy custom, Thou dost enter the synagogue. I go in with Thee.

The Scripture, read aloud and commented upon, constitutes the core of worship in the synagogue. And Thou dost offer to read the Book Thyself, for afterwards Thou dost want to explain the Word of God.

It is in the synagogue that Thou dost wish to read the Book. I shall translate the Jewish term into Christian language. Thou hast entrusted Thy holy Church, the community called and assembled by Thee,

with the safekeeping of inspired Scripture. I want always to read the Word with Thy Church, and never against Thy Church. For the Church of Jesus Christ or—what comes to the same thing—Jesus Christ in His Church, is the supreme and infallible interpreter of what was written under the breath of the Spirit. Nevertheless Thou dost expect me to receive the Word in an intensely personal way, just as much in the 'synagogue' as in the privacy of my room. The question is not only: what am I going to hear? It is also: how am I going to hear?

'He went into the synagogue....' The Gospel adds: 'and stood up for to read'. Thou dost stand up, and this movement conveys a spiritual initiative, an intention that Thou hast concerning the Word of God. Thou dost stand up: thus indicating that Thou art an authorised and authentic reader of the Word and commentator on it, and dost offer Thyself to communicate it to the believers.

Lord, each time that I take the Bible in my hands, allow me at that moment to see Thee standing up, ready to teach me to 'read'.

They delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah, 'and when he had opened the book, he found the place....' The passage from Isaiah that St Luke cites relates to the Lord's Anointed who will announce the good news to the poor, the captives, to the oppressed and the blind. It is indeed a moving passage, and singularly appropriate to the Saviour's mission. But what I would like to pay attention to here are the two actions: first, 'there was delivered unto him the book': then, 'and when he had opened the book, he found the place'.

Lord Jesus, I hand the Book to Thee. Rather than reading it myself, I would like to hear Thee read. That is to say that, in reading, I want to lay aside all personal preoccupations, all prejudice, all interpretations that



could come only from myself. I shall be silent, so that within me Thy voice alone may speak the word of God for me.

Lord, open the book and find the 'place'. In the synagogue the passage to be read was set. But whatever the passage may be, today it is written for me. Whether I hear the Gospel read in the congregation or whether my reading is in private, I know that if Thou dost read there will always be a text—perhaps one phrase, one word only—which, at this moment, applies to my present state. I can open the Book at random and I know that if my eyes settle on the first sentence that I happen to read or on those that are next to it or follow it—and if my heart is filled with Thee—I shall very soon discover the word which gives me the needed shock or impulsion. The place where I find Thee will be 'the place'. It will be the word of command, the marching order that I shall carry away with me for the day's business and from which I shall draw life, while the day passes. It will be the 'sacramental word' which will guide and fortify me on the journey.

'And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down.' Thou hast finished reading, Master. And now, return the book not to the minister of the synagogue, but to me, Thy poor servant, so that I may thus receive from Thy hand the Book that Thou hast read to me, the Book that we have read together. Thy Scripture will be more precious to me and loved if Thy hand places it in my hand. This passing from hand to hand (in Latin *traditio*) will truly take place to the extent that I am aware of each sentence of Scripture as being a gift that Thou dost make to me.

Thou dost sit down. 'And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them. . . .' The moment has come, no longer for formal reading, but for more intimate talk. It is not enough, Lord, for me inwardly to hear Thy

voice, rather than my own, reading the sacred text. Now, I want Thee to explain it to me. My eyes are fastened on Thee, on Thee alone. Speak to me—above all of Thyself. ‘He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.’ Speak to me, as Thou didst speak to Thy two disciples on the road to Emmaus, so that Thy Word might be as much a flame as a light to me. ‘Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?’

Speak also to me about myself. Show me how the scriptural Word that I have heard can be applied to the ordinary actions of this day. In the synagogue at Nazareth, when Thou hadst read, Thou didst say to those who were listening ‘This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.’ Today, in my simplest occupations I can embody the sacred words, in so far as I have heard and welcomed them. I can—dare I put it this way—exchange and convert them into ready money. If the Scriptures remain something apart from my work, my rest, my meals, my conversation, of what use would they be to me? When Thy two disciples, to whom Thou hadst expounded the Scriptures on the way, found themselves near the village they were going to, Thou didst seem to wish to go on further. But they detained Thee saying: ‘Abide with us.’ In the same way, Lord, do not leave me after reading and expounding the Word. Do not send me back alone to my daily tasks. In my life, do not let Thy word be like a sanctuary that iron railings isolate from the house and the street. In all that I am going to do, Lord, stay with me.

The Book which I handed to Thee, and which Thou didst return, the Book that Thou didst read and explain to me, is the inspired Book which Thy Church holds in trust. But, Lord, let me see all my reading in the light of that episode at Nazareth: Jesus reading

in the synagogue. Make me strong enough to read only the books which I may 'deliver' to Thee. Thou canst not open and 'read to me' a bad book or even a useless book. I want to look for Thee and find Thee in everything I read. Many books, though they do not name Thee, nevertheless speak to me of Thee. Those, and such as are sincerely devoted to Thee, I deliver to Thee, so that Thou mayest open them, and so that Thou Thyself, in me, mayest read and illumine them for me with Thy light.

## HE WROTE ON THE GROUND

But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground.

John 8.6

Jesus, through Thee everything that I read—whether it is a scientific or technical work, or something purely literary—ought to be ‘brought to life’. It should, in however roundabout a way, communicate Thee to me. Or rather, each time that I read, I should hear Thee reading.

But what about writing? Has Thy life, have Thy Gospels, something to teach me about the expression of thought by means of written signs?

Only once, throughout the whole of the Gospels, Lord, art Thou depicted in the act of writing. It is during the episode of the woman taken in adultery. I am not unaware that this passage has raised certain textual problems, but I see in this page, Lord, one of the most moving examples of Thy attitude toward sinners. Thy refusal to give an opinion, the barrier of silence with which Thou didst meet the insidious questions of the Pharisees and scribes, the challenge Thou didst throw out to the accusers: ‘He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her’, and those other words addressed to the guilty woman: ‘Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more’—in all this I see the shining out both of Thy merciful compassion and of the integrity of Thy justice.

Amongst other aspects of this episode, there is a gesture in which I would now like to find inspiration. While the scribes are questioning Thee, as much to test

Thee as to accuse the woman, Thou dost answer nothing, but simply dost bend down and, with Thy finger, write on the ground. And, having spoken the words about the first stone, again Thou dost bend down and write.

What didst Thou write? Those for whom each of Thy gestures is charged with a spiritual meaning, a meaning that must be deepened, have asked themselves this question. Perhaps Thy gesture was meant simply to express indifference or detachment, a refusal to show any interest in the accusation. Perhaps it evoked the memory of the two tables of stone, 'written with the finger of God', which Moses received; and such an allusion to the law could become an allusion to all transgression. Perhaps, even, the outlines traced by Thy finger brought pointedly to the accusers' minds some personal sin or other. When the accusers heard what Thou didst say about the first stone, they 'went out one by one, beginning at the eldest'. The Evangelist establishes no direct connection between their exit and the words spoken by Thee. But Thy writing on the ground would certainly not have been mentioned in two verses if it did not serve, in some way, as a link between the accusation and the accusers.

We do not know what Thou didst write, nor shall we ever know until the last day. There are two things, however, of which we can be certain.

To begin with, Thy gesture was mysteriously oriented toward the truth. While Thou wast writing, both the accusers and the woman herself found themselves faced with their own consciences. A silent call was thus made to the deepest 'self' of each.

And then Thy gesture was directed toward mercy and justice as regards the adulterous woman. What she felt, what she thought, while seeing Thee write remains unknown to us. But Thy gesture served as a prelude to the abandonment of the accusation, then to

pardon and finally to the admonition with which the episode ended.

