

CHAPTER X

Christ our Savior Celebrates the Last Supper with His Disciples in Fulfillment of the Law, and He Washes Their Feet; His Most Holy Mother by Her Celestial Vision Receives Knowledge and Takes Notice of All These Mysteries.

445. Our Redeemer proceeded on his way to Jerusalem, as I said above (438), in the afternoon of the Thursday preceding his Passion and Death. During their conversation on the way, while He instructed them in the approaching mysteries, the Apostles proposed their doubts and difficulties and He, as the Teacher of wisdom and as a loving Father, answered them in words which sweetly penetrated into their very hearts, for having always loved them* He, like a divine Swan, in these last hours of his life, manifested his love with so much the greater force of amiable sweetness in his voice and manner. The knowledge of his impending Passion and the prospect of his great torments not only did not hinder Him in the manifestations of his love, but just as fire is more concentrated by the frost, so his love broke forth with so much the greater force at the prospect of these sufferings. In this way the conflagration of divine love which burned without limit in the Heart of our most loving Jesus issued forth to overpower by its penetrating activity first those who were nearest to Him, and then also those who sought to extinguish it forever. The rest of the children of Adam (except Christ and his most holy Mother) are ordinarily roused to resentment by injury, or dismayed and disgusted by adversity, and we deem it a great thing not to revenge ourselves on those who offend us; but the love of the divine Master was not daunted by the impending ignominies of his Passion, nor dampened by the ignorance of his Apostles and the disloyalty which He was so soon to experience from them.

446. The Apostles asked Him where He desired to celebrate the Paschal supper (Mt. 26:17), for on that Thursday night the Jews were to partake of the lamb of the Passover, a most notable and solemn national feast. Though of all their feasts this eating of the paschal lamb was the most prophetic and significant of the Messiah and the mysteries connected with Him and his work, the Apostles were as yet scarcely aware of its intimate connection with Christ. The divine Master answered by sending St. Peter and St. John to Jerusalem to make arrangements for the paschal lamb. This was to be in a house where they would see a servant enter with a jug of water, and whose master they were to request in the name of Christ to prepare a room for his Last Supper with his disciples. This rich man was a resident of Jerusalem, illustrious and devoted to the Savior, one of those who believed in his miracles and doctrine, and due to his pious devotion he merited that the Author of life chose his house in order to sanctify it by the mysteries He was to enact there, thus consecrating it as a sacred temple for others who would follow afterwards. The two Apostles immediately departed on their commission, and following the instructions they petitioned the owner of this house that he might admit into it the Master of life and grant Him his hospitality so He could celebrate within it the great solemnity of the Unleavened Bread, also called the Pasch.

447. The heart of this householder was enlightened by special grace and he readily offered his dwelling with all the necessary furniture for celebrating the supper according to the law. He assigned to them a very large hall (Lk. 22:12), appropriately tapestried and adorned for the mysteries which, unknown to him and to the Apostles, the Lord was to celebrate therein. After

* cf. Jn. 13:1 [Ed.]

due preparation had thus been made the Savior and the other Apostles arrived at this dwelling. His most blessed Mother and the holy women in her company came soon after. Upon entering the most humble Queen prostrated Herself on the floor and adored her divine Son as usual, asking his blessing and begging Him to inform Her of what She was to do. He bade Her go to another room where She would be able to see all that was done on this night according to the decrees of divine Providence, and where She was to console and instruct, as far as was proper, the holy women of her company. The great Lady obeyed and retired with her companions. She exhorted them to persevere in faith and prayer, while She, knowing the hour of her Holy Communion was at hand, continued to keep her interior vision riveted on the doings of her most holy Son and her preparation for the worthy reception of his body and blood.

