

A Word for Every Day of the Year



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Every day God invites us to listen to His message. And it is our task to realise that Word in our own lives every day. For, thus the Word becomes flesh and blood. Thus It can come to life and can come to giving life. Thus It finds inspiration and becomes a source of inspiration. People help each other to live according to the Word. They live by it, they pronounce it, they confirm it and they encourage others to do so as well.

Even every day reality contains an invitation to concretise this Word, to bring the dead letter back to life, to make this 2000 year-old message topical again.

In the course of history, there have been multiple personalities who lived all of this in a very unique way. They can serve as guides for us who live today. However, we should not try to do what they did, but imitate their example of creative loyalty.

For that is what they were: They were absolutely dedicated when it came to living according to the Word of the Lord and they also were enormously creative when it came to translating it in their time and their particular context.

One of those personalities who had all the typical features of such a guide was Father Triest, Founder and inspired leader of many of his contemporaries. Even today, his example pinpoints us to the authentic message of the Lord Jesus. How He loved his fellow man without exception and reserve, because His Father loved Him, and because He loved His Father. In addition, Jesus was especially concerned about the sick, the poor and the wounded.

That had moved Father Triest very deeply and with the grace of God he made a unique translation of the Gospels, this Word, just like Jesus Christ himself had done.

Father Triest lived that to the full, and he announced it, confirmed it and encouraged others to do the same.

Every single one of his sermons, letters and writings contains an invitation to take the Gospels seriously, to imitate the Lord's amiability, and to be moved by the tears and the suffering of the people. That was his charisma, the life-giving contribution of the Holy Spirit, who stirs up that which is already smouldering inside man.

Helped by the writings of Father Triest, we can learn to listen to the Word of God more attentively and more intently. That is why we have selected a short fragment of text drawn from his writings for each day of the year. Sometimes, there will be a link between the text and an event of the liturgical year, but on other occasions the text should serve as an invitation to test the Word against our world, against our reality, and against our efforts to live by It in our lives.

Father Triest's words can be read personally, or can be read aloud, and hopefully, some people will use them as a basis for meditation. May these words illuminate the rich personality of Father Triest even more brightly, and may they sound as a prayer of thanks to the Holy Spirit who has not been sparing with his marvellous gifts. Thanks to his mercy we remain today the supporters and promoters of this charisma.

Broeder René Stockman, f.c.
Superior General
Brothers of Charity

August 28th 2001,
At the opening of the
Process of Beatification
Of God's Servant
Peter Joseph Triest

Incarnation – Humanity

1 January

I give you the following five words as New Year present: example, vigilance, love, perseverance and prudence.

For the secret of good community management consists in the union of these five virtues and characteristics. (*Letter, 1825*)

2 January

When God loves you, then try to answer His love with your own and try to love Him veritably.

All that is not God is nothing. (*Undated sermon*)

3 January

Take the firm decision not to lose a single moment of prayer time this year. Whilst praying, you should examine how poorly virtuous you are and how infinitely virtuous and perfect the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary are. Pray and meditate! For keep in mind that a religious who does not boast a prayerful spirit is like an unarmed soldier, a bird whose wings have been clipped, a city whose fortifications have been torn down or like a body with neither spirit nor soul. (*Letter, 1830*)

4 January

Oh blessed is this day! For the first time I can address my beloved parishioners publicly. Often have I been moved and often have I had to witness the craving of the children, the groaning of their parents, the tears of the sad and the poor, and the lamentations of the sick, and all this without being able to console or help, though my heart desired much to do so. (*First public sermon in Ronse, 1803*)

5 January

What is left for us to do?

We must seek God here on earth, love and serve Him with all our hearts, for if we fail to acknowledge God, we risk becoming interested only in ourselves. (*Sermon in Ronse, 1803*)

6 January

I pray you to unite your heart with mine so that we may truly love each other.

Let us then be one of heart and one of soul. I tell you with the words of Saint John, “Love one another; you must love one another just as I have loved you.” (Jn 13:34) (*Sermon in Ronse, 1803*)

7 January

Jesus Christ, whose love is boundless, commands us to imitate His love for mankind. He calls on us to love one another for love of Him, to carry each other’s burdens, to forgive each other like we wish God would forgive us and to live in peace, if we are capable of it.

Peace, union, unity and love will be for the blessed. Let us then try to live here on earth as we will live forever in heaven. (*Sermon in Ronse, 1803*)

8 January

Oh my God, offer me the competence and the strength to revert the hearts of all those people who turned their backs on You and help me to alight them so that they may truly love You. (*Undated sermon*)

9 January

Oh blessed Saviour, where would I flee from You? You, who have bound me to You with so many ties of love that neither friend, nor human; that not a single creature can be bound so tightly to another as I am bound to you. I sacrifice myself for you. (*Meditation*)

10 January

Take the habit that is Jesus Christ. And taking that spiritual habit that is Jesus means filling one's heart and mind with His laws and sentiments. It means living one's life in imitation of Jesus Christ's life and arranging one's whole way of life according to the divine example. (*Sermon for the ceremony of taking the habit*)

11 January

Let us walk in the presence of God every day of our lives and in the morning when we wake up, let us speak these words, "Speak, Lord; your servant is listening."
Go to morning prayers, making the firm decision not to ever insult God and to serve Him ever better.
And in the evening meditate on your faults, examine your conscience, pray for forgiveness and close the day with a pious prayer. (*Undated sermon*)

12 January

If God loves you, then try to answer His love and try to love Him veritably. (*Undated sermon*)

13 January

What is the value of intelligence, ingenuity and competence if they are void of God's grace? What are all those wonders of nature like beauty, power, elevation and nobility but mere signs of vanity if you separate them from grace?
Find true greatness where it is really to be found. Leave all those vain honorary titles to those worldly people who wish to pride themselves on them. (*Undated sermon*)

14 January

On this earth, Man is only truly great when he is in a state of grace. He does not possess any true good apart from that which is sealed by grace; he can be but truly happy and peaceful in the Kingdom of grace.
Therefore, be humble so that God's grace may descend upon you. (*Undated sermon*)

15 January

Blessed the Christians who make proper use of that benefaction! Aware of the fact that God loves them, they answer His love and love Him veritably. (*Undated sermon*)

16 January

Great and wonderful are the goodness and the mercifulness of the Lord to man. He has exhausted, as a matter of speaking, all the treasures of His omnipotence and all the treasures of His charity for man. However, the true miracle is that He created all that for the benefit of man and man for himself. (*Undated sermon*)

17 January

Christian soul, were you to know the price and the value of the gift of grace, then how grateful you would be to God for such a benefaction! And how anxious you would be to keep it safe, and not to lose it. (*Undated sermon*)

18 January

To establish the religion, Jesus chose 12 poor and ignorant men. But He filled them with so much light and power that they succeeded in propagating the faith all over the earth in no time. Such weak labourers for such a big task! That must prove that God spoke through them. (*Writings*)

19 January

My body, my spirit, my heart, my possessions, my health, my talents, all these gifts have in my hands so often been instruments of injustice. Offer me grace, my Lord, so that they may become instruments of justice. (*Writings*)

20 January

Justice is a good that is pure. Science makes people haughty, pleasures wear us out, honour and glory blind us, wealth turns our hearts to stone, but justice contains all virtues. (*Undated sermon*)

21 January

The desire for justice consoles the soul because the soul contains the objective and because it sets the eventual objective at the same time. As soon as one expresses the wish to love God and to be united with Him, one is already loved by Him and one is already united with Him. (*Undated sermon*)

22 January

Perseverance is the key to everything. It is not the good start that crowns the effort, but the eventual accomplishment of the enterprise. Only those who persevere will be blessed. (*Undated sermon*)

23 January

The higher one erects the building, the higher the costs will be. Similarly, the more progress one makes in the field of virtues, the more alert, careful and humble one must be. (*Undated sermon*)

24 January

The Holy Scriptures caution us without ceasing that we had better not be like stars that do not have a fixed place in the skies, or like the moon, ever changing. As soon as we start ploughing we must carry on without losing heart. Without perseverance there will be neither reward, nor laurels. (*Undated sermon*)

25 January

Our good work may be compared to ‘seeds’. Like one seed yields many more, not at the moment that it has been sown but at the end of the year. Alike, we will receive a big reward, not while we sow and pursue a virtuous life, but at the end of our lives, when reaping time has come.

You have started well, now you must want to persevere! (*Undated sermon*)

26 January

At an advanced age as well as in your youth, your loyalty must never wane, your zeal must never decrease, and you must persevere in your faith, your love and your piety.

In one word: the last day of your career as a zealous and passionate person must be the equivalent of the first one. (*Undated sermon*)

27 January

The more you advance in your accepted state, the more you must progress in the zeal for your perfection, in love and in the fulfilment of your duties. (*Undated sermon*)

28 January

The closer you come to the End, the more you should keep your eye on heaven. And you must not await anything else than the joyful moment that will reunite you with Christ. (*Undated sermon*)

29 January

“Behold,” says Holy Father Bernard, “the true love that descends from heaven in a hospital, inhabited by sick people and all sorts of unfortunate people: to live but to serve these people.” Consider then, my beloved children of Christ, the dignity of your vocation by observing it irreproachably and loyally, since you represent the person of God in your service. (*Letter to the Sisters of Charity in Antwerp, 1828*)

30 January

“Be humble and you shall find peace for your souls, peace with God, peace with your neighbour, peace with yourself, a type of peace that the world cannot offer you. A type of

peace that amidst these greatest of trials will make you truly happy and that will one day guide you towards eternal peace. A peace that I wish you with all my heart and out of sincere affection for you.” (*Undated sermon*)

31 January

If you wish to enjoy the peace that Jesus Christ offered to his disciples and that I will give to you as New Year present, you must observe the holy rule and be a perfect and fervent religious person. (*Letter to the Sisters of Charity, 1825*)

Vocation

1 February

God has loved us as no friend ever loved a friend or a father and mother their child. Since we were the first to be loved, let us then love Him back. (*Sermon Lovendegem, 1809*)

2 February

All that He has done was for our benefit: his praying, his waking, his fast, his preaching, his travels, his miracles. How greatly concerned he was about taking good care of us in the person of the Samaritan! How tenderly and lovingly he did receive us! As prodigal sons! With what goodness he has protected us, sinners! Oh wonder of love! Oh Jesus, how much you love us! (*Undated sermon*)

3 February

Oh Jesus, how lovingly you exhaust yourself for us, even though you are God! What more could you have sacrificed than yourself! You have given us a new miracle of Love: in the course of your mortal life, you were present on only one precise location on this earth, but today you are ubiquitous! And you will remain as such until the end of times thanks to your love! (*Undated sermon*)

4 February

It is only natural and fair that a person who is ill seeks help from a doctor; that a person who has doubts goes to a lawyer; that a pupil goes to his master, and a child to his father. When we are in pain we complain about it to our friends, when we have doubts we seek council from a person in whom we trust, when we are sad we seek consolation from other people, rather than seeking the help of the divine Heart of Jesus. We always seems to forget Jesus. (*Undated sermon*)

5 February

Love should always burn in the hearts of Christians like on a spiritual altar. But to keep that love alight, we must fuel it and keep it ablaze through daily meditation. Like a fire cannot burn without end – especially when it is exposed to strong winds –, if it is not regularly fuelled with wood or other combustibles. Alike, it is impossible for divine love

to remain intense if it is not regularly stimulated by our meditation on divine matters. (*Sermon, 1804*)

6 February

Without meditation, how your works will resemble virtues without perfection and without inner spirit, if the only motives or reasons for being virtuous are self-love, vanity, personal benefit and self-will. May God grant you acumen! (*Writings*)

7 February

Why not rise one hour earlier every morning to go to church in order to ask God to protect you against all evil that day.