'Jesus stooped down ... and ... wrote.' A little further on: 'And again he stooped down, and wrote.' The Evangelist, Lord, underlines the fact that Thou didst stoop down. Thou didst not wish to adopt the stance of a judge who, whether standing up or seated, stares at the accused. With the greatest delicacy, Thou didst avoid looking at the adulterous woman, as long as her accusers were there. Only when they had gone didst Thou 'lift Thyself up'; and seeing her alone didst speak to her.

Lord Jesus, I consecrate to Thee all the writing that I do. What I consecrate to Thee is not only the text that I write, but the action of writing itself. Let what my hand writes always participate in Thy writing on the ground during Thy encounter with the adulterous woman. Whether it is occupied with original work, or with copying out a simple list, or even—and most especially—with the letters that make up one's ordinary correspondence, let me never write without entering into Thy intention.

May whatever I write, Lord, serve the truth. For all truth is Thy truth. May what I write (particularly where personal letters are concerned) help the other person to look into himself, to see what is true. May what I write serve Thy compassion and Thy mercy and always aim, even very indirectly, towards an outcome which is good.

Each time I write, may I see Thee writing on the ground, and may I feel at one and the same time what the Pharisees and scribes felt, what the accused woman felt, and also, to a certain extent, what Thou Thyself didst feel. For my condition derives partly from that of the Pharisees, accusers and transgressors, and partly from that of the adulterous woman, but also from Thy life which Thou dost communicate to men.

Lord, each time that I write, may I stoop as Thou didst stoop down in tracing the letters on the ground. May I never feel a sense of superiority over those to whom I write. May I never adopt an upright stance, or the look of an accuser or judge.

Thou hast said, through Thy prophet Jeremiah: 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' O Master, write in my heart, so that everything I put on paper may be a tracing of what Thou hast put in me. While I write, place Thy hand on mine and guide it. Make me into a precise instrument, both flexible and strong, with which Thou mayest write in our hearts.

## THE SENDING TO THE VINEYARD

Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

Matt. 21.28

O Lord, by Thine own life, in Thine own life, Thou hast sanctified labour and weariness, exertion and the work itself. One can see in man's work his capacity for perfection, or think of it as the interaction between man and nature, but, for Thy disciple, it is from Thee, from Thy example, that the day's work receives its meaning.

Under the old dispensation, work was considered sacred by virtue of the word spoken by the Creator to Adam: 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.' But from henceforth our daily work is blessed in Thee because it is a sharing of the physical travail which Thou didst take upon Thyself on earth, and in the unceasing, eternal work in which Thou art engaged. For Thou didst say: 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' And it is in terms of work that Thou didst speak of Thy redemptive mission: 'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.'

Several times in Thy parables Thou didst compare the kingdom of heaven to a vineyard. A householder sends labourers to it—those whom he hires early in the morning, those at the third hour, those at the sixth hour, those at the ninth hour and even those at the eleventh hour. A father sends his two sons to it. The one answers his father's order with: 'I go, sir,' but does not go. The other son answers: 'I will not,' but later goes. The wicked husbandman beat one of the householder's servants, kill another, stone a third, illtreat



still others and end by killing the heir, the son himself.

In this way, symbolically, the relationship between the work of man and the history of salvation is conveyed to us. In our human work, in the work of our hands or of our minds, we receive the call of God. We answer it by consent or by a refusal. We obey immediately or after a delay. We welcome or we ill-treat those sent by the Father. We kill the Son Himself, or we receive Him with love. It is in the vineyard, just as much as in the temple or in our homes that we do these things.

When the 'vineyard' is mentioned in the Gospels, long familiarity, through both associations and language, make us think at once of apostolic work. But every form of work, whatever it may be, is carried out in this 'vineyard' and makes it either barren or fruitful. Every true calling to a human task is a sending to the 'vineyard'. Every occupation, from that of street sweeper to that of teacher, and to that of an apostle's ministry, is service in the vineyard where the master of the servants 'gave . . . to every man his work'. Each morning, Lord, Thou canst either send me to very varied employments, or keep me tied to a task which is always the same. Thou canst set me to undertakings which are filled with new interest or else to humble and monotonous occupations. But if I have enough faith and love, I shall hear the same call every day: 'My son, go work today in my vineyard.' And I know that, in its ultimate reality, the vine—under whatever guise it may appear—is Thyself, to Whom I am grafted. 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' In doing my work, it is always Thee that I find. It is Thee that my work mysteriously expresses.

To begin with, Lord, Thou hast made manual labour holy. Thou didst give the greatest part of Thy earthly life to it. Prefiguring this, by a striking anthropomorphism in the holy Books, the making of the two tables of

the Law had been attributed to the work of God's hands: 'The tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.' And of Thyself, the crowd said: 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' and, even more precisely: 'Is not this the carpenter?' Thou didst not 'submit' to this labour of the workshop, accepting it as the condition in which it had pleased the Father to place Thee. Rather, Thou didst choose it, Thou didst want it, Thou didst prefer it to all others. During the long years at Nazareth, Thou didst work hard with Thy hands. Thou didst give but a very short time to Thy missionary work. So, to Thy disciples, contemporary 'labour' problems cannot be considered primarily in terms of social class, or of politics or economics. Their *alpha* and their *omega* is the person, the example of the God-Man, the worker who has divinised all the work of human hands.

Lord, teach me to like manual work more, and, following Thy example, to choose it. Teach me to see in all physical labour a sharing of Thy work at Nazareth. Opportunities for doing this kind of work may not arise very often in my life: may I make up for this by mindfulness of the Lord, by union with the Lord, by the respect, the intention, the attention and the generosity of purpose with which I do the work when the opportunity does come my way. It may be something very small (the work, I mean), but even if it is only the washing or drying of crockery, or the tidying of a room, may I feel Thee working with me and through me—for Thee, that means for Thy brothers and mine. May I feel that I am 'at Nazareth'.

O Lord, give me the spirit of Nazareth. Make me grow in that simple atmosphere of quiet hard work in which Thou, Thyself, didst increase in years and wisdom, in stature and in favour 'with God and man'. For it is at Nazareth, above all, that one is able to grow, that one can be 'adolescent'. Thy apprenticeship as

a workman and Thy adolescence took place at the same time. It is both beautiful and fitting that a statue of Jesus in adolescence nowadays dominates the little town where Thou didst grow up.

Lord, through working with my hands, make me 'grow up at Nazareth'. In this way, I shall enter into the intimacy of what was Thy family, Thy home. I shall feel their living presence in me. Thy fellow citizens of Nazareth linked the memory of Thy manual labour to remembrance of Thy most holy Mother in calling Thee 'the carpenter, the son of Mary'. Oh! would that, through the power of humility, by sharing in the hidden life of the carpenter as fully as I can, I might come to know better her near whom Thou didst work, so that I might glimpse her tenderness, and so that Mary might inspire me, and whisper to me the only precept she ever gave to men (at Cana in Galilee): 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.'

Master, as Thou hast blessed the work of our hands, so hast Thou blessed the work in our minds. 'Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven' Thou didst compare to a householder 'which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old'. Wert Thou not Thyself the perfect scribe who, through the written words of the Book, revealed the living Word sent to men by the Father? Master, all intellectual work is a part of Thy treasure. Thou didst learn to read and to reckon. Thou didst make use of the most commonplace, the most elementary forms of human reasoning that apply to everyday life. From all the long-accepted truths, Thou didst draw out new truths—those that relate to the Father. Thou didst connect all truth to absolute Truth. And so, Lord, in any intellectual work that I might undertake, show me that the workings of my own intelligence are a part of the intellectual aspects of Thy human nature. And also of Thy divine nature. Because all my poor reasonings, by virtue of

using reason, share in the incandescent light of the *logos*. Show me thus that all truth, whether religious or mathematical, historical or technical, is *Thy* truth, coming from God and leading toward knowledge of God. So, no matter what my field of study may be, send me the Spirit of which Thou didst say: 'When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.'

Lord, Thou didst also say: 'The truth shall make you free.' Make me courageous and free, so that I may never injure truth, nor suppress a particle of it, in order to please anyone, whoever he may be.