448. His most holy Mother having retired, our Lord and Master Jesus with his Apostles and disciples took their places to celebrate the feast of the lamb. He observed all the ceremonies of the law, without omitting any of the rites which He Himself had ordained through Moses (Ex. 12:3ff.). During this Last Supper He gave to the Apostles an understanding of all the ceremonies of that figurative law as observed by the Patriarchs and Prophets in order to signify the truth of what the Lord himself had fulfilled and had yet to accomplish as Repairer of the world; that the ancient law of Moses and its figures would be abrogated by the literal truth; that the shadows could no longer endure, being overtaken by the light and beginning of the new law of grace, which alone would remain permanent along with the precepts of the natural law, which was perpetual, though these precepts were greatly enhanced and perfected by other divine precepts and counsels He himself had taught; that by the efficacy He would give to the new Sacraments of his new law all the figures of the ancient law of Moses would be terminated as being inefficacious and only figurative; and for all this He was celebrating with them this Last Supper by which He gave an end and terminated the rites and obligations of the old law, since all its precepts had been directed to prepare and represent that which His Majesty was accomplishing, and hence having attained its end had now become useless.

449. This instruction enlightened the Apostles concerning the deep mysteries of this Last Supper. The other disciples who were present did not understand these mysteries as thoroughly as the Apostles. Judas attended to and understood them least of all, yea not at all, for he was possessed by avarice, thinking only of his prearranged treason and occupied with how he could execute it with secrecy. The Lord revealed none of his secret treachery, for so it was appropriate to his equity and to the dispositions of his most high judgments. He did not desire to exclude him from the supper and from the other mysteries, leaving it to his own wickedness to bring about his exclusion. The divine Master always treated him as his disciple, Apostle and minister, and was careful of his honor. Thus He taught the children of the Church by his own example with what veneration they must treat his ministers and priests, how they must guard their honor and avoid speaking of their sins and weaknesses, still adhering to frail human nature in spite of their high office. None of them will ever be worse than Judas, and this we must understand, and neither will any be like Christ our Lord, nor possess such authority and power, as faith teaches. Hence, as all men are infinitely less than our Savior, there will be no reason to treat his ministers, who though wicked will be better than Judas, in a manner the Savior himself refused to treat that wicked disciple and Apostle; and this duty is no less important for superiors, for also Christ our Lord, who bore with Judas and guarded his honor, was infinitely his superior.

450. On this occasion the Redeemer composed a new canticle by which He exalted the eternal Father for having in his Son fulfilled the figures of the old law and for thus advancing the glory of his holy Name. Prostrate upon the earth He humbled Himself in his humanity before God,

confessing, adoring and praising the Divinity as infinitely superior to his humanity, and speaking with the eternal Father He interiorly offered a most exalted prayer and most fervent exclamation, saying:

451. "My eternal Father and immense God, thy divine and eternal will determined to create my true humanity so in it I could be the Head of all those who are predestined for thy glory and everlasting happiness (Rom. 8:29), and who by means of my works are to dispose themselves to attain their true blessedness. Toward this end, and to redeem the children of Adam from his fall, I have lived with them thirty-three years. Now, my Lord and Father, has come the opportune and acceptable hour decreed by thy eternal will to manifest to men thy holy Name so it may become known and exalted by all nations by means of the holy Faith which shall manifest to all who receive it thy incomprehensible Divinity. It is time for the book sealed with seven seals, which thy wisdom has delivered to Me, to be opened (Apoc. 5:7), and for Me to give a happy end to the ancient figures and sacrifices of animals (Heb. 10:1ff.) which have signified the sacrifice of Myself which I voluntarily desire to offer now for my brethren the children of Adam, for the members of this body of which I am Head, and for the sheep of thy flock, for whom I beseech Thee to look upon now with eyes of mercy. If the ancient figures and sacrifices, which I am going to fulfill, have expressed the placation of thy anger, it is just, my Father, that it be extinguished, since I am ready and willing to offer Myself in sacrifice to die for men on the cross, sacrificing Myself as a holocaust in the fire of my own love (Eph. 5:2). O Lord, let the rigor of thy justice now be moderated, and look upon the human race with eyes of thy clemency. Let Us give a salutary law to mortals by which they may open the gates of heaven closed until now by their disobedience. Let them now find a certain way and open gate to enter with Me to the vision of thy Divinity, if they will imitate Me and follow my law and footsteps."

