

# LENTEN READING PLAN

## Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday

*Daily readings from Father Faber and Cardinal Newman*

There are forty days of Lent – but there are more than forty days listed below! This is because Sundays and the days of the Sacred Triduum are not counted as part of the forty days of Lent. But in our spiritual discipline, it is good to have a certain consistency *every* day. Therefore, I have included enough daily readings for all of the days from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday.



Conveniently, the text on kindness by Father Faber, as it is divided, ends on the day before Palm Sunday. I have thus appended some meditations by Cardinal Newman on hope in God as our Redeemer for your daily reading during Holy Week – Palm Sunday through Good Friday. These readings are slightly longer, as it is fitting to spend a greater amount of time each day in prayerful meditation during the holiest week of the year.

For Holy Saturday, the reading provided is the second lesson from the Liturgy of the Hours for that day, an excerpt from an ancient homily by an unknown author.

Finally, for Easter Sunday, a beautiful meditation by Cardinal Newman is provided.

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Huntsville, Alabama  
2010*



## □ DAY 1 – *February 17, 2010*

# KINDNESS

*Excerpted from Spiritual Conferences, by Fr. Frederick William Faber*

Spelling Americanized by Fr. Bryan Jerabek  
Text proofread by Fr. Geoffrey Horton

## I. ON KINDNESS IN GENERAL

The weakness of man, and the way in which he is at the mercy of external accidents in the world, has always been a favorite topic with the moralists. They have expatiated upon it with so much amplitude of rhetorical exaggeration, that it has at last produced in our minds a sense of unreality, against which we rebel. Man is no doubt very weak. He can only be passive in a thunderstorm, or run in an earthquake. The odds are against him when he is managing his ship in a hurricane, or when pestilence is raging in the house where he lives. Heat and cold, drought and rain, are his masters. He is weaker than an elephant, and subordinate to the east wind. This is all very true. Nevertheless man has considerable powers, considerable enough to leave him, as proprietor of this planet, in possession of at least as much comfortable jurisdiction, as most landed proprietors have in a free country. He has one power in particular, which is not sufficiently dwelt on, and with which we will at present occupy ourselves. It is the power of making the world happy, or at least of so greatly diminishing the amount of unhappiness in it, as to make it quite a different world from what it is at present. This power is called kindness. The worst kinds of unhappiness, as well as the greatest amount of it, come from our conduct to each other. If our conduct therefore were under the control of kindness, it would be nearly the opposite of what it is, and so the state of the world would be almost reversed. We are for the most part unhappy, because the world is an unkind world. But the world is only unkind for the lack of kindness in us units who compose it. Now if all this is but so much as half true, it is plainly worth our while to take some trouble to gain clear and definite notions of kindness. We practice more easily what we already know clearly.

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## □ DAY 2 – *February 18, 2010*

We must first ask ourselves what kindness is. Words, which we are using constantly, soon cease to have much distinct meaning in our minds. They become symbols and figures rather than words, and we content ourselves with the general

impression they make upon us. Now let us be a little particular about kindness, and describe it as accurately as we can. Kindness is the overflowing of self upon others. We put others in the place of self. We treat them as we should wish to be treated ourselves. We change places with them. For the time self is another, and others are self. Our self-love takes the shape of complacency in unselfishness. We cannot speak of the virtues without thinking of God. What would the overflow of self upon others be in Him, the Ever-blessed and Eternal? It was the act of creation. Creation was divine kindness. From it as from a fountain, flow the possibilities, the powers, the blessings of all created kindness. This is an honorable genealogy for kindness. Then, again, kindness is the coming to the rescue of others, when they need it and it is in our power to supply what they need; and this is the work of the Attributes of God towards His creatures, His omnipotence is for ever making up our deficiency of power. His justice is continually correcting our erroneous judgments. His mercy is always consoling our fellow-creatures under our hardheartedness. His truth is perpetually hindering the consequences of our falsehood. His omniscience makes our ignorance succeed as if it were knowledge. His perfections are incessantly coming to the rescue of our imperfections. This is the definition of Providence; and kindness is our imitation of this divine action.

Moreover kindness is also like divine grace; for it gives men something which neither self nor nature can give them. What it gives them, is something of which they are in want, or something which only another person can give, such as consolation; and besides this, the manner in which this is given is a true gift itself, better far than the thing given: and what is all this but an allegory of grace? Kindness adds sweetness to everything. It is kindness which makes life's capabilities blossom, and paints them with their cheering hues, and endows them with their invigorating fragrance. Whether it waits on its superiors, or ministers to its inferiors, or disports itself with its equals, its work is marked by a prodigality which the strictest discretion cannot blame. It does unnecessary work, which when done, looks the most necessary work that could be. If it goes to soothe a sorrow, it does more than soothe it. If it relieves a want, it cannot do so without doing more than relieve it. Its manner is something extra, and is the choice thing in the bargain. Even when it is economical in what it gives, it is not economical of the gracefulness with which it gives it. But what is all this like, except the exuberance of the divine government? See how, turn which way we will, kindness is entangled with the thought of God! Last of all, the secret impulse out of which kindness acts is an instinct which is the noblest part of ourselves, the most undoubted remnant of the image of God, which was given us at the first. We must therefore never think of kindness as being a common growth of our nature, common in the sense of being of little value. It is the nobility of man. In all its modifications it reflects a heavenly type. It runs up into eternal mysteries. It is a divine thing rather than a human one, and it is human because it springs from the soul of man just at the point where the divine image was graven deepest.

### □ DAY 3 – *February 19, 2010*

Such is kindness. Now let us consider its office in the world, in order that we may get a clearer idea of itself. It makes life more endurable. The burden of life presses heavily upon multitudes of the children of men. It is a yoke, very often of such a peculiar nature that familiarity, instead of practically lightening it, makes it harder to bear. Perseverance is the hand of time pressing the yoke down upon our galled shoulders with all its might. There are many men to whom life is always approaching the unbearable. It stops only just short of it. We expect it to transgress every moment. But, without having recourse to these extreme cases, sin alone is sufficient to make life intolerable to a virtuous man. Actual sin is not essential to this. The possibility of sinning, the danger of sinning, the facility of sinning, the temptation to sin, the example of so much sin around us, and, above all, the sinful unworthiness of men much better than ourselves, these are sufficient to make life drain us to the last drop of our endurance. In all these cases it is the office of kindness to make life more bearable; and if its success in its office is often only partial, some amount of success is at least invariable.

It is true that we make ourselves more unhappy than other people make us. No slight portion of this self-inflicted unhappiness arises from our sense of justice being so continually wounded by the events of life, while the incessant friction of the world never allows the wound to heal. There are some men whose practical talents are completely swamped by the keenness of their sense of injustice. They go through life as failures, because the pressure of injustice upon themselves, or the sight of its pressing upon others, has unmanned them. If they begin a line of action, they cannot go through with it. They are perpetually shying, like a mettlesome horse, at the objects by the roadside. They had much in them; but they have died without anything coming of them. Kindness steps forward to remedy this evil also. Each solitary kind action that is done, the whole world over, is working briskly in its own sphere to restore the balance between right and wrong. The more kindness there is on the earth at any given moment, the greater is the tendency of the balance between right and wrong to correct itself, and remain in equilibrium. Nay, this is short of the truth. Kindness allies itself with right to invade the wrong, and beat it off the earth. Justice is necessarily an aggressive virtue, and kindness is the amiability of justice.

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### □ DAY 4 – *February 20, 2010*

Mindful of its divine origin, and of its hereditary descent from the primal act of creation, this dear virtue is for ever entering into God's original dispositions as Creator. He meant the world to be a happy world; and kindness means it also. He

gave it the power to be happy; and kindness was a great part of that very power. By His benediction He commanded creation to be happy; kindness, with its usual genial spirit of accommodation, now tries to persuade a world, which has dared to disobey a divine command. God looks over the fallen world, and repents that He made man. Kindness sees less clearly the ruin of God's original idea than it sees still that first beneficent idea, and it sets to work to cleanse what is defiled, and to restore what is defaced. It sorrows over sin, but, like buoyant-hearted men, it finds in its sorrow the best impulse of its activity. It is laboring always in ten thousand places, and the work at which it labors is always the same, to make God's world more like His original conception of it.

But, while it thus ministers to Him as Creator, it is no less energetic and successful in preparing and enlarging His ways as Savior. It is constantly winning strayed souls back to Him, opening hearts that seemed obstinately closed, enlightening minds that had been willfully darkened, skillfully throwing the succors of hope into strongholds that were on the point of capitulating to despair, lifting endeavor from low to high, from high to higher, from higher to highest. Everywhere kindness is the best pioneer of the Precious Blood. We often begin our own repentance by acts of kindness, or through them. Probably the majority of repentances have begun in the reception of acts of kindness, which, if not unexpected, touched men by the sense of their being so undeserved. Doubtless the terrors of the Lord are often the beginning of that wisdom, which we name conversion; but men must be frightened in a kind way, or the fright will only make them unbelievers. Kindness has converted more sinners than either zeal, eloquence, or learning; and these three last have never converted anyone, unless they were kind also. In short, kindness makes us as Gods to each other. Yet, while it lifts us so high, it sweetly keeps us low. For the continual sense, which a kind heart has, of its own need of kindness, keeps it humble. There are no hearts to which kindness is so indispensable, as those that are exuberantly kind themselves.

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## □ DAY 5 – *February 21, 2010*

But let us look at the matter from another point. What does kindness do for those to whom we show it? We have looked at its office on a grand scale in the whole world; let us narrow our field of observation, and see what it does for those who are its immediate objects. What we note first, as of great consequence, is the immense power of kindness in bringing out the good points of the characters of others. Almost all men have more goodness in them than the ordinary intercourse of the world enables us to discover. Indeed most men, we may be sure from glimpses we now and then obtain, carry with them to the grave much undeveloped nobility. Life is seldom so varied or so adventurous, as to enable a man to unfold all that is in him. A creature, who has got capabilities in him to live for ever, can hardly have room in

three-score years to do more than give specimens of what he might be, and will be. But, beside this, who has not seen how disagreeable and faulty characters will expand under kindness? Generosity springs up, fresh and vigorous, from under a superincumbent load of meanness. Modesty suddenly discloses itself from some safe cavern where it has survived years of sin. Virtues come to life, and in their infantine robustness strangle habits which a score of years has been spent in forming. It is wonderful what capabilities grace can find in the most unpromising character. It is a thing to be much pondered. Duly reflected on, it might alter our view of the world altogether. But kindness does not reveal these things to us external spectators only. It reveals a man to himself. It rouses the long dormant self-respect, with which grace will speedily ally itself, and purify it by its alliance. Neither does it content itself with making a revelation. It develops as well as reveals. It gives these newly disclosed capabilities of virtue vigor and animation. It presents them with occasions. It even trains and tutors them. It causes the first actions of the recovering soul to be actions on high principles and from generous motives. It shields and defends moral convalescence from the dangers which beset it. A kind act has picked up many a fallen man, who has after wards slain his tens of thousands for his Lord, and has entered the Heavenly City at last as a conqueror, amidst the acclamations of the saints and with the welcome of his Sovereign.

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## □ DAY 6 – *February 22, 2010*

It is not improbable that no man ever had a kind action done to him, who did not in consequence commit a sin less than he otherwise would have done. I can look out over the earth at any hour, and I see in spirit innumerable angels threading the crowds of men, and hindering sin by all manner of artifices which shall not interfere with the freedom of man's will. I see also invisible grace, made visible for the moment, flowing straight from God in and upon and around the souls of men, and sin giving way, and yielding place to it. It is only in the deserts that I do not see it, and on the tracts of shipless seas, and the fields of polar ice. But together with grace and the angels there is a third band of diminutive figures, with veils upon their heads, which are flitting everywhere, making gloomy men smile, and angry men grow meek, and sick men cease to groan, lighting up hope in the eyes of the dying, sweetening the heart of the bitter, and adroitly turning men away from sin just when they are on the point of committing it. They seem to have strange power. Men listen to them, who have been deaf to the pleading of angels. They gain admittance into hearts, before the doors of which grace has lost its patience and gone away. No sooner are the doors open than these veiled messengers, these cunning ministers of God, have gone and returned with lightning-like speed, and brought grace back with them. They are most versatile in their operations. One while they are the spies of grace, another while its sappers and miners, another while its light cavalry, another while they bear the brunt of the battle, and for more than five thousand

years they have hardly known the meaning of defeat. These are the acts of kindness, which are daily enrolled in God's service from the rising to the setting of the sun; and this is the second work they do in souls, to lessen the number of their sins. There are few gifts more precious to a soul than to make its sins fewer. It is in our power to do this almost daily, and sometimes often in a day.

