

2. Loneyan

LETTER OF VERY REVEREND FATHER GENERAL
TO THE WHOLE SOCIETY

Reverend fathers and dear Brothers in Christ,

Pax Christi:....

Since I have undertaken the government of the Society under obedience, I think that I should, in accord with the mind of the recent General Congregation, tell you of a special duty which seems to be incumbent on us today. The Church, the spouse of Christ on earth, asks and expects much of our Society throughout the world, the Church hopes that we will be "strong and skillful oarsmen," who will lend effective help to the bark of Peter "tossed and shaken by constant storms." (I) Are we the kind of men who can live up to this expectation of Christ and the Church?

On all sides those who have charge of our various undertakings complain that the laborers are too few. Not only in the missions to the infidels, in those regions which were once called "foreign parts", is there a great lack of manpower, so that we are far from able to evangelize completely the regions intrusted to our care, but even in those places which are still called Catholic, though not always so in fact, we are compelled to refuse many new projects which the Bishops and faithful are asking of us, while even those things which we have been at for a long time we are not able to do as diligently not as perfectly as the matter requires and we desire, even though we burden our men beyond what Christian prudence counsels.

In numbers indeed our workers are unequal to the task; but much more frequently and earnestly we are wont to complain of their lack of ability. That most divine work of all, and to which all our efforts are aimed, namely, to direct souls to their Creator and Redeemer, requires no small talent. If this has ever been true, it is even more so today. All know to what grave dangers and difficulties the faith, not only of learned and cultured men but even of numbers of the less educated is exposed; all of Ours know too that just any sort of spiritual aid offered to those in danger or in error is now highly insufficient.

Men dedicated to the clerical state are expected to be brave soldiers; but we must be officers. In an officer one expects to find such ability, such knowledge, such esprit de corps, such integrity that he is willingly obeyed and confidently followed. It matters little to the Church that there are at hand 28,000 Jesuits; but it counts a great deal what type of men they are. Not unprofitably, although in an accommodated sense, may we apply to ourselves the warning of our Lord:

"Do not say within yourselves: 'We have Abraham for our Father.' For I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up sons of Abraham."

(Matt: 3:9)

(I) Bull Sollicitudo: Instructum S.J.; 1892, Vol. I, 337.

Let us not keep saying: "We are sons of a glorious Society; we have Saint Ignatius for our father;" humbly we might ask ourselves: "Are we really worthy sons of St. Ignatius? Are we such as he expects us to be?"

When the Fathers deputed to the Twenty-ninth General Congregation came to Rome from every corner of the world....from Europe and America, from Australia and the islands of the Pacific, from India and China and Japan, from different parts of Africa, showing the universal character of our Society....they compared what they had themselves heard and experienced. One might prudently assert that their unanimous opinion corresponds to the truth. Significantly, all seemed to think that today's Society is not so outstanding in what St. Ignatius called those "interior things" from which force must flow to the exterior, rather than from the diligent and assiduous devotion to that which is external. Nor is the Society so much "contemplative in action" after the example of our blessed Founder, as too much poured out in activity. We undertake a great deal, we propose to undertake still more; we spare no labor; we seek new ways and means. Day and night we anxiously rush from one task to another; harder and harder we work. Thus we imitate the example of the rest of our contemporaries. To whom, whether on the foreign missions or in the provinces, amidst so many trials of soul, is there left any leisure for thought, contemplation, and prayer? Not a few say:

Does not a new age require a new method; indeed, is not this modern manner of acting more closely akin to the true and genuine spirit of our Father Ignatius? And what formerly was called the "soul of the apostolate" ... a life dedicated first of all to prayer and recollection, must this not now, in the light of an advanced knowledge of the Gospel, be left for the higher principle of "charity" ... that kind of charity which gives itself over to laborious and ceaseless action?

Indeed this is the greatest difficulty which the Society has to solve. It is a far greater and more serious problem than that which arises from the diminished number of laborers in not a few European provinces or from destroyed colleges and residences. One of two ways must be chosen. Is it better, on account of the urgent need of souls, to undertake daily more labors, and more to curtail the time for prayer, reflection, and study, in order that we may forthwith have more time for the apostolate? Or is it better to cease extending out labors, and to perfect those we have already undertaken, to give ourselves more wholeheartedly to study, and to devote more time and greater care and diligence to prayer and contemplation?

To solve this dilemma let us see first of all what our holy Father thought of it, what reason and faith teaches and requires, and then we shall come to some conclusions.

The circumstances of the times in which St. Ignatius founded and molded the Society are not unlike our own. Very many are completely ignorant of religion; minds are clouded by revolutionary ideas and disturbed by false opinions; everywhere the common people are falling from the Church. To these evils there was added, in St.

Ignatius's day the further evil that in many parts of Europe the clergy, in learning and in morals, were not worthy of their divine calling. Endeed, even some of the religious orders had strayed from the path of regular observance.

Humbly seeking the will of God, St. Ignatius, after he had considered the life of the Carthusians, and then the life of the mendicant orders, gradually realized under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that his vocation lay in gaining souls for Christ. Soon he decided to gather about himself companions of the same mind, who, living the life of "reformed" secular priests, might be a source of spiritual aid to their neighbor. By "reformed" clerics, he meant men free from every desire of gain, poor men, even indigent, men moreover given to penance, to prayer, and the pursuit of the interior life, men seeking earnestly evangelical perfection, instant in zeal and labor: men, in brief, who, without the bond of religious life, would imitate the virtues of fervant religious. Let us consider what type of men were our first Fathers as they lived in the Italian cities before going to Rome, or as they toiled in Rome before our Order was founded. They were governed solely by the internal law of charity. They toiled with great fruit for souls, they worked together as one body more closely than any artificial union could have achieved. All these noble deeds which we justly admire, which to our shame and regret we have not yet been able to attain, they achieved by that interior principle alone which so far surpasses that which is exterior as the soul surpasses the body, and that which moves surpasses that which is moved.

When on further deliberation our first Fathers decided to propose this type of life for others to imitate, and determined to make it permanent as long as this should be pleasing to God, they thought it best to found a religious order whose efficacy would depend not so much upon the exterior observance as upon the interior spirit with which it should be animated. They wished that this order should further as far as possible the work of Christ's Vicar on earth in every part of the world; that it should adapt itself as much as possible to the great difficulties of the times; and therefore they wished that it should be free from a number of customs, which some said were necessary to the religious life itself. Not many years after the death of our Founder, when Saint Pius V, in conference with our General, St. Francis Borgia, urged him to introduce choir into the Society, he offered to St. Francis the following weighty reason: "Unless you do this, you will be like chimney-sweeps, you will become defiled while doing your apostolic work." (3) As you know even the Apostle was afraid that after preaching to others, he himself would be lost!

