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SCALABRINIANS
SAINT CHARLES BORROMEO PROVINCE

Symposium on Spirituality

Papers on Scalabrinian Spirituality

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Invitation to Divine Friendship (39-40)

Learn to listen to me, and I will speak to you, heart to heart, as a man converses with his friend. I long to hold a conversation with you. I want to speak to you to instruct you, to guide you, to comfort you, just as I instructed, guided, and comforted St. John, and my other disciples.

MY HEART'S DESIRE IS THAT ALL PRIEST SHOULD ENTER INTO THE GIFT OF MY DIVINE FRIENDSHIP

I desire that my priest, my chosen ones, should turn to me in their doubts, their fears, their perplexities, and their weaknesses. I desire that they should learn to share all things with me.

It is not enough to seek me at **certain times only**, nor is it enough to share with me only **a part** of what they live, **or pieces of their existence**. To live in my friendship is to share of things with me, to keep no secrets, to reserve nothing for oneself alone.

It is not good for man to be alone. For this reason have I made **myself ever present, available in the sacrament of my love**. The soul who spends time in my presence, close to my open heart, will learn all that my heart contains, and will come to share in all my sentiments and desires.

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REMAIN IN MY PRESENCE, WHENEVER, AND FOR AS LONG AS YOU CAN

Being with me is the great means to healing, and to holiness. It is enough to remain with me if you be like me. Come to me, full of expectant hope, and I will do all the rest. To adore me, is to seek my face, and to approach my heart, full of wonder, and of holy fear, and above all, full of love. Adoration is the **wordless confession of my divinity**. Adoration proclaimed that **I am all** and that's all else is not.

All who would reach the Father must pass through me. For this reason, was my side, open by the soldier's lance. **It is the way to my Father**. If you would speak to my Father, speak to me. If you would see my Father, fix your gaze upon my Eucharistic face.

It is enough to begin by, seeking me out in the sacrament of my love, **as often as possible**. This is how every through friendship begins, by seeking out the presence, and the **company of the loved one**. Then, allow me to love you in return, to speak to your heart, to touch you by means of the operations of my Holy Spirit in your soul.

The way to holiness is the path of my friendship. There are many who complicate the way to holiness, and you make it seem forbidding and unattainable to others.

It is enough to except my gift of friendship. It is this that leaves me free to act upon you, and with you, and strengthen you. **Let Me love you, as a friend.** Then that is enough.

A MESSAGE GIVEN TO A MONK BY JESUS ADVENT (94)

“Begin this advent season, full of **confidence, and hope** in my unfailing mercy. Although I am coming and coming soon, **I am already present.** Look at my **Eucharistic face**; know that **I am here for you** in this the sacrament of my love. I am here to consoled you, to comfort and instruct you, to give you an experience of my **divine friendship** already here in this life, so as to prepare you for the glories of friendship in the next.

In this sacrament **I'll wait for you.** So, many emphasize that they must wait for me, and yet I am already present, close to them, and disposed to reveal to them the secret of my heart. **They forget that it is I will wait for them** to come to Me. How often did I say to my disciples: “Come to me”. They understood, at least most of them did, the intensity **of my longing for the company of souls.** I would have all souls come to me and remain with me.

This is the secret of priestly holiness. Once a priest begins to come to me, seeking my Eucharistic face and longing for the company of my pierced Heart, I will come to him, and **make my home in him,** and with me welcome, my Father and the Holy Spirit. Thus will his priesthood be forever, consecrated and sanctified and rendered divinely fruitful.

Spend this Advent, My beloved friend, My priest, close to me in the sacrament of my love. Be my priest, adorer. Offer me yourself, and I will offer you with me to our Father.

Seek out the company of My Immaculate Mother, and of the Saints. Learn to live with them now so that you will live with them in eternity.

Honor My Mother in **the mystery of her Immaculate Conception.** This is a **mystery** full of grace and of light for those who ponder it. It is the **remedy** for many of the ills that afflict my priest and poison their souls. Invoke my mother, conceived without sin, and she will communicate to you something of the purity and brightness of her all holy and immaculate heart.

Do not be fearful of preaching. Know that I will be with you to speak through you, and to touch even the most hardened hearts.

Abandon yourself to me in complete confidence, and I will abandon myself to you, so that your words will be my words, your presence my presence. This is what I long to do with every priest of mine. If only my priests would allow me to speak, and to work through them, what miracles of grace they would see!

A holy priest is quite simply **one who allows me to live in him,** as in a **supplementary humanity.** In every priest, I will speak and act, delivering souls from the powers of darkness and healing the sick, but most of all, I desire to offer myself, in every priest, and to assume every priest into My own offering to the Father.

This I would do **at the altar**, in the celebration of my Holy Sacrifice, **but not only there**; The life of a priest united to me is a ceaseless oblation, and he like Me is a hostia perpetua. You cannot imagine the **fruitfulness of such a union**, and this is the fruitfulness, that I desire for my Father's glory, and for the joy of my bride, the Church .

I speak to you also for your brother priests, and for those souls who would pray for them, and who would offer themselves that priest might be sanctified in truth".



