

Chapter 13

Aids to Spiritual Growth

Although these aids to spiritual growth are not all of equal value, they do mutually assist one another. They are only secondary means of growth in perfection, however, and therefore no one of them should be used to the exclusion of the basic and fundamental means already discussed.

The Presence of God

The practice of the presence of God consists in recalling as frequently as possible that God is present in all places, especially in the depth of the just soul, and consequently in doing all things in the sight of God. Sacred Scripture and tradition are unanimous in stressing the importance and sanctifying effect of the practice of the presence of God. "Walk in my presence and be blameless," God said to Abraham (Gen. 17:1). The one necessarily follows from the other, for *if we are convinced that God sees us, we will endeavor to avoid sin and will strive to be as recollected as possible in God's presence. If properly used, this spiritual practice will keep the soul in a spirit of prayer and will lead it to intimate union with God.* St. Francis de Sales goes so far as to say that interior recollection accompanied by pious ejaculations can supply for any pious practice and that its absence cannot be remedied by any other.⁽¹⁾

It is a theological fact that we are constantly in *God's presence, which admits of five distinct types.* The *presence of immensity* flows from the divine attribute of the same name; it signifies that God is truly present to all things, and this in a threefold manner: *by essence, presence, and power.* He is present by essence so far as he gives and preserves the existence of all things (creation and conservation), so that nothing could exist or continue to exist without God's presence. He is present by presence in the sense that absolutely nothing escapes his gaze, but all things are naked and open to his eyes. He is present by power in the sense that all things are subject to his power. With one word he creates; with one word he could annihilate whatever he has created.

God's presence *by indwelling* is a special type of presence effected through grace and the operations flowing from grace, in virtue of which God is present to the just soul as a friend and a father, enabling the soul to share in his own divine life.

God's *sacramental presence* is that which Christ enjoys in the Eucharist, so that he is truly present under the appearance of bread and wine.

God's *personal or hypostatic presence* is proper to Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, so that the humanity of Christ subsists in the Person of the Word.

God's *presence by manifestation* signifies that which is proper to him in heaven. So far as we are concerned, however, we shall be aware of this manifestation only when we enjoy the beatific vision.

Of these five types of presence, those which most directly affect the practice of the presence of God are the first two, namely, the presence of immensity, and the presence of indwelling. The first is verified of the soul at all times and under all conditions, even if the soul should be in the state of mortal sin. The second is found only in souls in the state of grace.

The practice of the presence of God has several consequences of great importance for the spiritual life. The following are the principal ones:

1. ***It reminds us to avoid even the slightest deliberate fault.*** If we are careful of our behavior in the presence of superiors or persons of dignity lest we offend them, how much more so in the presence of God, who sees not only our external actions but also our interior thoughts and movements.
2. ***It impels us to do all things with the greatest possible perfection.*** This is a natural consequence of love, especially if we are performing an action in the very presence of the one we love. Faithful observance of this norm is sufficient to lead a soul to the heights of sanctity. Although it is true that God does not demand perfection of us here and now, he does expect us to do the best we can at a given time.
3. ***It enables us to observe modesty in our deportment at all times.*** Whether alone or with others, those who are constantly aware of God's presence will maintain a sense of Christian dignity in all their actions and in their very bearing. To this end, it is important that souls in the state of grace be mindful of the indwelling of the Trinity.
4. ***It increases our fortitude in the struggles of the Christian life.*** It is much more difficult to overcome obstacles and to suffer trials when we are alone. But God is always with us to animate our courage and give us the positive assistance of his grace.

There are ***two principal methods of practicing the presence of God.*** The first consists in a kind of ***exterior representation by which we visualize God as ever present to us.*** We do not see him, but he is really there, and we cannot do anything that escapes his divine gaze. ***This method of practicing the presence of God is greatly aided by the use of crucifixes and other religious symbols placed in a prominent place.***

The second method is that of ***interior recollection.*** It requires that one should live in an ever-increasing awareness of God's presence in the soul, whether by immensity or by the indwelling. The result of this method is a more profound understanding of what Jesus meant when he said: "The kingdom of God is within you." When properly used, interior recollection serves to unite the practice of the presence of God with a deep and intimate union with God. It is also, therefore, one of the necessary conditions for cultivating a deep and abiding spirit of prayer.

Other methods for practicing the presence of God have been proposed by various writers: to see the hand of God in all the events of one's life, whether adverse or prosperous; to see God in all creatures; to see God in the person of one's superior and in one's neighbor. ***One should use the method that is most helpful in cultivating the practice of the presence of God.***

Examination of Conscience

As its name indicates, the examination of conscience is an investigation of one's conscience in order to discover the good or evil acts one has performed, and especially to verify one's basic attitude regarding God and personal sanctification. ***We are not referring to the examination of conscience made prior to confession, which is simply a review and enumeration of one's sins, but of an examination made in view of one's progress in holiness.*** It should take into account the strength or weakness of one's virtues, as well as the number and frequency of one's sins. ***To place too great an emphasis on one's failings may result in meticulousness, anxiety, discouragement, and even scrupulosity.***

Spiritual writers are unanimous in stressing the importance of the examination of conscience as a spiritual exercise. Outstanding among them, of course, is St. Ignatius Loyola, who for a long time used no other methods of spiritual formation for his companions but the examination of conscience and the frequent reception of the sacraments.

St. Ignatius distinguishes two types of examination: general and particular. (2) The first is an overall view of one's spiritual state and those things that would contribute to the improvement of one's spiritual life. The second is focused particularly on some definite vice one is trying to eliminate or some virtue one is trying to cultivate.

The particular examen has three steps or points. First, ***on arising in the morning***, one resolves to correct the particular fault one is trying to eliminate, or to avoid failure in the practice of the particular virtue one is trying to cultivate. Secondly, ***after the noon meal*** one makes an examination of the faults committed during the morning and resolves to avoid them in the afternoon. Thirdly, ***after the evening meal*** one repeats the examination and resolution as at noon.

The general examination proposed by St. Ignatius has five points: (1) give thanks to God for benefits received; (2) beg the grace to know one's sins and to rid oneself of them; (3) make a detailed examination, hour by hour, of one's thoughts, words, and deeds; (4) beg pardon of God; (5) resolve to amend one's life and recite the Our Father. The general examen is made once a day, before retiring.

In order to obtain the maximum benefit from the examination of conscience, it is necessary to know how to practice it. The following extract provides a more detailed explanation of the Ignatian method of examination:

1. ***One's spiritual exercises should be unified***; otherwise they will not exert their influence throughout the day. The examination of conscience should be the bond of union for all of one's spiritual exercises and the great means of achieving unity in one's spiritual life.
2. Philosophy teaches us that ***acts are transitory, but habits are permanent. Hence we should especially examine our habits.*** The mere knowledge of our acts will not give us an intimate knowledge of our souls. What resides in the sanctuary of conscience is not our acts, which have already passed away, but our habits or dispositions of soul. If we have succeeded in knowing them, we have verified the true state of our souls, but not otherwise.

3. In order to know our souls, it is necessary to ask ourselves this simple question: **"Where is my heart"** Immediately we shall find the answer within ourselves. **The question makes us look into the intimate depths of the soul, and immediately the salient point stands out.** This is an intuitive function, and it can be repeated many times during the day. There is no need for investigations, feats of memory, mathematical calculations. It is simply a rapid, all-inclusive glance that tells us at once the state of our souls. That is the mainspring of all our actions, and that is what must be corrected and made right if all else in our life is to go well.

4. The details and exact number of the external manifestations of our fundamental disposition of soul are of least importance. We don't waste time cutting the branches from a tree when we are going to cut down the whole tree. **It is true that external acts reveal the internal condition, but we can discover this condition by looking at it directly instead of searching for it in the forest of external acts.**

5. But if we attend exclusively to the principal interior disposition, shall we not lose sight of the other dispositions of soul, thus allowing them to grow in the darkness without paying any attention to them? There is no danger of this. **The other dispositions of soul cannot emerge if one's whole soul is directed to God as a result of the examination. Moreover, the dominant inclination or disposition of soul is not always the same; one's defects are manifested according to circumstances,** and as soon as a disposition comes to the fore, the examination of conscience overcomes and controls it.

6. But can we rest content with this glance? Does everything consist in seeing? By no means. It is necessary to rectify all disorders and to foster all good movements and inclinations. **The glance at one's state of soul should lead to contrition and resolution. Contrition corrects evil, and resolution affirms good. Contrition looks to the past, and resolution prepares for the future.** The resolution should be a particular one that will touch the special point dominating one's soul. It should place our hearts completely in the presence of God.

7. **There are, therefore, three steps in the examination of conscience: a glance at one's state of soul, contrition, and resolution.** All three can be utilized in the general and particular examens of which St. Ignatius speaks. In the general examen, the glance embraces one's predominant disposition throughout the day. Then it can extend to the secondary dispositions that have been manifested but have not been predominant. The particular examen is easier. As a matter of fact, it has already been done when one discovers one's fundamental predominant disposition of soul. The morning examen should be used to assure one's proper orientation during the day and the avoidance of the evils to which one is most exposed.

8. In this way, **the examination of conscience will give unity and consistency** to all of one's spiritual life. By means of it one can avoid dangers and correct defects. **It serves to reveal one's interior state, so that one cannot remain in evil but is obliged to advance in holiness.**

There is no doubt that the faithful practice of examination of conscience will have profound effects on one's spiritual life. But in this, as in so many things, its efficacy depends to a great extent on perseverance. To omit the examination frequently or to make it in a purely mechanical fashion is to render it absolutely sterile. **The soul that earnestly desires to become holy must be**

convinced that many of the other means of sanctification are frustrated if one does not make the daily examination of conscience.