Thus it was that St. Ignatius wished his men to be fashioned by what he afterward called the "experiment" of the Spiritual Exercises, extending through a whole month. Up to that time, no religious congregation, apparently, had prepared its members with a purely interior and spiritual exercise so strenuous and long. And, except for the congregation which imitate the "experiment", influenced by the Society's example and usage, perhaps none, even up to the present, imposes so intense an interior formation upon its men from the very beginning.

(3) Sf. A. Astrain: Historia, l. III, c. 8, p. 321

The formation of our novices and priests pivots upon the Spiritual Exercises. What other objective do they have than solidly establishing us in the cultivation of those "interior" things... namely, of intimate dealing with God in prayer, so that our whole life will be permeated with the spirit of Christ, the spirit of humility, of complete generosity, of active love of the Redeemer, labouring and suffering to gain souls?

For more than ten years the new-born Society lived and grew because of the power and effectiveness of that interior spirit. And when the Constitutions appeared, it was evident, that besides the juridical form and structure of the Order, without which no association on earth can exist and function, the Constitutions comprised especially, the principles of the interior life which were taken from the Exercises...and to such an extent that, later, the collections of these principles could really be said to be the "Summary" of the Constitutions.

The author of the Constitutions himself, wished however to draw up a kind of compendium containing what he deemed necessary before everything else for the end of his Order. Hence, he composed that excellent Tenth Section of the Constitutions, which, we shall never sufficiently reread, study and meditate.

Most of you know these passages by heart: that "Prayers and Holy Sacrifices will be foremost in helping toward the preservation and increase of the Society and toward its advance for the Glory of God and the salvation of souls. Before all else, this purely spiritual and supernatural assistance is esteemed the first....both in order and in importance. Our holy Father goes on to say that "for keeping the spirit of the Society"...the spirit of burning zeal which comes from loving Christ, the spirit so dear to us..."for attaining the objective which the Society proposes: the help of souls"...those means which join the instrument to God and dispose it to be guided by the divine hand are more effective than those which regard men." "For they are the interior things from which force must flow to those which are exterior for the objective proposed to us." (4)

One could hardly express the thought more tellingly and plainly. Even in that age, so destructive of things human and divine, when it seemed that all else should be set aside to bring absolutely all forces into play to render help to souls at once, he who ardently desired the Society to be apostolic, intensely wished that it be "interior".

It is not surprising that the Summary of the Constitutions, when it speaks of external work, says that "Moderation in mental and physical work" will make for long continuation and will keep the whole body in condition..."(5) Here is that famous Ignatian "discretion" or wisdom. We may well ask whether we fully observe it, in balancing activity and contemplation.

Our Father's own spirit shines forth especially in those outstanding men whom he personally formed in the way of the Institute,

(4) Const. P.X..n. 1.2.

(5) Const. P.X. n. 10.

or whose formation went on under his supervision. Read the biography and writings of St. Francis Xavier, St. Peter Canisius, Blessed Peter Faber: All of them, though laboring prodigiously, are most of all outstanding for their valuing, loving, and practicing the "interior" and the spiritual. They are models for us in nearly all our principal works: in pagan and distant missions, in producing books, in colleges, in teaching Christianity, in preaching to widely differing groups in spiritual direction...through the Exercises and otherwise. Would that we had more among us, so hard-working and efficient! Still, is it not evident, how highly they esteemed prayer, mortification, and the whole spiritual life?

Not to dwell longer upon the examples of our saints, I pass by Peter Claver, John Francis Regis, Francis de Hieronymo, Bernardino Realini. Who would say, that in a very "modern" sense...these men were not vigorous and active apostles according to the exigencies of their day, and at the same time, most faithful to the genuine spirit of our Constitutions and Rules?

Even a little consideration makes clear, how much is contributed to the success of the apostolate by what St Thomas describes with the single word "contemplation" ... namely, studies and reflection which are accompanied at every stage by, and permeated with meditation and prayer.

Who fails to see the need for solid study, not only as remote preparation for the work of a priest, but also as nourishment for all our preaching, teaching, and directing? Our Founder surely impressed this upon his sons, if ever anyone did. Furthermore, the very law of the universal Church sets it forth in the Code for all priests. And it is insisted upon by pontifical letters and by the continual exhortation of ecclesiastical superiors. The faithful of our time read and hear so much and such a variety of material. Some are particularly anxious about religious questions, especially the inspiration and historicity of Sacred Scripture, and the more difficult truths of faith, such as the teaching on predestination, grace and its efficacy, original sin, salvation outside the Church, the value of other religions, the eternity and pains of hell. They are not satisfied with the mere assertion by a priest that such things are to be accepted with a blind and simple faith. They rightly attribute such an answer to his ignorance; they wonder that a priest whose business it is to be versed in matters of theology, philosophy, and scripture, cannot answer those who ask. Certain people suspect that our truths rest on a weaker foundation than we claim. Some fall away from the faith or remain strangers to it. And this is true, not only of the learned: In regions regarded as Catholic, many of the ordinary populace, even of those who have not yet abandoned the practice of religion, give way to doubts. They are strongly influenced by the charges made, now here, now there, against it. But what is to be said about the millions without faith and still steeped in false doctrines? Neither mere good-will, nor sincere piety, nor charity alone will suffice, for the most part, unless there is also learning, presented in a way adapted to the minds of the hearers. Not even in our own schools is that knowledge of religion adequate, which once satisfied the students, especially the older ones. Some think the

students' difficulties concern only the practice of virtue; but more often than appears, and at an earlier age than we think, they have difficulties against faith. These difficulties no one will solve who does not read, reflect and meditate assiduously.

When it comes to the conversion of the more learned who are skeptical and without faith...and this is to be regarded as one of the most important of all our ministries...who fails to see that men, thoroughly competent in one field or another, will have little esteem for, and no confidence in a man who to them seems already suspect just because of his priesthood, unless he is outstanding in some natural gifts, or abilities and knowledge?

If at times, our scholastics, those farther along especially, are annoyed by the tediousness of long preparation...when they are at an age when other priests and religious are already engaged in the apostolate...they ought to recall what is required of them by these times in which we live; they should remember what the Church awaits of them. Encouragement should be drawn from what our Supreme Pontiff, Pius XII said, when he cautioned us against shortening our lengthy formation: "Just as a long time is needed for making an oak strong and firm, so also it always takes great patience to form a man of God." (6)

Divine providence, of course, has not endowed all in the Society with equal aptitude; hence all are not destined for the same ministry, no do they need the same skills. But everyone called to be a priest becomes a "specialist", as we say, in matters religious. For a priest to be a bungling theologian, one who has not thoroughly assimilated theology with his mind and with a devoted heart...that is just as shameful and as injurious a thing as for a physician not to know medicine or to have no interest or love for it. The latter has weighing on his conscience the harm he does to bodies; and there is no one who does not see what harm the former with objectively serious fault does to souls. Would that it were never irreparable!