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## ❑ DAY 7 – *February 23, 2010*

Another work, which our kindness does in the hearts of others, is to encourage them in their efforts after good. Habits of sin, even when put to death as habits, leave many evil legacies behind them. One of the most disastrous parts of their inheritance is discouragement. There are few things which resist grace as it does. Obstinacy even is more hopeful. We may see floods of grace descend upon the disheartened soul, and it shows no symptoms of reviving. Grace runs off it, as the rain runs from the roofs. Whichever of its three forms, peevishness, lethargy, or delusion, it may assume, God's mercy must lay regular siege to it, or it will never be taken. But we all of us need encouragement to do good. The path of virtue, even when it is not uphill, is rough and stony, and each day's journey is a little longer than our strength admits of, only there are no means of shortening it. The twenty-four hours are the same to everybody, except the idle, and to the idle they are thirty-six, for weariness and dullness. You may love God, and love Him truly, as you do, and high motives may be continually before you. Nevertheless you must be quite conscious to yourself of being soon fatigued, nay perhaps of a normal lassitude growing with your years; and you must remember how especially the absence of sympathy tried you, and how all things began to look like delusion because no one encouraged you in your work. Alas! how many noble hearts have sunk under this not ignoble weariness! How many plans for God's glory have fallen to the ground, which a bright look or a kind eye would have propped up. But either because we were busy with our own work and never looked at that of others, or because we were jealous and looked coldly and spoke critically, we have not come with this facile succor to the rescue, not so much of our brother, as of our dearest Lord Himself! How many institutions for the comfort of the poor, or the saving of souls, have languished, more for want of approbation than of money; and though sympathy is so cheap, the lone priest has struggled on till his solitude, his weariness, and his lack of sympathy have almost blamelessly given way beneath the burden, and the wolves have rushed in upon that little nook of his Master's sheepfold, which he had so lovingly partitioned off as his own peculiar work! O what a wretched thing it is to be unkind! I think, with the thought of the Precious Blood, I can better face my sins at the last judgment, than my unkindness, with all its miserable fertility of evil consequences. But, if we have no notion of the far-reaching mischief which unkindness does, so neither can we rightly estimate the good which kindness may do. Very often a heart is drooping. It is bending over itself lower and lower. The

cloud of sadness thickens. Temptations are all around, and are multiplying in strength and number every moment. Everything forebodes approaching sin. Not so much as a kind action, not so much as a kind word, but the mere tone of voice, the mere fixing of the eye, has conveyed sympathy to the poor suffering heart, and all is right again in one instant. The downcast soul has revived under that mere peep of human sunshine, and is encouraged to do bravely the very thing which in despondency it had almost resolved to leave undone. That coming sin might have been the soul's first step to an irretrievable ruin. That encouragement may be the first link of a new chain, which, when its length is finished, shall be called final perseverance.

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## □ DAY 8 – *February 24, 2010*

Few men can do without praise, and there are few circumstances under which a man can be praised without injuring him. Here is a difficulty. It is wise to take a kindly view of all human infirmities, but it is not wise to humor them in act. Some men can do without the praise of others, because their own is so unfailing. Their vanity enables them to find self-praise sufficient. Vanity is the most comfortable of vices. The misfortune is, that nevertheless it is a vice. Some try to do without praise, and grow moody and critical, which shows their grace was not adequate for their attempt. Some do without praise, because they are all for God: but alas! it would not occupy us long to take the census of that portion of the world's population. Most men must have praise. Their fountains dry up without it. Everyone in authority knows this well enough. He has to learn to praise without seeming to praise. Now kindness has all the virtues of praise without its vices. It is equally medicinal without having the poisonous qualities. When we are praised, we are praised at some expense, and at our own expense. Kindness puts us to no expense, while it enriches those who are kind to us. Praise always implies some degree of condescension; and condescension is a thing intrinsically ungraceful, whereas kindness is the most graceful attitude one man can assume towards another. So here is another work it does. It supplies the place of praise. It is in fact the only sort of praise which does not injure, the only sort which is always and everywhere true, the only kind which those who are afraid of growing conceited may welcome safely.

Moreover kindness is infectious. No kind action ever stopped with itself. Fecundity belongs to it in its own right. One kind action leads to another. By one we commit ourselves to more than one. Our example is followed. The single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make fresh trees, and the rapidity of the growth is equal to its extent. But this fertility is not confined to ourselves, or to others who may be kind to the same person to whom we have been kind. It is chiefly to be found in the person himself whom we have benefited. This is

the greatest work which kindness does to others, that it makes them kind themselves. The kindest men are generally those who have received the greatest number of kindnesses. It does indeed sometimes happen, according to the law which in noble natures produces good out of evil, that men who have had to feel the want of kindness are themselves lavishly kind when they have the power. But in general the rule is that kindness makes men kind. As we become kinder ourselves by practicing kindness, so the objects of our kindness, if they were kind before, learn now to be kinder, and to be kind now if they were never so before. Thus does kindness propagate itself on all sides. Perhaps an act of kindness never dies, but extends the invisible undulations of its influence over the breadth of centuries. Thus, for all these reasons, there is no better thing, which we can do for others, than to be kind to them; and our kindness is the greatest gift they can receive, except the grace of God.

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## □ DAY 9 – *February 25, 2010*

There is always a certain sort of selfishness in the spiritual life. The order of charity rules it so. Our first consideration is the glory of God in the salvation of our own souls. We must take hold of this glory by that handle first of all. Everything will be presumption and delusion, if it is taken in any other order. Hence, even while speaking of kindness, it is not out of place for us to consider the work which it does for ourselves. We have seen what it does for the world. We have seen what it does for our neighbors. Now let us see how it blesses ourselves. To be kind to ourselves is a very peculiar feature of the spiritual life, but does not come within our range at present. Foremost among the common ways in which kind actions benefit ourselves may be mentioned the help they give us in getting clear of selfishness. The tendency of nature to love itself has more the character of a habit than a law. Opposite conduct always tends to weaken it, which would hardly be the case if it were a law. Kindness moreover, partly from the pleasure which accompanies it, partly from the blessing it draws down upon itself, and partly from its similitude to God, tends very rapidly to set into a well-formed habit. Selfishness is in no slight degree a point of view from which we regard things. Kindness alters our view by altering our point of view. Now does anything tease us more than our selfishness? Does anything more effectually retard our spiritual growth? Selfishness indeed furnishes us with a grand opportunity, the opportunity of getting to hate ourselves, because of the odiousness of this self-worship. But how few of us have got either the depth or the bravery to profit by this magnificent occasion? On the whole, selfishness must be put down, or our progress will cease. A series of kind actions turned against it with playful courage, and selfishness is, I will not say killed, but stunned; and that is a great convenience, though it is not the whole work accomplished. Perhaps we may never come to be quite unselfish. However there is but one road towards that, which is kindness; and every step taken on that road is a long stride heavenwards.

Kindness seems to know of some secret fountain of joy deep in the soul, which it can touch without revealing its locality, and cause to send its waters upwards, and overflow the heart. Inward happiness almost always follows a kind action; and who has not long since experienced in himself, that inward happiness is the atmosphere in which great things are done for God? Furthermore, kindness is a constant godlike occupation, and implies many supernatural operations in those who practice kindness upon the motives of faith. Much grace goes along with kindness, collateral graces more than sufficient in themselves to make a saint. Observation would lead us to the conclusion, that kindness is not a native of the land of youth. Men grow kinder as they grow older. There are of course natures which are kindly from the cradle. But not many men have seen a really kind boy or girl. In like manner, as kindness in the natural world implies age, in the spiritual world it implies grace. It does not belong to the fervor of beginnings, but to the solidity of progress. Indeed Christian kindness implies so much grace, that it almost assures the exercise of humility. A proud man is seldom a kind man. Humility makes us kind, and kindness makes us humble. It is one of the many instances, in the matter of the virtues, of good qualities being at once not only causes and effects together, but also their own causes and their own effects. It would be foolish to say that humility is an easy virtue. The very lowest degree of it is a difficult height to climb. But this much may be said for kindness, that it is the easiest road to humility, and infallible as well as easy: and is not humility just what we want, just what we are this moment coveting, just what will break down barriers, and give us free course on our way to God?

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## □ DAY 10 – *February 26, 2010*

Kindness does so much for us that it would be almost more easy to enumerate what it does not do, than to sum up what it does. It operates more energetically in some characters than in others. But it works wondrous changes in all. It is kindness which enables most men to put off the inseparable unpleasantness of youth. It watches the thoughts, controls the words, and helps us to unlearn early manhood's inveterate habit of criticism. It is astonishing how masterful it is in its influence over our dispositions, and yet how gentle, quiet, consistent, and successful. It makes us thoughtful and considerate. Detached acts of kindness may be the offspring of impulse. Yet he is mostly a good man, whose impulses are good. But on the long run habitual kindness is not a mere series of generous impulses, but the steadfast growth of generous deliberation. Much thought must go to consistent kindness, and much self-denying legislation. With most of us the very outward shape of our lives is, without fault of ours, out of harmony with persevering kindness. We have to humor circumstances. Our opportunities require management, and to be patient in waiting to do good to others is a fine work of grace. It is on account of all this that

kindness makes us so attractive to others. It imparts a tinge of pathos to our characters, in which our asperities disappear, or at least only give a breadth of shadow to our hearts, which increases their beauty by making it more serious. We also become manly by being kind. Querulousness, which is the unattractive side of youthful piety, is no longer noticeable. It is alive, because an ailing or an isolated old age may bring it to the surface again. But kindness at any rate keeps it under water; for it is the high tide of the soul's nobility, and hides many an unseemly shallow which exposed its uninteresting sand in early days, and will disclose itself once more by ripples and stained water when age comes upon us, unless we are of those fortunate few whose hearts get younger as their heads grow older. A kind man is a man who is never self-occupied. He is genial; he is sympathetic; he is brave. How shall we express in one word these many things which kindness does for us who practice it? It prepares us with an especial preparation for the paths of disinterested love of God.

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## □ DAY 11 – *February 27, 2010*

Now surely we cannot say that this subject of kindness is an unimportant one. It is in reality, as subsequent Conferences will show, a great part of the spiritual life. It is found in all its regions, and in all of them with different functions, and in none of them playing an inferior part. It is also a peculiar participation of the spirit of Jesus, which is itself the life of all holiness. It reconciles worldly men to religious people; and really, however contemptible worldly men are in themselves, they have souls to save, and it were much to be wished that devout persons would make their devotion a little less angular and aggressive to worldly people, provided they can do so without lowering practice or conceding principle. Devout people are, as a class, the least kind of all classes. This is a scandalous thing to say; but the scandal of the fact is so much greater than the scandal of acknowledging it, that I will brave this last, for the sake of a greater good. Religious people are an unkindly lot. Poor human nature cannot do everything; and kindness is too often left uncultivated, because men do not sufficiently understand its value. Men may be charitable, yet not kind; merciful, yet not kind; self-denying, yet not kind. If they would add a little common kindness to their uncommon graces, they would convert ten where they now only abate the prejudices of one. There is a sort of spiritual selfishness in devotion, which is rather to be regretted than condemned. I should not like to think it is unavoidable. Certainly its interfering with kindness is not unavoidable. It is only a little difficult, and calls for watchfulness. Kindness, as a grace, is certainly not sufficiently cultivated, while the self-gravitating, self-contemplating, self-inspecting parts of the spiritual life are cultivated too exclusively.

Rightly considered, kindness is the grand cause of God in the world. Where it is natural, it must forthwith be supernaturalized. Where it is not natural, it must be

supernaturally planted. What is our life? It is a mission to go into every corner it can reach, and reconquer for God's beatitude His unhappy world back to Him. It is a devotion of ourselves to the bliss of the Divine Life by the beautiful apostolate of kindness.

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## □ DAY 12 – *February 28, 2010*

### II. KIND THOUGHTS

Everywhere in creation there is a charm, the fountain of which is invisible. In the natural, the moral, and the spiritual world, it is the same. We are constantly referring it to causes, which are only its effects. Faith alone reveals to us its true origin. God is behind everything. His sweetness transpires through the thick shades which hide Him. It comes to the surface, and with gentle mastery overwhelms the whole world. The sweetness of the hidden God is the delight of life. It is the pleasantness of nature, and the consolation which is omnipresent in all suffering. We touch Him; we lean on Him; we feel Him; we see by Him; always and everywhere. Yet He makes Himself so natural to us, that we almost overlook Him. Indeed, if it were not for faith, we should overlook Him altogether. His presence is like light, when we do not see the face of the sun. It is like light on the stony folds of the mountaintop, coming through rents in the waving clouds, or in the close forest where the wind weaves and unweaves the canopy of foliage, or like the silver arrows of underwater light in the deep blue sea, with colored stones and bright weeds glancing there. Still God does not shine equally through all things. Some things are more transparent, other things more opaque. Some have a greater capacity for disclosing God than others. In the moral world, with which alone we are concerned at present, kind thoughts have a special power to let in upon us the light of the hidden God.

The thoughts of men are a world by themselves, vast and populous. Each man's thoughts are a world to himself. There is an astonishing breadth in the thoughts of even the most narrow-minded man. Thus we all of us have an interior world to govern, and he is the only real king who governs it effectually. There is no doubt that we are very much influenced by external things, and that our natural dispositions are in no slight degree dependent upon education. Nevertheless our character is formed within. It is manufactured in the world of our thoughts, and there we must go to influence it. He, who is master there, is master everywhere. He, whose energy covers his thoughts, covers the whole extent of self. He has himself completely under his own control, if he has learned to control his thoughts. The fountains of word and action have their untrodden springs in the caverns of the world of thought. He, who can command the fountains, is master of the city. The power of suffering is the grandest merchandize of life, and it also is manufactured

in the world of thought. The union of grace and nature is the significance of our whole life. It is there, precisely in that union, that the secret of our vocation resides. The shape of our work and the character of our holiness are regulated from the point, different in different men, at which nature and grace are united. The knowledge of this point brings with it, not only the understanding of our past, but a sufficiently clear vision of our future; to say nothing of its being the broad sunshine of the present. But the union of nature and grace is for the most part effected in the world of thought.

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### ❑ DAY 13 – *March 1, 2010*

But I will go even further than this, and will venture to contradict a common opinion. It seems to me that our thoughts are a more true measure of ourselves than our actions are. They are not under the control of human respect. It is not easy for them to be ashamed of themselves. They have no witnesses but God. They are not bound to keep within certain limits or observe certain proprieties. Religious motives alone can claim jurisdiction over them. The struggle, which so often ensues within us before we can bring ourselves to do our duty, goes on entirely within our thoughts. It is our own secret, and men cannot put us to the blush because of it. The contradiction, which too often exists between our outward actions and our inward intentions, is only to be detected in the realm of our thoughts, whither none but God can penetrate, except by guesses, which are not the less offences against charity because they happen to be correct. In like manner, as an impulse will sometimes show more of our real character, than what we do after deliberation, our first thoughts will often reveal to us faults of disposition which outward restraints will hinder from issuing in action. Actions have their external hindrances, while our thoughts better disclose to us our possibilities of good and evil. Of course there is a most true sense in which the conscientious effort to cure a fault is a better indication of our character than the fault we have not yet succeeded in curing. Nevertheless we may die at any moment; and when we die, we die as we are. Thus our thoughts tell us, better than our actions can do, what we shall be like the moment after death. Lastly, it is in the world of thought that we most often meet with God, walking as in the shades of ancient Eden. It is there we hear His whispers. It is there we perceive the fragrance of His recent presence. It is thence that the first vibrations of grace proceed.