A salesman will stay up day and night to buy or sell merchandise. Someone involved in a trial will study his case day and night in order to win it. A labourer will work from early in the morning until late at night in order to make a little profit. Yet you, alas, cannot even spare a single hour in order to obtain the eternal goods for your soul. Yet you cannot spare a single hour to devote yourself to Christ's vineyard, to work on your own salvation. (*Writings*)

8 February

Those who have been summoned to fulfil certain functions in active life, should, admittedly, devote themselves to that function. Were they to act differently, then they would be reversing the order of things established by Providence. However, they should mind not to be misled by illusions, and they will be if they do not make time for the exercises of a more contemplative life. The more you are exposed to distractions as a result of your function in life, the more care you should take to repent before God so as remain united with Him by love. (*Writings, 1799*)

9 February

Remain loyal until you have progressed in such a way that you fulfil the will of God in all things, even in your torments, your sadness, your discontentment, your grief, your troubles, your contempt, and your suffering. And that the fulfilment of God's will is your only source of satisfaction and of happiness. (*Writings, 1823-1825*)

10 February

How is it possible that man forgets to thank God, even though God feeds him. And this while birds lift up their beaks to the sky every time they eat or drink something, as if thereby wishing to express their gratitude to the Giver for his mild gifts. Let us then also direct our hearts and our senses towards God in order to thank Him for what He has given us. (*Writings*)

11 February

Do not lose heart, even if you have sinned in the past, and have thus renounced the Lord God! Saint Peter made the same mistake! He fell in a disgraceful way, but rose again thanks to the grace of God. God dropped him but helped him to stand up again eventually. Therefore, you must never be fainthearted, desperate or distrustful, for penitence healed the prince of the apostles. (*Meditation*)

12 February

God's charity is greater than we can ever imagine.

The true friends of God are those who seek nothing else than their God. (*Writings*)

13 February

The prayer of the humble one penetrates the clouds. The example of the tax collector should serve as confirmation of the one truth. "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," he spoke to the Lord. Jesus himself assures us that he went home again justified. (*Undated sermon*)

14 February

Grace is the only gift that can make us truly great. Only grace provides us with the true good and it alone brings us peace. (*Undated sermon*)

15 February

Generosity is the daughter of love. The bigger the love for someone, all the richer the generosity. (*Undated sermon*)

16 February

Meekness is a virtue that has love, humility and justice as foundations.

It should radiate through the whole person, his face, his deeds, his words, the tone of his voice, and above all it should rule in his heart. (*Undated sermon*)

17 February

We must bear all that is difficult and painful, without becoming embittered or becoming angry.

It is typical of the meek to bear all ordeals. (*Undated sermon*)

18 February

By nature man is hasty and irritable. But do we want to put into practice the lessons that our Saviour taught us only insofar as they correspond with our own nature?

True zeal is full of meekness. And when you do adopt a more severe tone occasionally, you must nevertheless avoid losing your temper or becoming embittered. (*Undated sermon*)

19 February

As for me, I forgave my enemies long ago. I even renew my pledge that I forgive them from the bottom of my heart. I give them the kiss of true fraternal love and as revenge, I desire nothing else than that they be reconciled with their God so that they may become one of heart and one of mind like true brothers in Jesus Christ. (*Sermon in Ronse, 1802*)

20 February

Be humble, pray constantly and you will persevere, since the Lord has said himself that he would be merciful to the humble and that he would reject the haughty.

Be humble so that the Lord may have mercy on you. (*Last religious speech, 1836*)

21 February

Seek not to be praised. Neither seek to hear people speaking favourably about you. Be joyful when you hear people speaking favourably about others. (*Writings, 1820*)

22 February

Do nothing for fear of what people might think, or to attract their attention or their gaze. Act only to please the Lord. (*Writings, 1820*)

23 February

Chase all thoughts of vainglory or haughtiness. Esteem others more highly than yourself, not only in your judgement or your thoughts, but also in your actions and in your works. Approach your neighbour as humbly and as respectfully as you would approach your superiors. (*Writings, 1820*)

24 February

Humility is considered the basis and the core of evangelical perfection. Slowly it illumines the mind with a very bright light. In its glow you will steadily discover the greatness of God and the insignificance of creatures. (*Writings, 1804*)

25 February

The one who does not stretch out his hands to the poor to give them alms will raise his hands in vain to God to beg Him for forgiveness for his sins. (*Writings, 1804*)

26 February

The works of charity have no merit and will not please God as long as they are not done wholeheartedly, humbly, zealously and for love. (*Writings, 1804*)

27 February

Someone once asked Saint August what the first condition for a spiritual life was. And this great man answered as follows, "It is humility." "And what is the second condition?" that person added. Saint August's reply, "It is humility." "And the third?" the interviewer continued. Saint August replied for the third time, "It is humility." (*Writings*)

28 February

Humility is the beginning, the root and the origin of all virtues; haughtiness, on the contrary, is the beginning, the root and the origin of all sins. (*Sermon to his religious*)

Christian Life

1 March

Jesus Christ, since you instantly received the penitent criminal in your mercy and in your clemency, and since you granted him mercy for his sins, as well as for the punishment for his sins, and since you promised him that he would enjoy your divine image in paradise, then allow me to address you in the words of the 'good thief': "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk 23:42). (*Meditation*)

2 March

The more the love for God springs from humility, the more passionate it becomes, so man must not attribute it to his own merits. (*Sermon to his religious*)

3 March

The first and final stage of the path towards perfection is humility. In a house that is ruled by humility reign all other virtues. When you are humble, the other sisters will be virtuous. (*Letters to the Sisters of Charity, 1829*)

4 March

Why has the great God of glory humiliated himself so much? To no other purpose than to convince us, through his deep humility, to spit out the venomous and deadly food of haughtiness. (*Meditation*)

5 March

If there is still a single ray of love for Jesus, your Saviour, to be found inside of you, then follow Him with your mind, follow Him with your heart. Follow Him through the compassion and the sadness in your soul. And see how he will accomplish the work of your salvation. (*Meditation*)

6 March

The heart of the fool lies on his tongue. The mouth of the wise man is in his heart. Nothing is more beautiful and more pleasing to God and to man, than a person who knows when to speak and when to be silent. Truthfulness, simplicity, openness, and prudence should always characterise our speech. (*Undated sermon*)

7 March

Do the ordinary, everyday things, the inner spiritual ones as well as the exterior ones, as perfectly as possible. (*Writings*)

8 March

Do not let your exterior behaviour betray that you are impatient, but demonstrate a great spiritual peace.

Control every movement that might prove your impatience. (*Writings, 1821*)

9 March

Stop all that may disturb the peace, or that may provoke sadness, revulsion or malevolence from entering your mind or heart. Do not permit any desire for revenge to grow, insignificant though it may be. (*Writings, 1821*)

10 March

If we wish to be eternally happy, we will have to resort to humility and the folly of the cross. (*Writings*)

11 March

Behold your good works! What was your motive for doing them? Was it not self-love, or vainglory, or the eyes of the world? You have given alms and done other works of charity, but was it not your desire for it to be known by everyone?

You have shared your bread with the poor, but you should do it more often. Your good works are insufficient. (*Undated sermon*)

12 March

On which side would you like to be? Choose, because, whoever you are, you can still be one of the chosen. There is still time. The time of mercy is not yet past. Jesus Christ is your saviour. He is prepared to forgive you everything. (*Undated sermon*)

13 March

If you are still in God's mercy, then persevere! (*Undated sermon*)

14 March

A family man has three duties to fulfil with regard to the members of his household: 1) Love, which means that he should treat them well, put up with their imperfections, help them to overcome their weaknesses. 2) Justice, which means that he should feed them and reward them. 3) Religion, which means that he should inspire them to live a pious life through what he says and does. (*Writings*)

15 March

About the use of time, I would like to say the following: 1) Time is precious, therefore we should consider it important. 2) Time is short and passes quickly, therefore we should make the best possible use of it. 3) Time never comes back, therefore we should not waste it.

Let us make proper use of time. (*Sermon, 1797*)

16 March

There is nothing more precious than time. Each moment that we spend properly is worth our complete and eternal salvation. Eternal salvation is the fruit of mercy, and it can only be granted in time. (*Sermon, 1797*)

17 March

Time is an incredibly valuable treasure, more valuable in fact than all the riches of the world.

It is therefore that we must regret the wasted moments in our lives.

That shortest lapse of time thanks to which we become blessed, is more precious than gold and silver. (*Sermon, 1797*)

18 March

Our lifetime is so short and passes so quickly. It is like a leaf chased by the wind, a fume, smoke that vanishes into thin air.

How then do we spend that short period of time that so quickly approaches eternity.

Let us make good use of the time that is left to us; Let us use it to perform creditable work. (*Sermon, 1797*)

19 March

Time shall never return. Blessed are we, if we try to spend the years that are left to us in a useful way. We must double our zeal and passion in order to make proper use of the time that is left to us and to safeguard our salvation. We should imitate those, who, when travelling to the city, hasten their steps because they had let themselves be distracted by trivialities along the way, and who now risk arriving when the gates are already closed. (*Sermon, 1797*)

20 March

Wake up blind man. Rise from your death-sleep, in which you have lain so long. It is now time to start working on yourself and for the salvation of your soul. Try to buy back the time that you lost by henceforth making holy use of time. Waking up in the morning, you should realise that this day could be your last. So plan to devote it entirely to God and to your own salvation. (*Sermon, 1797*)

21 March

Man should bear the cross and love it, and he should bear it, not drag it, love it and not complain or grumble about it.

There is not a single state of life without a cross, there are crosses to bear in marital life and in single life. There are crosses to bear for those who maintain a secular way of life, and for those who live in a monastery. There are even crosses to bear in the most remote wilderness. And since each man has a cross to bear, the best thing to do is to embrace it and love it. (*Sermon, 1791*)

22 March

Whether you are married or not, magistrate, Lord, father, master of a household, or an absolute nobody, mind that everyone is supposed to walk in Christ's footsteps. And you can only do that if you follow Him, and you can only follow Him if you imitate that what he has demonstrated, and there is no other way to do so than by bearing your cross in the same spirit as Jesus bore his. (*Sermon, 1791*)

23 March

How many sick have regained their health at the foot of the cross? How many crippled have been cured there? How many sad people have found consolation; and how many of the dejected have found help and understanding? How many sinners have repented and have been converted at the foot of the cross? Come then, you the sick, and resort to the holy cross, for at its foot you shall be healed. Come, sad and dejected souls, trust in the cross and you shall be helped. (*Sermon, 1791*)

24 March

Oh cross of God, I adore you and I want to carry you, I lay my heart on the spot where Jesus' body once rested. I greet you, holy cross. You are the glory of the world, our true hope, the piece of driftwood to which we cling, after having been shipwrecked. May the cross inside of us be fruitful thanks to the patience, the determination and the love with which we bear it in our lives, and this thanks to your never-ending mercy. (*Sermon, 1791*)

25 March

Merciful and charitable Jesus, I come to You, not as a Judas to betray you, but wholeheartedly and humbly. We have hurt you so often, yes, betrayed you even. Now give us the kiss of peace and friendship. Embrace us. Receive us in the bosom of your mercy and your grace. (*Meditation*)

26 March

Oh Jesus Christ, I fear that I am doomed forever, because you are just. However, I also hope to be blessed, because you are merciful and graceful and the *summum bonum*. Your divinity inspires me with fear, but your humanness reinforces my hope. (*Meditation*)

27 March

O loveable and blood-covered Saviour, today you have demonstrated to the world that you are not only good and merciful, but that you are *the* ultimate infinite goodness and mercy. You, who have been bound, bind us now with your ties of love. (*Meditation*)

28 March

I offer you the resurrected Lord, a perfect image of religious perfection. For like Jesus stayed on Earth another forty days after He had risen with great affection for his disciples and in perfect union with God, and you must imitate Him. (*Letter, 1827*)

29 March

There is no more perfect way of painting Jesus' picture, than by helping those people who moan with misery, who bear the cross of poverty, illness and misery, and who fall victim to all disasters and accidents at the same time. (*Letter, 1827*)

30 March

Imitate the resurrected Jesus by speaking only about divine things.

Seek solitude.

Do not seek satisfaction in earthly matters that cannot make you happy, but taste the celestial ones that can guide you towards perfection, and eventually heavenly glory. (*Letter, 1827*)

31 March

Merciful and loveable Jesus, I must confess that I was more prepared to follow you on Mount Tabor than on the Mount of Olives.

But now I have been conquered by your great love, and from now on I will follow you everywhere. (*Meditation*)

Religious Life

1 April

Man, today you are still here, but tomorrow you shall appear no more. And thus pass the days of salvation, without anybody taking particular notice of them. As young children we spend our days in frivolity. And as adults we are constantly preoccupied with the most banal of worries. And what is left at the end? Nothing. What have we been able to collect for the future? Not a day, not a week, not even 15 minutes. In other words, we have but the moment that we live. That is what we are entitled to.