452. The eternal Father graciously received this prayer of our Redeemer and sent innumerable hosts of his angelic courtiers to assist at the wonderful works which Christ was to perform in that place. While this happened in the Cenacle most holy Mary in her retreat was raised to highest contemplation in which She witnessed all that passed as if She was present; thus She was enabled to cooperate and correspond as a most faithful Coadjutrix, enlightened by the highest wisdom. By heroic and celestial acts of virtue She imitated the doings of Christ our Savior, for all of them awakened fitting resonance in her bosom and caused a mysterious and divine echo of like petitions and prayers in the sweetest Virgin; moreover, She composed new and admirable canticles of praise for all the sacred humanity of Christ was now about to accomplish in obedience to the divine will and in accordance and fulfillment of the figures of the written law.

453. Very wonderful and worthy of all admiration would it be for us, as it was for the holy Angels and as it will be for all the Blessed, if we could understand the divine harmony of the works and virtues in the Heart of our great Queen, which like a heavenly chorus neither confused nor hindered each other in their superabundance on this occasion. Being filled with the intelligence of which I have spoken, She was sensible of the mysterious fulfillment and accomplishment of the legal ceremonies and figures of the old law through the most noble and efficacious Sacraments of the new. She gazed upon the vast fruits of the Redemption in the predestined; the ruin of the reprobate; the exaltation of the Name of God and of the most holy humanity of her Son Jesus; the universal notice and faith in the Divinity which the Lord himself was preparing for the world; that He would open heaven, closed for so many ages, so from now on the children of Adam could enter it by the establishment and progress of the new evangelical Church and all of its mysteries; and how of all this her most holy Son was the admirable and most prudent Artificer, with the praise and admiration of all the courtiers of heaven. For these

magnificent results, without forgetting the least of them, She now blessed the eternal Father and rendered Him ineffable gratitude in the consolation and jubilation of her soul.

454. However, She also reflected how all these admirable works were to cost her divine Son the sorrows, ignominies, affronts and torments of his Passion, and at last the death of the cross, so hard and bitter, all of which He was to endure in the very humanity He had received from Her, while at the same time so many of the children of Adam for whom He suffered would ungratefully waste the copious fruit of the Redemption. This knowledge filled with bitter sorrow the most sincere Heart of the pious Mother; yet since She was a living and faithful reproduction of her most holy Son, all these sentiments and operations found room in her magnanimous and expanded Heart, and therefore She was not disturbed or dismayed, nor did She fail to console and instruct her companions, but without losing touch of her high intelligences She descended to their level of thought in her words of consolation and eternal life for their instruction. O admirable Instructress and superhuman example entirely to be followed and imitated! It is true that in comparison with this sea of grace and light our prerogatives dwindle into insignificance; but it is also true that our sufferings and trials in comparison with hers are so to say only imaginary and not worthy to be even noticed, since She suffered more than all the children of Adam together. Yet neither in order to imitate Her, nor for our eternal welfare, can we be induced to suffer with patience even the least adversity. All of them excite and dismay us, and take away our composure; we give vent to our passions; we angrily resist and are consumed with restless sorrow; in our stubbornness we lose our reason, give free reign to evil movements, and hasten on toward the precipice. Even good fortune lures us into destruction, and so no reliance can be placed on our infected and spoiled nature. Let us remember our heavenly Mistress on these occasions in order to repair our disorders.

455. Having completed the legal supper and fully instructed his disciples, Christ our Savior, as St. John tells us (Jn. 13:4), arose from the table in order to wash their feet. He first addressed another prayer to the Father, prostrating Himself in his presence, of the type He had made during the supper. This prayer was not vocal but mental, saying: "My eternal Father, Creator of the universe, I am thy image, engendered by thy intellect and the figure of thy substance (Heb. 1:3). Having offered Myself by the disposition of thy holy will to redeem the world by my Passion and Death, I desire, my Lord, for thy approval to enter upon these sacraments and mysteries by humbling Myself to the dust, so the haughty pride of Lucifer be confounded by my humility, I who am thy Onlybegotten. In order to leave an example of this virtue to my Apostles and to my Church, which must be established on the secure foundation of humility, I desire, my Father, to wash the feet of my disciples, even those of Judas, the least of all due to the wickedness he has wrought. Prostrating Myself before him in true and profound humility I shall offer him my friendship and his remedy. Though he is the greatest enemy I have among mortals, I shall not deny him my kindness or pardon for his betrayal, so if he does not accept it heaven and earth shall know I opened to him the arms of my clemency, yet he despised Me with an obstinate will."

