

THE TRUE SPIRIT

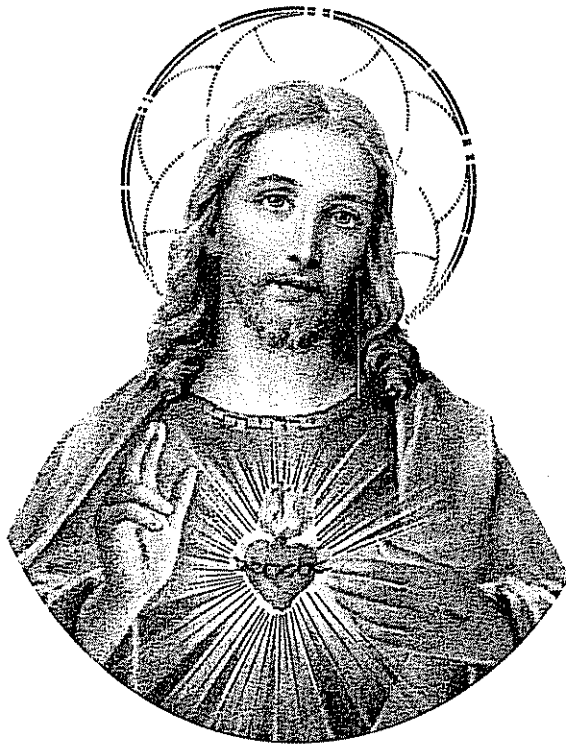
OF

THE FAMILY OF THE DISCIPLES OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF
JESUS AND GOSPEL MOVEMENT

FAITH - FIDELITY

HUMILITY

CHARITY



By Fr. Melchiorre Arnoldi

*Consecration of the Family
to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the
Immaculate Heart of Mary*

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INTRODUCTION

The time of the great apostasy foretold by Jesus has come. (Mt. 24: 9-13) It has come from lack of faith, rampant impiety, false prophets, social disorders and corruption at all levels and in all senses. A big drop in moral values has affected the whole world. It is made easy due to the modern technology and mass media. There is an urgent need to turn to God and to rely on His words. It is more important to practise the Gospel thoroughly in every situation in our daily life. The written word of God (Bible) and the Spoken One (the Tradition of the Church), as presented by the teaching authority (Magisterium) are of utmost importance. They will prevent us from going astray.

Mankind should turn to God to avoid destruction. For this purpose, Gospel Movement, which combines with the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was born. It expresses itself in evangelism and deeds of reparation. In fact, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the last effort of the Lord to draw people back to Himself before the end of the world, as He said to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque three hundred years ago (Cf. Revelations of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque).

In this period of the human history in which man wants to be the centre of the universe and replace God with his recent discoveries, and wants to be completely independent from moral obligations, there is an urgent need of humility. Lack of humility was the first sin of the First Parents who wanted to be like God. Unfortunately, this is our sin too. Lack of humility is highly contagious. There are many Adams and Eves today! We must react against this worldly mentality, do penance in reparation for the many sins committed by us and by others, and live in continual conversion and repentance. Praying to God brings about God's help while doing penance for our sins is our effort of self-denial. Without both of them, we are unable to resist against the allurements of the world which has unfortunately been 'totally placed in evil' (1 John 5:15).

In short, let us turn to faith – fidelity to God, in the form of prayer; humility, in the form of penance and reparation; charity, in the form of practising the teachings of the Gospel which is the best expression of charity life because the Gospel describes how Jesus, who is God, showed His care and love for others. He said, 'Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and love people as much as yourselves.' (Mk 12:30).

In other words, different aspects of Faith – Fidelity, Humility and Charity and how to practise them will be explored. This is the aim of this pamphlet which is meant for those who want to know and practise the spirit of the Gospel Movement i.e. Family of the Disciples of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I am deeply grateful to Mr. Paul Kwok and his wife Halina for their great help in preparing this publication. May God bless them and reward them as He knows and can.

Fr. Melchiorre Arnoldi

FAITH – FIDELITY

1. The level of faith in modern society is extremely low

Jesus said, “When the Son of Man returns, will He find again faith on earth?” (Lk 18:8).

This prophecy of Jesus seems to have materialized in our modern times. The level of faith among many Christians is superficial. Only few Christians still have a strong faith. For most Christians, faith is apart from their daily life. As a matter of fact, many of them are so involved in this mundane world that they live like pagans.

The lack of faith is most obvious among young people who do not want to be restricted by any rules. They want to be independent and are always in pursuit of money and pleasures. Unfortunately, their faith has been smothered by their quest for pleasures. They have become more materialistic; they rely on themselves, science, technology, and on freedom.

What should we do?

1. We should pray to the Lord fervently, continuously and humbly. Prayers should come first in our life. Jesus said, “You should be awake and pray in order not to be put to the test.” (Mt. 26:41) Daily meditation on the Gospel or on the Bible is necessary. We should practise the teachings of the Gospel, and of the other books of the New Testament which are an extension of the Gospel and the application of the teachings of the Gospel in our daily life.
2. We should practise the Three Virtues of Gospel Movement: Faith-Fidelity, Humility and Charity in our daily activities.

Our faith should be a living faith expressed in charity works (Ga. 5:6). It is recommended to do one act of charity every day and that our charity should be a form of life, not a matter of thoughts.

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Those who know Mr. C. Y. Mong’s lifestyle know he himself is an inspiring example of charity. One day, while taking a rest in front of his own restaurant, he was almost hit by a brick which fell down from a nearby tall building and smashed at his feet. He realized he had just escaped from death miraculously. He was impressed by this miracle so much that he decided to go to a nearby church and make a confession although he had not been to Mass for sixteen years. Since then he has attended Sunday Mass and weekday Masses as well. He left his job and has been involved in charity works, such as visiting hospitals, homes for the aged and the poor, full time.

He helps them materially and spiritually. He tries to convince them to love God and Our Lady Mary in order to be saved. He begins his daily activities by attending a Mass. Then he is busy in his charitable activities until evening. He was once a businessman of the world. Now he is a businessman of the Kingdom of God. Most of his family members are now living in Canada. He, however, wants to stay in Hong Kong because he believes he has more opportunities to serve the Lord in Hong Kong. He selflessly spreads the words of God, forgetting he himself is already over ninety.

What a marvellous transformation caused by the faith in God.

FAITH - FIDELITY

2 The five stages of faith

1. Some people believe in the Lord and in the revealed truths but they do not practise the teachings of the Bible. Their faith is considered dead by St. James. This type of faith is useless. Even the Devil himself knows God exists, but he does not practise the words of God.
2. There are people who believe in God and they pray. This type of faith is more consistent but not complete. Jesus performed miracles to help those who trusted Him. He also praised their faith. For instance, He said to people who asked Him for miracles, 'Your faith has saved you.' (Mt. 9:22):
3. The next step of faith is to practise the teachings of Jesus. He said, 'My sheep hear my voice and follow me.' (John 10:27) Jesus considers who practise His words as His sheep and His friends. He said, 'The one who practises my words loves me.' (John 14:21)
4. St. Paul, in his Letter to the Galatians, speaks about living faith which is involved in charitable work. (Cfr. Galatians 5:6)
5. There is another type of faith of those who bear witness of God to others. Some of them even lose their life because of Christ. They are the martyrs. Their faith has reached the highest degree.
Whenever we witness our faith to others, we strengthen our own faith. The word 'martyr' comes from the Greek word *μαρτυρεω* which means "to witness".

To conclude, the members of the Gospel Movement should always be prepared to practise their faith in all five stages. By joining the Gospel Movement i.e. Family of the Disciples of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, they are supposed to be the witnesses of Christ in practising the Gospel to the last detail and spreading the Gospel, generously, and devoting their life to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I once met a Protestant professor who used to read the Bible every day for three hours. He applied the teachings of the Bible in all circumstances. Not only did he read the Bible, he also spoke and quoted the Bible to others to help them trust the Bible. Retired from teaching, he wrote books on how to introduce Christ to others. Despite his old age and poor health, he still always reads the Bible and finds ways to help others to practise the teachings of the Bible. How many Catholics have read the whole Bible? And how many of us can memorize a few sentences from the Bible? This professor has memorized hundreds of Bible passages. He quotes them in his

daily conversations with others, to console them and to direct their life and encourage them to do good.

FAITH- FIDELITY

3. What changes can faith bring about in our life?

First, a man with faith realizes the Lord is the centre of the universe and of his life.

A man without faith does not think so, he thinks he himself is the centre of the world and the only master of his life. A man with faith obeys God's will at every moment while a person without faith has his own programs, his own ideals, has his own goals to pursue. He has no time for God and for the needs of his soul.

Jesus set us examples of obeying His heavenly Father at every situation. Since we are his followers, we should imitate Jesus.

Primarily, faith brings about METANOIA (CHANGE OF MENTALITY). Because of this change of mentality, life also changes.

It is because of faith that a believer's lifestyle is different from many people's. For this reason he is persecuted by the world. Jesus said, "The world hates me because I am not of the world. Since you do not belong to the world, the world will persecute you too." (John 15:19)

The worldly people who did not understand saints and their reason why they acted in some certain ways often considered them mad. Saint Paul says, "Whoever does not have the Spirit, cannot receive the gifts that come from the Spirit of God. Such a person cannot appreciate the gifts, because their value can only be judged on a spiritual basis. Whoever has the Spirit, however, is able to judge the value of everything." (1 Corinthians 2:14-15)

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Saint Francis of Assisi was the son of a wealthy merchant, but he renounced everything and chose to live like a beggar for the sake of Christ. He detached himself from everything and lived in a way according to the teachings of the Gospel. The people who saw this first thought he was mad. Later they discovered he was wise and had a saintly life. He had applied the whole Gospel to his life and patterned his actions on the teaching of the Gospel. Since then people of all generations considered Saint Francis an outstanding person who had the courage to transform his life and the society in which he lived; he had the courage to practise the teachings of the Gospel: a powerful tool which can cause many transformations.

All the saints practised the teachings of the Gospel. This is what made them great people. They lived a full life following the Gospel; they encourage us to follow them towards true happiness.

St. Francis of Assisi asked his friars to sing the praises of the Lord rould his deathbed to show how happy he was even among the pains of death.

FAITH-FIDELITY

4. How to increase our faith?

Our prayers can increase our faith. Our faith is a gift from God before it is the fruit of our efforts. We should always learn from the apostles and repeat what they said to Jesus, 'Lord, we believe. Increase our faith.' (Lk 17:5). So, let us thank the Lord for the gift of faith and ask Him to help us increase our faith every day.

1. Our faith can be increased through charity work. Those who are involved in charity for the glory of God get a deeper faith and are able to understand religious truths. When we obey God's words and, above all, follow His will, we increase our faith. Jesus, when speaking of Himself, said, 'My food is to do the will of my Father.' (John 4:34) And again, 'I always do what pleases my Father.' (John 8:29).
2. We can increase our faith by witnessing Christ to the others and by bringing others to Him. In other words, we increase our faith by spreading it.
3. We increase our faith through the worthy reception of the Sacraments, especially of the Holy Eucharist. It is because through the Sacraments we can receive God's grace and the supernatural virtues.
4. We increase faith by practising Christian virtues. All the Christian virtues are linked together so that when one increases the others benefit from it.
5. We increase our faith by reading and meditating on the Bible and other books of Catholic doctrine, by listening to sermons and talks on topics of Catholic doctrine. Saint Augustine says: "Intellige ut credas" (learn to increase your faith) (De Utilitate Credendi 42, 65-92).

St. Catherine of Siena, a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic, lived her consecration to the Lord at home. She was involved in charitable activities, such as visiting hospitals, praying and fasting. As her spiritual virtues grew, many lay people admired her and became her disciples, forming a spiritual family around her. She was able to bring many sinners to the Lord. She managed to persuade the Pope to leave his residence in Avignone and return to Rome. Her successes were attributed to her great faith and extraordinary virtues: all products of her trust and love for the Lord.