The Desire for Perfection

Of all the psychological factors that play a part in our spiritual life, a prominent place must be given to the sincere desire for attaining perfection. It is said that when St. Thomas Aquinas was asked by one of his sisters what she should do to reach sanctity, he answered her in one brief sentence: ***"Will it."***

The desire for perfection is an act of the will, under the influence of grace, which aspires unceasingly to spiritual growth until one reaches sanctity. ***It is under the influence of grace because such a desire is manifestly supernatural and surpasses the exigencies and tendencies of pure nature.*** It must be constant in its aspiration for ever greater perfection, and it ***must not stop at any intermediate degree but must aspire to the heights of sanctity.***

Sanctity is the supreme good we can attain in this life. By its very nature it is something infinitely desirable, but since it is also an arduous and difficult good, it is impossible to tend toward it efficaciously without the strong impulse of a will that is determined to attain it at any cost. St. Teresa of Avila considers it of decisive importance "to have a great and very determined resolve not to stop until one reaches it," (3) without reckoning the difficulties along the way, the criticism of those around us, the lack of health, or the disdain of the world. Therefore, ***only resolute and energetic souls, with the help of divine grace, will scale the heights of perfection.***

In order that it will possess the greatest possible sanctifying efficacy, the desire for perfection should have the following qualities:

1. ***It should be supernatural***, that is, should flow from grace and be directed to the greater glory of God. This means that the desire for perfection is a gift of God, for which we should petition humbly and perseveringly until we obtain it. ***"Lord, make me want to love you!"***
2. ***It should be profoundly humble***, without reliance entirely on our own strength, but placing our trust in him from whom all graces flow. Nor should we aspire to sanctity for any other motive than to love and glorify God. ***In the beginning, it is difficult to avoid every trace of presumption and egoism***, but it is necessary to be constantly purifying one's intention and perfecting one's motives until they are directed only to the glory of God.
3. ***It should be filled with confidence***. Of ourselves we can do nothing, but all things are possible in him who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13). Countless souls abandon the road to perfection in the face of obstacles because, becoming discouraged and lacking confidence in God, ***they think that sanctity is not for them***. Only those who persevere in spite of hardships will receive the crown of victory. '
4. ***It should be the predominant desire***. All other goods must be subordinated to this supreme good. Hence the desire for perfection is not simply one among many, but it must be the fundamental desire dominating one's entire life. Those who wish to become saints must dedicate

themselves to this task professionally, and this requires that they put aside anything that may prove an impediment. ***Many souls have failed in the pursuit of sanctity because they have fluctuated between the things of God and the things of the world.***

5. ***It should be constant.*** Numerous souls, on the occasion of some great event, such as the termination of a retreat, reception of the religious habit or sacred orders, or profession of vows, experience a great spiritual impulse, as a result of which they resolve to dedicate themselves henceforth to the pursuit of sanctity. But they weary of the pursuit when they experience difficulties, and they either abandon the road to sanctity, or the desire becomes cool.

Or sometimes they grant themselves vacations or pauses, under the pretext of resting a while to recover their strength. This is a great mistake because the soul not only does not gain any strength but also is greatly weakened. Later, when it wishes to renew its efforts, a greater effort is required to recapture the spiritual gains previously made. All this could have been avoided if the desire for perfection had remained constant, without undue violence or extremes, but also without respite or weakness.

6. ***It should be practical and efficacious.*** This is not a question of wishful thinking but of a definite determination that must be put into practice here and now, using all the means at one's disposal for attaining perfection. It is easy to imagine that one has a desire for perfection because of occasional good intentions or certain noble sentiments experienced during prayer.

But ***a desire is efficacious only when it is put into execution.*** To desire perfection in a theoretical way and to postpone one's efforts until some later date is to live in an illusion. The individual passes from one delay to another, and life passes on, so that the person runs the risk of appearing before God with empty hands.

Since the desire for perfection is of such great importance in the struggle for holiness, one should ***note carefully the following means for arousing this desire:***

1. ***To beg for it incessantly from God.*** Since the desire is supernatural, it can come to us only from above.
2. ***To renew it frequently.*** It should be renewed daily at the most solemn moment of the day, namely, at the moment of Communion; at other times, on principal feasts, the monthly day of recollection, during the annual retreat, on special anniversaries.
3. ***To meditate frequently on the motives that inspire this desire.*** The principal motives are the following: (a) our obligation to strive for perfection, (b) consciousness that this is the greatest good we can seek in this life; (c) awareness of the danger we risk if we do not truly strive to sanctify ourselves; (d) recognition of the fact that the perfect imitation of Christ demands perfection and sanctity.

Conformity to God's Will

Perfect conformity to the divine will is a most efficacious means of sanctification. St. Teresa of Avila says in this regard that those who begin the life of prayer must work and resolve and dispose themselves with as much diligence as possible to make their will conformable to that of God; in this consists the greatest perfection that can be attained on the spiritual way.(4)

Conformity to the will of God consists in a loving, total, and intimate submission and harmony of our will with that of God in everything he disposes or permits in our regard. When it reaches a perfect state it is known by the name of ***holy abandonment to the will of God***; in its less perfect state it is called simply ***Christian resignation***.

In order to understand this practice in an orthodox sense, it is necessary to keep in mind certain doctrinal points. In the first place, sanctity is the result of the action of God and the free cooperation of man. God is the director of the work of our sanctification, and therefore nothing should be done that is not in conformity with his plans and under the impulse of his grace.

The basis of abandonment to the will of God is charity. The reason is that love unites the will of the lover to the will of the beloved, and perfect abandonment requires the complete surrender of our own will to that of God. Perfect abandonment is found only in souls that are far advanced in perfection.

In order to attain this total abandonment, the following theological points should be meditated upon frequently:

1. ***Nothing happens that has not been foreseen by God from all eternity and willed or permitted by him.***
2. ***God could not will anything that is not in conformity with the purpose for which he created all things, namely, his own external glory.***
3. ***All things contribute in some way to the good of those who love God and persevere in his love (Rom. 8:28).***
4. ***Abandonment to the will of - God does not excuse anyone; from fulfilling the divine will of expression by obeying the precepts and commands of God, and then submitting himself or herself as regards all things else to the divine will of good pleasure, without any anxiety.***

From what has already been said, it should be evident that abandonment to the will of God is not only an excellent spiritual practice but also a necessary one for the attainment of sanctity. Its excellence lies in its incomparable efficacy for removing the obstacles that impede the action of grace, for making one practice the virtues as perfectly as possible, and for establishing the absolute dominion of God over our will.

The necessity of practicing abandonment to the will of God is based upon the following points:

1. **Divine right**. As God's creatures, we are also his servants. He created us, he conserves us, he redeemed us, he has made us for himself. We do not belong to ourselves, but we are God's (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19). We are also his children and friends through grace, but children should be subject to their father, and friends should be of one mind and one heart.

2. **Our utility**. Abandonment to God's will has a great sanctifying efficacy, and our sanctification is the greatest good we could seek in this world.

3. **The example of Christ**. All during his life on earth Christ fulfilled the will of his heavenly Father. He proclaimed this by his actions and openly professed it in words. His last words from the Cross were a submission and yielding of his whole being to the hands of his Father. Mary, too, handmaid of the Lord, practiced this total abandonment in imitation of her Son.

Having traced the general lines of the practice of abandonment to the will of God, we shall now offer some suggestions regarding the method of conforming to God's Will in the circumstances of daily life.

1. **Whatever God positively and directly wills is best for us**, even if for the time being it causes pain and suffering. In the face of incurable sickness or the death of loved ones, the only Christian attitude is: "Thy will be done." And if our love of God is strong enough to enable us to rise above simple resignation, and through our pain or sorrow give thanks to God, we shall have reached a high degree of abandonment to the will of God.

2. God never wills positively and directly that which refers to evil, which God cannot will as such. But in his infinite goodness and wisdom, **God knows how to convert into good the evil he permits, and that is why he permits it**. Hence we manifest a lamentable shortsightedness when, in the evils God permits to happen to us, we do not raise our eyes to heaven to adore God, who permits these things for our greater good. We must, therefore, strive to see in the injustice of men the justice of God, which punishes us for our sins, and even his mercy, which gives us an opportunity to make satisfaction for them.

3. **It is necessary to conform ourselves to the will of God as known through his precepts and laws**. It would be a grave error to attempt to please God with works freely selected by ourselves, and then disregard the laws he has imposed on us directly or through his representatives. The first things that we should observe conscientiously are God's commandments, the laws of the Church, the commands of superiors, and the duties of our state in life. "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

4. The first and most basic step toward conformity of one's will with that of God is **to avoid most carefully all sin, however small**.

But what is to be done if we fall into a grave sin? It is necessary to distinguish two aspects of the sin: the offense against God and the humiliation of the sinner. The first must be rejected completely, and one can never repent of it sufficiently. The second can be accepted with

penitence and gratitude because one's humiliation through sin is a means of learning the significance of God's law (cf. Ps. 118:71).

5. ***The soul that wishes to attain perfect abandonment to the will of God must be disposed to practice the evangelical counsels.*** Religious make a vow to practice certain counsels in their daily life; ***lay persons are not called upon to do this, but they should observe the spirit of the counsels*** and carry them out in practice when the duties of their state in life permit. However, it would be an error for the laity gratuitously, to assume a manner of life proper to religious; the first duty of the laity, whether married or living singly in the world, is to fulfill the duties imposed by their particular vocation.