A Priest must study unceasingly, seriously, attentively and meditatively. And for this study assiduous prayer will be a marvelous aid, particularly the prayer we are accustomed to call meditation. Religious truths must not only be understood in precise concepts, but, to use the expression of our holy Father, they are also to be sensed and tasted interiorly; something which is impossible without the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is essential for every priest and religious, that he permit himself to be taught and guided by God, united to Him as an instrument in the hand of the builder. Who of Ours has ever doubted but that every first germ of faith, every initial salutary light and movement comes gratuitously from above? Do we not all affirm with fullest faith that in the work for souls we are helpless without the grace of Christ who said: "Without me you can do nothing." (7) Doing the work of God, we act not as the principal and efficient cause, but as an instrument utterly dependent on the Divine Workman.
(7) John 15:5

Who would even hope to accomplish anything in this world, saturated with materialism, naturalism and pride, without an abundant effusion of God's grace?

Consider the tasks assigned to men in the Mystical Body of Christ: to serve as "Prophets", as men of God and Interpreters of His Will, as teachers and rulers. To fill their office worthily and well, surely such men must be penetrated with the very life of the Body of Christ, imbued with its spirit, alive to its every movement. Such union will always be the gift of God and not the fruit of our efforts.

Now if all this is true; if this is our faith, then why is it that, delirious with the fever of activity, we omit and neglect so completely all prayerful recollection of mind and attention to the divine voice speaking within? Why is it that we always give the preference in our modern apostolate to exterior activity, even omitting the things of the spirit that we may more strenuously pursue the externals?

We have fallen into error. We have turned from the way that leads to God and the salvation of souls, and forgetful of the spirit of our constitutions we have been rushing into ever more frantic activity. It is time to stop. It is time to face about.

Hear what the Supreme Pontiff said to us in gravest terms: "...in these days that most erroneous attitude called Naturalism strives to pervade all things; and through the so-called "heresy of action" it even attempts to wear in some, the guise of apostolic zeal and spirituality." (8)

Now we present to you certain conclusions, some looking directly to Superiors, others to all of Ours.

It is the duty of Superiors so to moderate their subjects' labors, both imposed and freely undertaken, that neither the "spirit be oppressed nor the body take harm":(9) this principle, applied by our Rule to corporal labors, is valid for all our activities.

Let there be moderation in all things. No one, within the ordinary Providence of God, even though possessed of unusual vitality and courage, can push his efforts beyond a certain limit without loss of greater good. It is incumbent on Superiors, regardless of difficulties, to save their subjects from truly excessive labor. Let us not accept every proffered ministry; let us not begin new tasks, even though insistently besought by bishops, priests and laity; before expanding what we have already begun, we must carefully check our resources of skill and men, lest we be forced beyond the limits of a truly religious life. It may well happen that very useful and almost essential work will have to be refused, remembering the reply of the Holy Father, Pius X, of happy memory, to a certain religious superior: "We are not Divine Providence." We cannot do everything, nor does Divine Wisdom expect it of us. We will omit some things; some things we will leave to others; without falling prey to laziness or sloth, we can and must say: "God will provide." Moreover, what title to God's blessing have we for tasks assumed contrary to the prescriptions of our Constitutions and in violation of all laws (8) Acta Romana X. 637

(9) Constitutions, P.111, 62, n. 4;
Summ. Const. R. 47.

of prudence and charity? We will take as our motto: "Non multa sed multum"; let us not further extend the apostolic endeavor of the Society; if possible, we must narrow it; let us not begin the new and better, unless at the same time we drop certain less productive, out-moded works, Let the preparation of Ours be broadened and deepened; working always more wisely, let us guard the leisure requisite to life of prayer and thought.

However, it not infrequently happens that to the moderate tasks imposed by obedience a subject will freely make many additions according to the promptings of his heart or the dictates of blind and immoderate zeal. It even happens that with complete neglect of duty, all their effort is expended on the objects of their free choice. In such a case, it is the Superior's duty by paternal advice and exhortation to correct the mistake of his subject; and if he does not obey, to insist still more; and finally, with kindness and charity, to command him. The Superior may not say, "he is of age; let him see to it." For not only is the subject answerable for himself to God, but the Superior is answerable to God for his subject. Nor does the Superior do his duty if, after rightly admonishing his subject, he then permits him to do as he pleases.

This vigilance over the work of subjects is only a part of the Superior's office. Provincials, Rectors, Superiors and Ministers must also help their subjects to be faithful to the Rules and the prescribed offices of piety. Such vigilant aid can be of much avail; such is human weakness, that many are genuinely strengthened by corrections frequently repeated and enforced with salutary penances. Nor can the Superior leave the whole care to the Spiritual Father in this matter; for the Superior, in accord with the mind of our Institute as clearly expressed by our Founder, must be most solicitous even of the interior life of his subjects. Just as the father of a family concerns himself not only with the temporal goods and health of his sons, but also with their education and progress in faith and virtue, thus also and much more the religious Superior, if only he understands what it is to rule as a father and with a paternal spirit. Religious commit themselves to their Order that in it they may more surely find God and serve Him well. The Superior cannot fail to help in this without a true sin of omission. How badly deceived is that Superior who esteems his men only on the basis of experience, knowledge, natural gifts and success in external things. These are all good indeed, but deceptive when considered alone because: "God is able to raise up sons of Abraham from stones".(10) Let them consider rather the abnegation of their subjects, their humility, solid piety and charity, their depth of spirit.

Let these few observations concerning the duty of Superiors suffice for the present, for to them the General must frequently write, dealing assiduously with all their various offices. Now I would touch upon two points, which, according to statements made by the Fathers of the 29th Congregation, are at present of the greatest moment in order that the spirit of the Society be preserved, and, so far as necessary, revived, that once again we may approach our initial apostolic efficacy: fidelity to our Rule, and fidelity to prayer.

(10) Matt: 3:9

And first we consider fidelity to our religious observance, to those Rules, particularly, which pertaining as they do to external deportment and activity are held of little moment by not a few because of the prejudices of our times. Some of these rules, they say, are maintained just for the sake of appearances. "Superiors", some of Ours contend, "know these rules to be out-dated; but because they dislike changing the traditional usages, or simply oppose their deletion out of some irrational cast of mind, these rules remain on the books." Likewise, they say, "there are other rules designed to regulate our conduct in all surroundings; where, however, the good of souls can be obtained without observing these rules, why should we bother with them to the detriment of our "personality" and of human progress? As long as we are lead by the interior law of charity the rest is of little matter; why insist on them as if religious perfection consisted in them?"