Despite of the fact that she was illiterate, she was the author of several books on spiritual life. Faith gave her the wisdom and power of action beyond to her human abilities.

FAITH-FIDELITY

5. What are the main deeds of faith?

The deeds of faith as are follows:

1. To practise Jesus' teachings and to imitate His deeds.
2. Motivated by the love of God and the salvation of souls to participate in charitable and Christian activities.
3. Participate in apostolic activities by joining Catholic associations, institutions, or clubs.
4. Witnessing Christ for the conversion of sinners.
5. Praying and doing penance for the conversion of sinners. When we pray for sinners and do penance for them, God enlightens their minds and strengthens their will to do good.

With regard to the practice of the Gospel, we should read it constantly and apply the teachings in our daily life. We should always look for opportunities to practise God's teachings every day. With the help from God, we can spot out such chances to practise, even if some parts of the Gospel, daily. Without making efforts to look for such opportunities, we will easily follow the mentality and practices of this secular world.

With regard to charitable activities, we should bear in mind that we should please God and not to be seen or praised by people.

We should always remember how Jesus practised charity towards the people of His time. He cared for both their material and spiritual needs. He performed miracles to help their physical bodies to recover and taught them the religious truths to transform their spirit.

His method is unique. We should learn from Him to be involved in both charitable and spiritual activities: caring for the needs of the body as well as the soul. This is the only way to enhance our faith and spread the Christian message effectively.

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Mr. John Cheuk is a man of tremendous faith. He never stops speaking of Jesus and Our Lady to other people. From sunrise to sunset he is involved in different types of charitable activities: offering hair cuts to the sick in hospital and the aged at home, contacting the poor in China and bringing them clothes and money, etc. At the same time, he cares about their souls: he prays for them and teaches them how to pray. He succeeds in making people willing to become Catholics who were once reluctant. Sometimes, he even baptizes them. Who can measure all the good things he has done to the bodies and souls in the course of one year? Yet, at the age of ninety-two, he has been doing this for over thirty years. Though a man of ninety-two, he is as active as sixty. God supports him for he is a great apostle of Jesus, a man of faith and of great charity.

FAITH- FIDELITY

6-Who should we believe in?

1. We should believe in God and in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In the Old Testament God spoke to the Israelites through Moses and the prophets. In the New Testament (Messianic times) God speaks to us through His only begotten Son, Jesus., and through the Holy Spirit, who enable us to understand the teachings of Christ and shows us the ways to practise them. Jesus foretold, "He (the Holy Spirit) will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you." (Jn 14:26)
The Holy Spirit is present and is working within the Church. Jesus said, "He will teach you all the truth." (Jn 16:13) and "He will take what is mine and give it to you." (Jn 16:14)
In other words we should believe in God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We believe in Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. What Jesus said is what the Father told Him to say. He said, " My words are not mine. It is the Father who speaks in me." (Jn 14:10)
2. We should believe in the Church. The chief of the Church is Christ, who is represented by the Pope on earth. The Pope himself is infallible in matters of faith and morals. We should also believe in the teaching authority of the Church which is called Ordinary and Universal Teaching of the Church (Magisterium Ordinarium et Universale), which comes to us from the body of the bishops (Collegium Apostolicum). They are the successors of the apostles and their teaching -together with the Pope- is called Magisterium i.e. the official teaching of the Church. The Church was given the responsibility to teach all nations.. Jesus said o the apostles, "Go forth and teach all nations." (Mt 28: 19)
3. The Church is built on the apostles and the prophets of the New Testament(Cf Ephesians 2:20). It is our duty to listen to the voice of the bishops (Magisterium) And to the true prophets of our times, for they express the will of God to us. To listen to them is to follow the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church on the path of holiness to eternal salvation.
4. We should listen to the Holy Spirit who speaks to us through inspirations and motions to lead us to practise the teachings of Christ and to do God's will.
5. The Holy Spirit can give us special gifts (Charismas) to build the kingdom of God on earth (Cf 1 Corinthians 12)
6. To follow the inspirations and the motions of the Holy Spirit is an expression of faith.

In short , let us follow the will of God, imitate Jesus and co-operate with the Holy Spirit who speaks to us through the Bible, the Magisterium, the prophets and the holy inspirations and motions. All this is what faith demands.

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Fr. Mario Aquistapace, a Salesian over ninety years of age, has been very active for all his life. He has been really moved by the Holy Spirit. He speaks of the Holy Spirit

to everybody he meets. Belonging to several Ecclesiastical Movements, he has been involved in many charitable activities in his seventy years of priestly ministry in Macau and Hong Kong. He is popular among people who know him because the Holy Spirit, through him, is changing the society. He has been always devout to the Holy Spirit. He has promoted devotion to the Holy Spirit by sending out leaflets and distributing holy pictures, with symbols of the Holy Spirit. His faith is very strong and his life is without blemish. The Holy Spirit has given him a strong and living faith.

It's the Holy Spirit who makes us believe and brings our faith to full blossom, as we can see in the life of Father Mario, a man who is always on the run, moved by an internal energy no one can fully explain.

FAITH-FIDELITY

7. What should we do about doubts on faith?

Many of our doubts about faith can be attributed to our ignorance of the religious truths or temptations.

Whenever we have doubts about faith, we should pray to God asking Him to guide us and help us keep believing in the Scripture and the official teaching of the Church with regard to that particular issue which causes us to have doubts. Although we may not be able to fully understand it, we should believe it in order to obtain the grace to have a better understanding. Let us believe in order to understand, not to understand in order to believe. It would cause serious mistakes if you want to understand in order to believe. There is always something in faith that is beyond our ability to understand.

If you are familiar with the teachings of the Scripture and the teachings of the Church about a particular issue which causes us to have doubts, and after prayers, you still have doubts, this could be a temptation from the devil who wants to obscure your mind to make you fall into sins.

Satan's temptations cause us to have doubts on faith. He wants to blind our mind and fall into sins easily. He did this to Eve when he tempted her to eat the forbidden fruit to make her doubt about God's goodness and sincerity.

He said, 'Did God really say you were not to eat the fruit of the trees in the garden?'

The woman answered the serpent, 'We can eat the fruit of the trees in the garden, but about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, "You must not eat it, not touch it, or under the pain of death." '

The serpent said to the woman, 'No! You will not die! God knows in fact that on the day you eat it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil.'
(Gen. 3:1-5)

So we can see how Satan blinded Eve's mind to make her doubt about God's goodness in order to make her disobey God. Today, Satan is again using the same trick on us. When the devil wants us to commit sins, he makes us have doubts about God or about the Catholic doctrine.

St. Peter admonishes the faithful, 'Be calm and vigilant, because your enemy, the devil, is prowling round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to eat. Stand up to him, strong in faith.....' (1 Peter 5:8-9)

St. Peter admonishes the faithful, “ Be calm and vigilant, because your enemy, the Devil, is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand up to him, strong in faith...” (1 Pt.5:8ff)

We should be careful not to be led astray by disobeying the Lord for human considerations, as it happened to Peter. He tried to persuade Jesus to escape death on the cross by following human considerations. He was rebuked by Jesus, who said to him, “ Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God’s way but man’s.” (Mk 8:33)

To follow human considerations may cause us to decrease our faith. This could happen when we are with friends who have worldly mentality. To please them, we put aside faith and righteousness, as in the case of Pontius Pilate who, in order to please the crowds, had Jesus crucified. We should understand why it is so important we should always stand firm on our faith, whenever and wherever.

Jesus set us good examples in the wilderness. When Satan approached Him making proposals that contradicted the will of God, Jesus rejected them all by quoting the Bible. Thus, the Holy Scripture is the best weapon against temptations. We should not be discouraged in being tempted because our faith becomes stronger every time when we reject temptations.

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St. Francis de Sales experienced strong temptations against faith. He was filled with despair in God’s mercy. He had the impression he was destined to Hell without any possibility of escaping from it. He tried to fight against this temptation for months without success until one day he recited the “Memorare”, which is a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, and that temptation of despair in God’s mercy vanished at once.

Such temptations he experienced strenghtened his faith and caused him to have the ability to convert many Protestants , to the Catholic Church.

FAITH-FIDELITY

8. What does faith change in our life?

Driven by faith, we do things that people without faith do not do, and we do not do things that people with little faith do. A life that is marked by faith is always misunderstood by people of little faith.

Faith is the source of many spiritual activities. It makes us see the good we should do, and the evils we should avoid. Above all, however, it helps us evaluate reality from God's viewpoint. The Lord is always right in His judgement. Things that are seen from His point of view are properly evaluated.

The Blessed Virgin, by saying 'yes' to the angel, not only changed her life's direction, but also influenced the history of mankind: she brought the Saviour into the world and thus the world underwent tremendous changes.

Faith is also a source of consolation and strength. Through faith, we receive graces and strength from God to do great things. The Bible says, 'To the believer all becomes possible.' (Mk 9:23)

True faith makes God present in our life. We become God's instruments for His plans of salvation. The Blessed Virgin said, 'Behold, the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to your will.' (Luke 1:38)

Faith gives us direction in our life. People without faith are like the blind, they do not know where they come from and to where they go. They move around without a fixed direction, they waste time and energy for nothing. Their life is meaningless. People with faith know what to do, they know where they come from and where to go. There is no waste of time and energy in their life.

At Lourdes, in the compound of the shrine of Our Lady, there is a statue of a blind person with this inscription: 'Lack of faith is worse than blindness.' The statue was erected by a sinner who had spent many faithless years. After her conversion, obtained through the intercession of Our Lady at Lourdes, she felt it was her duty to warn those who had no faith the dangers they were facing.

This should make us thankful to the Lord for the great gift of faith and for the good fruits which stem from it.

FAITH-FIDELITY

9. Why do many people not get what they ask for in prayer?

Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you, search and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks will receive; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door open to him". (Lk 11:9-10)

The apostle James gives us an explanation in regard to the unheard prayers. He says, "When you pray and do not get it, it is because you have not prayed properly, you have prayed for something to indulge your own desires." (James 4:3)

Jesus tells us to pray in His name, "Anything you ask the Father, He will grant it in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name." (John 16:23-24)

Jesus insists that we should ask in His name. What does it mean? The name "Jesus" means "Saviour". Therefore we should ask for things that are good for the salvation of souls, including ours as well. If we do not ask in the name of Jesus, it is unlikely we will get it. In other words, if the things we ask for in prayer are not profitable for our salvation and the salvation of others' souls, we are not praying in the name of Jesus i.e. in the sphere of the salvation of souls.

Theologians say that there are graces we can get even without praying for them, but there are also graces we will not get without praying for them. On the other hand, there are also graces we will not get even if we pray well, for God knows that the graces we ask for are not good for the salvation of our and others's souls or for our mission in this world.

Who is the dutiful father who will give his children all the things they ask for and not rather what is good for them? God will give us the right thing we need in that moment if we pray well. Therefore the sentence of the Gospel, "Ask and it will be given to you." (Lk 11:9) still holds true.

St. Augustine says, "Quodcumque petimus adversus utilitatem salutis non petimus in nomine Salvatoris." (Whenever we ask for something not in favour of eternal salvation, we do not ask in the name of the Saviour). (In Io. 73, 3 PL 1825)

Let us not get discouraged if we do not get what we ask for in prayer. God in His fatherly love will give us something that He considers more suitable for our needs, provided we have prayed properly. When we recites the Lord's Prayer we say, "May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Mt 6:10) We should pray God in this way, "If it is compatible with Your will, give me this or that".