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### ❑ DAY 14 – *March 2, 2010*

Now, if our thoughts be of this importance, and also if kindness be of the importance which was assigned to it in the last Conference, it follows that kind thoughts must

be of immense consequence. If a man habitually has kind thoughts of others, and that on supernatural motives, he is not far from being a saint. Such a man's thoughts are not kind intermittingly, or on impulse, or at hap-hazard. His first thoughts are kind, and he does not repent of them, although they often bring suffering and disgust in their train. All his thoughts are kind, and he does not checker them with unkindly ones. Even when sudden passions or vehement excitements have thrown them into commotion, they settle down into a kindly humor, and cannot settle otherwise. These men are rare. Kind thoughts are rarer than either kind words or kind deeds. They imply a great deal of thinking about others. This in itself is rare. But they imply also a great deal of thinking about others without the thoughts being criticisms. This is rarer still. Active-minded men are naturally the most given to criticize; and they are also the men whose thoughts are generally the most exuberant. Such men therefore must make kind thoughts a defense against self. By sweetening the fountain of their thoughts, they will destroy the bitterness of their judgments.

But kind thoughts imply also a contact with God, and a divine ideal in our minds. Their origin cannot be anything short of divine. Like the love of beauty, they can spring from no baser source. They are not dictated by self-interest, nor stimulated by passion. They have nothing in them which is insidious, and they are almost always the preludes to some sacrifice of self. It must be from God's touch that such waters spring. They only live in the clammy mists of earth, because they breathe the fresh air of heaven. They are the scent with which the creature is penetrated through the indwelling of the Creator. They imply also the reverse of a superficial view of things. Nothing deepens the mind so much as a habit of charity. Charity cannot feed on surfaces. Its instinct is always to go deeper. Roots are its natural food. A man's surfaces are always worse than his real depths. There may be exceptions to this rule; but I believe them to be very rare. Self is the only person who does not improve on acquaintance. Our deepest views of life are doubtless very shallow ones; for how little do we know of what God intends to do with His own world? We know something about His glory and our own salvation, but how the last becomes the first in the face of so much evil neither theologian nor philosopher has ever been able adequately to explain. But so much we are warranted in saying, that charity is the deepest view of life, and nearest to God's view, and therefore also, not merely the truest view, but the only view which is true at all. Kind thoughts, then, are in the creature what His science is to the Creator. They embody the deepest, purest, grandest truth, to which we untruthful creatures can attain about others or ourselves.

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□ **DAY 15 – *March 3, 2010***

Why are some men so forward to praise others? Is it not that it is their fashion of investing themselves with importance? But why are most men so reluctant to praise

others? It is because they have such an inordinate opinion of themselves. Now kind thoughts for the most part imply a low opinion of self. They are an inward praise of others, and because inward, therefore genuine. No one, who has a high opinion of himself, finds his merits acknowledged according to his own estimate of them. His reputation therefore cannot take care of itself. He must push it; and a man who is pushing anything in the world is always unamiable, because he is obliged to stand so much on the defensive. A pugnacious man is far less disagreeable than a defensive man. Every man, who is habitually holding out for his rights, makes himself the equal of his inferiors, even if he be a king; and he must take the consequences, which are far from pleasant. But the kind-thoughted man has no rights to defend, no self-importance to push. He thinks meanly of himself, and with so much honesty, that he thinks thus of himself with tranquility. He finds others pleasanter to deal with than self; and others find him so pleasant to deal with, that love follows him wherever he goes, a love which is the more faithful to him because he makes so few pretences to be loved. Last of all, kind thoughts imply also supernatural principles; for inward kindness can be consistent on no others. Kindness is the occupation of our whole nature by the atmosphere and spirit of heaven. This is no inconsiderable affair. Nature cannot do the work itself, nor can it do it with ordinary succors. Were there ever any consistently kind heathens? If so they are in heaven now, for they must have been under the dominion of grace on earth. We must not confound kindness and mere good-humor. Good-humor is---no! on such an unkindly earth as this it will be better not to say a disparaging word even of mere good-humor. Would that there were more even of that in the world! I suspect angels cluster round a good-humored man, as the gnats cluster round the trees they like.

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## □ DAY 16 – *March 4, 2010*

But there is one class of kind thoughts which must be dwelt upon apart. I allude to kind interpretations. The habit of not judging others is one which it is very difficult to acquire, and which is generally not acquired till very late on in the spiritual life. If men have ever indulged in judging others, the very sight of an action almost indeliberately suggests an internal commentary upon it. It has become so natural to them to judge, however little their own duties or responsibilities are connected with what they are judging, that the actions of others present themselves to the mind as in the attitude of asking a verdict from it. All our fellowmen, who come within the reach of our knowledge, and for the most retired of us the circle is a wide one, are prisoners at the bar; and if we are unjust, ignorant, and capricious judges, it must be granted to us that we are indefatigable ones. Now all this is simple ruin to our souls. At any risk, at the cost of life, there must be an end of this, or it will end in everlasting banishment from God. The decree of the last judgment is absolute. It is this the measure which we have meted to others. Our present humor in judging others reveals to us what our sentence would be if we died now. Are we content to

abide that issue? But, as it is impossible all at once to stop judging, and as it is also impossible to go on judging uncharitably, we must pass through the intermediate stage of kind interpretations. Few men have passed beyond this to a habit of perfect charity, which has blessedly stripped them of their judicial ermine and their deeply-rooted judicial habits of mind. We ought therefore to cultivate most sedulously the habit of kind interpretations.

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## □ DAY 17 – *March 5, 2010*

Men's actions are very difficult to judge. Their real character depends in a great measure on the motives which prompt them, and those motives are invisible to us. Appearances are often against what we afterwards discover to have been deeds of virtue. Moreover a line of conduct is, in its look at least, very little like a logical process. It is complicated with all manner of inconsistencies, and often deformed by what is in reality a hidden consistency. Nobody can judge men but God, and we can hardly obtain a higher or more reverent view of God than that which represents Him to us as judging men with perfect knowledge, unperplexed certainty, and undisturbed compassion. Now kind interpretations are imitations of the merciful ingenuity of the Creator finding excuses for His creatures. It is almost a day of revelation to us, when theology enables us to perceive that God is so merciful precisely because He is so wise; and from this truth it is an easy inference, that kindness is our best wisdom, because it is an image of the wisdom of God. This is the idea of kind interpretations, and this is the use which we must make of them. The habit of judging is so nearly incurable, and its cure is such an almost interminable process, that we must concentrate ourselves for a long while on keeping it in check, and this check is to be found in kind interpretations. We must come to esteem very lightly our sharp eye for evil, on which perhaps we once prided ourselves as cleverness. It has been to us a fountain of sarcasm; and how seldom since Adam was created has a sarcasm fallen short of being a sin? We must look at our talent for analysis of character as a dreadful possibility of huge uncharitableness. We should have been much better without it from the first. It is the hardest talent of all to manage, because it is so difficult to make any glory for God out of it. We are sure to continue to say clever things, so long as we continue to indulge in this analysis; and clever things are equally sure to be sharp and acid. Sight is a great blessing, but there are times and places in which it is far more blessed not to see. It would be comparatively easy for us to be holy, if only we could always see the characters of our neighbors either in soft shade or with the kindly deceits of moonlight upon them. Of course we are not to grow blind to evil; for thus we should speedily become unreal. But we must grow to something higher, and something truer, than a quickness in detecting evil.

## □ DAY 18 – *March 6, 2010*

We must rise to something truer. Yes! Have we not always found in our past experience that on the whole our kind interpretations were truer than our harsh ones? What mistakes have we not made in judging others! But have they not almost always been on the side of harshness? Every day some phenomenon of this kind occurs. We have seen a thing as clear as day. It could have but one meaning. We have already taken measures. We have roused our righteous indignation. All at once the whole matter is differently explained, and that in some most simple way, so simple that we are lost in astonishment that we should never have thought of it ourselves. Always distrust very plain cases, says a legal writer. Things that were dark begin to give light. What seemed opaque is perceived to be transparent. Things that everybody differed about, as people in planting a tree can never agree what it wants to make it straight, now everybody sees in the same light; so natural and obvious has the explanation been. Nay, things that it appeared impossible to explain are just those the explanations of which are the most simple. How many times in life have we been wrong when we put a kind construction on the conduct of others? We shall not need our fingers to count those mistakes upon. Moreover grace is really much more common than our querulousness is generally willing to allow. We may suspect its operations in the worst men we meet with. Thus, without any forced impossibility, we may call in supernatural considerations in order to make our criticisms more ingenious in their charity. When we grow a little holier, we shall summon also to our aid those supernatural motives in ourselves, which, by depressing our own ideas of ourselves, elevate our generous belief in others.

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## □ DAY 19 – *March 7, 2010*

But, while common sense convinces us of the truth of kind interpretations, common selfishness ought to open our eyes to their wisdom and their policy. We must have passed through life very unobservantly, if we have never perceived that a man is very much himself what he thinks of others. Of course his own faults may be the cause of his unfavorable judgments of others; but they are also, and in a very marked way, effects of those same judgments. A man, who was on a higher eminence before, will soon by harsh judgments of others sink to the level of his own judgments. When you hear a man attribute meanness to another, you may be sure, not only that the critic is an ill-natured man, but that he has got a similar element of meanness in himself, or is fast sinking to it. A man is always capable himself of a sin which he thinks another is capable of, or which he himself is capable of imputing to another. Even a well-founded suspicion more or less degrades a man. His suspicion may be verified, and he may escape some material harm by having cherished the suspicion. But he is unavoidably the worse man in consequence of

having entertained it. This is a very serious consideration, and rather a frightening argument in favor of charitable interpretations. Furthermore, our hidden judgments of others are, almost with a show of special and miraculous interference, visited upon ourselves. Virtue grows in us under the influence of kindly judgments, as if they were its nutriment. But in the case of harsh judgments we find we often fall into the sin of which we have judged another guilty, although it is not perhaps a sin at all common to ourselves. Or, if matters do not go so far as this, we find ourselves suddenly overwhelmed with a tempest of unusual temptations and on reflection conscience is ready to remind us that the sin, to which we are thus violently and unexpectedly tempted, is one which we have of late been uncharitably attributing to others. Sometimes also we are ourselves falsely accused, and widely believed to be guilty, of some fault of which we are quite innocent; but it is a fault of which we have recently, in our own minds at least, accused another. Moreover the truth or falsehood of our judgments seem to have very little to do with the matter. The truth of them does not protect us from their unpleasant consequences; just as the truth of a libel is no sufficient defense of it. It is the uncharitableness of the judgment, or the judging at all, to which this self-revenging power is fastened. It works itself out like a law, quietly but infallibly. Is not all this matter for very serious reflection?

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## □ DAY 20 – *March 8, 2010*

But, in conclusion, what does all this doctrine of kind interpretations amount to? To nothing less, in the case of most of us, than living a new life in a new world. We may imagine life in another planet, with whose physical laws we may happen to have a sufficient acquaintance. But it would hardly differ more in a physical way from our earthly life, than our moral life would differ from what it is at present, if we were habitually to put a kind interpretation on all we saw and heard, and habitually had kind thoughts of every one of whom we thought at all. It would not merely put a new face on life; it would put a new depth to it. We should come as near as possible to becoming another kind of creatures. Look what an amount of bitterness we have about us! What is to become of it? It plainly cannot be taken into heaven. Where must it be left behind? We clearly cannot put it off by the mere act of dying, as we can put off thereby a rheumatic limb, or wasted lungs, or diseased blood. It will surely be a long and painful process in the heats of purgatory; but we may be happy if mercy so abound upon us, that the weight of our bitterness shall not sink us deeper into the fire, into that depth from which no one ever rises to the surface more. But when we reach heaven, in what state shall we be? Certainly one very important feature of it will be the absence of all bitterness and criticism, and the way in which our expanded minds will be possessed with thoughts of the most tender and overflowing kindness. Thus by cultivating kind thoughts we are in a very special way rehearsing for heaven. But more than this: we are effectually

earning heaven. For by God's grace we are imitating in our own minds that which in the Divine Mind we rest all our hopes on, merciful allowances, ingeniously favorable interpretations, thoughts of unmingled kindness, and all the inventions and tolerations of a supreme compassion.

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## □ DAY 21 – *March 9, 2010*

The practice of kind thoughts also tells most decisively on our spiritual life. It leads to great self-denial about our talents and influence. Criticism is an element in our reputation and an item in our influence. We partly attract persons to us by it. We partly push principles by means of it. The practice of kind thoughts commits us to the surrender of all this. It makes us, again and again in life, sacrifice successes at the moment they are within reach. Our conduct becomes a perpetual voluntary forfeiture of little triumphs, the necessary result of which is a very hidden life. He, who has ever struggled with a proud heart and a bitter temper, will perceive at once what innumerable and vast processes of spiritual combat all this implies. But it brings its reward also. It endows us with a marvelous facility in spiritual things. It opens and smoothes the paths of prayer. It sheds a clear still light over our self-knowledge. It adds a peculiar delight to the exercise of faith. It enables us to find God easily. It is a fountain of joy in our souls, which rarely intermits its flowing, and then only for a little while and for a greater good. Above all things, the practice of kind thoughts is our main help to that complete government of the tongue, which we all so much covet, and without which the apostle says that all our religion is vain. The interior beauty of a soul through habitual kindness of thought is greater than our words can tell. To such a man life is a perpetual bright evening, with all things calm, and fragrant, and restful. The dust of life is laid, and its fever cool. All sounds are softer, as is the way of evening, and all sights are fairer, and the golden light makes our enjoyment of earth a happily pensive preparation for heaven.