It will help to consider a little more closely these present-day illusions...illusions which, to tell the truth, do not always really deceive those who follow them. For, unless our whole life rests on perfect sincerity, it is impossible for us to please God, Who is Supreme Truth. If our Superiors urge the observance of rules which they themselves regard as antiquated and ineffective, thereby imposing on their subjects a heavy load "which neither our fathers nor we ourselves have been able to bear,"(11) they must be accused of serious guilt before God. If they impose as ultimate norms merely disciplinary prescriptions, which have as their sole purpose the preservation of some external order, they are lacking in that "discretion" which St. Ignatius placed at a very high premium and which he indicates as one of those things by which the Society can be kept in a healthy state.

Concerning the worthwhileness of observing our rules, errors which can lead to serious consequences have here and there begun to insinuate themselves in not a few provinces. And unless our Spiritual Fathers and Superiors energetically refute these errors by explaining the true teaching of the Society and supporting it with theological argument, we are in a position where we can really turn aside from our true spirit.

Religious observance, that is, the aggregate of our rules relating to discipline, has a twofold objective: an external one and an internal one. And it is based on a double foundation: reason and faith.

Religious discipline has for its purpose a certain external order. No one will deny that in any association of men working toward an end, it is necessary to coordinate the efforts of the various persons by rule and the guidance of authority. It is indeed quite possible that some private individual may himself think out a more effective procedure. But no one with any experience will deny that it is advisable for all unaffectedly to obey one person, although he may perhaps issue imperfect commands, rather than for each one to carry on according to his own notions, even though some individuals might discover more perfect methods. Let us notice, I ask you, how things are done under our very eyes by enemies of the Christian name, in how compact a unity and with what efficiency they (11) Acts 15:10.

stand together.

Both among friends and among enemies of our Order, our own unity and continuity of action deriving from our obedience is a matter of praise. We should show far more and greater achievement if there were not so many among us who, out of human weakness, have great difficulty in curbing their own inclinations, so that, when the rule or a superior commands or indicates a preference, they may make the decision proceeding from obedience their very own. If one rereads many of the things which my revered predecessor wrote to the Society, it would scarcely be difficult to instance some further sad examples today.

Our rules are indeed in part directed to giving the Society this unity of action throughout the world and in each Province. And this purpose of the rules should not be set aside lightly by anyone. Still, the chief purpose of the religious rule is interior: for it is really directed in the first place to sanctifying individuals and thus preparing them for their mission of winning souls.

It is no secret to anyone that most of our rules have been borrowed by our holy Founder and his successors from the ancient religious tradition of other orders, both monastic and mendicant. That is, they are the common patrimony of the religious life in the Catholic Church. They are grounded in a deep knowledge of human nature and in solid and tested Christian asceticism.

If we wish to be sincere and humble...and these two virtues fit remarkably together...we are forced to own that our human nature needs protection if we are to be able to observe and profit by the vows and the virtues...even the essential virtues. There is no priest of any maturity who has had experience in the ministry among religious who does not know what unhappy falls are to be ascribed to overconfidence or brashness, and that not only in the case of young people but also in the case of older ones and even of men quite advanced in years. With that unconscious pride which is found in all men, they have readily exempted themselves from the observation of the rules, and, unawares, they have fallen into the dangers to which our weakness all too readily yields. We undoubtedly need our rules to keep us from falling when the danger presents itself.

If we are to be able to lead a life of continual labor, of continual forgetfulness of self, of continual control over our passions with their tendency to interfere with our judgment, a life of continual and strenuous engagements with adversaries whom we must overcome not with force but only with the weapons of charity...for all this our nature is going to need the support of an energetic asceticism. The principle involved here is understood even by those who take care of the training of military recruits today: the training of recruits becomes more severe and uncompromising than ever when it is seen that they are not only to be soldiers in name and by reason of their uniform, but that they are going to be sent into action. Similarly, unless our ascetical training maintains that uncompromising or inflexible quality which we have learned from our holy Father and our predecessors, we are going to become soldiers of Christ in name and in uniform rather than in reality and in fact. Hence,

Superiors are not to connive at younger men who rashly look for a considerable relaxation in the austerity of our life and of the severity of our discipline, pretending that this will make them more competent to engage in the battles which have to be fought today. It is the business of Superiors to lead, not to be led. Even if here and now the younger men do not understand why the time-honored observance is so strongly urged, and ascribe this severity to the deficient paternal attitude of those in charge, nevertheless those in charge should act as a father ought to act who is aware of his duty. Often enough a good father of a family will have to prescribe what his sons here and now consider rather severe and what they cannot see or understand to be of any importance. But the father will know from mature reflection what his orders are for. He will know^{what} the true good of his sons requires, while the sons themselves, although they balk now, will later, when they have arrived at full maturity, be deeply grateful to the good father, perhaps by this time long dead, who has prepared them for life as it really is...difficult, troublesome, and full of sorrows. How many of Ours there are who, in their declining years regret the fact that long ago superiors did not hold them to more faithful observance, to more serious study, to better performance in their writing and public speaking. Indeed, they even condemn the Superiors and directors and teachers who once connived at their indolence. "He who spares the rod hates his own son." (12) For a vigorous life, there is no preparation other than a vigorous education.

Our religious observance is an asceticism which has been tested by the experience of centuries. But it is designed to serve an even more sublime spiritual purpose.

The saying of Our Lord, "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (13) lays open to us religious especially the road to perfection and union with God. Unless we become humble whole-heartedly, thoroughly, and unaffectedly, we only flatter ourselves vainly to think that we are going to find God in everything. In fact, the first objective of all religious observance, indeed of all our obedience is this: that the religious become a thoroughly humble man, small in his own eyes, small in the eyes of others, and that he look only to God for his exaltation. Now this humility is remarkably furthered by regular discipline, accepted simply and carefully observed. The fact that in the case of things really quite reasonable and good, things which anybody in the world decides upon according to his own good pleasure, we are obliged, entirely as little children, even though we may be well advanced in years, to ask for permission from the superior and submit ourselves to his scrutiny...in the ministry, in dealing with externs, in writing letters, in speaking and keeping silence, in getting up and going to bed, and in a thousand other things...what is more according to the spirit of the gospel, what is more humbling, what is fuller of the spirit of our Master, meek and humble of Heart?