We do not know what God has decreed for our future, but we do know some things for certain: that the will of God is the supreme cause of all things; that the divine will is essentially good and beneficent; that all things, whether adverse or prosperous, contribute to the good of those who love God. Therefore, we should cultivate a holy indifference, not preferring health to sickness, wealth to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life, and so likewise with everything else, but that we desire and choose that which best leads us to the end for which we were created.

If the divine will is the supreme cause of everything that happens, and if the divine will is infinitely good, holy, wise, and powerful, then the more our wills conform to that of God, the more certain we can be that nothing evil will befall us. ***The evils that God permits will contribute to our greater good if we know how to utilize them in the way God desires.***

But in order to understand ***the nature of holy indifference***; the following principles should be kept in mind:

1. ***The purpose of holy indifference is to give oneself completely to God and to become utterly detached from self.*** It is not a stoical indifference to whatever befalls us, but an efficacious means of uniting our wills to, that of God.
2. ***This indifference applies only to the superior part of the soul,*** for it would be impossible to demand of our lower faculties that they remain insensate and indifferent. Therefore one should not be disturbed if one experiences the repugnance or revolt of nature, so long as the will accepts sufferings and trials as coming from the hand of God.
3. ***This indifference is not merely passive but truly active.*** In those instances in which the divine will is made manifest, the human will rushes forth to obey with generosity; in those cases in which the divine will is not yet manifested, the human will is perfectly disposed to accept and fulfill whatever God decrees as soon as his will becomes manifest.

Would it be permissible to reach such a point of indifference that one is disinterested in one's own salvation? By no means; God wills that all be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4), and he permits those to be condemned who have deliberately turned away from him and have died unrepentant. It is not that they could not have been saved, but they would not be saved. Hence to renounce one's own salvation under the pretext of practicing perfect abandonment to God's will would be in

contradiction to God's will, as well as a violation of man's innate desire for perfect happiness. Moreover, since the glory of God is the prime motive for our existence, we should positively seek our own salvation, which is the perfect way in which we give glory to God.

The blessings of complete abandonment to God's will are innumerable. In addition to those already mentioned, the following should be noted:

1. ***It gives a sweet intimacy with God***, such as a child experiences with its mother.
2. ***The soul travels with simplicity and freedom***, desiring only what God wills.
3. ***The soul remains constant and serene*** in all events of life because God wills or permits them.
4. ***The soul is filled with true joy*** that no one can destroy, because it wills whatever God wills.
5. ***One can expect a happy death*** if one remains faithful in abandonment to God's will.

Fidelity to Grace

Fidelity in general signifies the faith and loyalty one person has for another. Fidelity to grace means loyalty or docility in following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in any form in which they are manifested to us.

Inspirations are the interior attractions, movements, feelings of remorse, or the knowledge God causes in us, in order to arouse us and draw us to virtue and to good resolutions. Divine inspirations are produced in various ways. Even sinners receive them in order to be converted.

The Holy Spirit works in us according to his will (cf. John 3:8). Sometimes he enlightens us, as when he gives us the knowledge by which we may resolve a doubt; at other times he moves us, as when we perform some good action we had already intended to do; but most often ***he both enlightens and moves us at the same time***. At times he inspires us in the midst of some work or even distraction, sometimes during prayer, at the times of Communion, or in moments of recollection and fervor. He rules and governs the adopted children of God in the ordinary events of daily life as well as in affairs of great importance. He does not always inspire us directly, however, but sometimes sends the inspirations through a secondary cause such as a good book, a sermon, or someone's good example. Nevertheless, in the last analysis the Holy Spirit is always the principal author of the inspiration.

It would be impossible to insist too strongly on the importance and necessity of fidelity to grace in order to advance on the way of perfection. It is, in a certain sense, the fundamental problem of the Christian life because it determines whether one will make constant progress toward the heights of sanctity. Practically the only task of the spiritual director is to lead the soul to a most exquisite and constant fidelity to grace. Without this, all other methods are doomed to failure. The theological reason for this can be found in the divine economy of actual grace.

Actual grace is necessary for every salutary act. Without actual grace it is impossible to perform the smallest supernatural action, even if the soul possesses sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But actual grace is continuously offered to us in the fulfillment of the duties of the moment. That is not all. In the ordinary economy of divine providence, God subordinates consequent graces to those graces that have previously been given. Therefore, infidelity to grace at a given time may deprive us of many other graces that God would have given us if we had used the earlier graces. Only in eternity shall we see that a great number of frustrated saints were such because of their infidelity to actual grace. It should be noted that we are not here speaking of serious sins, which cause the loss of habitual grace, but of those venial sins, which frustrated the action of the Holy Spirit.

The negative effects that follow infidelity to grace should be sufficient to impress upon the soul the importance of being faithful to the graces God gives, but it is also important that we understand the positive sanctifying value of fidelity to grace. We must rely on the inspirations and directions of the Holy Spirit if we are to purge ourselves of all evil and grow in goodness. Hence, we should strive to be so possessed by the Holy Spirit that he alone governs all our faculties and regulates all our interior and exterior movements. In this way we shall no longer live, but Christ will live in us, due to our faithful cooperation with the actual graces given us through the Holy Spirit. It may happen that an inspiration from God is met with repugnance, doubt, or difficulties, but it is necessary to overcome our unruly nature and to follow at any cost the inspirations that come to us from God. ***We can never reach perfection so long as we are governed and guided by a natural and human spirit because perfection requires that God should live in us and work through us according to his will.***

The inspiration of the Holy Spirit is to an act of virtue what temptation is to a sinful act. The Holy Spirit proposes the virtuous act to the intellect and arouses the will; the just person accepts and approves the inspiration and then carries it out. Possessing in our souls the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are given in order to make us docile to the inspirations and movements of the Holy Spirit, we may rightfully ask for these inspirations and expect them. Indeed, the *Veni Creator Spiritus* is nothing other than a litany of petitions to the Holy Spirit, asking him to grant us his inspirations and his graces.

Three things are necessary for our response to the inspirations from the Holy Spirit: (1) attention to the inspirations; (2) discretion for distinguishing them from natural inclinations or movements from the devil; and (3) docility in carrying out the inspiration.

1. ***Attention.*** We should consider frequently that the Holy Spirit dwells within us through sanctifying grace. If we were able to detach ourselves completely from all earthly things and withdraw to the silence and recollection of our own interior, we would undoubtedly hear the voice of God speaking within us. This is not a question of an extraordinary grace; it would be something completely normal and ordinary in the Christian life. ***Why then do we not hear the voice of the Holy Spirit? In the first place, because of our habitual dissipation. God is within us, but we live outside ourselves.*** The Holy Spirit says that he will lead us to solitude and will speak there to our hearts (cf. Hos. 2:16).

God does not choose to impose himself nor to take from us our own initiative. He does not force himself upon the soul; he does not enter if he is not wanted. And even if the soul is in the state of grace and enjoys the indwelling of the Trinity, God's presence is silent and hidden until the soul itself turns to him with love and attention.

Another reason why we do not hear the voice of God within us is our sensuality. The animal man, says St. Paul, does not perceive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14). For that reason it is absolutely indispensable that we cultivate and preserve a spirit of mortification. Indeed, one of the first things that is lost by those who give themselves over to the things of the world, and especially to sensual delight, is the taste for prayer and the things of God.

The third reason why we do not hear the voice of God is our own disordered affection. Even in seeking God, we may deceive ourselves and actually seek ourselves. It is not at all unusual to find persons who are externally very pious and observant in their religious duties, but inwardly filled with egoism and self-complacency. The will can easily deviate from God and seek the self as the object of love. ***It is easy to see, therefore, why those who seek themselves first, and even subordinate God to themselves, hear only the voice of their own desires, while God remains silent.***

2. ***Discretion.*** The discernment of spirits is of great importance if we are to know for certain the spirit that moves us at a given moment. The following points will be of help in recognizing divine inspirations.

(a) ***The devil never inspires us to virtue,*** and neither does fallen human nature, as a rule, if it is a question of some virtuous act that is difficult.

(b) ***God does not generally inspire us to perform actions not in keeping with our state in life or particular vocation. In this respect we must be cautious lest we try to do what we personally wish to do, and then justify it by calling it an inspiration from God.***

(c) St. Francis de Sales maintains that one of the best signs of the goodness and authenticity of an inspiration, and especially of an extraordinary one, is the peace and tranquillity with which it is received, because God does not use violence but acts sweetly and gently. This is another way of saying not to presume that the inclination to perform some extraordinary action, such as changing one's vocation or state in life, is an inspiration from God unless there are sufficiently grave reasons for making the change. If, on the other hand, a soul is upset and perturbed by what it considers to be an inspiration from God, it is not to be presumed that the inspiration in question is from God.

(d) Those who claim to be acting by divine inspiration and refuse to obey their superiors are impostors, says St. Francis de Sales.⁽⁵⁾ The first question a spiritual director should ask in cases of doubt is whether or not such individuals are obedient to the laws of God and the Church and the duties of their state in life. The spirit of disobedience has been responsible for numerous apostates, heretics, and fraudulent mystics.

(e) In the ordinary events of everyday life, it is not necessary to deliberate or seek counsel. As a rule, it suffices simply to choose that particular action that seems to be in conformity with the divine will, and not be troubled by any scruples of conscience. In cases of doubt concerning matters of greater importance, however, one should always consult a spiritual director, one's superiors, or someone who is able to make a prudent decision.