456. Such was the prayer of the Savior in preparing to wash the feet of his disciples. There are neither terms nor adequate similes in all creation sufficient to declare something of the impetus with which his divine love prepared and accomplished these works, for in comparison to it the activity of fire is slow, the inflowing of the tide ponderous, the movement of a stone toward its center tardy, and all the movements in the world we can imagine are inadequate comparisons to the force of his love. Yet we cannot ignore that only his love and wisdom could ever invent such a type of humility that his supreme divinity and humanity humbled themselves to the lowest part

of men, that is the feet, and to those of the worst of those born of women, Judas, there placing his mouth on the most unclean and contemptible of his creatures, He who is the Word of the eternal Father, the Saint of saints and essential Goodness himself, the King of kings and Lord of lords, prostrating Himself before the most wicked of men in an attempt to justify him, if only he would recognize and accept this benefit, while never becoming weary of the heavy price He would pay for it.

457. Our divine Master arose from his prayer, and his face beaming with peace and serenity commanded his disciples to seat themselves like persons of superior station, while He himself remained standing as if He were their servant. Then He laid aside the mantle which He wore over the seamless tunic, which went all the way down to his feet, though not covering them. On this occasion He wore sandals, which He had worn ever since his most holy Mother had put them on his feet in Egypt; however, He sometimes had dispensed with them on his preaching tours. They grew in size with his feet as He advanced in age, as I have already remarked (*Inc.* 691). Having laid aside this mantle, which was the garment spoken of by the Evangelist (Jn. 13:4), He girded his body with one end of a large towel, allowing the other part to hang down free. He then poured water into a basin for washing the feet of the Apostles (Ib. 5), who with admiration were attentive to all their divine Master was doing.

458. He first approached the head of the Apostles, St. Peter; and when this fervent Apostle saw prostrate at his feet the Lord himself whom he had acknowledged and confessed as the Son of the living God, renewing in his interior this faith with new light which instructed him, and knowing with profound humility his own lowliness, embarrassed and astonished he said (Ib. 6): *Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?* The Author of life answered him with incomparable meekness: *What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter* (Ib. 7). This was the same as to say to him: Obey now first my command and will, and do not prefer thy will before mine, disturbing and perverting the order of virtues. Before all thou must yield captive thy understanding and believe what I do is proper; then, having believed and obeyed, thou shalt understand the hidden mysteries of my doings, into the knowledge of which thou must enter by obedience. Without obedience thou canst not be truly humble, but only presumptuous; nor can thy humility be placed before mine, for I shall humble Myself unto death (Philip. 2:8), and in order to thus humble Myself I have sought the way of obedience; but thou, who art my disciple, dost not follow my doctrine. Under color of humility thou art disobedient, and by thus perverting the right order of virtues thou dost strip thyself of humility as well as obedience, following thy own presumptuous judgment.

459. St. Peter did not understand this doctrine contained in the first answer of our Lord, for though he belonged to his school he had not yet experienced the divine effects of this washing and contact. Hindered by the indiscreet affection of his humility he answered the Lord: "I shall never consent, Lord, that Thou wash my feet" (Jn. 13:8). But the Author of life answered with greater severity (Ib.): *If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me.* By this threatening response the Lord sanctioned obedience as the secure way. According to the judgment of men it seems St. Peter had some excuse for resisting such an unheard-of act and such extremes as to consent for an earthly and sinful man to have prostrate at his feet One whom he knew and adored as God himself. Yet his opposition was not excusable in the eyes of the divine Master, who could not err in what He desired to do; for when there is no evidence of error in what is commanded, obedience must be blind, without searching for any other reason to resist it. In this mystery the Lord desired to repair the disobedience of our first parents Adam and Eve by which sin entered into the world (Rom. 5:19); and due to the similarity and relation between it and the

disobedience of St. Peter, our Lord threatened him with a similar punishment, telling him that if he did not obey he would have no part in Him, namely that he would be excluded from the merits and fruits of the Redemption by which alone we become worthy of his friendship and glory. He also threatened to deprive him of participation in his body and blood which He was now about to perpetuate in the sacramental species of bread and wine. The Savior gave him to understand that however ardently He desired to communicate Himself not only in part but entirely in this mysterious manner, yet disobedience would deprive even the Apostle of this loving benefit if he persevered in it.