Once, Lord, Thou didst remove a new disciple firmly from his normal employment. This happened in the case of Levi, for it was not fitting for one of Thy apostles to be a collector of taxes, especially when that work involved exacting money unjustly. But, more often, Thou didst make use of the everyday work of Thy apostles in order to reveal their final vocation to them through the medium of their work. It was by sharing in the life of the fishermen of Lake Gennesaret that Thou didst teach those who were Thine, little by little, to become 'fishers of men', and in talking to the Galilean farmers about their fields and vineyards that Thou didst open their eyes to what the kingdom of God is.

Teach us therefore, Master, to examine our respective occupations and to discover their divine significance. Transfigure our work into a service, into a 'channel of grace'.

The mason, the plumber and the mechanic may not know (nor is it their fault) how to discern the spiritual signs hidden in the actions of building or repairing, of joining, adjusting or smelting. They may understand more easily that in doing these things for other men, they serve them. But perhaps they do not know that, in thus serving men, they share in the activity of the Master who said: 'I am among you as he that serveth.'

They may not know that He who spoke these words was Himself a *tektôn*. This Greek term, which is applied to Thee in the Gospels, goes further than the narrow sense of 'carpenter' and includes the work of the smith and of the builder. Thou wast supremely a worker. And Thou wast the supreme servant.

We, however, do know these things. And so it is for us, who know, to make ourselves 'substitutes' for those who know less. It is for us to interpret each profession in the way that relates it to Thy Person. It is for us to have a thought and a prayer for the special work of each man which reveals Thy Presence in that work.

Master, Thou didst want to transform the implements used by Thy disciples in their daily work by making them into instruments of the kingdom of God. One day Thou didst go out of doors and sit by the side of the sea. A great crowd gathered round Thee. Thou didst get into one of the ships and, from it Thou didst teach the multitude which 'stood on the shore'. And so Thou didst transform the fishing boat into a throne of truth.

Lord, if I carry out the work which Thou hast entrusted to me—whether manual or intellectual—for Thee and with Thee, then canst Thou begin to make use of my activity. Through it, Thou canst touch souls, Thou canst speak to them. Very likely it will be unnoticed. And yet my work will be a channel through which Thy charity will reach those men and women whom Thou hast chosen and marked for this hour. Lord, make of my boat a place from which Thou dost speak.

## IN THY REST

Come ye . . . and rest awhile.

Mark 6.31

Just as I desire to meet Thee during the day's work, Lord, so do I desire to meet Thee in my rest: My rest? It would be more correct, more in keeping with the general intention and direction of these thoughts to say: in Thy rest.

Master, nowhere in Thy Gospels do I find words which might suggest what we call rest, or recreation, or holidays. Thou dost seem to require constant attentiveness and almost continuous work of Thy disciples. Thou dost censure, with a sort of ironic shudder, rest that is taken at inappropriate moments—at the least appropriate moment, as in the case of Thy disciples who slept in the garden of Olives: 'Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.' Lord, how often have I stayed idle when Thou didst need me at Thy side.

And yet once, once only, the Gospel depicts Thee inviting Thy apostles to rest. They had returned from a mission and were giving Thee an account of what they had done. Meanwhile, such a crowd was coming and going round them that they did not even have time to eat. Then Thou didst say to them: 'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.'

What could, what should, the rest of a disciple—my rest—be like? Our rest, like all our other actions, must look for its foundation, its transfiguration and its blessing, in Thine own actions. Our rest must be a

partaking of Thy rest. Then what is the nature of Thy rest?

In everything, Lord, Thou dost imitate the Father. So, if we seek to discover what Thy rest might be, we must ask ourselves: is there such a thing as rest for God? If so, in what does it consist?

Now Scripture gives us a description of the rest which is God's. 'And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. . . . And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day. . . . And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.'

This text shows very clearly what the rest of God is, what the rest of the Son of God and the Son of Man is, and under what conditions God blesses men's rest. 'For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.'

The Creator's rest is bound up with the perception of the achievement of His work, and of its goodness. God rests, because all has been done and done well.

In the same way, Lord, Thou didst have the right to rest, because Thou didst see Thy work being accomplished and succeeding. Through Thee salvation could enter into souls, into the world.

Thy disciples also had the right to rest, for they had just come back from achieving their first mission. They had preached repentance, they had cast out devils, they had healed the sick. They had come back joyfully. Thou didst commend their work saying: 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.' Just as the Creator rested, just as Thou Thyself rested, they could rest in seeing that their work was good.

But what about me, Lord? Me, when my whole life is sin? If I glance back over what I have done since my birth, how can I exist before Thee? Thou didst call me

to work with Thee: and yet what else has my existence been—even though shot through by the lightnings of Thy pardon and Thy tenderness—other than a long infidelity? How can I expect to have any part in Thy rest? I seem to read my own condemnation in the word with which Thou didst first inspire the psalmist and which was then repeated by another sacred writer: ‘Wherefore I . . . said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.’

Thy rest seems therefore forbidden to me, as the garden of Eden was shut to Adam and Eve after the fall. I can only prostrate myself before Thee, and humbly confess: ‘Lord, I am not worthy of entering into Thy rest.’

And yet, if I read on further, the same sacred writer says: ‘Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day . . . *To day.*’ That today could now become ‘today’ for me. If yesterday my unbelief (as evidenced by my actions) prevented me from entering into Thy rest, today, in discarding what I was yesterday and coming to Thee once again, offering myself once again to Thy yoke, I shall find that rest of which Thou speakest: ‘Come unto me. . . . Take my yoke upon you . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls.’

Lord, if my work has been nothing at all, or bad work, I may at least share in the rest of the Creator and the rest of the Saviour by seeing how good has been their work, how very good. ‘They sing the song of Moses . . . and the song of the Lamb, saying Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty.’

Alas! Is this in fact how I spend my hours of rest, my days of rest, and those days which are especially consecrated to Thee? What do I do with them? Oh, my despicable leisure. . . .



Lord, the problem of sanctifying 'leisure' can only be solved close to Thee, through Thee. My rest will sing, if Thou, Thyself, art my rest. I shall meet Thee in my rest if I enter into Thy rest. Thou art the fullness and the joy of the seventh day. Increase in me the spirit of thankfulness, so that all my rest, all my leisure, all my holidays may become an entering into the rest of the Creator who formed me and preserves me, an entering into the rest of the Lamb who saves and forgives me. In Them I shall find the greatest rest, for Their work of goodness has been maximal. Lord, let my rest be a partaking of the rest which, by the side of the lake, Thou didst want to share with Thine apostles. 'For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said.'

## THE EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE

And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

Mark 7.17

Lord, Thou dost speak to us in two ways. Thou dost speak to us in the midst of the community of those who believe in Thee; Thou dost speak to us in Thy Church and through Thy Church, which Thou hast entrusted with the spreading of Thy Gospel. I certainly do not claim to have access to any secret teaching. I am one among the least of those who hear Thee. The Gospel as it is presented to all is the only Gospel that I acknowledge. I know no other Gospel than the one which was preached to Peter, to James, to John and to the rest of the Twelve, and to all the crowds that followed Thee. Let me find a place amongst that crowd and sit at Thy feet, with, and like the man 'out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus'.

Nevertheless, Lord, Thou dost speak in yet another way. Allow me, when the crowd has dispersed, to enter 'into the house'—into calm, in solitude—and to question Thee on what has been said. For Thou hast also spoken in this way. Thy disciples questioned Thee about the parables. Thy answers added nothing to the message of the parable, but they helped them to 'comprehend', to deepen its message, and above all to relate it to their own condition.

Lord, too late have I begun to appreciate the richness of Thy parables. I had grown so used to them, and they were so simple, so popular, that I did not realise that I

could find in them a complete treatise on the things of Thy kingdom and of life according to Thy Spirit. In reading them, I did not know how to identify with Thy personal experience of their events (for since Thy childhood, Thou hadst seen all those things): the sower casting the seed, the woman who swept the room searching for the lost drachma, the housewife who mixed the yeast into the dough, the labourers waiting to be hired by the day to work in the vineyards and so many other scenes drawn from daily life. Today, I should like to read the parables again, acquiring a little of the human 'vision' by which Thou didst see these things Thyself. Furthermore, I did not, in the past, sense clearly that behind these universal truths, veiled in simile, each parable constituted a 'sign', the sign of a given situation, of a concrete, living, immediate situation that raises questions about Thine own person and the personal identity of each listener.