3. **Docility**. This is a quality by which one follows the inspiration of grace promptly, without waiting for a second movement of grace. This, of course, applies only in those cases in which the divine inspiration is clear, because we have already stated that in doubtful cases it is necessary to deliberate or to consult someone in authority. The soul should always be disposed to fulfill the will of God at any given moment.

Cardinal Mercier advised persons to spend some time each day in complete recollection and to address the Holy Spirit in the following words:

"O Holy Spirit, soul of my soul, I adore you. Enlighten me, guide me, strengthen me, console me. Tell me what I ought to do. Give me your commands. I promise to submit myself to whatever you ask of me and to accept whatever you permit to happen to me. Grant only that I may know your holy will."

Plan of Life

The plan of life is a schedule of the occupations and practices of piety an individual should perform during the day. The advantage of some kind of plan or schedule is that it gives a constancy and regularity to one's efforts toward greater perfection. Without a schedule, one may lose much time, fall into a habit of indecision, neglect duties or fulfill them carelessly, or develop the defect of inconstancy. If one has a fixed schedule of life, there is much less danger of vacillation and wasted time, of being caught unprepared by some unexpected event, and of falling away from the practices of piety that are necessary for the spiritual advancement of the individual. When one is faithful to a plan of life, it is much easier to supernaturalize all the activities of daily life and to be attentive to the duty of the moment.

However, the plan of life should be adapted prudently to one's particular vocation and duties of state in life. A plan of life that would be suitable for several classes of persons would lose its effectiveness by being too general. The requirements differ for persons in various vocations or states of life: the laity, diocesan priests, and persons in the consecrated life.

The Laity

Living as they do in the world, without a superior whom they are bound to obey in matters that touch their personal spiritual life, and without a rule to guide them in their efforts toward greater perfection, ***it is difficult for the laity to avoid the danger of extreme individualism in their practices of piety.*** They may prefer to follow their own personal tastes and inclinations rather than select those exercises most beneficial to them. It should be strongly emphasized that, although the laity have a great liberty as regards practices of piety and means of sanctification, they should take care to utilize the fundamental means of sanctification before selecting this or

that secondary practice of piety. Thus *the frequent use of the sacraments, devout attendance at Mass, fidelity in the practice of daily prayer, the performance of the works of mercy -- these are basic practices that should play a dominant part in the spiritual life of the laity.*

It is not unusual to find that the laity put greater emphasis on certain private devotions or secondary means of sanctification and neglect those things that are of greater importance. Moreover, it frequently happens that the laity identify a plan of life with certain observances that are proper to the religious or priestly state. *The life of the religious or the priest is not a life suited to the laity and consequently it would be a serious error for a lay person to attempt to live an adapted form of the religious life.* The plan of life utilized by a husband or wife, a father or mother, or a member of the various professions in the world should be orientated to an ever-increasing love of God but placed within the framework of the duties of the individual in his or her particular vocation or profession. Perhaps *the best rule to follow in drawing up such a plan of life is to ensure that nothing in the schedule would make it impossible or difficult for the individual to fulfill the duties of his or her vocation or profession.*

Diocesan Priests

The diocesan priest and members of secular institutes are sometimes exposed to the same dangers and difficulties that threaten the lay person who has no definite plan of life. The diocesan priest must be in the world, but not of the world. His apostolate is such that it keeps him in constant contact with the people, and for that reason his way of life is evident to all. He must, therefore, be conscious of his personal obligation to strive for holiness and to give good example to the faithful. *It goes without saying that he needs some schedule or plan of life as an individual Christian, and also in view of the demands of his priestly apostolate.*

In this respect, he must avoid the same mistake the laity must avoid, namely, attempting to live a watered-down religious life. The diocesan priest is above all a man of the people, and although it may prove very satisfying to follow a plan of life that would provide many hours of recollection and solitude, he would run the risk of withdrawing too much from the people he has been sent to serve. At the other extreme, the diocesan priest without any plan of life is a constant contradiction in the eyes of his people; they cannot understand how a priest would be a worthy priest and still give no sign of regularity in the practices of the spiritual life. *A priest is expected to be a man of temperate and regular habits, to be available at all times for the needs of his people, to have that delicate sense of prudence that enables him to be in the world without becoming worldly.*

The diocesan priest should seek to draw up a plan of life enabling him to dedicate himself completely to his apostolate and at the same time to utilize certain hours of the day for his own personal sanctification. Unlike the religious priest, the diocesan priest does not have a schedule of daily life provided for him by a rule; except for the demands of his ministry and the care of souls, he is left to himself regarding the schedule of his daily life.

Religious

Although religious have a definite schedule for community exercises, **they also need a plan of life for their personal exercises**. Community prayer and spiritual reading provide important material for meditation and private recollection, but there is still the question of arranging those hours that are left to the personal initiative of the individual religious. **It is a strange paradox to find in a religious house certain individuals who attend the community exercises regularly and perform their duties faithfully but use their free time to do absolutely nothing**. It is as if they erroneously believed that they should do nothing except that which is explicitly demanded of them by their rule or their superior.

This is obviously a serious misunderstanding of the function of the vow of obedience, for it is precisely in those hours of freedom from explicitly commanded duties that the religious manifest the intensity of their desire to perfect themselves. The religious, therefore, whether living in a cloistered community or in one of the active institutes, will always have some free time that can be put to good use or simply wasted. It is for these free hours that the plan of life should provide, and it is in this area that the zealous religious will prudently arrange a schedule of life allowing for reasonable relaxation and at the same time preventing slothfulness.

It is a prudent practice to give the plan a period of trial. **The first requisite is that the plan of life must be adapted to the duties of one's state, to one's profession or work, to one's disposition of spirit, to one's character and temperament, to one's strength of body, to the degree of perfection already attained, and to the attractions of grace. Moreover, the plan of life should be at once rigid and flexible**. It needs a certain rigidity in order to give regularity and constancy to one's life; it must be flexible in order to allow for dispensations or adaptations when the need arises, or for substitutions and changes as one's needs vary. If there is a reasonable cause for departing from the schedule under given circumstances, the individual should not hesitate to do so, but **one should never depart from the plan of life without a reasonable and justifying cause**.

Spiritual Reading

The attentive and assiduous reading of spiritual books is an efficacious aid to the practice of prayer and the acquisition of knowledge of spiritual doctrine. It is a laudable custom to have at hand a book of spirituality that can be read from time to time as one's occupation permits. A good book will not only renew the desire to strive for greater perfection, but it will impart invaluable knowledge concerning the spiritual life.

Not all spiritual books, however, have the same value or sanctifying efficacy. Objectively, Sacred Scripture should hold the first place, and especially those parts that are most instructive and doctrinal. Nevertheless, not all persons are able, for one reason or another, to obtain the maximum benefits from reading Sacred Scripture. This applies especially to the Old Testament, for there is no doubt that the New Testament, especially the Gospels and the Epistles, can be read by all with great benefit.

The lives of the saints can also be a source of edification and instruction, but here it is necessary to remark that one should be selective in the choice of biographies. If too much emphasis is placed on the extraordinary in the life of a given saint, the reader may acquire a distaste for such books or a feeling of incredulity regarding the veracity of such phenomena. What is worse, the reader may attempt to imitate particular details in the life of a saint who belonged to a different age, a distinct culture, or lived in a state of life having little or nothing in common with that of the reader.

In general, one should select spiritual books that offer solid and practical doctrine regarding the Christian life. And since moods of the individual vary greatly, the book used at a given time is not always the one that is most beneficial at that time. ***Some books may be of great value in a particular period of a person's spiritual development but would cease to be of use later on. Other books would prove to be harmful to certain individuals because they are only beginners in the spiritual life,*** because of their lack of understanding of spiritual doctrine, or because of some particular defect at a given time.

Once a book has been selected for spiritual reading, it is of prime importance that it be read properly. ***Spiritual reading is not purely for reasons of study; it is an exercise of piety.*** Although it is true that one derives much instruction through the reading of spiritual books, the ultimate purpose is to arouse one's love of God and to intensify one's desire for perfection. Hence ***the important thing is not to read many books, but to assimilate what is read.***

Sometimes it is very beneficial to reread certain sections of a book .or to return again and again to the same book so that its doctrine can be deeply impressed upon the mind and heart. The important thing to be kept in mind about spiritual reading is that we

should use a book as long as we need it and can derive benefit from it. Sometimes it is necessary to resist the temptation to change books frequently, without ever finishing any one book.

It would be equally erroneous, however, to believe that we must necessarily finish every book that is started. If we begin a book that proves unsatisfactory, the prudent thing to do is to select a different book rather than waste time on something that is not beneficial. ***If the book is properly selected and properly read, we will easily pass from reading to prayer, and sometimes the two exercises will be so closely connected that we will not know when we ceased to read and began to pray.***

Holy Friendships

Father Lacordaire (1802-61) once said that true friendship is a rare and divine thing, a sure mark of a noble soul, and one of the greatest rewards of true virtue. We read in Sacred Scripture that a faithful friend is a powerful protector and that anyone who has found such a friend has found a treasure (Sir. 6:14-16). The truth of these statements is evident from daily experience. A virtuous friend is one of the greatest inspirations for the conquest of self and the practice of good.

True friendship is an alliance of souls who are united to do good. It is disinterested, generous, sincere, and patient to the point of heroism. True friendship does not know the meaning of

duplicity or hypocrisy; it does not deny the defects that exist in the friends, but it enables them to love each other in spite of their defects and weaknesses. Neither is it a sensual love, because the love of true friendship must be a love that seeks primarily, not the good of oneself, but the good of the other. That is why the love of friendship is synonymous with true charity.