460. By this threat of Christ our Lord St. Peter was so chastened and instructed that he immediately submitted from his whole heart and said: *Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head* (Jn. 13:9), as if to say: I offer my feet in order to walk in obedience, my hands in order to exercise it, and my head in order not to follow my own judgment contrary to it. The Lord accepted this submission of St. Peter and said (Ib. 10): *He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all* (for among them was the most unclean Judas). This Christ said because the disciples (except Judas) had been justified and made clean by his doctrines, and it was necessary only to wash the imperfections and slight or venial sins in order to approach Holy Communion with greater purity and disposition, as is required to receive its divine effects and obtain more abundant grace, and with greater fullness and efficacy; for these effects are much hindered by venial sins, distractions and lukewarmness in receiving it. Then the feet of St. Peter were washed, and the others obeyed, filled with astonishment and tears, for all of them were receiving by this washing new light and gifts of grace.

461. The divine Master also washed the feet of Judas, whose premeditated treason could not extinguish the charity of Christ or prevent Him from bestowing greater demonstrations of charity upon him than upon the other Apostles. Without manifesting them to the other Apostles, He demonstrated his charity to Judas in two ways: First, in the kind and caressing manner in which He approached him, knelt at his feet, washed them, kissed them, and pressed them to his bosom; and second, by seeking to move his soul with inspirations proportionate to the dire depravity of his conscience, for the assistance offered to Judas was in itself much greater than that offered to the other Apostles. Yet since his disposition was dreadful, his depraved habits most intense, his obstinacy hardened with many determinations, and his understanding and powers disturbed and debilitated, and since he had entirely forsaken God and delivered himself over to the demon, possessing him in his heart as upon a throne and seat of his wickedness, he resisted all the divine advances and inspirations connected with this washing of his feet. Moreover, he was harassed by the fear of breaking his contract with the Pharisees and scribes. Hence at the bodily presence of Christ, and by the interior force of the helps and light by which Christ desired to move his understanding, there arose in his darkened conscience a turbulent storm which filled him with confusion and bitterness, and inflamed him with anger, enraging him and whirling him still farther away from his Master and Physician, and converting the salutary medicine He desired to apply into deadly venom and the most bitter gall of wickedness with which he was filled and possessed.

462. Thus did the malice of Judas resist the saving contact of those divine hands in which the eternal Father had deposited all the treasures and powers to work wonders and enrich all creatures (Jn. 13:3). Even if he had not received any other assistance except that naturally flowing from the visible and personal presence of the Author of life, the wickedness of this unhappy disciple would have been beyond all bounds. The bodily appearance of Christ our Good was most perfect and attractive. His countenance, serenely dignified yet sweetly expressive and

beautiful, was framed in abundant waves of golden chestnut hair, freely growing after the manner of the Nazarenes; his frank and open eyes beamed forth grace and majesty; his mouth, nose, and all the features of his face exhibited the most perfect proportion; and his whole Person was clothed in such entrancing beauty that He drew upon Himself the loving veneration of all who beheld Him without malice in their hearts. Over and above all this the mere sight of Him caused in the beholders an interior joy and enlightenment, engendering heavenly thoughts and sentiments in the soul. Judas now saw this so amiable and venerable Person of Christ at his feet, striving to please him by new tokens of affection, and seeking to gain him by new impulses of love. But so great was the perversity of Judas that nothing could move or soften his hardened heart; on the contrary, he was irritated by the gentleness of the Savior, and he refused to look upon his face or take notice of his actions, for from the time in which he had lost faith and grace he was filled with hatred toward his Master and his heavenly Mother, and never looked them in the face. Greater in a certain respect was the terror of Lucifer at the presence of Christ our Savior, for this demon, having established himself in the heart of Judas, could not bear the humility of the divine Master toward his disciples and sought to escape from Judas and from the Cenacle; but the Lord detained him by his almighty power so his pride would be crushed. Yet later on he was cast out from that place (478-9), filled with fury and the suspicion that Christ might after all be the true God.

