

III. God's People

F. Religious

103.

Sermon, Book 1, No. 18 (dated 1855)

The Origin of Religious Orders

"For our conversation is in heaven" - Phil. III, 20

St. Paul, in this and many other passages of his Epistles, dwells upon the peculiar manner of life which ought to distinguish the sincere Christian. He tells us to bear the Cross of the Lord in our flesh, to live as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, to do all our works, even our eating and drinking, to the glory of God; and in the Epistle just read, he mentions as a distinctive characteristic of Christian life that his "conversation is in Heaven." Conversation is the interchange of ideas, sentiments, and affections that takes place between those who live together. For our conversation to be in heaven, therefore, is for us to hold intercourse on all that concerns us with God and his saints, instead of unbosoming ourselves to any earthly friend. It is for us to live in communion with the inhabitants of heaven, to be always mindful of God's presence, always studying how to give Him pleasure, to have our treasure and our heart, our interests and hopes, our friends and associates in heaven. It is for us to view all that is in the world, its wealth, its splendor, its joys, its grades of dignity, its agitations, excitements, and aims with cold indifference and pitying contempt; to look upon all things as God looks upon them, and to feel joy or sadness according as we are conformable to the image of His crucified Son.

This sublime doctrine of the Apostle whereby the spirit is made to be supreme over the body is one which the world, though chilled and awed, is willing to accept and admire, in theory. A philanthropist preaching self-denial and devotion to the interests of humanity, in answer to a toast given at an oyster supper, is often thought to be a hero of charity by the world; because the circumstances in which the rhapsody is able to give all to understand that it is only a matter of theory and sentiment. Young men whose passions know no restraint are set down as the master pieces of human disinterestedness and patriotism, because they sentimentalize in fervid speeches and editorials about the necessity of bending all their energies to the great task of elevating and ennobling the masses. The world admires lofty sentiments. But when it comes to the realization of these sentiments, when it comes to the practice of heroic maxims, the world loses its admiration, turns away with horror, begins to carp and find fault and hate and persecute.

So long as you are in the world and of it, you may theorize as loftily as you please about contempt for sublunary things, disinterested devotion to virtue, instead of pleasure and ambition. But once reduce these sentiments to act, and you can no longer count upon the sympathy of worldly people.

The religious orders in the Catholic Church are a proof of this assertion. Worldly minded people acknowledge that it is a beautiful thing to devote oneself entirely to God; yet they never cease to look with disfavor on those associations of men and women in which the members were bound by solemn vow to serve God alone in poverty, chastity and obedience.

I am not speaking here of those worldly people who have been brought up in such lamentable ignorance and imbued with such foolish prejudices as to believe that religious orders originated by human nature or are held together by human cupidity, but of those [who] admit the sincerity of religious and ascribe their estrangement from the world to fanaticism and exaggerated piety, who regard them as weak-minded in their selection of a state of life and pitiable in their privation of the pleasures of life. There are two classes of these: non-Catholics, who call Catholic doctrine harsh that immures so many interesting women and talented men in cloisters or keeps them among the poor; and Catholics who, patronizing religion by assent to its theoretical doctrines, are yet too strong minded to allow it to interfere with their practical life, their domestic arrangements for profit or for pleasure.

I think that both of these classes ought to be satisfied, if I demonstrate that the spirit of the religious orders is a direct and immediate effect of the doctrine of Christ; that, both as a matter of fact and a matter of theory, monastic discipline was the natural growth of Christian faith and of the times in which it took root in the hearts of men.

There are in the Church three kinds of religious orders, the purely contemplative, the purely active, and the mixed.

The purely contemplative, such as the monks of Calmoldi of which Gregory XVI. was a member, are those who forsake human society altogether and spend all their time in study, meditation, and prayer.

The purely active are those who, having no religious exercise of prayer or meditation in common, are united together for the performance of some corporal work of mercy or piety. Some of these were the military orders in the Middle Ages, and the present confraternities for the burial of the dead, the support of orphans, the charge of the poor and the like.

The mixed orders are those which are partly contemplative partly active such as the Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, and most of the orders that are known in this country.

The contemplative orders existed from the beginning of the Church. The purely active orders arose in the Middle Ages, when religion was the sole link that bound men to deeds of justice or charity or mercy.

As to the mixed orders, it was the custom in early times for the bishop and the clergy to constitute a sort of community, but the first mixed order of any note was the Dominican, instituted by a Spaniard, during the Pontificate of Innocent III., in the

beginning of the XIII. century. These had for chief obligation to preach, catechise, and hear confessions, and hence were called Friar Preachers. The next were the Franciscans, so called from St. Francis of Assisi, whose chief function also was preaching. After these were instituted the Trinitarians for the Redemption of Slaves, the Jesuits, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Hospitalers by St. Camillus of Lellis, the Redemptorists by St. Ligouri, the Nuns of St. Ursula of the Visitation of the Sacred Heart of Notre Dame, the Sisters of Charity of Mercy of the Good Shepherd. In short there is not a department of human life, not an exigency for which Catholic Charity has not provided a remedy, clean, efficacious and perpetual, in some one of her religious orders.

No one, however slightly he may value the souls of men, can find fault with the purely active and the mixed orders. The benefits they confer upon society are too obvious to be ignored by the most unreflecting. To give the dead Christian burial, to nurse and attend the sick, to support orphans, to give gratuitous education to the poor, are deeds so obviously conducive even to the temporal good of society, that a man must be not only an infidel, but a fool, in every sense of the word, to censure those who devote their labors to works of this nature.

In fact, it is not as benefactors of society that the religious are vituperated. It is not for their attendance on the spiritual and corporal wants of the distressed, but for their separation from the interests of the world, for their indifference about the ups and downs of political and social affairs, that is, for the contemplative and not for the active part of their mixed life.

The Church might have orders to attend to all these social wants; but why separate them from the world? Why enjoin on them common fasts and mortifications, why impose on them a rigid rule of discipline, why subject them to a round of meditation and prayers and silence and subjection to the will of a superior? Why burthen them with vows of chastity, poverty and obedience! It is the devotion to God of the orders, their renunciation of the world and worldly motives, that is a mystery and a scandal to the world.

The cross is a mystery now to the world as it was when it was first planted on Calvary.

For this separation of the contemplative orders from the world is a direct fruit of the teaching of Christ, an immediate and natural consequence of the belief in Christianity.

