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**DIRECTORY
of the
AUGUSTINIANS OF THE ASSUMPTION**

Emmanuel D'Alzon, A.A., *Founder*

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The Cover: Seal of the "Congregation of the Assumption" used by Father d'Alzon in 1867.

D'ALZON SERIES

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introduction

Father Emmanuel d'Alzon, founder of the Augustinians of the Assumption, first wrote the *DIRECTORY*

in 1859 for the Religious of the Assumption, a Congregation of women founded a few years before his own Institute of men. He was a close friend and the spiritual director of Mother Eugenie de Jesus, their foundress.

In this work he discarded the numberless minute details that were usually part of the Directories of various Congregations. He went straight to the principles which govern religious life as he understood it.

The Council of the Sisters, unprepared for such a novel presentation, finally voted not to accept it.

At the General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption in 1862, Father d'Alzon proposed to adapt the text for the formation of the novices.

Our Congregation had regular Constitutions since 1855, and these Constitutions included several sections of a highly spiritual nature. These were eliminated in the revision of 1865, in order to conform with the directives of the Holy See, which desired a more juridical presentation of the rules of the Institute.

But Father d'Alzon was not ready to abandon them. Rather, he incorporated them into a revision of the *DIRECTORY* — the document first prepared for Sisters, then addressed to the novices, and now finally given to all his religious. Then he inserted the *DIRECTORY*

between the two sections of the Constitutions of 1865 in order to stress the importance it had in his mind.

Our *DIRECTORY*, therefore, bears the marks of these variations. Written first for religious women, it required a radical adaptation when addressed to priests and religious who were called to an apostolate much more open to the requirements of the modern world. This adaptation remains superficial, and lacks particularly the developments on the theme of the Kingdom of God, which Father d'Alzon was to complete so brilliantly in the years to come. The theme of the Kingdom is expressed especially in the Instruction to the Chapter of 1868 and in the four letters to the novices which he wrote subsequently at the request of the General Chapter.

All these documents are essential to anyone who wishes to understand the spirit of our founder.

Father d'Alzon was a man of his times. In fact, this is one of his special features: in a century that changed profoundly from generation to generation, he adapted himself to each one of them. Though he was often prophetically ahead of the century, he always thought and spoke in terms of the needs of the days in which he lived.

Were he living today, many details would change in the text presented here, and it would be better adapted to the late twentieth century. We are sure that he would have opened up magnificently to the Church of our times and to the spirit of Vatican II, as he did to the Church of his times and to the spirit of Vatican I.

But his fundamental ideal would have remained the same, as it did throughout the variations of the nineteenth century, and the *DIRECTORY*, together with the subsequent developments on the theme of the Kingdom, express this ideal. No Assumptionist can afford to be unfamiliar with it or indifferent to it, and still claim to have the spirit of the Congregation.

It is an ideal expressed in terms of love for the total Christ, including the Virgin Mary and the Church — today we would say including the Church and the Virgin Mary as its most eminent member: this is the first section.

As a result, it is an ideal that stresses certain virtues rather than others: the theological virtues primarily, and a few that derive from them. This is why he presents the virtues in a special order: faith and its “daughters,” humility and obedience; hope and its consequences, prayer and poverty; charity and its extensions, mortification, chastity and zeal. And so we have the second section.

The third section comes down to details of the ordinary life of a religious and is, therefore, more subject to variations with time. However, no change in time or space can eliminate the frankness and loyalty that stand above all the details as the principles guiding them throughout these chapters: they are part and parcel of his spirit.

The present edition conforms to the text integrated with the Constitutions of 1865. It identifies those sections that were borrowed by our founder from the Constitutions of 1855. It includes in footnotes the more important variants of successive editions.

An official printed text of the *DIRECTORY* of 1865 does not exist to our knowledge, nor is there a manuscript written by Father d’Alzon personally. The text that served as a basis for the present translation was copied by a feminine hand in that year, and found among the papers of Father Hyppolyte Saugrain, who was then Master of novices. It is used in preference to the copies written by the novices — for all novices copied the Constitution and the

DIRECTORY

in those days — because the corrections are in Father d’Alzon’s handwriting. These are included as part of our running text. We borrow it from the French edition which appeared in Rome in 1966, as part of a critical study of our Constitutions of 1855 and 1865.

Great love and work has gone into this translation. Father Patrick Croghan, A.A. succeeded in grasping the full thought of the founder without becoming the slave of the French original. Fathers Joseph Grenier, A.A. and Aime Deschamps, A.A. checked the variants of the different editions. All of us, even in this Introduction, utilized the extensive research of Fathers Athanase Sage, A.A. and Pierre Touveneraud, A.A. on the life and writings of our founder. [1] Others also have contributed to the present edition. To all, we owe a debt of gratitude.

May this book be an inspiration for all our religious, may its spirit be assimilated by our novices and younger religious, and may it help to explain our ideal to our friends and associates. May it help all toward a life imbued with the spirit of Father d'Alzon.

Armand H. Desautels, A.A.

Provincial

preface

In his preface. Father d'Alzon indicates the originality and scope of the DIRECTORY, and the manner of its use.

My Dear Sons in Christ,

The *DIRECTORY* which I now offer you results from the observations and reflections of several years. I have been impressed by certain providential events [2] which, I

believe, have helped to give a more specific direction to the development of our Congregation: we take the same holy vows as all other religious, yet we have a distinctive character as religious of the Assumption.

This is not surprising; if, as you surely believe, the existence of our little family has been willed by God, it must have its own particular purpose, and for this purpose it must work. [3] By studying the dominant ideas which governed our beginnings, you will advance in the perfection to which you are called; this work

[4]
should be made easier by the
DIRECTORY.

The following remarks will reveal the usefulness of these pages:

1. The *DIRECTORY* should be nothing more than a practical commentary on the Rule; any deviation from the Rule would be contrary to what we proposed.
2. Its aim is to instruct you above all on the spirit and dispositions which you should bring to your duties, so that you may always animate them by a supernatural motive.
3. The Rule is directed to the Congregation in general, but the *DIRECTORY* approaches each religious as an individual, penetrating deep into his soul to make him conscious of the feelings that should animate him and the virtues he must acquire through secret effort and in intimacy with Our Lord.

The chapters, which are very short, lay down certain principles from which practical conclusions are drawn in the form of an examination of conscience. Those who use this book should find its clear exposition a helpful guide in acquiring the virtues they may lack and in correcting their faults; it will facilitate [5] the inner activity of personal reflection, for without this, the most noble ideas are worth nothing. The three parts of the *DIRECTORY* deal, respectively, with: (a) the spirit of the Congregation; (b) the virtues of the religious life; (c) the means of holiness offered by the more perfect life you have adopted and the supernatural intention you must bring to the observance of the Rule.

A rapid reading of the *DIRECTORY* will reveal a certain amount of repetition; if, however, you meditate on its teaching, you will realize that repetition is at least useful, if not necessary, for making you reflect on the basic ideas of the religious life.

May Our Lord, whom you more particularly imitate, [\[6\]](#) and His divine Mother bless these words, and use them to enkindle in you the desire to attain the full holiness to which you are called.

E. d'Alzon

DIRECTORY

Part One

The Assumptionist Spirit
chapter one

The Assumptionist Spirit

In its very essence our Congregation is consecrated to Christ. Her profound devotion to Him broadens naturally into love for Mary, His Mother, and for the Church, His Bride. This triple love of Christ, of Mary, and of the Church, is for Father d'Alzon, a particular mark of the Assumptionist religious.

The spirit of our Congregation can be expressed very briefly as: love of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, His Mother, and of the Church, His Bride. [\[7\]](#)

Love for Our Lord

As a religious, I am the servant of Jesus Christ in a very special way. All the affections of my heart, all the powers of my being must be directed to Him. That is my life: "Life to me is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

Is Jesus Christ everything to me? ... Is He the single object of my desire? ... Am I prepared to sacrifice everything to Him? ... Is He the only One for whom I long? ... Is my heart completely free, attached to nothing else? ... Or do my affections embrace some person or thing which could stifle the love I have for Jesus?

Unless and until my heart is completely free, I cannot be a true Assumptionist.

Love for Mary and the Church

Not only must I avoid ties of affection that would prevent my wholehearted love for Jesus, but at the same time, I should love for His sake all that was most dear to Him. On earth, His two great loves were Mary, His Mother, and the Church, the Bride which He purchased with His own blood.

What is my devotion to Mary? Can I call myself her son? Up to now, have I honored her, not with mere formalism or barren emotion, but in a way that is really effective? ... Have I any real

conception of the wonderful relationship which, through Jesus, could exist between Mary and myself? ...

Next to His Mother, Jesus loved nothing so much as the Church which is His Bride and His Mystical Body. What does the Church mean for me? ... Does she inspire me with love? ... What is the depth of my devotion to her? ... What is my gratitude to her? ...

chapter two

Love of Our Lord

Our Lord is the perfect model of all spiritual life — first as God, since to live spiritually is to participate in the very life of God; then as Man, since His humanity reflects the infinite perfection of God.

Love of Our Lord involves:

1. Adoration of the Holy Trinity because, as God, Jesus is of one and the same nature as the Father and the Holy Spirit;
2. Constant awareness of the Presence of God;

3. Study of the life of Jesus as Man, so that I may be of one mind with Him;

4. Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar in which Jesus, true God and true Man, is always present. [\[8\]](#)

Adoration of the Blessed Trinity

To love Christ means to love God primarily, and to love God means first to adore Him, as creatures must. We adore the Father in the Son who reveals Him to us, and in the Spirit of love given to us: Father, Son and Spirit are pleased to share with us their intimate divine life.

Am I deeply convinced that Jesus Christ is my God? . . . If so, why am I not filled with awe at the gulf between the fullness of His Being and my emptiness? ... When I thus consider the nature of my Master, why am I still given to pride? ...

Adoration of the Father

Jesus Christ is my God, and He became man only to reconcile the world with its offended Creator and to teach me to worship His Father in spirit and in truth. What is my attitude toward God the Father, the Author and Source of all good and of every perfect gift? ... Have I any conception of the reverence, worship, gratitude and honor that I should offer Him, in union with the adoration and glory given Him by His Son? ...

Adoration of the Son

The eternal life of the angels and saints is in knowing the one true God, and Jesus Christ who was sent to make God known to men. How can I ever thank my Divine Savior for undertaking this merciful mission? ... Have I given any indication of my gratitude up to the present, and how shall I show it from now on? ... "God loved the world so much that He gave His Only Son" (Jn 3:16); when do I intend to give myself to God, entire, undivided and without reserve, together

with His Son and with the love that Jesus enkindles in me through His Holy Spirit?

Adoration of the Holy Spirit

The love between the Father and the Son is God Himself, and it is through this love who is the Holy Spirit that I am enabled to love God, “because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us” (Rm. 5:5). God the Father has given me His Son, who in turn has given me both Himself and the Love between Him and His Father; He has made my heart a temple, a holy place, in which is enshrined the Love who is God. What then must my heart be? Could it ever harbor any thought which cannot be set ablaze with the love of God?

Conclusion

God the Father created me. He has given me His Son who gives Himself to me so that I may learn to know and adore His Father. The Son also gives me His Spirit, who is God, and who will make up for my lack of knowledge and will cry from within me: “Father, Father” (Rm. 8:15). When do I propose to enter fully into this new life? ... When shall I surrender to the torrent of love which the Holy Trinity pours within me? ... When shall I go to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit through Christ, with Christ, in Christ? ... When shall I offer to Almighty God the honor and glory He is entitled to, both in time and in eternity? [\[9\]](#)

chapter three

Love of the Blessed Virgin

Our love of Mary flows from our love of Christ: we love her because she is the first object of Christ's love on earth. She is given to us as a model perfectly suited to our human condition and as a mother of unlimited tenderness and power to help us. Our love for her imbues our love for Christ with delicate freshness and apostolic zeal.

In His gentle courtesy, Our Lord is not content to be our sole exemplar, either as God or as man; He has given us another to imitate, His Mother, who is our mother too, the most perfect of all God's creatures.

Mary is for me both model and mother. She is my model: I must strive to imitate her as much as a religious in pursuit of holiness is capable of imitating the Queen of heaven and earth. She is also my mother; I must place in her a tender and complete confidence.

Mary my model:

Only through the Gospel story do I know the virtues of the Blessed Virgin, yet this more than supplies for my needs.

—in the mystery of the Incarnation

I marvel at the prudence of her question to the angel sent to greet her in the name of God. Her obedience and faith are no less obvious when she finally says, "I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk. 1:38). This faith is the source of all the wonderful things accomplished through her, and this is what Elizabeth points out when she says to her: "Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Lk. 1:45).