Today, Master, Thou dost no longer speak to us in parables. Or, rather, the parables Thou dost set before us are no longer in words, whether spoken or written. They are no longer texts which are fixed once and for all, as are the parables of Thy Gospel. They are 'existential' parables, not confined to words any longer, but expressed in events and through actions. The 'sign' replaces the former parable, for Thou dost continue to speak to us by means of signs which vary constantly. I call 'signs' all that visibly happens to me during the day. Each day is woven out of episodes, of lesser or of more serious encounters, of contradictions, difficulties, successes, conversations, which are in themselves so many 'signs'. For in each of these situations I find Thy Presence and Thy will concerning the orientation of my life. If my eyes were sufficiently open, I would perceive, behind the material events, the 'sign' which Thou dost mean for me.

Thus 'signs' are today Thy parables. It is a matter

of understanding the meaning of the sign, just as it was a matter of understanding, in Galilee and in Judea, the meaning of the parables. I can see the confused reverse side of the tapestry quite well. I still need to see the right side, the true design, that is to say how my days are filled with saving acts and graces. To see this would also be to the more aware of the ministry to men which is exercised by the angels and saints, who lovingly support Thy intentions, Thy work.

Each sign is a messenger, repeating to me the words that Martha said to Mary: 'The Master is come, and calleth for thee.' Then, 'When Mary was come where Jesus was, she fell down at his feet.' Every human situation is, at a given moment, the place where Jesus is to be found. As soon as I understand the situation which is expressed by each one of Thy signs, I want to be consciously active in it, first to run toward Thee, and, having found Thee, to throw myself at Thy feet.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees came to Thee to put Thee to the test. They desired that Thou shouldst show them a 'sign', in other words, a miracle, because the same word in Greek has both these meanings. (What depth there is in this double meaning: each of Thy miracles, even before being a marvellous event, is a supernatural sign.) Thou didst answer them that every evening, depending on whether the sky was light or dark red, they could foretell whether the morning would be fair or foul. And Thou didst conclude: 'Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?'

Master, teach me to discern the 'signs of the times', in what is relevant to my own existence. Teach me to interpret the parable of my life. Show me Thy interventions and Thy bounties. Why, for example, was I not crushed today by that car which brushed past me? To what end didst Thou grant me yet another delay? Each evening, I want to come to Thee 'in the house',

and, in intimate talk, to hear from Thy mouth what was the inner and deep meaning of all the things that have happened to me since the morning. I am not capable of interpreting for myself the parables or signs in my life. May my eyes discern Thee, through the faint mists in which Thou enlopest Thyself. Master, do Thou explain the parable to me.

## THE OUTSTRETCHED HAND

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him.

Matt. 14.31

Lord Jesus, physical gestures are also relevant to this contemplation of ours. Each of Thy physical actions described in the Gospels has a meaning according to the Spirit. May not Thy everyday gestures become an inspiration to mine?

In fact, apart from Thy Passion, which remains unique, Thy gestures were no different from those which most men make. Thy gestures were our ordinary gestures of every day, every hour. Thy attitudes and our attitudes are the same, in as much as they imply identical exterior movements. And this was so, even when Thou didst perform a miracle. A difference, however, does exist. It lies in the state of the soul from which the gestures proceed.

When I ask, 'Can Thy gestures inspire mine?' it is not a matter of asking myself constantly, 'What movement would Jesus make now?' The question is not one of imagining, in my own situation, out-of-the-ordinary gestures that I would then attribute to Thee, but rather of asking myself truly in what spirit Thou wouldst perform the gestures that I am actually making or that I shall need to make.

There is not one of my attitudes that I could not make new and inspired—although, of course, God is the only true inspirer—if I tried to let them conform to Thine, or, rather, allowed Thee to make them a participation in Thine.

Thy silences, for example. Just as a silence arising from laziness or cowardice, from bad temper, spite or disdain is sterile and bad, so a silence which is an entering into Thine own silence is sacred—Thy silence with the Father, Thy silence before Pilate ('But Jesus gave him no answer')—into Thy silence of recollection and maturing which prepares the word and makes it fertile.

Another very simple example. Thy people were accustomed to pray standing up. Only once does the Gospel depict Thee kneeling in prayer. It is the moment of Thy agony, in the garden. So often, my kneeling is purely routine and without thought. (And how very different from those passionate prostrations before Thee made by Peter, by Mary of Magdalene and by several of the sick!) Lord, inspire me when I kneel. Each time, let it be not only a prostration in front of Thee, my Saviour, but a union with Thine own kneeling to the Father, at Gethsemane.

There is one of my gestures, one which I use very frequently, that I would especially like to incorporate into the gesture which, in Thy life on earth, corresponded to it. It is the one I shall call the gesture of the outstretched hand. The words of the Gospel that I have put at the start of this meditation show Thee stretching forth Thy hand to catch hold of Peter at the moment when he was beginning to sink into the sea. Thy hand very often made a gesture to save someone and Thy word then gave expression to the meaning of the gesture. Thou didst take 'by the hand' the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, who had just died, and she arose. Thou didst take 'by the hand' a blind man, and Thou didst touch his eyes with Thy hand, and he was cured. Thou didst put Thy fingers into the ears of an afflicted man, a deaf mute, and didst touch his tongue, and he too was cured. At the time of Thy ascension, Thou didst bless Thy disciples, 'lifting up' Thy hands. Thy custom was to place Thy hands on the sick

**and on the small children. And thus the contact of Thy body with the bodies of these people brought them deliverance and strength.**

The gesture of holding out my hand to another, of taking in mine a hand held out to me, or of clasping the hand that mine meets—is one of the oldest that has come down to us in the human tradition, and it is a precious sign of peace and trust. This is the small change of friendship.

But so often the clasping of hands is degraded. It has become a sort of trite ritual, a conventional form of politeness that lacks any real personal commitment. The sign of a vague goodwill. . . . There are times when this gesture conveys a corrupt suggestion or invitation to the other person. How far we have gone, O my Saviour, from the generous rescuing hand, the healing, strengthening hand which, in the Gospels, we see Thee offering to those who suffer or have sinned.

Lord, from now on I consecrate to Thee my part in this gesture of the outstretched or accepted hand. Do Thou transform each time what was a sign of politeness into a sign of charity, into one of Thy saving acts. Let it become, each time, part of one of the analogous acts of Thy life among us.

In the Gospel account of Peter being saved from the waters, I see Thee first of all stretching forth Thy hand, then catching hold of Peter. Each time I offer my hand to someone, may Thou Thyself stretch out Thy hand to him or to her! When my hand takes that of another, may Thou Thyself catch hold of that other, to save him in hidden trials, to strengthen him, to bring him to Thee. And conversely, each time I grasp an outstretched hand, may it be Thine own hand that takes hold of it with faith and love. Through the hand holding mine, catch me and make me Thine. So that then may I hear Thee say to me: 'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm.'



Only a human hand that is very pure, that has become supple and sensitive to the movements of Thy Spirit can, if I may dare to say so, be of use to Thee as a hand. A hand that is out of control, or has become inert and deadened, would not know how to transmit or how or receive Thy grace.

One day, in a synagogue, Thou didst come across a man with a withered hand. Thou didst tell him to stand up and hold it out. 'He stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.' Lord, selfish passions have withered my hand. I stand before Thee, and stretch it out to Thee. Make it whole again. Make it new, sensitive to Thy action, submissive. If it is clasped by another hand, no matter to whom that other hand belongs, say Thou to me at that moment: 'I place my hand on thee so that thou shouldst belong to Me.' If I clasp the hand of another, say to me: 'On this person I place My hand, for behold, thy hand I have made into Mine.'