The fundamental maxim of Christian morality is that man finds his happiness, his content, his last end, in eternity--alone--that however the pleasures, the honors, or riches of time may beguile and distract him for a period, his true repose is only in the immutable good, the unchangingly beautiful, of the life to come. Now, this maxim presupposed, those who embrace any state of life are determined by the consideration of the facilities that state offers for obtaining salvation; and as the world is known to be

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full of temptations and occasions of sin, it is not wonderful that many should have sought to shun it and bury themselves in solitude, to remain trimming their lamps, in expectation of the midnight cry, "behold the Bride-groom cometh!"

We read of many who were determined to embrace the religious state solely by the thought of eternity.

St. Theresa, when a child, wondered over and tried to fathom the immense duration of the delights the good shall feel in Heaven and the woes the wicked must taste in Hell, used to be overcome with the vastness of her own conception, and separating herself from her little playmates, used to devise a thousand heroic things to do for God, in order that her Eternity might be a happy one.

St. Alexis of Rome, oppressed with fear in the midst of splendor of his patrician nuptials, lest the pride of life should obliterate from his mind the memory of Eternity, fled from the comforts of his father's house and lived out the remainder of a long life as a pilgrim, a hermit, a servant, and for thirty years a porter in the house of his own father.

In fact, let any one dwell for a little while on the thought that he is to live for ever, and he cannot but be filled with contempt for all that is transitory. Divest yourselves now of all other thoughts and think for but a moment upon this alone. You and I now here together within these walls will live forever. In a few years we shall pass from this state of existence and others shall occupy our places. There will be no doubt many changes and revolutions in the world, before the earth shall be destroyed and we shall be living all the time. Other worlds may be created and run through their courses of ten thousand years, and we shall be living when they all have passed away. Conceive an ocean without a shore, it is our existence. Fancy space without limit of star or sun, it is our future. Endless, illimitable, unchangeable, perpetual, awful, incomprehensible, fathomless eternity. How the short-lived joys that thrill our hearts in our moments of forgetfulness change to bitterness as its cold light streams upon us. How the soul, rising up on the consciousness of its boundless future, learns to look upon as petty, insignificant, [and] useless all the pursuits and appliances of this world! Oh if we live for Eternity, what matter is it in what part of this low earth, in what state of short life we await the rolling back of the night clouds and the dawning of the endless day? What matter, whether we be rich and honored or poor and persecuted, whether we be wise, beloved, full of ruddy health, or unlearned, despised, and full of infirmities, weighed down with disease? We shudder with horror when we read the description of the torments of the martyrs, and the austerities of the hermits of the desert. Yet after all, their pains lasted, like our joys, but for a moment. They survived and lived on.

This I say, brethren: the time is short; it remaineth that they also who have wives be as if they had none and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice

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as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use the world as if they used it not; for the fashion of this world passeth away. And Eternity is coming on so quickly that [it] is not worth while to make any distinction between classes of society or the conditions of this fleeting life.

This is the thought that peopled the desert and the cloister. This is the thought that made philosophers and courtiers, men of giant intellect and princely dignity, forsake cities and courts, and seek in the Egyptian deserts teachers of practical virtue. This is the thought that rendered their painful humiliations and frightful austerities not only possible but sweet. "I live for eternity," was the voice which the Holy Ghost sent ringing into the heart of the Pauls, the Anthonys, the Basils, the Gregories; and forthwith the desert was white with the tents of solitaries, and the rugged mountain caves became vocal with praise and petition psalm and litany.

We live for Eternity. Of what use then for to toil and struggle, to scheme and plan, in the pursuits of life? to lay up riches that will be torn from us? to compass ends of sensual satisfaction that death will thwart? to reach dignities that death will consign to others? What shall it profit a man if gain the whole world, even without the terrible condition of losing his own soul? Since the whole world cannot satisfy even the least want of a heart created for everlasting happiness, and if acquired, as a mist flies from the mountains and leaves the traveler beneath [the] broad glare of the sun, will pass away and leave the soul alone and naked in the unchanging light of eternity!

It was this view of life, as a journey, a pilgrimage, a time of trial, fundamental to Christianity, that produced the religious orders. Those orders were no invention of human wit, but a spontaneous effort of common sense to meet a fearful exigency disclosed by faith. The skeptic may scoff at this belief in Eternity, but admitting that belief to be correct he cannot deny that they reasoned like philosophers, and did not dogmatise as fanatics. If there was fanaticism in the spirit they exhibited, that fanaticism belongs to the religion of the Cross.

Yet I am far from saying, Beloved Friends, that the sole thought of our eternal destiny will drive every sincere believer into solitude. There are many detained in the world by obligations of justice, or bonds of charity, or impulse of zeal, who are serving God with an eye as single as that of the inmates of a cloister. I mean that thought alone would be sufficient to make every one ready in mind to forsake as unworthy of thought, houses and lands, friends and family; and where any of these were found to be obstacles to his salvation actually to forsake them. It is the consideration of the importance of salvation, joined to the dangers of losing it in the world, that leads men into the cloister and the desert.

I speak an unknown tongue when I talk of the dangers of the world to people of the world. They are not aware of being in any danger, and they do not see why there should be any danger in the contact with what they admire so much and strive so hard

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to please. Yet there is danger in a contact with the world. The world, with all its pursuits and aims and excitements, is under the malediction of God, set in malice against Him. Whosoever shares its lot will share a heavy lot of woe.

And for all this curse of God on it, the world is very fascinating to the natural heart. There is a power almost irresistible in its example and in the allurements it offers to the cupidities. It assumes forms bewitchingly lovely, and entices us by motives almost overpoweringly strong. It promises long life and happy death if we taste of its pleasures and join in its pursuits; it points to us examples of many as good and talented and more respected than we, who do not hesitate to follow the common lot. It fills us with excitement.

[Clearly this was left not quite finished.]

104.

Sermon, *The Catholic Telegraph*, January 11, 1865

The same sermon was preached at St. Martin's in Brown County, Ohio on Dec. 8, 1875. -- see Fifty Years in a Brown County Convent, pp 192-201.