—in her Magnificat

Mary's hidden depths are revealed in her acknowledgement of her cousin's greeting: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord" (Lk. 1:46). Mary's purpose in life is to give glory to God; her happiness is to serve Him and make known her gratitude for the gifts she received. In Mary's hymn, I find evidence of all that God does for one who is faithful, and of hope and confidence amid the greatest difficulties.

—in the details of her life

I follow her to Nazareth where she works quietly at home with Joseph; to Bethlehem where, in a stable, she gives birth to the Son of God; to the Temple where she offers Him to God; into Egypt, where she flees from Herod; [\[10\]](#) in Jerusalem where she loses Jesus for three days; to Joseph's workshop, where for eighteen years, she leads a hidden life until the time comes when Jesus leaves to preach the Gospel and to die on Calvary. What a wealth of wisdom and inspiration is contained in these details of her life!

To imitate Mary:

—at the Annunciation

Do I show the prudence of Mary on important occasions? ... Am I prudent in my normal relations with others?

Do I obey like her as soon as I see the will of God made known to me either by my Superiors or their representatives? ...

Is my faith such that I would accept even the most difficult commands? ... Am I ready to enter earnestly into a spiritual way of life so that Our Lord can bring to fruition the destiny He has in store for me? ... Is it not true that I am afraid of this, that I have doubts, and that I am lax in doing what is expected of me? ...

—in her Magnificat

Can I say that my sole purpose in life is the glory of God? ... Do I dedicate my energies to this end? ...

Is God the one source of my real happiness, or do I seek for this among things created? ... Am I deeply imbued with the purity of intention that goes directly out toward God, without deviating, either to the right or to the left? ...

Have I ever given any consideration to all that God would accomplish within me if only I would let Him give free rein to His power? ... How quickly would He rid my heart of impurity, vanity, pride, if I did not fear to let Him rule there absolutely!

—in the details of her life

Do I, in times of difficulty, put all my trust and confidence in my Sovereign Master, without relying on anything else?

. . . Is my poverty like that of Bethlehem, my industry like that of Nazareth? ... Have I really dedicated myself to God, giving Him my all as Mary did to Jesus? ... Do I find my delight in being obscure and unnoticed? ... Have I accepted generously to be separated from persons I love, as Providence has demanded or could demand of me every day? ... Have I accepted even separation from holy things, as Mary accepted to be separated from Jesus? [\[11\]](#) ... It is in contemplating the life of the Blessed Virgin that I will find the spirit of the true religious.

Mary my mother

If Mary is my model, she is also my mother, for she adopted me on Calvary, at the foot of the Cross. She accepted me as her child, when, so to speak, she was still drenched with the blood of Jesus which was poured forth for me, and in spite of the revulsion she must have had for me,

since it was for my sins that her Son died. From now on, I am her child.

What an honor to have such a mother! What a joy to be part of this divine arrangement! ... What a debt of tenderness and gratitude do I not owe her? ... But what are these qualities worth, if they are belied by a daily life departing from the example given by Mary?

I must prove my love for her by doing the things that please her. I must exclude from my mind and heart every thought or feeling unworthy of her. I must act toward her with a love so tender that it will show me to be her true son. Does my way of life show this?

chapter four

Love of the Church

We also love the Church because Christ has loved her. Our love of the Church broadens our love of Christ to the dimensions of the whole world. Father d'Alzon insisted that we be deeply attached and totally dedicated to the Church.

This love is the source of the vow which Religious of the Assumption are permitted to make after a certain time; it consists in a self-dedication to extending the reign of Jesus Christ in men.

[\[12\]](#)

I. *Why should I love the Church? ...*

What the Church is:**—for Our Lord**

What is the reign of Jesus Christ if not His continued acting in the Church? I can see the extent of His love for the Church when I consider all He has done for her. For the Church, His Mystical Body, He came down from heaven and became man, was born in a stable, and spent thirty years working obscurely and laboriously as a poor man; He was slandered, persecuted and insulted, and after suffering most atrociously, died on the Cross. If I love Jesus, how must I not love what He loved most? ...

—for me

Furthermore, the Church is my mother. In her and through her, I was born into a new life through the water of holy Baptism. Jesus Christ fosters His divine life in me through the sacraments of His Church. My mind is enlightened with divine truth which the Church teaches with infallible authority. Through her, I receive unending assistance and encouragement to lead a good life. She has blessed the little Congregation which I chose to join in order to love and serve Our Lord more perfectly. Without her, I would not know as well and I could not serve as devotedly the God to whom I have consecrated myself.

—for all men aspiring to perfection

This radiant Bride of Christ calls on all favored souls to fall in love with Him too, and in the fire of the Holy Spirit, invites me to complete that union between Creator and creature that surpasses all understanding. Jesus has an especial love for all who become holy in His Church. All do not reach the same heights of sanctity, but all are called to it. In His infinite kindness, Our Lord does not wish to work alone at the task of drawing men toward Him so that they may become saints. That is why He instituted the priesthood. But He also encourages all Christians, according to their position, their strength, and the graces they have received, to co-operate in this labor of love. The fourth vow I have made, or will soon make, invites me more urgently to this work. [\[13\]](#)

II. *How should I love the Church? ...*

—as my homeland and my mother

I should love the Church as my spiritual homeland, for it is the society in which I am united to God. I am a child of God, [\[14\]](#) and the sacrament that makes me a child of God makes me also a child of the Church.

—in all her members

Since I should love all that makes her live, I must love Our Holy Father the Pope, who, since the days of Saint Peter, is the unshakeable rock on which the Church is built. While my love should go out particularly to Christ's representative on earth, it should also enhance the whole hierarchy of the Church for whom I should pray earnestly, so that its members will receive all the graces they need to fulfill their mission.

I must love those members of the Church Suffering, now being purified in the flames of Purgatory so as to be worthy to see God. I should also love and call upon the saints in heaven, reigning with Christ in the Church Triumphant. My love must draw into unity the three elements of the One Church.

—with total dedication

It is, however, of the utmost importance that I devote myself, to the best of my ability, to the interests of the Church Militant. My prayers and acts of self-denial should be sealed with a unique fervor when I recollect that they can contribute to the salvation of men. My general bearing, my actions, my words, my teaching, or indeed any task assigned to me with either direct or indirect reference to the same purpose, should be permeated with the same outlook and the same love.

On my love for the Church:

—out of love for Christ

Do I love the Church because I love Jesus? ... Do I thank my Good Master for all He did to found the Catholic Church, of which I have the good fortune to be a member? ... Do I ever reflect on all the weariness, humiliations and sufferings it cost Jesus to establish His Church? ...

—as my mother

Do I, a child of the Church, love the Church as my mother? ... Am I grateful for the new life given me through the Church, for the graces which are my spiritual food, and for the incomparable happiness of being able to nourish myself with the Body and Blood of my God? ...

—in all her members

Do I suffer with the Church in time of persecution? ... Do I ask God to grant the peace and freedom necessary for His work in the Church to continue? ... Do I fervently pray to the saints in heaven for help? ... Do I have enough compassion to ask God to give a speedy release to the souls detained in Purgatory? ... Do I pray that God will help the Holy Father to rule wisely? . . . Do I ask Him to assist the bishops and priests who devote their lives to the saving of men?

—with total dedication

Have I ever practiced acts of self-denial so that men, especially those with whom I have most contact or who have been particularly entrusted to me, will turn definitively back toward God? ... Have I that fiery love which caused King David to grieve so much when God was being offended? ... Have I really tried to have the kindness, the insight, and the gentleness which can

draw a man to God? ... If I have failed to lead men to God, is it because I have not had the courage to become myself more saintly?

chapter five

Desire for Holiness

Father d'Alzon lived in the radiance of the love of Christ, Mary and the Church; from it he drew clear and practical conclusions. Love seeks likeness: Our Lord, His Blessed Mother and the Church urge us continually to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Effect of our love of Christ, Mary and the Church

The lover wishes always to please his beloved, and if my heart belongs entirely to Jesus, this desire will be equal to my love for Him. Above all else, He wants me to be holy; if I do not strive to co-operate with this wish, there is something lacking to my love.

God alone is absolutely holy, yet Our Lord directs me to imitate Him: "You must be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48). Jesus, God-made-man, and Mary, His Mother, are also the models I must imitate. When do I intend to take up this task in earnest? ... Is not religious life the way to holiness? ...

Have I a precise idea of the holiness God expects from me? ... Do I ever reflect on its exemplars: the holiness of the Father and His Son and the virtues of Mary? ... Do I realize the

extent of my duties? ... Rather, am I not a lukewarm, lazy and bored religious? ... Do I pay attention to that small inner voice which reproaches me for my perpetual casualness? ... Have I given up all that holds my heart captive? ... Have I even tried to find out, let alone avoid, the pitfalls on the way of spiritual progress? ... Have I ever set out resolutely on the road to sanctity? ... Perhaps I have not even taken the first step! ...

Holiness and dedication

Holiness and dedication are, in a sense, one and the same thing. Am I wholeheartedly zealous in doing good? ... Am I willing to cast away everything that might thwart Our Lord's will that I become perfect? [\[15\]](#)

chapter six

Awareness of the Presence of God

Adoration of God's infinite perfections and contemplation of His marvelous handiwork lead to a habitual awareness of His presence in our inmost being; this is the sign of a true love of Christ and the sure pledge of progress in the spiritual life.

My thoughts can never be far from the object of all my love. If I love Our Lord, my mind will continually turn toward Him. He is God, and so it will be as God that He will be ever present in my mind and heart.

Perfection of Christ as God

As God, Jesus is the fullness of being: “It is he who gives everything—including life and breath—to everyone. It is in him that we live, and move, and exist” (Acts 17:25, 28). He is boundless perfection and unsurpassed beauty, and He has sealed our souls with the splendor of His being. “The light of your face is sealed on us.” [\[16\]](#) Sin, however, has dimmed the brilliance of the soul created in His likeness. I can best restore its faded beauty by acknowledging the burden of my nothingness and by leaving myself open to the divine influence of grace, in a constant awareness of the presence of God.

God is my supreme good. I must therefore seek to draw near to Him; my happiness will be to possess Him.

Living in the presence of God:

—He is the fullness of being

Am I habitually aware of the presence of God? ... Am I before Him with the knowledge that I owe Him everything? ... Does my faith lead me to realize fully the completeness of His being and, so to speak, the entirety of my nothingness? ... Have I given sufficient thought to the fact that my body, my senses, my heart and my mind come from Him, continue to exist in Him, and would disappear at the merest bidding of His infinite Will? ... I come in contact with nothing that is not the work of God and that does not belong to Him. Everything about me reminds me, or at least should remind me, of Him. Am I sensitive to the universal cry of all things which draws me back to the Author of being? ... With what reverence do I stand before God who sees me always? ... To what extent do I love and thank Him for giving me all that I possess? ...

—He is infinite beauty

God has willed to make my soul reflect His limitless beauty, but original sin destroyed this gift once, and actual sin does so every day. No words can describe the kindness which leads Him to restore this pristine beauty by His grace. He wishes me to co-operate in this work through my

own efforts; accordingly, He wants me to draw near to Him, and, by reflecting on His holiness, reproduce it in myself, in so far as I can, by the virtue I strive to cultivate. Am I doing this work? ... Are my eyes fixed on my divine model so that, by imitating Him, I may repair the damage inflicted on my soul? ... Do I attempt to unite myself to God in such a way that, in my attachment to Him, I shall be of one mind with Him, as the Apostle puts it? ...

—He is the supreme good

God is pre-eminent, the supreme good; my eternal happiness will consist in possessing Him. Since this is so, why am I not more preoccupied here on earth with my destiny? ... Why is it not the object of all my thoughts? ... Why does my mind wander elsewhere? ... Why, in order to possess the perfect gift, do I not become more holy myself? ...

Lord, grant that I may walk always in your presence and so reach the heights of sanctity.

chapter seven

The Mind of Jesus Christ

Our souls are made to resemble the Blessed Trinity by means of the holy humanity of the Son of God. It is a distinctive trait of holiness, like adoration of God, to reflect in our souls, through Jesus Christ, the divine beauty and perfection. We must constantly and lovingly study the doctrine, the mysteries and the actions of Our Lord, in order to know and appreciate His mind and heart.

Before I can love Jesus Christ, I must know Him, and to know Him I must study His perfections. I will find this knowledge in the Sacred Scriptures, of which He is the pivot and the goal: "The purpose of the Law is Christ." [\[17\]](#)

I should consider, in particular, the things He taught, the mysteries which surround His divine nature, and His actions here on earth.