## IN THE STREETS AND IN THE FIELDS

A certain blind man sat by the way side begging:  
And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what  
it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth  
passeth by.

Luke 18.35-37

Some men and some women are privileged to lead a cloistered life, hidden in Thee, O Lord. And only those who know no better can think of such a life as being either useless or inhuman.

But the majority of men and women are called to 'go out', and to be in contact with the 'outside' world. This day that I wish to spend with Thee, Jesus, includes the comings and goings of what is called the 'world'. Such contact with the outside world can, and must, be contact with Thee, a divine encounter as real as any I could find in a chapel, in a cell or in a room.

To the question asked by the blind man who was begging at the outskirts of Jericho, they answered: 'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.' Every time I go out should become an experience of the passing by of Jesus. And this in a double sense. When others are passing by, I ought to feel Lord, that it is Thou who passest. And whenever I go out, there should be that in me which makes others feel that it is Thou who goest by.

'Thou hast taught in our streets.' Lord, Thou dost place these words on the lips of 'many . . . [who] will seek to enter in, and shall not be able'. They refer to Thy preaching in the towns and villages of Palestine. But, Lord, art Thou still, at the present time, in our

thoroughfares? Yes, Master, even today Thou dost preach amidst the multitude. 'After that he appeared in another form.' All that is needed is to recognise that in this or that form, in so many different forms, it is still, it is always Jesus of Nazareth who passes by.

Why go out of the house? To encounter Jesus. To give or to receive Jesus through the men and women who cross my path and who will, consciously or unconsciously, be either receiving or giving Christ.

I go into the street and walk, and behold, Lord, Thou dost walk beside me. Or, rather, Thou dost walk in front, and I follow Thee, as Thy disciples followed Thee. Thou art invisible to my bodily eyes, but the eyes of my faith perceive Thy Presence. I seem to go forward in light, and experience joy and strength to feel Thee there, so close to me. I know where I am going, yet all the time it is as if Thou didst lead me. Thou dost speak to me, and I answer. Or often we go forward together, both in silence, and words are then unnecessary, for my heart is filled with the outflowing of Thy own heart.

We are not alone. In this street there are men, there are women; there is all the movement of modern life. I pass amongst these beings in whom Thou art. Without knowing them, nevertheless I recognise them. For in them I recognise Thee.

The child that Elisabeth bore in her womb leaped with joy at the approach of Mary who, herself, invisibly bore Jesus. 'That which is of God' in every being leaps on feeling 'that which is of God' in another being. Even the man who seems to have sunk the lowest is not without a divine spark. These men and women that I come across very likely do not know that Thou art with them and in them (although the difference between the Creator and His creature is never effaced). But in them I adore Thee, O Saviour, who at this moment walkest our roads. Whether with me and in me, whether with

them and in them, it is Jesus of Nazareth who passes.

I get into a train or a bus. All the other passengers seem strangers to me, and indifferent to me. O Lord, break down this wall of separation. Let me give them this Presence which accompanies me. Let me receive that Presence which they, too, bear within them. How can we meet? Sometimes contact will be made through a word. It is not then the obvious content of the words which matters so much as their hidden content—the intention, the intonation, the facial expression, the smile, the secret ardour of the soul. If I talk to them, to these others, whatever I say to them, Lord, it is to Thee that I am speaking. If they talk to me, whatever they say to me, it is to Thyself that I listen. Thou Thyself art to be found behind the word that is uttered, often despite the word that is uttered. Most often, we will say nothing to each other. A look can then establish the contact, if that look is straight, and pure, and deep. Then that look, which I receive or give, will take possession of the being that I am, or of the being I wish to approach. Even without a look, the movement of the Spirit in us produces the same effect. We communicate in Thee. We share Jesus.

There are some people through whom I see Thee passing as if they were transparent beings. I remember an unknown woman whose face expressed such peace, such a shining transfiguration, that I could not stop myself going up to her and saying: 'Where does the peace that you seem to wear come from?' She answered me: 'It is the joy of the Gospel.' At that moment I felt Thee passing by.... But what about those others from whom no single ray seems to emanate, what about those suffering faces, the hardened and bitter faces, the confused faces, those bloated with sensuality—it is especially upon such faces as these that, silently, I call for Thy blessing, Thy help, Thy Presence. And also on the little children, whose eyes reflect

Thy purity. Moreover, I sense Thee in all of them, as loved host or ill-treated prisoner, and I call upon myself, I take upon myself, that other aspect of Thy Presence which is manifested in them. O marvellous exchange through which Thou 'hast taught in our streets', without any word of Thine being outwardly heard.

And it was also to the public places of Thy country that the sufferings of men were brought and placed at Thy feet. They 'began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard that he was. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment.'

Lord, Thou dost wish me to bring to Thee the dying, the sick, the unbelievers and the sinners, the afflicted and the isolated, all those who are especially in need of Thy help. I cannot do this in any literal sense, it is only within myself, in my thought and my prayer, that it becomes possible.

Lord, I assess with sorrow how superficial, and I would even say, unreal, my prayers of intercession are. I run through some names rapidly, and that is what I call 'interceding', 'praying for. . .'. To pray for another is to 'carry' him right up to Thee, to bear him on my shoulders or in my arms, by a sustained attention and an unflinching sympathy. 'Do not try to carry me, if you cannot carry me to the end,' a man who had sinned once said to me (and I did not know how to carry him to the end). To pray for another is to place him in Thy Presence. In order to do this, I must first of all approach Thee until I can feel that 'Jesus is passing'. To pray for another is to establish personal contact—the touching of the border of the garment—between Thee and the person concerned. No matter that this takes place only within my soul, what matters is to find the intimate and unique connection, the junction-point at which Thou

dost say to each person: 'No one is dearer to me than thou art,' or at least: 'Thou art dear to me in a way that no other person is dear to me.' Mary and Martha said to Thee: 'He whom thou lovest is sick.' Through the intuition of grace, I must discern in what way I can think of each being as 'he whom Thou lovest' with a love that is not found again anywhere else. And it is this love, unique in each case, and answering in each case to a unique need, that I must take as the point of departure and make the basis of all intercession. This does not happen without effort.

Lord, may I never go out into the street—or, if I do not physically go out, may no reaching out of my thoughts toward the world which surrounds me take place—without my 'truly' bringing to Thee and placing at Thy feet all the sufferings, all the infirmities of body and soul that my physical senses or my thought encounter.

I do not only go into the town and into the streets where I meet people. I also go into fields and gardens. No day passes without my having some direct contact with 'nature'. And in the fields, too, I find Thee.

'It came to pass, that he went through the corn fields. . . .' Each time that I go through the fields, I see Thee, cleaving a path through the ears of corn, with Thy disciples. And I follow Thee. . . . Thou didst say to the Eleven: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' The Greek word, *ktisis*, goes further in meaning than 'reasonable creature': it carries in it the general idea of 'creation', of everything that has been created. I have no doubt that when Thou didst make Thy way through the corn, Thou didst bring the message of salvation to nature. In what way? By giving meaning to the inarticulate aspirations of animals and plants. Thy apostle Paul, especially, knew how to interpret the sighs and groans of the natural world, the world that sin has brought into subjection

to the Prince of this world, and which awaits deliverance. Thyself, Thou didst, from choice, express the reflection of the beauty and goodness of the Father in the works of His hands. In times when the feeling of Thy Presence is not given to me, I see in nature above all, like Paul, an enslavement and an awaiting. But as soon as I make my way 'through the cornfields' with Thee, then, with Thee too, I bring the good news to the whole of creation. I proclaim to it, in song rather than in speech, that at this very moment it is meeting the Jesus towards whom it strains with all its might, and who is the crown of its existence. For Creation is no other than an immense parable of the kingdom of God.