At the Profession of Thirty-Eight Novices, Convent of St. Mary's, at Notre Dame, Ind., Dec. 8th, 1864

Hear, O daughter, and incline thine ear, and forget thy people, and the house of thy father and the King shall desire thy comeliness, for He is the Lord thy God. (Ps. XLIV)

With the emotions belonging to a scene like this dwelling in our hearts, a full discussion of the lawfulness of religious vows would seem out of place. To these young novices who have, by prayer and meditation on the step they are taking, prepared themselves for what we call sacrifice, and the angels, nuptials; to these friends whose hearts stand tremulously beating between sorrow at the parting, and joy at the consummation, it would be idle to prove the right of every human soul to choose God for its portion, and His sanctuary for its rest for ever and ever. You do not need argument to convince you that those who are called to it may rightfully follow Christ in His poverty, His chastity, and His subjection to the will of others. You know that the convent is a safe home--the vestibule of the house not made with hands; and when you have seen your dear ones clothed with its dress, and made inmates of its walls, the only pang you feel is not of anxiety for them, but of loneliness for yourselves.

But, though you appreciate the innocence of the life which these maidens have chosen for their own, permit me to doubt whether you justly estimate its real excellence.

On the day of her profession, the Nun dies to the world. In some orders, wrapped in her sombre habit as in a black shroud, she prostrates herself before the

altar, and little children scatter flower leaves upon her has upon one departed. "She is buried alive," says the world, because she is separated from what it calls life; and even Catholics thoughtlessly thank God that she is now disposed of and safe, as if her life were to be henceforth an idle but delicious dream.

This is a capital mistake. The person who dedicates himself to God by religious vows, renounces nothing of true life. On the contrary, by that act, he but gives free play to whatever talent and energy, and power of achieving great things he has received from God. His vow to follow Christ is not a vow to shrink from labor or danger, but rather to court them with ceaseless activity. Far from being a living death or an idle dream, the life of the cloister is the one of the freest activity and the grandest results, and it gives the fullest scope to all that is sublime in human genius, praiseworthy in human energy, heroic in human courage. Every action must have two conditions to entitle its performer to the character of great. It must belong to him as originator, and it must achieve some great end. The agents of great revolutions in society are not called great because they do not originate and control the events which give them prominence, but are waifs floating on the surface or sinking into the depths by the impulse of a power not their own.

So let one originate ever so much in small matters, he is not a great, but a little, and a "fussy" man if he be overactive. Now, life is but a series of actions. To be great, it must be free, or self-controlled, self-guided, and it must have some lofty end.

Apply these tests of excellence to the life in the world and in the cloister, and see which of the two is the more excellent.

I.

LIBERTY OR SELF-CONTROL.

Any one who undertakes, for the first time in earnest, the task of self-examination, will be startled to find how little of what he calls his life, has been, in the full sense of the word, his own. He did not choose his race, color, his physical development, the prejudices of his education, the influence of his associates, the circumstances of his rank and social position. Yet these give their bent to the lives of most men. Ask every one you meet how he happened to be of the trade, or profession, or business he follows, and ninety-nine out of every hundred will answer, their family, their education, their pecuniary circumstances, forced them to it. To the great mass, the main drift of life is a foregone conclusion, long before they have time to reflect upon it, enough to see even what it is; and the only liberty they find left them is in carrying out its details from day to day.

Yet even here is liberty fearfully abridged, by want of reflection. The mind is usually in such a hurry, is stirred by so many rushing emotions and vivid fancies, that the power of calm thought, of looking before leaping, is nearly all the time stunned and baffled. It is this which makes life, to those who have reached its close, in the emphatic

language of scripture, like the dream of one rising from sleep. We lay our head upon a pillow for a few moments; and in dreams we undertake vast enterprises, work on them, feel the triumph of success, and the humiliation of defeat; we traverse oceans and continents; witness the beginning and the end of great wars; see little children grow up mature, become old and die. Then roused from sleep the dream vanishes. We have traversed no ocean, done no work, achieved no success, suffered no defeat, but only dreamed a dream. So when, life's fitful fever being ended, the soul rises from the body where it has been dreaming as on a couch, with a vision bounded, no longer, by the figure of this transitory world, the light of Eternity, the greatness and beauty of God, the brightness of Heaven, the vastness of the endless life before it, the splendor of the imperishable goods it has either lost or won, it cannot but regard the life it lived in the flesh as the dream of one rising from sleep.

Look back, now, upon that part of your life which is buried with the past, and what is it to you but a dream?

The emotions of hope and fear, joy and sorrow, desire and aversion, that made time seem long to you, are gone now forever. You can recall the fact of having been excited by them, but you cannot re-awaken the feeling. As the harp remains all the same, whether the music was sad or joyous, when its strings were last touched, so our hearts have no record left on them of the emotions that thrill them from the touch of passing events, but the cold, simple consciousness of guilt incurred, or merit won. Thus it is that in dying persons the entire record of a life can be crowded into the thought of an instant--comprising, as it does, only the number of its good and evil deeds.

What the world calls life, active, bustling, laborious life, is but a dream of ambition, or of avarice, or of sensuality.

Awakening at the threshold of Eternity, out of the reach of earthly honor, or praise, or flattery, the soul that coveted self-aggrandizement, starts with astonishment at finding out its own delusion. I have been struggling to grasp what I thought my soul panted for. I forgot truth, and justice, and mercy, in my eagerness to outstrip my rivals and win power. I was mistaken. Won or lost human honor is now to me a thing of the past, and an eternity of existence is yet before me. I thought I had done much--I have done nothing. I strove for what could not help me. I fled from what could not hurt me. I have been in a dream. At the same point, the dawn breaks upon the soul that has been laying up much good for many years, and as death tears it loose from all its possessions, it exclaims: "I thought I knew the philosophy of life. I gathered together what I thought would command service, and defy want. I exulted when my possessions multiplied, but my struggles and hopes and joys were all things of a dream. In the midst of what I thought abundance, want has seized upon me and with imperishable desires still gnawing within me, my hands are empty. Precisely so, though with more overwhelming sense of shame awakes the soul that was chained by

voluptuousness to the service of the flesh. "I thought," it says mournfully, over the corpse it is now freed from, "that I was revelling in the joys of life and leaving its cares to fools. Behold--what I called joy was only fever, and wisdom but delirium. Now, at the outset of my unchangeable existence, I am naked, and blind, and miserable!"

Yet these three classes of men, all, namely, "that are in the world, and of it, the proud, the covetous, and voluptuous--bondsmen from the cradle to the grave--have the assurance to speak of the liberty they enjoy, and to pity those who by vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, break loose from the fetters that bind them and become free!