There are three outstanding advantages that flow from a true and holy friendship. In the first place, a friend can be an intimate confidant to whom one can open the heart and receive advice and counsel when confronted with problems and doubts. Secondly, a friend can be a prudent and sympathetic corrector who will frankly point out one's defects and prevent many acts of imprudence. Thirdly, a friend will console in times of sorrow and will know how to select the proper words and remedies in times of trial.

If true friendship has been highly praised, even by pagan philosophers, as one of the greatest blessings in a person's social life, it is reasonable to expect that it can be a powerful aid in the attainment of perfection. The struggle for perfection is the work of a lifetime, and it demands fidelity in the face of many obstacles. Even heroic souls have experienced the discouragement that comes from the recognition of the loftiness of the goal and the weakness of human nature. The love of a friend who has the same high ideals can be a source of encouragement and inspiration in times of darkness. Through all the centuries of the Church's existence there have been outstanding examples of holy friendship in the lives of the saints.

Since human love can so easily become tainted with selfishness and sensuality, however, ***it is necessary that one maintain a strict vigilance lest one's love should exceed the limits of virtue and become an occasion of evil.*** For if it is true that a good friend is a powerful stimulus to virtue, it is no less true that one of the most destructive forces in the Christian life is that of a sinful friendship. St. Francis de Sales warns that it happens frequently that a human friendship begins in a virtuous manner but imperceptibly but surely becomes mixed with sensual love and finally terminates in carnal love.⁽⁶⁾

For this reason it is extremely important that one know the signs by which one can determine whether a friendship is sensual. ***The first and most evident sign of a sensual friendship is that it is exclusive.*** This exclusiveness is shown by the fact that the two friends withdraw from the company of others in order to be alone, are annoyed if others join their company, and are jealous of each other to the point of becoming angry if one sees the other in the company of a third party. ***Secondly, a sensual friendship is characterized by possessiveness,*** which may reach such a point that one cannot tolerate the absence of the other, seeks to prolong conversations and visits unduly, and dominates the other person. ***Thirdly, sensual friendships are obsessive.*** At the slightest provocation one's thoughts turn to the friend; on entering a room the first person sought is the friend; the imagination seems always to be focused on the face of the friend, and this to the point of distraction in prayer or in the performance of one's duties.

In order to avoid this type of friendship, which is harmful to the spiritual life, the best remedy is to prevent such a friendship from developing. ***As soon as any of the signs have been noticed, one should react as to the symptoms of a disease.*** If, however, such a friendship has already been allowed to develop, it may be necessary to avoid any drastic and sudden measures but rather to let the friendship gradually cool until it can be rectified. Spiritual directors and

confessors, who are prone to react violently to such friendships and to demand of their penitents an immediate and definitive break between the friends, may unwittingly cause a psychological upheaval more serious than the disorder they hoped to cure.(7)

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction is the art of leading souls progressively from the beginning of the spiritual life to the height of Christian perfection. It is an art in the sense that spiritual direction is a practical science that, under the guidance of supernatural prudence, applies to a particular case the principles of the theology of Christian perfection. It is orientated to the perfection of the Christian life, but this direction must be given progressively, that is, according to the strength and need of the soul at a given time. The direction should begin as soon as the soul has definitely resolved to travel along the road to Christian perfection and should continue through all the phases of that journey.

Although it is true that individuals have attained sanctity without a spiritual director -- which proves that spiritual direction is not absolutely necessary -- ***normally those who have reached perfection have had the counsel and advice of a spiritual director. In the ordinary providence of God, spiritual direction of some kind is morally necessary for the attainment of Christian perfection.***

Is it necessary that the spiritual director be a priest? We can answer without hesitation that normally the director should be a priest. There are many reasons for this.

First of all, the priest usually has both the theoretical and the practical knowledge required for the direction of souls. Second, the function of spiritual director is closely related to the office of confessor. A third reason is the grace of the priesthood. Fourth, the practice of the Church forbids any person who is not a priest, even religious superiors, to probe into matters of conscience.(8)

Nevertheless, it is possible that in a particular case spiritual direction could be given by a prudent and experienced person who is not a priest. There is ample testimony in the history of the Church to justify such direction because of peculiar circumstances; for example, some of the hermits in the desert and the primitive monks who were not priests, and the direction given by St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius Loyola before his ordination, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Teresa of Avila.

How does one receive the office of spiritual director? If it is a question of a priest, he receives the remote power from God and the Church when he is ordained to the priesthood and given the commission to sanctify souls through his priestly ministry. But ***the direction of a particular soul is based upon two essential factors: the free election of the one directed and the free acceptance by the director.*** No human power can oblige any individual to accept spiritual direction from a particular director. Even religious and seminarians retain their liberty when it is a question of the choice of a personal spiritual director. When a bishop assigns a particular priest to be confessor to religious, this is done simply to facilitate the weekly confession of the religious, but it in no way obligates any religious to take that priest as a spiritual director.(9) The office of confessor is not necessarily identified with the office of spiritual director.

On the part of the director, it should be observed that a pastor and those priests who are officially given the care of souls in a parish are bound in justice to hear the confessions of their subjects whenever they reasonably request it. In case of urgent necessity, all confessors are bound in charity to hear the confessions of the faithful.⁽¹⁰⁾ ***Spiritual direction in the strict sense of the word, however, even in those cases in which it is given during sacramental confession, is a function completely distinct from the administration of the sacrament of penance.*** There is no divine or ecclesiastical law, therefore, which imposes upon any priest a strict obligation to accept the office of spiritual director. A priest is always free to accept or to refuse such an office, although it is true that he would be performing an excellent act of charity if he were to accept the office.

Since it frequently happens that spiritual direction is given during sacramental confession, it is necessary to point out the difference between confession and spiritual direction. The purpose of spiritual direction is to lead a soul to the perfection of the Christian life, and therefore the spiritual director is essentially a teacher, counselor, and guide. The confessor is above all a judge who possesses power in the internal forum and can, within the limits of his jurisdiction, strictly obligate the penitent. His basic mission is to pardon sins in the name of God, and to do this it is sometimes necessary for him to dispose the penitent for valid sacramental absolution. The spiritual director as such does not possess jurisdiction in the internal forum; he cannot obligate the person directed unless the individual has voluntarily made a promise of obedience to the director; nor does he have as his purpose the forgiveness of sin, but the gradual perfection of the soul in view of sanctity.

This raises the question of whether it is necessary or fitting that the spiritual director should also be the ordinary confessor of the one who is directed. The answer is that it is not strictly necessary, but it is fitting and convenient. It could not be said that one's spiritual director must of necessity be the confessor, because the two functions are distinct and separable.⁽¹¹⁾ Moreover, it may happen that a priest is a good confessor but does not possess the qualifications necessary for the direction of a particular soul. ***But because of the intimate relation between the offices of confessor and spiritual director, it is fitting that one and the same person fulfill both functions whenever possible.*** There are several reasons for this: it gives greater authority to the director; it makes it possible to give spiritual direction in the confessional; it enables the director to know the soul more perfectly.

We have mentioned that some priests may be qualified as confessors but not suitable as spiritual directors. This signifies that there are definite qualities required for the office of spiritual direction. Some of these qualities are essential to spiritual direction as such; others are required of the person who is to give the direction. The first may be called *technical* qualities, and the second may be considered as *moral* qualities.

Technical Qualities of the Director

Perhaps no writer has outlined with such clarity and precision the technical qualities of a good spiritual director as have St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. She states that ***a good spiritual director should be learned, prudent, and experienced.*** St. John of the Cross also

maintains that a director should be learned, prudent, and experienced, and he places great emphasis on experience.

Learning. The learning of a spiritual director should be extensive. In addition to having a profound knowledge of dogmatic theology, without which he would be exposed to error in regard to matters of faith, and of moral theology, without which he could not even fulfill the office of confessor, ***the spiritual director should have a thorough knowledge of ascetical and mystical theology.*** He should know, for example, the theological doctrine concerning Christian perfection, especially regarding such questions as the essence of perfection, the obligation to strive for perfection, the obstacles to perfection, the types of purgation, and the means of positive growth in virtue. He should have a detailed knowledge of the grades of prayer, the trials God usually sends to souls as they advance from the lower to the higher degrees of prayer, and the illusions and assaults of the devil that souls may encounter.

He also needs to be well versed in psychology so that he will have an understanding of various temperaments and characters, the influences to which the human personality is subjected, and the function of the emotions in the life of the individual. He should also know at least the basic principles of abnormal psychology and psychiatry so that he will be able to recognize mental unbalance and nervous or emotional disorders.

A priest should realize that, if he is not competent to direct a particular soul, he should advise the individual to go to someone who possesses the necessary knowledge. A priest incurs a grave responsibility before God if he attempts to direct a soul when he lacks sufficient knowledge. In recent times, with the wider dissemination of knowledge of mental illness, the priest must especially be warned that, as regards the field of psychiatry and the therapeutic methods proper to that branch of medicine, he is a mere "layman" and is incompetent to treat mental sickness. If he suspects that a penitent is suffering from a mental illness, he should direct that individual to a professional psychiatrist, just as readily as he would expect a psychiatrist to refer spiritual problems to a clergyman.