1) *His Teaching*

This I shall find either in His own words or in the reports given by the Apostles and the Evangelists. As God, Jesus is Eternal Truth, the transcendent Word; the more I meditate on Divine Truth, the closer I shall come to Jesus Christ, to God Himself.

As Jesus became man to bring me the light and strength I need in order to reach up toward God, [\[18\]](#) how do I revere His teaching? ... How do I read the Gospels, and what importance do I attach to them? ... Do I appreciate the merciful kindness of God, who, not content with becoming man, clothes Himself in human words so that I may find Him more accessible? ... What use have I made of such enlightenment? ... What value do I set on the explanation of Christ's words given me by His ministers? ... What effort have I made to meditate on this teaching, to apply it to myself and to make it my own spiritual food? ... If these things are not really important to me, need I wonder that my outlook is so earthbound, and that I have little understanding of heavenly matters? ...

2) *His Mysteries*

Jesus is God-made-man. I must expect, then, that His life on earth will be inseparable from the Infinite, and so will be full of mysteries. These, being beyond the reach of my mind, are the object of faith, yet I can draw wonderful lessons from them. In their human aspect, they captivate me by being brought within the range of my understanding; in their divine element, they lift me up and out of myself, into the most intimate relationship with God.

My whole life should be given to the study of these mysteries, because it is through Jesus Christ

that I learn to know God in so far as He can be known here on earth. As they give place to each other, at various stages in the life of Christ, I can, according to my preference, pay greater attention to this one or that; the Incarnation, the Nativity, the hidden life, the public life of preaching, the sufferings and humiliations, the death and the Resurrection, can occupy my mind in turn, [\[19\]](#) as I concentrate for a time on a particular mystery which seems to provide the most suitable spiritual nourishment for me.

How have I considered these mysteries? Are they no more than subjects of curiosity for me, or do I search them lovingly to see the favors bestowed by Christ? ... Have they inspired me to adoration, [\[20\]](#) or have they been distasteful to me? ... Do I not find it easier to say that I cannot understand them, when I should seek, in humble faith, to draw from them the special lessons placed there for me? ...

3) *His Actions*

All that Jesus did on earth was for our instruction. There is not an instance in our own life which cannot be related to His divine life, each detail of which teaches His followers how they should live. There is no word, no request, no emotion which we cannot sanctify by uniting them with those of Christ. Our divine Master fulfilled all justice to teach us to do the same. I shall learn this if I accompany Jesus in spirit through the years of His earthly life.

Have I sought to apply to my own life the standards of Jesus Christ? ... How have I studied the details of that life which is to be the model for mine? ... Am I convinced that no aspect of my life is too small to be elevated by a supernatural thought? ... "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you," says Jesus (Jn. 13:15).

My life should be a facsimile of the divine original. Is it? ... If not, why not? ... Am I afraid that I might discover something that would condemn me or force me into the practice of virtues that do violence to my natural instincts? ... When am I going to decide, once and for all, to follow Jesus wherever He wishes to lead me?

DIRECTORY

Part Two

The Virtues

chapter one

Faith

Because of its link with our love of Christ, faith is given the first place in this section on the virtues. From it flow hope and charity, just as love of Mary and love of the Church are the fruits of our love of Christ. On the plane of the virtues, faith is the first characteristic of the Assumptionist spirit.

Faith is a virtue by which I believe all the truths that the Church proposes for my belief, because God, the infallible Truth, has revealed them.

Faith attracts Jesus into my soul

Jesus, being God, is the origin and culmination of all faith; as such he cannot be the model of my life of faith. It is to Mary, who at the Annunciation made the most sublime act of faith of which a creature is capable, that I must look as an exemplar of this virtue. By her faith, she merited to become the Mother of God when she offered her wholehearted co-operation in the mystery of the Incarnation.

Faith can accomplish a similar mystery within me. For, is not divine Truth the object of my faith? And is it not through the enlightenment given me by Jesus Christ, the eternal Word and infinite Truth, that I believe? ... By faith, I attract Jesus into my heart, where He begins to live in me as Saint Paul desired, "May Jesus Christ live in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:17).

How intense and vigorous is my belief? ... Do I realize my good fortune in being Christian and Catholic? [\[21\]](#) ... Do I appreciate the teaching of the Church, which enables me to know God as I should? ... Meditation on the chief mysteries of my religion should be my staple spiritual food: do I often make acts of faith in these mysteries? ... Am I sufficiently grateful to God for making me a child of His Church? ... Do I try, as a religious should, to gain an ever deeper knowledge of the great truths of faith? ...

As a teacher, have I not sometimes substituted my imagination and my private interpretation for the doctrine of the Church? Is this because I am too attached to my own ideas, or because I have been influenced by the faulty thinking of those who believe that, because they practice what the Church teaches, they are experts in theology?

Faith introduces me into the supernatural order

The primary effect of faith is to open up to me the supernatural order, and to enable me to enter into it, if I so desire. Faith shows me how God Himself sees and evaluates things, at least in so far as they have a direct bearing on my salvation.

Is my sense of values the same as God's? Do I try to extract from the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption and the life of Our Lord, the practical guidance they contain? If so, have I succeeded in giving a meaning to all my actions by uniting them to God and to the intentions of His Son who became man for me?

Have I, perhaps because my education was not particularly Christian, had too little esteem for the truths the Church teaches, the morality it encourages, and the things it venerates? ... Have I not, in matters I considered of slight importance, opposed my own judgment to that of the Church, and even taken a certain pleasure in raising objections?

In fine, would I be ready, like the martyrs, to shed my blood rather than renounce my faith in Christ and His Church? Indeed, on occasion, even within my own religious family, have I not been ashamed of some action that showed my desire to live by faith, because I feared to be ridiculed?

chapter two

Humility

In the light of faith, two virtues emerge: humility and obedience. As Assumptionists, we have our own manner of understanding and practicing these virtues which form us in the likeness of Christ, the foundation of our religious life, and which confer on us a distinctive spiritual character.

I [\[22\]](#)

Its practice at Assumption

Of all the virtues, humility is surely the most indispensable to an Assumptionist religious: because if it is true, as Saint Paul says, that knowledge puffs up, then we are bound to be exposed to very grave temptations arising from the type of work we will be doing. The danger will lurk in the very good expected of us; therefore, we must strive, by being humble, to perform all our actions with the purest of intentions, lest we substitute self-satisfaction for the glory of God which should be our sole objective. We will continue to lift our thoughts toward Him who should be the source and goal of all our actions, for fear of finding our reward in the personal satisfaction of our achievements, praiseworthy in themselves, but insufficiently directed toward God.

Foundation of our religious life

Humility will rid us of our self-seeking. Good works done for personal gratification, and not simply to please God, expose us to the danger of hearing these terrifying words: "Behold, in the day of your fast your own will is found." [\[23\]](#) If we are humble, we will obey, no matter how difficult the sacrifices demanded of us, for self-distrust will make us understand our need to be led; and being conscious of our own weakness, we shall place all the more confidence in God.

Humility will give rise to a great openness of heart in regard to our Superiors and will enable us to discuss with them our faults, our temptations, our difficulties, our needs, in fact, all our spiritual ailments. It will lead us to accept all assignments, even the most lowly and despised. It will give us a reverence for time-honored traditions of the Community, even when their meaning escapes us. It will control our tongue and will promote the seriousness and the deference that should mark our relationship with the Community and with others.

Finally, with humility to remind him how much he deserves contempt, the religious will be content to be despised out of love for Our Lord, who suffered so many insults, and he will have the strength to become, in the hands of Christ and His representatives, a docile instrument, ready to do anything that will contribute to the extension of the Kingdom of God.

II

Humility flows from faith which shows me:

—my totally dependent being

The light of faith shows me the perfection of God and my own insignificance. God by Himself is everything, and I by myself am nothing. The more I try to study God through faith, the more I am overwhelmed by His glory, and in comparison, my nothingness seems to fade, so to speak, into deeper insignificance.

If I am convinced that this is true, how can pride fit into my life? ... It simply cannot, and for that reason pride is insufferable, whether it reveals itself in self-satisfaction or in an anxiety to win the approval of others, or is demanding and hypersensitive, or retreats into solitary and gloomy selfishness.

If God is everything, I am nothing; [\[24\]](#) I must attribute everything to Him and seek my own glory nowhere. Yet I am proud, vain, demanding, sensitive: these faults manifest themselves either simultaneously or successively; if this is not the case, then I am completely dominated by one or another of them.

—my sin

Absolutely dependent in my existence, I have tarnished my God-given being by sin, and this has introduced incalculable disorder within me. Sinner that I am, I deserve only the anger and just punishment of God. In spite of the fact that He has pardoned me and purified me in the blood of His Son, I repay His beneficence by daily revolts against His law. My sins have turned me into a monster of revolt. A sinner, dependent and ungrateful: that is how I stand before God.

Examen

When I recollect myself, have I at least the common sense to humble myself, to stay where I belong, and to be ashamed of myself? ... In short, am I humble? ... Am I aware that, because of my sins and ingratitude, I must make amends to the all-just and all-loving God? ... Do I know

how to abase myself? ... Do I blush for my sins? ... Do I stay where I belong, which is the last place of all? ... In order to extinguish my pride, Jesus subjected Himself to every kind of indignity; do I try to imitate my Master by accepting those inevitable and humiliating bruising of my self-esteem? ... Do I welcome, and even seek for, opportunities to destroy my pride and vanity ? ... I am demanding; do I know I have a right to nothing? ... I am sensitive; do I accept with good grace everything that irritates me? ... I am an egotist, am I finally convinced that I am not the center of the universe? ...

Once again, am I humble? ... Do I perform acts of humility? ... Do I welcome humiliations in order to be humble like Jesus?

chapter three

Obedience

Through faith, our religious obedience is modeled on the eternal obedience of the Son to His Father.

I

Christ the model of our obedience

The religious gives up his right to all worldly possessions by poverty, surrenders his body and his senses by chastity; by obedience, however, he makes a gift of his entire self to God. The

vow of obedience is the primary bond of the religious life and perfects the total self-oblation. Its origin lies in the very bosom of the adorable Trinity, in the eternal obedience of God the Son, the uncreated Word, to the Will of His Father. [\[25\]](#)

This is why Jesus willed to be described as the Lamb sacrificed from the beginning of the world; He Himself says, through the Prophet, “My God, I have always loved Your Law from the depths of my being” (Ps. 40:8).

In the prayers of Holy Week, the Church repeats what Saint Paul taught, that Christ became obedient for us even unto death on the cross. If our obedience is to be acceptable to God, it must be humble, mild, prompt and generous, without complaint or negligence.

II

Obedience, the homage of my will to God

Faith is an act of the intelligence accepting the truth revealed by God: it teaches what we are to believe, and consequently, how we are to live. In making known the relationship between God and ourselves, it indicates our duties toward Him. God is the sovereign Master of all things and we are His servants; by grace, He makes us His children. On both counts, we are absolutely dependent on Him.

Our eagerness to acknowledge this situation can go beyond what is actually commanded; we can seek out His wishes and make them into laws for ourselves. Obedience then takes on a special note of perfection and love which manifests itself in the taking of a vow, the first bond of religious life. In this sense, obedience is the renouncing of my own will to do only the Will of God, which becomes evident to me through the voice of my Superiors.

Examen

I have made the vow of obedience; how have I kept it, up to the present? ... Have I completely given up my own will, so that I obey without reservation or distinction? ... Do I not criticize inwardly, or with others, the authority and the rights of my Superior and the extent of his powers? ... Do I not hold on to my own judgment, even in regard to the Rule? ... Am I obedient to the Superior placed over me, or to those in charge of the various tasks to which I am assigned? ... Have I the attitude that led Mary to say, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me" (Lk. 1:38)?

When tempted to disobey, do I remind myself that Jesus Christ, who was God, allowed Himself to be handed over by His Father, [\[26\]](#) and obediently, yet of His own accord, died on the Cross? [\[27\]](#)

Am I convinced that, while doubtless I am obliged to obey only formal commands, true obedience submits even to the slightest indication of the desire of authority? ... Do I not, in fact, have to be told the same thing over and over again? ... Am I not profuse in reasons for obtaining a permission which my Superior does not wish to grant? ... Do I not twist and juggle with commands or even with some text of the Rule?

chapter four

Hope

Like Mary's intercession, hope is a virtue of mediation, founded on the merciful omnipotence of God. It sustains us in all our trials, assuring us of the help of divine grace.