Lord, I do not know how to speak to men and to nature as they ought to be spoken to. In the streets, just as in the fields, if I am not deaf and dumb, then at the very least I am hard of hearing and stammer. I do not know how to hear, I do not know what to say. Place Thy hand upon me, as Thou didst upon the infirm man of the Decapolis. Put Thy fingers into my ears. Touch my tongue with Thy spittle. Pronounce Thy *Eph-phatha*, 'that is, Be opened'. So that not only shall my ears hear, not only shall the string of my tongue be loosed, but so that my heart and my whole being shall open to Thy Spirit and to men, so that Jesus of Nazareth may pass among us, pass from one to the other, communicated to each by each.

Thy spittle touched a human tongue. The spittle which was on Thy tongue loosed the other tongue. Divine and transforming contact. Unheard of contact. But through what humble means—a little saliva! When Jesus of Nazareth passes, when He unstops my ears and looses my tongue, I do not see Him as the glorious Messiah, as the triumphant Risen One. He makes use only of the humblest means. He who passes, the crowd calls Him Jesus 'of Nazareth', and this name that denotes his place of origin brings to mind the years

of His hidden and hardworking life. Later, Thou shalt show Thyself as the King of Glory. But now, in the streets and in the fields, I shall not recognise Thee and will not be able to follow Thee unless I look for Thee in Thy true place—the lowest place.

Very often already Jesus of Nazareth has passed in my life. Oh, may He not cease from passing! Especially in my hours of cowardice and of weakness, pass, O Jesus, pass by again! And in places where Thy Presence is not generally felt, would that I might feel it, and pass on to others the knowledge that Thou art there. And when my soul leaves the earth, may the luminous vision come to me again, and may I hear for one last time—as the best of the good news—the words of the Gospel: ‘And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.’ Then, with the blind man of Jericho, I shall cry: ‘Jesus ... have mercy on me.’ And the blind man saw *Thee*.



## THE BREAD THAT WE BREAK

We have eaten and drunk in thy presence.

Luke 13.26

Normally, no day passes for us without the taking of at least some food. During this day that I am trying to spend with Thee, Master, I must establish the relationship between Thee, O Master, and all of the foods that nourish us, both in body and soul.

Of all the actions which were Thine and remain ours, the act of taking nourishment is perhaps the most complex and the most mysterious. The bread that we break and the cup that we drink are in themselves realities and signs to an exceptional degree. Thou didst choose these humble, necessary elements of daily life, Lord, to be the bearers and instruments of Thy presence through the grace which confers on them, amongst all the elements of matter, a character that is unique.

Thy disciples are called upon to eat and to drink, with Thee and by Thee. They are even called upon to eat Thee and to drink Thee. Food, for them, is composed of aspects that are distinct and yet linked. There are the everyday meals, in which Thy goodness and Thy blessing call for our joyful thanksgiving. There is the generous gift that must be made to those who have no bread. At a different level, there is the participation in Thy Last Supper, in the sacrifice of Thy body and Thy blood. And there is the invisible and permanent Presence and effective virtue of Jesus, the Bread of life which, independently of any fixed form, serves as the food of souls.

One must not confuse these aspects of our food. But,

all the same, it is necessary to discern their connection, and to see what it is, in each of them, that derives from Thee. If we ignore the links between what is the humblest and what is the most excellent, if we keep separate and divide the various different, but real, 'eucharists' which allow us to communicate with Thy presence, we thereby manifest our incomprehension of the 'breaking of the bread' such as Thou didst think of it and desire it, such as Thou didst practise it. And then the Gospel saying about the disciples, after the multiplying of the five loaves and the two fishes: 'For they considered not the miracle of the loaves,' would apply to our own selves.

A man sits down to dine. He chooses what tastes good and is also expensive. He gives no thought to those outside who are hungry. A man who is rich and has an important position takes part, at the gathering of the faithful, in the mystery of the body and blood of Christ. He receives the sacrament. Next to him (and the Lord's supper is one of the rare occasions when such a juxtaposition is possible) the same food of life is given to a poor man, who does not perhaps know how he will feed himself that day or on the morrow, and who will leave the church with a feeling of total isolation. The first of these two communicants, and many of those who came with him to the Lord's table, will not ask themselves who that poor man was or what his needs might be. Another man will receive communion, but with no thought about the effects of this communion and how it must reach into all the actions of his daily life, no realisation that he can no longer behave as though he had not taken it. Truly, none of these men has understood the 'miracle of the loaves'. To them, and certainly to myself, is addressed that saying of Jesus: 'Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence. . . .' and the master of the house shall say: 'I tell you, I know you not whence ye are.'

And there is a yet more formidable saying: 'He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.'

Now I am about to eat one of my ordinary meals. Is that a 'profane' act, a purely human act? Certainly not. At this precise moment, I sit down in the open with the five thousand that Thou didst command to sit down 'upon the green grass'. I see Thee taking the loaves and the fishes. With Thee, I lift my eyes to the sky, giving thanks to Thy Father, to our Father. And I give thanks to Thee who dost offer me my food, whatever it may be. Not only do I eat in Thy Presence, but I eat with Thee. And I also go into that house at Emmaus which Thou enterest into to 'tarry' with Thy two disciples. Now I am seated at table, with them, with Thee: 'As he sat at meat with them, he took bread. . . .' Lord, let me never take part in a meal without adoring in it Thy invisible Presence, as both the host who receives me and as the guest whom I receive. May Thy Presence inspire and set the tone of all my meals. (The tone: Oh! preserve me from the sort of table-talk that wounds and stifles the Spirit.)

Lord, for those five thousand, whose hunger Thou didst miraculously satisfy, Thou couldst have made manna more exquisite than all earthly food come down from heaven. The bread which Thou gavest them could have been made from the purest wheat. But, to accomplish the miracle, Thou didst choose what was the simplest and roughest: 'five barley loaves'. Lord, I do not ask Thee to raise me to extraordinary feats of asceticism, nor do I seek to regulate my diet scrupulously. But I do ask Thee this at least: each time that I have the chance to choose, let me choose to eat that which is poorest, simplest, in order to eat as Thou didst eat at Nazareth, as Thou didst eat with Thy disciples.

Lord Jesus, Thou didst feed the five thousand because Thou wast 'moved with compassion toward

them'. Thou didst give the loaves to Thy disciples 'to set before' the wearied crowd. In the same spirit, Thou didst say to us: 'When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.' Have we invited the poor to our meals? If, for reasons which have nothing to do with my will, I have neither been able to invite them nor to be of help to them (and help which does not 'cost' something, in some way, has no real value), at least make my thought, at every meal, go out to the poor and the sick, so that it might implore Thy Compassion, so that it might unite itself to Thy Compassion, to the Compassion that Thou didst feel when Thou didst multiply the loaves.

Lord, Thou didst want each feature of the miracle of the loaves to announce and prefigure Thy Last Supper. On each of these two occasions, Thou didst give thanks, Thou didst break the bread, Thou didst distribute it. Lord, do Thou establish a link between each of my 'ordinary' meals and the 'extraordinary' Supper of the upper room. I take my place at table; and, behold, I remember the verse of the Gospel: 'When the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.' I also hear Thy other saying: 'With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you.' In me, the episodes of the mystery live again, the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine, by which Thou didst signify and communicate Thy redeeming death to men. Jesus, let me never get up from table without having secretly kept the memory of my Saviour's Passion.

Thy Church, Lord, offers us at its tables participation in the sacrifice of the Cross. Up till now, I have not spoken of Thy Cross. I did not want to separate the mystery of Golgotha from the mystery of the Supper. May each sharing in the Eucharist bring me more even than Thy real Presence, more than an assurance of forgiveness. May it make me—without confusion of

essences—become what I receive, Him whom I receive.

Visibly, I receive broken bread. 'Jesus took bread . . . and brake it.' Invisibly, I am united to the broken and crucified body of my God. Lord, break in me the life of lust and pride. O blessed suicide! To share in the sacrificed body of the Saviour is to have a sword plunged into the depths of myself. That which I have been dies. But this death is a new birth, the birth of the person I would wish to be and who Jesus wants me to be. And this death allows me to enter into the Risen Life of Christ in glory.