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## □ DAY 22 – *March 10, 2010*

### III. KIND WORDS

From thoughts we naturally pass to words. Kind words are the music of the world. They have a power which seems to be beyond natural causes, as if they were some angel's song, which had lost its way, and come on earth, and sang on undyingly, smiting the hearts of men with sweetest wounds, and putting for the while an angel's nature into us.

Let us then think, first of all, of the power of kind words. In truth there is hardly a power on earth equal to them. It seems as if they could almost do what in reality God alone can do, namely, soften the hard and angry hearts of men. Many a friendship, long, loyal, and self-sacrificing, rested at first on no thicker a foundation than a kind word. The two men were not likely to be friends. Perhaps each of them regarded the other's antecedents with somewhat of distrust. They had possibly been set against each other by the circulation of gossip. Or they had been looked upon as rivals, and the success of one was regarded as incompatible with the success of the other. But a kind word, perhaps a mere report of a kind word, has been enough to set all things straight, and to be the commencement of an enduring friendship. The power of kind words is shown also in the destruction of prejudices, however inveterate they may have been. Surely we must all of us have experienced this ourselves. For a long time we have had prejudices against a person. They seem to us extremely well founded. We have a complete view of the whole case in our own minds. Some particular circumstances bring us into connection with this man. We see nothing to disabuse us of our prejudices. There is not an approach to any kind of proof, however indirect, that we were either mistaken in forming such a judgment, or that we have exaggerated the matter. But kind words pass, and the prejudices thaw away. Right or wrong, there was some reason, or show of reason, for forming them, while there is neither reason, nor show of reason, for their departure. There is no logic in the matter, but a power which is above logic, the simple unassisted power of a few kind words. What has been said of prejudices applies equally to quarrels. Kind words will set right things which have got most intricately wrong. In reality an unforgiving heart is a rare monster. Most men get tired of the justest quarrels. Even those quarrels, where the quarrel has been all on one side, and which are always the hardest to set right, give way in time to kind words. At first they will be unfairly taken as admissions that we have been in the wrong; then they will be put down to deceit and flattery; then they will irritate by the discomfort of conscience which they will produce in the other; but finally they will succeed in healing the wound that has been so often and so obstinately torn open. All quarrels probably rest on misunderstanding, and only live by silence, which as it were stereotypes the misunderstanding. A misunderstanding, which is more than a month old, may generally be regarded as incapable of explanation. Renewed explanations become renewed misunderstandings. Kind words, patiently uttered for long together, and without visible fruit, are our only hope. They will succeed. They will not explain what has been misunderstood, but they will do what is much better--make explanation unnecessary, and so avoid the risk, which always accompanies explanations, of reopening old sores.

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❑ **DAY 23 – *March 11, 2010***

In all the foregoing instances the power of kind words is remedial. But it can be

productive also. Kind words produce happiness. How often have we ourselves been made happy by kind words, in a manner and to an extent, which we are quite unable to explain? No analysis enables us to detect the secret of the power of kind words. Even self-love is found inadequate as a cause. Now, as I have said before, happiness is a great power of holiness. Thus, kind words, by their power of producing happiness, have also a power of producing holiness, and so of winning men to God. I have already touched on this, when I spoke of kindness in general. But it must now be added, that words have a power of their own both for good and evil, which I believe to be more influential and energetic over our fellow men than even actions. If I may use such a word when I am speaking of religious subjects, it is by voice and words that men mesmerize each other. Hence it is that the world is converted by the foolishness of preaching. Hence it is that an angry word rankles longer in the heart than an angry gesture, nay, very often even longer than a blow. Thus all that has been said of the power of kindness in general applies with an additional and peculiar force to kind words. They prepare men for conversion. They convert them. They sanctify them. They procure entrance for wholesome counsels into their souls. They blunt temptations. They dissolve the dangerous clouds of gloom and sadness. They are beforehand with evil. They exorcise the devil. Sometimes the conversions they work are gradual and take time. But more often they are sudden, more often they are like instantaneous revelations from heaven, not only unraveling complicated misunderstandings and softening the hardened convictions of years, but giving a divine vocation to the soul. O it would be worth going through fire and water to acquire the right and to find the opportunity of saying kind words!

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## □ DAY 24 – *March 12, 2010*

Surely then it gives life quite a peculiar character that it should be gifted with a power so great, even if the exercise of it were difficult and rare. But the facility of this power is a fresh wonder about it, in addition to its greatness. It involves very little self-sacrifice, and for the most part none at all. It can be exercised generally without much effort, with no more effort than the water makes in flowing from the spring. Moreover the occasions for it do not lie scattered over life at great distances from each other. They occur continually. They come daily. They are frequent in the day. All these are commonplaces. But really it would seem as if very few of us give this power of kind words the consideration which is due to it. So great a power, such a facility in the exercise of it, such a frequency of opportunities for the application of it, and yet the world still what it is, and we still what we are! It seems incredible. I can only compare it to the innumerable sacraments which inundate our souls with grace, and the inexplicably little modicum of holiness which is the total result of them all, or, again, to the immense amount of knowledge of God which there is in the world, and yet the little worship He receives. Kind words cost us nothing, yet

how often do we grudge them! On the few occasions, when they do imply some degree of self-sacrifice, they almost instantly repay us a hundredfold. The opportunities are frequent, but we show no eagerness either in looking out for them, or in embracing them. What inference are we to draw from all this? Surely this, that it is next to impossible to be habitually kind, except by the help of divine grace and upon supernatural motives. Take life all through, its adversity as well as its prosperity, its sickness as well as its health, its loss of its rights as well as its enjoyment of them, and we shall find that no natural sweetness of temper, much less any acquired philosophical equanimity, is equal to the support of a uniform habit of kindness. Nevertheless, with the help of grace, the habit of saying kind words is very quickly formed, and when once formed, it is not speedily lost. I have often thought that unkindness is very much a mental habit, almost as much mental as moral; observation has confirmed me in this idea, because I have met so many men with unkind heads, and have been fortunate enough never to my knowledge to have come across an unkind heart. I believe cruelty to be less uncommon than real inward unkindness.

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## □ DAY 25 – *March 13, 2010*

Self-interest makes it comparatively easy for us to do that which we are well paid for doing. The great price, which everyone puts on a little kind word, makes the practice of saying them still easier. They become more easy, the more on the one hand that we know ourselves, and on the other that we are united to God. Yet what are these but the two contemporaneous operations of grace, in which the life of holiness consists? Kindness, to be perfect, to be lasting, must be a conscious imitation of God. Sharpness, bitterness, sarcasm, acute observation, divination of motives, all these things disappear when a man is earnestly conforming himself to the image of Christ Jesus. The very attempt to be like our dearest Lord is already a well-spring of sweetness within us, flowing with an easy grace over all who come within our reach. It is true that a special sort of unkindness is one of the uglinesses of pious beginnings. But this arises from an inability to manage our fresh grace properly. Our old bitterness gets the impulse meant for our new sweetness, and the machine cannot be got right in a moment. He, who is not patient with converts to God, will forfeit many of his own graces before he is aware. Not only is kindness due to everyone, but a special kindness is due to everyone. Kindness is not kindness, unless it be special. It is in its fitness, seasonableness, and individual application, that its charm consists.

It is natural to pass from the facility of kind words to their reward. I find myself always talking about happiness, while I am treating of kindness. The fact is the two things go together. The double reward of kind words is in the happiness they cause in others, and the happiness they cause in ourselves. The very process of uttering

them is a happiness in itself. Even the imagining of them fills our minds with sweetness, and makes our hearts glow pleurably. Is there any happiness in the world like the happiness of a disposition made happy by the happiness of others? There is no joy to be compared with it. The luxuries which wealth can buy, the rewards which ambition can attain, the pleasures of art and scenery, the abounding sense of health, and the exquisite enjoyment of mental creations, are nothing to this pure and heavenly happiness, where self is drowned in the blessedness of others. Yet this happiness follows close upon kind words, and is their legitimate result. But, independently of this, kind words make us happy in ourselves. They soothe our own irritation. They charm our cares away. They draw us nearer to God. They raise the temperature of our love. They produce in us a sense of quiet restfulness, like that which accompanies the consciousness of forgiven sin. They shed abroad the peace of God within our hearts. This is their second reward. Then moreover we become kinder by saying kind words, and this is in itself a third reward. They help us also to attain the grace of purity, which is another excellent reward. They win us many other graces from God; but one especially:---they appear to have a peculiar congeniality with the grace of contrition, which is soft-heartedness towards God. Everything, which makes us gentle, has at the same time a tendency to make us contrite. A natural melting of the heart has often been the beginning of an acceptable repentance. Hence it is that seasons of sorrow are apt to be seasons of grace. This too is a huge reward. Then, last of all, kind words make us truthful. O this is what we want, to be true! It is our insincerity, our manifold inseparable falseness, which is the load under which we groan. There is no slavery but untruthfulness. How have years passed in fighting, and still we are so untrue! It clings to us; for it is the proper stain of creatures. We fight on wearily. Kind words come and ally themselves to us, and we make way. They make us true, because kindness is, so far as we know, the most probable truth in the world. They make us true, because what is untruthful is not kind. They make us true, because kindness is God's view, and His view is always the true view.

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□ **DAY 26 – *March 14, 2010***

Why then are we ever anything else but kind in our words? There are some difficulties. This must be honestly admitted. In some respects a clever man is more likely to be kind than a man who is not clever, because his mind is wider, and takes in a broader range, and is more capable of looking at things from different points of view. But there are other respects in which it is harder for a clever man to be kind, especially in his words. He has a temptation, and it is one of those temptations which appear sometimes to border on the irresistible, to say clever things; and somehow clever things are hardly ever kind things. There is a drop either of acid or of bitter in them, and it seems as if that drop was exactly what genius had insinuated. I believe, if we were to make an honest resolution never to say a clever

thing, we should advance much more rapidly on the road to heaven. Our Lord's words in the Gospels should be our models. If we may reverently say it, when we consider of what a sententious and proverbial character His words were, it is remarkable how little of epigram, or sharpness, there is in them. Of course the words of the Eternal Word are all of them heavenly mysteries, each one with the light and seal of His Divinity upon it. At the same time they are also examples to us. On the whole, to say clever things of others is hardly ever without sin. There is something in genius which is analogous to a sting. Its sharpness, its speed, its delicacy, its wantonness, its pain, and its poison, genius has all these things as well as the sting. There are some men who make it a kind of social profession to be amusing talkers. One is sometimes overwhelmed with melancholy by their professional efforts to be entertaining. They are the bugbears of real conversation. But the thing to notice about them here is, that they can hardly ever be religious men. A man, who lays himself out to amuse, is never a safe man to have for a friend, or even for an acquaintance. He is not a man whom any one really loves or respects. He is never innocent. He is for ever jostling charity by the pungency of his criticisms, and wounding justice by his revelation of secrets. Il n'est pas ordinaire, says La Bruyère, que celui qui fait rire se fasse estimer.

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## ❑ DAY 27 – *March 15, 2010*

There is also a grace of kind listening, as well as a grace of kind speaking. Some men listen with an abstracted air, which shows that their thoughts are elsewhere. Or they seem to listen, but by wide answers and irrelevant questions show that they have been occupied with their own thoughts, as being more interesting, at least in their own estimation, than what you have been saying. Some listen with a kind of importunate ferocity, which makes you feel, that you are being put upon your trial, and that your auditor expects beforehand that you are going to tell him a lie, or to be inaccurate, or to say something which he will disapprove, and that you must mind your expressions. Some interrupt, and will not hear you to the end. Some hear you to the end, and then forthwith begin to talk to you about a similar experience which has befallen themselves, making your case only an illustration of their own. Some, meaning to be kind, listen with such a determined, lively, violent attention, that you are at once made uncomfortable, and the charm of conversation is at an end. Many persons, whose manners will stand the test of speaking, break down under the trial of listening. But all these things should be brought under the sweet influences of religion. Kind listening is often an act of the most delicate interior mortification, and is a great assistance towards kind speaking. Those who govern others must take care to be kind listeners, or else they will soon offend God, and fall into secret sins.

We may, then, put down clever speeches as the first and greatest difficulty in the

way of kind words. A second difficulty is that of repressing vexation at certain times and in certain places. Each man meets with peculiar characters who have a specialty, often quite inexplicable, of irritating him. They always come at the wrong time, say the most inopportune things, and make the most unfortunate choice of topics of conversation. Their presence has always something intrusive about it. You may admire, respect, even like the persons; yet you give out sparks when they touch you, and explode if they rub against you. This is only one example of many species of vexation, which it is difficult to repress in our social intercourse, and which it is the office of the spirit of kindness to allay.

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## □ DAY 28 – *March 16, 2010*

The unselfishness of speedily and gracefully distracting ourselves from self is also singularly difficult to practice. A man comes to us with an imaginary sorrow when we are bowed to the earth with a real one. Or he speaks to us with the loud voice and metallic laugh of robust health, when our nerves are all shrinking up with pain, and our whole being quivering, like a mimosa, with excruciating sensitiveness. Or he comes to pour out the exuberance of his happiness into our hearts which are full of gloom, and his brightness is a reproach, sometimes almost a menace, to our unhappiness. Or we are completely possessed with some responsibility, harassed by some pecuniary difficulty, or haunted by some tyrannical presentiment of evil, and yet we are called upon to throw ourselves into some ridiculous little embarrassment, some almost fictitious wrong, or some shadow of a suffering, for which another claims our sympathy. Here is grand material for sanctification. Nevertheless such materials are hard to work up in practice. It is weary work cleaning old bricks to build a new house with.