Undoubtedly we do harm to ourselves and our own souls when, resorting to various pretexts and sophisms, we exempt ourselves from that fidelity which we learned as novices. We often complain that there is lacking among us a spirit of working together and of giving ourselves to community projects, that we are not sufficiently large-

9 (12) Proverbs: 13:24 (13) Matt: 18:23

souled in overlooking the defects of others and in valuing and praising their gifts and merits, that we lack genuine piety and the spirit of prayer. But all these things are of a piece, and they would all readily spring from a greater humility of heart. There is a great deal of remarkable psychology, both natural and supernatural in the dictum ascribed to St. Leo by our holy Father in his Letter on Obedience: "Nothing is difficult for the humble and nothing is hard for the meek."

That humble course of life which consists chiefly in obedience is really the continual practice of the third degree of humility which St. Ignatius proposes to us in the book of the Exercises as the most perfect preparation of the soul for any higher gifts. Hence from the beginning of our novitiate we are asked whether we wish "to obey and be humble and attain eternal happiness" in the Society.(14)

The man of today readily applauds various virtues such as sincerity, generosity of spirit, a challenging attitude toward the tyranny of tradition, bravery; but there are certain others which he makes much less of, perhaps even scorns. These are humility and penance. Let us take care lest, on the plea of being "modern", we cease to cultivate the true spirit of Christ. It is not permitted us to mutilate the Gospel or the epistles of Paul; and while retaining what pleases us better, omit what is less attractive to us. He who said: "Going, teach all nations" (15) said also: "He who does not take up his cross is not worthy of Me." (16); and the same Apostle who was a debtor to "Jews and Greeks", nay even to "Greeks and barbarians" was wont assiduously to cultivate mortification, humility, meekness and to inculcate these virtues. Father Jules Cordara, a man not unfamiliar with the history of the Society, frankly stated that in his opinion, if there be room for speculation in such matters, the old Society had possibly displeased God through a lack of humility, and therefore was tried and tested by the calamity of suppression. God alone knows whether such a judgment be true or not; still we may well have grounds for fearing that we, like our forefathers, give reason for such a doubt and that perhaps the cause of such displeasure to the Divine Majesty is that we have not become "like little children".

So much for religious observance which in the mind of the Fathers of the recent Congregation, is the principle matter for reform on the part of all of us, lest the Society should waste its spirit in mere external works. The second point claiming our attention is faithful devotion to our daily exercises of piety... above all to the whole hour of mental prayer. Moreover these two things are inter-related: for observance, with its principal fruit--humility--, is a sine qua non for prayer. At least we may say that, without it, prayer will be made less faithfully or will not bear that fruit which the spiritual writers ascribe to it. Prayer, on the other hand, will imbue our observance with that spirit of love without which it is meritless. In truth, prayerless observance, far from increasing our spirit of devotion will work to its prejudice and wreck it upon the rocks of niggardly pusillanimity.

(14) Exam.Gen. c.4;m.45.

(15) Matt. 28:19.

(16) Matt. 9:38

To discourse upon mental prayer to religious of Our Society and point out its value both in our individual lives and for our Apostolate is quite superfluous, it seems to me. It is hardly necessary to repeat, indeed, what my predecessor had to say in this regard in the letter he wrote on July 2, 1934, to the Society. His customary devotion and solid doctrine are amply mirrored therein.(17) Let that letter be read and read again especially when Renovation of vows or the annual retreat comes around. I have in mind a few practical points which may be made here not without profit.

We should be quite lacking in sincerity, were we to fail to recognize a fact that practically hits one in the eye. I mean the curtailing or entire omission of mental prayer by some here and there throughout the Society. At times it is the younger members, but far more often the seniors in age and in religion. What causes this? And what remedies are there for such criminal negligence? I say criminal advisedly because it is that negligence which is the root cause of harm in the Society's apostolate.

The first excuse we usually come out with is: "I had no time to pray." The need of souls is great...the workers in the vineyard are few. From morning till night (it would not do to say from early morning, till night), indeed until quite late at night, we are at work busily studying, preaching, working with the neighbor. So there is no time left for protracted prayers.

Not infrequently does work overburden us...that is true enough. We have already stated what duties fall to Superiors and what obligations their subjects have, in a previous part of this letter. Perhaps it is not so much the actual work which is an obstacle as the methods of work we employ. How often does it happen that in the identically same job, one man will say he never has a moment he can call his own for the exercises of piety, while another will confess he finds no difficulty at all in being faithful to them. The reason for this is that the whole trick is whether or not you have learned to work in an orderly fashion and parcel out your day efficiently. It's the case also with some in their own private affairs. One man simply never can keep his things in order: give him a short time and his room looks like a second-hand shop or an antique store. It's the same way with jobs. Were we for several continuous days or weeks to keep an accurate account of how we make use of our time, it would be quite evident that we have wasted a good deal more time than is necessary for relaxation simply by working in a helter-skelter fashion without any previous planning or by consuming more time than is reasonable in reading newspapers or all kinds of books to no purpose. Another time-waster is protracted conversation with our students, with externs or with our own brethren on matters that might well be expedited or indeed omitted altogether. We shall perceive how much time we have let slip through our fingers by superficially covering too wide a range, flitting like butterflies from one flower to another, doing nothing thoroughly and in a solid fashion. But perhaps, before God we could admit that we have never waster a moment of our time uselessly. Still and all,... even from a human viewpoint,...how much time would we not gain were we to obtain by faithful prayer, more abundant graces from the Holy Spirit! There is that holy inspiration which God is accustomed to send us at the appointed times, informing us just what we ought to

(17) Acta Romana VII, 820 - 859.

say in our sermons, how we ought to go about our affairs, what little plans we ought to resort to in order to win our neighbors. God often compensates those who trust in Him, in a very short time, after long hours have been consumed in vain attempts. Let us be on our guard against what the author of the Imitation of Christ warns us, that is, how ingenious our human nature is in trumping up excuses and finding pretexts for avoiding what displeases us, and for seeking the pleasant things in life: "So much inclined to things exterior; so negligent of the interior. So prone to laughter and dissipation, so hard to tears and compunction..." (18) Let us beware that where as a matter of fact we lack courage and the ability to stick at it, we dream up, with sincerity, excuses that seem to carry weight.

Let our day be orderly. And the first and most important point in this program of orderliness is to go to bed on time. If the duties of our apostolic work make it necessary to stay up later, then have the matter regulated by the Superior, both for the purpose of getting up later and so that both morning and evening spiritual exercises may be carried out fully and perfectly, even though at a different hour. But the hour of rising and retiring is not to be a matter of our own whim: it must be determined by the authority of the Superior. The experience both of secular priests and religious has been that the cause of omission of morning prayer and the preparation for Mass is almost always the fact that the man did not have the will-power to stop reading or writing or talking at a definite hour. How happy I should be to know that one single resolution taken in the annual retreat by a good many people was simply to go to bed on time every night! If you don't do that, unless you are an extraordinarily strong-willed individual, you cannot remain faithful for long to the exercises of piety prescribed in the Society, and necessary for a truly spiritual life. I wish the Fathers^s Minister in the Colleges would make it their business to see that the scholastics and the younger brothers are not remiss in this matter. They may as well know that they are responsible for the future inefficiency of our priests in the Apostolate...in fact they are answerable for vocations unfortunately lost, if they do not faithfully carry out their duties of watching this matter faithfully.