So let us take good care of the moments that God accords us. For no one can add but the least instant. (*Undated sermon*)

2 April

Do not judge me, I who am your servant. You have given me your grace and your help so that I might resist Evil. But I am at the end of my strength. I have not listened to your divine interventions. I have not taken advantage of your grace or of your help. Still I pray to you, humbly and from the bottom of my heart. "Do not avert your eyes from me. But let me hear your words of mercy brightly and clearly!" (*Meditation*)

3 April

Oh Judas, what have you come to? What have you been and what are you now? Your anger is great and miserable. You have a master who has said, and whom you have heard say yourself: "Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). Oh Judas, return to your master who is infinitely good and merciful! (*Meditation*)

4 April

Oh merciful and clement Saviour, I do not want to follow Judas' example. Even though I am a great sinner I shall not despair. I know that your mercy and compassion surpass my sins and my anger infinitely. I know, Jesus, that Your own precious blood, indeed even the smallest drop of it, suffices to wash away the sins of the world. Hoping and trusting to obtain your grace, I seek refuge with You. "I am your salvation." (*Meditation*)

5 April

We come to You, Lord, to shed true tears of regret over our sins, like Saint Peter. Turn to us, like You turned to Saint Peter. Look on us with those eyes filled with compassion with which You penetrated the heart of Saint Peter. Have mercy on us. (*Meditation*)

6 April

In that trying mission that we have to accomplish, in that pleasure that we have to deny ourselves, in that disease from which we suffer, in that feeling of loss that we experience, in that humiliation to which we are submitted, we find the cup that we must empty and we must empty it courageously. (*Sermon on suffering*)

7 April

Do not lose heart. Christ is willing to drink from this bitter cup. He wants to deliver us. I hear Him saying, "I am willing, Father, to spill my blood for the salvation of man." I am ashamed to notice that I seem incapable of drinking with You, patiently and lovingly, a small drop that fell from your cup. (*Meditation*)

8 April

He has truly risen so as to give us an example of a true conversion. He has truly risen so that we might be truly and lastingly converted. He has shown himself, after the resurrection, so that we might also, after having been converted, demonstrate our conversion freely and generously.

Jesus has truly risen and after His example, God wishes us to be converted. (*Undated sermon*)

9 April

Blessed and sacred is he who was allowed to participate in the first resurrection. Blessed and sacred is he, who, rising with Christ Jesus, averts his face from all earthly things at his conversion; who does not seek prosperity; who rises against misfortune; who is satisfied when possessing God and who attaches himself to God for God. (*Undated sermon*)

10 April

If you have been truly converted, people should no longer be able to recognise you. However, what does that new life consist in? It is similar to that of the risen Lord who became a spiritual body. (*Sermon*)

11 April

You imitate God's capacities and his providence, by feeding the poor of Jesus Christ. You let manna rain down on the hungry, and you refresh the thirsty. Is that not splitting rocks so as to let living waters flow from them? (*Letter, 1828*)

12 April

You know the sad state of the unlucky, of the poor, and of the sick! One would almost think that these poor people are not allowed to enjoy a single day of pleasure, that the sun refuses to shine for them, and that the earth has flowers for only the rich, but thistles and thorns for poor. (*Letter, 1828*)

13 April

Offering life to those people, giving them clothes, by means of which they can protect themselves against wind and rain, preparing medication by means of which you can ease their pains, giving them food so as to satisfy their hunger, lending them a bed and fluffing up the pillow so that they may rest their wounded and ailing body, giving them a new, sweeter life by cleansing and attending to their dirty, odorous and gangrenous wounds, is that not resurrecting them, saving them from the jaws of death, making the sun shine on them, creating a new earth? (*Letter, 1828*)

14 April

Through your love and charity you become God's equal. You participate in the service of Jesus Christ. All the poor that you have helped bless you. And like you discern in them the person of the suffering Christ, they discern in you the person of Jesus the Saviour and Consoler. (*Letter, 1837*)

15 April

If one does not pay attention to the sparks, there is the danger of a big fire. A fever that is not instantly treated with medication, is often the cause of a serious illness. If the farmer does not eliminate the tares in his cornfield, it will become a wilderness yielding nothing but thistles and thorns.

Were you to be familiar with the nature of everyday sins, you would understand how contradictory the everyday sins are to divine perfection, to his sanctity. (*Undated sermon*)

16 April

How is it possible that we, who are all liable to the same faults and weaknesses, who have nothing that makes us superior to our neighbour, still dare demand that others pardon us, that they put up with us, while we continue to mock and criticise each other.

Is it really impossible to speak of others without resorting to gossip and slander? (*Undated sermon*)

17 April

Is it really so difficult to praise one another? It may be that your fellow man is haughty, jealous and ambitious sometimes, but likely he has done his bit of charity now and then as well? Likely, he has helped others in his personal way. And he may be miserly, but now and then he is also very attentive, meek and it may even be that he has done works of charity of which you have never been informed. (*Undated sermon*)

18 April

Let us avoid listening to or speaking of the evil deeds of others! You may risk sinning against love. Therefore, may that loving virtue, indeed, may that love rule your tongue so that you contemplate well the things that you wish to say about your neighbour. (*Undated sermon*)

19 April

Blessed is the one of whom may be said that he does not raise his voice, that he does not argue, that he is never depressed, nor rebellious or restless, and that he never bursts out in a bitter or haughty fashion. (*Undated sermon*)

20 April

What has become of the tradition of concealing the mistakes and weaknesses of our fellow man? What is more common today than that damned gossiping! What is more common today than digging up and trumpeting about the mistakes and weaknesses of our fellow man? And regrettably, these people who stoop to such gossip and slander tend to spice their story, rather than to water it down. 'For', so they claim mockingly, 'only frauds water down their stories.' (*Meditation*)

21 April

Oh Lord! You know how common the sin of gossip is amongst some. I pray that these people may be enlightened by your grace, and that from this day forth they may embrace You and their fellow man more affectionately, in order to announce their virtues to the world and to speak evil of them no more. Or at least, when they do not know how to speak favourably of their fellow men, then let them know how to hold their tongues about their mistakes and weaknesses, in imitation of You. (*Meditation*)

22 April

Never hold on to the things about which you disagree with others out of stubbornness. For stubbornness is a sign of haughtiness, of stupidity and of a lack of intelligence. (*Undated sermon*)

23 April

Remain silent as soon as you become angry or ill-humoured, and wait to respond until you feel that you have calmed down. It will be more effective to preserve a careful and mild expression, meekness and true friendship, than to retort venomously. (*Undated sermon*)

24 April

In order not to die in sin, you must abandon your sinful state without delay, and you must never return to it. And you must devote the remaining days of your life to God, until you will one day find the way to eternal life, thanks to His divine grace. (*Sermon for Candlemas*)

25 April

Man, today you are here, but tomorrow you shall appear no more. And thus pass the days of salvation, without anybody taking any notice of it. As young children we spend our days in frivolity. And during our adult years we are constantly preoccupied with the most banal of worries. Let us make proper use of the time that is left to us. (*Sermon about suffering*)

26 April

In order to reach perfection only two conditions need be fulfilled: believing that it is today that one has to start serving God, and believing that today might be the last day of your life. (*Writings*)

27 April

I am willing to suffer with You, because I know very well and I believe that what you said to your apostle Paul is true: “So our hope for you is secure in the knowledge that you share the encouragement we receive, no less than the sufferings we bear” (2 Cor 1:7). (*Meditation*)

28 April

God wants us to serve Him at our own expense, and without desiring to be awarded any consolation. (*Order of the day*)

29 April

After meditation, pray prime and tierce, then prepare sermon and instruction. Consequently, prepare mass, pray a tenth of the rosary, and study.

11:00 a.m. – pray sixth and none, adoration of the Sacred Heart. Second meditation from the book ‘*Pugna Spiritualis*’. Examine conscience, lunch with colloquium.

2:00 p.m. – pray vespers and a tenth of the rosary, study or visit a sick person.

5:00 p.m. – adoration, pray matins and lauds.

7:00 p.m. – dinner

Every day at 9:00 p.m. evening prayer in the bedroom till 10:00 p.m., then read one chapter of the Holy Scriptures while kneeling, and one or other paragraph from the aphorisms of Steyaert and one chapter from a pious book. (*Order of the day*)

30 April

As your piety increases, the frequency with which you sin will decrease, your abuse will cease, and, my parishioners, you will sin less against the three capital sins, namely drunkenness, blasphemy and indecency. (*Undated sermon*)

Brotherhood

1 May

If Mary is already worried about being able to assist her servants through the torments of their lives, then what shall she not do in the hour of death that has so many serious consequences. (*Sermon, 1787*)

2 May

If God loves you, then try to answer his love and try to love him veritably. All that God is not, is nothing. (*Undated sermon*)

3 May

Mary has a mother's heart for us, a heart filled with love, filled with tender affection, ever ready to help us.

Therefore, I do not doubt that you are all very devoted to her and that you pray in her honour and to her memory every day. Of all prayers the rosary pleases her the most. (*Sermon, 1789*)

4 May

Of one who piously loves the rosary, may be said with great certainty that he is like a spiritual bee that sits on the most beautiful of flowers, or rather on the principal mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ, his saviour, in order to suck up the honey of piety. (*Sermon, 1789*)

5 May

Mary praises God for what he created in her.

"My spirit," she says, "is beside itself with astonishment, my heart is filled with love, I no longer belong to me, but the Lord fills all the powers of the soul. How great that Lord of goodness is." (*Comments on the Magnificat*)

6 May

Mary says, "I was the least known and most common of his handservants, and still he deigned to look upon me. Oh! How much gratitude and Oh! How much love I do owe Him!" Thus speaks the humble soul who is loyal to her God and filled by his mercy. (*Comments on the Magnificat*)

7 May

You have forgotten about Mary in your life, you have not honoured her, you refused to be her servant during your lifetime. Therefore, she will let you wrestle with the mightiest and the most dangerous of enemies. Therefore, she will forget about you in the hour of your death, because you did not think of her during your life. (*Writings*)

8 May

Like God created the sun so that it might light the earth, alike the Holy Trinity gave us Mary's name so that she might bring mercy, redemption, grace and glory to the whole world. (*Writings*)

9 May

Mary may rightfully say that the Almighty did great things to her. However, mind that she has always remained loyal, for never in her whole life has she neglected to fulfil the tasks out of the grace in which she herself was received. (*Writings*)

10 May

The higher Mary was elevated by the Heavens, the more humble she became. On earth we witness the inverted situation, the more one is praised, the less humble one becomes.

The Most High chooses her as his Mother, the angel tells her that the Lord is with her, that she is full of mercy. And despite all the honorary titles, and all the praise, she cries, “Behold the Lord’s servant!” (*Writings*)

11 May

Seek refuge with Mary, the mother of Jesus, whom He has given to us as Mother. She is the defender of all sinners, always willing to defend us before her Son and to reconcile us with Him, to obtain his mercy and his grace so that we may persevere in the love and friendship of God. (*Writings*)

12 May

Mary will tell us, full of joy: “You have hailed me so often during your life, now I come to comfort you in the hour of death. You have so often said that I was full of mercy. Now I come to pour it abundantly into your soul. You have so often said, the Lord is with thee. Now I tell you that you will be with the Lord forever. You have told me so often, blessed are thee amongst all women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Now I tell you that you will be blessed as well!” (*Undated sermon*)

13 May

Watch how affectionately God has wanted us to adore Mary, since he has filled her with all mercies, as a result of which she possesses everything that we need for our salvation, and it comes to us through her mediation. (*Conference at the celebration of Saint Bernard*)

14 May

What is the use of praising and admiring Mary’s zealous submission, if you do not imitate her through renouncing your sins without delay, and through living by the just laws of penitence; introduced by God for all sinners. (*Sermon at the celebration of Candlemas*)

15 May

You are not children of Mary, if you relapse into sinful behaviour at the least temptation, the least danger and thus inflict so many indignities on her son. Being a friend of Mary and an enemy of her Son’s cannot possibly go together. Abandon those lapses! And seek refuge with Mary. She will reconcile you with God and obtain grace so that you may become her and His friend. (*Sermon on the Feast of the Annunciation*)

16 May

If you wish to obtain eternal grace, then become penitent without delay, fly to Mary, your Mother. Promise her, that you will improve your life. She will receive you as an honest and true child of love. She will reconcile you with God, she will assist and protect you, now and in the hour of death. (*Sermon on the Feast of the Annunciation*)

