

JESUS CHRIST, HIS LOVE, MY PERFECTION

Notes from the 2017 Lenten Mission

Monday, 13 March 2017

I. There is great power in the words of Christ.

✠ We come to know Christ through His words. For example, reflect upon:

- ➔ “Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Mt 4:17)
- ➔ “Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48)
- ➔ “If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me.” (Mt 19:21)
- ➔ “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” (Mt 16:24)
- ➔ “For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?” (Mt 16:26)
- ➔ “Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.” (Lk 7:47)
- ➔ “A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you.” (Jn 13:34)
- ➔ “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” (Jn 14:6)

✠ His words have the power to convert hearts. But we must *listen, reflect* and *respond*.

II. To get to know Jesus Christ, we must “see” Him, with faith.

✠ In the Gospels.

✠ And above all, in the Church.

✠ In the lives of the Saints.

✠ And her Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist.

III. The patron saints of this mission are:

[1] Immaculate Heart of Mary, [2] St. Joseph, [3] St. Paul and [4] St. Agnes.

IV. The love of God.

⇒ Charity consists in the God has *first* loved us and that He has *so greatly* loved us.

⇒ The charity of Christ presseth us! (*or the love of Christ impels us!*) [2 Cor 5:14]

⇒ ***What motivates you?***

V. In order to hear Christ’s words with spiritual profit and to see Christ in faith:

℞ We must be guided by the Holy Ghost (authentic Church doctrine).

℞ We must be “clean of heart,” that is (1) detached from sin & (2) detached from the world.

Avoid:

levity and thoughtlessness (which leads to)
the constant and passionate absorption in external things
the insatiable thirst for riches and pleasures

Do:

think about eternal truths
think about the Divine laws
think about God Himself

I. In this Mission, we will discuss four ways by which we can grow in our conviction of the boundless love of our Savior Jesus Christ.

- (1) Listen to His Divine Words (*and reflect*)
- (2) See Jesus in the Gospel scenes, the Sacraments (especially the Holy Eucharist), and the Lives of the Saints (*and reflect*)
- (3) Jesus our Model of Perfection
- (4) Jesus in His Mysteries

II. In order to draw godly profit from our efforts along these four ways:

- (i) We must be guided by the Holy Ghost (Church teaching)
- (ii) And we must have pure hearts.
- (iii) So work hard to purify your mind:
 - (a) Strive to meditate upon eternal things
 - (b) Strive to reflect upon about God's Laws,
 - (c) and about think about God Himself, in all His perfections.

III. Two great evils of our time are *levity* and *thoughtlessness*.

- ⇒ As a remedy, we must think about the end (purpose) of our creation.
 Who made you? How did you get here? Why are you here? Where are you going?
 ☞ We have been made to love Jesus!

IV. Jesus is our model of Perfection

- ⇒ Jesus is the exemplary cause (model) of our supernatural life.
 ⇒ It is also only through Him that we can have the power (grace) to imitate Him.
 ⇒ He is not only our Example in His human activity, but also in His Person.
 † ***Christianus, alter Christus*** - "The Christian is another Christ." [see Phil 2:5]

V. Jesus Christ in His Mysteries

- ⇒ Think especially of the Mysteries of the Rosary, but all the events of Christ's life.
 ⇒ Christ's mysteries are *our* mysteries (i.e. those who have been baptized into Him).
 ⇒ They are our mysteries because He lived them for us
 ⇒ In their historical and material duration the mysteries of Christ's life on earth are now past; but *their power remains*, and the grace that allows us to share in them operates always.
 ⇒ We associate ourselves with the mysteries of Christ by meditating on the Gospels, and especially by uniting ourselves with the Church, the spouse of Jesus, in her liturgy.