463. The Lord completed the washing of the feet, and again assuming his mantle seated Himself in the midst of his Apostles and began the discourse recorded by St. John (13:12ff.): *Know you what I have done to you? You call me Master, and Lord; and you say well, for so I am. If then I being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also. Amen, Amen, I say to you: The servant is not greater than his lord; neither is the Apostle greater than He that sent him.* Then the Lord proceeded to propound great mysteries and truths which I will not expatiate upon, but for which I refer the reader to the Gospels. This discourse still further enlightened the Apostles in the mysteries of the most blessed Trinity and the Incarnation, and prepared them by new graces for the Holy Eucharist, confirming them in their understanding of the vast significance of his doctrines and miracles. Among them all St. Peter and St. John were most fully enlightened, but each of the Apostles received more or less insight according to his disposition and the divine will. What St. John refers to regarding the question he asked of Christ at the request of St. Peter about who the traitor was who would sell Him, and the understanding which His Majesty himself accordingly gave him, happened at the supper when St. John reclined on the bosom of his divine Master (Jn. 13:23ff.). St. Peter desired to know this in order to avenge or impede the treason due to the fervor which inflamed his bosom, and to manifest above all his love of Christ, which he was accustomed to do. But St. John, though he recognized the traitor by the bread dipped into the sauce and handed to Judas, would not inform St. Peter. He alone knew the secret, but taught by the charity which he had acquired in the school of his divine Master he buried the secret in his bosom.

464. While St. John thus reclined on the bosom of Jesus our Savior he was privileged in many other ways, for there he was made to see many most exalted mysteries of the divinity and humanity of Christ, and many mysteries of the Queen of heaven, his most holy Mother. Also on this occasion he was commissioned to take charge of Her, for on the Cross Christ did not say to him: *She shall be thy Mother, or thou shalt be her son, but behold thy Mother* (Jn. 19:27), because this was not a matter resolved upon at that time, but one which was then to be made manifest publicly as having been ordained and decreed beforehand. Regarding all these

sacraments connected with the washing of the feet and the words and discourses of her Son his most pure Mother was minutely informed by interior vision, as I have said in other places, and for all of them She rendered gratitude and gave glory to the Most High. And when afterwards the wonderful works of the Lord were accomplished She beheld them not as one ignorant of them, but as one who saw fulfilled what She had known beforehand, and what had been recorded in her Heart like the law recorded on the tablets of Moses (Dt. 5:22). She also enlightened her companions concerning all that was proper, reserving whatever they were not capable of understanding.

*INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT MISTRESS OF
THE WORLD, MARY MOST HOLY, GAVE ME.*

465. My daughter, in three principal virtues of my Son and Lord, of which thou hast spoken in this chapter, I desire thee to be extreme in order to imitate Him as his spouse and my beloved disciple; they are charity, humility and obedience, in which His Majesty desired to signalize Himself more at the end of his most holy life. It is certain He manifested the love He has for men during his whole life, since because of them and for them He accomplished so many and such admirable works from the instant He was conceived in my womb by the Holy Ghost. Yet at the end of his life, when He established the evangelical law and the New Testament, there burst forth with greater force the flame of the burning charity and loving fire which blazed in his bosom. On this occasion the charity of Christ our Lord operated with all its efficacy for the children of Adam, since it concurred on his part with the sorrows of death which encompassed Him (Ps. 114:3), and on the part of men with their aversion to suffering and accepting the good, and their consummate ingratitude and perversity in seeking to take away the honor and life of the One who was giving his own life for them, and preparing for them eternal salvation. By this opposition his love was inflamed to the point at which it would not be extinguished (Cant. 8:7); hence He was more ingenious in preserving Himself in his own works, and arranged how to remain among men after having to leave them, teaching them by his example, doctrine and works the certain and efficacious means by which they could participate in the effects of his divine love.