Prudence. ***This is one of the most important qualities for a spiritual director. It comprises three basic factors: prudence in judgment, clarity in counseling, and firmness in exacting obedience.***

If a spiritual director lacks prudence, he is usually lacking several other virtues as well. Prudence enables an individual to do the right thing under given circumstances. Spiritual direction is not concerned with the general doctrine of spiritual theology, nor with theoretical situations that one may imagine, but with the individual soul placed in concrete circumstances at a given moment or in a given phase of spiritual growth.

The director is not called upon to make decisions regarding general doctrine; most people could find such answers in any standard manual of spiritual theology. The director's role is precisely to recognize the particular circumstances of a given situation and to give the advice needed at that moment. In order that the advice be prudent, a spiritual director must have the empathy by which he is able to place himself in the given circumstances and must have the patience to listen attentively. Of the various factors that militate against prudence, the following are especially

common: lack of knowledge of the various states of the ascetical and mystical life, lack of understanding of human psychology, prejudice in regard to particular states of life or particular exercises of piety, lack of humility, excessive eagerness to make a judgment.

The second characteristic of prudence in the spiritual director is clarity in the advice given to the one directed and in the norms of conduct prescribed. In order that he may be clear in his direction, he must possess clarity in his own mind. In speaking to the soul he is directing, he should avoid any vague or indecisive language, but should always express himself in concrete and definite terms. He should resolve problems with a yes or a no and, if necessary, he should take the time for further deliberation before making his decision. If a soul perceives that the director is not sure of himself, it will lose confidence in him, and his direction will lose all its efficacy.

Moreover, the director should always be sincere and frank, without any partiality or selfish motives. It would be a serious fault if a director were to avoid offending the person directed lest that person should go to some other priest for direction. ***Those priests who place great importance in attracting and retaining a large number of followers are, by that very fact, disposing themselves to failure as spiritual directors.*** The director should never forget that he acts in the name of the Holy Spirit in directing souls, and that he must endeavor to treat those souls with kindness and- understanding, but with firmness and utter frankness.

The director must also take care that he does not become the one who is directed. Some persons are extremely competent in getting their own way in everything, and even the director is in danger of falling under their power. For that reason, once the director is certain of his decision and the course that should be followed; he should state his mind with unyielding firmness. ***The individual must be convinced that there are only two alternatives: to obey or to find another director.***

But the director should not forget that he should never demand of a soul anything that is incompatible with its state of life or vocation, its strength, or present condition. He should realize that there are some things that can be demanded of advanced souls but could never be required of beginners; that some things would be perfectly fitting in dealing with a priest or religious but not with a lay person. ***Excessive rigor does nothing but frighten souls and may cause them to abandon the road to perfection.*** There is, therefore, a world of difference between firmness in demanding obedience and an excessive rigidity that discourages the soul of the penitent.

Experience. ***This is one of the most precious qualities of a good spiritual director.*** Even if he is less perfect in knowledge and somewhat deficient in prudence, experience can make up for these deficiencies. This does not mean that the experience of the director must necessarily flow from his own spiritual life, for he may obtain the benefits of experience from his observation and direction of others.

As regards the personal experience of the director, if it is a question of the guidance of the average Christian, he needs little more than the experience any priest can obtain from the faithful fulfillment of his duties in the sacred ministry. ***If it is a question of advanced souls who have already entered the mystical stages of the spiritual life, it is desirable that the priest himself***

have some experience of those higher stages. If he lacks this, a delicate sense of prudence, coupled with competent knowledge of the mystical states, will suffice in the majority of cases.

But personal experience alone is not sufficient to make a spiritual director as competent as he ought to be. There are many different paths by which the Holy Spirit can lead souls to the summit of sanctity. It would be a serious mistake for a director to attempt to lead all souls along the same path and to impose on them his own personal experiences, however beneficial they may have been for himself. The spiritual director should never forget that he is merely an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit and that his work must be entirely subjected to the Holy Spirit. If, through a lack of understanding of the variety of divine gifts and the multiplicity of roads to perfection, he were to force all souls to travel by the same road, he would become a veritable obstacle to the workings of grace in the soul.

Moral Qualities of a Spiritual Director

The moral qualities indispensable for a good spiritual director are piety, zeal for the sanctification of souls, humility, and disinterestedness. Because there are so few who possess all these qualities, there are also few competent spiritual directors. Yet it should not be thought that a person who is unable to find a perfect spiritual director will be unable to reach perfection. If the soul has an ardent desire for sanctification and strives faithfully to cooperate with all the graces God bestows, it will not fail to reach sanctity, even if the spiritual director does not possess all the qualities that are necessary. Indeed, such a soul could possibly attain perfection even without a spiritual director. ***It is not the director who makes saints; sanctification is essentially the work of God and the cooperation of the soul.***

Piety. It is easy to understand the necessity of piety in a spiritual director, and St. John of the Cross insists upon this quality with great emphasis.⁽¹²⁾ ***The piety of the spiritual director should be permeated with the great truths of the Christian life.*** It should be eminently Christocentric and orientated to the glory of God. The director should likewise be animated with a profound sense of our adoptive filiation so that he can see God above all as a loving Father. He should have a most tender affection for Mary, the Mother of God and our mother. He should practice recollection and be detached from the things of the world. A director who is animated with these sentiments will be perfectly at home in the direction of souls. He will understand their language and will be able to communicate with them. His own experimental knowledge of God and divine things will give him an understanding that no acquired science could ever provide. There can be no doubt whatever that piety is the first and most basic moral quality a good director of souls should possess.

Zeal for the Sanctification of Souls. The director's ardent zeal for the sanctification of souls is a natural consequence of his personal piety. Zeal, as St. Thomas explains, is an effect of intense love. The love of God impels us to labor for the extension of his kingdom in souls, and the love of those souls enables us to forget ourselves so that we think of nothing but of sanctifying them in and for God. This is the zeal that urged St. Paul to become all things to all men in order to gain all, and gave him that beautiful sympathy by which his whole being was united with others in their joys and sufferings and sorrows (cf. 1 Cor. 9:22). Lacking this ardent zeal, spiritual direction will lose its power because the director himself will have lost the stimulus for

persevering in his efforts in spite of any difficulty, and the direction will become an oppressive burden.

Zeal, however, is always in danger of degenerating into a stubborn inflexibility that would be most harmful to the person who is being directed. For that reason it must be counterbalanced by a basic goodness and sweetness of character. The spiritual director should be animated by the same sentiments that animated our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

If the director is excessively rigorous and lacks compassion, he will discourage the soul and may even cause it to abandon the work of its sanctification. ***The director needs compassion especially in dealing with souls who are strongly tempted, who find it difficult to open their hearts to the director, or who are weak and inconstant by nature***. For that reason the goodness and kindness of the spiritual director should enable him to be truly paternal in striving to form Christ in the souls whom God has entrusted to him.

Humility. ***The director also needs a profound humility***, and this for three reasons. In the first place, ***God resists the proud and gives his grace to the humble***. Of what value is all human knowledge and wisdom if one is lacking in humility? Second, ***the spiritual director needs humility so that he will distrust himself when necessary and not rush forward to solve difficulties without reflection***. Humility will cause him to study and meditate and to consult others more learned than himself. In this way he will avoid many of the mistakes and embarrassments that occur to those who are too proud to doubt themselves. Third, ***humility in a director attracts souls, while pride repels them***. In this respect also the director should imitate Christ, who said of himself that he is meek and humble of heart and that he seeks only the glory of his Father.

Disinterestedness. Lastly, the director should love souls in a disinterested manner, that is, he should not seek to guide them because of any self-satisfaction or consolation that he would receive, but simply and solely to lead them to God. ***St. Augustine states emphatically that those who lead the sheep of Christ as if they were their own and not Christ's, show that they love themselves and not the Lord***. By means of this disinterested love the director will forestall many temptations that could arise in regard to pride and sensate affections, and he will be able to respect the liberty of the souls he directs.

We have already stated that both the director and the soul directed enjoy complete freedom. If this freedom is to be respected, the spiritual director must never show any annoyance if a soul leaves his direction, and he should certainly not look upon other directors as his rivals or competitors. In order to preserve his detachment and disinterest, the spiritual director should never, under any circumstances, accept any gifts as a recompense for the work he has done for a particular soul, and he should never impose upon it any kind of sacrifice or mortification that is undertaken for his benefit.

Duties of a Spiritual Director

We have already mentioned that the function of the confessor and that of the spiritual director are not the same, although spiritual direction is frequently given in the confessional. ***The following seem to us to be the principal duties of a spiritual director:***

1. ***To know the soul that is directed.*** The director should have a profound knowledge of the person he is to direct—character, temperament, good and evil inclinations, defects, likes and dislikes, powers and energy. He should have a knowledge of the individual's past life, at least along general lines, so that he will know the principal temptations to which the soul is subjected, means used to overcome those temptations, the graces received from God, the progress in virtue and by what means, the individual's present dispositions, the intensity of the desire to strive for perfection, the sacrifices the individual is willing to make in order to attain sanctity, and the obstacles and difficulties at the present time.

Nothing should be put in writing, either by the director or the one directed. It is easy for a penitent to imagine that such written accounts may one day rank with the autobiographies of certain saints, and there is always the possibility that they may fall into the hands of the wrong persons. Moreover, it is usually difficult to judge accurately a written account of one's personal experiences. Hence all information given to the director should be given orally. Unlike the confessor, who should normally believe whatever the penitent declares in the confessional, the spiritual director is not obliged to believe everything that he hears; indeed, there are occasions when he should examine and question the person before making any decision.