Hope is a virtue by which we have a firm trust, founded on the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ,

that we shall possess God for all eternity, provided we make full use of the graces He gives us in this life.

|

The effects of hope

We shall therefore place our whole confidence in God alone, never in any created thing. Evangelical poverty will be the external evidence of our hope, from which we shall also draw the true spirit of humility, with its distrust and contempt of self. Hope will give us the spirit of prayer, leading us to ask for the grace necessary to observe the law of God and His counsels, convinced as we are that whatever is not God, or does not relate to Him, is not worthy of us. [\[28\]](#)

Hope will be the source of our complete trust in Jesus amid all our difficulties. Before His Passion, He said to the Apostles, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me" (Jn. 14:1). No matter how great our trials, we know that He will never desert us if we remain loyal to Him. He Himself foretold not only our victory, but also our persecution: "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too. In the world you will have trouble, but be brave: I have conquered the world" (Jn. 15:20 and 16:33).

Dispositions inspired by hope

In view of this, let us remember:

1. Never to pray for anything that is not directed to the greater glory of God.
2. Never to ask to be freed of the trials which God permits to come our way, except in so far as this would lead to the further extension of the Kingdom of God.

3. While searching to be relieved of temporal afflictions, to desire only a greater freedom for serving God, to whom our lives should be entirely dedicated.

4. To find our happiness, our strength and our rest in the love of the Cross through which Jesus Christ saved the world.

Our tribulations, we are convinced, are as nothing in comparison to those of Christ. Just as a child quickly forgets his little aches and pains if his mother becomes seriously ill, so we also will ignore our hardships at the memory of what Christ freely endured for us and the vicissitudes to which His Church is daily exposed. It is in this spirit that we shall offer up our hearts and our capacity for suffering, both at Mass and before Jesus, always present in the Tabernacle, to atone for the crimes committed against God and the Church.

II

Hope reaches out: first, to God

Hope shows us God as the goal of all our striving. Alone and unaided, we cannot attain to Him; it is only by His grace that we can attain possession of Him. He is the supreme Good toward whom we are urged by our innate desire for happiness, even when we do not know Him, and He Himself wants to give Himself to us as our superabundant reward. By faith, we learn what God is and what we owe Him; by hope, we reach out to Him as the source of all riches and perfection, the infinite beauty, the splendor of eternal glory, the author of all love and joy, the goal of all our efforts.

—second, to grace

I can possess God, and I must be confident of doing so, if I use the means His kindness has made available to me. By my own efforts, this would be impossible, but in Him who strengthens me with His grace, I can do all things. Indeed, hope is based on this grace which Jesus Christ

merited for me. Without grace, I am powerless. [\[29\]](#) Hence: 1) I am presumptuous if I imagine that I can achieve anything by my own energies. Grace is sufficient for me, but I do need it. I must do all I can to draw upon me this divine aid and to make of it my support in every circumstance of life. 2) Since I can do all things with the help of grace, I am foolish and ungrateful if I ever give way to discouragement or despair. The Lord is with me; whom shall I fear? I must never permit these sentiments to penetrate into my heart.

Therefore, I should have a very high esteem for the grace won for me on the Cross by my Savior. It was purchased with His blood, and will turn the key of heaven for me. If I co-operate with it and allow God to bring to fruition through it the plans He has for me, then it is my greatest treasure here below, as God Himself will be my treasure in heaven.

Examen:**—on God, the first object of hope**

Is hope really the anchor of my religious life? ... Is my only desire to possess God in heaven? ... Does my search for the good reveal to me that in God alone can I find complete happiness, that He alone is my eternal inheritance? ... Do I realize that in giving my heart to anything created, I am turning aside from my true destiny? ... If any such attachment cannot be referred to God, it is a bond holding me from reaching out to Him. Do I understand clearly the folly of such attachments? ... Do I place all my reliance on God alone? ... Do I ask Him for grace and place my confidence in it alone? ... Or have I been presumptuous enough to think that my holiness is self-achieved? ... My speech may be humble, but does it express my innermost thoughts? . . . • Is it not because of this confidence in my own strength, that God has often allowed me to fail? ...

—on grace, its second object: Confidence

Do I really believe that grace can help me? ... A natural tendency to discouragement has been used to the full by the devil, often convincing me that I am capable of no good, that I have not used the grace given to me, or that God will either refuse further assistance, or will not provide enough. Have not such false ideas often brought me to the brink of despair? ...

Esteem

Do I accept with reverence this free gift of God? ... Do I not rather distrust it, thinking it too demanding? ... Have I not wasted, through distractions, the pious thoughts aroused by my readings, my meditations and Holy Communions? ... Have I not feared the lengths to which grace would take me if I followed its impulses? ... Have I not been terrified by the thought of all I would have to give up if grace once took possession of me? ...

Abandonment

Where do I stand today? ... Have I definitely resolved not to impede the influence of grace? ... God offers Himself to me as my everlasting happiness, and Jesus helps me to attain possession of Him by the grace which He paid for with His life; have I the wisdom and courage to abandon myself, unconditionally, to the impulse of grace, in the hope of the divine recompense it will bring me? ...

chapter five

Prayer

Prayer is a cry of Hope. Though we can do nothing without grace, prayer assures us of grace, and the initial grace of prayer is never refused. Our best spiritual weapon is prayer.

I

Prayer directs us to God in all things

As Religious of the Assumption, we give ourselves to the pursuit of a life of prayer, in a habitual awareness of the presence of God.

Prayer is our most effective defense against temptation and the scheming of him who would destroy us. It is also the chief means of surmounting all obstacles to good works, and to the spiritual advancement we seek. We are to walk before God and be holy, and this awareness of God's presence is the source of recollection and modesty.

We should pray always, wherever we may be, to adore God, to thank Him for His gifts, and to atone for the scandals that surround us on all sides. We shall find joy in uniting ourselves with the intentions of Our Lord and with the prayers which this eternal High-Priest offers to His Father on behalf of sinners. As loving children of the Church, we shall pray for all its needs, and in so doing, we shall quicken the fire of our zeal to extend the reign of Jesus Christ.

If the spirit of faith pervades our prayer, it will be more powerful than anything suggested by human prudence. We shall undertake nothing without commending ourselves to God, mindful, at the same time, that gratitude is the most efficacious means of obtaining further graces. Let us thank Our Lord for everything that happens, be it good or evil; Saint Paul tells us that all things co-operate for the greater good of those who love God, and he reminds us that we should give thanks for everything. [\[30\]](#)

II

Prayer in the light of hope

Our hope of attaining heaven rests upon grace, the gift that God freely bestowed on us. God

gives us many things without our asking, yet He, who has given the first grace to pray, wishes us to appeal to Him to supply all our needs. Among these is our desire to pray more perfectly, day by day. "Ask and you will receive/" He says (Jn. 16:24). We must ask, and the more persistent our petitioning, the more certainly shall we be heard, if our prayer is not faulty. God is only too eager to shower His graces upon us; if we do not receive them, it is because God sees our attitude to be such that, if He granted our request, we would merely add ingratitude to our other sins. He wants us to desire and request His grace, and to dispose our hearts to receive it profitably.

Thus considered, prayer is my yearning for God, the cry of my poverty and misery, arising from the depths of my sinfulness and stretching out toward the throne of divine mercy. It is primarily a petition, but it is also an act of atonement that can cleanse me. It gives thanks for favors received, and thus merits to receive more abundantly. It is a worshipping of God, the sovereign Lord of all good things, who is Himself the supreme Good. However, as an aspect of hope, prayer is first and foremost a petition. I must approach God with the conviction that I have nothing and that I must look to Him for all things. This admission is pleasing to God, who loves to hear the appeal of the needy.

Examen

How do I pray ? ... Do I consider grace, which will enable me to possess God, the most valuable of all gifts ? ... Have I been careful to waste none of those I have been granted? ... Has my prayer been accompanied by the unselfish dispositions that make it pleasing to God? ... Do I really wish Him to heed my prayer? ... Have I not been afraid of the demands of grace, fearing consequently to ask for it? ... Do I pray with perseverance, or do I become weary of asking because, apparently, God pays no attention to me? ... Is my prayer respectful? ... Is it not true that my imagination fills me with distractions, and that my indolence makes me heavy and dull? ... Yet, I think it amazing that God does not hear me!

Do I really want to possess God, to be united with Him and to enjoy Him forever? ... Am I ready to abandon everything to obtain from Him the intimacy He grants to those who are faithful to His grace, and which is the most certain guarantee of my eternal union with Him? ...

chapter six

Poverty

The proof of hope is poverty. By it our hearts, freed from worldly possessions, are turned to the poor; by it our wills are strengthened and our apostolate is exercised in freedom.

I

By poverty we imitate Christ

The riches of our religious family should consist in an absolute freedom of heart in regard to material possessions, in imitation of Jesus who said, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Mt. 8:20). We should be ashamed of the unnecessary comforts with which we surround ourselves. Jesus, in His apostolic life, did not display excessive austerity; we should at least imitate His poverty as best we can. Similarly, we should be scrupulous in the use of our time; like the poor, we must work to earn a living.

II

Poverty in the light of hope

My yearning hope is to possess God, and, consequently, I will have a great disdain for everything which is not God, or has no reference to Him. It is true that I can be free of any attachment to worldly goods and still retain them, but it is better to give up everything and sanctify this renouncement with a vow. Then, I can no longer dispose of anything without permission from my Superiors; I own nothing, whether I brought great wealth with me into the

Congregation, or whether I merely gave myself and my willingness to work.

To a good religious, poverty is a joy; according as the love of God inspires me, I can carry its spirit far beyond the prescriptions of the Rule. No man can serve two masters; if I am poor in spirit, as well as in fact, God can more easily take possession of me. The extent of my poverty depends on me.

Do I not sometimes look back with regret at the good things money can buy? ... Am I not attached to some object, small though it may be? ... Have I really given up everything? ... Do I not continue to desire or miss certain things which I no longer have? ... Is my poverty that of Christ, whether in the manger at Bethlehem, at work in Nazareth, or without a stone to rest his head during His public life? ... Does the holy poverty of my Master so attract and charm me that I long only to live as He did? ... Does my spirit of poverty lead me to be particularly careful of books, clothes and the other things that have been entrusted to me? ...

Poverty implies work

If I am poor, I must work for my living. The obligation of working came into the world as a punishment for sin, but it is especially the constant companion of the poor. Do I understand the value of time and use it diligently? ... Am I not lazy? ... Have I not often drifted sluggishly? ... Do I not become so easily bored with work that I simply waste my time? ... As I must, one day, render a strict account of my use of time, am I resolved to avoid useless conversation and other time-consuming habits, by which I offend poverty and perhaps cause my brethren to do the same? ... In this regard, how am I to make up for the bad example I have given in the past? ...

chapter seven

Charity [\[31\]](#)

Charity is the total gift to God of our capacity to love. By reaching out to the Church, it perfects our resemblance to Christ, Who loves His Church and Who gave Himself up for her. Charity is also, for Father d'Alzon, a mysterious source of unity: spiritual unity of all the Holy People of God; ineffable unity of the soul with its Creator; cordial unity of the members of our religious family.

I

Saint John tells us that God is love, and that he who abides in love abides in Him. [\[32\]](#) Let us therefore constantly appeal to the Spirit of love, who proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, to unite us in a perpetual bond to God, to Jesus Christ, to His Church, to our brethren and to all those entrusted to us.

II

Union with God through charity

By grace, I hope not only to possess God, but also to be united with Him in love, for God is love, and he who loves abides in God, and God in him. This is the sole aim of my life.

Of myself, I am nothing and I can do nothing. It is said of Solomon that God gave him a heart with the breadth of the sands on the seashore. By His grace, He can expand the capacity of my heart to let it contain the ocean of His love, and He can perfect me, as Christ says, in the unity of that love. [\[33\]](#)

This union is a mystery; but each day the priest, mingling water with wine in the chalice, asks God to make us sharers in the divine nature, just as Jesus Christ shared our human nature. All my thoughts, aspirations and desires should be directed toward this sublime destiny.

Hope reaches out to God as the supreme and desirable Good; charity unites me with Him as the one being worthy of my entire love: "I say, 'You are my God'" (Ps. 31:14). He alone suffices. I should be ready to give Him all that I am; and if every Christian must love God above all things, what must it be of the religious, His consecrated servant! How pure must my heart be, how aflame with love, how eager to relinquish everything that is not God!

Is my heart entirely pure? ... Does God alone reign in the depths of my being? ... Does charity command all my thoughts and acts? ... Have I not taken back the heart I had given to God and reserved a place in it for created things? ... Between God and me is there any barrier? ...

Obstacles to charity

Mortal sin destroys the love of God. Without lingering on the terrible thought that I have destroyed my love of God by mortal sin, must I not admit that I have too often undermined that love by venial sin? ... Have I some sinful habit which, though venial, is very dangerous to the love I owe God? ...