Suggestions for prayer:

- Scripture: Luke 15, John 21, Luke 18 (on prayer)
- The Imitation of Christ, Book Three on Interior Consolation
- St. Paul's letters; keep in mind his one purpose is to unveil the adorable Person of Christ and make Him known & loved.
- The Epistles from the 1st Sunday of Lent, and Quinquagesima and Sexagesima Sundays, all from St. Paul, keeping in mind how the love of Christ *impels him*.
- From the Blessed Sacrament Prayerbook by Fr. Lasance: The Psalter of Jesus (pp. 799-809); Prayers to the Holy Ghost (pp. 1019-35); Prayers for Holy Communion (pp. 1036-66); & Reflections on the End of Man (pp. 1187-89)

EIGHT MEANS TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Wed, 15 March 2017

Be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus is here in these eight means, and in a way, His love is even more intense.

(1) Desire

- ⇒ The greater our **desire**, the greater will be the **will** and the **effort** we employ.
- ⇒ Meditate on God's **infinite perfections** (keep in mind how Jesus manifests them).
God is (1) eternal, (2) omnipresent, (3) immutable, (4) omniscient, (5) supremely wise, (6) almighty, (7) supremely good, (8) very patient, (9) full of mercy and compassion, (10) infinitely holy, (11) infinitely just, (12) perfect truth, (13) faithful ...
- ⇒ Go beyond the minimum!
- ⇒ Meditate on the words of Our Savior (e.g. from the start of each mission conference).
- ⇒ Remind yourself: *"O God, Thou hast created me to love Thee above all things; I am on this earth to love Thee. I want to love Thee to perfection!"*
- ⇒ Do not think so much about the good you have done, but of the good you must still do and the virtue you must still acquire.
- ⇒ Be on guard against tepidity, or lukewarmness (lack of fervor for spiritual devotions, doing good, making sacrifices). Consider a retreat, good spiritual reading, Four Last Things, good sermons...

(2) Prayer

- ☞ Five Reasons why Prayer is so Necessary:
 - (i) It acknowledges God for who He is.
 - (ii) We need God's help for we are so weak and broken; and our enemies are relentless.
 - (iii) God commands it.
 - (iv) Simply to be with God—to be with the One *we love*.
 - (v) In imitation of Jesus Christ. (In the Gospels, we always see Him at prayer!)

☞ Our prayer must include:

(1) Adoration, (2) Thanksgiving, (3) Reparation, and (4) Petition.

☞ Four things we should **always** pray for:

- ✠ The forgiveness of our sins
- ✠ The love of God
- ✠ The love of prayer
- ✠ Final perseverance (a happy death)

☞ Make sure you:

- ✠ Pray to the Holy Ghost!
- ✠ **Persevere** in Prayer!

"Pray without ceasing." [1 Thes 5:17]

Prayer is *"An elevation of our soul to God to offer Him our homage and ask His favors, in order to grow in holiness for His glory."*

(3) Spiritual Reading

- ↳ “*Spiritual reading is very necessary ... it teaches us to pray and to labor.*” – St. Bernard
- ↳ “*He that wishes always to be with his God, must often pray and read.*” – St. Augustine
- ➔ Numerous saints had profound conversions through spiritual reading.
- ➔ Spiritual reading is not primarily about gaining knowledge (nor entertainment nor pride), but about growing in virtue. Therefore we must have purity of intention.

(4) Meditation

Mental Prayer is “*A silent elevation and application of our mind and heart to God in order to offer Him our homages and to promote His glory by our advancement in virtue.*”

- ⇒ Mental prayer is: (1) Silent, (2) has a *specific* application, (3) and is *specific* to advancement in virtue.
- ⇒ Mental prayer has a specific structure, with three parts: (1) Preparation, (2) Body, and (3) Conclusion.
- ⇒ The body has (1) considerations, (2) affections, (3) petitions, and (4) resolutions. Any revealed truth may be chosen as the subject of the meditation (consideration). The affections, petitions and resolution are the most important part of the meditation.

(5) Daily Examination of Conscience

In order to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, we must daily engage in a careful and minute scrutiny of our conscience. This will lead us to deplore the sins and imperfections we discover in our examination, and with the help of God’s grace, we will resolve not to commit them anymore, & to do penance for past sins, faults, and imperfections.