2. ***To give instruction.*** The spiritual director is expected to instruct the person under his guidance, thus making it possible for the individual to solve his or her own problems and difficulties whenever possible. Spiritual direction has as its goal the perfection of the individual, and the ideal is to enable the individual to walk or even to fly to the summit of sanctity. Like any form of counseling, ***spiritual direction should be given only when necessary. If the director dominates the individual excessively and makes that person come to him for decisions or permissions in unnecessary and sometimes foolish things, the subject becomes increasingly weaker and more dependent on the director.*** It is not unusual to find spiritual directors who violate this basic rule and nullify any good they could accomplish by making themselves the focal point of all their direction. The only exception would be in dealing with souls who are scrupulous or excessively curious, because with such persons the only method of treatment is to exact unquestioning obedience.

The instructions given by the director should avoid all controversial points in the theology of Christian perfection, all abstruse and disputed questions in speculative theology, and in general anything that would serve to sharpen the curiosity of the person directed without giving an understanding of spiritual matters. His instructions should be based on those fundamental points commonly accepted by all theologians rather than any particular devotion or spiritual exercise, which may be perfectly orthodox and commendable in itself but not suited to the taste or present need of the person directed. He will above all avoid any word or action that could be interpreted as disapproval or disdain of any other school of spirituality.

3. **To encourage the soul.** Few souls, even among those who are advanced, are so self-sufficient that they do not need to be encouraged. The spiritual director is not only called upon to give instructions and to solve difficulties, but also required to be a true educator who makes a positive contribution to the spiritual formation of the soul under his direction. Sometimes the best possible way of contributing to this formation is by means of encouragement and stimulation. To that end, the director should endeavor to infuse in souls a healthy optimism founded on confidence in God and distrust of self. **Souls must be made to realize that they are individually called to perfection and that they can attain it if they are faithful to the graces God gives them. If they fail or become discouraged, the director should lift them up and make them see that discouragement at their failure can be more harmful to their spiritual life than the failure itself.**

It would be impossible to measure the harm that is done to souls by severe and harsh treatment from the director at the precise moment in which the disheartened individuals need assistance and confidence and encouragement to resume the difficult journey toward perfection. Frequently **there is nothing that so animates a soul as to be received with kindness and understanding when it expected to be censured and scolded by the director.**

4. **To control the spiritual life of the person directed.** The soul should not take any important step without the approval of the spiritual director. The plan of life, the method of prayer, the practices of piety, the practice of mortification, the work of the apostolate, the material of the examination of conscience - all can be controlled by the spiritual director as the need arises. But the direction should be limited strictly to those things that concern the soul's growth in holiness. The spiritual director should take care that he does not become an intolerable burden to the person directed by interjecting his authority into those matters that are of petty consequence or are not related to the spiritual life.

By the same token, he should never allow the penitent to insert family matters, business affairs, or human preoccupations into the interviews or conferences. As soon as he perceives that the person is beginning to wander from the matter that pertains to the spiritual life, he should immediately and definitively put an end to such discussion. In order to prevent any such digression, the spiritual director should always be in control of the conversation and should insist that all matters be discussed as briefly and as directly as possible. If from the very start of the spiritual direction he restricts the individual to a succinct discussion of the matter at hand, he will avoid wasting much precious time and will prevent the direction from degenerating into pious conversation or purely social visits.

5. **To correct defects.** The spiritual director will have to know how to unite sweetness of character with the obligation of correcting the fault of the person directed. Although the purpose of spiritual direction is eminently positive-to lead the soul to the height of perfection-he cannot achieve that goal without the negative aspect of uprooting defects. It does not suffice for the director to be concerned simply with the correction of voluntary faults; he must likewise understand and seek to remedy the predispositions to sin that are found in the individual person. Thus **the precipitation, inconstancy, superficiality, and sensuality, which predispose to various sins, must be corrected so that the personality can be integrated and properly disposed for the practice of virtue.** As regards voluntary faults, the spiritual director will never allow the

individual to excuse himself for his fall by blaming them on his temperament or some external circumstance.

The particular examen will be utilized as a means of discovering the occasions that provided the temptation and the causes that disposed for the deliberate fault. Although he must avoid discouraging the individual, the director must make the subject realize that ***voluntary imperfections are incompatible with the perfection of charity.***

6. ***To direct by progressive stages.*** Spiritual direction should be progressive and accommodated to the soul's degree of virtue, temperament, age, and circumstances of life. If the direction given is far above the needs and capacities of the soul, the soul will become disheartened and discouraged because more will be demanded of it than it is capable of doing. If, on the other hand, the soul has advanced beyond the type of direction that is given, the wings of the soul will be tied so that it cannot soar to God.

The director must, therefore, discern what are the needs of the soul at a given time, and then take care that the direction given will satisfy those needs. When he wishes to intensify the spiritual life of the soul, he may propose things by way of a trial or test, in order to see how the soul reacts. He need not and should not tell the soul that this is his method, but he should take every precaution not to hold the soul back when God wishes to lead it to a higher stage, and not force the soul to a higher stage when it is not yet ready to make the step. ***Growth in the spiritual life, like any other kind of growth, must be gradual and continuous.***

Consequently, the spiritual director should know the various steps that mark the phases of growth from the beginning of the ascetical life to the transforming union, and in dealing with particular individuals he should expect that they will not remain static in any given phase, but that they will progress in gradual stages from one phase of the spiritual life to another. And although it is, true that God could take a soul in his arms, so to speak, and carry it from one stage of life to a much higher stage, this is not to be presumed in any given case, because it is not the ordinary working of God's grace.

7. ***To observe secrecy.*** The spiritual director is obligated to observe absolute secrecy in regard to the confidences he has received from the persons he directs, not only because many of these things are in some way connected with the internal forum, but also because the office of spiritual director obligates him to natural secrecy. The obligation to secrecy is especially important when it is a question of advanced souls who have experienced certain extraordinary phenomena and supernatural charisms. Although a director who comes into contact with such phenomena may have a strong inclination to discuss these things, he should remember that, as a rule, the narration of such things does nothing more than arouse morbid curiosity in others and dispose the director himself to feelings of pride and self-complacency.

The Person Directed

Since spiritual direction involves two persons, the success of the direction *is* not guaranteed by the mere fact that the director possesses all the necessary qualities and understands the purpose and function of spiritual direction. There are also definite requisites demanded of the soul that

receives the spiritual direction, and these requisites flow, first of all, from the nature of spiritual direction itself and, secondly, from the relationship of the person directed with the spiritual director.

The direction itself cannot be successful unless the person directed possesses the following qualities:

1. ***Sincerity***. This is the first and most important quality because without it any kind of direction is impossible. The spiritual director has to know all: temptations and weaknesses, desires and resolutions, good and evil inclinations, difficulties and trials, successes and failures. If he is to guide the soul to greater perfection, his hands are tied unless he has sufficient knowledge of the soul. Although the spiritual director need not also be the confessor, ***it would be impossible to give any spiritual direction if the director were to know nothing of the sins and imperfections of the individual.***

One should reveal to the director whatever has any importance in regard to the spiritual life, but it is not necessary, and it would even be an abuse, to give him a detailed account of petty trifles and insignificant events. But what is revealed should be revealed with all frankness and sincerity, without condoning or excusing one's failures or exaggerating one's virtues.

2. ***Obedience***. The director does not possess any authority by which he can demand strict obedience. Spiritual direction is a matter of perfect liberty on the part of the director and the person directed. By the very fact that a person seeks the help of the director, however, the two are not on an equal footing; the director is in a position of superiority as the master and guide.

Granted the voluntary submission of a person to the director, the director has a right to expect docility and obedience from the one directed. If these are lacking, there can be no spiritual direction. The soul should obey simply and without discussions or personal interpretations. And it should be noted that even worse than disobedience is the duplicity by which a soul would so ingratiate itself with the director that he would command it to do only the things the soul wants to do. This does not mean, however, that an individual may not take the initiative in order to make a manifestation of conscience or to point out particular difficulties or obstacles that the director perhaps did not see.

What is to be thought of the vow of obedience that some persons have taken to their spiritual director? In general, this is not advisable because of the disadvantages connected with it (i.e., too much responsibility for the director, anxiety for the person directed, too much passivity, unnecessary visits and interviews). In any case, the director should never take the initiative and suggest that a person make a vow of obedience to him, for this would be an abuse of his authority and his office. It would be an even greater abuse if a director were to add to the vow of obedience the promise never to change directors or never to consult anyone else.

But if an individual voluntarily and repeatedly requests permission to make a vow of obedience to the director (for an increase of merit), it could be permitted under the following circumstances: (a) that the vow be made for a short period of time and then renewed if desired; (b) that the

person making the vow be perfectly normal, serene, and balanced; and (c) that the vow may be revoked if any difficulties or anxieties arise.

What is to be done if a conflict arises between the commands of a lawful superior and those of a spiritual director? One must unhesitatingly obey the superior, even if one has taken a vow of obedience to the director. It should be noted that private vows taken by religious are null and void without the approval of their superiors. And even if one has received permission of a religious superior to make a vow of obedience to one's director, the superior never loses the power over the subject that is the result of religious profession.

3. **Perseverance**. The very nature of spiritual direction requires that the person directed should persevere in seeking the help and guidance of the director. Spiritual direction is rendered sterile by the frequent change of directors, by absenting oneself for long periods, by the constant change of spiritual exercises and means of sanctification, or by letting oneself be led by a caprice of the moment instead of following the instructions received from the director. When serious reasons justify a change, a person should not hesitate to find a new director, but that is something quite distinct from the fickleness and inconstancy manifested by some persons in changing from one director to another under the slightest pretext.