God's is a jealous love; have I always surrendered to the holy demands it makes on me? ... Have I not secretly dreaded these demands, taking refuge in countless pretexts to avoid understanding and carrying out the imperious requests of the Holy Spirit within me? ...

The fire of the love of God must ever burn more brightly or it will die. Have I nurtured its flames, so that the blaze is more ardent from day to day? ... Must I not plead guilty to tepidity? ... What have I done to preserve and increase my first fervor? ... I know that God loves me; can I truly say that I love Him? ...

III [\[34\]](#)

Fraternal charity

If love of all mankind is a distinctive mark of our Congregation, it should go out first to our brethren and to our Superiors, who in turn should have a special regard for those entrusted to their care. Among all, there must reign a tender love, full of reverence, respect and seriousness; we should try to see our fellow-religious as living images of Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit and children of Mary, the mother of us all.

We should avoid undue familiarity, those exclusive attachments which are the bane of common life, the animosity which loosens the bonds of holy affection, every word that could wound, anything that would encourage scandalous gossip. When necessary, we should correct one another fraternally; and, unless some action is public knowledge, we should avoid any reference to what has been seen and heard. On the other hand, the Superiors have a right to such information, so that the evil may be repaired more quickly and effectively, with the minimum damage to charity.

As a religious of the Assumption, my love embraces first Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, the Church and the Pope, the Vicar of Christ. Then, my affections must go out to my Congregation, which, however, I must love in God, without any of the exclusiveness that sees good only in what is done by ourselves.

Our conversations should be useful and elevating, avoiding detraction, angry arguments, all that can be harmful to community life. We should not visit each other's rooms without permission. We should be on our guard against anything that would hurt a religious of a different nationality. Finally, we should strive to become worthy of what the Holy Spirit said of the first Christians: "The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul" Acts 4:32).

chapter eight

The Spirit of Sacrifice

Love is a holocaust fed by the many sacrifices of our daily religious life.

Calvary, model of my sacrifice

Just before His journey to Calvary, where He offered up His life on the Cross for the redemption and salvation of men, Jesus said to His Apostles: "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done for you" (Jn. 13:15). This oblation of Himself, which Christ renews without ceasing on our altars, is the model for my self-offering. The heart-felt tenderness I have for Him to whom I have consecrated my life means little, if I am not always ready to give up my own interests for His.

I can offer God the weaknesses of my nature which constantly reappear, but if I am not totally dedicated to His service, if I make calculated reservations, if I am not willing to take on even the most difficult tasks assigned to me, then I am not worthy of my divine Master.

At every Mass, I share in the renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary; at each Communion, I receive the divine Victim. Have I yet acquired the spirit of sacrifice, or have I yet become a sacrificial victim? I can be this in so many ways: by obedience, love, self-denial, zeal, and by all the virtues that a religious should practice to perfection. [\[35\]](#)

Have I, once and for all, placed myself on the altar of holocausts, saying to my Savior: "Make of me a sacrificial victim, just as You offered Yourself, so that I can prove my love for You, as You have proved Yours for me" ... Am I really a victim?

chapter nine

Chastity

Chastity is dear to us because it is the strongest and deepest proof of our love for Christ and for His Virgin Mother. It is also the most perfect fruit of our worship of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

I

Chastity and union with God

It is from our devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and from a childlike love of the Blessed Virgin that we shall draw the strength we need to keep the vow of chastity. We shall try to be fully occupied at all times so that we may more easily avoid pointless or dangerous conversations. Our actions should be such that we need never fear or be ashamed to have them known; apostles, like angels, are messengers, and to be true apostles we should possess the angelic virtue of chastity. Unless our hearts are transparently innocent, we can never hope to enjoy an intimate relationship with Him Who is the eternal and pure image of the Father.

Superiors have the special obligation of making sure that this virtue flourishes in their community, and accordingly of anticipating the occasions and eliminating the circumstances which could damage reputations.

We must remember that it is only by a love of holy purity that we can achieve our goal, the eternal possession of God. Jesus stated this clearly when He said: "Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God" (Mt. 5:8).

II

Chastity in the light of charity

I can offer God no greater proof of my love for Him than to freely renounce even lawful affections, in order to practice chastity. [\[36\]](#) I should treasure this virtue, which makes me more completely the child of Mary and the friend of Jesus.

Need I say more on chastity, which prepares me to see God face to face? Is it not better for me to keep silent and to deplore, from the bottom of my heart, any thought, word or action, which might have tarnished, even slightly, the beauty of this delicate flower.

As I kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, I will ask my divine Master to let me drink deep of the wine which makes virgins, and I will beg the Holy Angels, who surround His throne, to make my heart and soul as pure as they are.

chapter ten

Mortification

Our charity will bear fruit, according to Father d'Alzon, to the extent that we are willing to suffer. It is by suffering in union with her divine Son that Mary gave Him, in the mystery of our redemption, the most perfect cooperation possible to a creature.

I

The spirit of our self-denial

In becoming a religious, I have sacrificed my life to God. It is no longer my own, and whether it be long or short, my only desire should be to devote it to carrying out God's will for me. From now on, I cannot plead ill-health as an excuse for not doing as I am commanded; in the same way, if I am told to take particular care of myself, I will obey, so as to do what is most pleasing to God.

The religious is a soldier who must fight or lay down his arms, according as his commanding officer sees fit. He must never lose sight of the ultimate goal of his calling, which is victory over himself, over the world, and the preaching of Christ crucified. Works of penance are a necessary means of achieving self-mastery, but they should be in keeping with the spirit of the Congregation; I find them in the practice of poverty, prayer, study, a persevering courage in the pursuit of good, regularity, and the fore-bearing love of neighbor.

Fasting and other corporal austerities are not so necessary, perhaps, as in other Congregations, because our apostolic labors take sufficient toll of our bodies. Extraordinary penances, however, are not forbidden; on the contrary, I can make use of them to obtain a conversion or the success of our work, and to make reparation for the evils afflicting the Church. Such motives will be suggested to me by frequent meditation on the Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

II

Penance in the light of charity and chastity

"As a lily among the thistles, so is my love among the maidens," says the heavenly Spouse. [\[37\]](#)

I If I wish the flower of my chastity to retain its fragrance, I must close it about with a hedge of thorns, that is, I must acquire the spirit and habit of penance. This practice of penance, though it

is not, in its extreme form, characteristic of my religious family, remains a necessary condition of all Christian life, a safeguard for chastity, and proof of my ardor as a servant of Christ.

As a Christian, I must remember that I belong to a sinful race, and that by means of penance I must make reparation for my sins. As the friend of Christ, I must take a jealous care of my greatest treasure. As a religious, I must share the mind of Jesus, and make up within myself what is lacking in His Passion.

Examen:

For me, mortification will serve to atone for my sins, to safeguard chastity, and to deepen my love for the suffering Christ.

—atonement

Have I realized the debt that I myself have incurred by my sins? ... If I were to die, have I any idea of the length of time I would spend in Purgatory, or of the suffering I would have to undergo? ... And yet I cannot tolerate even the least inconvenience or irritation. It is only with great reluctance that I offer up the innumerable hardships that life provides and which could be, if I chose, mortifications of great value.

—safeguard

What precautions have I taken to preserve my chastity from the least breath of impurity? ... Have I nothing to banish from my conversation or my reading? ... Do I try to control the wanderings of my imagination, or my careless glances? ... How do I react to the austerity of religious life? ... Have I not solicitously avoided everything that would inconvenience or tire me? ... Do I not dread the thorns of mortification with which Jesus wishes me to surround my heart?
...

—love

Entirely consecrated as I am to the service of God's altar, it is unthinkable that I should stand before my divine Master without pleading with Him to have pity on His people, and without offering myself as a victim to appease His anger. What am I willing to add to my petition, so that it will be heard? ... Jesus won salvation for sinful man, amid the most atrocious sufferings of body and spirit, on the cross. What can I offer for sinners, in union with Jesus? ...

If I am to lead a life of contemplation before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I must have a love of prayer and penance. What have I done as yet to make myself ready for such a life, in the spirit of my Rule?

chapter eleven

Zeal for the Salvation of Mankind

Spurred on by our vocation and by our motto, "Thy Kingdom Come" we spend ourselves in the service of mankind. Our zeal for the salvation of men is the flower of our charity; it is also the crown of the virtues we cultivate and the mark of their apostolic orientation.

I

Total dedication to mankind

We belong to an apostolic Order [\[38\]](#) and we must endeavor, in so far as we can, to acquire the virtues demanded by such a vocation. We must remember that Our Lord became man, not to be served, but to serve, and we must consider ourselves as humble dependents of those for whom we work. They have rights over us; we have only the right, given us by Christ, to lead them toward the holiness to which they are invited.

This attitude is a source of reverence, which is a safeguard for them and for us. It is in Christ that they are dear to us; He loved them to the point of shedding His Blood for them, and this will be the measure of our devoted efforts to help them to the holiness to which they are called.

Although each religious should be willing to undertake any assignment suggested by his Superior, if it is within the limits of our Institute's work, nevertheless, the Superiors should weigh carefully the various aptitudes, the natural talents and especially the graces which have been received, so as to appoint each religious to the work in which he is most likely to succeed.

Qualities of our zeal

Absence of self-interest and vanity will mark all our activities. We shall rejoice with others when they achieve the good we were not considered worthy to attempt. When others bring home God's harvest from fields to which we would seem to have a right, let us say with Moses: "If only the whole people of Yahweh were prophets" (Num. 11:29).

In our zeal we shall be humble, mindful of the words of Christ to the Apostles: "When you have done all you have been told to do, say, 'We are merely servants: we have done no more than our duty'" (Lk. 17:10).

We must also be persevering, for Holy Scripture gives countless instances of the way in which God's plans succeeded, even when it seemed there was no hope. The less a man relies on his

own resources, the more God supplies for what is lacking.

II

The goal of our religious life

We may give ourselves to silent prayer, like Mary our Mother, or we may engage in works that contribute to the well-being of the Church, but our contemplation and our action are always united in pursuing the same goal: the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ. No matter what the purpose of the Community of which I am a member, I shall always work to show my personal love for Jesus Christ and to attract men to Him.

Personal traits required by the fourth vow

I must pursue these various aims. [\[39\]](#) However, I must consider the dispositions required of a religious who is about to make, or has made, his fourth vow:

[\[40\]](#)

1. I must share the mind of Jesus Christ who said: "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already" (Lk. 12:49). The only desire of my life must be to enkindle souls with this divine fire.
2. I must always bear in mind the memory of the sufferings of Jesus during His life on earth. His labors, His weariness as He strove to bring the "Good News"; the rebuffs, contradictions, persecutions and ingratitude He met with; His prayer and agony in the Garden of Olives, the anguish of His passion, the tortures, the thirst, the abandonment of His death: all these things convey some slight idea of the love Our Savior had for men and the price He paid to redeem them.
3. I must have a devoted love for the just, and desire that their holiness increase, for the

glory and consolation of Our Lord; I will love those who have gone astray in sin, and will long with my whole heart for their conversion, so that the sacrifice on Calvary will not have been in vain for them.

The exercise of our zeal

In this respect, my zeal will be tempered by prudence, whether I deal with children, retreatants, or any one who needs my help. It will be guided by obedience, and I must remember that, in trying to do too much or to act too quickly, I may find my efforts abortive or even harmful. Still, my enthusiasm should be as intense as my Master's, and I must be ready to do all in my power for the salvation of men, in accordance with the directives of my Rule and my Superiors.

If I am attached to a novitiate, I can, with the necessary permission, give evidence of my love for mankind by prayer and penance. At the altar, I will pour out my tearful longing for the sanctification of all men, for the conversion of the sinful, for the triumph of the Holy See, for the freedom of the Church, for the holiness of the clergy, for the destruction of the enemies of God, and for the victory of Jesus Christ, even in this world.

These are the dispositions I should have; how do my own compare with them ? ... Is not my devotion self-centered ? ... Is there not something exclusive in my activities, which are often directed by personal attachment? ... Is my heart eager to love Jesus Christ and all that He loves? ... Am I willing to pray, to suffer, and to fight? ... Weak as I am, do I still wish to be His apostle? .

Part Three

Means of Becoming Holy chapter one

The Rule

The Rule is a commentary on the Gospel, meant to guide the day-by-day unfolding of my religious life.

The Rule may be considered from two points of view: its letter, and its spirit.

Its letter

The letter or body of the Rule is the group of laws laid down by the Church to determine the obligations of the religious life in general; to these must be added the observances of the Congregation. Experience, time, prudence, the founders [\[41\]](#) and the approval of the Church have shown them to be the most useful guide to holiness. I have had the good fortune to be called to the religious life so that I myself may become a saint, and, therefore, I must always have the greatest reverence for my Rule.