Let our work be orderly. I mean we should always begin with our exercises of piety, unless charity or some other duty at times demands otherwise, and we should place them ahead of any other work. The marvel of it is that the very people who never finish their Previary on time, never find time either to say their beads or do any spiritual reading. If these matters are attended to without haste and with peace of soul before all other jobs, then we shall pray with greater devotion. Then afterwards, our work will be done more efficiently and expeditiously with no trouble at all. If you do not believe this, I suggest that you try it.

Another cause of our lack of faithfulness to mental prayer is simply the trouble that this very salutary exercise of piety demands of some of us.

It is everybody's experience...in fact, a fairly frequent experience,...that prayer can be rendered difficult by what St. Ignatius calls "desolation". To be sure, our holy Father himself, a man by no means weak-kneed, felt that it was "extremely difficult", (18) Imitation of Christ, Bk IV, c. 7.

when desolation comes along, to persevere in contemplation for a whole hour. Now any man who is at all serious about leading a life dedicated to prayer, may as well prepare himself to face no little trouble from the various forms of desolation. His mind will be distracted. He will be tempted. He will suffer from aridity. He will be incapable of fixing his mind upon anything salutary. And this will perhaps be a matter of no short duration, but will last a long time. In fact, it may be the more usual experience. Consequently, the temptation to shorten the exercise and presently to omit it, will occur when it still remains unfruitful and useless (so we think) in spite of the various remedies you employ to overcome aridity. That is the conclusion we are apt to come to. Would it not be better to read or study or take a look at what we are to say, rather than waste our time with useless attempts at prayer?

This is a serious mistake and a pernicious one. It recurs over and over again. We want to calculate the spiritual fruit of prayer by the consolation...especially the sensible consolation we derive from it. Do not both reason and faith teach us quite otherwise? Is not that abnegation through which we are not made to depend upon sensible consolation, among the first requisites for a life united to God? The Beatific Vision is reserved for Heaven alone. We are still in Via, "peregrinantes a domino", seeking by hope what we do not as yet possess, "seeing in a glass darkly", by vision, but it is by faith that we know God. And by charity we love God who is known only by faith. Faith, of course, presents difficulty to our proud spirit and likewise to our proud hearts and self-love. To be able to persevere faithfully in prayer we must have a living faith; we must believe that it is right and just, proper and conducive to salvation for us to adore God unceasingly, to give thanks to Him, to beg pardon of Him humbly for ourselves as well as for others, to manifest to Him our desires and our needs of help, even though we may not see nor experience the fact that His is merciful to us and hears us. By faith we must profess that the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, in which each member exercises his proper function, and in which it has fallen to us as religious and priests to be made mediators in man's behalf between God and men, offering satisfaction and prayer in their place and in their name. And if it is truly fitting that we should become contemplatives in action, will there be any other path open to us except that which the Society, having four centuries of experience in the apostolate, still points out to us and recommends with greater insistence for the needs of our times? I refer to the practice of daily prayer, both mental and vocal, carried on through the hours of the day with inflexible fidelity and regarded as the most important thing in our life.

Someone, no doubt, will ask whether the weakened nervous condition of the young men of our day is equal to the strenuous task of making a full hour of meditation; and whether perhaps it is not expedient to use more freely that faculty of dispensation which St. Ignatius gives to the Rector. For it seems that those in this weakened condition need relaxation, a less restricted life, and distractions, of the mind from things of this sort in order to regain their health and self-composure. What we impose upon them was perhaps suited to our forefathers who were stronger in body; but there is need of kind consideration towards those who have a weaker

constitution. Indeed everyone will admit that certain phases of our manner of life must be adapted to the exigencies of the times. And everywhere in the Society this has already been done. But we cannot for this reason allow that our prayer and especially our meditation should be shortened or omitted.

Those who have tendencies toward what are today called nervous disorders need above all else peace of soul and interior joy in order to regain their health. For true peace of soul is nowhere to be found more abundantly than in the assiduous practice of the purest intention and union with God.

One time when Our Very Reverend Father Ledochowski of pious memory, then Assistant for Germany, was visiting the provinces of his assistancy, he spoke to the novices of Tronchiennes and made this remark, which is confirmed by experience: "A man who is truly devoted to prayer is not subject to nervous disorders." A man who is devoted to prayer may have a weak nervous system; but he will not succumb to those so-called nervous disorders, that is, to a state of soul in which the sick person thinking only of himself and his ailments becomes a burden to himself and a nuisance to others; he loses heart and seems even to lose his self-control and mental balance.

On the contrary, a man who daily nourishes and fortifies his soul by prayer will courageously disguise the real grievances he suffers so as not to be bothersome to others. In addition, he will preserve his confidence which finds its support in God's help. He will always be ready to undertake according to his ability, any laborious task; he will inspire courage in others; and the more deeply he feels his own weakness and need of help, the more effectively will console and help others in difficulty.

Let those who are suffering from nervous fatigue be taught to pray calmly without straining their heads and without an inordinate desire of consolation. For prayer itself is not what causes fatigue, but rather the stirrings of that disquieting self-love which tends to steal away our peace of soul.

This point, therefore, is most important in the life of prayer: that each one be taught to pray in the manner and method which suits him best.

In that letter of Father Claudius Aquaviva "On the Use of Prayer and Penance in the Society" (19), which can never be sufficiently praised, he clearly explains the principles according to which we should evaluate and regulate the method of our prayer. It is by no means the wish of that illustrious General of the Society that all should be forced to proceed along the same path and at the same pace. For this would be contrary to sound spiritual doctrine, and to the intentions and even the practice of our holy Father himself.

Moreover Father Aquaviva wishes that before all things we should follow as our guide the Holy Spirit Who operates in the soul of each as He wishes. It is the part of an experienced spiritual father to discover in each religious, even in our young men, the kind and quality of disposition bestowed on them by nature and grace so that the spiritual life of each individual may receive its proper development...within the limits, of course, of sound doctrine and the asceticism of our vocation, about which there are many wonderful (19) Letters of the Generals, 1909, 1 p. 248 ss.

testimonies in this epistle.