- ☞ **St. Ignatius Loyola** tells us to do FIVE things in our daily Examination of Conscience:
 - (i) Give thanks to God for the *benefits* received during the day.
[This will bring into relief our ingratitude, thus preparing the way for contrition, and at the same time, it sustains our confidence in God, and it makes us more aware of *His love!*]
 - (ii) Ask God for the grace to *know* one’s sins and cast them out.
 - (iii) Examine one’s *words, deeds* and *omissions* from throughout the day.
 - (iv) Ask God pardon for one’s sins; **sorrow for sin** is the principal element of examination.
 - (v) Make a *firm decision*, with the help of God’s grace, to amend one’s life which a practical resolution on the means of reform.

(6) Frequent Confession

- ☞ Go to Confession frequently, even when your soul is not burdened with mortal sin, because by **good** and **frequent** Confessions the soul is:
 - (i) Still more strengthened to keep at a distance from sin.
 - (ii) Enlightened (by God’s truth).
 - (iii) Filled with ever-increasing graces and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.
 - (iv) In better disposition for receiving the favors of God (e.g. experiencing His love!)
 - (v) Given new light to discover the devils’ temptations & strength to overcome them.

(vi) Cleansed yet more and more from her daily stains, and approaches nearer to the [perfection] required of a true Christian.

✚ It would be a very excellent thing for you to make a rule to go to Confession *once a week*. St. Catherine, St. Bridget, St. Charles, St. Ignatius and St. Vincent Ferrer confessed every day.

✚ On the other hand, whenever you go to Confession, exert the utmost care and diligence in order to worthily approach this Sacrament and make a **good** confession:

(i) Spend time and prayer examining your conscience.

(ii) Pray, especially to the Holy Ghost, for the grace of true, sincere and lasting contrition.

(iii) Make a firm purpose of amendment.

(iv) Confess your sins (mortal, venial, vices, and even past mortal sins to increase contrition).

(v) Have a willingness to do the penance imposed.

(vi) Have the disposition to heed the priest's advice.

✚ Good confessions will change your life (the way you pray, act, think...)

✚ Do your best to find a good (holy) confessor, who helps you grow in the spiritual life.

(7) The Holy Eucharist

✚ Apart from the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Our Lord's Real Presence in the Eucharist it is impossible to *truly* know and love Jesus Christ.

🔔 **One** Holy Communion worthily received can make one a perfect saint.

✚ Holy Communion is the principal means to enkindle the divine fire of charity in us.

✚ To prepare better for Holy Communion, a soul should be disposed on two main points:

➔ It should be detached from creatures.

➔ It should have a great desire to advance in divine love.

⇒ Make Acts of Faith, Confidence, Love, Humility, Contrition, and Desire

⇒ Consider the Eucharist according to the infinite perfections of God.

(8) Devotion to Mary and the Saints

✚ The Christian Life must be a continuation of the most holy life which Jesus led on earth.
Think about this!

✚ When we venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary, we join with the Three Divine Persons in esteeming what They Themselves esteem.

➔ We can never adequately honor and esteem the one whom the Word-made-flesh reveres as His Mother, the well-beloved daughter whom the Eternal Father contemplates with loving eye, and whom the Holy Ghost regards as His chosen sanctuary.

➔ To God alone do we offer the *cultus latriæ*, or the worship of adoration.

➔ To the Angels and Saints we offer *cultus duliae*, or dulia, (veneration).

➔ Our veneration for Mary must surpass that which we give to the Angels and Saints, so it is a singular veneration called *cultus hyperduliae*, or hyperdulia.

✚ Always keep in mind that **the Lord God Himself** honors the Saints.

✚ **Really make the effort to grow (and never stop growing) in your devotion to Mary and the Saints.**