Slaves of every insolent appetite, of every passing whim and fancy; slaves of the unexpiated guilt they have incurred indulging their caprices; slaves of fashion and human respect, they cannot understand the glorious liberty of the children of God, for which He created them, and wherewith CHRIST THE REDEEMER longs to make them free. The freedom of the human soul is not in forms of government, not in letting the appetites of the body rule life; but the absence of all impediment to its seeking union with God, the absence, as St. Augustine says, of the ignorance that clogs it and the concupiscence that fetters it. It is the power of the soul not to serve, but to rule the flesh and its desires. It is not independence of God, but independence of all that would prevent us depending on Him alone.

Ignorance is bondage for it makes us do, we know not what, and therefore what we will not. Concupiscence is bondage; for it drives us to the evil we will not, and from the good we wish.

But in the life of the true religious, ignorance and concupiscence cease to reign.

Ignorance is removed by faith made practical in meditation and prayer. The soul that has chosen the better part sees with unerring truthfulness the just value of all that surrounds it. It is not carried away by any false glitter of transitory goods--not allured into forgetfulness of its true end but from the first step when it is decided to fear no more them that can kill the body, but only Him who has power over the soul. It goes day by day meditating the law of God, and by it escaping all its thought, affections, hopes, desires, so as never to have occasion for that remorseful exclamation, "Oh, had I but known!"

We read of many who in the hour of death regretted not having been more fervent in the meditations and austerities of their rule; but of none who in their last hour were sorry for having made and kept the holy vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Concupiscence--which rules in the life of the great mass--though not removed, is baffled and subdued by the discipline and regularity of the cloistered life. The hours of silence and prayer; the bodily mortifications of watching and fasting, the continual practice of humble obedience, subdue passion and chasten the soul. The little austerities of the convent life are like picket guards stationed far in advance of the

region where sin could make any direct attack on the soul. To deny one's self what is lawful prevents the heart from chafing after what is forbidden. And the soul that wills only what God wills, must always have all it desires, for having but one thought and one will with Him it partakes of His omnipotence. It feels, indeed, the thrills of human emotion; but grace places it above the humiliation of human weakness, as the mountain top bathes in the unclouded sunlight, while it feels the rush of the storm that is roaring round its base. Envy, anger, ambition, hate, avarice, lust, which embitter the lives of people of the world, find no entrance in the convent's sacred walls. Like dogs they may bark and snarl around it, but, the heart remaining true to its vows, can never come in to tear and rend as they tear and rend in what is called "society."

In the convent, therefore, the soul is freer than in the world; freer from ignorance that deceives it into doing it knows not what, and from passion that drags it into what it would not wish, free to guide itself; to know what it does, and do what it intends, and therefore to say what it does as its own.

II.

"But grant"--is the unthinking exclamation--"grant that the soul is free; still, is it not a pity to see persons of talent, beautiful, educated, accomplished, running away from society, and doing nothing when they might have done so much?" And this brings one to the second of the two assertions. I have undertaken to prove that the results accomplished in the religious life are vaster, more worthy, the aspirations of a great heart, than could be hoped for in the world.

Any one who speaks of the vast amount to be done in society cannot surely allude to the ordinary lives of women in the world. In them, all that talent and beauty and education can achieve is to hold gracefully, perhaps advance somewhat, social position. To do this successfully is not to do very much. To receive and pay visits; to keep up a brilliant and well regulated household; to talk and be talked of; and finally to fade out and have a fashionable funeral, is no result to stir a noble ambition. The good that one might do to society, by remaining in it, must be what those who lament over lives given to Christ, allude to when they complain.

Now, far be it from me to speak lightly of the good influence exerted on the home and social circle by the holy life of a Christian matron. The HOLY GHOST has said of her, "from afar, from the uttermost bounds is her price." Her presence breathes purity; her words inspire virtue and rebuke vice. She relieves want; soothes sorrow; teaches all the fear of God. The presence of such, scattered through society, holds it from being dissolved in it. But ere we deplore in any one the renunciation of this life, let us see whether, in renouncing they have not adopted one still more fruitful of good results.

In the first place, we have no right to assume as certain, that any one who adopts the religious life would, had she remained in the world, have persevered to the end in

the practice of those virtues which make her life a blessing to all around her. Few in the world live such lives. "Who shall find a woman of fortitude?" says Holy Scripture. The soul that follows through life the path marked out for it by God, finds the graces it needs as it journeys along: bread when it is hungry; fountains of water when it is thirsty, gushing up by the wayside. Who can say that there are any such laid up for it along any other pathway? The car that runs smoothly on its own track is shattered and broken on a track of another gauge. She who in the cloister is a model of humility, purity, charity, disinterestedness and prudence might have been the reverse in the world. Though sincere at the outset, the clamour of vanity might have darkened good to her eyes, and the fickleness of concupiscence, have changed her judgment so that in not following her vocation she might have lost the not only the opportunity, but also the desire of doing good.

In the second place, excellent as is the life of the Christian matron; full as it is of earnest love and heroic self-sacrifice, the life of the religious is better. The reason is, because the good which is an incident in the one, is the business of the other. The matron must attend to her family affairs; the wants of her dependents; the wishes of her superiors, yet so as not to displease God. The nun, undivided in heart, can give herself solely to works of mercy, and think of nothing else but "how she may please God." Does a cry come up from the battlefield of strong men, stricken down and perishing for want of care? She is free to take the next train and go to their relief. Does a pestilence smite a city and riot in the homes of the poor? She neglects no duty that she owes to any one when she takes her life in her hand, and goes to the infected rooms, breathes the poisoned air, and brings comfort to the sick, through the contagion and dying. Do the poor and the orphans stretch out their arms for succor? She is free to give them all she has and all she can beg, for she has only them to provide for. Do the children of the needy want instruction? She has no standing in society that will be lost, no claims that will be neglected by taking her place in the free school, and keeping it through life. In one word, she is free from every evil that would keep her soul from following Jesus Christ wherever He may choose to lead and undertaking any work that would redound to His glory.

Nor is that part of her life which is hidden with Christ in God, barren of results. Her interior struggles, her watchings and fasts, her meditations and communions have effects on her own soul that stretch through eternity, and upon society that spread far out beyond the convent walls. The vast framework of society is held up from falling into chaos and ruin by the finger of God, and the prayers of the pure, as it were, the cords by which He upholds it. "Works of art, and monuments of human genius and labor will pass away with the figure of this world," and then will appear in imperishable beauty, the vast consequences of the labors and good works which only God noted in the cloister.

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The life you have chosen, then, is not one of constraint, or of idleness, but of freedom and toil. Let no misgiving about throwing your gifts away ever ruffle your hearts. Others may have done wisely and well, but you have "chosen the better part which shall not be taken from you."