Its spirit

The spirit of the Rule, however, is more important than the body. It is a commentary on the Gospel, making known not only what is necessary to enter heaven, but also what is recommended for the acquiring of real holiness; it is also a commentary adapted to the needs of my soul in my personal vocation. No Rule could ever take into account every single approach to sanctity: ideals differ among individuals. Yet all Rules have this in common, that they insist on the keeping of the Rule according to its spirit. How have I acted in this regard? ... Have I not often broken the Rule for the flimsiest of pretexts? ... Again, am I not incredibly weak in

complying with its demands on me? ... Have I not often been pharisaical in my manner of keeping it? ... Have I not grumbled about it and rebelled against it? ... When do I intend to follow the Rule lovingly, so that I may become more holy, and a source of good example to my brothers? ... When will I realize the harm I am doing through the scandal given by my faults against the Rule? [\[42\]](#)

chapter two

Superiors

We must be guided in our religious life, not only by the Rule, but also and especially by our Superiors, in whom faith sees the representatives of God.

Saint Paul has said: “Obey your leaders and do as they tell you, because they must give an account of the way they look after your souls; make this a joy for them to do, and not a grief — you yourselves would be the losers” (Heb. 13:17).

My Superiors are God’s representatives, responsible to Him for my salvation and for the Congregation, or that part of the Congregation which has been entrusted to them. They are answerable for me, and this fact provides one of the strongest motives for obeying them. Even if I choose to go my own way, I still do not relieve them of responsibility for me, for the vow that binds me to them, binds them also to me. I am a member of a society; I am not free, any more than my Superior is free. He is bound to use the authority he has received from the Congregation. His obligation is to watch over the common good, either of all the communities, or of the particular one to which he is appointed. Just as I have no right to disturb order and peace, he has no right to let them be disturbed.

Have I not often been a cause of sadness to my Superiors ? ... Have I not blamed and criticized them, and felt that the government of houses, duties, classes and religions would go much more smoothly if I were consulted? ... Do I not spread my opinions among others? ... Am I not quick to point out the weaknesses and failings of my Superiors? ... This achieves nothing except to flatter my spirit of independence ... And what do these whims and ugly moods, this sullenness and spirit of revolt, contribute to my holiness? ... I have grieved my Superiors, and spread gloom among the Community; I have been lacking in obedience; I have loosened, if indeed I have not broken, the bond of my vows.

Will I ever be simple, meek, co-operative, and generous in obeying those who have charge of me? Their responsibility increases according to the greater number of religious entrusted to them. I must see in my Superiors the person of Jesus Christ: as His representatives, their happiness is to offer Him servants who are zealously co-operative with the guidance He wills to give through them.

chapter three

Silence

*“Without silence, there can be no recollection; with-out recollection, there can be no interior life.”
In today’s world more than ever, periods of silence are necessary for a true religious life.*

I

Interior and exterior silence

The more we are required to live in the world, the more necessary it becomes for us to be alone from time to time. We make an annual retreat of ten days, and each month, the Superior arranges a day of recollection; it is, however, by our habitual state of interior quiet that we maintain our union with God and our love of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, toward which we must constantly strive.

In so far as it is consistent with our duties, we shall observe the rule of silence, trying to dwell within ourselves in the midst of the distractions that sometimes flow from our current occupation. Thus, it will be obvious that when we do break silence, it is because this is absolutely necessary.

II

Its importance

Silence is one of the greatest resources of the religious. According to the Prophet, “Your strength will be in silence and hope,” [\[43\]](#) that is, in prayer. These two great means to holiness are complementary: without silence, there can be no recollection; without recollection, there can be no interior life. If I am always talking, how can I expect to hear the voice of the Lord my God within me? ... How can I hope to be united with Him? ... How can I prepare for this union, either by looking back over the past, which will result in my disavowing my sins and purifying my soul, or by making acts of loving adoration, which require a great peace and quietness of soul?” ...

Why I refuse to be silent

I can easily find the reasons for which I break the silence. There is my levity which makes me unwilling to concentrate; gradually, I begin to have a distaste for serious thought, which tires me, wears me out, and is too burdensome. There are also, my imagination, which is inclined to stray, and to discuss its wanderings; my curiosity which wants to know everything and investigates everything, whether it concerns me or not; my spirit of criticism, whose tribunal is always set up to judge of all that is said and done around me. Then, there is my self-will which contrives innumerable reasons for not doing as I am told; it would serve me better to obey in

silence, after the example of Jesus and Mary. In addition, I am afraid to see myself as I really am, and wish to think about everything except my failings. I feel the need to talk at length about my inner dispositions in order to justify myself; it would be much simpler for me to admit openly that I am proud, that I am a coward, that I have not the right spirit, and so on with my other faults.

Will I ever acquire the habit of silence that Jesus showed in His Passion and still retains in the Blessed Sacrament? ... When shall I make up my mind to speak less to creatures and listen more attentively to God?

chapter four

Morning Rise

To rise habitually at a fixed hour helps prepare a day truly consecrated to God.

The first sacrifice to offer to God is that of my sleep. Reasons of health may often be a pretext for more rest. It is for the Superior to decide whether I am imprudent in denying myself extra sleep, or whether I am lazy.

Having first offered my heart to God, I will remind myself that I am going out from my bed as Our Lord came forth from the tomb; with my energies renewed by rest, I resolve to begin life anew.

Saint Paul tells us to “put on Christ” and so I ask Jesus to clothe me with His virtues and His grace; I take up the garments that have been blessed, and wear them as armor, remembering that, in spite of my weakness, my life has been consecrated by my dedication to the Church. If I should be tempted to vanity, I will remind myself that, in God’s eyes, clothing is the humiliating relic of the sin in which I was born. Finally, I call upon the aid of the Blessed Virgin, my Guardian Angel, my patron saints, and examine myself to anticipate what the day will hold.

chapter five

Mental Prayer

Father d’Alzon conceives of mental prayer as a struggle in which, for both the soul and God, victory consists in being vanquished by the tenacious love of the adversary.

A long struggle

In mental prayer, the soul struggles with God, until, being overcome by Him and purified by all the trials that He sees fit to send, it reaches a perfect union with Him, at least insofar as this can exist here on earth between our nothingness and Infinite Being. I need not be surprised, then, if this form of prayer makes me tired and weary, arouses distaste and is accompanied by dryness and suffering; however, I must rise above these difficulties and reach out toward God in the way that He wishes.

Am I punctual at prayer time? Often might I just as well not be there? Have I not wasted my time, with my mind wandering astray? I have spent the time, but doing what? Do I concentrate on what is useful, or do I lose myself in fruitless, impractical contemplation?

Conditions for its success

If I do not rise from prayer with a deeper faith, a more confident hope, a more ardent love, with greater humility and a more genuine sorrow for my sins, I may well fear that my attempt at prayer was so much time lost. If I do not become day by day more holy, if my failings still remain, if the virtues do not develop and if there is no change for the better in my character, then even the longest and apparently the most fervent prayers are fruitless.

What resolutions have I taken at prayer's end? ... And after so much time spent in meditation, what has become of these resolutions? [\[44\]](#)

chapter six

The Mass

The Mass, re-presentation of Calvary, is the very center of my religious life. It is the moment in which I must renew, in union with Christ, my total consecration to God.

The Mass is the re-presentation, in an unbloody manner, of the sacrifice on the cross. It is the moment when I should offer myself as a sacrificial victim to God.

If each day, when I am present at Mass or am celebrating it, my mind returned to Calvary and I

stretched myself out on the cross with my divine Master, entering in spirit into His sufferings, His offering of Himself, the death He underwent for me, if I expressed once again the love burning in my heart for Him, then I would accept, [\[45\]](#) in union with Him and unreservedly, all the sufferings He permits me to encounter. If I prayed for all these intentions: for sinners, for the souls in Purgatory, for our Holy Father and for the Church, if I offered Him my entire life and all that it involves, if I then withdrew, like Mary coming down from Calvary, with all the thoughts that filled her mind in that terrible, solemn moment — if my faith placed all this before my mind and prompted me to make the resolutions I know I should make — what would my life be like for the remainder of the day?

What has been my attitude at Mass until now? ... Was it just a matter of routine? ... Was I not present with indifference or tepidity? ... Were not my distractions countless? ... What resolutions have I taken, and how have I kept them? ...

chapter seven

Holy Communion

I could not remain faithful to my religious consecration to God if Christ did not come within me to give me the strength I need.

If Holy Communion is the most precious moment in the life of every Christian, it must be even more so for a religious, who has totally consecrated himself to the love of Jesus.

I receive this Sacrament several times a week, or every day if I say Mass: how is it that I have not yet become another Christ? Yet herein lies the very mystery of communion: to enable me to

become one with Him. How do I prepare for His entrance “under my roof”? ... Is my heart pure? ... How keen are the flames of my love? ...

What happens when He is within me? ... Do I acknowledge Him as my sovereign Master? ... Do I ever refuse Him anything? ... Can I allow Him to peer into the depths of my innermost being, without being ashamed of what lies hidden there? ... Do I want my soul to be crystal clear so that the light He brings can shine through it? ... Have I given myself completely to Him, as He has given Himself completely to me? [\[46\]](#)

chapter eight

Study

Education in all its forms is the strongest means we have of extending the reign of Christ. Study, therefore, is one of our most important obligations.

When God expelled Adam from Paradise, He said to him: “With sweat on your brow shall you eat your bread” (Gen. 3:19). These words refer primarily to work in general, but they can have a special application to me, if I am called upon to pursue further studies. I will not forget that all work has the nature of punishment and penance, and so I will study courageously even subjects for which I find no attraction; this is a strict obligation, not a matter of taste.

The farmer does not choose his task of tilling the soil, and I have no choice in mine: I simply accept that area of the field of knowledge which is assigned to me for cultivation. Jesus sanctified work during the eighteen years of His stay in Nazareth; I have only to follow in His footsteps. He labored for love of me, and I can make some small return by studying for love of

Him.

God is the God of Knowledge, and knowledge is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; I can unite myself more particularly to this divine Spirit by asking Him to help me to study with faith and humility.

What is my attitude toward study? ... Do I not shrink from giving myself to the subjects assigned to me and seek to choose what I will do, according to my own whims and fancies? ... Have I not wasted my time on things that had no reference to my assignments? ... Do I work in a spirit of penance and self-denial, trying to unite my efforts with those of Jesus in Nazareth? ... Do I invoke the Holy Spirit as I begin my studies, so that His influence will guide me? ... Have I not often been discouraged; or, on the other hand, have I not been proud of the knowledge gained? ... Do I work to please God, or simply for my own satisfaction? ... Jesus Christ, Eternal Truth, is present in all truths; have I tried to find Him in everything I study, mindful of these words of Scripture: "The purpose of the Law is Christ"? [\[47\]](#) ...

If I love my Divine Master, it will be my delight to discover Him in whatever form He appears to me; studying in the spirit of faith is certainly one means of uniting myself with Him.

chapter nine

Manual Work [\[48\]](#)

The Son of God worked for many years with His hands. Manual work can help me to better understand and love the laborers and the poor, to whom I must bring His message.

It may be that my contribution to the Congregation is the work of my hands, for example, as sacristan, infirmarian or lay brother, etc.; this is no reason for me to underestimate my state of life.

What did the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph do during their life? How did Our Lord Himself spend the first thirty years of His life? Saint Joseph worked to earn food for his family. Mary looked after the household for Jesus and Joseph. Jesus Himself, from His earliest years, helped His Mother and His foster father. What wonderful company I keep, if I work in union with them, if I nourish myself with the thoughts that must have engrossed them, if I try to enter into their intentions, if I imitate their recollection and silence, if I work the way they worked.

There is no type of work in which Jesus, Mary and Joseph cannot be my models. All three were familiar with toil that was difficult, lowly, and not particularly appreciated by men. Joseph worked laboriously to feed the Son of God, just as I work to feed the followers of Jesus Christ. Mary took care of the most humble details of the material upkeep of the home, just as I should to promote the good done by the Congregation to which I belong. Jesus Himself, in taking on the most arduous tasks, teaches me that nothing should seem difficult to me if I wish to be like Him. When I am engaged in manual work, do I habitually unite myself with the Holy Family? ... Have I not grumbled about what I am told to do ? ... Have I brought to my work a spirit of penance, humility, and love ? ... If I do not consecrate my work to God with the thoughts that faith brings forth, should I not fear that, in His eyes, I labor in vain? ...

chapter ten

Teaching

By my teaching, I help to form Christ in the souls of my students and to bring to maturity the fruits of baptism, and I share in the teaching mission of the Church.

Teaching is complemented by supervision. If anywhere, it is in this most thankless aspect of education that a true supernatural spirit is necessary.