- (1) **The Sense of Touch** - The vice of *lust* completely impairs man's intellect, because of the violence of its appetite. The fearful consequences of the vice of lust cannot be overestimated or exaggerated
 - (2) **The Sense of Taste** - One can sin by gluttony in the following ways: (1) eating outside the proper time, (2) eating without necessity or with too great an eagerness, (3) seeking exquisite food, (4) preparing food with excessive delicacy, (5) eating too much in quantity.
 - (3) **The Sense of Sight** - The sense of sight brings more images to the imagination than all the other senses combined, so we have to be particularly vigilant over everything that we see.
 - (4) **The Tongue** - Many, many sins are caused by the tongue. We must mortify and restrain our tongues! (1) Practice more silence, (2) speak the truth, (3) do not speak ill of others.
 - (5) **Passions of the Soul** - We lose control of our passions mainly due to *pride, anger, and greed*. The virtues which oppose these are *humility, meekness, and generosity*. Thus, practicing these three virtues will go a long way in helping you overcome unruly passions.
 - (6) **The Love of Riches** - We waste far too much effort and energy in acquiring, holding on to, and losing worldly riches. And for what? What good will all these riches do you on the Day of your Judgment? We must detach from them in order to have a pure heart focused on God.
 - (7) **The Desire for Honor, Praise, and Glory** – Like Christ, we must be meek and humble of heart. Pray the *Litany of Humility*.
 - (8) **Temptations of the Devil** – The temptations from Satan's part are permitted by our heavenly Father for our good. In order to conquer the temptations of the devil, we should (1) reject energetically the first suggestion of evil, (2) pray for God's assistance, (3) avoid the occasions which for us are frequent sources of temptations, and (4) disclose to one's confessor the evil thoughts, desires or actions to which one is tempted.
- ☠ The enemies of our salvation are three: **the devil, the world, and the flesh**.
- ➔ These are the *great obstacles to salvation*.
 - ➔ They are also the *three great obstacles to Christian perfection*.
 - ➔ These are the great obstacles which prevent us from loving God above all things, and loving our neighbor for God's sake.
- 🔔 Thus, we have to **fight** against these enemies. We must fight against them with *all our heart, mind, soul, and strength*.
- ➔ You are a soldier! You are a member of the Church Militant! (Confirmation)
- ⇒ Christian perfection consists in this:
- (1) On the one hand, loving God, (2) and on the other, fighting these enemies.
- 🔔 We have to practice **mortification**.
- ➔ Mortification is self-denial, renouncing what feels good, what looks appealing, what sounds good; it is renouncing one's self, and restraining one's disordered passions.
 - ➔ A more formal definition: *Mortification is the struggle against our evil inclinations in order to subject them to the will, and the will to God.*

THE EIGHT BEATITUDES OF JESUS (Mt 5:3-10)

☞ God is our origin and end. → *I come from God. I belong to God. I am destined for God.*

✠ Christ reveals to us the laws that govern life (i.e. the supernatural life, the only life that really matters) and which lead to Christian perfection.

☞ All the Saints lived the Beatitudes — it is what made them Saints.

- ★ *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*
- ★ *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.”*
- ★ *“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”*
- ★ *“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.”*
- ★ *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”*
- ★ *“Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.”*
- ★ *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”*
- ★ *“Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

Note two things, in particular:

(1) The example of Jesus Christ Himself is the model of each Beatitude.

(2) At the root of each Beatitudes is poverty of spirit and purity of heart; this means the heart is attached to God alone, everything comes from God, every single is for God, every thought, word, and action is consecrated to His greater glory.

- The poor in spirit are those who have no love for this world. God seeks to wean us from the love of creatures. Christ chose to be born and to live in poverty.
- Meekness is humility of heart showing itself outwardly in gentleness, patient endurance of contradiction and harsh treatment of any kind.
- Sorrow can be sanctifying insofar as it softens and humbles the heart, teaches sympathy for others and prepares the way for grace. The sorrow which makes us most blessed is sorrow for sin and the sufferings of Christ.
- Those who hunger and thirst after justice are those Christians who earnestly endeavor to grow daily in virtue and goodness, and to make others do so too.
- The merciful are those who freely pardon all injuries and relieve those who suffer.
- It is not easy to keep a clean heart. The world is full of filth and the enemy within us is fierce indeed. It is from our own concupiscence and curiosity that we have most to fear, and nothing short of a great and continued effort will keep them in subjection and keep our heart clean.
- We are peacemakers when we promote harmony among men, by reconciling man to man. We are peacemakers in the most excellent way when we reconcile man with God.
- By persecution we are to understand all sorts of injuries and afflictions, whether coming from men or evil spirits. But we must suffer for the love of holiness and of God.