105.

Sermon, Book 1, No. 7

This is a simpler form of the sermon "At the Profession of Thirty-eight Novices" (item 104). Especially "part II" has been expanded in that version.

Religious Vows

While the emotions belonging to a scene like this are working upon our minds, a cold discussion of the lawfulness of religious vows would seem out of place. To these young candidates who have, by prayer and meditation on the step they are taking, prepared themselves for what we call sacrifice and the angels nuptials; to their parents and friends whose hearts stand tremulously beating between sorrow at the parting, and joy at the consummation, it would be idle to prove the right of every human soul to choose God for its portion, and His Sanctuary for its rest for ever and ever. You do not need to be convinced that it is right for those who are called to follow Christ, in His poverty, His chastity, and His subjection to the will of others. You know that the convent is a safe home, the vestibule of the one not made with hands; and when you have seen your dear ones clothed with its dress, and made inmates of its walls, the only pang is over your own loneliness, not over their danger.

But though you may appreciate the innocence of the life which these maidens have chosen for their own, permit me to doubt whether you rightly estimate its real excellence. On the day of her reception the Nun dies to the world. In some orders, wrapped in her sombre habit as in a shroud, she prostrates herself before the Altar, and little children scatter flower leaves upon her as upon one departed. "She is buried alive," says the world, because she is separated from what it calls life; and even Catholics thoughtlessly thank God that she is now disposed of and safe, as if her life were to be henceforth an idle but delicious dream.

This is a grand mistake. The person who dedicates himself to God by religious vows renounces nothing of true life. On the contrary, by that act, he but gives free play to whatever talent and energy and power of achieving great things he has received from God. His vow to follow Christ is not a vow to shrink from labor, or danger, but rather to court them with ceaseless activity. Far from being a living death, or a dream, the life of the cloister is of all lives the one of the greatest activity and the grandest results, and it gives the fullest scope to all that is sublime in human genius, praiseworthy in energy,

heroic in courage.

Every action must have two conditions to entitle its performer to the character. It must belong to him as originator, and it must achieve some great end. So a life which is but a series of actions to be great, must be self controlled, and must accomplish vast results. We do not admire those men who happen to be prominent in great revolutions because we do not attribute the changes in society to them, and we call them waifs thrown upon the surface of the billows, riding where forced to ride, sinking when drawn into the gulf.

So let a man be ever so bush in small matters we do not call him great but little and fussy.

To be great he must originate what he does; and what he does must be vast, and grand. Apply these tests to the life in the world and of the cloister, and see which is the more excellent of the two.

I.

Any one who undertakes the task of self-examination for the first time in earnest will be startled to find how little of what he calls his life has been, in the full sense of the word, his own. He did not choose his race, or color, his physical development, the prejudices of his education, the influence of his associates, the circumstances of his rank and social position. Yet these give their bent to the lives of most men. Ask every one you meet how he happened to be of such a profession, or trade, or business, and ninety-nine out of every hundred will answer, their family, their education, their pecuniary circumstances. To the great majority of men, the main drift of life is a foregone conclusion, long before they have time to think upon it enough to see what it is; and the only liberty they find left them is in carrying out its details from day to day.

Yet even here is liberty fearfully abridged, by want of thought. The mind is usually in such a hurry, is filled with so many strong emotions and vivid fancies, that the power of calm reflection, of looking before leaping, [is] stunned and baffled. This makes life to one who has reached its close, like in the emphatic language of scripture, like the dream of one rising from sleep. We lay our head upon a couch, and in dreams we undertake vast enterprises, work on them, feel all the triumph of success and all the humiliation of defeat; we traverse oceans and continents; witness the beginning and the end of wars; see little children grow up, become old, and die. Then morning dawns and the dream vanishes. We have done no work, achieved no triumph; we have made no journeys but perhaps have turned in bed; not years have passed since we lay down, but only minutes. Struggles and triumphs, labors and travels, sights and sounds were all but the dream of one rising.

So when, life's fitful fever bring over, the soul rises from the body in which it has rested as in a couch, and sees, for the first time, with a vision no longer bounded by the figure of this transitory world, the greatness and beauty of God, the brightness and

glory of Heaven, the vastness of the endless life before it, the splendor of the imperishable goods it feels itself to have either lost or gained, the life in the flesh will be indeed to it the dream of one rising

Look back on that part of your life which is now buried with the past, and say what is it but a dream. The emotions of hope and fear, joy and sorrow, that made time seem long were but the thrills of the heart strings touched by passing objects of sense; leaving when the thrill ceases no more record on the soul than is left on the strings of a harp that was played long ago. Memory can recall the fact of the excitement, but it cannot reawaken the emotion, but only shame or wonder that it could have been so easily moved.

To the great mass of men life is but a dream of ambition or avarice or sensuality. At the threshold of Eternity the ambitious soul awakens, out of the reach of honor or praise or flattery, and beyond the range of jealousy and rivalry, with an eternity of life still before it, and "I have been tossing in a dream!" it exclaims, "I was struggling to grasp what I thought my soul longed for, and to baffle the evil that I feared would overwhelm me; and I put all other thoughts aside in my eagerness to succeed. I forgot truth and justice and mercy; and lo it was but a dream. What I strove for could not help me. The power I gained can command nothing here. The humiliation I feared has come upon me." At the same point awakes the soul of the avaricious with the same exclamation. "I thought I was gathering together what would keep me far from want. I passed by the poor man and said, 'how good that I am not as he.' I laughed in my heart when my possessions multiplied. My struggles and fears and hopes and joys were things of a dream. After grasping all I wanted, I am here with my hands empty and the want I fled from in my delirium has seized me." So too now from its dream the soul that was chained by voluptuousness, as it breaks loose leaving the body a corpse. "I thought I was plucking life's roses," it says. "I thought I was leaving to others the cares of life and I was reveling in its joys. It was not delight I felt, but fears. And the fear is gone now leaving the thirst for enjoyment still."