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When Our Lady appeared at Fatima to the three shepherds in September 1917, one of them, Lucy, had a list of names of the sick people to present to Our Lady. They were the sick people who wanted to recover through the intercession of Our Lady. But what happened? Our Lady was reported to have said, "I will cure some of them but not all, because God has no confidence in them." (Msgr William C. McGrath, *The Woman Clothed with the Sun* p. 198)

As Jesus said, "It is an evil and unfaithful generation that ask for a sign! The only sign that will be given is the sign of the prophet Jonah... The men of Nineve will rise up in the judgement with this generation and will condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here." (Mt 12: 39-42)

And again, "Many believed in His name when they saw the signs He gave, but Jesus knew them all and did not trust them; He never needed evidence about any man; He could tell what a man had in him." (Jn 2:25).

It appears that the recovery of some of those sick people would have not been beneficial for their salvation.

FAITH-FIDELITY

10. Why does God allow doubts about faith to occur?

The reason why the Lord allows doubts of faith to occur is to strengthen our faith while testing it. It is not God's purpose to destroy our faith by allowing doubts. Therefore, when we have doubts we should continue to believe, pray and even consult priests to overcome them. Then our faith will become stronger. It will be strong enough to meet the challenges in life. Since God foresees the challenges we are going to face, He allows certain doubts on faith to train us and make us strong in particular issues of our beliefs in view of the challenges ahead of us.

Every test has its own risks: we can fail or overcome the test. In order to overcome the test on faith, we should be prudent and follow the teachings of the Bible which is the source and pillar of our faith.

St. Peter had the mission of confirming Christians in faith. Therefore, he was tested with regard to his fidelity to the Lord Jesus. He was destined to become the visible chief of the church so it was necessary for him to have a stronger faith. Jesus, with regard to Peter's tests on faith, said, "Simon, Simon! Listen! Satan has received permission to test all of you, to separate the good from the bad, as a farmer separates the wheat from the chaff. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith will not fail. And when you turn back to me, you must strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31-32). Jesus said these words just at the vigil of His Passion during which Peter's fidelity was tested three times. Unfortunately, Peter failed the tests because he did not pray. Moreover, he was imprudent by exposing himself to temptations but, later, he repented and was faithful to the Lord till his own death on the cross in Rome.

Faith is a grace from God and the fruit of one's efforts at the same time. Therefore, we should not forget to pray in order to have a strong faith. Peter, on the night of the Great Betrayal, failed in the tests of faith because he did not pray. He and the other apostles were told to pray but they slept. Later, when the moment of the tests arrived, they were too frail to stand against the tests. If they had prayed, the disaster would have been avoided.

Faith is a supernatural virtue which demands our efforts. God often allows doubts to occur in order to purify our soul. As the saints experienced in the so-called "Night of the Senses" and even more in the "Night of the Spirit", described by St. John of the Cross.

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As it was said before, St. Francis de Sales had strong doubts about faith and was strongly tempted to despair of his salvation. He had the impression of being destined to Hell. He overcame those doubts by reciting the prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, called "Memorare".

We should be careful not to be led astray by disobeying the Lord for human considerations as it happened to Peter. He tried to persuade Jesus to escape death on the cross by following human considerations. He was rebuked by Jesus, who said to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God's way but man's.' (Mk. 8:33)

To follow human considerations may cause us to decrease our faith. This could happen when we are with friends who have a worldly mentality. To please them, we put aside faith and righteousness, as in the case of Pontius Pilate who, in order to please the crowds, had Jesus crucified. We should understand why it is so important we should always stand firm on our faith, whenever and wherever.

Jesus set us good examples in the wilderness. When Satan approached Him making proposals that contradicted the will of God, Jesus rejected them all by quoting the Bible. Thus, the Holy Scripture is the best weapon against temptations. We should not be discouraged in being tempted because our faith becomes stronger every time when we reject temptations.

St. Francis de Sales experienced strong temptations against faith. He was filled with despair in God's mercy. He had the impression he was destined to Hell without any possibility of escaping from it. He tried to fight against this temptation for months without success until one day he recited the "Memorare", which is a prayer devoted to the Blessed Virgin, and that temptation of despair in God's mercy vanished at once.

Such temptations he experienced strengthened his faith and caused him to have the ability to convert many Protestants to the Catholic Church.

FAITH-FIDELITY

11. How to combine a life of faith with local culture?

The local culture can endanger our faith and even destroy it if we are not careful. The trends of this world, like its fashion, its materialistic mentality, etc, are all obstacles for a life of faith. We should develop a sense of discernment between, among the elements of the local culture, what are compatible with faith and what are not. We call it inculturation i.e. harmonizing faith and culture without spoiling faith in order to save the culture. But in cases of conflicts between faith and local culture, faith should be done away without compromises.

Some people wrongly believe that by becoming more like the people of the world, we will be able to help them more easily. This was proved to be utterly wrong. It is like the fact that when the salt has become insipid, it is good for nothing. Jesus said, 'You are the salt of the earth. If the salt loses its taste, it is good for nothing and is trampled under feet.' (Mt 5:13).

Being Christians, we all live among the worldly people who have no faith. Their ways of speaking, thinking, and acting can make us become unbelievers as they are. Without noticing it, we absorb their mentality and ways of life and finally become what they are: pagans in deeds and Christians in name. Therefore we should always be on guard and reject promptly and completely what are not in agreement with the teachings of the Gospel. We should ward off all kinds of infiltrations of worldly mentality, even if they are minimal, lest our faith be spoiled and our behaviour affected.

We can accept only the elements from the local culture which are in full agreement with the teachings of the Gospel and reject the rest. Jesus says that we cannot serve two masters: God and mammon (money) (Mt 6:24). As we know, the mentality of the world is based on thirst for money. Money is the motive power that makes people of the world move. Money is their idol. They are convinced that by having much money they can afford to have all they want and their wishes gratified.

I once heard a Chinese say, 'We Chinese have our own culture which is like a plant in a pot. This plant occupies all the space of the pot and leaves no room for Christianity. If we want to be Chinese, we cannot be fully Christians. Christianity can be accepted only if it helps us to become better Chinese.'

This argument is misleading. Christianity is meant to produce children of God, not to make pagans remain pagans under Christian disguise. People whose thoughts are like this Chinese are not yet Christians even if they are baptized because their lives will not be transformed.

This argument is misleading. Christianity is meant to produce children of God, not to make pagans remain pagans under Christian disguise. People whose thoughts are like those of this Chinese are not Christians , even if they are baptized, because their lives will not be transformed.

FAITH-FIDELITY

12. Does faith put restrictions on our freedom?

There are people who do not embrace any religion because they want to have complete freedom to organize their lifestyle. They are not living at the service of the Lord and of His will. They are proud, selfish, godless, and foolish. Remember the parable of the foolish rich person who did not care about God's existence and trusted only his wealth. He said, 'My soul! You have all the good things you need for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself!' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night you will have to give up your life; then who will get all these things you have kept for yourself?' (Lk 12:19-20)

The sins of modern man are godlessness, self-centredness, and refusal to submit to God's will. Many say, 'I do not believe in anything except myself.' Considering themselves self-sufficient, they are willing to live without God. They think they can do whatever they like to do whenever and wherever. Man, however, should not do what he likes to do but should do what he has to do. Our faith tells us what we should do: we should believe in God, respect His laws, treat everyone with justice and love, practise virtues, lay aside merits for the life after death, etc. Our faith demands us to set limitations on our own likings and free will. Faith requires us to live in the way that we should serve God and people. St. Augustine says that those who love God and the others properly love themselves too. Surely, a man who has faith puts limits to his own freedom in many ways, but it is for something much more valuable - heaven.

Those who do not believe in God, in order to have complete freedom, are foolish and spiritually blind. They are on their way to complete disaster.

It was reported that in Japan an inquiry was made about the number of Catholic residents. It turned out that a few million claimed they were Catholics. This number was against the statistics released by the Catholic Church in Japan. Later, it was discovered that many of those who claimed they were Catholics were not yet baptized. When asked why they were not baptized, they said, 'Because we want to be free. If we receive baptism, we have to observe many rules and our freedom will be restricted.'

In Europe, many people say, 'I am Catholic but not practising.' These people believe in the existence of God but do not observe the Commandments. It is because they want to be free to do what they like to do. This kind of faith is not faith at all. St. James condemns this kind of faith by saying, 'Faith without works is a dead faith.' (James 2: 17)

FAITH-FIDELITY

13. Faith and fidelity combine

According to the Old Testament, faith is closely related to fidelity. The Lord often reminded the Israelites that they were not faithful to Him and that they had abandoned Him, they also turned to the cults of the idols of the pagan nations.

Not only did the Israelites believe in the Lord, they were also required to be faithful to the Lord by observing the prescriptions of the Covenant made with the Lord on Mount Sinai. Through this Covenant, the Israelites became the chosen people of God with particular duties in regard to Him. Their faith in God was required to combine with fidelity to Him.

Fidelity is related to a pact or an agreement. It demands us to stick to the conditions or requests of the agreement in order to be found faithful.

We Christians, through baptism, have become the children of God, the people of the New Covenant. The Lord entered into this New Covenant with man through Jesus' death on the cross. In the sacrament of baptism, the catechumens profess their faith and pledge fidelity to the Lord by undertaking to observe His Commandments. Besides, in baptism we profess our faith in Jesus and pledge fidelity to the Lord and to His Gospel.

The Family of Disciples of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (Gospel Movement) are people that, besides having consecrated themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, take the Promise or the vows of Faith – Fidelity. They make a covenant or pact with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, promising to practise the Gospel in full and devotion to the Sacred Heart, as it was proclaimed by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Such Promise or Vow of Faith includes trusting the Sacred Heart and the willingness to be faithful to the Gospel in a particular way (to practise it to the last detail) and to live up to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. These two Hearts (Heart of Jesus and Heart of Mary) form one moral heart, as St. John Eudes said.

It is more appropriate to call their Promise of Faith as Promise of Fidelity. It is because the members not only intend to believe in the Gospel and in Devotion to the Sacred Hearts, but to put the practice of the teachings of the Gospel and Devotion to the Sacred Hearts their first priority in their life. From this we can see how the Promise of Faith (Fidelity) can be something more meaningful and useful for spiritual life. This concept should be explained to those who say that Faith is a duty for all and making the Promise or Vow of Faith is meaningless. Fidelity in carrying out the requests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is what we mean by taking the Promise of Faith – Fidelity.

Although it is optional, Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary is strongly recommended by the Church because it can actively contribute to the sanctification of the world.

HUMILITY

1. The Importance of Humility

Once St. Francis de Sales was asked, 'What is the most important virtue?'

'Humility,' said St. Francis.

'Why humility and not charity?' asked the person again who felt the answer was a bit strange.

'If a person has no humility, he cannot possess the other virtues, including charity, since God gives the grace only to be humble,' explained St. Francis. (Cfr. James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5). The grace of God is needed to do every good thing and to practise virtues.

St. Bonaventure defines humility in this way, 'Humility is a supernatural moral value which inclines the human will, after having got the true knowledge of God and of oneself, to consider oneself as contemptible and worthy of being treated as such.'

There are passages in the Holy Scripture which can convince us of this truth:

1. Our salvation comes from God's mercy. We should collaborate with God's grace. (Romans 11:6, Titus 3:5)
2. Jesus said, 'You, cut off from me, can do nothing.' (John 15:5).
3. St. Paul says, 'Our sufficiency is from God.' (2 Cor. 3:5)

The truth of humility is: our being, existence, capacity, and achievements, etc. all come from God's helping grace.