To cite an example which clears away all doubt, we shall recall how great were the differences in some respects (though in others there was admirable agreement) among some of those who were trained or directed by our holy Father himself. In the case of Peter Fater, Francis Borgia, and Peter Canisius, we find that each cultivated his own individual type of piety, and nevertheless shared the mind of the same father; just as in the order of nature sons of the same mother bear a striking resemblance to one another and yet each one is thoroughly different from the other.

As we have already said, in order that Ours be better trained in the life of prayer, it is above all necessary that they be firmly grounded in sincere humility according to the measure of grace imparted to them. Unless a soul becomes sincere, docile and meek, it will be too far removed from the Divine Exemplar, as revealed to us in the Incarnate Word, to be able to be assimilated to the Divine nature, Divine inspirations, Divine knowledge and Divine love. And so with difficulty or even in vain will he seek to discover a way to an easier more simple, and more profound prayer.

It is impossible that the God of truth, Who necessarily hates a lie, should associate familiarly with one who arrogantly and petulantly gives thanks to God that he is not like other men. (20) How shall he who thinks he has no need of light receive the light sent down from heaven? How shall he who boasts that he commits no sin receive the pardon for past sins offered him by Divine Mercy? How shall he who wishes to depend on no one and desires to be his own master be attracted by Divine Love? Who will give anything to one who refuses to accept it and who denies that he needs it?

But if before all things sincere humility pervades the soul... a humility that surely must be greatly perfected in the course of years (for God Himself is wont to teach humility in a fuller way by sending many trials to those who are growing more mature and especially to those who are aging)...then the merciful Jesus will be close to such a person, according to those words: "Quam pius es petentibus, quam bonus et quaerentibus." (21)

The Master of Novices from the very first days should teach his young men the elements of the methods of prayer from the book of the Exercises. In these early stages, it is quite necessary that all should proceed as it were, along the same path, for all of these things are new to them. And yet, St. Ignatius advises in various places (for example, in the fourth addition of the First Week which is perhaps the most important passages in our Exercises) that even for those who are making the Exercises for the first time, several adaptations should be made, as far as is possible, to meet the spiritual needs of each individual. It is the Master's duty to discover if there are any, especially among the more mature, who even in the Novitiate, need direction that is more specialized in accordance with the different state of soul and the various difficulties of each individual.

But first and foremost the spiritual Father to whom the train-
(20) Luke: 18:11 (21) Hymn of First Vespers, Feast of the Holy -
Name

ing of our young men is entrusted from the time they finish the novitiate, ought to take care that the spiritual reading, and the subject matter and method of prayer should be adapted to each individual. A man of singular ability in the Society, who directed first the Juniors and afterwards the tertians for many years with admirable skill, used to say that the principal reason why not a few grow tepid in prayer in later life was that they had never learned a method of prayer which was suited to them. It is therefore required that the Spiritual Father should in addition to his own experience, prepare himself by the study of ascetical and mystical theology, and by reading spiritual books which are regarded as classics in the Church, so as to be able to help all in their needs. Those especially who have charge of scholastics teaching in our colleges should see to it that in this rather difficult period, these young men learn a method of prayer which is more suited to the active life.

Caution indeed must be taken, as Father Aquaviva very well explains, that we do not depart from the kind of prayer required in the life of the Society; that we do not adhere to a foreign and less approved asceticism because it is new or modern; on the other hand, we must be careful not to interpret "our method", as we sometimes call it, more strictly than our Founder and the Society itself intends.

Is there any reason then to fear that Ours are wandering from the safe path when they nourish their prayer from books of Scripture other than the gospels, or from the books of the liturgy? Provided that they are sufficiently prepared and instructed in the use of such texts, do Ours depart from the true spirit of our vocation because they drink directly from the very fountains of faith and Catholic piety, as the Church herself teaches us to do more and more in the letters, exhortations, and encyclicals of the Supreme Pontiffs?

If their devotion inclines them, our scholastics, especially the more mature ones, and certainly our priests, will derive great and lasting benefit from meditation on the psalms and hymns of the Breviary, the prayers of the Missal and the Ritual, and most of all from the liturgy of the sacraments. By constant reading they should become familiar with the books of Sacred Scripture; and, if they have not yet finished theology, this should be done under proper direction. From the scriptures they should select a few thoughts to be digested and relished in prayer; selecting them from the Old Testament as well as from the New Testament, and by no means excluding the Acts and Epistles.

How often have we heard Ours complain: "I can find no suitable daily meditation book"? True, this statement is exaggerated, because there is a sufficiency of books, well suited to most people. Yet, in some sense it is true. For it is not surprising that a man who has lived many years in religion, studied theology and completed Tertianship, who has heard many instructions, read many books and given points for meditation to others, should find those very books, although good, distasteful because they are too well known. He may be on the look-out for books more solid, deep and to the point. He

will find what he wants in private study of the Scriptures. In truth, although at first it may seem a little strange to some, let him not hesitate to gather from our dogmatic and patristic text books passages which he may use as prayers. Who has ever expressed with greater devotion, feeling and solidity the truths of the Holy Eucharist or the Sacrifice of the Mass, than the Council of Trent in the 22d session? Where will he find material on these mysteries which is more suited for instructions, sermons and meditation? Were not some of the Trinitarian formulas, encyclicals of the Popes and similar documents composed in order to supply the soul of the devout inquirer with solid spiritual nourishment? The objection may arise that this is to turn meditation into study. That will not happen, if one has learned to converse humbly and simply with God. To restrict myself to the Saints of our Society, how much spiritual nourishment can be found in their writings! How much matter for prayer would not one find in the thoughtful and prayerful reading of the "Memorial" of Blessed Peter Faber, "The Confessions" of St. Peter Canisius, some of the spiritual treatises of St. Robert Bellarmine, or the treatise on "The Divine Names" of Venerable Father Leonard Lessius?

Let the Tertian Master teach our priests to dig out the treasures of our Catholic heritage, which have suffered eclipse in the course of centuries and in our present age have been buried in oblivion. Such knowledge would help our fathers in the third year of probation to learn the art of directing souls especially along the paths of mental prayer.

After having tried the various kinds of approved prayer, many eagerly and profitably return to that type of prayer which is common and ordinary. This type of prayer can be practised by those who have not engaged in the formal study of theology. Our Brothers are an excellent example of this, who are accustomed to approach God familiarly and humbly. How much spiritual profit can be acquired from the all too neglected second method of prayer? Indeed, who prays more profitably than the man who with full heart perseveringly utters only the "Our Father" or the "Hail Mary" and devoutly adores the ever present God?