Yet these three, types of all that is in the world, the proud, the greedy, the voluptuous, bondsmen from the cradle to the grave, have the assurance to speak of the liberty they enjoy, and to pity those who by vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity, break fellowship with them and their ways! Slaves of every insolent appetite, of every passing fancy and whim, slaves of the unexpiated guilt which is dragging [them] where they would not go, slaves of fashion, they do not understand the glorious liberty of the children of God, the liberty for which God created them, and wherewith Christ the Redeemer longs to make them free. For what after all is the freedom for which the heart pants with inextinguishable thirst? Is it the freedom of the body to lord it over the soul, to let the appetites run riot, and hasten on disease and death? Is it the abolishment of certain forms of human legislation, and issuing of statutes from any temporal source

of authority? No, it is the absence of all impediment to the soul's seeking its true end, its freedom, as St. Augustine says, from ignorance that clogs and the concupiscence that chains it. It is the power of the soul not to fulfill but to control and deny the desires of the body. True freedom is not being independent of God, but in being independent of all that can keep us from depending upon Him alone.

Ignorance is bondage, for it makes us do we know not what, and therefore what we do not will. Concupiscence is bondage for it drives us to the evil we would not, and away from the good we wish.

But in the life of the true religious, both ignorance and concupiscence cease to reign. Ignorance is removed by faith. In its light the meditative soul sees with unerring truthfulness the just value of all that surrounds it. It is not carried away by any false glitter of transitory goods, or allured into forgetfulness of its true end, to find itself deceived in the close of life. History speaks of many who in the hour of death regretted not having been more fervent in the meditations, and prayers of their rule; but none who in their last hour were sorry for having passed their lives in the cloister.

Concupiscence, though not taken away, is baffled and subdued by the discipline of the community life. The hours of silence and prayer, the bodily mortifications of watching and fasting, the continual practice of humble obedience, subdue passion and chasten the soul. To deny one's self things lawful keeps the patient heart from desiring things that are unlawful. The little austerities of convent life are like picket guards placed far outside the lines, where sin could make any attack on the soul, and render secure every approach to the heart against the assaults of passion.

Freedom is not in serving but in mastering concupiscence. What can be imagined freer than the soul which always has what it desires? But the soul of the true religious adheres to God [so] as to have but one thought and one will with him, and so partakes of his omnipotence. It is placed so high up that no evil can come near it, no good be beyond its reach. It feels the emotions that belong to the sensual nature.

II.

What a pity for one so talented, so accomplished to become a nun! She might have exercised so much influence in the world, might have done so much good! And now her power is all lost, buried in the convent!

Such is the language in which the world continually asserts that the activity of its votaries achieves vaster results, than that which is exercised in the cloister. I have said that the reverse is true, that the soul set free by being bound to God, is not only freer, but has a grander work to do for him while the day lasts.

The greatest work that any one can do is to save his own soul.

I repeat it now, that you, who today receive the holy habit of this order, will be humble [in] perseverance to the end do a greater and more excellent work in the sight of God and of truth than you [could] possibly hope to do by remaining in the world.

106.

Lecture, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, April 8 and April 15, 1863

According to the Telegraph of March 24, 1860, this or a very similar lecture was delivered by then-Father Rosecrans on Sunday, March 25, in the Metropolitan Hall in Cincinnati on the first anniversary of the Catholic Institute. It was given again in Columbus in Naughton's Hall on the evening of January 6, 1863, and in the cathedral in Fort Wayne on St. Patrick's Day, 1863.

The Order of Mercy.

History, they say, is a record of human crimes and sorrows. Yet though the past is indeed sadly marked with evidences of ambition, avarice and injustice, it is not all a picture of horror. Here and there over the dark landscape the readers of history can see that the sun of justice gleams, and as he travels on through scenes of carnage and violence he finds now and then a spot on which to rest, a deed, or series of deeds that he can admire and praise. Such a one I will point out to you in European history. Its date begins with the close of the twelfth century, and for its better understanding I ask your indulgence while I recall to your minds the features of the period.

The grand characteristic of the time was the war between Christ and Mahomet. The Moslem power was firmly rooted in Asia and Northern Africa, and was still advancing. The followers of the Prophet had a foothold in Spain, held most of the Islands of the Mediterranean, had more than once made raids into the South of France and along the coasts of Italy, and were still gathering and threatening all along the border from Gibraltar to Constantinople. The powers of Europe were sadly weakened by intestine feuds. The first Crusades had exhausted the spirit of Christian Europe and the little princes of different regions were struggling to advance their personal interests as eagerly as so many army contractors.

In England, John the Landless was plotting to reach the throne of his brother, Richard the Lion-hearted.

In France, Philip Augustus was carrying on a treacherous war against Normandy. The Austrian Duke was trying to hold the King of England in prison for trampling on the banner of his dukedom at the siege of Acre. James, King of Aragon, was straining every nerve to feed his retainers and induce the Moslems to rob and murder elsewhere than in his dominions.

Pope Innocent the Third was busy day and night reconciling contending parties, denouncing oppressions, and defending the helpless.

In the meantime the Turks were slowly advancing. And they did not advance into an enemy's country as do troops in modern times, stationing guards over private property, and enjoining on the soldiers not to disturb any one's sleep by talking too loudly after nightfall. They devastated. Armed men were killed or spared to be slaves.

Young women and children, old enough to work, were made slaves. Those too old to be of service, or so young as to be helpless, were brained on their door-sills. The cattle were driven off, the houses burned, and the fields desolated. Like the lava that pours hot and hissing down the sides of the volcano, they left no thing with life in it. Those whom they spared they spared for a captivity, compared to which death would have been a mercy. For it must be remembered that the Mahometans made war not precisely for conquest and plunder, but to propagate their religion. To every one they offered the choice between the prophet and the scimitar. They let their captives live with the view of shaking their constancy by harsh usage, and ultimately making them proselytes. The oppression that exacts the service of the body is hard indeed, but it is endurable since labor is the common lot; but the injustice that aims to shackle the soul, that tries to extort the assent of the understanding to error, or bind the will to wrong, is too galling to be borne. One might make bricks with the Israelites on the plains of Egypt; but to worship their idols and offer incense at their altars is a degradation from which one ought to flee even into the jaws of death. So the lot of the captives was bitterer than that of the slain. In their hard bondage they had continually before them the offer of ease and honor if they would only abjure Christ and trample on the Cross, and the certainty of insult, degradation and torture if they continued faithful.

At the time of which I am speaking the number of slaves in the hands of the Saracens was very great. Princes and noble knights dragged their chains over the plains of Syria. Young soldiers taken in war, peasants surprised in their fields and gardens, fishermen dragged from their boats and nets, merchants from their traffic, artizans from their shops toiled side by side under the burning sun of Morocco and of Egypt, while at home in Christendom wailing over the bondage of loved ones was heard in the streets, and sorrow sat down on the desolate hearth-stones.