Spiritual Exercises

Pastoral Letter on the Spiritual Exercises - 1876 (1)

Recalling the encyclicals of Clement XI (1700) up to Pius IX, Scalabrini aware of his responsibility as bishop, renews the obligation of the Spiritual Exercises. "Be solicitous of all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has placed you as bishops to govern the Church of God"
(Acts 20, 28)

"Precisely in accordance with this truth," and in fulfillment of our duty, now all our discourse is directed to you, V.F, that the more sublime glory you have for the grace of the priesthood, the greater you must also have our solicitude.

Indeed, this pertains to the capital good of your souls bought with the blood of Christ. **Therefore, we strongly invite you all to do the spiritual exercises.**

We do not do this out of fear of inconformity with priestly life but because we have made it our duty to fulfill this very important part of our episcopal ministry in obedience to the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, who firmly exhorts the Ordinaries to make an effort to solicit all the clergy to do the Spiritual Exercises.

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The FRUITS that the Spiritual Exercises by their nature are capable of producing:

- 1 - Easily remove the dirt produced by the worldly dust that continuously pollutes even religious souls.
- 2 – restore the ecclesiastical spirit and elevate the eye of the soul to the contemplation of divine realities.
- 3 – establish or confirm a straight and holy rule of life.

FIRST POINT: SEVERE WARNING

And again, we do not want to speak of those who, disobeying the apostle's command, let themselves be ensnared all day long in worldly affairs, on their own initiative and without an urgent need, but only attracted by the love of miserable wealth and illicit gain, and who like to take charge of the most varied affairs of families, **so they are no longer men of God**, but of the earth, no longer dispensers of heavenly mysteries **but ministers of human passions**.

They bring worldly tumult before the altar instead of that spirit of devotion and prayer with which it is absolutely necessary to prepare oneself to do well the Divine Mysteries.

NOT THE GLORY

And first of all, in the exercise of all our duties, let our first love **not** be that of intensely desiring poor worldly glory, the esteem and honor of men, but that of always aiming at and realizing the **sole glory of God** and the good and salvation of souls with the right intention of our mind and heart.

If we then see that our efforts do not always, indeed almost never, yield the hoped-for fruit in relation to our neighbor, we will obtain what merit from God, our conscience being sure that we have fulfilled our duty. From God therefore and from Him alone we must expect the **happy outcome of apostolic labors**, let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God by declaring ourselves useless servants even when we have done all that was supposed to be done.

MEEK AND HUMBLE AT HEART

This **smoke of vain glory** must be avoided above all in the preaching of the word of God. Therefore, we must live and act **meek, affable, approachable, filled with the sweetness of Christ's love** in the conduct of our lives, in any exercise of the sacred ministry, but especially in the **administration of the sacrament of penance**, so that someone does not detach himself, offended by our harshness, grumpiness or unfriendly manners, or even worse, he distances himself from the frequency of the sacraments. "Learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart". (Matthew 11, 29)

On the contrary, how many and how great evils would a harsh way of behaving alas be capable of producing, **a rigid and rude disposition** that acts impetuously and passionately even if with an apparent good intention, a disposition too quick to anger: because man's wrath says the scripture does not work what is right before Christ the Lord. Even St. Paul demands patience from ministers towards everyone: in fact, everyone expects to find in their pastor a **sweet friend who edifies by example, a wise counselor in doubts, a comforter in pain, a true friend of the heart is a loving father.**

SECOND POINT

Coming to the second point everyone sees **how important it is for everyone to retire from time to time to reflect seriously on the extreme need to amend**; and precisely this can nowhere and at no time be achieved better than during the exercises.

However, do not mistakenly think that these holy exercises consist only in living for a few days, but doing the same things as on other days, far from noise, affairs and earthly tasks; in praying a little more and listening to a few more sermons on the word of God, not at all. But let it be thought correctly that by their nature

they give that fruit which will help the needs of one's soul, multiple needs for each believer but which are even greater for the **ecclesiastics**.

In fact, their life in continuous contact with that of men, the dissipations inseparable from their tasks, the inevitable distractions even in sacred functions, often cause that, while we help others by giving them the means of salvation, we tire one's spirit and make him almost forgetful of himself.

The need to be free for a few days emerges quite clearly, not to withdraw materially from the world and its affairs, but to **recover what we have lost**, to rebuild our spiritual strength, and to begin a lifestyle that allows us to say with the apostle: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me". **It is absolutely necessary through spiritual exercises to restore that spirit of God and of the Church** which we received in sacred ordination: this purpose we can more easily achieve by the fact that during the exercises the eye of the soul rises better and more easily to the contemplation of divine realities.

ABOUT PRAYER

All Christians know this, and we have preached to our people in the most varied circumstances, that **all our good comes to us from prayer**, as well as that without prayer it is not possible to obtain those graces and strength necessary for the exercise of virtue and to do well, to serve God worthily: in a word, **necessary for the sanctification and salvation of our souls**.