These are difficulties; but we have got to reach heaven, and must push on. The more humble we are, the more kindly we shall talk; the more kindly we talk, the more humble we shall grow. An air of superiority is foreign to the genius of kindness. The look of kindness is that of one receiving a favor rather than conferring it. Indeed it is the case with all the virtues, that kindness is a road to them. Kind words will help us to them. Thus out of the difficulties of kind speaking will come the grand and more than sufficient reward of kind speaking, a sanctification higher, completer, swifter, easier, than any other sanctification.

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## □ DAY 29 – *March 17, 2010*

Weak and full of wants as we are ourselves, we must make up our minds, or rather

take heart, to do some little good to this poor world while we are in it. Kind words are our chief implements for this work. A kind-worded man is a genial man; and geniality is power. Nothing sets wrong right so soon as geniality. There are a thousand things to be reformed, and no reformation succeeds unless it be genial. No one was ever corrected by a sarcasm; crushed perhaps, if the sarcasm was clever enough, but drawn nearer to God, never. Men want to advocate changes, it may be in politics, or in science, or in philosophy, or in literature, or perhaps in the working of the Church. They give lectures, they write books, they start reviews, they found schools to propagate their views, they coalesce in associations, they collect money, they move reforms in public meetings, and all to further their peculiar ideas. They are unsuccessful. From being unsuccessful themselves they become unsympathetic with others. From this comes narrowness of mind. Their very talents are deteriorated. The next step is to be snappish, then bitter, then eccentric, then rude. After that, they abuse people for not taking their advice; and, last of all, their impotence, like that of all angry prophets, ends in the shrillness of a scream. Why they scream is not so obvious. Perhaps for their own relief. It is the frenzy of the disregarded sibyl. All this comes of their not being genial. Without geniality no solid reform was ever made yet. But if there are a thousand things to reform in the world, there are tens of thousands of people to convert. Satire will not convert men. Hell threatened very kindly is more persuasive than a biting truth about a man's false position. The fact is, geniality is the best controversy. The genial man is the only successful man. Nothing can be done for God without geniality. More plans fail for the want of that than for the want of anything else. A genial man is both an apostle and an evangelist; an apostle, because he brings men to Christ; an evangelist, because he portrays Christ to men.

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❑ **DAY 30 – *March 18, 2010***

#### IV. KIND ACTIONS

There is always one bright thought in our minds, when all the rest are dark. There is one thought out of which a moderately cheerful man can always make some satisfactory sunshine, if not a sufficiency of it. It is the thought of the bright populous heaven. There is joy there at least, if there is joy nowhere else. There is true service of God there, however poor and interested the love of Him may be on earth. Multitudes are abounding in the golden light there, even if they that rejoice on earth be few. At this hour it is all going on, so near us that we cannot be hopelessly unhappy with so much happiness so near. Yet its nearness makes us wistful. Then let us think that there are multitudes in heaven today, who are there because of kind actions; many are there for doing them, many for having had them done to them.

We cannot do justice to the subject of kindness, if we conclude without saying something about kind actions and kind sufferings. So let us think, first of all, how much we ourselves in past life owe to kind actions. If we look back through the last twenty or thirty years, it is amazing to consider the number of kind actions which have been done to us. They are almost beyond our counting. Indeed we feel that those we remember are hardly so numerous as those we have forgotten; forgotten, not through ingratitude, but because of the distractions of life and the shortness of our memory. Under what various circumstances too they have been done to us! They have come to us together with blame, as well as been the accompaniments of praise. They have made our darkness light, and our light brighter. They have made us smile in the midst of our tears, and have made us shed tears of joy when we were laughing carelessly. They have come to us also from all quarters. They have reached us from persons in whom we might have expected to meet with them. They have reached us from unexpected persons, who would naturally have been indifferent to us. They have reached us from those from whom we had every reason to expect the opposite. They have come to us from such unhoped-for quarters, and under such an affecting variety of circumstances, that each one of us must seem to himself to have exhausted the possibilities of kindness. The thought of them all melts our hearts.

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## □ DAY 31 – *March 19, 2010*

Now every one of these acts of kindness has doubtless done us a certain amount of spiritual good. If they did not make us better at the time, they prepared the way for our becoming better, or they sowed a seed of future goodness, and made an impression which we never suspected, and yet which was ineffaceable. Graces from God, kindnesses from men we seem to have stood all our lives under the constant dripping of these beneficent showers. But who can say if there were two showers, and if it was not all the while but one, kindness being nothing more than a peculiar form of grace? There is no great harm in confounding the two; but, to be strict, grace is one thing, and kindness is another. Let us content ourselves then with saying, that kindness has again and again done the preliminary work for grace in our souls. Let us think also how little we have deserved all these kind actions, not only so far as God is concerned, but so far as our fellow-creatures are concerned also. There is no one who has not received tenfold more kindness himself than he has shown to others. The thought of all the kindness of so many persons to us sometimes grows to be almost intolerable, because of the sense of our own unkindness. These kind actions have been to us like importunate angels. They have surrounded us almost against our own will, and done us all manner of unasked good, of extra good, of good apparently unconnected with themselves. From how many evils have they not also rescued us? We know of many; but there are many more of which we do not know. But in this respect, as well as in others, they have done angels' work in our behalf. To how much good have they encouraged us? We know of much; but there is much

more of which we do not know. We can hardly tell what we should have been, had we been treated one whit less kindly than we have been. Have we not sometimes been on the verge of doing something which a life would have been short to repent of? Have not words been on our tongues, which, had we said them, we would willingly have lost a limb afterwards to have unsaid? Have we not vacillated in the face of decisions, which we now see concerned eternity as well as time? Can we not now see in the retrospect steep places, down which we were beginning to fall, and a kind act saved us, and, at the time, we thought we had stumbled over a stone by the way? We are indeed very far from what we ought to be now. But it is frightening to think what we should have been, had parents, friends, nurses, masters, servants, schoolfellows, enemies, been less kind than they have been. All through life kindness has been bridling the devil that was in us. The surprised and affectionate recollection of it now is one of our greatest powers for virtue, and may easily be made a fountain of interior sweetness within ourselves. Feeling that we ourselves owe all this to the kindness of others, are we not bound, as far as lies in our power, to be putting everyone else on all sides of us under similarly blessed obligations?

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## □ DAY 32 – *March 20, 2010*

It is not hard to do this. The occasions for kind actions are manifold. No one passes a day without meeting with these fortunate opportunities. They grow round us even while we lie on a bed of sickness, and the helpless are rich in a power of kindness towards the helpful. Yet, as is always the rule with kindness, the frequency of its opportunities is rivaled by the facility of its execution. Hardly out of twenty kind actions does one call for anything like an effort of self-denial on our part. Easiness is the rule, and difficulty the exception. When kindness does call for an effort, how noble and how self-rewarding is the sacrifice! We always gain more than we lose. We gain even outwardly, and often even in kind. But the inward gain is invariable. Nothing forfeits that. Moreover there is something very economical about the generosity of kindness. A little goes a long way. It seems to be an almost universal fallacy among mankind, which leads them to put a higher price on kindness than it deserves. Neither do men look generally at what we have had to give up in order to do for them what we have done. They only look to the kindness. The manner is more to them than the matter. The sacrifice adds something, but only a small proportion of the whole. The very world, unkindly as it is, looks at kindness through, a glass which multiplies as well as magnifies. I called this a fallacy. It is a sweet fallacy; and reminds us of that apparent fallacy which leads God to put such a price upon the pusillanimities of our love. This fallacy however confers upon kind actions a real power. The amount of kindness bears no proportion to the effect of kindness. The least kind action is taller than the hugest wrong. The weakest kindness can lift a heavy weight. It reaches far, and it travels swiftly. Every kind action belongs to many persons, and lays many persons under obligations. We appropriate to

ourselves kind actions done to those we love, and we forthwith proceed to love the doers of them. Nobody is kind only to one person at once, but to many persons in one. What a beautiful entanglement of charity we get ourselves into by doing kind things! What possesses us that we do not do them oftener?

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### □ DAY 33 – *March 21, 2010*

Neither is a kind action short-lived. The doing of it is only the beginning of it; it is hardly the thing itself. Years of estrangement can hardly take the odor out of a kind action. Hatred truly has chemistry of its own, by which it can turn kind actions into its choicest food. But, after all, hatred is an uncommon thing, as well as a brutal one; that is to say, comparatively uncommon. Whereas it is not an uncommon thing for a man at the end of half a century to do a kind action because one was done to him fifty years ago. There is also this peculiarity about kind actions, that the more we try to repay them the further off we seem from having repaid them. The obligation lengthens, and widens, and deepens. We hasten to fill up the chasm by our gratitude; but we only deepen it, as if we were digging a well or sinking a pit. We go faster still. The abyss grows more hungry. At last our lives become delightfully committed to be nothing but a profusion of kind actions, and we fly heavenwards on the wings of the wind. There is a pathetic sweetness about gratitude, which I suppose arises from this. It is a pathos which is very humbling, but very invigorating also. What was the feeling which was father in the poet's mind to those exquisite verses?

“I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds  
With coldness still returning;  
Alas! the gratitude of men  
Hath oftener left me mourning!”

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### □ DAY 34 – *March 22, 2010*

But by this time an objection to the whole matter will have come plainly into view. Indeed to some it has already presented itself before now. I have been aware of it throughout, but have chosen to defer noticing it till now. It may be said that all this implies a very unsupernatural view of the spiritual life, and lays undue stress on what are almost natural virtues, that it refers more to outward conduct than to inward experiences, that there is too much of common sense in it and too little of mystical theology. I might content myself with replying that a man cannot write on more than one subject at once, neither can he bring in the whole of ascetical

doctrine, when he is illustrating but one portion of it. But there is something more in the objection, which I can only answer by pleading guilty to the charge, and refusing to be ashamed of my guilt. When we read the lives of the saints, or ponder on the teaching of mystical books, we shall surely have no difficulty in admitting that we ourselves are but beginners, or at least men of very low attainments in the matter of perfection. As such we are liable to two mistakes; I hardly know whether to call them temptations or delusions. The first is to think too little of external things. Do not misunderstand me. I am not accusing you of paying too much attention to the cultivation of an interior spirit. It is not easy to do this. In our state perhaps it is impossible. But what I mean is, that beginners like to turn their eye away from outward conduct to the more hidden processes of their own spiritual experiences. If we allow a beginner to choose his own subject for particular examen of conscience, he will almost always choose some very delicate and imperceptible fault, the theatre of which is almost wholly within, or some refined form of self-love whose metamorphoses are exceedingly difficult either to detect or to control. He will not choose his temper, or his tongue, or his love of nice dishes, or some unworthy habit which is disagreeable to those around him. Yet this is the rule of St. Ignatius; and surely no one will accuse him of not cultivating an interior spirit. This then is the first of the two mistakes which I attributed to men of low attainments. They affect those parts of the spiritual life, which lie on the borders of mystical theology, and do justice neither to the common things of the faith, nor to the regulation of outward conduct. This leads to hardness of heart, to spiritual pride, and to self-righteousness. It has a peculiar power to neutralize the operations of grace, and to reduce our spirituality to a matter of words and feelings. A man will remain unimproved for years who travels upon this path.

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## ❑ DAY 35 – *March 23, 2010*

The second mistake is very like the first, though there is a difference in it. It consists in giving way to an attraction towards what is too high for us. It is not that we divide things into outward and inward, and exaggerate the latter. But we divide them into high and commonplace, and are inclined almost to despise the latter. We fasten with a sort of diseased eagerness upon the exceptional practices of the saints. Peculiarities have a kind of charm for us. We try to force ourselves to thirst for suffering, when we have hardly grace enough for the quiet endurance of a headache. We ask leave to pray for calumny, when a jocose retort puts us into a passion. We turn from the Four Last Things as subjects of prayer hardly suited to our state of disinterested love. We skip like antelopes over the purgative way, as if none but the herbage of the illuminative, or the desert flowers of the unitive way, were food delicate enough for us. We enjoy Father Baker while we think Rodriguez dry. In a word, we traffic with exceptions rather than with rules. Hence the common moral virtues, the ordinary motives of religion, the duties of our state of life, our

responsibilities towards others, the usual teaching of sermons and spiritual books, are all kept in the background. We are too well instructed to speak evil of them, or to show them contempt; but we treat them with a respectful neglect. Thus our spiritual life becomes a sort of elegant selfish solitude, a temple reared to dainty delusions, a mere fastidious and exclusive worship of self whose refinement is only an aggravation of its dishonesty. No saint ever went along this road. We can only reach the delicate truths of mysticism through the commonplace sincerities of asceticism. We are never so likely to be high in the spiritual life, as when we seem just like anybody else. The grace to be indistinguishable from the good people round us, is a greater grace than that which visibly marks us off from their practices or their attainments.