The very word 'humble' comes from the Latin root 'Humus' i.e. soil. A humble person considers himself as low as soil which can be trampled under feet. The benefits of humility, according to the Bible, are many. The following are some of them:

1. Humility is the door to wisdom

The Bible says, 'Where there is humility, we find wisdom.' (Prov. 11:2) Jesus says, 'Father, you have concealed these things from the wise and the learned and revealed them to the humble.' (Mt. 11:25)

2. Humility is the foundation and the root of justice.

Complete justice consists in giving God what He deserves, people their own and oneself what is reasonable. The humble people revere the Lord, treat others with respect, and practise self-control. The Bible says, 'Great is the power of the Lord and he is honoured by the humble.' (Eccli. 3:21)

3. Humility is the dwelling place of God's grace.

The Holy Scripture says, 'The Lord resists the proud and gives his graces to the humble.' (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5) And again, 'The prayer of the humble penetrates the sky and reaches God.' (Eccli. 35:21).

The Fathers of the Church praised humility in many ways:

1. St. Bernard says that humility is the foundation and the guardian of all virtues. (Cfr. St. Bernard, Sermon on the Nativity of the Lord 1, PL183, 115).
2. St. Gregory the Great says, 'In all the things you do, you should keep being humble, otherwise your good works will be spoiled. The one who wants to be virtuous but lacks humility is like the one who wants to collect powder under the blowing wind.' (St. Gregory, Homily 7, PL 76, 1104)

St. Francis of Assisi once had a thought of pride towards Bro. Leon, one of his confreres. Immediately after this thought, he called for Bro. Leon and asked him to put his foot on Francis's neck to show that Francis was nothing but like dust: worthy of contempt. This shows how we should practise humility, not only superficially but also internally.

HUMILITY

2. Humility according to St. Benedict

St. Benedict of Nursia, the founder of the Western Monachism, listed 12 levels or steps of humility (seven steps concerning internal humility and five steps concerning external humility).

A. Internal humility

1. **FEAR OF THE LORD** One observes the Commandments first for fear of punishments and then for respect for the Lord. This is the first level of humility.
2. **SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WILL** Not only to observe the Commandments but also to follow God's will.
3. **OBEDIENCE TO THE SUPERIORS FOR GOD'S SAKE** It is more difficult to obey men than God. Men have biased opinions and defects.
4. **PATIENT OBEDIENCE IN DIFFICULT MATTERS OR SITUATIONS** When a person is asked to perform difficult things or to stand difficult situations, and if he does these without complaining as Jesus did during His Passion, he has achieved a higher level of humility.
5. **CONFESSION OF ONE'S HIDDEN DEFECTS TO (RELIGIOUS) SUPERIORS OUTSIDE SACRAMENTAL CONFESSION** This is easier for people who live a religious life, whose superiors are priests or nuns. However, if a lay person tells his/her defects and sins to his/her parents, priests or other religious people, then this person has achieved a good level of humility. The Holy Scripture encourages us this way, 'Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another.' (James 5:16)
6. **CORDIAL ACCEPTANCE OF DEPRIVATIONS AND LOW OCCUPATIONS**
We should gladly accept deprivations and low occupations by considering ourselves not deserving higher positions or tasks.
7. **CONSIDERING ONESELF AS A GREAT SINNER AND THE LEAST OF ALL MEN** Many great saints considered themselves the greatest sinners of the world and the least of all. For instance, St. Paul considered himself the least of all Christians since he had persecuted the Church. We can consider ourselves the least of all by recalling our past sins and our lack of responses to God's graces, etc.

B. External humility

8. **AVOIDING SINGULARITY** One should avoid things that attract attention. He should do the ordinary things, rather than the extraordinary ones, unless there is a sufficient reason to do things out of the ordinary.

9. **SILENCE** One should be silent until questioned unless there is a good reason for speaking.

10. **AVOID LAUGHING** To laugh is often an expression of pride, especially if done sarcastically.

11. **SPEAKING GENTLY AND HUMBLLY**

12. **MODESTY IN ONE'S POSTURES** In walking, sitting, gesturing, etc.

HUMILITY

3. The three levels of humility according to St. Ignatius of Loyola

St. Ignatius of Loyola based humility on obedience. He listed three levels of humility.

THE FIRST LEVEL OF HUMILITY consists of lowering oneself in order to obey the Law of God (Ten Commandments) to such an extent that even if we could get all enjoyments of this world at the price of a mortal sin, we will in no way commit a mortal sin even if we lose our life. This level of humility is essential to every Christian if we want to go to Heaven.

THE SECOND LEVEL OF HUMILITY consists of being ready to suffer in any way, even death, in order to avoid committing a venial sin. This level of humility is achieved by only a few fervent people.

THE THIRD LEVEL OF HUMILITY is the most perfect one. Not only does it exceed the first and the second levels of humility, it consists of being willing to choose humiliations and poverty, as Christ did, in order to save the souls. People who have achieved this level choose to become poor as Christ was and to suffer as Christ did, whenever there are chances of being rich, of enjoying themselves, and of being honoured. This level of humility is attained by great saints.

St Ignatius proposed these levels of humility to those who make the retreat according to his system. In other words, these three levels of humility are three levels of self-denial. St. Ignatius had this motto: "Do things for the greater glory of God." This is also a form of humility. It is because humility consists of abasing ourselves to give glory to the Lord. Man has been created to glorify the Lord on earth and thus saves his soul.

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The Jesuits, founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola, put great emphasis on the practice of obedience. Therefore, they are at the service of the Church in many important tasks and they hold key positions. They are spiritual soldiers (St Ignatius was a soldier before becoming a priest) who obey their superiors in all circumstances without any delays or excuses. God has blessed the Society of Jesus with many members and made them influential and respected all over the world. It is because God likes the humble who base their life on the solid rock of obedience.

HUMILITY

4. The three levels of humility according to Rev. J. J. Olier

Fr. J. J. Olier (1608 – 1657), the founder of the Congregation of St. Sulpice in France, suggested three levels of humility to fervent souls:

The first level consists in being able to realize that we ourselves are sinners. In this level, we know our own lowliness, abjection, defects, and sins. However, the mere knowledge of our misery is not humility yet. In fact, there are people who admit their defects but they try to find all the good things about themselves to cover up their misery. These people are not really humble. On the contrary, if a person is pleased to discover his misery, and ready to accept his own misery and abjection as the right punishment for his sins out of love of God, then this person is really humble.

The second level consists in being pleased to be known and considered by everyone as a sinner, or as a nobody and good for nothing. This is a higher level of humility. Most people want to be respected by others in spite of their defects and failures. These people are hypocrites and want to pretend what they are not.

The third level consists in not only being known as a sinner, but also willing to be treated as a sinner, or as a wicked person, in order to be treated as we really deserve. A person of this level will be glad to be treated in bad manners. This person is very humble and makes room for the Lord to act in him throughout his life. People who have reached the third level of humility, as it is described by Rev. J. J. Olier, consider the Lord as their supreme leader. They completely forget about themselves. They care only for the greater glory of the Lord, ready to pay the price, no matter how high it is, in any circumstances.

God will choose such people for His plans of salvation.

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St. John of the Cross was one of these people. He was treated as a criminal although he was innocent. He was put into prison and scourged. He bore everything with great patience. Once the Lord appeared to him and asked, 'What do you like?' He answered, 'To be despised and suffer for you, Jesus.' St John of the Cross was a great saint. He became the reformer, together with St. Teresa of Avila, of the Carmelite Order.

HUMILITY

5. The three levels of humility according to St. Vincent de Paul

Besides the fact that he was not only a great man, St. Vincent de Paul was also renowned for his charitable activities. He was a great saint famous for his great humility.

He divided humility into three levels or aspects, also called conditions of humility.

The first level or aspect of humility

The first condition or level of humility consists in 'considering ourselves-in all sincerity-worthy of contempt from everybody because of our sins.'

The second level or aspect of humility

This level consists in being pleased when others know our defects and despise us.

The third level or aspect of humility

If the Lord does something good in us or through us, we should not let people know but thank the Lord and consider our lowliness. And, if people know about it, we should turn everything to the praise of God's mercy and to the merits of others. Our Lady set an example to us in this situation. When she was praised by Elizabeth, she turned everything to the glory of the merciful Lord. (Cfr Luke 1: 46-55).

St. Vincent de Paul says that this type of humility is the basis of the whole Christian perfection and is a must for those who want to practise the teachings of the Gospel. Those who do not reach this type of humility will always be hassled by problems. This is because God will humble them by allowing difficulties and worries to affect their life continuously. Jesus said, 'Unless you become like little children, you will be unable to enter the Kingdom of God.' (Lk 18:17) It is wrong to assume that the humble people will always be in a low position because the Bible says, 'The humble will be exalted.' (De Poenitentia, Sermo 351, cap. 1. PL 39, 1556)

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St. Vincent de Paul learned humility from experience. He was transported to Africa as a slave and served his masters for two years. Since slaves were despised and ill-treated, he learned humility and then he taught others how to practise it. We should consider ourselves slaves of the Lord. All the good things about us come from the Lord and have to be turned to the service of the Lord, just like the slaves at the times of the Roman Empire who had nothing of their own. All the profit they made was supposed to belong to

their masters. No wonder why St. Vincent de Paul, filled with such spirit of humility, became the apostle of charity. Today, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is doing a lot for the poor people all over Europe, and also in many other areas in the world. They have founded orphanages, hospitals, homes for the aged, and caring for the poor in their homes, etc.

HUMILITY

6. Humility according to Fr. David of Augusta

Fr. David of Augusta divided the practice of humility into three stages or levels:

The first level consists in considering ourselves as sinners and having many defects, and that we are unable to do good things ourselves. It also consists in ignoring the praises of others, not looking for honours and acknowledgements. Fr. David thought everyone should reach this level of humility.

The second level consists in accepting those who despise us. We are pleased when the others consider us, as we consider ourselves, worthy of contempt and of being ignored. Only a few people reach this level of humility.

The third level consists in not getting elated when we receive honours and praises, but to continue to consider ourselves as low and miserable as before. Our Lady, at the praises of the angel Gabriel in her regard, said, 'Behold the slave-girl of the Lord.' (Lk 1:38) The third level of humility was practised by the saints. In fact, the more a person is close to the Lord, the more he feels himself a great sinner and likes to be treated as such.

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St. Paul considered himself to be the least and the last of all saints, because he remembered having persecuted the Church. Although he received many revelations from the Lord, he did not get elated but considered them the fruit of God's mercy in his regard and thanked the Lord for them. He never complained about the many troubles he had received in serving Christ. On the contrary, he rejoiced in all his sufferings. He thought these sufferings would bring good results to him and to the Church. He said, 'I am full of courage; I am filled with joy.' (2 Corinthians 7:4)

HUMILITY

7. The two main aspects of humility

Humility is a virtue unknown to unbelievers. They ignore the value and importance of humility for they have no faith and cannot see the role and the good effects of humility. However, for Christians, the virtue of humility is extremely important.

Basically, there are two aspects of humility.

The first aspect consists in attributing whatever good things we do or possess within us to the fruit of God's mercy, and that we should turn all to the praises and glory of God. The glory of God is the scope of creation. Man was created for the glory of the Lord, which consists in the submission and obedience to God's will. The Virgin Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let be done to me according to your will.' (Lk 1:38) Jesus, on entering into the world, said, 'Father, I come to do your will.' (Hebr. 10:9) To summarize, the first aspect of humility consists in looking for God's glory.

The second aspect consists in considering ourselves miserable and sinners. What we can really call our own are our own sins. All the good things done by us or through us are the result of God's grace and our collaboration with God's grace. Without God's actual grace, we are in great danger of falling into temptations. Jesus said, " Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptations. The spirit is ready but the flesh is weak." (Mt.26:41).