17 May

Does Christ rule your mind, always preoccupied with temporal matters? Practically never is it busy contemplating the benefactions that Christ conferred on you. Does Christ rule your will? He has given it to you so that you might love Him above all. (*Meditation*)

18 May

Lord Jesus, offer your gifts and your grace to those whom you love. I wish to love You with all my heart. Therefore, I humbly pray to you so that you might help and assist me. (*Meditation*)

19 May

It is a pity that so many Christians can no longer enjoy her mighty protection during their lifetime and in the hour of death, because they failed to serve Mary with childlike trust. Ask them what they do in order to solicit her help and her love. And we, do we say divine office or do we pray the rosary? Do we give alms to the poor out of love for her? Do we fast in her honour? (*Sermon Blaasveld, 1787*)

20 May

Mary's friends have every reason to trust in the mediation of their mediator. The young will feel more attracted to chastity and obedience. Adults will become more pious and zealous through receiving the sacraments. The elderly will worry about being well-prepared for their faithful departure. Persevere, friends of Mary, for thanks to the rosary will we obtain what we cannot obtain through reprimands. (*Undated sermon*)

21 May

Holy Mary, Mother of grace, aid to Christians, support us when we formulate our good intentions. For they are weak, help us to execute them so that the heavens, which we believe you have entered soul and body, may remain the object of our desire here on earth, but also the reward for our merits when we die. (*Undated sermon*)

22 May

Mary says, "My happiness is great, I admit, but I owe it to the pure and voluntary grace of the Lord. My intentions to please Him are the origins of my glory and the favours he has deigned to shower me with. He has chosen me as a result of his goodness. Behold that to which I owe my happiness, and my greatness. Behold that which penetrates me and renders me drunken with love". (*Comments on the Magnificat*)

23 May

Does Mary not seem to say to all of us that the one among us who finds himself in a state of honour and grace, should not overrate himself, thereby neglecting and ignoring the ones who suffer, the ones in need. On the contrary, all who sigh and cry as a result of oppression and suffering, should find the courage, should mortify themselves and put all their trust in the Lord. In order to be united with God, we must be humble. (*Comments on the Magnificat*)

24 May

I would be most unhappy, if I were to notice that the devotion to Mary proved a problem, for then I would have to witness to my deepest regret how your lack of love for Mary would ultimately result in the decline of your piety and your virtuousness. (*Writings*)

25 May

Oh! Purest of Virgins, you were sanctified from conception, and until the end of your days you grew in this grace. Do not allow us to ever renounce a task or a grace. You are a merciful Mother to us all; that is why we kneel before you, trustingly. See to it that our heart is consumed by love. (*Theme at Candlemas*)

26 May

Matthew gave Mary the most worthy of titles that God could ever have given to a creature: that Jesus was born of her. They are but few words, but they astonish heaven and earth. (*Theme at the Feast of the Annunciation*)

27 May

In spite of her virginal and worthy service, Mary only kept her honorary title of ‘the Lord’s handservant’. Who can explain how wonderfully she grows in mercy as a result of her elevated humility. It is not difficult to be humble when you have been rejected, but only rarely do you see that humiliation coincides with elevation without changing into haughtiness. (*Theme at the Feast of the Annunciation*)

28 May

Let us all say with Saint Augustine, “Through reading we search, through praying we beg, through meditation we find, but through contemplation we can enjoy what we searched for, begged for and what we found.” (*Spiritual writings*)

29 May

When someone has been called to guide souls, he must be trained for that task through exercises of inner life. He shall devote himself entirely to the salvation of his neighbour. However, he must always preserve a few moments to contemplate and to recuperate from the noticeable exhaustion of his soul. (*Spiritual writings*)

30 May

Without the Holy Spirit, without grace, man is mere vanity. What are man’s intelligence and his gifts without the light of the Holy Spirit, without grace?

What is the significance of the advantages of nature without grace? And of your beauty, your fearlessness, your nobility, if you disconnect them from grace? Pure vanity!

How will man benefit from his being a judge, a hero or a king if he has lost grace. (*Undated sermon*)

31 May

Seek then greatness where it is truly to be found. Leave to the lovers of worldly things all the vain honorary titles on which they pride themselves so easily, whilst their souls find themselves in the worst possible misery, humiliation and poverty. Respect and strive after the honorary titles that make you truly great.

Respect the sanctifying grace, for thanks to it we are children of God, temples of the Holy Spirit, lodgings for His divine Majesty, Brothers and members of Jesus Christ, heirs of God. *(Undated sermon)*

God is love

1 June

Jesus Christ could not have proved his love more convincingly than by leaving us his Heart. For one cannot demonstrate one's love for another person more intensely than by sacrificing oneself for those whom you love, and that love is boundless. But since God, our Saviour, loves us so boundlessly, He has every right to expect from us the same boundless reciprocal love. *(Sermon, 1813)*

2 June

“Come to me” (Mt 11:28).

Come then, and have faith, for I am your master. I will instruct you. I am your father. I will nourish you. I am your God. I will make you rich and glorify you with all possible graces. Come to me, no matter whether you are, sick or crippled, for I will heal you. Come to me, all who are depressed, and I will comfort you. Come to me, all who are poor, and I will make you rich. Come to me, all who have sinned, and I will forgive you. *(Sermon, 1813)*

3 June

Indeed, once your heart is alight with ardent love, it cannot rest anymore, it wants to progress. Feet do no longer suffice to advance, it will seek wings to fly.

We must seek the Lord without ceasing; because we must love Him uninterruptedly. *(Undated sermon)*

4 June

The most intense way of expressing one's love for someone is by dying for that person. That is the way in which Jesus' Heart has loved us. He died for us.

Oh! Dearly beloved all, if our hearts were to be alight with that passionate fire, then how much we would sacrifice to increase God's glory, perhaps even our own lives! *(Sermon, 1809)*

5 June

Most beloved heart of Jesus, You asked me to give You my heart, well, here it is. Only You are worthy of it, and only You can fill it with joy. I offer it to You so that you may heal it of

all wounds of haughtiness, of attachment to worldly things and of the devotion to myself, of a lack of love for my fellow man, in one word, of all my wounds.

Jesus Christ, my God, I desire only one thing: a place in your Heart. (*Sermon, 1809*)

6 June

The Divine Heart shows itself everywhere, as the heart of a good father who invites us to come to Him, as the heart of a loyal friend who knocks upon the door to our heart without ceasing in order to embrace us, as the heart of a caring shepherd who searches for his lost sheep in order to return them to the flock to his own great joy. (*Sermon, 1811*)

7 June

I am ashamed Lord Jesus that my heart is so cold for You, whilst your heart is alight with love for me. I hope that henceforth my heart will love you with increased ardour. From this day forth, I will summon all the powers of my soul to love you back; all the powers of my intelligence so as to fully submit myself to this dogma; all the powers of my will to honour you with the greatest possible respect; and all the powers of my memory so as to never forget about this love.

Henceforth, I will demonstrate my love as I approach your holy altar.

Oh! God of love, my heart, strengthened by your grace, will burn with passion for you!
(*Sermon, 1819*)

8 June

Love then, dearly beloved, the Heart of Jesus and soon you will become zealous people, zealous for your own salvation, zealous when it comes to praying for the sinners, zealous to help the miserable and needy, zealous to facilitate the realisation of God's Kingdom. A heart, united by love with Jesus' heart, participates in its sanctity, is the temple where God lives.
(*Undated sermon*)

9 June

Oh! Most sacred Heart of Jesus, oh! Worker of all graces, origin of perfection, guide our thoughts, purify our desires, sanctify our sentiments, accept our adoration and our offertory. We pray you, make us humble, meek and patient in our suffering and do not permit us to seek other things than your honour and your glory, and do not permit us to love others than You in time and eternity. (*Sermon, 1811*)

10 June

Whether rich or poor, we must offer Him our heart, since that is the gift that He desires, that is the gift he demands from all of us with the greatest tenderness. "My son," he says, "give me your heart. I have given mine, should you not give me yours then?" (*Undated sermon*)

11 June

For what concerns the eternal good, the human heart can best be compared with water, by nature cold, but it can grow hot and stay hot when you heat it or keep it warm. Man is like water.

By nature man is cold, saintly desire does not warm him at all. Only when the Holy Spirit lights within him the fire of love does he warm up. (*Undated sermon*)

12 June

You will benefit little from the outer habit of your bridegroom, if you do not acquire at the same time his inner spirit. You would not at set times bear fruit if you were not planted along a stream, from which you can extract the fluids and nutriments that you require for your growth. The source is the inner prayer or meditation. (*Sermon at the taking of the habit*)

13 June

In the course of his mortal life, he often withdrew to the mountains or the desert where he spent the whole night discussing with his Heavenly Father, while all creatures remained silent. He never interrupted his prayer.

Blessed are those who love to pray! (*Undated sermon*)

14 June

Blessed, indeed, blessed a thousand times the one who possesses the Holy Spirit. That is the sanctifying grace thanks to which we are united with our God. It is the grace that the Holy Spirit pours into our souls, together with love; the grace that is the lifeblood of our soul, the security of our hope. (*Undated sermon*)

15 June

There is no more perfect way of painting Jesus Christ's picture than by taking care of those who groan with misery, who bear the cross of poverty, who suffer as a result of diseases or live in miserable circumstances and who are visited by all sorts of disasters and accidents at the same time. (*Undated sermon*)

16 June

Ah! You have abandoned God and without experiencing the least regret. When you suffer a loss, you do not cease to complain. And even though you have lost your God, you do not shed the least tear. Think of what is necessary to crush a heart turned to stone.

If you have abandoned God, you can only find Him again through penitence and tears. (*Undated sermon*)

17 June

That which should incite us most of all to serve God is that He has established the most sacred sacrament of the altar. In that sacrament, He gives himself entirely to us in the form of bread and wine, and he takes those forms so as to be able to pour the whole of his spirit into our souls and to inform our body of its immortality, and to remain within us so that we remain within Him, and so that we may become one. He has given himself entirely to you. Therefore, you can do nothing less than devote yourself entirely to his service. (*Undated sermon*)

18 June

The sisters will organise a perpetual adoration of the Sacred Heart. The convents will divide the hours of adoration between them, each according to a different schedule so that the perpetual adoration should be guaranteed. (*Rule of the Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

19 June

It is praiseworthy to persevere in times of misfortune, but it is almost a miracle not to fall from grace when you live in great wealth. (*Undated sermon*)

20 June

Providence supports us, it protects us, it guides us during the day and guards us during the night. It provides the bread that we eat, and makes water spring from the bosom of the earth so that we can drink. It provides the juices that flow from fruits and plants. To put it in one word, it provides without end and with an infinite goodness all that we need. (*Sermon, 1813*)

21 June

When your soul is hurt, you must use an effective medicine. He who goes to the Eucharist respectfully, will experience a salutary change within him. (*Sermon, 1787*)

22 June

Like ordinary food helps to preserve physical life, and gives a person new strength. Alike, the most sacred sacrament helps to preserve the life of the soul by giving it new strength and by stimulating its weakened virtues. It gives strength to man so that he may withstand the attacks of his enemies and so that he may grow towards perfection. This is the bread that strengthens the heart of man. (*Sermon, 1788*)

23 June

From this living source of God's mercy you will be able to draw all the mercy and the virtues that you require. You seek wisdom, well here you will receive the Eternal Wisdom in person. You pray for purity, well here you will receive purity itself. You need strength to preserve your virtuousness when facing the dangers of life, well here you will be shown the source of the grace that can protect you against all that is damaging to your salvation, and which will prove your most important instrument to pursue a Christian life. (*Sermon, 1788*)

24 June

Since this sacred sacrament is a sacrament of love, you must receive it with love. We must love God, who loves us so much. Since He gives himself to us, we must give ourselves to Him. Since he belongs entirely to us, we must belong entirely to Him. (*Sermon, 1806*)

25 June

The incarnation of Christ was a miracle. But what He did when He established the host is even more miraculous.

In this sacred sacrament he did not only disguise his divinity, but also his humanness by taking the form of bread and wine. As a result of that metamorphosis, we can now eat and

drink Him. Through the incarnation man became united with God. But through this Sacred Sacrament He, who was both God and man, wishes to become one with us. (*Sermon, 1807*)

26 June

Blessed, indeed, blessed a thousand times, those who will have loved, adored and served Jesus in the shadow of his sacred sacrament. They will behold Him face to face in heaven, they will love Him and praise Him for all eternity. (*Sermon, 1810*)

27 June

Jesus Christ deserves that we visit Him in his sacrament of Love. For he has instituted the sacrament the first time out of love for us. Ah! Who shall dare refuse that reciprocal love, for He has loved always us infinitely and still does. That is why we owe Him all our love. (*Undated sermon*)

28 June

If we experience sadness, a dislike or dullness, we must not lose courage or become fainthearted, but remain loyally and perseveringly at the feet of our divine Master until He deigns to let his eyes rest upon us.