He 'gave it to the disciples. . . .' I receive, under the species of the given bread, the body that Jesus gives so that it should be eaten. I receive a blood which is shed for men. Lord, in receiving the 'gift', I 'give' myself. From now on make my life a life which is given.

It is not enough, Jesus, that—in Thee—I should be broken and given. I must be distributed and shared. 'Jesus took the loaves . . . he distributed to the disciples and the disciples to them that were set down.' And similarly: 'And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves.' In the multiplying of the loaves, as in the upper room, Lord, Thou dost wish Thy sacrifice to be shared. That is to say that there is no place, in the gift, for any exclusivism. I do not belong only to some any more than Thou dost. It is possible for every man, for every woman to say to me (the sovereign right of my God in me being always protected): 'Thou art mine: thou belongest to me: thou art for me: thou art my servant.' My mission to each is to communicate the 'this' that I have 'taken'—'Take this and divide it among yourselves'—and 'this' means not only the eucharistic presence and grace, but all received presence and grace, and also, in the end, myself.

'For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world. . . . I am the

bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' The bread of our daily meals, the bread that we distribute to the poor, the bread that Jesus multiplied for the crowd, the bread that He gave to His disciples on the eve of His death, and that His Eucharist perpetuates—all these aspects of the bread that we break are united and transcended in the Person who is the eternal and invisible Bread of life. For our earthly foods are but for a time, and our eucharists themselves will cease, but Thou, Jesus, living Bread come down from heaven, Thou art with us for ever. And, at every moment of our lives here below, as in the future life, it is possible for us to feed on Thee invisibly. Already I ask Thee to let me taste Thee unceasingly. Render captive my thoughts and my emotions; banish from me not only what is against Thee, but everything that is not Thee. Through all the visible aspects of the bread that we break each day, several times a day, be Thou my only and my constant interior food. O enter in, Thou who dost stand at the door and knock. 'If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' It is Thou Thyself whom I desire, saying with Thy disciples: 'Lord, evermore give us this bread.'

## ASLEEP IN THE SHIP

And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow.

Luke 4.37-38

Lord Jesus, this day that I desired to spend with Thee draws to its close. Already night begins to fall and the first stars appear.

They reveal to me the immensity of the worlds. In my soul, they sometimes give rise to a question. Is it possible that, in this universe whose order is calculated by science, an infinitesimal human creature should profit from the constant attention and help of the creative power itself? Is that not anthropomorphism, something that primitive minds would believe?

But then I remember that 'the star ... stood over where the young child was'. The star which guided the Magi symbolised the physical universe whose limits we cannot know. The standing still of the star over the young child of Bethlehem signified the subordination of this vast universe to the humble incarnation of our God and to the salvation of men. In the same way, Lord, Thou didst show Thyself to the Seer of Patmos with seven stars in Thy right hand. Thy face was as the sun, and Thy voice as the sound of many waters. And the Seer fell terrified at Thy feet, as dead; but Thou didst lay upon him Thy right hand, which held the stars, saying unto him: 'Fear not.' The Creator of the worlds is a personal Saviour. The salvation of one soul—and therefore of my soul—matters more in Thy

eyes than the entire order of the material universe.

Night falls. Each nightfall calls to mind, in the spiritual sphere too, the triumph of darkness. Thy Evangelist fittingly and movingly voices this collusion between night and evil when, in writing of the departure of Judas after the Supper, he observes: 'And it was night.' Night is, for many, the time of temptation and of sin. And the night in their souls is then darker than the natural night. Lord, I confide to Thy mercy all those men and women who, this night, are going to seek out and do what is evil in Thine eyes.

But nightfall is also the time for lights. Lamps are lit. They tell me that the dark cannot shroud Thy brightness, even in the blackest depths. O joyful Light, serene Light, Thou who didst say: 'I am the light of the world.' Physical gloom may increase. Moral darkness, too, may weigh on me and seem so dense as to smother me. But what can I fear, if I take Thee, if I possess Thee Thyself, for my light, an interior light against which all external powers are impotent? I repeat the words of the psalmist: 'In thy light shall we see light.'

It was at this hour that the disciples of Emmaus constrained Thee to stay with them, saying: 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening.' And Thou didst not only stop with them, but Thou didst enter the house to share their meal and to open their eyes to Thy Presence. At the end of this day, in the same way, I entreat Thee: Stay with me this evening, tonight. Do more than stay with me. Let these last hours of the day be privileged ones in which I feel Thee near me, in which I feel Thee within me.

May these hours facilitate the intimate personal talk that I need so much. May they bring me one of those special words which, coming from Thy lips, are life-giving.

Night is the time for sleep. I shall submit, as did the



psalmist, to this need of human nature: 'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep.' I shall sleep. And yet Thou didst exhort Thy disciples to keep watch. Thou didst say to Peter: 'Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour?' and Thou also saidst to them: 'Watch ye pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.' It is true that not all our nights are the night of Gethsemane. But could I not spare one hour at least to be privately with Thee in the quiet of the night? Prayer in the night seems to have particular efficacy. It is after the description and the granting of a prayer made 'at midnight' that one of the parables ends: 'Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' Lord, give me the desire and the strength to seek Thee, at least sometimes, during the hours of night, and to take away from my sleep as much time as I would beg Thee to determine Thyself. Thou didst pray during the night. May my night's prayer become a sharing in those secret prayers, and especially in those of the Garden, on the eve of Thy death. Oh, most certainly it is only from a great way off that I could associate myself with the Saviour's prayer to His Father before going to the Passion—but, even though it was only for an instant, like lightning as it strikes and flashes, may Thy redemptive emotion penetrate to, and grow in, my heart.

In sleep itself, I do not want to separate myself from Thee. And before falling asleep, I say to myself in secret those great words which, from Thy Cross, Thou didst cry out: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.' My prayer here is one with Thine. It is my soul, with Thy soul, that Thou dost commend and which I myself commend to the Father. Thy soul and my soul, together we commend them to the uncreated Tenderness. We commend our soul as the trustee delivers that which has been entrusted to him. I commend mine also

as one entrusts something to a trustee from whom—perhaps—I shall receive it once again tomorrow. I commend my soul by uniting it with Thine, and thus I have no fear.

I sleep, and I do not cease from being with Thee. How can this happen? Our whole human state is rooted in Thy human state. My nightly sleep is part of Thy sleep on earth. Thou didst sleep in order to sanctify our sleep, to steep it in Thyself. The Gospels, once, depict Thee sleeping. Once only. But this single occasion blesses and transfigures what, without Thee, would have remained the conduct of an animal.

Once, Thou didst get into a ship, and some disciples went with Thee. A violent storm arose. The waves beat against the ship, and were coming over the side. The disciples were afraid, but Thou wast asleep, Thy head on a pillow. In fear, they wakened Thee, saying: 'Lord, save us: we perish.' And then, having arisen, Thou didst still the winds and the sea, 'and there was a great calm'.

This image of Jesus sleeping in the back of the ship while the storm is loosed is, if I may use the term, the ikon of my sleep. I share the sleep of Jesus. It is possible that before going to sleep, I was beset by difficulties. In sleep, I am unaware of them. The difficulties, however, do still exist. I shall find them again tomorrow, but they do not break into my sleep. The winds and the waves can rage. Jesus will not let them disturb the rest that I am taking near Him. A great calm surrounds me, and it is the very calm of Jesus.

And perhaps, Lord, tonight Thou wilt give me even more than Thy calm, more even than the trusting sleep and serenity which were Thine and which, through Thee, are mine. Perhaps Thou wilt, in my sleep itself, mysteriously draw near to me. Sleep, in the Scriptures, is the time of dreams and signs. The night can be rich in divine signs which go far beyond the poor symbols

that the psychologists think so highly of. It was in a dream that Jacob saw a ladder set up on the earth whose top reached to heaven; the angels of God ascended and descended the length of that ladder. And, in alluding to this episode, Thou didst tell us that we should see heaven opened and the angels of God 'ascending and descending upon the Son of Man'. Lord, if only some of my nights at least might be the night of Bethel.