A humble person always remembers his state of sinfulness, and misery and because of that the humble person receives many graces from the Lord and often thanks and praises the Lord, like the Blessed Virgin (Cf Lk 1:46-55), like the humble shepherds (Cf Lk 2:20) and like the old Simeon (Cf. Lk 2:29-32)

On the contrary, the proud are critical, and, according to Saint Vincent de Paul, experience narrowness of spirit(*angustiae spiritus*) in continuation, as a punishment for their pride (Cf. *Regulae seu Constitutiones Com. Congregationis Missionis* ch.2 No.7). Jesus said, " Those who humble themselves will be exalted and those who exalt themselves will be humbled." (Lk 14:11)

And again, 'I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; cut off from me you can do nothing.' (John 15:5)

In conclusion, we can say that a humble person is aware of being miserable. Therefore, he puts all his trust in the Lord, and for all the good things present within himself or done by him, he thanks the Lord. As St. Paul recommends, 'Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects from you in Jesus Christ.' (1 Thes. 5:17-18). The Psalm says, 'Bless the Lord all day long.' (Ps. 34:1)

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I once met a priest who thanked the Lord every day and often his expressions of thankfulness were heard by people around him. He was called Father-Deo-Gratias, i.e. Thanking-the-Lord Father, because of those continual praises and expressions of thankfulness to the Lord. He gave me great encouragement in regard to the practice of humility. He followed the teaching of St Paul: " For all things give thanks to God, because it is this what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus." (1 Th 5:18)

HUMILITY

8. Humility is to perform one's responsibilities dutifully

The will of God for us consists of performing our duties well. For instance, a student should act as a dutiful student while a mother as a dutiful mother. Performing one's duties well is to practise humility, which consists of service and obedience. Not only should we perform our prescribed duties, but also the inspirations or motions of the Holy Spirit and whatever that is pleasing the Lord although it is not our specified duty. If we comply with it, we will follow the will of God and practise humility.

St. Paul speaks about the different gifts the Holy Spirit (charismas) gives to the believers for a mission or a special duty to perform in favour of the growth of the Church. To fulfill such missions in obedience to the calling of the Spirit is a form of humility, and is a service for the Kingdom of God on earth, which is the Church.

Therefore, the true charismas are coming from the Holy Spirit. It is He who is asking us for a type of service for the Kingdom of God. And St. Paul warns us 'not to make the Holy Spirit sad.' (Ephesians 4:30)

However, it is our duty and the duty of the ecclesiastical authorities to distinguish true charismas from the false ones. True charisma should be followed at once, with great generosity, as part of our task. St. Paul exhorts us not to extinguish the spirit. Thus, for instance, if a believer is attracted to the Charismatic Movement, or the Focolare Movement or the Gospel Movement (Family of the Disciples of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus) or others, and if he is morally sure that this inspiration comes from the Holy spirit, he should obey it and combine this new task with the other ordinary duties. In doing both things – performing his ordinary duties and his extraordinary duties – he follows God's will and practises humility. Moreover, his peace of conscience and the good fruits which stem from his performing both duties will confirm if he is following God's will. The Scripture says, 'No peace – says the Lord – for the wicked' (Isaiah 57:21) The Holy Scripture also says, 'Anyone who wants to have a happy life and enjoy prosperity....., must never yield to evil but must practise good; he must seek peace and pursue it.' (Psalm 34:12-16; 1 Pet. 3:10-12) If he finds peace of conscience, he should continue knowing that he is obeying the Lord and practising humility.

A humble person has the spirit of duty and of the service for others. Jesus said, 'Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be the first among you must be the steward of all. For the Son of Man himself did not

come to be served but to serve and to give his life for the ransom of many.' (Mk. 10:44-45)

We should be attentive to perform our ordinary duties, which may be boring at times, well. We are often tempted to do extraordinary things which can give us a sense of importance and pride. On the other hand, we are often not interested in doing the ordinary things which make us feel small, humble, and even frustrated. It goes without saying that extraordinary things tend to make us proud and lose sight of our limitations. To avoid this, we should stick to ordinary duties prescribed by our superiors, for they are surely in the sphere of God's will, and help us remain humble.

Fr. Louis Gambaro was a man who performed his duties well and always avoided attracting attention of others. He preferred the ordinary things of daily life to the extraordinary ones. He did not like meeting people at the upper class of his society, having his name on the papers, taking part in parties, etc. And precisely for his spirit of humility, he was considered by many Catholics a saintly priest: a priest of duty and a true servant of the Lord.

HUMILITY

9. To serve others is an expression of humility

Why is serving others a form of humility? It is because when serving others, we renounce our wishes to follow their wishes which may be in contrast with our liking. By obeying them, we renounce our freedom which is the main quality that distinguishes man from animals. Animals are not free by nature. They are bound to follow their instincts. To renounce our own freedom in order to comply with the desires of others is true humility. It is an abasement of oneself. Adam and Eve had the freedom to do everything except eating the fruit of a particular tree. This was an order from the Lord. When they refused to obey the Lord and ate from the forbidden tree, they committed a great sin of pride, i.e. the original sin. The same occurred to Lucifer. He refused to serve the Lord, saying, "Non serviam" (I will not serve). After saying this, he committed a grievous sin of pride, which caused him to change from an angel to a devil.

However, our service for others should not go as far as disobeying the Lord. Obeying others' wishes which are in contrast with the Lord's will is an expression of pride and complicity. For whenever the orders or requests of our superiors contravene the law of conscience or the teachings of the Bible, our service ceases to be an expression of humility, because the Lord should be served first and above all, and His law must always be respected. We should only help or obey others in matters that do not oppose moral law. Refusing to serve people who ask us to do things forbidden by the Lord is true humility and even greater humility whenever such refusal brings about reprisal or unfavourable results to ourselves.

We should prefer to be trampled under the feet rather than to give in to their sinful requests.

A humble person in front of proposals or dispositions that are not agreeing with the law of the Lord is not afraid to take a strong stand, ready to bear the consequences and even lose his life.

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John the Baptist took a strong stand in regard to the scandalous behaviour of Herod. He paid for it and was beheaded. He proved to be a humble person. He fought for truth and virtue, for God's honour and glory, forgetful of his personal interests. He set an example for us. Disobedience to superiors who make us do things against the law of the Lord is outstanding humility. The Apostle Peter said to the Sanhedrin, who had forbidden the Apostles to preach the Gospel. "Obedience to God comes before obedience to men." (Acts 5:29)

HUMILITY

10. Not judging others, not condemning others, and not criticising others are forms of humility

Whenever we judge, or criticise, or condemn others, we interfere with God's powers and commit a sin of pride. We should not judge others because there are many things which are beyond our knowledge: their feelings, knowledge, and intentions. We can only see the exterior of their behaviour. Their interior, which counts most, from the moral point of view, is hidden from us. When we criticise or condemn others, we step into the sphere of God's powers.

Jesus discourages us from passing judgements on others by saying, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged, because the judgements you give are the judgements you will get, and the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own?Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your eye and you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye." (Mt. 7: 1-5)

A proud person pays no attention to his own defects, but great attention to the defects of others. A proud person sees evil easily in others and all the good points in himself. It comes natural to think good of oneself and evil of the others.

On the contrary, a humble person has always in his eyes his own defects and sins and keeps on trying to be a better person. He feels miserable for his own mistakes and limitations and pays no attention to the defects of others.

Thus, when a humble person sees defects in others, he tries to find excuses for their intentions if he cannot find excuses for their actions. This consists of prudence, humility, and charity. Moreover, a humble person tries even to find an opportunity to tell the wrong-doers, reasonably and kindly, how to correct his defects. On the contrary, a proud person either criticises the wrong-doers behind their back or scolds them in public or gets angry with them and despises them. In addition, he makes their defects look more serious and malicious than they really are.

A humble person does not condemn sinners. With patience he puts up with their faults, hoping they eventually will understand and correct themselves. He even prays to the Lord for them, and does acts of penance for those who have particular defects, both to obtain the grace of their conversion and the right words to admonish them.

Since God is merciful to sinners, we, as His children, should also be merciful to sinners. Nevertheless, we should disapprove of their actions, lest they can influence our behaviour and lead us to do the same wrong things.

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A group of seminarians were resting on the meadows of a Swiss mountain. They were on a trip. A stranger came to them two times and looked at them closely, then he left without saying anything. The superior of the seminarians said, "If this man comes here again, I will rebuke him for his interference." After a few minutes the man returned, but this time carrying a lot of food. He had been there twice to make sure of the number of the seminarians so that he could provide sufficient amount of food for all of them.

How wrong was the superior to have suspected such a generous man!

HUMILITY

11. Corporal and spiritual humility

We need to practise humility in body and soul.

1. Corporal humility consists of undergoing physical sufferings with patience, such as diseases, infirmities, lack of physical comfort, voluntary mortifications of our senses, self-imposed chastisements, to atone for our past sins or to train ourselves to refrain from falling into temptations.
2. Humility of the spirit consists of accepting humiliations gladly and even to humble ourselves by doing things which can make people laugh at us. For instance, by telling our faults, by revealing our hidden defects, by keeping silent when we are scolded unjustly, and other forms of self-imposed humiliations, provided they will increase God's glory and the good of souls. St. John the Baptist said, "He (Jesus) must grow greater and I must grow smaller" (Jn 3:30).

Great saints like St. Ignatius, St. Vincent de Paul, Rev. J. J. Olier insisted on humility of the spirit, and seemed to overlook corporal humility, which is also important. They may have called it by other names (mortification, self-sacrifices, corporal punishments, etc.)

In our materialistic and consumeristic society, where the body is exalted and treated as an idol, we should turn to forms of corporal humility in dressing, eating, drinking, travelling, and, above all, in punishing ourselves for our defects by humiliating our body with corporal forms of penance.

For instance, when describing her corporal and spiritual forms of humility, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque said, "In order to punish myself for my offences against the Lord and be more similar to Him, I fastened cords with knots around my chest, tightening them to the point that I could breathe with difficulty....I fastened chains around my arms....I rested at night on planks with knots...etc." (Autobiography No. 19) She also used to recite prayers with hands under her knees, kissing the ground at every Our Father etc. She practised spiritual and corporal humility at the same time.

Corporal mortifications and spiritual humiliations are strongly recommended to the people of the modern world, who have so many different forms of comforts in life, enjoy great freedom of action, at the risk of losing their souls through their pride, selfishness, and immoral sexual activities.

Pride is called the impurity of the soul as lust is called the pride of the body. So, by the practice of humility in body and soul we will cleanse our body and soul, and dispose ourselves to a worthy worship of the Lord in our life and receive God's graces.

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Saint Paul says, "I treat my body hard and make it obey me, for, having been an announcer myself, I should not want to be disqualified." (1 Cor. 9:27). Jesus said, "If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself." (Mt 16:24) Saints went through a great amount of penance and humiliations in order to keep themselves in a state of humility to please the Lord. For instance, St. Benedict Labbre used to go around begging in the streets of Rome, allowing himself to be ill treated and laughed at, for the sake of Jesus and to practise humility.

HUMILITY

12. Humility demands detachment from everything

An important aspect of humility consists in detaching from everything, everybody, and even from ourselves, in order to be ready to follow God's will in everything. Jesus said, " If any man comes to me without hating [he should love Me more than...] his father, mother, wife , children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple." Lk 14:26-27). And again, " None of you can be my disciple unless he gives up all his possessions." (Lk 14:33). Pleasures test our virtue. For the love of pleasures, men fall easily into temptations. Those who detach from pleasures do not expose themselves easily to temptations. They are in the best position to avoid temptations.

If humility consists in obeying the Lord, what makes us disobey the Lord most is our love of pleasures: physical pleasures (sensuality) and spiritual pleasures (pride). Adam and Eve fell into temptation because they wanted to enjoy the taste of the forbidden fruit, it was tasty and may make them become more like God. Material and spiritual pleasures allured them and brought about their fall.

On the contrary, those who look neither for material nor spiritual pleasures can avoid many risks of falling into temptations.