I

Our purpose in teaching

We seek to extend the reign of Jesus Christ especially through teaching understood in the broadest sense of the word, embracing high schools, seminaries, and higher studies. We would engage in primary education only to give it free of charge.

Our main objective is to develop Christian men who are deeply attached to the Church, and to point out the absolute necessity of a living unity, not only in doctrine, but also in discipline, with an ever-growing respect for the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff.

In fact, one of the greatest evils of modern times is the spirit of separation which tends to dissolve the bonds between the minds of men. Accordingly, one of the reasons for the existence of our little Congregation must be found in our endeavor as teachers to draw minds and hearts ever (loser to the common center which Christ has given to His Church.

II

The dispositions with which I must teach

Teaching, then, is one of the most efficacious means of fulfilling the vow to extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ. [49] Whether my relation to this task is direct or indirect, I should be happy to be considered worthy of such an honor. Yet in what frame of mind have I prepared myself for teaching. Have I courageously tackled the subjects however difficult and dry, from which I must draw my teaching material? ... Have I given sufficient thought to the fact that, without a great spirit of faith and humility, I may well be able to impart my own ideas, but not those of Jesus Christ, and that, unless I remain always faithful to the influence of the Holy Spirit, my own spirit may emerge at any time? ...

Have I not been too elated at my success in class, too dejected by my failures? ... Have I not taken undue personal credit for the pleasure my students derive from good teaching? ... Have I not ascribed to any reason except myself, their boredom during my classes, when the cause is my own bad teaching? ...

In what spirit have I taught? ... Is it to impart a knowledge of Jesus Christ and a love for the Church? ... Am I sufficiently concerned with the progress of my pupils? ... Have I not deemed myself better than others when I succeed in doing good to them? ... Have I not been jealous of the good that others have done to them? ...

The single, most basic disposition

This is not the place to reflect on the great principles of Christian teaching, but is it not obvious that, quite apart from all theory, there is a practical lesson that comes from a master's gift of himself to his students, for love of God, and which draws them, not toward the one who is teaching, but toward Him on Whose behalf he teaches. Have I this all-embracing spirit of self-effacement? ... Am I concerned only with enabling Jesus Christ to rule in those I teach? ... And if I am devoid of this attitude, should I find it astonishing that, so far, I have done so little good, and that my teaching has produced so little fruit for eternal life? ...

Have I taught with the gentleness Saint Paul recommends, or have I not, during class, allowed the weaknesses of my character to appear, so that the students have been able to see in me the knowledge that puffs up, but not the love that enlightens? ...

Supervision

The mere giving of lessons at scheduled hours, however, is not sufficient. To train children, one must watch over them at all times. This is, perhaps, the most arduous and fearsome aspect of education.

It is a difficult task to give students the attention required to prevent them from doing wrong and to ward off any threat to their innocence; to arouse their affection for the monitor; not to make life too hard for them, even when a watchful eye constantly takes in their every movement; to introduce into this continual relationship enough spirit of initiative, enough liveliness to prevent minds from straying to anything but suggested good thoughts; to stop certain abuses among the more mature, without awakening still dormant imaginations; to make discipline pleasant, but also to make it felt if need be, so that they will become familiar with the rule, the performance of duty and, if possible, the love of effort; to study their characters and to train them, at least to the extent to which one is responsible for them. This is the enterprise confided to me, every time I supervise.

The difficulties are almost without limit; what a constant watch I must keep upon myself, so as to do as much good as I can, without being betrayed into a false step or an ill-advised, momentary show of anger.

Are the children convinced that my devotion to them comes from my love for Our Lord? ... Do they sense any favoritism in my manner of treating them? ... Do they find my moods unpredictable? ... Do they find me a real source of edification? ... Do I influence them for good as far as I am capable? ... Briefly, can I say that I have the patience of Saint Paul, who sought to engender Christ in those to whom he was sent to preach the Gospel? ... In how many people have I brought forth Our Lord, by the way in which I perform my supervisory duties? ...

chapter eleven

Meals

My body must be a docile instrument of the good I am called to do. With that principle in mind, I must both nourish it and avoid pampering it.

I

A warning

We religious must remember all that the great servants of God have said in warning about the dangers to which eating can give rise. It was this approach that Satan used in tempting the first man; the Jews in the desert drew down upon themselves the anger of God by their anxiety about food; it was when the Son of God was hungry that He allowed the Devil to tempt Him.

On the other hand, Jesus warns us that only by prayer and fasting can we overthrow a certain type of demon. Religious should be extremely careful, when at table, to maintain the moderation and self-denial that befits their state in life.

II

To sanctify my meals

My vocation does not demand of me those frightening austerities and continual fasts about which we read in the lives of the early religious; however, without saying that we should imitate their terrifying self-denial, we must admit that there is a real struggle between the flesh and the spirit, and that the two will eternally be at odds. Which one triumphs in me? ...

What is my attitude toward my meals? ... Do I, like Saint Bernard, go to the refectory as to the torture chamber? ... Am I content to eat what is set before me? . . Have I not been imprudent, endangering my health by indulging in attractive fare or in taking what I know to be harmful to me? ... Have I been self-denying in following a restricted diet, if it has been prescribed for me? ... Have I not allowed myself to indulge my animal appetite as a compensation for luxuries that my religious state denies me? ... Do I pay attention to the reading? ... Do I come in time for meals? ... Have I not looked for excuses to come to the second sitting, when I could come to the first ? ... Have I ever eaten outside of mealtimes, without necessity, and without permission? ... In a word, have I mastered the whims of my appetite? ...

chapter twelve

Recreation

Our recreation must afford us both relaxation and joyful community fellowship, allowing us to bring to our work afterwards a greater application and a deeper supernatural spirit.

I

Our periods of recreation will be spent, as a rule, either with the students or with fellow-religious.

Recreation with the students

The recreation taken among the students should be given very special consideration. We must avoid familiarity and abruptness. We may join in the games, and we even should do so, to get them started. We should be careful to see that the boys do not talk at too great length among themselves, and that they do not easily break up into groups. We shall keep an extremely watchful eye on those about whom we have our doubts. We must beware of using uncouth words and any conversation savoring of back-biting or discontent. We can speak about God to them on occasion, but always unaffectedly; we can also show that our friendly interest in them is sincere. We should deal fairly with them in order to win their trust. It is during recreation that we can do the most good or the most harm to the students, because in these moments of relaxation they are most easily influenced for better or worse.

Recreation in community

Recreation spent in community provides an opportunity of strengthening the bonds of fellowship and of showing that deep, mutual regard which should make these moments spent together a precious time of rest. The Superior should be present at these recreations as often as he can. In these expansive moments there is often danger of offending against charity and obedience by expressing opinions which could scarcely be described as Christian; the mere presence of the Superior should check such abuses. Nobody should be absent from recreation without asking permission; this should be granted only for serious reasons.

II

To sanctify my recreation

I can sanctify my recreations just as much as my other daily exercises. While enjoying the relaxation which is necessary, I can give good example by my religious bearing, for at such times, I am naturally prone to neglect it; by maintaining a composure which reveals no irritability; by frequent acts of kindness and thoughtfulness, without going beyond the bounds of Christian courtesy; [\[50\]](#) by being tolerant of these trifling annoyances which arise almost automatically from long association.

The ideal disposition is a readiness to speak or remain silent, according to circumstances: to listen when others entertain, prepared to take up the burden of the conversation, if this shows

signs of flagging. I should be convinced that one of the most pleasing offerings I can make to Our Lord is the kindness I extend to His friends, so as to make them happy in His service, and to help them return with a greater zest to the more serious activities which follow recreation.

Examen

What do recreations mean to me ? ... Am I not too easily carried away by my dissipation? ... Do I not talk too much? ... Do I not want people to listen to me alone, or again, am I not unduly taciturn? ... Have I not often brought gloom and ill-humor to recreation and maintained a silence that can infect others? ... Have I not shown my fickle temperament, my animosity, my darker moods and my sullenness? ... Have I always been charitable, kind, gentle, humble and thoughtful of others at recreation? ... Have I made of recreation a really relaxing time for others and for myself, in preparation for a more dutiful service of Christ during the rest of the day? ...

chapter thirteen

Relations with Others

“Thy Kingdom Come” This is the motto that should inspire the unselfish and supernatural spirit I must bring to my relations with others.

I

Good example and modesty

In all our dealings with others, we must remember that we can influence them for good or be a source of scandal, depending on whether or not our behavior is becoming of a true religious.

Simplicity should be characteristic of the demeanor, the dress and the furnishings of a religious; especially should he be unassuming in his relations with others. This will reveal him as a self-possessed, living image of Jesus Christ, and will be a sermon often more eloquent than any expressed in words.

II

To draw to Christ all those with whom I deal

My life is not to be spent in a cloister, and since it is inevitable that I will have some external relationships, I am obliged by the fourth vow to sanctify them as much as I can. What saint has loved Our Lord and has not zealously desired to draw men to Him, by prayer, by penance, or by word?

The immediate effects of my words will obviously be limited; but if, with those who visit me, I spoke more of things that concern eternal happiness, I would eliminate many sources of danger and avoid loss of time in useless conversations. Of course, I can discuss things other than spirituality, but perhaps I forget only too often that if holiness does not characterize the speech of a religious, his visitors from the outside will be at first amazed, then smugly satisfied, at the vindication of their normal type of conversation by the worldly-minded talk they hear from him. The conclusion they draw will certainly not contain respect for the one who sanctions by his own example a conversation which too often ends by being anything but Christian.

On the other hand, if I bring to my dealings with others a solicitude for the good of their souls and for the triumph of Our Lord Jesus Christ, how inspiring and useful I can be to them, without seeming to do so. What noble ideas I can diffuse, simply by being a true religious; how many uncharitable words I can check, simply by remaining silent.

True, I may not have the gift of speaking eloquently about God, but at least I can have the virtue of keeping silent; and if there is a hope that my influence can be effective, why does not my zeal for Our Lord and His Church suggest some means of doing good to those I have to meet?

The members of my family

My own family, in particular, should benefit from my position, and I ought to take advantage of their visits to speak with affectionate concern, but also energetically about their eternal welfare. In this connection, I must realize that their affection for me will make them very critical, and the least flaw in my behavior will be considered a kind of subtle compensation for any reluctance they might have had to let me enter religious life. Have not some visits weakened my resolution by their length, or by conversations both pointless and harmful? ... Have I not yielded to curiosity and asked questions which overstep the limits of religious discretion? ...

Need for prudence and guidance

The good I can do and the evil of which I can be guilty in these external relationships show me the need for prudence and the importance of being guided by my Superiors. Experience demonstrates that over-anxiety to do good often produces the opposite effect. For this reason, unless I have the assurance of my Superiors that they have confidence in my ability to control a situation, I should look to them for advice and discuss frankly with them my contacts with others, as, in point of fact, I am required to do by Rule.

chapter fourteen

Spiritual Reading

To commune with God in prayer, I must deepen my knowledge of Him through spiritual reading.

I have often heard that in prayer I speak to God, while in sermons and in my spiritual reading, God speaks to me. To turn this to the greatest advantage, I should bring to my readings:

1. an obedient acquiescence in the choice of books which is made for me. In receiving them from the hand of my Superiors, I am nearer to the path of God. [\[51\]](#)
2. a faith which leads me to consider the things I read from the supernatural standpoint and to avoid all questions raised by natural curiosity. Jesus Christ is the end of the Law. Everything in my reading should bring me back to Him, and if it does not lead me to this eternal truth, my time has been lost, and perhaps dangerously spent.
3. a simplicity which interprets things plainly and clearly, without the scrupulousness of a narrow mind.
4. a sincerity that safeguards me from illusion and enables me to profit from the enlightenment of conscience which my spiritual reading can give, so that, though unwilling, I take the direction God urges on me.
5. a serious attention, which helps me, like Mary, to keep in my heart whatever has impressed me, and to meditate on it as she did, in order to gather fruit that will be helpful toward my spiritual advancement.

Do I read in this fashion? ... Is not curiosity the motive of my reading? ... Have I always sincerely accepted the enlightenment it provides? ... As I read, do I seek Jesus Christ alone, and what He taught? ... Since, in my spiritual readings, I have studied the principles and means of perfection, to what extent have I made progress? ...

The Rosary

Mary, Mother of the Church and my Mother, will guide me to her divine son, as I meditate on the divine mysteries.