Ah! Loved ones, what graces you would receive, if you were to receive more often the sacred sacrament of your Saviour. Never would you return from his presence, not having experienced new blessings. (*Sermon, 1810*)

29 June

When you eat the bread of life that was broken for you, often there is not the least flame or spark of love within you.

I am ashamed, my Lord Jesus, when I think that up until now I have paid so little attention to that great love that you have wished to prove to me by instituting this most sacred of sacraments.

My heart, strengthened by your grace will burn for love of you. (*Undated sermon*)

30 June

When we receive the sacred sacrament, having approached the altar and adoring you, we must also pray for others.

When you are father of a household, you must recommend your whole family to Jesus, after having received the host.

And should you have enemies, know people who have mistreated you, then you must try to see them with Jesus' heart. He loves them. Forgive them from the bottom of your heart and pray for them. (*Sermon, 1810*)

Prayer

1 July

One's debut as a religious person is usually very passionate. One lays the foundations of one's spiritual building with zeal and diligence that never seem to wane. However, once the original zeal and diligence have disappeared, one decides on one's own authority that one is entitled to rest.

Mind that the nature of your state in life remains invariable, whatever your age. (*Undated sermon*)

2 July

Who are you, Sister of Charity?

I am nothing, consequently I am capable of nothing myself, I am incapable of taking the least action. And so I must resort to Him thanks to Whom we are capable of everything and Who gives whatever is necessary to the one who approaches Him confidently and truly humbly and who pursues the path of obedience. The means of doing what one cannot do oneself, is to resort to the Almighty in prayer and to do everything obediently. (*Conference*)

3 July

I am a sinner. He demands of me no other satisfaction than strict observance of the rule and complete self-denial. (*Conference*)

4 July

I am a Sister of Charity and it is my task to educate children. I should be thankful for the gift of so many souls, for whose salvation I will have to render account one day. (*Conference*)

5 July

How then should I discharge myself of this task?

By being devoted to my work, by taking my task to heart and by working for the spiritual and temporal well-being of the children. This implies being kind to them and, if necessary, reprimanding them, but always softly. And never should I demonstrate the least preference for one or other child, because I should discern the face of Jesus Christ in each child's face. (*Conference*)

6 July

Commit myself to it with great care. But do everything as strictly as possible and according to the time schedule, and if necessary sacrifice a pious exercise in order to do a work of charity. (*Conference*)

7 July

Out of a spirit of unity with my fellow Sisters, I remain friendly at all times and in case of a small difference of opinion, I am careful not to show the least sign of it in the presence of the pupils. (*Conference*)

8 July

Do everything with the purest possible intention, working to the same purpose, the glory of God and the well-being of these souls, because if we are all pervaded by the same spirit and if we all work in the same way, the pupils will witness the unity between the Sisters. (*Conference*)

9 July

You should perform the task that you were given and not force yourself unto the other, who has another task to perform. That is how you can live in peace. (*Conference*)

10 July

The way to spend a happy life in a convent is not to conceal anything that causes you to feel sad. You should open your heart completely in confession, and sometimes on other occasions too. You should even admit to all your doubts. (*Writings*)

11 July

You will find religious who harbour illusion regarding silence. They think it is a virtue not to speak during recreation. On the contrary! During recreation you have to talk and contribute to the relaxation of community.

However, it is improper to be noisy or to laugh in an uncontrolled way. You should take delight, but in the Lord. (*Writings*)

12 July

I wish you and your fellow sisters the dignity and the happiness of a Sister of Charity. For to my mind, there is no title that is worthy of your vocation. Shall I call you servants of God? But that is far too modest and meagre a title. Friend of God? Still too modest. Brides and images of God? Still not enough praise. Angels of the world? Not enough. But I can say with the Holy Scripture, and without being at all too bold: *Vos estis Dii*. You are Gods on earth. (*Conference, 1828*)

13 July

What a source of happiness it is to live in a house, where love, obedience, patience, peace and helpfulness rule. A house where one does not notice anything else than angels, where one hears how God is being praised, where people leave chapel silently and filled with love, where only work of charity are being done, where one notices but the fires that burn in hearts filled with divine love, where the only complaints are about there being insufficient signs to prove one's love. (*Letter, 1829*)

14 July

Create a resting-place for elderly sisters and sisters who suffer from illnesses. It is only natural that the Sisters, who spent the whole of their young lives, serving the sick, taking care of the mentally ill, educating the children can count on special care once they have become old and needy.

Therefore, the congregation should have a place somewhere close to the town or the gates of the town, where the air is clean and where it is pleasant and quiet. (*Writings*)

15 July

Every vocation comes from God. It is therefore your duty not to work against it, and you can prevent yourself from doing so by devoting yourself carefully and loyally to your study and by avoiding sin.

If you thus answer to the graces that the Lord will not refrain from giving you, you will be following the path that leads to happiness. (*Letter*)

16 July

Thanks to your vocation and your profession you have been resurrected from a worldly existence to a religious existence.

That implies living in the world, but separated from it.

What more could we desire, given that we can already rejoice about possessing Jesus Christ and God. (*Letter, 1827*)

17 July

“Behold,” the Holy Father Bernard says to you, “the true love that descends into a hospital, inhabited by sick people and all sorts of wretched and miserable people: living only to serve them.”

Consider then the dignity of your vocation, by living it irreproachably and loyally, since you represent God in your service. (*Letter, 1828*)

18 July

There will be neither perfection, nor sanctity for a religious who does not abide by the rule. For a religious person the rule is the path that leads to heaven. (*Writings*)

19 July

A work that is good in itself or even heroic, but that does not really befit the religious person who does it, is not in the least meritorious and certainly not pleasing to God. (*Writings*)

20 July

When the rules are abided by, then love, unity, piety and all other sorts of virtues will rule. There is then Heaven. The virtues cannot reign in a convent, where the rules are not respected. For then there can be no quietude, no peace, no contemplation, in one word no sanctity in the place. (*Letter, 1832*)

21 July

Dear Brothers, the rules that I give to you are extracts from the writings of saintly and pious men. These rules set out part of your obligations, namely, those points that are related to your exterior deportment. As to your interior dispositions, it is the Spirit of God who will make these points known to you. (*Presentation of the rule, 1809*)

22 July

The Spirit of Truth will teach you every truth, and remind you of all that our adorable Redeemer has taught in the Gospel about the duties of those whom, in his infinite mercy, He has chosen to be his disciples. (*Presentation of the rule, 1809*)

23 July

As a result of this privileged choice, they are called to follow Him in his difficult and painful life, in his zeal for the glory of his celestial Father and the salvation of souls; as also his affability, his compassion for those who are in need, every type of sick and infirm who came or were brought to Him, and whom He cured, if they or those who brought them to Him had faith in Him. (*Presentation of the rule, 1809*)

24 July

The spirit of Love that is God himself – if you render yourself worthy to receive Him – will inspire you with the deep desire to be instructed in this sublime doctrine, in the most perfect virtues and the evangelical counsels, which in the Gospel the God made man offered to those ready to follow Him in his intimate, uninterrupted and sublime union with his heavenly Father in the midst of all his actions, which had no other end in view than the glory of God and the extension of his Kingdom in souls. (*Presentation of the rule, 1809*)

25 July

We should pray constantly to the Almighty so that He might inspire us with a passionate and powerful desire to become His true disciples. (*Presentation of the rule, 1809*)

26 July

What is it then, my God, that prevents us from imitating Jesus, and from being your true disciples? Oh! Adorable Truth! You answer my question by means of these few but meaningful words of the Holy Gospel: “none of you can be my disciple without giving up all that he owns.” (*Presentation of the rule, 1809*)

27 July

Saint Francis de Sales teaches us that we should not reprimand, thereby adopting an admonishing tone, but that we should remain meek and kind. There is no way of expressing how powerfully friendliness or kindness can attract someone to the good. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

28 July

You shall place yourself under the presence of God during your work, and you shall regularly say a short prayer. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

29 July

A Sister-hostess will be appointed whose task it will be to receive and take care of guests. She will have to be an example of love and loyalty to the rule; she will have to be like an Angel in a mortal body. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

30 July

All Sisters will make an effort never to show the least sign of something that might disturb or hinder love. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

31 July

A Sister of Charity will observe the rule obediently, will be kind-mannered. She will live a simple evangelical life, preserve perfect unanimity, love all sorts of unhappy people, keep silent, she will be zealous and have no property. (*Rules Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

Vows – Evangelical Life

1 August

Apart from working on our own perfection with the help of divine grace, the congregational objective is also to attempt to realise the salvation of our neighbour. To that purpose we will do all sorts of works of charity, attract the poor and the needy and help them so that they may also come to perfection and salvation. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

2 August

We will take care of everything for the sick and serve them as if we were serving Jesus Christ himself. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

3 August

In each convent you will receive poor sick people and poor abandoned orphans. After the spirit of Saint Vincent you should only take care of poor and necessitous people. Accordingly, you will not organise a boarding school for rich children, unless you admit poor children first. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

4 August

The Sisters should remember that they are maidservants of the poor and that it is their task to serve Jesus in the person of the poor mentally ill and the physically ill. They should fulfil their task in all humility, simplicity and love and do their works with care, proper attention, loyalty and affection. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

5 August

You will take good care even of the most obnoxious and troublesome. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

6 August

The Sisters of Jesus and Mary will lead a contemplative life insofar as it is possible given their other duties. Taking part in active life, consists of serving the poor sick, the mentally ill, orphans, raising other poor children, organising education and various other works of charity, according to the spirit and the rule of Saint Vincent de Paul. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

7 August

The Sisters will devote at least one hour a day to contemplation and meditation. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

8 August

Serving the sick is an estimable vocation. Through that service you become helper and servant of God's Providence with regard to the sick. You should also realise that it is Jesus Christ himself, whom you serve when nursing the sick. It is Him who receives all the care that you take of his limbs with your own hands. (*Texts, 1833*)

9 August

We should keep our heart pure when serving the sick and banish all other thoughts from our mind. Like it is our task to nurse the sick at all times, it is also our task to constantly raise our hearts up to the Lord and to render Him present. (*Texts, 1833*)

10 August

We shall go humbly and respectfully to the sick, because in them we discern Jesus himself who suffers. If certain diseases frighten us, we should resort to that strong faith that says that we have to see Jesus himself. With the eyes of faith we will serve the sick zealously and passionately. (*Texts, 1833*)

11 August

It is true that people have a native aversion to serving persons who are seriously ill. But love should take nature's place, for it is love that gives us the power to chase away our sadness, our aversion and concern. Love gives us the strength that nature cannot give us. (*Texts, 1833*)

12 August

Our love should be sincere and not hypocritical, our affection should be full of true brotherly tenderness and we should serve the sick respectfully.