The Devil uses the bait of pleasures, like a hunter, to entice people to do evil. We should be on guard against the tactic used by the Evil One. We cannot condemn all pleasures. However, we should be prudent and practise self-restraint by taking only those which can help us perform our duty in a better way and serve the Lord and people as well. All the others should be rejected as dangerous or evil.

A great majority of people think that they are in this world to enjoy pleasures, the more the better. This is only an illusion and a temptation of the Devil. Life should not be seen as a series of pleasures to enjoy, but as a series of duties to perform. Pleasure is for duty. A pleasure not linked to a specific duty to perform is an unsound pleasure.

Cardinal Frederik Borromeo said that life for some people is a series of pleasures to enjoy, while for some others a series of duties to perform. The former are the sinners while the latter are the virtuous. The saints were the people of duties; the sinners were the people of pleasures. Those who look for roses in life will eventually get thorns, and those who take the thorns now will get roses in the future.

Pleasures breed vices; mortification breeds self denial, humility, and all the other virtues.

It is a wise rule of prudence to stay away from all kinds of pleasures, restrict ourselves only to the necessary ones to fulfil our duties, to be on the safe path of virtue which leads us to heaven.

HUMILITY

13. A humble person attributes all the good things to God and all the bad things to man

It is a great sign of humility to attribute all our successes and the good things we have done to God. We should attribute all the good things done by us or through us to the bounties and mercy of God. This is what a humble person should believe. All the bad or evil things, on the other hand, should be attributed to ourselves. It is because man, and not God, can do evil things.

The natural reaction of a humble person in terms of good things is to thank the Lord since he realizes the Lord is the only source of good things. Therefore, if we have done something good, we should think it was possible because the grace of the Lord, which is the main agent of whatever is good, has made it possible. Liturgy rightly says that the Lord is "the source of all holiness" (Cf. Eucharistic Prayer II).

In comparison with God's holiness, we are miserable creatures. Man's sinfulness stems from giving in to concupiscence. Without prayer we are in great danger of falling into temptations.

Humble people acknowledge their state of misery and rely on God to do good things. They thank the Lord and consider Him the author of all the good things. Therefore, when we are praised for something good or for some success we have achieved, we should turn all the praises to God's glory, as Our Lady did when she was praised by Elizabeth (Cf. Lk 1:45-55). For without God's cooperation and assistance, these successes would never have happened. Even the merits we possess are the fruit of God's grace, as St. Augustine puts it, "Deus non coronat merita tua tamquam merita tua, sed tamquam dona sua." (De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio 6, 15) i.e. "When the Lord crowns your merits, he crowns his own gifts to you."

This should help us be thankful to the Lord at all times, as the Psalm says, "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall be on my lips continually." (Ps. 34:1)

The last but not least form of humility is that of doing everything for the glory of God, as St. Paul says, " WHATEVER YOU EAT, WHATEVER YOU DRINK, WHATEVER YOU DO AT ALL, DO IT FOR THE GLORY OF GOD." (1 Cor. 10:31) In all our actions, the merit is for us, but the glory should belong to the Lord, as the Liturgy sings, "All honour, power and glory are yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. Amen." (Conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayers)

CHARITY

1. The meaning of charity according to “Gospel Movement” alias “Family of the Disciples of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus”

St. John says, ‘God is charity.’ (1 John 4:8) All His teachings and actions tell us that Jesus, the Son of God, lived a life of charity. In other words, His teachings and actions teach us different aspects of charity which we should imitate by practising the teachings of the Gospel to the last detail. Those who practise the teachings of the Gospel thoroughly clothe themselves with the spirit of the Lord and live a life of perfect charity as well.

The gist of the Old Testament is that we should love God with all our heart, our mind, our soul, and our strength; and that we should love others as ourselves. Jesus said, ‘You must love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two Commandments hangs the whole Law and the Prophets also.’ (Mt 22:37-40) These two commandments summarize the teachings of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, Jesus puts more emphasis on charity by giving us His New Commandment. He said, ‘I give you a New Commandment. You should love one another as I have loved you.’ (John 13:34)

Members of the Family of the Disciples of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus should engage themselves in loving God in a special way. They must practise the teachings of the Gospel thoroughly and live up to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in its original sense, which is the basis of the Gospel Movement. This devotion is a further step in loving God and people especially the sinners (Cf Lk 7:34). The members of the Family of the Disciples of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus are exhorted to pursue the virtue of charity by taking the Promise or Vow of Charity. The taking of this vow is motivated by the fact that it helps to love God more constantly and earnestly in practising the teachings of the Gospel thoroughly and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. These two directions are integrating each other.

Living up to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in its real sense, is to imitate St. Paul the Apostle who said, ‘It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of His body, the Church.’ (Col. 1:24) Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a form of reparation for the sins of the world. Today, there is a great need of reparation for the sins of the world since sins are so rampant that many sinners get lost in Hell. To snatch them from the grips of Satan, Jesus and Mary ask us to pray for them and do much penance in union with their Sacred Hearts.

Jesus made this request clearly to St. Margaret Mary. He specified the motive of this devotion, which is central to the life of the Church, it's to help the sinners to escape from

the punishment of Hell. Jesus said, "Many false prophets will arise; they will deceive many, and with the increase of lawlessness, love in most people will grow cold." (Mt 24:11-13) Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is meant to revive the love of God and of souls.

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque says, "This devotion is the last effort of His love in favour of the people of recent centuries, to deliver them from the grips of Satan, willing to ruin them, and to make them enter the sweet empire of His love, which will be established in the hearts of those who embrace this devotion." (Msgr Francois-Leon Gauthey, Vie et Oeuvres de St. Marguerite Marie Alacoque Vol. 2, p.572).

St. Faustina suffered from terrible pains in her stomach for many nights. She learned that those pains were permitted by God to make her compensate for the sins of abortion committed by wicked mothers and obtain the grace for their conversion. She willingly accepted this cross for the love of those souls. Sometimes she felt agonizing pains that were permitted by the Lord to help great sinners on the brink of death to get the grace of repentance.

CHARITY

2. Love of God

1. We love God by practising His words as Jesus said, 'Anybody who receives my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me.' (John 14:21) God does not need anything from us except our obedience to His words. When we obey His Commandments, we prove that we love Him. Members of the Gospel Movement are therefore encouraged to meditate on the Gospel every day and put their best efforts in practising it at every moment of their life.
2. Whenever we do good to people in need of help for the sake of Jesus, it is considered we do this to Jesus Himself. The Lord, on the day of the Last Judgement, will say to those who have done good to His needy brothers and sisters, 'In so far as you did this to the least of my brothers, you did it to me.' (Mt. 25:40)

Members of the Gospel Movement are requested to do, every day, at least one act of charity towards the needy for the sake of Jesus. This is to make sure they practise charity and love of God, as St. John said, 'If you do not love the brothers you can see how can you say that you love the Lord you cannot see?' (1 John 4:20)

3. To fulfil the will of God is a form of charity. Jesus said, 'Anyone who carries out the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.' (Mk 3:35)

The discernment of the will of God is done by considering the teachings of the Bible, reasons and concrete circumstances of life. God speaks to us through the Bible, reasons and circumstances. We should be attentive to find out God's will and perform it at once. In case we do not know what God wants from us, we should pray and ask the Lord for guidance. Then we should reflect, study and even consult with learned and experienced people in the spiritual fields because the Lord will not deny us the knowledge of His will if we really want to practise it. Jesus said, 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him.' (Mt 7:7-9)

In addition, the members of the Gospel Movement are urged to detach themselves from everything, everybody, and above all, from themselves in order to be free to do God's will at all times. Jesus said, 'My food is to do the will of the One who sent me, and to complete His work.' (John 4:34) And again, 'I always do what pleases Him(the Father).' (John 8:29)

To sum up, we can love God in three ways: practising the teachings of the Bible, doing good to others for His sake, and carrying out His will in every situation of our life.

Pope John XXIII was a man who looked for God's will at all times. He said, 'Whatever is not done in accordance with God's will is disorder and ruin.' Even the good things that we do, if they are not the will of God, will turn out to be bad and sinful. This Pope enjoyed deep peace because those who do God's will rest safely in God's hands and they become God's tools for the implementation of His plans in this world. In his five years' pontificate, Pope John XXIII by calling the Vatican II opened the road for the renewal of the Church. In fact Vatican II was an event which marked a new era in the life of the Church itself. This has become a clear sign that those who fulfil God's will can transform the world.

CHARITY

3. To love God is to fulfil God's will at every moment

To fulfil God's will at every moment is the best way to practise devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to express our love for the Lord in concrete terms because whatever is not in accordance with God's will is sinful. However, fulfilling God's will at every moment requires a great degree of detachment from things, from people and from ourselves. It also requires us to embrace our cross at every moment. Jesus said, 'If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross every day and follow me.' (Mk 8:34)

God's will is expressed to us at different times through the Bible, our conscience, the circumstances of life, and inspirations and motions of the Holy Spirit. We should be attentive to these channels through which God's will is expressed to us. We should grasp the opportunity to fulfil God's will immediately, thoroughly, and diligently.

In cases of inspirations, if we are not quick to grasp the opportunity to fulfil God's will which is offered to us at a particular moment, we will most likely be unable to get the same opportunity later. Motions of the Holy Spirit will not give us peace of conscience until we follow them.

In short, we should be very attentive to discern what is God's will. If it is God's will, we should be ready to fulfil it without considering how much it may cost us. This level of obedience can be achieved if we have complete detachment from the creatures and from our own selves. On the other hand, we cannot have this kind of detachment unless we love God very much and unless we love the cross so much that we are willing to embrace it at every moment, even ready to die, if it's God's will.

Since saints were great lovers of God and of souls, and because they were detached from everything except God's will and the cross, they were able to fulfil God's will all through their life. They were ready to suffer in every way in order to submit themselves completely to God's will. They were convinced that holiness consists of fulfilling God's will and that, here in this mundane world, it is impossible to fulfil God's will unless we love God and embrace our cross.

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St. John of the Cross, who loved the Lord and the cross so much that he called himself John of the Cross, recommended complete detachment from everything (from all pleasures) in order to attach ourselves to God's will in all situations of life.

He says a bird is unable to fly if it is bound to anything, even if it is a small thread. Similarly, if we are not detached from anything, we will not be able to fulfil God's will thoroughly. The most difficult thing is to detach us from our own very selves. It requires

a great deal of self-denial and self-control. However, it is necessary for us to fight against our old ego at every moment so as to be free from our bad inclinations and follow the call of the Holy Spirit.

CHARITY

4. Obedience to superiors is a form of charity

Obedience to the superiors is a form of charity if it is done out of love for the Lord; it is especially so if our superiors are not friendly towards us, or they have defects themselves, or they make us do things we do not like to do.

Jesus' teaching can help us obey our superiors. He said, 'Those who listen to you, listen to me. Those who despise you, despise me.' (Lk 10:16) And again, 'Everyone must obey state authorities, because no authority exists without God's permission, and the existing authorities have been put there by God.' (Rom. 13:1)

People who love the Lord respect their superiors and see in them Jesus' presence despite their limits and defects.

Obedience to the superiors not with the aim of personal advantages, i.e. to be praised, to be promoted to a higher position, to receive special benefits, etc. but because we see their commands as God's will, is pleasing to the Lord.

A perfect obedience should be: fast, joyful, generous, constant (always obey, even in difficult matters or under difficult situations).

We should not forget that it's our duty to tell our superiors what seems to be God's will for us in particular issues so that they may have enough light to discern the will of God and avoid mistakes.

Vatican II says that the subjects should help their superiors find out the will of God in their regard; both should search for God's will together.(Cf.LG 27)

And Jesus said to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque that those who disobey their superiors will be abandoned by Him and He will let them go after their own wishes as unbridled horses.

Whenever we obey our superiors we offer the Lord the most precious gift we have ever received from Him – free will. Among the three vows of the religious, the most pleasing to the Lord is the vow of obedience.