There are graces that God grants even without being prayed for, **but there are more graces that God grants only to the one who has prayed well**, intensely and with perseverance. Among these there is especially the grace of final perseverance, which is the most important of all and, so to speak, the only one necessary. **Saint Augustine** says: "It is certain that God has prepared some graces for us without the need to ask for them, such as the beginning of faith, while others only if requested, such as final perseverance." And those oft-repeated words of Christ of Christ must be understood as referring in a special way to it: "Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you."

Therefore prayer, **very useful and necessary for all, is especially for the ministers** of the church. **Prayer must be their work and daily food**. Of course we assume, indeed we willingly believe that you have always dedicated yourselves to this exercise of prayer, all and individually; however, the very urgent need to withdraw for a certain time from all the affairs of life remains ever more valid, in order to be able to examine well, and with a calm mind, our **progress or regression** in the path of virtue, of perfection, and it is salvation.

In fact, those who participate in the exercises **return spiritually renewed** in their holy vocation, filled with an ineffable joy and intimately at peace, enriched with the most abundant gifts of grace and thus disposed to the

kindling of the heart, they are filled with merits, they progress on the way of salvation, persevering in the work, they are much more fervent in the pious recitation of the breviary, in the devout celebration of the holy sacrifice of the mass, alien to all wickedness, sober, modest, much more faithful custodians of ecclesiastical discipline; and when they have to correct, administer, teach, exhort, they do it with **humility**; they graze the flock entrusted to them as God wants, and voluntarily become the models of the flock, with words and example they spread everywhere the good perfume of Christ.

In fact, although God fills everything with himself and is present in every place, **nevertheless he is pleased to establish certain times and places in which he is ready to pour much more abundant graces upon us**; to speak personally to the heart of man. He especially prefers **solitude** over everything.

And who of you dearest brothers do not feel the **need for God to speak to him** and truly say to his heart that word, which is more penetrating than any two-edged sword, which penetrates to the point of dividing soul and spirit?

Therefore, even in the case that one's conscience is free from any evil and lives a righteous and holy life: however, he will have to make him the humble confession of St. Paul: "But I am not justified for this". Therefore, even with the testimony of conscience of a good and holy life we must always work our salvation with fear and trembling **never trusting in ourselves**.

Therefore, let it be our main and continuous care to **always aim at the highest things** and if by the grace of God we believe we are keeping our foot firmly on the straight path of salvation and perfection, we very humbly thank God, from whom all good derives and we always live in the fear of our pilgrimage, that is, in that fear of the saints who always fear that fear that leads to salvation.

Therefore, especially during these days, if each of you has heartily approved the most serious matter, indeed the only necessary one among all, and that is the eternal salvation of the soul, **make sure to place before your eyes the state of the whole his life**. May he arrange the present wisely and finally provide for the future with solicitude, as Saint Bernard expresses himself in explaining these words. In this short space of time of the exercises we see why the solicitude of life, worldly cares, worldly affairs that are not really necessary are silenced and set before us. **So, with the heart free** from all superfluous thoughts and distractions we will hear what the Lord God would say to us; for surely he will speak of peace to his servants, to the saints, and to those who question his heart. This is the grace we wish for you all.

THEREFORE, BY VIRTUE OF HOLY OBEDIENCE WE COMMAND:

1. All secular priests of any order or degree of dignity should make the spiritual exercises every two years.

2. Anyone who has recently received the appointment of parish priest, possibly before taking possession of the parish or less within a year of entry, should make the spiritual exercises.
3. The theologians who, having completed their studies, have finally been placed by us for the first time in the apostolate, make the spiritual exercises in each of the following six years.
4. The urban and suburban parish priests with the vicars forane, at the end of each three-year period, by means of a report to be delivered to us in writing, will inform us of the fulfillment of these commands by the respectively living priests in the parish or in the vicariate

*Given in Piacenza, from the palace of our presidency,
on the eve of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary 1876.*

CONSIDERATIONS

1. For St. J.B. Scalabrini, the spiritual exercises, following the tradition of St. Ignatius de Loyola, during his time were conducted by a preacher, for eight days, in complete silence, with common prayers, conferences, examination of conscience and confession.
2. It is necessary to reintroduce the practice of 8 days of spiritual exercises, preached and in silence at least every two years.
3. The local superior should report to the provincial if the religious make these spiritual exercises.
4. A day of recollection should be every month, in a retreat house (=retreat) and not at home, of a spiritual nature and different from other community meetings or assemblies.

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Eternal service (93)

The life of the priest is my life in heaven, ceaseless attention to the Father and uninterrupted intercession, thanksgiving, reparation, and praise on behalf of all man.

There is not a moment when a priest cannot be united to me in praising My Father for his great glory, in mediating the praises of the saints and of the Angels, in carrying forward every offering to the Father, made on earth, from the rising of the sun to its setting.

The life of the priest is not only his mass; it is **every mass** that is been offered on earth, that has been or will be offered, and all of this in union with Me who stand in the presence of my Father as eternal priest, as perpetual victim, and as Altar, covered with the outpouring of my own blood.

The service of my priest in the sanctuary of my church on earth is but a part of their day, a passing moment in time. **My desire is that each priest should unite himself to my eternal service of the Father in the sanctuary, not made by human hands that is in heaven.**