We sometimes hear this difficulty proposed: I am frequently so worn out by my daily labors that I scarcely have strength left for prayer. I am so weary that I am incapable of throwing off the cares of my office or of giving serious thought to any matter. In the morning I am especially sluggish and drowsy. This frequently happens to those who live in tropical regions and are afflicted with those chronic diseases that are common to certain mission fields. What can the missionary do who is forced to be on the road before dawn and returned in the evening only to be pestered with swarms of insects and asked to solve the many little personal problems of his Christians? How is it possible for a man in such circumstances to perform his ordinary spiritual exercises?

St. Francis Xavier narrates that in his apostolic labors it was sometimes impossible for him to recite even his Office. Some of our fathers in their labors may find themselves in similar circumstances. Let them console themselves with the words of the Following of Christ: "If for piety's sake, or with a design to the profit of

our brother, we sometimes omit our accustomed exercises, it may afterwards be easily recovered". However, such a condition must never be allowed to become the ordinary thing. No Superior can allow his subject, be he priest, Scholastic or Brother, to be so overwhelmed with work that he is forced to omit frequently the exercises of piety prescribed by our rules. Let the superior look into the matter, and if necessary suppress certain apostolic labors or other work. Let the inferior be careful of self-deception in omitting frequently the exercises of piety without real necessity. Although he may not be aware that he is suffering spiritual harm, yet ever so slowly he is drifting away from striving after the religious spirit and genuine charity. In our Society how many vocations, especially of the younger coadjutor Brothers, have been lost because of the example of older Fathers, whose views on the discipline of religious life are somewhat too liberal! How many young men have been turned aside from a higher degree of virtue and prayer by older men who by word and example show that easy mediocrity is far better!

Spiritual writers tell us that it is not difficult to turn those distractions and mental wanderings into matter for prayer, just as other temptations and difficulties. Let us not, as we are sometimes accustomed to do, deal with those distractions with our own unaided efforts. Rather let us talk over all our problems with our Father in heaven. Let us not hesitate to remind Him even of our insignificant problems. Did not St. Theresa of Jesus weary her Lord with prayers in order to devise a type of veil that would be suitable for her religious? Let us remember Blessed Peter Faber's very simple method of Prayer, by which he actually saw God in everything. This method of prayer yields that great benefit which the "Contemplatio ad amorem" is intended to produce.

But, if because of ill health or because God wishes to try us, we are completely incapable of doing anything that will help us fix our minds on some point, let us by no means give up. We can with God's grace, humbly petitioned, because of our love for the crucified Christ, bear the weariness of prayer by struggling on in humility and with the desire of practising patience and mortification. Thus we will advance in faith, confidence, and true charity. We will help Christ apply the fruits of the redemption to the world by filling up "what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ".(23) This is one of the deep mysteries of the Christian dispensation, that the cross has been and always will be more fruitful than preaching. Is not this participation in the cross one of the principal obligations of our apostolic vocation?

Let the spiritual Father decide what course of action is best in such problems. Whether the person who is thus tried can be helped to persevere in prayer by reading some spiritual book slowly and prayerfully, by interspersing his meditation with vocal prayer or ejaculations, or by merely gazing intently with folded hands on the tabernacle or the crucifix. Especially should the spiritual Father give heart to those who think they are only wasting time because they can do nothing, for actually they are placing themselves in God's hands and allowing the Divine Majesty to act as He sees fit.

(23) Col.: I : 24

It is true that our spiritual life is nourished by other means than daily mental prayer. In fact prayer by no means holds the first place in dignity and efficacy. Yet, as St. Theresa of Jesus has remarked, mental prayer is, as it were, the soul of all our spiritual exercises and exerts a greater influence. The best preparation for reciting the Divine Office, receiving Holy Communion and saying Mass is a deep penetration into heavenly realities. No one will seek and find God in all things, unless he has frequently and thoroughly schooled himself in the "Contemplatio ad amorem".

Since the fathers of the last two General Congregations unanimously determined that the sons of the Society should be urged to moderate their zeal for action and give more serious thought to their spiritual perfection, it is our duty to obey, Reverend Fathers and dear Brothers in Christ, their admonitions. The Holy Father spontaneously approved and by his great authority solemnly inculcated these same counsels in his allocution to the delegates.

The times are critical. As long ago, by the power of arms and perverse doctrine the enemies of Christendom so completely overthrew the flourishing churches of Asia Minor and North Africa, that to this very day we have not even been able to make a start in reclaiming them for the true faith, so today those parts of Europe that thus far gloried in the name of Christian are in grave danger. Even outside Europe some Catholic missions are in danger of complete destruction. Everywhere in Catholic countries as well as in others, the enemies of Christ, although in other matters at complete variance, unite in a secret and powerful conspiracy "against the Lord and His Church". (24) Every decent person asks himself, and not without anxiety, what tomorrow may bring. I do not know whether in the whole history of the Church there has ever raged such a zealous, insidious, and universal persecution. Certainly at no other time have there been so many martyrs. We must grope our way from day to day with a blind confidence in God.

Who of us does not clearly see that now is the time, if never before, for prayer. Now is the time for offering sacrifices to God in union with that Sacrifice which is renewed daily on our altars. Who does not see that we must throw ourselves upon God's help, we must have hope in Him, we must cry to Him for help. Can we at this time neglect our prayers and neglect God? Who is so foolish as to presume that by his own efforts he can check this catastrophe?

Certainly we will all work as never before with all our strength. We will spend our energies in checking the enemy. We will generously offer our labors and our lives for the cause. But all this will be in vain, unless God is with us and fight for us. "If enemies in camp should stand together against me, my heart will not fear". (25)

Our older men, especially the priests, should by their example lead the way for the others, as the 28th Congregation admonished us in its 22d decree in which spiritual helps are indicated. "The Fathers and Brothers who have taken their final vows should lead the way by an example that mirrors forth the spirit of Christ, laying it to heart that they have a serious obligation of giving edification to the Scholastics and younger brothers". (26) We justly place great emphasis on the solid training of our novices and younger men. With-

(24) Psalms: 2:2 (25) Psalms: 26:3

out this, all other measures would be in vain. But this is not sufficient. That silent and more efficacious instruction of a good example is needed, which contributes much to promote spiritual progress: "Verba movent, exempla trahunt". These engaged in the active ministry and those toiling in the missions fields of the Church, will be held accountable before God for the increase of the body of Christ, which consists in the salvation and perfection of souls. By frequent prayers and persevering penance they should plead for God's abundant grace. This will gain for them even in the midst of persecution "that victory which conquers the world", (27) that is, the spiritual victory of those who live in faith and charity.

I commend myself most earnestly to you in your Holy Sacrifices of the Mass and in your prayers.

From Rome, the twenty-seventh day of December, 1946, on the feast of St. John the Evangelist.

The servant of all in Christ,

John Baptist Janssens, S.J.,

General of the Society of Jesus.

(27). I John: 5:4