Jesus expressed His love for the Father by obeying until His death on the cross. (Cf. Phil. 2:5-11)

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In the history of the Fathers of the Desert, there is a true story regarding the merit of obedience. St. Dorotheus told us that he had a disciple called Dositheus. His health was so poor that he was not able to do penance like other monks although he was very

obedient. Not only did he obey his superiors, he also obeyed everyone who ordered him to do anything.

After a few years of monastic life Dositheus died. On the same night of his death, St. Dorotheus saw him already in heaven among other saints. He asked him, 'Why are you in heaven in such a short time?'

He said, 'Because I was always obedient. Obedience is the virtue which obtained many merits for me. It's the best way to purify people from their sins.' (Doct. 1. No.15)

CHARITY

5. Doing good to others for God's sake is true charity

Many people today do good to others not for God's sake but for humanitarian reasons. While it is good that they have a sense of solidarity with the needy and that they are happy to have the chance to help them, it is not yet an expression of charity, because charity is a supernatural virtue which cannot exist on earth without faith, which the Council of Trent describes in these terms, "Initium, fundamentum et radix totius iustificationis" (the beginning, the foundation and the root of all justification[supernatural life]) (S 6 c 8 Denz. 801)

Charity consists of doing good to the needy for Jesus' sake. For Jesus said, "Love God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, with all your strength, and love people as yourself." (Mt 22:37, Mk 12:29 – 31, Lk 10:27).

The importance of charitable actions, especially in regard to Christians, is emphasized in Matthew's Gospel (Chapter 25) where Jesus speaks about the Last Judgement. The Judge (Christ) then will say, "What you have done to the least of your brother is considered as it was done to me." (Mt. 25:40).

The New Commandment of Jesus says, " Love one another as I have loved you; you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another everyone will know that you are my disciples". (John 13:34-35). By giving us this New Commandment Jesus shows Himself as the model and the measure of our love for our brothers and sisters: we are told to love them as Jesus loved them. Jesus loved them to the point of dying for them on the cross. Jesus loved them so much that He gave them the most precious he could give: His Father, His Mother, even His Body in the Eucharist and His Spirit. He abased Himself so far as to wash His disciples' feet. What more could He have done?

St Faustina, in her "Divine Mercy in My Life", suggested doing one act of charity for the needy every day, for this will enhance our love for the Lord. If we cannot prove our love with deeds, then our love towards the Lord is neither real nor practical. St. John says, 'Anyone who says, "I love God" and hates his brother, is a liar, since a man who does not love his brother that he can see cannot love God whom he has never seen. So this is the commandment that he has given us, that anyone who loves God must also love his brother.' (1 John 4:20-21)

CHARITY

6. Following the Holy Spirit is to live a life of charity

One of the ways the Lord expresses His will is through inspirations and motions of the Holy Spirit.

We should be careful not to mistakenly take the inspirations and motions of the Holy Spirit as the fruit of our imagination or feelings.

The inspirations are flashes of spiritual light which affect our mind unexpectedly most of the time.

1. If these flashes of light help us perform our duty in a better way, they are from the Lord and should be followed at once. Any delay will make us lose the opportunity to do what the Lord wants. Motions from the Holy Spirit are the same. They are a sudden and prolonged inclination to do something good. The Holy Spirit pushes us to do something good which are in conformity with our duties, teachings from the Bible, and for the good of souls.
2. Whenever we are inclined to do things beyond our duties or mission, we should follow these criteria:
 - a. If we receive inspirations which are for the good of souls, including our very own, then we should consult our Spiritual Director or Confessor or at least a learned and saintly person endowed with spiritual wisdom and possibly experience in such matters. This is to avoid being deceived by the Devil who may disguise himself as an angel of light.
 - b. If the inspirations we receive are not for the good of souls, then it is better to ignore them.
 - c. If the inspirations are against the teachings of the Bible or the Doctrine of the Church, we should reject them immediately because they come from an evil spirit.

True inspirations, if followed, will cause peace of conscience and good effects. Thus, if we do not enjoy peace of conscience and good effects when following inspirations, then we know these inspirations are not true inspirations but our self-illusions.

True inspirations and motions bring great effects in the spiritual field. If we follow them, the Holy Spirit will commune with us and reveal God's will to us. On the contrary, if we neglect good inspirations or motions, our spiritual progress will be reduced, or even paralysed.

It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the true spirit of charity, according to the famous expression of Saint Paul, 'The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy

Spirit which has been given to us.' (Romans 5:5) Thus we should be docile to the action of the Holy Spirit in whatever way He manifests Himself.

While visiting the Basilica of St. Paul in Rome on January 25, 1959, Pope John XXIII received the inspiration to call the Vatican Council. He told the Cardinals of this inspiration and then announced it to the whole world. Thus, the Vatican Council was called because of an inspiration, and it brought about the renewal of the Church and lasting effects. This proves the great importance of following true inspirations.

CHARITY

7. Following one's charisma as an expression of charity

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, St Paul says, 'There is a variety of gifts but always the same Holy Spirit; there are all sorts of services to be done, but always the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. One may have the gift of preaching with wisdom given him by the Spirit; another may have the gift of giving instructions given by the same Holy Spirit; another the gift of faith given by the same Spirit; another the gift of healing, through this one Spirit; one the power of miracles; another, prophecy; another gift of recognizing spirits; another the gift of tongues and another the ability to interpret them. All these are work of the one and same Spirit, who distributes gifts to different people he chooses.' (1 Cor. 12: 4-11)

Therefore we should discover our own charisma and follow its demands. They are always for the good of the Mystical Body of Christ i.e. the Church.

The charisma is in the form of a constant liking for a type of good work contributing to the good of souls and the glory of the Lord as well. A charisma is given to a person for the good of others, although the person who is given the charisma can benefit from it. A true charisma, if followed properly, gives peace of conscience and good fruits. In addition, favourable circumstances will accompany it, so that the person endowed with a charisma will be given the possibility of carrying it out in one way or another. It is the Providence of God that assists those who have received a particular charisma and helps them to carry it out.

People with charisma (the charismatics) feel it is urgent to follow a particular direction and to make their charisma take roots and spread. Holy Spirit acts in them and gives them peace of conscience only when they behave according to what their charism requires. Meanwhile, the Divine Providence, expresses itself through favourable circumstances and acts interiorly (through inspirations or motions, private revelations or other mystical phenomena) and exteriorly (providing people means for the growth of the charism itself).

Charismatics, who want to keep their charisma alive, are very earnest on the path to holiness and live a life of intense charity. They are under the influence of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Charity, lest their charism will fade out due to their negligence.

At the critical moments of the Society of Jesus, St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, said, 'If the Society of Jesus is abolished but not due to my fault, it will take only half an hour of my prayer to pacify my conscience.' He said this to encourage himself to try his very best to keep the Society of Jesus survive, for he would have felt guilty if the Society of Jesus had come to an end because of his own negligence.

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Blessed Daniel Comboni, the founder of Comboni Missionaries, felt a strong desire to spread Christianity in Africa. He visited several countries in Europe to look for support for his plans in Africa. He founded a Religious Congregation, the Comboni Missionaries, to recruit and train missionaries for Africa. To follow his charisma, he visited Vatican many times in the hope of speeding up proceedings for the materialization of his plans for the conversion of Africa. The cardinal in charge of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith tried to calm him down and asked him to take it easy. However, the cardinal had little success because Daniel felt carrying out his plans was a matter of great urgency. It was like a fire in his heart pushing him to act. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, people in contact with him were so touched by his enthusiasm that they could not oppose his plans.

CHARITY

8. Love of God specified in 'The Lord's Prayer'

The Lord's Prayer is the model for every prayer and the source of inspiration for every type of religious activities. The first part of 'The Lord's Prayer' makes us understand charity consists of seeking God's glory; the extension of God's kingdom; and following God's will in everything as the angels in heaven.

We glorify God and build His kingdom by following His will in the best possible way at every moment of our life. For those who want to love God and people effectively, there is nothing more important than following God's will. Therefore, we should try our best to look for God's will in prayer and meditation. We should search for God's will with purity of intention. We should not look for our selfish advantages. We should put our focus on the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

We should search for God's will which is often expressed through the circumstances of our life, our duties, our charism, our mission, and all the inspirations that God sends us from time to time. His will guides us to live a life in accordance with His plans of salvation. The voice of our conscience is the supreme norm of our activities and it expresses God's will. Nothing should be done against the voice of our conscience, lest we will fall into sin or go astray. St. Paul says, 'Every act done in bad faith (i.e. against the voice of the conscience) is a sin.' (Romans 14:23)

Many times God's will is expressed through the orders of our legitimate superiors, for they represent God. St. Paul says, 'You should obey the governing authorities, since all governments come from God, the civil authorities were approved by God, and so anyone who resists authority is rebelling against God's decision.' (Romans 13: 1-2)

The fact that modern man seeks self-determination, independence, and unrestricted freedom is wrong. It is a tendency stemming from pride and selfishness. Today, man puts himself in the place of God. He puts his own will to replace God's will and becomes self-centred, selfish, unloving, rebellious to God. He is like the rebellious angels (the devils) and like Adam and Eve, whose sin of pride caused their downfall and the ruin of mankind. In fact, going against God's will harms man himself.

In short, our main concern and purpose in life should be following God's will. On this issue, Jesus said, 'I always do what pleases Him(the Father).' (John 8:29) Jesus set a perfect example of how we should love God properly i.e. by following God's will promptly, constantly, properly, and everywhere.

St. Teresa of the Child Jesus did not do any extraordinary things in her life. She spent ten years living in a convent, only obeying the rules and her superiors. In such a short time she reached the peak of holiness. She put her focus only on obeying God's will properly, constantly, and everywhere. She said, 'I fear only one thing: to follow my own will.' She said that the secret of holiness consists not in reciting many prayers, or in doing many acts of penance etc, but in doing God's will constantly and properly. This is also the true love of God.

CHARITY

9. Jesus Christ and His mother are perfect models of charity

Jesus' life and teachings, which are reflected also in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, show us different aspects of charity.

First and foremost, we can see the complete obedience of Jesus to the Father. His obedience started from the very beginning of his entrance into the world, and as of His incarnation in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He said, 'Father, I come to do your will.' (Hebr. 10:9) Then Jesus, in His whole life, did nothing but the Father's will in every situation. He said, 'I do always what pleases Him(the Father).' (John 8:29) Jesus obeyed His Father's will even in the most crucial and painful moments of His life, for instance, in the Garden of the Olives, in front of Pilate, on the Calvary etc. In the Garden of the Olives, He said, 'Father, if it is possible, make this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, may your will be done, and not mine.' (Mt 26:42) He did the will of the Father until the very last minute of His life. When He was about to pass away, He uttered His last words, saying, 'All is completed.' Then He breathed His last. (Cf John 19:30) He really obeyed the Father's will to the very end of His life.

The Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians describes how Jesus loved His heavenly Father. He manifested His love for the Father by obeying His Father's will, like a slave, till His death on the cross. This is the highest degree of love for the Father.

Through the complete obedience to His heavenly Father, Jesus was able to love His Father thoroughly and He also loved people in the upmost degree. His unfathomable love of God and of men should encourage us to be obedient to God at all costs.

Let us reflect on what Jesus did for us in particular:

1. He gave us His Father to be our Father. Thus, we can call God with the sweet name, 'Father'. This greeting is first found in the Lord's prayer: 'Our Father, who art in Heaven.' (Mt 6:9)
2. He gave us His Mother. On the cross He said to her, 'Woman, see your son (John).' (John 19:26) John, who represented all followers of Jesus, received Mary as his mother, and also as our Mother.
3. He gave us His Body as our spiritual food. 'Take and eat it, this is my body.' (Mt 26:26) Then He said, 'Drink all of you from this, for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' (Mt 26:28)

4. From His breast, opened by the lance of a soldier, came out blood and water. (John 19:34)

Blood is the symbol of the Eucharist and water is the symbol of the grace of forgiveness of sins granted in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Baptism.