Our carefulness should be unlimited, always mindful that it is the Lord that we serve. We should fulfil our task gladly, patiently and wholeheartedly. (*Texts, 1833*)

13 August

It is thanks to the spirit of love that we will gladly and happily serve the sick, help them to do whatever it is that they have or want to do, console them and relieve their pains so that they may be served by us from the bottom of our heart and with true zeal. (*Texts, 1833*)

14 August

We shall approach the sick very patiently. It is Christ who pours zeal into us so that we might be able bear all the difficulties and revulsion that we experience whilst nursing the sick. We must bear in mind that it was Jesus himself who was prepared to suffer for us. (*Texts, 1833*)

15 August

We should not lose heart or become faint-hearted, for we have not yet shed our blood like Christ did for us. Therefore, we must not complain, because we might lose our patience. All the revulsion, impatience and uneasiness that we experience when nursing the sick should be sacrificed to Jesus Christ, because of the sins that we committed against Him. (*Texts, 1833*)

16 August

We should accept and bear all the uneasiness that we experience when nursing the sick with a spirit of repentance. Let us bear in mind that the Lord, because of his enormous goodness, affability and mercifulness, contents himself with troubling us with these slight difficulties and mortification, instead of submitting us to the eternal torments that we deserve as punishment for our evil deeds. (*Texts, 1833*)

17 August

The consideration of death and of the final judgement can help us to overcome the difficulties of our service. (*Texts, 1833*)

18 August

Humility is the most pretty and pleasing virtue of any religious person. For thanks to it we become the equals of God's Son who adopted the nature of a slave in order to humiliate himself. He came to serve and He even sacrificed his own life so as to deliver us. Thus the love of humility will make us adore the least and it will help us to despise ourselves in the eyes of the world. (*Texts, 1833*)

19 August

Meekness is the reflection of humility. It is up to the religious to serve the poor like Christ had demonstrated. (*Texts, 1833*)

20 August

We should not only take care of the physically ill, but also of their mental wellbeing. It is precisely our intention to help to serve the spiritual life of the ill through physical help. By the continued existence of the virtues we will encourage the sick to live virtuously themselves. (*Texts, 1833*)

21 August

If we think that we can rely on our proper strength, we fool ourselves. For as soon as God decides to lift his hand, we will be rendered absolutely powerless. However, through prayer

we will obtain whatever means we need to nurse the sick appropriately, to sanctify ourselves and to edify our neighbour through acting as good example. (*Texts, 1833*)

22 August

Seek and aspire in a spirit of poverty after the least and the most modest clothing and housing. Love to serve the poor and the wretched who are the scum of the world. That is the spirit of Christ. (*Writings*)

23 August

Be simple-mannered and an enemy of farfetchedness. (*Writings*)

24 August

Be aware that the works of charity should benefit all sorts of poor and sick people, thereby leaving no one in the cold. They also comprise nursing the mentally ill, and even raising poor children. (*Interrogation, 1813*)

25 August

Be aware that apart from the three vows: obedience, poverty and chastity, we should make a fourth one, namely to serve the poor, the sick and the needy and to help them, according to the institution and the rule of the congregation. (*Interrogation, 1813*)

26 August

Be aware that this fourth vow, which we have to make, implies serving the sick everywhere, in all places, without exception, be it in their houses, be it in a hospital. It also implies nursing the mentally ill, raising and educating poor children. In fact it implies doing various sorts of works of charity in the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul. (*Interrogation, 1813*)

27 August

I should think that it is unreasonable to prevent you from providing soup and other things to the poor, given the strong winter.

It would be a disgrace if people, suffering from cancer and other diseases, were to be nourished poorly and taken care of badly, because of the fact that they are not used to much comfort anyway. (*Letter, 1830*)

28 August

Be happy to notice that some things are lacking, even when they are quite essential things, because that characterises those who are truly poor in mind and who imitate Jesus Christ perfectly. (*Writings, 1822*)

29 August

Oh, Good Jesus! You taught us by the light of the Holy Gospels to renounce all earthly good and to love all that is celestial. Please help us to attain the true poverty that we promised to observe at our profession.

We abandoned the world to become the equivalent of you, who did not even have a stone to rest your head upon.

Accept our poverty. We give up our soul and our body. Make them as poor as you desire so that we may find wealth in you and inherit the Kingdom of your Father. Amen. (*Prayer about true poverty*)

30 August

Almighty, eternal God, You have chosen us as virgins so that we may be undividedly yours, free of sensual bonds and pure of body and mind.

We thank you for having chosen us and we declare ourselves prepared to answer to your call. We know that your grace has to protect our purity and that it should chaste us. Help us then to die of each irregularity, and of all thoughts and feelings that are less pure. Amen. (*Prayer about true chastity*)

31 August

Oh, Jesus Christ! You became a slave, obedient until you died on the cross. You teach us how we should give up our own will.

Our inheritable pride and personal sins have so often offended God. By our vow of obedience we have been able to offer everything to Him, what we had kept out of recalcitrance.

Let us not be big-hearted, neither faint-hearted, but humble-hearted.

When you had been obedient until death, your Father resurrected you.

Let us, after a serviceable and obedient life, share in your bliss. Amen. (*Prayer about humble obedience*)

Community

1 September

Love should be tender, childlike, sincere and constant, a love that is immaculately perfect, that has compassion for their suffering, that shares in their joy. A love that is no cause for sadness. “Children, our love must be not just words or mere talk, but something active and genuine” (1 Jn 3:18). (*Sermon, 1804*)

2 September

The request of two Sisters, which was based solely on love, had such a powerful effect on Jesus that when he noticed the miserable state of his friend Lazarus, he started to cry.

Here we remark what a strong influence love has and how, by simply calling upon love, the Lord Jesus did not only cry, but even raised Lazarus from the dead. (*Sermon Blaasveld, 1787*)

3 September

Oh, my God! Do not allow that a single one of my parishioners strays. I love them all for love of you. (*Sermon, 1802*)

4 September

My third duty, dearly beloved, is my service. I owe you my waking hours, my concern, my efforts, my rest and not only on certain occasions, but at every moment of the day and of the night, despite distant, difficult and muddy roads. (*Sermon, 1802*)

5 September

Call me whenever you think fit, and do not spare me. Do not fear to disturb me. I am happy when, according to the example of Jesus Christ, my master, can sacrifice my rest, my health and even my life for you. (*Sermon, 1802*)

6 September

I shall try to make myself useful at all times and in all places. I shall add my prayers to my work. I shall multiply my prayers for those who refuse to listen to my reprimands and to my advice, and I will make sacrifices for them. (*Sermon Ronse, 1802*)

7 September

That is what you owe me: love and gratitude. Love: God is my witness that I love you, that I wish you all the good that I wish myself and I am happy to be allowed to share in your love. Gratitude consists in your friendship, in the confidence that you have in me and in your prayers for me. (*Sermon Ronse, 1802*)

8 September

Young people, pray for me, I carry you in my heart. Fathers and mothers, pray for me, I want to help you take care of your children. Pray for me, poor people, you are the suffering limbs of the Lord, and as such I will honour, love and help you. Pray for me, sick and handicapped people, I will abstain from everything so that you can share in what is left in my house. (*Sermon, 1802*)

9 September

In order to maintain the vow of serving the sick, it is not enough to serve one group and not another, or to give to one group lovingly all that it needs, and to serve the other with a sort of half intention. But whether you have to serve the sick or whether your duty consists in educating the children, you should love each one of them just as much and devote the same sort of attention to the complaints of every single one. (*Last spiritual conference, 1836*)

10 September

Let us continue to do these works of charity. Let us continue to speak of love and to pray for it until God lights the fire of love in each heart. (*Undated sermon*)

11 September

The love of your neighbour? It is the love that should unite you by means of bonds so strong that despite different origins or talents, you become one of mind, heart and soul. (*Undated sermon*)

12 September

You should love each other sincerely and precede each other with mutual recommendations. It is here that you should put up with each other lovingly, striving carefully to preserve the unity of minds by the bond of peace. (*Undated sermon*)

13 September

What a wonderful and appreciated influence the commendable state of true humility has in society. A humble person finds in his neighbour nothing else than that which is good and virtuous. It causes him to imagine that everyone is perfect and it causes him to approach everyone kindly and respectfully. (*Undated sermon*)

14 September

You should love the poor, because they are people like you. You should love them, because they are the limbs of the Holy Church, members of the body of which the head is Jesus Christ. For “insofar as you did this for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.” (*Undated sermon*)

15 September

Treat everyone softly and kindly. Try to serve everyone and to please them as much and as often as you can. Assist people who are sick or needy with the greatest possible care and attention, and try by being mild-mannered, using kind words and answers to provide the things that you are unable to do or give. (*Writings, 1821*)

16 September

You should not be ill-disposed towards your fellow man. Do not dare to show the least aversion to someone, by not speaking to him or by not helping him when he is in need of help, out of despute. (*Writings, 1821*)

17 September

Do not get involved too deeply with the other and avoid all familiarity. Judge no one. Always try to have a positive opinion about everything and about everyone. (*Writings, 1821*)

18 September

Carefully practise love among you. Precede one another with signs of love. Avoid causing the least sadness, pain or displeasure. Bear one another's weaknesses lovingly. Do not complain about anyone. Be helpful. Do not envy anyone. Bear a warm heart towards each other so that you are glad when people are kind to someone else or when he obtains something, just as if you were the beneficiary. (*Writings, 1820*)

19 September

Never resort to slander or libel. Never speak of someone else's weaknesses, insignificant or commonly known though they may be. Never speak of what others have said about another person or of what might cause him pain or anguish, for that is sowing discord. (*Writings, 1820*)

20 September

Among all the goods that are to be found in the world and to be esteemed, friendship is one of the most important and first ones. The Book of Ecclesiasticus tells us the following: "A loyal friend is a powerful defence, whoever finds one has indeed found a treasure" (Sir 6:16). (*Meditations*)

21 September

If you want to have a sincere friend, then find the one who precedes you as good example, who reprimands you, who stands by your side and who helps you do that which is necessary for you, who wishes nothing else than your spiritual wellbeing and your salvation. If you have found that person, then realise that you have found a loyal friend and a treasure in the world. (*Meditations*)

22 September

In order to convince someone to devote attention to and have compassion with a wretched person, there is no stronger means than love from which springs everything. Love has a particular strength to move a person and to conquer his or her mind. Love is so eloquent that it even succeeds in penetrating the core of our heart. (*Sermon Blaasveld, 1787*)

23 September

Jesus Christ, whose love is boundless, commands us to imitate his love for man. He calls upon us to love each other for love of Him, to bear each other's burdens, to pardon each other as we would like God to pardon us and to live in peace with all our fellow humans insofar as we are capable of it.

Peace, unity, unanimity and love will be the share of the blessed. Let us then try to live here on earth like we will live eternally in heaven. (*Sermon Ronse, 1803*)

24 September

Oh, Blessed Saviour! Where would I flee from you? You have bound me to you with so many ties of love that no friend, no person, no creature is bound to another, like I am bound to you. Therefore, I offer myself entirely to you. (*Meditation*)

25 September

If God loves you, then try to answer his love and try to love him veritably. (*Undated sermon*)

26 September

Man on this earth is but truly great when he finds himself in a state of grace. He does not possess any true good than the one that is sealed with that grace. He is but truly at ease and happy in the Kingdom of grace.

Be humble so that God's grace may descend upon you. (*Undated sermon*)

27 September

Be humble and you will find peace for your soul: peace with God, peace with your fellow man, peace with yourself. A peace which the world cannot give you, a peace that will render you truly happy on this earth, despite even the greatest trials, and that will guide you towards eternal peace. A peace that I wish you from the bottom of my heart and out of a deep affection for you. (*Undated sermon*)

28 September

It is natural and reasonable that a sick person seeks the help of a doctor; that a person faced with doubts seeks the help of a lawyer, that a pupil asks his master for help, a child his father. When we suffer we complain about it to our friends, when we have doubts we seek the advice of someone in whom we have confidence, when we are sad we seek comfort among other people, but we always seem to forget Jesus. Why do we not resort to the divine Heart of Jesus? (*Undated sermon*)

29 September

Love should always burn in the hearts of Christians like on a spiritual altar. In order to keep that fire of love alight, it must be maintained and fuelled daily through meditation. Like a fire cannot burn without end – certainly not when it is exposed to strong winds – if it is not regularly fuelled with wood or something else that burns. Alike, divine love cannot remain alight if it is not constantly fuelled through our contemplation of divine matters. (*Sermon, 1804*)

30 September

Those who were summoned to perform certain functions in active life should devote themselves to their tasks with the greatest possible loyalty. Should they act differently, they would be reversing the order established by Providence. However, they should prevent themselves from lapsing into illusions. And they will fail, if they do not make time for the exercises of a contemplative life. The more you are exposed to distractions as a result of your function, the more care you should take of approaching God meekly and humbly so as to preserve the union with Him that is characterised by Love. (*Writings, 1799*)

Mission

1 October

As shepherd, it is my task to give a good example. It is my task to instruct you, to be completely at your service, indeed, to give myself entirely to you and to sacrifice myself for

your salvation. It is my task to give a good example, so that you may be encouraged to pursue a more virtuous life. I should also help you to learn about your duties in life. Finally, it is my task to be at your service and to help you whenever you are in need of help. (*Sermon Ronse, 1802*)

2 October

I do not wish to become blessed without you. Why should I desire so? Why am I shepherd? Why am I on this world? Only to live in Jesus Christ, but with you! That is my desire, my honour, my joy and my wealth. (*Writings*)

3 October

A shepherd should commit himself entirely to the sanctification of souls. It is his task to return those who have strayed and to convince them to loyally fulfil the duties that come with their state. He should be of one piece and forceful, but always in such a way that severity is tempered by kindness.