4. **Discretion**. The person receiving spiritual direction should never forget that, if the director is obliged to the seal of confession or to natural' secrecy, the one receiving direction is obliged to observe silence concerning the director. ***As a general rule, a person should never reveal to others the particular admonitions or counsels received from the spiritual director.*** Such advice is given to a particular person in view of particular circumstances and does not apply to other persons living in different circumstances. Many directors have suffered greatly as the result of the indiscretion of their penitents, and this is sufficient reason for a director to refuse to continue the direction of such a person.

The principal qualities required of the person directed in relation to the director are respect, confidence, and supernatural love.

1. **Respect**. The person directed should see in the director not merely a man gifted with certain qualities, but the representative of God and of Christ. No matter what defects or perfections he may have in the natural order, the director must be regarded with respect precisely as a director and guide of the spiritual life. This profound respect will be most useful, not only in fostering the docility and obedience of the person directed, but also in serving as a brake to any excessive attachment or sensual affection for the director.

2. **Confidence**. In addition to respect, there should be absolute confidence in the director. It should be a confidence that is truly filial, and so absolute that one can always be perfectly natural and frank when dealing with the director. ***If the person directed is timid and selfconscious, the spiritual direction will never be completely efficacious.***

3. **Supernatural love**. Once a person has cultivated a filial confidence toward the director, it frequently happens that a true love develops for the director. This is one of the most delicate problems in the relationship between the spiritual director and the person directed. There is

nothing unlawful about a love for one's spiritual director so long as the love remains on a supernatural level. The lives of the saints give countless examples of this type of holy love. The difficulty lies in keeping the love on a purely supernatural level.

It is not at all unlikely that, in many instances, the love of a woman for her spiritual director is purely natural, proceeding from the normal affinity that exists between a woman and a man. The love could also be the result of the paternal interest and affection manifested by the director and a sense of gratitude for all that he has done for the individual. The danger that lies in the love of friendship between a director and a woman is augmented by the fact that the director necessarily must know about matters of conscience, temptations, and even sins. Even if a director is convinced that there is no danger to himself or his penitent, he must always be conscious of the danger of scandal to others: As a consequence of all this, the person directed should make every effort to see the director as another Christ, to confer with him only when necessary, and scrupulously to avoid any manifestation of human affection.

In such matters, the director must have a most delicate conscience and a refined prudence, without going to the extreme of being excessively timid, suspicious, or gruff. If it is a question of a mutual sensible affection recognized by both parties, it would be more prudent for the individual to seek another spiritual director. The reason for this is not only the obvious danger that such a friendship may easily degenerate into sensual affection, but also that under those conditions it would be difficult to have true and efficacious spiritual direction.

If the director experiences a sensible affection for the person directed, he should examine it before God in order to discover whether such an affection disturbs his spirit, places him in danger of temptation, impedes the liberty he should have as a spiritual director, or is the source of some other danger. In this case, without revealing his feelings to the person directed, he should find some reasonable cause for abandoning the direction. If, in spite of the sensible affection, he does not experience any danger of temptation or any obstacle to the direction, he may proceed with the direction, but always keeping a prudent vigilance over himself.

If, finally, the director realizes that his penitent has developed a sensible affection for him and he himself does not return that affection, he should examine whether or not such an affection is disturbing the person's peace of soul or provoking temptation. If so, he should advise and even command that the individual seek another spiritual director. If there is no danger that the affection of the penitent may degenerate into a sensual love, he may continue the direction of that individual, but he should be very careful, lest by some imprudent word or act he should augment that human affection.

Selection of a Spiritual Director

Some persons (for example, cloistered nuns or persons who do not have access to several priests) are not in a position to choose their own director. In such cases one must do as well as possible with the person available and supply for any deficiencies by consulting books.

Apart from these particular cases, the choice of a spiritual director should be made in the following way. ***The first thing to be done is to ask God in prayer for the grace and light to***

proceed prudently in this important matter. Then one should investigate who among the available priests possesses the prudence, experience, and learning necessary for a good director. Under no circumstances should the choice be made because of one's natural inclinations toward a particular priest, although it should be recognized that it would be more difficult to open one's heart with confidence to a priest for whom one feels repugnance or antipathy. ***It is not advisable to ask the priest immediately to be the spiritual director, but one should test him for a time to see whether or not he will be able to fulfill the task of director.***

It may sometimes be necessary to find a different spiritual director, although one should not readily believe that it is necessary to change directors. The reasons that are sufficiently serious for changing one's spiritual director can be listed under two heads: if the direction has become useless or harmful. Spiritual direction becomes useless when, in spite of one's good will and sincere desire to advance in holiness, one does not feel toward the director the respect, confidence, and frankness that are indispensable for the efficacy of the spiritual direction. It would also be a futile effort if one perceives that the director never makes corrections of one's defects, does not encourage progress in virtue, does not solve problems, and shows no special interest in the sanctification of the individual.

The direction would be harmful if the person directed discovers that the director feeds the vanity and complacency of the individual, readily tolerates one's faults and imperfections, or judges things from a point of view that is too natural. Or if the director wastes time by frivolous conversations, by asking questions out of simple curiosity, or in discussing matters not related to growth in holiness. Or when one perceives that there has developed a strong sensible affection on the part of one or both; when the director imposes obligations that are beyond one's strength or incompatible with the duties of one's state in life; or when one perceives clearly that the advice given has been harmful instead of helpful. It should be noted, however, that one may easily be mistaken in making judgments concerning the competence of the director and the efficacy of the direction, and for that reason it is imperative that one deliberate before making a change in spiritual directors.

Would it be fitting to have several directors at the same time? Although there have been cases in which a person had several spiritual directors, in general it is not prudent to do so. There is always the danger of a difference of opinion and a conflict as a result of discrepancy in the advice given. Nevertheless, it is perfectly compatible with the unity of direction to seek advice from other competent persons when an especially difficult or extraordinary problem arises. As we have already stated, the director himself, if he is prudent and humble, will take the initiative and advise the penitent to consult another person. But apart from these special cases, ***the unity of spiritual direction must always be preserved, especially when dealing with scrupulous persons, and this unity is best preserved by having one director.***

Spiritual Direction by Correspondence

The last question to be answered in the matter of spiritual direction concerns direction given by mail. If it is a question of an isolated case in which an individual requests advice or the solution of a problem by mail, there is no reason why such direction should not be given in a letter, if one observes the necessary precautions required whenever confidential matters are discussed by

letter. If advice is requested by persons who already have their own spiritual director, great caution should be observed, especially if one is not sure of the good faith and discretion of the person who is asking advice. Sometimes individuals seek an answer in writing from another priest in order to show this letter to their own director and confront him with advice that is contrary to what he has given. If it is necessary for one priest to correct the advice given by another priest, this should be given as an amplification and further application of the advice already given rather than a complete and total rectification.

But what is to be said of spiritual direction given entirely by mail? It may happen in exceptional cases that it is the only way in which a person can receive spiritual direction, and even apart from these cases there are examples of direction by mail in the lives of the saints (for example, St. Francis de Sales and St. Paul of the Cross).

But ***the disadvantages far outnumber the advantages of spiritual direction by letter***. It is morally impossible for the director to acquire an intimate knowledge of the person directed unless there is oral communication between them. It is very difficult to express and describe one's interior life in writing; it is equally difficult to understand another person from a written account. Moreover, the spiritual director is not able to make corrections immediately, as he could do if the person were actually speaking to him. Another disadvantage is that letters may easily fall into the hands of others.

In practice, the spiritual director should not be willing to accept the direction of a soul through correspondence unless he already knows the individual and the person has no other recourse. In the actual writing of letters, the director should never write a single line that would in any way constitute a violation of the seal of confession. If he does receive such material in letters from the person directed, he should destroy the letter as soon as he has read it and should severely forbid the individual from writing such things in the future, under penalty of discontinuing the spiritual direction.

Whatever direction is given in writing should be brief and objective. The spiritual director should scrupulously avoid any terms of affection, pet names, excessively cordial salutations, and anything that smacks of sentimentality. Those who have had experience in spiritual direction by mail have been most succinct in their answers, sometimes writing a few words on the letter itself and returning it to the sender without any signature.

If in some cases it is necessary to write at greater length, the director should confine himself to the problems or questions presented and to the instruction, exhortation, or correction the matter demands. He should observe the greatest prudence and delicacy, and should always remember that, in spite of his own good will, there is always the danger of false interpretations and rash judgments. His letters should always be such that he never has anything to fear in this respect. Lastly, both he and the person directed must avoid any kind of secret or clandestine correspondence.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. Cf. *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. J. K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, 1949), Part II, Chap. 13.
 2. *Spiritual Exercises*, nn. 24-43.
 3. *The Way of Perfection*, Chap. 21; *The Life*, Chap. 13, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1946).
 4. Cf. *The Interior Castle*, Second Mansions, n. 8.
 5. Cf. *Treatise on the Love of God*, trans. B. Mackey (New York: Doubleday, 1942), Book VIII, Chap. 12.
 6. Cf. *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part III, Chap. 20.
 7. For an excellent treatment of friendship among priests and religious, see P. Conner, *Celibate Love* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1979).
 8. Cf. *Codex Juris Canonici*, can. 530.
 9. *Ibid.*, can. 519-23.
 10. *Ibid.*, can. 892.
 11. Canon 891 states that the rector of a seminary or the director of novices may be spiritual directors to their subjects but may not be the ordinary confessors.
 12. Cf. *The Living Flame of Love*, trans. E. Allison Peers (Westminster, Md.-Newman, 1957), Canticle 3.
-
-