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### □ DAY 36 – *March 24, 2010*

I believe that both these mistakes find an utterance in the objection which I have noticed, and therefore, as being peculiarly out of sympathy with both these errors, I willingly plead guilty to the objection. I do think we are all in danger of making away with the supernatural by having first used it to destroy the natural. I could go on for hours, illustrating this mischievous tendency; but I must keep to my subject, and endeavor to show those, who feel they cannot throw off the objection so lightly as I do, what a very real connection there is between this practice of kindness on supernatural motives, and the highest departments of the spiritual life. Indeed it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of kindness as an ally in our invisible warfare. Naturalists say of the ant, that the most surprising part of its instinct is its genius for extemporaneousness. In other words it almost puts reason to shame, by the promptitude with which it acts under totally new circumstances, its inventiveness in meeting with difficulties of which it can have had no previous experience, its ingenuity in changing the use of its tools, its power of instantaneous divination as to how it shall act in unexpected conjunctures, and its foreseeing judgment in hardly ever having to make an experiment, or to try two ways of doing a thing. Now there is something very like this in kindness. Spiritual persons, who specially cultivate kindness, are singularly exempt from delusions. Yet delusions form the most intricate and baffling part of our spiritual warfare. But the instinct of kindness is never baffled. No position ever seems new to it, no difficulty unforeseen. It appears to be dispensed from the necessity of deliberating. It follows the lightning-like changes of self-love, or of the tempter, with a speed as lightning-like as their own. It sees through all stratagems. It is for ever extemporizing new methods of defense, and new varieties of attack. It always has light enough to work by, because it is luminous itself.

## □ DAY 37 – *March 25, 2010*

Besides this, kindness has an intrinsic congeniality with all the characteristics of the higher spiritual states. Kind actions go upon unselfish motives, and therefore tend to form a habit of disinterestedness in us, which prepares us for the highest motives of divine love. They also catch us up, like strong angels, into the regions of sacrifice. Like God's goodness, they are constantly occupied where there is no hope of repayment and return. Like the shedding of the Precious Blood, they have an actual preference for multiplying themselves upon their enemies. In like manner as God acts ever more for His own glory, so kind actions, when they are habitual, must very frequently be done for Him alone. It is their instinct to be hidden, like the instinct of His Providence. Nay, God often rewards them by arranging that they shall be unrequited, and so look only to Him as Himself their recompense; and He shows frequently a most tender wisdom in arranging that all this shall be without the sin or ingratitude of others. He even shrouds our kind actions for us by letting us look stern, or speak sharply, or be quick-tempered, in the doing of them. I need not stop to develop all this, Who does not see that we are here right in the midst of the motive-machinery of the very highest spiritual condition of the soul?

It may not be out of place, however, to lay down a few plain rules for the doing of kind actions. I have said that the majority of them require no effort; but when they have to be done with effort, it is unkind not to keep the effort out of view. At the same time, so that our humility may not be disquieted, we must bear in mind that the being done with effort is no just cause of disheartenment. We should never repeat to others our kind actions. If we do, their heavenly influence over ourselves goes at once. Neither does it simply evaporate; it remains as a dead weight. The soul has many heaps of rubbish in it, but none more deleterious than this. When persons begin to thank us, we should playfully stop their thanks, but not stiffly or unreally. There are some men, who would feel awkward and uncomfortable if they were not allowed to pour out their feelings. Such men we must not check. It is part of the discernment of good manners to find out who they are, and the perfection of good manners to be natural and simple under the operation of being praised. Being praised puts us for the most part in a ludicrous position. Either it mortifies us by a sense of inferiority, or it makes us suspicious by a feeling of disproportion, or it unseasonably awakes our sense of humor, which is always in proportion to the honest seriousness of those who are praising us. The fact is, very few people know how to praise, and fewer still know how to take it. We should never dwell upon our kind actions in our own minds. God is in them. They have been operations of grace. He is shy of being looked at, and withdraws. When we are tempted to be complacent about them, let us think of the sanctity of God, and be ashamed. Let us dwell on His attribute of magnificence, and be especially devout to it. We shall thus keep ourselves within the limits of our own littleness, and even feel comfortable in them.

## □ DAY 38 – *March 26, 2010*

Before we conclude our task, we must say something about kind suffering. Kind suffering is in fact a form of kind action, with peculiar rubrics of its own. But if all kindness needs grace, kind suffering needs it a hundred fold. Of a truth those are rare natures, which know how to suffer gracefully, and in whose endurance there is a natural beauty which simulates, and sometimes even seems to surpass, what is supernatural. To the Christian no sight is more melancholy, than this simulating of grace by nature. It is a problem which makes him thoughtful, but to which no thinking brings a satisfactory solution. With the Christian, kind suffering must be almost wholly supernatural. It is a region in which grace must be despotic, so despotic as hardly to allow nature to dwell in the land. There is a harmonious fusion of suffering and gentleness effected by grace, which is one of the most attractive features of holiness. With quiet and unobtrusive sweetness the sufferer makes us feel as if he were ministering to us, rather than we to him. It is we who are under the obligation. To wait on him is a privilege rather than a task. Even the softening, sanctifying influences of suffering seem to be exercising themselves on us rather than on him. His gentleness is making us gentle. He casts a spell over us. We have all the advantages of being his inferiors, without being vexed with a sense of our inferiority. What is more beautiful than considerateness for others, when we ourselves are unhappy? It is a grace made out of a variety of graces, and yet, while it makes a deep impression on all who come within the sphere of its influence, it is a very hidden grace. It is part of those deep treasures of the heart, which the world can seldom rifle.

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## □ DAY 39 – *March 27, 2010*

To be subject to low spirits is a sad liability. Yet, to a vigorous manly heart, it may be a very complete sanctification. What can be more unkind than to communicate our low spirits to others, to go about the world like demons, poisoning the fountains of joy? Have I more light because I have managed to involve those I love in the same gloom as myself? Is it not pleasant to see the sun shining on the mountains, even though we have none of it down in our valley? O the littleness and the meanness of that sickly appetite for sympathy, which will not let us keep our tiny, Lilliputian sorrows to ourselves! Why must we go sneaking about, like some dishonorable insect, and feed our darkness on other people's light? We hardly know in all this whether to be more disgusted with the meanness, or more indignant at the selfishness, or more sorrowful at the sin. The thoughts of the dying mother are all centered on her newborn child. It is a beautiful emblem of unselfish holiness. So let us also hide our pains and sorrows. But, while we hide them, let them also be spurs within us to urge us on to all manner of overflowing kindness and sunny

humor to those around us. When the very darkness within us creates a sunshine around us, then has the spirit of Jesus taken possession of our souls.

Social contact has something irritating in it, even when it is kindest. Those who love us are continually aggravating us, not only unintentionally, but even in the display of their love. Unkindness also abounds, and is of itself vexatious. Something goes wrong daily. It is difficult even for sympathy not to exasperate. Consolation is almost always chafing. We often seem to have come into the world without our skins, so that all intercourse is agony to our sensitiveness. What a field for sanctification all this opens out to us! Then there is another sort of sweetness under God's visitations; and this shows itself especially in taking all the burden we can off others. For the fact is, that everybody's cross is shared by many. No one carries his own cross wholly. At least such crosses are very rare. I am not quite sure that they exist. Now kind suffering makes us habitually look rather at what others feel of our crosses, than at what we feel of them ourselves. We see our own crosses on other people's shoulders, and overwhelm them with kindness accordingly. It is not we who have been tossing wakeful all night that are the sufferers, but the poor nurse who has been fighting all night against the sleep of health by our bedside, and only with partial success. It is not we, who cannot bear the least noise in the house, that deserve sympathy, but the poor little constrained children who have not been allowed to make the noise. For to children is there any happiness, which is not also noise? This is the turn of mind, which kindness in suffering gives us. Who will say it is not a most converting thing? But then it must develop itself gracefully. We must do all this unobtrusively, so as not to let others see it is done on purpose. Hence it is that the saints keep silence in suffering. For the mere knowledge of what they suffer is itself a suffering to those who love them. But suffering is a world of miracles. It would fill a book to say all that might be said about kindness under suffering.

Let us conclude. We have been speaking of kindness. Perhaps we might better have called it the spirit of Jesus. What an amulet we should find it in our passage through life, if we would say to ourselves two or three times a day these soft words of Scripture, "My spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb" (Ecclus. xxiv. 27.). But, you will say perhaps, "After all it is a very little virtue, very much a matter of natural temperament, and rather an affair of good manners than of holy living." Well! I will not argue with you. The grass of the fields is better than the cedars of Lebanon. It feeds more, and it rests the eye better, that thymy, daisy-eyed carpet, making earth sweet, and fair, and homelike. Kindness is the turf of the spiritual world, whereon the sheep of Christ feed quietly beneath the Shepherd's eye.

□ DAY 40 – March 28, 2010 – Palm Sunday

# HOPE IN GOD – REDEEMER

*Excerpted from Meditations on Christian Doctrine, by John Henry Cardinal Newman*

Spelling Americanized and text proofread by Fr. Bryan Jerabek

## I. THE MENTAL SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD

After all His discourses were consummated (Matt. xxvi. 1), fully finished and brought to an end, then He said, The Son of man will be betrayed to crucifixion. As an army puts itself in battle array, as sailors, before an action, clear the decks, as dying men make their will and then turn to God, so though our Lord could never cease to speak good words, did He sum up and complete His teaching, and then commence His passion. Then He removed by His own act the prohibition which kept Satan from Him, and opened the door to the agitations of His human heart, as a soldier, who is to suffer death, may drop his handkerchief himself. At once Satan came on and seized upon his brief hour.

An evil temper of murmuring and criticism is spread among the disciples. One was the source of it, but it seems to have been spread. The thought of His death was before Him, and He was thinking of it and His burial after it. A woman came and anointed His sacred head. The action spread a soothing tender feeling over His pure soul. It was a mute token of sympathy, and the whole house was filled with it. It was rudely broken by the harsh voice of the traitor now for the first time giving utterance to his secret heartlessness and malice. *Ut quid perditio hæc?* "To what purpose is this waste?"—the unjust steward with his impious economy making up for his own private thefts by grudging honour to his Master. Thus in the midst of the sweet calm harmony of that feast at Bethany, there comes a jar and discord; all is wrong: sour discontent and distrust are spreading, for the devil is abroad.

Judas, having once shown what he was, lost no time in carrying out his malice. He went to the Chief Priests, and bargained with them to betray his Lord for a price. Our Lord saw all that took place within him; He saw Satan knocking at his heart, and admitted there and made an honoured and beloved guest and an intimate. He saw him go to the Priests and heard the conversation between them. He had seen it by His foreknowledge all the time he had been about Him, and when He chose him. What we know feebly as to be, affects us far more vividly and very differently when it actually takes place. Our Lord had at length felt, and suffered Himself to feel, the cruelty of the ingratitude of which He was the sport and victim. He had treated Judas as one of His most familiar friends. He had shown marks of the closest intimacy; He had made him the purse-keeper of Himself and His followers. He had

given him the power of working miracles. He had admitted him to a knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. He had sent him out to preach and made him one of His own special representatives, so that the Master was judged of by the conduct of His servant. A heathen, when smitten by a friend, said, "Et tu Brute!" What desolation is in the sense of ingratitude! God who is met with ingratitude daily cannot from His Nature feel it. He took a human heart, that He might feel it in its fullness. And now, O my God, though in heaven, dost Thou not feel my ingratitude towards Thee?

I see the figure of a man, whether young or old I cannot tell. He may be fifty or he may be thirty. Sometimes He looks one, sometimes the other. There is something inexpressible about His face which I cannot solve. Perhaps, as He bears *all* burdens, He bears that of old age too. But so it is; His face is at once most venerable, yet most childlike, most calm, most sweet, most modest, beaming with sanctity and with loving kindness. His eyes rivet me and move my heart. His breath is all fragrant, and transports me out of myself. Oh, I will look upon that face forever, and will not cease.

And I see suddenly someone come to Him, and raise his hand and sharply strike Him on that heavenly face. It is a hard hand, the hand of a rude man, and perhaps has iron upon it. It could not be so sudden as to take Him by surprise who knows all things past and future, and He shows no sign of resentment, remaining calm and grave as before; but the expression of His face is marred; a great wheal arises, and in a little time that all-gracious Face is hid from me by the effects of this indignity, as if a cloud came over It.

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## ❑ DAY 41 – *March 29, 2010*

A hand was lifted up against the Face of Christ. Whose hand was that? My conscience tells me: "thou art the man." I trust it is not so with me now. But, O my soul, contemplate the awful fact. *Fancy* Christ before thee, and *fancy* thyself lifting up thy hand and striking Him! Thou wilt say, "It is impossible: I could not do so." Yes, thou hast done so. When thou didst sin wilfully, then thou hast done so. He is beyond pain now: still thou hast struck Him, and had it been in the days of His flesh, He would have felt pain. Turn back in memory, and recollect the time, the day, the hour, when by wilful mortal sin, by scoffing at sacred things, or by profaneness, or by dark hatred of this thy Brother, or by acts of impurity, or by deliberate rejection of God's voice, or in any other devilish way known to thee, thou hast struck The All-holy One.

O injured Lord, what can I say? I am very guilty concerning Thee, my Brother; and I shall sink in sullen despair if Thou dost not raise me. I cannot look on Thee; I

shrink from Thee; I throw my arms round my face; I crouch to the earth. Satan will pull me down if Thou take not pity. It is terrible to turn to Thee; but oh turn Thou me, and so shall I be turned. It is a purgatory to endure the sight of Thee, the sight of myself—I most vile, Thou most holy. Yet make me look once more on Thee whom I have so incomprehensibly affronted, for Thy countenance is my only life, my only hope and health lies in looking on Thee whom I have pierced. So I put myself before Thee; I look on Thee again; I endure the pain in order to the purification.