4 October

The ardent desire to make progress on the path to virtuousness is the surest sign that a soul is making progress in the grace of God. (*Writings*)

5 October

Whoever is obedient – whether he or she ascends to heaven by reading, meditation or prayer, or descends by serving his or her fellow man – performs the task of the angels, because he or she executes the will of God. (*Writings*)

6 October

In order to become perfect in a short period of time, only two conditions need be fulfilled: firstly, we should believe that today we have started to serve God, and secondly, believe that today is the last day of our lives. (*Writings*)

7 October

Prayer, mortification and chastity are connected to each other by means of the most unbreakable and closest bonds.

Mortification is unbearable without prayer. Prayer is tasteless without mortification,. Without prayer and mortification, the vow of chastity is feeble and difficult to maintain. (*Writings*)

8 October

They should keep in mind that the objective of the congregation is to assist old and sick men at the hospice, together with other works of charity for the benefit of the poor and the wretched. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 1, 1808*)

9 October

They should keep in mind that another objective of the congregation is to be committed with particular zeal to realising personal salvation and the perfection of the Gospels. That is the reason, why they have become religious: to devote themselves entirely to God by making these three religious vows. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 2, 1808*)

10 October

Since obedience is the most important but also the most difficult vow, all Brothers should realise that without perfect obedience the congregation cannot function. Consequently, they need to see the will of the superior as the will of God. They will treat him respectfully and regardful and they will not speak of his weaknesses or encourage each other to disobey. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 7, 1808*)

11 October

Like the subordinate must obey zealously, the superior must give orders and command carefully, slowly and it will also be part of his responsibility to develop ideas and make suggestions. He will always be humble and beware of trusting too much in himself, He will ask for God's advice and pray for his help and in case of important matters, he will address the Reverend Sir Director. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 8, 1808*)

12 October

In order to preserve the spirit of love and to banish attachments to worldly goods, the Brothers will use only that which the superior has put at the Brothers' disposal. The superior will lovingly provide all that the Brothers require.

They will hand over to the superior all that they receive from friends or others. He will then distribute it among the poor or among the members of the community, according to the needs. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 9, 1808*)

13 October

The Brothers will be woken at 4:00 a.m. every morning (except in wintertime, when they will be woken at 4:30 a.m.) and they will get up zealously at the first sign and dedicate their first thoughts to God.

At 4:15 a.m., they shall meet in chapel for common morning prayers after which they will meditate for half an hour. Subsequently, they will they will pray four tenths of the rosary and the Angelus.

At 6:30 a.m., they will celebrate the Eucharist.

At 11:45 a.m., they will meet in chapel to pray the fifth tenth of the rosary and to examine their conscience.

At the table a pious book will be read aloud. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 10, 1808*)

14 October

During the day, the Brothers will constantly remain aware of the presence of God. In order to preserve and renew that holy repentance they will believe at the ringing of the bells that the infinite God sees them and with tender love they will turn their hearts towards God. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 12, 1808*)

15 October

The Brothers will be most concerned about preserving peace and unity. When a Brother has offended a confrere, the former should apologise and beg forgiveness immediately or certainly before bedtime, while the latter will have to forgive, because of Jesus' love, and without further discussion. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 14, 1808*)

16 October

The Brothers will be particularly devoted to the Sacred Heart, to the Blessed Mother and Virgin Mary, to Saint Joseph and as patron they will take Saint Vincent de Paul, on whose saint's day they will renew their vows every year. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 17, 1808*)

17 October

Humility, meekness, patience, moderation, obedience, chastity, love for the poor and above all love for God and true love for our fellow man and charity for the benefit of the oppressed and miserable limbs of Christ, has according to the spirit of Jesus Christ, the good spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul, whom all the Brothers of this congregation should imitate zealously. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 23, 1808*)

18 October

Meekness is a virtue based on love, humility and justice.

It should radiate through the whole of one's person: one's face, one's deeds, one's words, through the tone of one's voice and above all through one's heart. (*Undated sermon*)

19 October

As for me, I forgave my enemies a long time ago. I know openly renew my promise that I forgive them from the bottom of my heart. I give them the kiss of true fraternal love and as revenge I desire nothing else than that they be reconciled with their God, so that they may become one of heart and of spirit in order to be true Brothers in Jesus Christ. (*Sermon Ronse, 1802*)

20 October

The one who does not stretch out his hand to give alms to the poor, will raise his arms in vain to God in order to beg mercy and forgiveness for his sins. (*Writings, 1804*)

21 October

A fool's heart lies on his tongue. The mouth of the wise men is in his heart.

Nothing is more beautiful and pleasing to God and to man than the one who knows when to speak and when remain silent.

Truthfulness, simplicity, openness and prudence characterise his speech. (*Undated sermon*)

22 October

Do the ordinary, everyday things, the inner spiritual ones as well as the exterior ones, as perfectly as possible. (*Writings*)

23 October

Behold your good works, what was your motive for doing them? Was it self-love, was it vainglory or was it that the eyes of the world were on you? You have given alms and done other works of charity, but was it not your desire for it to be known by the others? You have shared your bread with the poor, but you should do it more often still. Your good works are insufficient. (*Undated sermon*)

24 October

About the use of time, I would like to say the following: Firstly, time is precious, therefore we should consider it important; Secondly, time passes quickly and is short, therefore we should use it properly; Thirdly, time never comes back, therefore we should not waste any. Let us then make proper use of time. (*Sermon, 1797*)

25 October

Time will never return. Blessed are we, if we try to make proper use of the years that may still be awarded to us. We should double our zeal and our passion in order to use the short time that is left to us to the full and to guarantee our own salvation. We should imitate those, who, when travelling to the city, have to hasten their steps, because they had let themselves be distracted by things along the way, and who now risk arriving at the gates when they are already closed. (*Sermon, 1797*)

26 October

Wake up, blind man! Wake up from the sleep of death in which you have lain. It is time to start working quietly on yourself and on the salvation of your soul. Try, by making a sacred use of time, to make up for lost time. Wake up every day, thinking that this day might be the last day of your life. Resolve to devote it entirely to God and to your salvation. (*Sermon, 1797*)

27 October

One should bear the cross and love it. One must bear it, not drag it, love it and not complain or grumble about it.

There is no state of life without a cross, there are crosses to bear for those people who are married, for those who lead a secular life. There are crosses to bear for those who live in a convent. Even those who live in the remotest wilderness will find that there are crosses to bear.

And since everyone has a cross to bear, the best thing to do is to embrace it and love it. (*Sermon, 1791*)

28 October

Oh, Jesus Christ! I fear that I am doomed eternally, because you are just. But I nevertheless hope that I will become blessed, because you are merciful and charitable and my Supreme Good. Your divinity scares me, but your humanity reinforces my hope. (*Meditation*)

29 October

You imitate God's power and providence, by feeding the poor of Jesus Christ. You let manna rain down on the hungry, you quench the thirsty. Is that not splitting rocks and making living water flow from them? (*Letter, 1828*)

30 October

You know the sad state of the unlucky, of the poor, and of the sick! One would almost think that these poor people are not allowed to enjoy a single day of pleasure, that the sun refuses to shine for them, and that the earth has flowers only for the rich, but thistles and thorns for them.

The miserable are the ones who are robbed of everything and resemble more the dead than the living. (*Letter, 1828*)

31 October

Giving life to such people, providing them with clothes by means of which they can protect themselves against wind and rain, preparing medication with which you may not be capable of curing their ills, but at least of easing their pains, distributing food so that they may still their hunger, giving them a bed and shaking up their pillow so that they may rest their wounded and sick body, giving them another, more sweet life by cleansing and taking care of their dirty, odorous and gangrenous wounds, is that not resurrecting them, saving them from death, making the sun shine on them, creating a new world? (*Letter, 1828*)

The Poor

1 November

All that God does is admirable. But we should especially admire, what he realises through the saints. Of all God's work the creation of his saints is one of the most splendid and most admirable works.

Admirable, because he destined them for his eternal Kingdom. Admirable, because he called them to the faith and because he sanctified them by grace. Admirable, because he tested and purified them by the cross and by suffering. (*Conference at Saint Bernard's saint's day*)

2 November

Let us compare our patience to Job's, our love to Saint Peter's or Saint Paul's, our mortification to Saint Bernard's, our humility to Saint Francis', the purity of our intentions to Saint Ignatius', our prayer to Saint Theresa's, our meekness to Saint Francis de Sales'. (*Writings*)

3 November

The reward for the Saints is so great that its dimensions cannot be measured, so abundant that its magnitude cannot be determined, so precious that its value cannot be estimated. It is God who has created happiness and it is thanks to his Son's intervention that we are allowed to enjoy the presence of the Father and the Holy Spirit for all eternity. (*Undated sermon*)

4 November

Through your love and your charity you become equal to God. You participate in the service of Jesus Christ. All the poor that you help bless you. Like you discern in them the person of the suffering Christ, they discern in you the person of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Comforter. (*Letter, 1837*)

5 November

Mary will tell us full of joy: "you have hailed so often during your lifetime, I now come to console you in the hour of death. You have described me so often as being full of mercy. Now I have come to pour some of my abundant mercy into your soul. You have assured me so often that the Lord was with me. Well, now I tell you that you will be with the Lord for all eternity. So many times, you have said to me that I was blessed among women and that the fruit of my womb was blessed too. I promise you that you will be blessed too." (*Undated sermon*)

6 November

Without the Holy Spirit, without grace, man is but vanity. What significance do the intelligence and talents of a person have, if he or she lacks the light of the Holy Spirit, if he or she is devoid of grace?

What is the meaning of natural benefits without grace? How significant are beauty, boldness, nobility if you disconnect them from grace. Ah, they are but vanity!

How will it benefit man to be magistrate, hero, king, if he has lost grace. (*Undated sermon*)

7 November

Seek then greatness where it is truly to be found. Leave to those who adore the world, all the vain honorary titles about which they boast, while their souls are caught in the deepest misery, humiliation and poverty. Value and work for the honorary titles that make you truly great. Value sanctifying grace, because we are God's children, temples of the Holy Spirit, dwelling of His Divine Majesty, Brothers and members of Jesus Christ, God's heirs, thanks to that grace. (*Undated sermon*)

8 November

The most profound expression of affection and love is to die for the person whom you love. That is how much Jesus loved us. He died for us.

Ah, dearly beloved! If only our hearts were ablaze with that amiable fire! How committed we would be to enhancing God's glory! Maybe, we would even be prepared to sacrifice our own lives. (*Sermon, 1809*)

9 November

Most amiable Heart of Jesus, since you have asked me for my heart; I now give it to you. Only you are worthy of it and only you can make it happy. I give it to you, so that you may heal all those wounds made by pride, self-love, attachment to worldly things and an even bigger attachment to myself, lack of love for my neighbour, in one word, of all wounds. Jesus Christ, my God, I desire but one thing: a place in your Heart. (*Sermon, 1809*)

10 November

Our life is short and passes quickly. It is a leaf blown away by the wind, a fume, smoke that vanishes into the thin air.

In the meantime, how do we spend our lives that speed so quickly towards eternity. Let us use the time that is left to us to do meritorious work. (*Sermon, 1797*)

11 November

Banish all thoughts of vainglory or pride. Esteem others more highly than yourself, not only in your judgement or in your thoughts, but also in your actions and your works. Be as respectful and humble before your neighbour, as you are before your superiors. (*Writings, 1820*)

12 November

Christ's incarnation was a miracle. But what he has done by instituting the Holy Sacrament of the Altar is even more wonderful.

In this Holy Sacrament he does not only disguise his Divinity, but also his humanity by becoming bread and wine, thus allowing us now to eat Him. Through the incarnation man became united with God, but through the Holy Sacrament, He who is God and man wants to become united with us. (*Sermon, 1807*)

13 November

Blessed, indeed, blessed a thousand times, those who will have loved, adored and served Jesus Christ in the shadow of his Holy Sacrament. They will behold Him face to face in heaven. They will love and praise Him for all eternity. (*Sermon, 1810*)

14 November

The start of one's religious life is usually quite passionate. One lays the foundations of one's spiritual building so zealously and so diligently that one wonders whether that zeal and diligence will ever wane.

However, once the first zeal and diligence have disappeared, one decides on one's own authority that one is entitled to rest.