It was not so much the pangs of separation that Christians felt, nor the thought of the stripes and bruises that the flesh of their flesh might feel; but the fear that these bruises and stripes might bring about apostasy, and so render their separation eternal. They believed in Christ. They believed that out of Him no man can be saved, and that apostasy was eternal ruin. Their fear was not for the body of the slave but for his soul. Thoughts that this fear suggested filled the mind of young John of Mather, a nobleman of Provence, in the South of France, on the day when, having long before renounced the world, and having patiently and diligently gone through the course of ecclesiastical studies and discipline, he ascended the altar to celebrate his first Mass. In fancy he heard the clank of the chain on limbs that Christ had set free by baptism, and the sigh of the bondsman seemed to smite his ear as it wafted across the Mediterranean on the soft air of that summer morning. While he was meditating to find what charity could do for misery so profound, Heaven seemed to open to him from above, and, radiant with glory, the Son and the Mother appeared. They were smiling not on him, for they did

not regard him, but on a venerable figure clothed in a flowing robe of spotless white, marked on the breast with a red and blue cross, in the act of striking the shackles from an emaciated Christian slave, beside whom the turbaned master was sullenly standing. The vision left him, but the purpose he had formed remained.

About the same time like thoughts filled the night dreams and waking meditations of the holy Felix of Valois in his hermitage in the lonely forest of Cerfroi. To him, also, was vouchsafed a waking dream in its leafy shades, the purport of which was to urge him, by his love for the Virgin Mary and her Child, to do something for the relief of the Christian slaves, and to leave him filled with a vehement desire to give up the sweets of his hermit life for the service of Christ's bondsmen.

One morning, that same summer, James, King of Aragon, told his courtiers a strange dream: how a stately lady, with a crown on her majestic brow, had spoken to him, as he stood awe-struck in her presence. "It would be most acceptable," she said, "to her and her Son, if he would establish a religious order for the ransoming of Christian slaves." Then she showed him the dress they were to wear, and left him filled with sweet but overwhelming emotions of veneration and desire to accomplish her bidding.

In the autumn of 1198, the young Priest and the aged Hermit met and conferred on what they had thought of, and tried to give shape to their half-formed design.

The object to be accomplished was plain enough. Christians were to be set free from degrading bondage and fearful danger of denying Christ. After much deliberation their plan was organized. A religious order was to be formed whose members should add to the three ordinary vows of religion--namely, poverty, chastity and obedience, a fourth one, binding themselves to devote all their fortunes, their talents, influence and labor to the ransoming of slaves from Moslem bondage.

This settled, they set out in the dead of winter, 1197, on a foot pilgrimage to Rome to obtain the approbation of the proper authority for the foundation of their new order. And as I fancy them toiling from Provence, over the Alps and down along the Apennines to Rome, through the bleak weather and rough ways, the old hermit and the young noble seem to me well to symbolize the great institutions which the Catholic Church creates and fosters. The old man, with his white locks and wrinkled brow, is a type of the wisdom of her counsels; and the youth, with his springing tread and bright eyes, of the vigor of their execution.

Innocent III., the youngest Pope that ever sat on the chair of Peter, was then at the head of Europe. He was a man skilled in all the knowledge of his times, of consummate ability in the management of affairs, eloquent, energetic, disinterested, unswervingly devoted to justice, and the uncompromising foe of oppression. His defense of unfortunate queen Indelberga against the injustice of Philip Augustus, who attempted wantonly to repudiate her, his endorsement of the English barons, who wrung the Magna Charta from Landless John, his tenacious adherence to the rights of his ward,

the helpless heir to the crown of Naples, show him to have been one to whom justice was dearer than human favor or even life.

About this time there was a great passion for founding religious orders throughout Christendom. So much so that we find in the fourth Council of Lateran, held in Rome Nov. 1215, a decree prohibiting the erection of new orders, and enjoining on all to seek to fulfill their vocation in those already in existence.

The Dominicans and Franciscans, two of the most famous and influential orders in the Church, came into existence under Innocent III.

Accordingly, although John and Felix were kindly received in Rome, their project was not approved without the most rigid scrutiny. It was placed in the hands of a committee, and did not receive any formal approbation until after eleven months of examination. The bull approving it is dated 16th of December, 1198. It is directed to "Our beloved Sons, John the Minister and his brother of the House of the Holy Trinity," and opens with these words:

"When you, beloved in Christ, some time ago came into our presence, and with humility made known to us your project, which is believed to have sprung from divine inspiration, asking that your intention might be strengthened by the approval of the Holy See, we, in order to know that your desire was founded in Christ, out of whom nothing enduring is founded, thought it best to send you back with letters to our colleague, the Bishop, and our well beloved son, the Abbot of St. Victor's in Paris, that through them, who knew better than we your desire, intention, and the order, we might more securely and efficaciously signify our assent. Because, therefore, as is evident from their letters, you seem to be seeking, not your own, but Christ's gain...we send to you and your successors the rule according to which you must live, and declare it to be perpetual."

From this it appears that although Innocent approved the object of the society, he was by no means certain of the men. Then, even more than now, piety was popular, and could be made the cloak of fraud. So he insisted on the testimony and approbation of the local authorities in France. Being assured on examination that John and Felix were sincere and disinterested men, who sought not their own gain but gain for Christ, he examined their rule, took away some parts of it, and added others of his own, and solemnly approved it.

This is the first anti-slavery society on record. And while I mention some features of their rule of life, you can hardly help wondering how many members a modern anti-slavery society in Old or New England would number, subject to similar discipline.

The brothers of the Holy Trinity shall live under obedience to the head of the house, to be called the Minister in Chastity, and without anything of their own.

All their property, howsoever acquired, will be divided into three equal parts.

The first two parts shall go to the economical support of the house and works of mercy at home. The third part will be kept for the ransoming of slaves held in bondage by pagans for the faith of Christ, either by buying them at a reasonable price, or by buying pagan slaves to exchange for them. On receiving any gift of money they will lay aside a third part, with the consent of the donor, for this purpose. If he objects, the gift must not be accepted. In like manner must be divided the proceeds of lands, houses, forests, vineyards. Concerning these divisions all the brothers will hold consultations together every Sunday.

In each house of the order there must be at least three clerics and three lay brothers, besides one Priest, the Chief, who must be called the Minister.

The clothing of all must be woolen and white. It is allowed to each brother to have one shirt and one pair of knee breeches, which, however, they shall not lay side when they sleep.