O my God, how can I look Thee in the face when I think of my ingratitude, so deeply seated, so habitual, so immovable—or rather so awfully increasing! Thou loadest me day by day with Thy favours, and feedest me with Thyself, as Thou didst Judas, yet I not only do not profit thereby, but I do not even make any acknowledgment at the time. Lord, how long? when shall I be free from this real, this fatal captivity? He who made Judas his prey, has got foothold of me in my old age, and I cannot get loose. It is the same day after day. When wilt Thou give me a still greater grace than Thou hast given, the grace to profit by the graces which Thou givest? When wilt Thou give me Thy effectual grace which alone can give life and vigour to this effete, miserable, dying soul of mine? My God, I know not in what sense I can pain Thee in Thy glorified state; but I know that every fresh sin, every fresh ingratitude I now commit, was among the blows and stripes which once fell on Thee in Thy passion. O let me have as little share in those Thy past sufferings as possible. Day by day goes, and I find I have been more and more, by the new sins of each day, the cause of them. I know that at best I have a real share *in solido* of them all, but still it is shocking to find myself having a greater and greater share. Let others wound Thee—let not me. Let not me have to think that Thou wouldest have had this or that pang of soul or body the less, except for me. O my God, I am so fast in prison that I cannot get out. O Mary, pray for me. O Philip, pray for me, though I do not deserve Thy pity.

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□ **DAY 42 – *March 30, 2010***

**II. OUR LORD REFUSES SYMPATHY**

Sympathy may be called an eternal law, for it is signified or rather transcendently and archetypically fulfilled in the ineffable mutual love of the Divine Trinity. God, though infinitely One, has ever been Three. He ever has rejoiced in His Son and His Spirit, and they in Him—and thus through all eternity He has existed, not solitary, though alone, having in this incomprehensible multiplication of Himself and reiteration of His Person, such infinitely perfect bliss, that nothing He has created can add aught to it. The devil only is barren and lonely, shut up in himself—and his servants also.

When, for our sakes, the Son came on earth and took our flesh, yet He would not live without the sympathy of others. For thirty years He lived with Mary and Joseph and thus formed a shadow of the Heavenly Trinity on earth. O the perfection of that sympathy which existed between the three! Not a look of one, but the other two understood, as expressed, better than if expressed in a thousand words—nay more than understood, accepted, echoed, corroborated. It was like three instruments absolutely in tune which all vibrate when one vibrates, and vibrate either one and the same note, or in perfect harmony.

The first weakening of that unison was when Joseph died. It was no jar in the sound, for to the last moment of his life, he was one with them, and the sympathy between the three only became more intense, and more sweet, while it was brought into new circumstances and had a wider range in the months of his declining, his sickness, and death. Then it was like an air ranging through a number of notes performed perfectly and exactly in time and tune by all three. But it ended in a lower note than before, and when Joseph went, a weaker one. Not that Joseph, though so saintly, added much in volume of sound to the other two, but sympathy, by its very meaning, implies number, and, on his death, one, out of three harps, was unstrung and silent.

O what a moment of sympathy between the three, the moment before Joseph died—they supporting and hanging over him, he looking at them and reposing in them with undivided, unreserved, supreme, devotion, for he was in the arms of God and the Mother of God. As a flame shoots up and expires, so was the ecstasy of that last moment ineffable, for each knew and thought of the reverse which was to follow on the snapping of that bond. One moment, very different, of joy, not of sorrow, was equal to it in intensity of feeling, that of the birth of Jesus. The birth of Jesus, the death of Joseph, moments of unutterable sweetness, unparalleled in the history of mankind. St. Joseph went to limbo, to wait his time, out of God's Presence. Jesus had to preach, suffer, and die; Mary to witness His sufferings, and, even after He had risen again, to go on living without Him amid the changes of life and the heartlessness of the heathen.

The birth of Jesus, the death of Joseph, those moments of transcendently pure, and perfect and living sympathy, between the three members of this earthly Trinity, were its beginning and its end. The death of Joseph, which broke it up, was the breaking up of more than itself. It was but the beginning of that change which was coming over Son and Mother. Going on now for thirty years, each of them had been preserved from the world, and had lived for each other. Now He had to go out to preach and suffer, and, as the foremost and most inevitable of His trials, and one which from first to last He voluntarily undertook, even when not imperative, He deprived Himself of the enjoyment of that intercommunion of hearts—of His heart with the heart of Mary—which had been His from the time He took man's nature, and which He had possessed in an archetypal and transcendent manner with His Father and His Spirit from all eternity.

O my soul, thou art allowed to contemplate this union of the three, and to share thyself its sympathy, by faith though not by sight. My God, I believe and know that then a communion of heavenly things was opened on earth which has never been suspended. It is my duty and my bliss to enter into it myself. It is my duty and my bliss to be in tune with that most touching music which then began to sound. Give me that grace which alone can make me hear and understand it, that it may thrill through me. Let the breathings of my soul be with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Let me live in obscurity, out of the world and the world's thought, with them. Let me look to them in sorrow and in joy, and live and die in their sweet sympathy.

The *last* day of the earthly intercourse between Jesus and Mary was at the marriage feast at Cana. Yet even then there was something taken from that blissful intimacy, for they no longer lived simply for each other, but showed themselves in public, and began to take their place in the dispensation which was opening. He manifested forth His glory by His first miracle; and hers also, by making her intercession the medium of it. He honoured her still more, by breaking through the appointed order of things for her sake, and though His time of miracles was not come, anticipating it at her instance. While He wrought His miracle, however, He took leave of her in the words "Woman, what is between thee and Me?" Thus He parted with her absolutely, though He parted with a blessing. It was leaving Paradise feeble and alone.

For in truth it was fitting that He who was to be the true High Priest, should thus, while He exercised His office for the whole race of man, be free from all human ties, and sympathies of the flesh. And one reason for His long abode at Nazareth with His Mother may have been to show, that, as He gave up His Father's and His own glory on high, to become man, so He gave up the innocent and pure joys of His earthly home, in order that He might be a Priest. So, in the old time, Melchisedech is described as without father or mother. So the Levites showed themselves truly worthy of the sacerdotal office and were made the sacerdotal tribe, because they steeled themselves against natural affection, said to father or mother, "I know you not," and raised the sword against their own kindred, when the honour of the Lord of armies demanded the sacrifice. In like manner our Lord said to Mary, "What is between Me and thee?" It was the setting-apart of the sacrifice, the first ritual step of the Great Act which was to be solemnly performed for the salvation of the world. "What is between Me and thee, O woman?" is the offertory before the oblation of the Host. O my dear Lord, Thou who hast given up Thy mother for me, give me grace cheerfully to give up all my earthly friends and relations for Thee.

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□ **DAY 43 – *March 31, 2010***

The Great High Priest said to His kindred, "I know you not." Then, as He did so, we may believe that the most tender heart of Jesus looked back upon His whole time

since His birth, and called before Him those former days of His infancy and childhood, when He had been with others from whom He had long been parted. Time was when St. Elizabeth and the Holy Baptist had formed part of the Holy Family. St. Elizabeth, like St. Joseph, had been removed by death, and was waiting His coming to break that bond which detained both her and St. Joseph from heaven. St. John had been cut off from his home and mankind, and the sympathies of earth, long since—and had now begun to preach the coming Saviour, and was waiting and expecting His manifestation.

Give me grace, O Jesus, to live in sight of that blessed company. Let my life be spent in the presence of Thee and Thy dearest friends. Though I see them not, let not what I do see seduce me to give my heart elsewhere. Because Thou hast blessed me so much and given to me friends, let me not depend or rely or throw myself in any way upon them, but in Thee be my life, and my conversation and daily walk among those with whom Thou didst surround Thyself on earth, and dost now delight Thyself in heaven. Be my soul with Thee, and, because with Thee, with Mary and Joseph and Elizabeth and John.

Nor did He, as time went on, give up Mary and Joseph only. There still remained to Him invisible attendants and friends, and He had their sympathy, but them He at length gave up also. From the time of His birth we may suppose He held communion with the spirits of the Old Fathers, who had prepared His coming and prophesied of it. On one occasion He was seen all through the night, conversing with Moses and Elias, and that conversation was about His Passion. What a field of thought is thus opened to us, of which we know how little. When He passed whole nights in prayer, it was greater refreshment to soul and body than sleep. Who could support and (so to say) re-invigorate the Divine Lord better than that "*laudabilis numerus*" of Prophets of which He was the fulfilment and antitype? Then He might talk with Abraham who saw His day, or Moses who spoke to Him; or with His especial types, David and Jeremias; or with those who spoke most of Him, as Isaias and Daniel. And here was a fund of great sympathy. When He came up to Jerusalem to suffer, He might be met in spirit by all the holy priests, who had offered sacrifices in shadow of Him; just as now the priest recalls in Mass the sacrifices of Abel, Abraham, and Melchisedech, and the fiery gift which purged the lips of Isaias, as well as holding communion with the Apostles and Martyrs.

Let us linger for a while with Mary—before we follow the steps of her Son, our Lord. There was an occasion when He refused leave to one who would bid his own home farewell, before he followed Him; and such was, as it seems, almost His own way with His Mother; but will He be displeased, if we one instant stop with her, though our meditation lies with Him? O Mary, we are devout to thy seven woes—but was not this, though not one of those seven, one of the greatest, and included those that followed, from thy knowledge of them beforehand? How didst thou bear that first separation from Him? How did the first days pass when thou wast desolate? where didst thou hide thyself? where didst thou pass the long three years and more, while

He was on His ministry? Once—at the beginning of it—thou didst attempt to get near Him, and then we hear nothing of thee, till we find thee standing at His cross. And then, after that great joy of seeing Him again, and the permanent consolation, never to be lost, that with Him all suffering and humiliation was over, and that never had she to weep for Him again, still she was separated from him for many years, while she lived in the flesh, surrounded by the wicked world, and in the misery of His absence.

The blessed Mary, among her other sorrows, suffered the loss of her Son, after He had lived under the same roof with her for thirty years. When He was no more than twelve, He gave her a token of what was to be, and said, "I must be about my Father's business;" and when the time came, and He began His miracles, He said to her, "What is to Me and to thee?"—What is common to us two?—and soon He left her. Once she tried to see Him, but in vain, and could not reach Him for the crowd, and He made no effort to receive her, nor said a kind word; and then at the last, once more she tried, and she reached him in time, to see Him hanging on the cross and dying. He was only forty days on earth after His resurrection, and then He left her in old age to finish her life without Him. Compare her thirty happy years, and her time of desolation.

I see her in her forlorn home, while her Son and Lord was going up and down the land without a place to lay His head, suffering both because she was so desolate and He was so exposed. How dreary passed the day; and then came reports that He was in some peril or distress. She heard, perhaps, He had been led into the wilderness to be tempted. She would have shared all His sufferings, but was not permitted. Once there was a profane report which was believed by many, that He was beside Himself, and His friends and kindred went out to get possession of Him. She went out too to see Him, and tried to reach Him. She could not for the crowd. A message came to Him to that effect, but He made no effort to receive her, nor said a kind word. She went back to her home disappointed, without the sight of Him. And so she remained, perhaps in company with those who did not believe in Him.

I see her too after His ascension. This, too, is a time of bereavement, but still of consolation. It was still a twilight time, but not a time of grief. The Lord was absent, but He was not on earth, He was not in suffering. Death had no power over Him. And He came to her day by day in the Blessed Sacrifice. I see the Blessed Mary at Mass, and St. John celebrating. She is waiting for the moment of her Son's Presence: now she converses with Him in the sacred rite; and what shall I say now? She receives Him, to whom once she gave birth.

O Holy Mother, stand by me now at Mass time, when Christ comes to me, as thou didst minister to Thy infant Lord—as Thou didst hang upon His words when He grew up, as Thou wast found under His cross. Stand by me, Holy Mother, that I may gain somewhat of thy purity, thy innocence, thy faith, and He may be the one object of my love and my adoration, as He was of thine.

## □ DAY 44 – *April 1, 2010*

There were others who more directly ministered to Him, and of whom we are told more—the Holy Angels. It was the voice of the Archangel that announced to the prophet His coming which consigned the Eternal to the womb of Mary. Angels hymned His nativity and all the Angels of God worshipped at his crib. An Angel sent Him into Egypt and brought Him back. Angels ministered to Him after His temptation. Angels wrought His miracles, when He did not will to exert His Almighty fiat. But He bade them go at length, as He had bidden His Mother go. One remained at His agony. Afterwards He said, "Think ye not I could pray to My Father, and He would send me myriads of Angels?"—implying that in fact His guards had been withdrawn. The Church prays Him, on His ascension, "King of Glory, Lord of Angels, leave us not orphans." He, the Lord of Angels, was at this time despoiled of them.

He took other human friends, when He had given up His Mother—the twelve Apostles—as if He desired that in which He might sympathise. He chose them, as He says, to be, "not servants but friends." He made them His confidants. He told them things which He did not tell others. It was His will to favour, nay, to indulge them, as a father behaves towards a favourite child. He made them more blessed than kings and prophets and wise men, from the things He told them. He called them "His little ones," and preferred them for His gifts to the wise and prudent. He exulted, while He praised them, that they had continued with Him in His temptations, and as if in gratitude He announced that they should sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. He rejoiced in their sympathy when His solemn trial was approaching. He assembled them about Him at the last supper, as if they were to support Him in it. "With desire," He says, "have I desired to eat this Pasch with you, before I suffer." Thus there was an interchange of good offices, and an intimate sympathy between them. But it was His adorable will that they too should leave Him, that He should be left to Himself. One betrayed, another denied Him, the rest ran away from Him, and left Him in the hands of His enemies. Even after He had risen, none would believe in it. Thus he trod the winepress alone.

He who was Almighty, and All-blessed, and who flooded His own soul with the full glory of the vision of His Divine Nature, would still subject that soul to all the infirmities which naturally belonged to it; and, as He suffered it to rejoice in the sympathy, and to be desolate under the absence, of human friends, so, when it pleased Him, He could, and did, deprive it of the light of the presence of God. This was the last and crowning misery that He put upon it. He had in the course of His ministry fled from man to God; he had appealed to Him; He had taken refuge from the rude ingratitude of the race whom He was saving in divine communion. He retired of nights to pray. He said, "the Father loveth the Son, and shews to Him all things that He doth Himself." He returned thanks to Him for hiding His mysteries from the wise to reveal them to the little ones. But now He deprived Himself of this

elementary consolation, by which He lived, and that, not in part only, but in its fullness. He said, when His passion began, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death;" and at the last, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Thus He was stripped of all things.