Then, mind that the spirit of the state of life that you accepted, should remain invariable, however old you are. (*Undated sermon*)

15 November

A way of leading a happy convent life is to be honest and open about whatever causes you to be sad. Open your heart during confession and even outside of it. You should confess all your doubts. (*Writings*)

16 November

I wish you and your fellow sisters the dignity and the happiness of a Sister of Charity. For to my mind, there is no name that is in any way worthy of your vocation. Shall I call you servants of God? That is too modest and too common a title. Friend of God? Still, too modest. Brides and images of God? I am still not quite there. Angels of the world? Too modest still. But may I say with the Holy Scriptures and with no intention of becoming bold: *Vos estis dii*. You are Gods. (*Conference, 1828*)

17 November

What a joy it is to live in a house where love, obedience, patience, peace and helpfulness rule or are common practice. A house where one sees nothing else but angels, where one only hears God being praised, where people leave chapel full of love and utterly silent, where only works of charity are done, where the only fire one sees are the hearts that burn with divine love, where the only complaints are about there not being enough signs to prove one's love of another. (*Letter, 1829*)

18 November

Every vocation should come from God. It is therefore your duty not to place anything in the way of your vocation. And this you will not do, if you commit yourself loyally and carefully to your study and avoid all sins.

If you thus answer to the graces that the Lord will not refrain from giving you, you will eventually be able to follow the path that leads to happiness. (*Letter*)

19 November

“Behold,” says our Holy Father Bernard, “the true love that descends in a hospital, inhabited by the sick and all sorts of wretched and miserable people: live but to serve them.”

Observe then the dignity of your vocation by living it irreproachably and loyally, for you represent God in your service. (*Letter, 1828*)

20 November

Dear Brothers, the rules that I give you are extracts from the writings of saintly and pious men. These rules set out part of your obligations, namely those points related to your exterior department. As to your interior dispositions, it is the Spirit of God who will make these known to you. (*Presentation of the rule, 1809*)

21 November

The spirit of Truth will teach you every truth, and remind you of all that our adorable Redeemer has taught in the Gospel about the duties of those who, in his infinite mercy, he has chosen to be his disciples. (*Presentation of the rule, 1809*)

22 November

As a result of his privileged choice, they are called to follow Him in his difficult and painful life, in his zeal for the glory of his celestial Father and the salvation of souls; as also to imitate his affability, his compassion for those who are in need, every type of sick and infirm who came or were brought to Him and whom He cured, if they or those who brought them to Him had faith in Him. (*Presentation of the Rule, 1809*)

23 November

The spirit of Love, that is God Himself – if you render yourself worthy to receive Him – will inspire you with the deep desire to become instructed in this sublime doctrine, in the most perfect virtues and the evangelical counsels, which in the Gospel the God made man offered to those ready to follow Him in his intimate, uninterrupted and sublime union with his heavenly Father in the midst of all his actions, which had no other end in view than the glory of God and the extension of his Kingdom in souls. (*Presentation of the Rule, 1809*)

24 November

We should pray constantly to the Almighty that He may inspire us with a passionate and powerful desire to become true disciples. (*Presentation of the Rule, 1809*)

25 November

The Sisters will keep in mind that they are the handservants of the poor and that it is their task to serve Jesus in the person of the mentally and physically ill. They will fulfil their mission humbly, in all simplicity and lovingly, and they will execute their work carefully, attentively, loyally and affectionately. (*Rule Sisters of Charity, 1833*)

26 November

Serving the sick is a meritorious vocation. Through it you become an assistant, a servant of God's Providence regarding the sick. You should also realise that it is Jesus Christ himself whom you serve as you serve the sick. It is He who benefits from your help and the care that you take of his limbs with your own hands. (*Texts, 1833*)

27 November

We should keep our hearts pure when serving the poor, and avoid becoming preoccupied with other thoughts. Like we should serve the sick at all times, we should also at all times raise our hearts up to the Lord and render God present. (*Texts, 1833*)

28 November

We will approach the sick humbly and respectfully, by discerning in them Jesus Christ himself who suffers. Should certain diseases frighten you, then resort to that strong faith by seeing Jesus himself. With the eyes of faith we will serve the sick zealously and passionately. (*Texts, 1833*)

29 November

It is true that people have a natural aversion to nursing people who are seriously ill. But love should overcome nature. It is love that will give us the strength to banish sadness, aversion and concern. Love gives us the strength that nature cannot give us. (*Texts, 1833*)

30 November

Our love should be sincere and unfeigned. Our affection should be filled with true fraternal tenderness and we should serve the sick respectfully.

Our carefulness should be infinite, and we should always be mindful that it is the Lord himself that we serve. We should fulfil our task joyfully, patiently and wholeheartedly. (*Texts, 1833*)

Formation – Holiness

1 December

It is thanks to the spirit of love that we are able to serve the sick joyfully, help them, console them, and relieve their pains, so that they may truly believe that we serve them from the bottom of our hearts and out of true zeal. (*Texts, 1833*)

2 December

We shall go to the sick very patiently. It is Christ who pours that zeal into us so that we may bear all the difficulties and the revulsion that we experience when we nurse the sick. We must keep in mind that it is Jesus himself who suffered so patiently for us. (*Texts, 1833*)

3 December

Humility is the nicest and most pleasing virtue of any religious person. For thanks to that virtue we become the equals of God's Son who became a slave in order to humiliate himself. He came to serve and he even sacrificed his own life in order to deliver us. Thus the love of humility will make us love the least and it will also encourage us to despise ourselves in the eyes of the world. (*Texts, 1833*)

4 December

Meekness is a reflection of humility. It is up to the religious to serve the poor people in imitation the Christ. (*Texts, 1833*)

5 December

If we think that we can rely on our own power, we fool ourselves, for God will withdraw his hand and will leave us powerless. But through prayer we will obtain the means to serve the sick appropriately, to sanctify ourselves, and to edify our fellow man by giving a good example. (*Texts, 1833*)

6 December

Love should be tender, childlike, sincere and constant. A love that is perfect, and that has mercy on those who suffer. A love that participates in their joy. A love that does not cause sadness. "Children, our love must be not just words or mere talk, but something active and genuine" (1 Jn 3:18). (*Sermon, 1804*)

7 December

My third duty, dearly beloved, is my service. I owe you my waking hours, my care, my efforts, my rest, and not only on certain occasions, but all the time, night and day, despite distant, difficult and muddy roads. (*Sermon, 1802*)

8 December

Call me whenever it pleases you, and do not spare me and do not fear to disturb me. I am happy when, after the example of Jesus Christ, my master, I can sacrifice my rest, my health and ever my life for you. (*Sermon, 1802*)

9 December

Young people, pray for me: I have got a place for you in my heart. Fathers and Mothers: pray for me: I want to help you to take care of your children. Pray for me, poor people: you are the suffering limbs of the Lord, and as such I will honour, love and help you. Pray for me, sick and infirm people, I am willing to forgo everything for you, I will share with you all that I have in my house. (*Sermon, 1802*)

10 December

In order to maintain one's vow to serve the sick, it is not enough to serve these and not the others; it is not enough to provide lovingly to one group all that it needs, and to serve another group only halfheartedly. But whether you have to serve the sick, or you have been given the task of educating the children, you should love each person just as much and give the same sort of attention to each one of their ailments. (*Final religious conference, 1836*)

11 December

Let us continue to do these works of charity, speak of love and pray for it until God lights the fire of love in each and every heart. (*Undated sermon*)

12 December

You should love each other sincerely and precede each other with praise. It is here that you have to put up with each other, striving carefully to preserve the unity of mind that is the result of a peaceful bond. (*Undated sermon*)

13 December

You should love the poor, because they are people like you.

You should love them, because they are the limbs of the Holy Church, the members of the body of which Jesus Christ is the Head. For “all that you have done for the least of these brothers of mine, you have done for me.” (*Undated sermon*)

14 December

Treat everyone gently and kindly. Try to serve and please everyone as much as you can. Assist sick and indigent people with the greatest possible care and attention, and try to provide the things that you cannot do or give by being sweet-mannered, soft-spoken and by answering kindly. (*Writings, 1821*)

15 December

Love each other carefully. Precede each other with signs of love. Do not cause the least sadness, pain or displeasure, to anyone. Bear each other’s weaknesses lovingly. Do not complain about anyone. Be helpful. Do not envy anyone. Bear a warm affection toward each other, so that you may be just as happy when someone else is lucky, as you would be if you were the lucky one. (*Writings, 1820*)

16 December

Of all the goods that are to be found and esteemed in the world, friendship is the first and the foremost. That is what the Book of Ecclesiasticus wishes to explain to us by means of the following words: “A loyal friend is a powerful defence. Whoever finds one has indeed found a treasure” (Sir 6:16). (*Meditation*)

17 December

If you wish to have a sincere and honest friend, then seek the one who precedes you as good example, who cautions you about your sins, who helps you and assists you at doing what is necessary for you, who desires nothing else than your spiritual wellbeing and your salvation. And if you have found him, then be aware that you have found a loyal friend and a treasure in the world. (*Meditation*)

18 December

As shepherd it is my duty to be a good example; I should instruct you, I should be entirely at your service, indeed, give myself entirely and sacrifice myself for your salvation. I should be a good example in order to incite you to pursue a virtuous life, instruct you so that you may learn your duties, and be at your service to help you whenever you are in need. (*Sermon Ronse, 1802*)

19 December

A shepherd should commit himself untiringly to the sanctification of souls. He should return those who strayed from the straight path and convince them to loyally fulfil the duties that come with their state in life. He should be of one piece, and energetic, but always so that severity is tempered by gentleness.

20 December

Prayer, mortification and chastity are interconnected by means of the most unbreakable and closest bonds.

Mortification is unbearable without prayer, prayer is tasteless without mortification. Without prayer and mortification chastity is difficult to maintain. (*Writings*)

21 December

In order to keep the spirit of love and to avoid all attachment to earthly things, the brothers will only use what their superior provides. The superior will lovingly provide what they require.

They will give to the superior all that they receive from friends and others. He will then hand it out to the poor or to the community, according to each person's needs. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 9, 1808*)

22 December

The Brothers will stay under the presence of God during the day. In order to maintain that holy contemplation and to renew it, they will believe at the ringing of the bell that the infinite God sees them and with tender love they will turn their hearts towards God. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 12, 1808*)

23 December

The Brothers will be most concerned about preserving peace and unity in the community. Whenever a brother has offended a confrere, the former will apologise immediately or certainly before bedtime and ask for forgiveness, while the latter will forgive his confrere for the love of Jesus and this without entering into a discussion. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 14, 1808*)

24 December

Humility, meekness, patience, moderation, obedience, chastity, love of the poor and above all love of God and true love of our fellow man and the charity to the oppressed and miserable limbs of Christ, has been, according to the spirit of the Jesus Christ, the good spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul, after which the brothers of this congregation will have to aspire with the greatest possible zeal. (*Rule Hospital Brothers – n° 23, 1808*)

25 December

Is there something more fascinating than the union of the divine with the human nature? Is there something more fascinating than the incarnation, the birth, the life and the death of the Redeemer? (*Undated sermon*)

26 December

If God loves you, then try to answer his love and try to love him veritably. All that God is not, is nothing. (*Undated sermon*)

27 December

Ah, my God! Give me the competence and the strength to revert all those hearts that have turned away from you and to light the fire of love in them so that they may love you. (*Undated sermon*)

28 December

My body, my mind, my heart, my possessions, my health, my talents, all these many gifts have in my hand so often been instruments of injustice. Have mercy on me, my Lord, so that they may become instruments of justice. (*Writings*)

29 December

Perseverance is the key to everything, it is not the start but the successful accomplishment that is the crowning glory of an enterprise. Only those who persevere will be blessed. (*Undated sermon*)

30 December

Our good works may be compared to seeds, because like one grain yields many more, not when it is sown, but at the end of the year. Alike, your good works will result in great rewards, not at the moment that you do them or practice your virtues, but at the end of your lives, when reaping time has come. You have started well, now you must want to persevere! (*Undated sermon*)

31 December

Let us walk in the presence of God, and in the morning when we wake, let us say: "Speak, Lord; your servant is listening."
Go to morning prayers, and promise not to offend God the rest of the day and to serve Him ever better.
Then in the evening, meditate on your shortcomings, examine your conscience, pray for forgiveness and close the day with a pious prayer. (*Undated sermon*)