When Thou didst appear before Pilate's tribunal, his wife sent unto him and told him to have nothing to do with the Just One, with Thee, for, she explained, 'I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.' Lord, I would willingly suffer for Thy sake in a dream if I might glimpse, if not Thy Face, at least Thy shadow and the trace of Thy footsteps. One dreams about what one desires, what one loves. Visit and penetrate my dreams. Thou didst often show Thyself to Thy martyrs, during the nights which preceded their witness. I do not ask for such graces as were accorded to them and of which I am so unworthy. But Oh, that I might sometimes—I do not say 'see' Thee but, in a dim, though not uncertain, manner—have a presentiment of Thee.

Perhaps this night my soul will be required of me. But I commended it to Thee before going to sleep. My body slumbers, but my soul keeps watch in Thee. In the words of the Shulamite woman, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh.' If I go to sleep uniting my heart to Thine, abandoning myself wholly to Thee, I shall fear nothing when the cry is heard, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' I shall rise with joy, saying: 'My Saviour, how I have longed for Thee!'

It seems, however, that this night will very likely not be the last, and that another day will be given me so that I may cleave to Thee yet more closely. Already the night, from the black that it was, is becoming grey.

Soon day will break. Do I not hear Thy approach? Is that not the sound of Thy footsteps? Is that not Thy voice, still afar off? 'The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.' Come to me, Jesus, in this new day.

## EASTER MORNING

I say unto thee, arise.

Mark 5.41

I awaken, and behold Thou art with me. Emerging from sleep, I feel Thy Presence quickening me, Thy tenderness enfolding me.

The awakening of Thy disciples, in the days of Thy earthly pilgrimage. . . . Those Galilean dawns, on the shore of the lake between Tiberias and Capernaum, I know them well. The birds sing with a brilliance I have not heard elsewhere. The sun is not yet up, but already it throws a silver wake over the sighing waves of the unsettled sea. Thy disciples, once aroused, go out to meet the new day in the joyful knowledge that they will be walking in Thy company and that each hour spent with Thee will dazzle them and also hold new discoveries. The same promise of those Galilean mornings is offered to me each time I wake up. 'This day, once again, I shall follow Him. . . .'

But even more than the awakening of Thy disciples, it is Thy awakenings which should give substance to mine. Master, when Thou didst waken, Thy first movement could not have been other than a movement toward the Father: 'I will arise and go to my father.' The words which the parable attributes to the prodigal son took on very special meaning when spoken by Thee, a meaning that was truly unique. Thou wast going—while being already and always with Him—to a Father from whom no lapse had ever separated Thee.

I am unable to say those words as Thou alone couldst say them. I can go to the Father only as a sinful and

repentant son, dying of hunger, shaken to the depths of my being by the shock of a surge of consciousness—the consciousness that what I had forsaken was absolute Goodness, and that what I had been reduced to envying were ‘the husks that the swine did eat’. It is not enough for this shock of conscience to awaken in me a vague frustration or nostalgia. It must hit me like the lash of a whip so that the pain strikes to the marrow of my bones. Then I shall have experienced contrition. Lord, from the break of day, receive me in repentance. Breathe Thy Spirit on me. Take me by the hand. Lead me to the Father.

And behold, the Father and the Spirit send Thee Thyself to me, as the bearer of forgiveness, as the messenger of hope. The elder son of the father of the prodigal was jealous of his brother and angry with him. But today, from the moment of my awakening, the eldest Son, the Unique One—who is also my eldest Brother—comes to find and to welcome me on behalf of the Father.

O my Saviour, even before I get up, Thou art there. Thou dost want me. ‘It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying Open to me. . . . My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door. . . . Behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up.’

Lord Jesus, every new day is a meeting that Thou dost grant me, and for this meeting Thou are always the first to arrive. So let each day begin for me with the desire for this meeting, with the desire for growing knowledge and love. May each awakening bring me first of all the joy and the promise of Thy Presence.

Jesus, I know that Thou art there and that Thou dost take me in Thine arms. But I cannot, I must not forget those who ignore Thee, those whose awakenings are not illumined and warmed by Thy light—by the

rising of the true Sun. The lightless dawns of those who suffer, of the sick who are going to die. The agony of those condemned to death, who count the minutes. The anxieties of those who do not know how they will feed themselves today, or how they will feed their children. The exhaustion and bitterness of those who, in the dark of the earliest morning, leave to go to their harsh work in mines, on railways, at machines. The awakening of the sinner, with the bitter taste in his mouth. All this, Lord, and all those men and women, Thou dost know them and take pity on them. Unite my soul to the compassion which Thou hast for them and to Thy will that this day should not pass without divine help being invisibly offered to them.

Master, Thou dost come to me and say, as Thou didst to the young daughter of Jairus: 'Arise.' And taking her by the hand, Thou didst call her back to life. The child, whom they believed dead, immediately arose and walked. And it is in this way that through the daily act of awakening I glimpse the mystery and the power of the Resurrection.

Thou too, Thou didst arise. Thou didst leave the sleep of death. Thou didst arise, living and glorious. And the glory of Thy Resurrection rests over each of our mornings.

The first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome came to the tomb. It was 'very early in the morning ... at the rising of the sun'. Lord, let no new day come to illumine my life without my thought going out to Thy Resurrection, and without my going, in spirit, with my poor spices, to the empty tomb in the Garden.

For it is the Risen Christ who comes to me each day, at dawn. Whatever difficulties there may be, whatever dangers, each of my days will start radiantly if I remember—with my whole soul and all my thought—that my Saviour has conquered the powers of evil and

death. My first act of faith, each morning, will be an act of faith in Thy final victory. 'For love is strong as death ... the coals thereof are coals of fire.... Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.'

Dost thou believe this, my child?—I believe it, Lord. Then, my child, there can be no room in thy soul for any affliction, for any fear, unless it be the fear of losing Me, I who am thy life.

Lord Jesus, each day can then be 'the first day of the week' for me, the feast-day of the Resurrection, each morning an Easter morning.

I write these lines in Jerusalem, on Easter morning, in the garden in which, for so many years, Thou hast given me so much, and which, I suppose, is much like the one where Thou wast laid in a new tomb. Amid the palms and the flowers, near the rock which is scorching hot in the sun, I seem to see her who wept, leaning over the tomb, and to become part of the scene described in the Gospel. Mary searches for Thee. She speaks to someone whom she takes to be the gardener. She turns round. She sees Thee: 'and knew not that it was Jesus'. And only when Thou sayest to her: 'Mary,' she turns again, and, recognising Thee, cries out, 'Rabboni, Master.'

This episode illustrates the nature of supreme conversion. Mary seeks Thee. But she seeks the Thee corresponding to the idea she already has of Thee. She clings to this idea. And this is why she cannot recognise Thee as Thou now art. She turns to Thee twice—and conversion means precisely the action of 'turning round'—and it is only the second time that, hearing her name, she becomes aware of Thy Presence.

I do not know on how many more mornings it will please Thee to let me waken again. I do not know if I shall ever again hear the bells of Easter ringing in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, I pray Thee that it may always



be, secretly, the garden in Jerusalem, and Easter morning for me. And that as each day, each awakening, brings me the joy of Easter, so it may also bring me the deepest conversion—by which I shall turn myself from Thy image of yesterday to Thy image of today. So that I may learn, through each event and each person, to know Thee as Thou wouldst be known this very day, not as Thou didst appear to me yesterday, but as Thou dost show Thyself now. Such a conversion and an uprooting do not take place without a wrench, but Thou dost require them. The new people, the new events through which I shall meet Thee may well be very varied. May each of my awakenings be an awakening to Thy equally varied Presence—a 'paschal' meeting with the 'Christ in the garden', with the Christ who is sometimes so unexpected! Let each event of the day be a moment in which I hear Thee call me by my name, as Thou didst call Mary. Grant me then to turn toward Thee, grant me then to answer Thee with one word, to say to Thee (but with my whole heart) the one word: 'Master.'

Jerusalem,  
Easter 1960

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