My God and Saviour, who wast thus deprived of the light of consolation, whose soul was dark, whose affections were left to thirst without the true object of them, and all this for man, take not from *me* the light of Thy countenance, lest I shrivel from the loss of it and perish in my infirmity. Who can sustain the loss of the Sun of the soul but Thou? Who can walk without light, or labour without the pure air, but Thy great Saints? As for me, alas, I shall turn to the creature for my comfort, if Thou wilt not give me Thyself. I shall not mourn, I shall not hunger or thirst after justice, but I shall look about for whatever is at hand, and feed on offal, or stay my appetite with husks, ashes, or chaff, which if they poison me not, at least nourish not. O my God, leave me not in that dry state in which I am; give me the comfort of Thy grace. How can I have any tenderness or sweetness, unless I have Thee to look upon? how can I continue in prayer, as is my duty doubly, since I belong to the Oratory, unless Thou encourage me and make it pleasant to me? It is hardly that an old man keeps any warmth in him; it is slowly that he recovers what is lost. Yet, O my God, St. Philip is my father—and he seems never in his life to have been desolate. Thou didst give him trials, but didst thou ever take from him the light of Thy countenance! O Philip, wilt thou not gain for me some tithe of thy own peace and joy, thy cheerfulness, thy gentleness, and thy self-denying charity? I am in all things the most opposite to thee, yet I represent thee.

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❑ **DAY 45 – April 1, 2010 – Holy Thursday**

### III. THE BODILY SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD

His bodily pains were greater than those of any martyr, because He willed them to be greater. All pain of body depends, as to be felt at all, so to be felt in this or that degree, on the nature of the living mind which dwells in that body. Vegetables have no feeling because they have no living mind or spirit within them. Brute animals feel more or less according to the intelligence within them. Man feels more than any brute, because he has a soul; Christ's soul felt more than that of any other man, because His soul was exalted by personal union with the Word of God. Christ felt bodily pain more keenly than any other man, as much as man feels pain more keenly than any other animal.

It is a relief to pain to have the thoughts drawn another way. Thus, soldiers in battle often do not know when they are wounded. Again, persons in raging fevers seem to suffer a great deal; then afterwards they can but recollect general

discomfort and restlessness. And so excitement and enthusiasm are great alleviations of bodily pain; thus savages die at the stake amid torments singing songs; it is a sort of mental drunkenness. And so again, an instantaneous pain is comparatively bearable; it is the continuance of pain which is so heavy, and if we had no memory of the pain we suffered last minute, and also suffer in the present, we should find pain easy to bear; but what makes the second pang grievous is because there has been a first pang; and what makes the third more grievous is that there has been a first and second; the pain seems to grow because it is prolonged. Now Christ suffered, not as in a delirium or in excitement, or in inadvertency, but He looked pain in the face! He offered His whole mind to it, and received it, as it were, directly into His bosom, and suffered all He suffered with a full consciousness of suffering.

Christ would not drink the drugged cup which was offered to Him to cloud His mind. He willed to have the full sense of pain. His soul was so intently fixed on His suffering as not to be distracted from it; and it was so active, and recollected the past and anticipated the future, and the whole passion was, as it were, concentrated on each moment of it, and all that He had suffered and all that He was to suffer lent its aid to increase what He was suffering. Yet withal His soul was so calm and sober and unexcited as to be passive, and thus to receive the full burden of the pain on it, without the power of throwing it off Him. Moreover, the sense of conscious innocence, and the knowledge that His sufferings would come to an end, might have supported Him; but He repressed the comfort and turned away His thoughts from these alleviations that He might suffer absolutely and perfectly.

O my God and Saviour, who went through such sufferings for me with such lively consciousness, such precision, such recollection, and such fortitude, enable me, by Thy help, if I am brought into the power of this terrible trial, bodily pain, enable me to bear it with some portion of Thy calmness. Obtain for me this grace, O Virgin Mother, who didst see thy Son suffer and didst suffer with Him; that I, when I suffer, may associate my sufferings with His and with thine, and that through His passion, and thy merits and those of all Saints, they may be a satisfaction for my sins and procure for me eternal life.

Our Lord's sufferings were so great, because His soul was in suffering. What shows this is that His soul began to suffer before His bodily passion, as we see in the agony in the garden. The first anguish which came upon His body was not from without—it was not from the scourges, the thorns, or the nails, but from His soul. His soul was in such agony that He called it death: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." The anguish was such that it, as it were, burst open His whole body. It was a pang affecting His heart; as in the deluge the floods of the great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven were open. The blood, rushing from his tormented heart, forced its way on every side, formed for itself a thousand new channels, filled all the pores, and at length stood forth upon His skin in thick drops, which fell heavily on the ground.

He remained in this living death from the time of His agony in the garden; and as His first agony was from His soul, so was His last. As the scourge and the cross did not begin His sufferings, so they did not close them. It was the agony of His soul, not of His body, which caused His death. His persecutors were surprised to hear that He was dead. How, then, did He die? That agonised, tormented heart, which at the beginning so awfully relieved itself in the rush of blood and the bursting of His pores, at length broke. It broke and He died. It would have broken *at once*, had He not kept it from breaking. At length the moment came. He gave the word and His heart broke.

O tormented heart, it was love, and sorrow, and fear, which broke Thee. It was the sight of human sin, it was the sense of it, the feeling of it laid on Thee; it was zeal for the glory of God, horror at seeing sin so near Thee, a sickening, stifling feeling at its pollution, the deep shame and disgust and abhorrence and revolt which it inspired, keen pity for the souls whom it has drawn headlong into hell—all these feelings together Thou didst allow to rush upon Thee. Thou didst submit Thyself to their powers, and they were Thy death. That strong heart, that all-noble, all-generous, all-tender, all-pure heart was slain by sin.

O most tender and gentle Lord Jesus, when will my heart have a portion of Thy perfections? When will my hard and stony heart, my proud heart, my unbelieving, my impure heart, my narrow selfish heart, be melted and conformed to Thine? O teach me so to contemplate Thee that I may become like Thee, and to love Thee sincerely and simply as Thou hast loved me.

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## ❑ DAY 46 – *April 2, 2010 – Good Friday*

### IV. IT IS CONSUMMATED

It is over now, O Lord, as with Thy sufferings, so with our humiliations. We have followed Thee from Thy fasting in the wilderness till Thy death on the Cross. For forty days we have professed to do penance. The time has been long and it has been short; but whether long or short, it is now over. It is over, and we feel a pleasure that it is over; it is a relief and a release. We thank Thee that it is over. We thank Thee for the time of sorrow, but we thank Thee more as we look forward to the time of festival. Pardon our shortcomings in Lent and reward us in Easter.

We have, indeed, done very little for Thee, O Lord. We recollect well our listlessness and weariness; our indisposition to mortify ourselves when we had no plea of health to stand in the way; our indisposition to pray and to meditate—our disorder of mind—our discontent, our peevishness. Yet some of us, perhaps, have done

something for Thee. Look on us as a whole, O Lord, look on us as a community, and let what some have done well plead for us all.

O Lord, the end is come. We are conscious of our languor and lukewarmness; we do not deserve to rejoice in Easter, yet we cannot help doing so. We feel more of pleasure, we rejoice in Thee more than our past humiliation warrants us in doing; yet may that very joy be its own warrant. O be indulgent to us, for the merits of Thy own all-powerful Passion, and for the merits of Thy Saints. Accept us as Thy little flock, in the day of small things, in a fallen country, in an age when faith and love are scarce. Pity us and spare us and give us peace.

O my own Saviour, now in the tomb but soon to arise, Thou hast paid the price; it is done—*consummatum est*—it is secured. O fulfil Thy resurrection in us, and as Thou hast purchased us, claim us, take possession of us, make us Thine.

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□ **DAY 47 – April 3, 2010 – Holy Saturday**

## AN EXCERPT FROM AN ANCIENT HOMILY FOR HOLY SATURDAY

*As found in the Liturgy of the Hours*

What is happening? Today there is a great silence over the earth, a great silence, and stillness, a great silence because the King sleeps; the earth was in terror and was still, because God slept in the flesh and raised up those who were sleeping from the ages. God has died in the flesh, and the underworld has trembled. Truly he goes to seek out our first parent like a lost sheep; he wishes to visit those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. He goes to free the prisoner Adam and his fellow-prisoner Eve from their pains, he who is God, and Adam's son. The Lord goes in to them holding his victorious weapon, his cross. When Adam, the first created man, sees him, he strikes his breast in terror and calls out to all: "My Lord be with you all." And Christ in reply says to Adam: "And with your spirit." And grasping his hand he raises him up, saying: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. I am your God, who for your sake became your son, who for you and your descendants now speak and command with authority those in prison: Come forth, and those in darkness: Have light, and those who sleep: Rise. I command you: Awake, sleeper, I have not made you to be held a prisoner in the underworld. Arise from the dead; I am the life of the dead. Arise, O man, work of my hands, arise, you who were fashioned in my image. Rise, let us go hence; for you in me and I in you, together we are one undivided person. For you, I your God became your son; for you, I the Master took on your form; that of slave; for you, I who am

above the heavens came on earth and under the earth; for you, man, I became as a man without help, free among the dead; for you, who left a garden, I was handed over to Jews from a garden and crucified in a garden. Look at the spittle on my face, which I received because of you, in order to restore you to that first divine inbreathing at creation. See the blows on my cheeks, which I accepted in order to refashion your distorted form to my own image. See the scourging of my back, which I accepted in order to disperse the load of your sins which was laid upon your back. See my hands nailed to the tree for a good purpose, for you, who stretched out your hand to the tree for an evil one. I slept on the cross and a sword pierced my side, for you, who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side healed the pain of your side; my sleep will release you from your sleep in Hades; my sword has checked the sword which was turned against you. But arise, let us go hence. The enemy brought you out of the land of paradise; I will reinstate you, no longer in paradise, but on the throne of heaven. I denied you the tree of life, which was a figure, but now I myself am united to you, I who am life. I posted the cherubim to guard you as they would slaves; now I make the cherubim worship you as they would God. The cherubim throne has been prepared, the bearers are ready and waiting, the bridal chamber is in order, the food is provided, the everlasting houses and rooms are in readiness; the treasures of good things have been opened; the kingdom of heaven has been prepared before the ages.”

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❑ **DAY 48 – April 4, 2010 – Easter Sunday**

## **THE RESURRECTION – THE FORBEARANCE OF JESUS**

*Excerpted from Meditations on Christian Doctrine, by John Henry Cardinal Newman*

Spelling Americanized and text proofread by Fr. Bryan Jerabek

### **SEE MY HANDS, ETC. HAVE YOU HERE ANYTHING TO EAT?**

I adore Thee, O my Lord, for Thy wonderful patience and Thy compassionate tender-hearted condescension. Thy disciples, in spite of all Thy teaching and miracles, disbelieved Thee when they saw Thee die, and fled. Nor did they take courage afterwards, nor think of Thy promise of rising again on the third day. They did not believe Magdalen, nor the other women, who said they had seen Thee alive again. Yet Thou didst appear to them—Thou didst show them Thy wounds—Thou didst let them touch Thee—Thou didst eat before them, and give them Thy peace. O Jesu, is any obstinacy too great for Thy love? does any number of falls and relapses

vanquish the faithfulness and endurance of Thy compassion? Thou dost forgive not only seven times, but to seventy times seven. Many waters cannot quench a love like Thine. And such Thou art all over the earth, even to the end—forgiving, sparing, forbearing, waiting, though sinners are ever provoking Thee; pitying and taking into account their ignorance, visiting all men, all Thine enemies, with the gentle pleadings of Thy grace, day after day, year after year, up to the hour of their death—for He knoweth whereof we are made; He knoweth we are but dust.

My God, what hast Thou done for me! Men say of Thee, O my only Good, that Thy judgments are severe, and Thy punishments excessive. All I can say is, that I have not found them so in my own case. Let others speak for themselves, and Thou wilt meet and overcome them to their own confusion in the day of reckoning. With them I have nothing to do—*Thou* wilt settle with them—but for me the only experience that *I* have is Thy dealings with myself, and here I bear witness, as I know so entirely and feel so intimately, that to me Thou hast been nothing but forbearance and mercy. O how Thou dost forget that I have ever rebelled against Thee! Again and again dost Thou help me. I fall, yet Thou dost not cast me off. In spite of all my sins, Thou dost still love me, prosper me, comfort me, surround me with blessings, sustain me, and further me. I grieve Thy good grace, yet Thou dost give more. I insult Thee, yet Thou never dost take offence, but art as kind as if I had nothing to explain, to repent of, to amend—as if I were Thy best, most faithful, most steady and loyal friend. Nay, alas! I am even led to presume upon Thy love, it is so like easiness and indulgence, though I ought to fear Thee. I confess it, O my true Saviour, every day is but a fresh memorial of Thy unwearied, unconquerable love!

O my God, suffer me still—bear with me in spite of my waywardness, perverseness, and ingratitude! I improve very slowly, but really I am moving on to heaven, or at least I wish to move. I am putting Thee before me, vile sinner as I am, and I am really thinking in earnest of saving my soul. Give me time to collect my thoughts, and make one good effort. I protest I will put off this languor and lukewarmness—I will shake myself from this sullenness and despondency and gloom—I will rouse myself, and be cheerful, and walk in Thy light. I will have no hope or joy but Thee. Only give me Thy grace—meet me with Thy grace, I will through Thy grace do what I can—and Thou shalt perfect it for me. Then I shall have happy days in Thy presence, and in the sight and adoration of Thy five Sacred Wounds.