They must have no down, or feathers, or cushions to sleep on, unless when sick. A hard bolster for the head is allowed. They shall never eat or drink except, perhaps, a glass of water, outside of their own houses, unless on a journey. If they receive presents, on a journey, they must lay them aside after deducting expenses for the ransoming of slaves.

All the brothers, lay and cleric, must use the same dwelling, dress, dormitory, refectory and table. Only the sick shall eat and sleep separately. The care of guests and the poor must be deputed to the most discreet of the brothers.

No brother, lay or ecclesiastic, must be without his work. If any one can, and will not work, he must be forced to leave the house, since the Apostle says, "He that will not work, let him not eat."

The head of the house must be chosen by the common vote of the brothers, not for the nobility of his blood, but for the merit of his life and the measure of his wisdom.

If any one wants to become a member of this order he must serve in one of the houses, at his own expense (except boarding), and in his own clothes, for one year. After a year, if the Minister and the brothers think best, and there is room, he may be received. At his reception nothing will be charged, but what he chooses to give will be taken, provided it does not bring with it the danger of a lawsuit.

If there is doubt about his morals, he must wait a longer time, and if he has showed signs of impatience and reluctance to submit to discipline, he may receive a modest license to leave the house with all his effects. None under twenty years of age will be received.

In our civilized times the idea of asking permission to live under such a rule, to make and save money, to purchase slaves to freedom, would seem to the last degree absurd; our philanthropists would not accept the leave.

But no sooner was the apostolic letter brought to France, than hundreds hastened

to the new order.

Philip Augustus encouraged it most cordially by influence and gifts. Margaret, Countess of Blois, and Gaucher III., Lord of Chatillon, presented a domain to John and Felix, and bore the expense of building their first abbey in Provence.

James, King of Aragon, announced himself their special friend and protector, and publicly wore the Cross of their order. In England, where the race of philanthropists had not yet sprung up, they were received with enthusiasm; and though there is no record of it that I have seen, you may be sure that in Ireland, where no work of faith and charity ever wanted a home, their project found a hearty welcome.

Such, in fact, was the state of popular feeling on the subject, that in less than forty years there were 600 monasteries of men belonging to the order, and represented in the General Chapters in Rome.

This wonderful Religious Society continued in existence more than 600 years. So long as there were slaves to ransom, it continued to increase and flourish. Every year sending out many agents and millions of money, and bringing home hundreds of slaves back to liberty, country and home. When its work was done, it, of course, began to dwindle away; and the last house of the order was closed about the year 1849, against the reception of new members, by the present Pope, Pius IX.

Allow me, now, to make two reflections--one on the spirit that animated this sublime order, and the other on the means it employed to accomplish its end.

1. The spirit that founded it and gave it life during the ages in which it had work to do, was supernatural charity, love for man as God's image, as Christ's brother, as a pilgrim on earth, whose home is eternity, to which faith lights the path. It was that fire which the Redeemer of men came on earth to kindle, the straightforward, honest practice of the precept, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Its members did not espouse the cause of the slave through any mawkish sympathy with imaginary sensibilities, nor for any political importance the advocacy might give them, nor to gain the reputation of philanthropists, nor to ride into power on the waves of the agitation they might create, but out of disinterested regard for his true interests, which only religion can inspire. They did not free the slave to spite or cripple the master; they did not break his bonds and bid him go starve. They set him free purely to save him from the danger of the apostasy from Christ and eternal ruin. His hardships were to them plain, obvious, palpable. There he was, a Christian, with the seal of baptism on his soul, under the lash of the persecutor, half starved, over-worked, parched with heat and thirst, with the price of apostasy always glittering before his eyes, and the pain of fidelity frowning horribly on him day after day. How soon might his courage falter. To the man of faith this spectacle said, "Behold, thy brother trembling on the verge of the abyss stretches out his arms to thee for aid, canst thou, follower of Him who laid down His life for thy redemption and his, stand coldly looking on?" And the man of faith

could *not* stand coldly looking on.

2. The means which they employed to accomplish the liberation of slaves were such as grew naturally out of the spirit of divine charity which animated them. That charity which is the true golden bond that binds the moral world together, unlike the tinsel counterfeit philanthropy, is never harsh, vindictive, impatient, selfish or unjust to any one.

It prepares no knives, or pikes, or hatchets for the hands of slaves; it counsels no treachery, no murder, no violence, no incendiarism. It never seeks to influence wounded pride into wrath, or sullen discontent into midnight insurrection. But it gently and sweetly seeks to remedy evils without inflicting wrong, and where the evils are irremediable, to soothe affliction with the hope of recompense at the hand of God. Though it could strike the fetters from every slave beneath the canopy of heaven by a single blow, yet it would not strike unless the blow were just. Though it could soothe a single pang of a bondman by a lifetime of labor, it would cheerfully undergo the labor and look to God for reward.

So the Order of Mercy labored for the captives. When any house had gathered together money enough to make it worth the while, one of the priests or brothers took the money and set sail for Tunis or Cairo, or some other Saracen port. Arrived, he announced his errand to the public authorities, and sought the slaves through their masters. Naturally enough a Spanish brother would seek the Spaniards, a French the French, and so on. From these he would select the most needed at home by reason of family necessities, of delicate health or wavering constancy, and buy them at the master's price so long as his money lasted. Then he would send them home and remain himself, sharing the hardships of those that could not be ransomed. Encouraging them to patience and refreshing them with the Sacraments.

In 1201, two disciples of Felix of Valois went to Tunis with the means for buying and sending home one hundred and eighty-six.

In 1202, John of Mather made the same voyage and sent back one hundred and ten more.

Peter of Nolasco, a little later, after having spent all his money, being importuned exceedingly by a poor widow to ransom her only son, on whom she depended for a livelihood, at last, in the excess of his compassion, exchanged himself for the youth--and would have remained a slave for life, had it not pleased God to convert the master to the Faith, and induce him to fly with Peter and all the rest of his slaves to Christendom.

So run the chronicles of this grand Order for nigh 500 years. Every year so much obtained, such and such priests sent out, and so many slaves bought and sent back--bold statements of dry facts. But let fancy fill those facts with their colors by conjuring up the multitudes of gladdened hearts, of smiling wives, fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, of joyous ecstatic greetings--those dry statements would become a picture of

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human heroism and human joy more bright than ever visited a poet's dream.

These are the kind of benefactors which the Catholic Church is ever giving to society, men whose aims are nothing earthly, whose lives are all heavenly. They live unnoticed by the world.