“Referring back to the Fathers of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas associates the symbolism of the Blood and Water to the Sacraments of Baptism , Eucharist and also other Sacraments”(Elzbieta Siepak, She made an Ordinary Life Extraordinary p.72)

What more could Jesus do for us? What more could He give us?

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is also a model of charity. She was obedient to the will of God till death. What she suffered spiritually was similar to what Jesus suffered physically on the cross. The Heart of Jesus was opened by a lance while the Heart of Mary, foretold by the prophet Simeon, was pierced through by a sword. ‘This child is destined for the fall and the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign which is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.’ (Lk 2:34-35)

The Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary should always be our most perfect models of charity: love of God in complete obedience, and love for people in thorough dedication to the cause of their salvation.

.....

St. Bonaventure wrote many marvellous expressions regarding Jesus’ love for men. Once a person asked him how and where he acquired such a profound knowledge of Christ’s love for men. Then St. Bonaventure invited this person to follow him into a dark room. There was only a big crucifix hanging on the wall. Pointing to the crucifix, St. Bonaventure said, ‘In front of this crucifix I learned what charity is and how to practise it.’

Jesus became the model of perfect charity precisely because Jesus Himself is the incarnated charity. He, through His words and deeds, especially through the examples He gave us at the time of His Passion and Death, showed us the real meaning of charity.

CHARITY

10. Charity is impossible without humility

St Augustine says, “ Ubi charitas ibi pax, et ubi humilitas ibi charitas” (Where there is charity we find peace, and where there is humility we have charity (in Ep. Ad Parthos Tr. Prol. PL 35,1977)

The root of charity is humility and the root of humility is obedience. To ensure the spirit and the practice of charity we should cultivate humility. For charity is a gift from God granted to the humble, as the Scripture says, ‘The Lord opposes the proud and gives His grace to the humble.’ (James 4:6 and 1 Pet. 5:5)

When we practise the teachings of the Gospel, we manifest our love for the Lord. However, the teachings of the Gospel cannot be practised without humility. As Jesus said, ‘Unless you become as little children [humble], you cannot enter the kingdom of God.’ (Mt 18:3) St. Vincent de Paul adds that if a person does not practise humility in depth, he cannot live up to the teachings of the Gospel completely. He describes humility under three aspects. These aspects are necessary for those who want to practise the teachings of the Gospel well. (Cf. Humility according to St. Vincent de Paul)

Charity without humility is impossible. For instance, the foundations of a building are made to sustain the whole building. The foundations should go down deep in the soil in order to guarantee the stability of the whole building. They cannot be seen but they are very important because the building, which is raised upon them, is in proportion to their stability.

The foundations of the spiritual building of holiness correspond to humility while the building itself corresponds to charity. We cannot have a building without foundations and likewise, we cannot have charity without humility. These two virtues are complementary and interlinked. The Holy Family of Nazareth is a shining example of humility and charity.

So we have to practise humility to sustain our life of charity, and remember that obedience is the basis of humility, as St. Augustine says.

To whom should we obey in order to practise humility and charity?

1. First and foremost, we should obey the Lord who speaks to us through the Bible, which is the inspired Word of God through the actions of the Holy Spirit.

2. Secondly, we should obey our legitimate superiors because they represent God. In addition, according to St. Paul, 'All authorities come from above.' (Romans 13:1)
3. Thirdly, we should obey ourselves, i.e. our good resolutions. Many times we change our good resolutions and we do not carry out what we determined to do for the glory of God and for the good of souls. It is because we follow our after-thoughts which distract us from our good resolutions. The golden rule in cases like this should be: when a resolution has been taken with the moral certainty that it is the will of God, we should not change our mind unless there are clear strong evidences that what we intend to do is not God's will for us.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus reproached St. Margaret Mary Alacoque for not obeying herself. Our resolutions and determinations to do something good are taken seriously by the Lord. So we must obey ourselves too in order to please the Lord.

St Augustine was convinced that humility is based on obedience, as charity is based on humility. He said, 'Where there is humility we find charity' (In Ep. Ad Part. Tract. Prol PL 35, 1977). He thought of the fall of the angels and of Adam and Eve. The first parents disobeyed the Lord and committed the sin of pride. Since they were proud, they lacked charity too.

St. Augustine himself was extremely obedient to the demands of his task. He was also extremely humble and charitable. He wrote that famous expression, ' Ama et fac quod vis "(Love [God] and do what you want.)"

CHARITY

11. Faith is the basis of charity

To practise charity, we need faith. The Holy Scripture says, “ Without faith it’s impossible to please God.” (Hebr. 11:6). How can we love God if we do not believe in Him? Can we love someone we believe not existing? Thus, the more we believe in God and know Him, the more we are likely to love Him and love people for His sake. The Holy Scriptures say that those who want to love God should love their neighbours.

‘How can you say that you love God whom you do not see and that you do not love people whom you can see?’ (1 John 4:20)

The way we should love God and people is made known to us through faith, which is based on revelation. Therefore, faith comes before charity and leads us to charity. St. Augustine says that we go to God by faith and love, and that the one who loves God should also love the children of God who are scattered all over the world. The followers of Jesus form the so-called Mystical Body of Christ, of which Christ is the head and the followers are its limbs.

When Saul (Paul) was persecuting the church, he heard this voice, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me (Jesus)?’ (Acts 9:4) He was not persecuting Jesus Christ, who had already died, at that time. He was persecuting the disciples of Christ, who formed a single body in Christ and with Christ.

Faith makes us see people with the eyes of God, which are full of mercy and love.

Those who have true faith practise charity. As St. Paul says, ‘Faith that makes its power felt through charity.’ (Gal. 5:6)

Without faith, we can only participate in humanitarian activities, not charitable works. It is not proper to call ‘humanitarian activities’ with the name ‘charitable works’, if they are performed by non-believers, who do so only out of love for the poor and the needy people. It is because where there is no faith in God there is no charity. The Council of Trent says, “ Faith is the beginning of salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification[supernatural life]” (S.6 c.8 Denz.801).

Consequently, an activity can be called ‘charitable’ only if it is done out of faith and love for God, as Jesus said, ‘Whatever you do to the least of mine in my name, it will be considered as it was done unto me.’ (Mt 25:40)

The more our faith increases, the more our level of charity increases too. For faith is the door and foundation of charity. Charity itself cannot exist without faith. By strengthening our faith, we strengthen our charity as well. Faith without charity is meaningless, as St. James says, 'Faith without the works of faith is a dead faith.' (James 2:17)

St Peter Martyr (1205-1252). He was born at Verona(Italy). He witnessed the true doctrine by preaching and upholding the Catholic Church in front of the heretics. One day he was ambushed by heretics who stabbed him to death. The moment before he died he managed to write on the sand "I believe". His great love for the Lord and for the salvation of souls was motivated by his strong faith.

CHARITY

12. Charity and humility are the primary spirit of “ The Gospel Movement” i.e. “Family of the Disciples of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus”

Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am MEEK and HUMBLE of heart.’
(Mt 11:28-29)

Jesus emphasized the fact that we should learn from Him by practising two virtues: charity and humility. Why? St. Margaret Mary says, “ Jesus’ most pure and sharp eyes find out even the smallest defects regarding charity and humility” (Cf. Autobiography No.52)

Throughout Jesus’ life, there were repetitions of acts of humility and charity. These two virtues were the focal points of all His mission as the Redeemer of the world. All His actions and teachings stem from His spirit of humility and charity. From the crib to the tomb, His life was marked by repetitions of acts of humility and charity: a shining example of what a Christian life should be.

These two virtues are essential in our Christian life. The more we practise them, the more we please the Lord. Jesus was strict with St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in regard to small defects against humility and charity. He was hurt by such defects.

The following excerpts were taken from the spiritual diary of St. Faustina, Divine Mercy in My Soul. “God delights in humble souls. The more a soul humbles itself, the greater is the kindness with which the Lord approaches it, uniting Himself closely with it. He raises it to His very throne.” (No. 1092) And St. Faustina exclaims, “ O humility, the most precious of virtues, how few people possess you! ... O Lord, reduce me to nothingness in my own eyes that I may find grace in Yours!” (No. 1436)

Speaking on charity St. Faustina adds, ‘I have come to know that only love is of any value; love is greatness; nothing, no words, can be compared with a single act of pure love of God.’ (No. 1092)

Thus, humility should exist in view of charity because there is no real humility without charity as there is no real charity without humility.

St. Francis of Assisi, the saint of charity who received the stigmata, identified his own life with the life of Jesus. He started the Seraphic Order of the Franciscans. The expression 'Seraphic Order' means the Order of Charity. Following the expectations of the 'Seraphic Order', the Franciscans are to practise the teachings of the Gospel as their rule of life, living up all the demands of charity made in the Gospel. St. Francis was a man of evangelical charity because he wanted to be extremely humble and poor. From this, we can see that humility and poverty were the basis of his life of charity.

CHARITY

13. The meaning of the Promises and Vows of charity within the Gospel Movement (Family of the Disciples of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus)

The Promise or Vow of Charity, which the members of the 'Family of the Disciples of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus' are encouraged to take, expresses the members' determination to practise the teachings of the Gospel completely and to live up to the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus as it was proposed by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Furthermore, through the movement called Divine Mercy, originated from St. Faustina, emphasis has also been put on devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as a way to approach the true devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Our Lord Jesus once said to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, 'I put you under the care of my Mother so that you may be formed according to my plans (to practise and spread devotion to My Heart).' (Autobiography No.22)

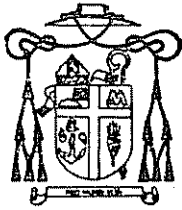
In addition, the members of the Gospel Movement, alias Family of the Disciples of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, should dedicate themselves to the cult of the Blessed Sacrament (Holy Communion and Adoration of the Eucharist). It is because the Sacred Heart of Jesus is present in the Blessed Sacrament, as a victim, for the salvation of souls.

In line with the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the members of the Gospel Movement are called to do acts of reparation for the salvation of sinners. This is the main purpose of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Our Lady of Fatima) i.e. we should associate ourselves to the Passion of Jesus for the conversion of sinners.

There are four degrees of charity we should keep in mind and practise:

1. To keep the Commandments of God, which can be summarized in the Great Commandment, 'Love God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul and with all your strength and love people as yourself.' (Deuteronomy 6:5, Mt 22:37, Mk 12:30, Lk 10:37)
2. To practise the teachings of the Gospel thoroughly.
3. To toil for the salvation of souls, to do penance for one's sins and those of the world, as it is required by the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.
4. To offer oneself as a victim in reparation for the sins of mankind, in imitation of Jesus who suffered and died for the salvation of the sinners.

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque was called by Jesus with the title, "Beloved Disciple of My Sacred Heart" (Autobiography No. 54) . For many years, she was tormented by two desires: to do penance for the conversion of sinners and to adore the Blessed Sacrament. She did a lot of acts of penance and humility. But, most of all, she spent many hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament to love Jesus who was forsaken by men. She said that all her free time was spent adoring the Blessed Sacrament and she would keep staying there if she did not have any other duties to perform. No wonder why she grew in charity by leaps and bounds since the Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of charity and the source of charity.



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This is to certify that the undersigned after examining the content of the manuscript entitled **THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE FAMILY OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS AND THE GOSPEL MOVEMENT** written by **FR. MELCHIORRE ARNOLDI** finds nothing therein which might be contrary to faith and morals and therefore affixes his approval and **IMPRIMATUR** for the printing of the said manuscript for the good of the people of God.

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