466. In this art of loving thy neighbor for the sake of God I desire thee to be very wise and industrious. This thou shalt be if the very injuries and hardships with which they afflict thee awaken in thee the power of charity, noting it is safe and without suspicion when neither benefits nor flattery on the part of creatures compel thee. For loving those who do thee good, though it is a duty, yet thou cannot know (if thou art not aware) whether thou lovest them for the sake of God, or for the usefulness thou dost receive, which would be loving thy own interest or thyself rather than thy neighbor for the sake of God. Whoever loves for other ends or motives of flattery does not know the love which constitutes charity, since he is dominated by the blind love of his own pleasure. But if thou dost love those who do not oblige thee by these means,* then thou hast as motive and principal object the Lord himself, whom thou lovest in his creature, whoever it is. And because thou canst exercise corporal charity less than spiritual, though both must be undertaken according to thy strength and the occasions thou hast, yet in spiritual charity and benefits thou must always extend thyself to great things, as the Lord desires, by prayers, petitions, and practices, and also by prudent and holy exhortations, procuring by these means the spiritual health of souls. Remember that my Son and Lord conferred to no one any temporal

* cf. Mt. 5:46; I Peter 2:18-19 [Ed.]

benefit which would prevent him from becoming spiritual, and it would have derogated from the perfection of his divine works to accomplish them without this plenitude. From this thou shalt understand how much the benefits of the soul must be preferred to those of the body, which must always be sought with circumspection and on the condition that spiritual benefits be given priority, although worldly men ordinarily blindly ask for temporal goods, forgetting the eternal ones and those which concern the true friendship and grace of the Most High.

467. The virtues of humility and obedience were enhanced in my most holy Son by what He did and taught at the washing of the feet of his Apostles; and if by the interior light thou hast regarding this rare example thou dost not humble thyself more than the dust, thy heart shall be very hardened and intractable in the science of the Lord. Therefore let it be understood from now on that never can thou say or imagine thou hast duly humbled thyself, though thou art despised and findest thyself at the feet of creatures, sinners though they be; for none shall be worse than Judas, nor can thou be as good as thy Lord and Master. Nevertheless, if thou dost merit to be favored and honored by this virtue of humility, it shall give thee a type of perfection and proportion by which thou shalt be worthy of the title of his spouse, and share a certain correspondence with Him. Without this humility no soul can be raised to such excellence and participation; for the proud must first be brought down, and the humble can and should be exalted (Mt. 23:12), and the soul is always raised up in correspondence to the degree it has humbled and annihilated itself.

468. Lest thou lose this jewel of humility when thou dost think thou art preserving it, I remind thee that its exercise is not to be preferred to obedience, nor in that case is it to be regulated by one's own opinion, but by the superior; for if thou dost prefer thy own judgment to the one who governs thee, though done under the color of humbling thyself, thou wilt be proud, since that would not only be failing to put thyself in the last place, but elevating thyself above the judgment of the one who is thy superior. From this thou art warned against suffering the error of shrinking back, like St. Peter, from accepting the favors and benefits of the Lord, by which thou deprivest thyself not only of the gifts and treasures thou dost resist, but of the very humility which is greater and which thou seekest, and the gratitude thou owest for the high purposes which the Lord always has in these works, as well as the exaltation of his Name. It is not for thee to enter into the matter of his hidden and inscrutable judgments, nor correct them by thy reasonings and motives by which thou judgest thyself unworthy of receiving such favors or performing such works. All this is a seed of the pride of Lucifer, cloaked in apparent humility, by which he seeks to render thee incapable of the intervention of the Lord, and of his gifts and friendship, which thou dost desire so much. Be it therefore an inviolable law that as soon as thy confessors and superiors approve of the benefits and favors of the Lord thou believe, accept, appreciate, and render gratitude for them with due reverence, without vacillating with new doubts and fears, but labor with fervor, and thou shalt be humble, obedient and meek.