The Rosary brings before my mind the chief mysteries in the lives of Jesus Christ and His divine Mother. If I recited it with attention and recollection, it is certain that I could make excellent meditations; provided that I follow the order of the mysteries, I can make very useful applications of them to myself. And in this regard, I can make of the Rosary a kind of review of the virtues of religion, so as to observe how I practice them and how I am wanting in them, and to ask for the grace to acquire those I do not yet have. [\[52\]](#)

It is with Mary, my Mother, that I meditate upon these virtues of which she is my model, and upon the perfections of her Son. The Rosary should help me penetrate the lives of Jesus and Mary in a more intimate way.

How do I carry out this pious exercise? ... Is it not by routine, without attention, and wandering away with all the distractions I meet in my path? ... Has the Rosary been a true exercise of devotion for me, or has it not often been a completely mechanical prayer? ... What respect do I have for the Blessed Virgin whom I invoke in it, for the greatness of the mysteries on which I should reflect, and which could have proved so beneficial if I had done so fervently? ...

chapter sixteen

The Divine Office

After devotion to the Holy Eucharist, the great liturgical prayer of the Divine Office is the most perfect expression of our life of prayer. It is the school of Christ, in which our minds and hearts are informed with a supernatural spirit.

I

Our interest

We intend our recitation of the Divine Office in common to be:

1. a mortification for ourselves, due to the added fatigue that the Office may bring.
2. a source of edification for the students in our schools where the Office is thus said.
3. an opportunity to arouse in those around us a deep regard for the great prayer of the Church, as contrasted with a host of pious practices which we do not condemn, but which must yield precedence to this solemn and most noble form of public prayer.

II

Greatness of the Office

The Office here on earth parallels the function of the angels in heaven: they praise God with the inspirations He gives them. And so do I when I praise God with the words of Scripture and with prayers authorized by the Church I should, therefore, bring to my recitation of the Office an angelic preparation.

The word “office” means “duty.” In a certain sense, the Divine Office is the paramount duty the Church has toward God: that is, public adoration, prayer, and universal worship.

When I recite the Office, I should make my own all the intentions of the Church, that Communion of Saints discharging its obligations to God and asking for the perseverance of the good and the conversion of sinners. The Church itself prays only in the name of Jesus Christ, Whose prayer it continues on earth, just as the great High-priest unceasingly offers the prayers of the Church to God the Father, at Whose right hand He sits. I pray in union with Jesus Christ, and if, indeed, I am united to the Divine Mediator between God and man, my prayer will be heard.

Examen

With what respect, up to the present, have I recited the Office? ... Do I appreciate the privilege of belonging to a Congregation in which the great prayer of the Church is recited in common? ... How do I share the intentions for which this prayer arises? ... How have I united myself to the choirs of angels and saints in heaven who praise God without ceasing? ... Have I tried to become one with Jesus Christ, forever living to plead for us? ... Have I not often surrendered myself to idle thoughts, distractions, or boredom? ... Has not this really heavenly life, to which I am raised by the reciting of the Office, been for me a source of disgust and irreverence? ...

chapter seventeen

Sleep

Sleep reminds me of death. Like Our Lord, I must be ever ready to offer to God, at the moment of death, the supreme token of my faith and love.

Some day, I must die; each time I lie down, I am serving an apprenticeship for the grave. One day, I will rise no more; I shall be laid to rest in the grave to await the eternal awakening.

Each time I go to sleep, can I be sure that I will wake in this world, and that the Bridegroom will not surprise me as He did the virgins of the parable? ... Is my lamp trimmed? ... On the contrary, is it not on the point of going out? ... Is it not completely out? ... This is what I should ask myself each time I go to bed. If, instead of the clock, it were the Judgment Trumpet that roused me from sleep, as one day it will, how would I appear before the Just Judge? ... Am I ready? ... If not, how do I have the courage to fall asleep when my conscience is not at peace? ...

The silence of the night can be holy and profitable to me. "I sleep, but my heart is awake" (Song 5:2), says the Bride in the Song of Songs. There is real quiet, which I can use to unite myself more closely with my Divine Master. In this silence, I can pray with greater recollection. "In peace I lie down and fall asleep at once" (Ps. 4:8). This separation from things created, demanded by the weakness of my nature, can be for me like a trial attempt at the more complete separation which, consciously and willfully, I shall accomplish tomorrow to find my rest in God alone.

chapter eighteen

Particular Examen

If I am to advance on the path of holiness, I must know myself well. Through the particular examen, I seek this self-knowledge in the light of my own conscience.

I shall know myself well only on condition that I study myself constantly. The particular examen is an exercise especially suited to giving me this self-knowledge which, revealing as it does my nothingness, my sins, and my shortcomings, will show me the remedy I should apply to the source of my sins.

What efforts have I made to achieve a real knowledge of myself? ... With what sincerity and rigor have I made my examen? ... Do I detest the cowardice and the daily struggles [\[53\]](#) which this examination makes known to me? ... Have I not often neglected it? ... Do I examine myself with the vigorous resolve to eliminate all the defects I see in myself? ... Have I imposed on myself a salutary act of penance when I became aware of my frequent relapses into the same faults? ... Or do I not remain just the same, because I dread the light that could bare my defects, and lack the necessary courage to uproot them? ...

chapter nineteen

Confession

Progress in holiness requires frequent confession, which keeps alive in my soul horror for sin, true humility, and the desire to love God more deeply.

I am a sinner, and God in His mercy offers me unceasingly the Blood of His Son, so that I may be made clean in the pool of repentance. With what respect should I not approach a sacrament in which I receive pardon for my sins through the merits of the Blood of God!

My examination of conscience should be thorough; my confession, frank and sincere, and therefore short. It is to contrition that I must pay the greatest attention, because if, through the grace of God, I have as a rule only venial faults to confess, it is not so much the detailed enumeration of them that is important, as the sorrow with which I make my accusation and the firmness of my resolution not to commit them again.

Are not my confessions the narration of stories, rather than accusations? ... Have I not often enjoyed adding irrelevant details? ... Have I received the sacrament of Penance solely to obtain the forgiveness of my sins, and not for the natural relief of unburdening my heart? ... Do I regard only the person of my Master ready to pardon me in the tribunal of penance? ... Have I always had a sincere contrition? ... Have I learned to see, in the blessing of forgiveness and the sting of remorse, a further reason for loving Our Lord, Who laid down His life for me as a proof of His love? ... How have I fulfilled the penance imposed? ... Have I not often paid it mere lip-service, instead of performing it with all the fervor of which I am capable, thanking God for taking so gentle a revenge for the sins of which I had just accused myself? ...

chapter twenty

Report to the Superior

Frank and sincere discussions of my religious life with my Superiors will help me to gain a deeper knowledge of myself, and consequently of the manner in which I must strive to progress in holiness.

One of the most powerful means of sanctification in religious life is, undoubtedly, this exercise in which I freely open my heart to my Superior. In order that it produce the desired results, it

should be performed:

1. in a spirit of faith. Although the one to whom I speak is not exempt from making mistakes, he represents God for me. It is not him alone that I should see, but God, from Whom I seek help, light and advice.
2. with simplicity, clarity and precision. The equivocations with which I evade the issue are only the subterfuges of self-love, the affectations of stupid cunningness, the result of an excessive need for personal attention, or the consequences of a confused mind.
3. with an absence of useless explanations and endless excuses. Experience shows that these end, as a rule, in a prodigal waste of time. The time of my superior is precious, and, in houses where there are many religious, what I needlessly take for myself, I steal from the needs of my brothers. Frankness is not lengthiness; as a rule, the greater my brevity, as long as this is for the proper motive, the more open I shall be. And if I am lacking in frankness and openness, this exercise will be completely fruitless.

If I ought to avoid covering the same ground constantly on pretext of telling everything, thus making these conversations with my Superiors interminable, it is also obvious that when necessary, I should take all the time I need. The best rule to follow in this regard is simply to let my Superiors decide. If they have understood, they will say so, and then it will be absolutely futile to show them that they do not understand; I am exposing them to the temptation of giving me, for the sake of peace, the answer I want, and which, under the circumstances, will rarely be the answer of Our Lord.

If these faults are avoided, this exercise will certainly be of great benefit to me. It opens up and gives rest to my soul and puts it more peacefully into the hands of those to whom it has been entrusted. It enlightens my doubts; it strengthens, encourages and urges me to show more generosity and initiative; finally, it brings me closer to the heart of Our Lord, Whose words, faith tells me, I hear from the mouth of those who direct me.

chapter twenty-one

The Chapter of Faults

Whatever form the Chapter may take, I must see in it a means of fostering both the life of my community and my own spiritual life.

The Chapter of Faults was instituted to train me in humility. It is an exercise repugnant to human nature which takes little pleasure in admitting its deficiencies; at the same time, it offers me an opportunity to show charity in the remarks I am called upon to make.

This highly important practice of religious life can be for me just a meaningless and ridiculous formula, a source of interior revolt, or a deep humiliation, if I take part in it with merely natural dispositions. It can have the most fruitful results if I come to it with faith, charity, and humility.

At the Chapter, faith can unite me with Our Lord, humiliated before the tribunals of Jerusalem; charity may require that I be given admonitions which cause pain, and yet are acceptable because of my supernatural disposition; finally, humility will encourage me to accept the counsels I receive, and likewise to accuse my faults as a help to amendment.

What has the Chapter of Faults been for me? ... With what dispositions have I accused my failings? ... Have I accepted the advice and penances the Superior found it necessary to impose on me? ...

chapter twenty-two

The Interior Life

The DIRECTORY has a single purpose: to exhort us to live the life of Christ. This life can only be a gift of God, but God will grant it to us according to the measure of our renunciation and detachment from the things of this life. This chapter, concluding the DIRECTORY, places us clearly on the demanding path to holiness.

Its inexorable conditions

The religious life, strictly speaking, is but the more perfect life of Christ within us; it will flourish only on condition that we die completely to ourselves. In order to effect this death, we must practice:

1. Dying to our senses, subduing them to such an extent that they are completely under control and exercise no dominion over us.
2. Dying to our desires. As long as I wish for anything other than God or what contributes to His Glory, I have not died to my desires.
3. Dying to our affections. The word of God penetrates more deeply than a two-edged sword and reaches to the division of the religious spirit; [\[54\]](#) God wishes to be the sole master of my heart. [\[55\]](#)
4. Dying to creatures. Since I became a religious, the world is dead to me and I am dead to the world. As long as there is anything which I have not renounced, I shall be living by human standards and cannot achieve interior holiness.

5. Dying to self. This is the hardest death, and yet I must attain to it. Doubtless, this death will not take place without great suffering. I must submit to the agony it brings, while I am being purified. There will be weariness, tedium, searching, [\[56\]](#) and temptations of every kind. Such are the conditions of the interior life.

Examen

Am I willing to endure this dying? ... Am I willing to disown my senses and shake off their tyranny? ... Will my desires now be only for heaven, my affections only for God? ... Have I tamed my desires and subjugated my affections? ... Is my heart totally consumed with the love of God? ... What do creatures mean to me? ... Am I not still preoccupied with them? ... Have I given up everything around me and within me? ... Have I the courage to accept all the terms of this absolute stripping of self, the nakedness of spirit to which I must be reduced, if I wish to put on Jesus Christ? ... Have I died so that my life may be hidden with Christ in God? ...

I cannot love Jesus Christ without wishing all creatures to love Him and this is why my life should be that of an apostle.

Final prayer

Such, O Lord, is the purpose of my life: to be stripped, separated from everything, in order to be clothed with Your Divine Son and to be eternally united with You. Give me light to see what I lack and the strength to acquire the virtues I do not possess. Give me the grace to follow my vocation, so that, as a true son of the Church and the Blessed Virgin, I may be a not too unworthy follower of Jesus, my Master.

O my God, let my union with You, begun here on earth, be brought to completion for eternity in the immensity of Your mercies, Your love and Your infinite perfection. Amen.

[1] *Premières Constitutions des Augustins de l'Assomption 1855-1865*, ed. Athanase Sage, A.A. and Pierre Touveneraud, A.A., Rome, 1966.

[2] By “providential events,” Fr. d’Alzon meant, among other things, the attempts made to unite with other Congregations, all of which had collapsed before the originality of the new Institute

[3] 1935 ed.: “This is not surprising. If ... by God, it must have . . .”

[4] Variant: “. . . this, the work of a lifetime . . .”

[5] 1935 ed.: “We ask them this work while facilitating by means of this book the inner activity . . .”

[6] 1935 ed.: “... of whom you are more particularly the imitators, the instruments.” In their edition of the DIRECTORY, the women religious were always called the “spouses of Christ.” To characterize our own relationship with Our Lord, Fr. d’Alzon used the terms “servants” “imitators,” or “instruments.”

[7] Father d’Alzon probably was aware of a passage in a letter from Mother Marie-Eugenie de Jesus to the Abbe Combalot, in 1837, two years before the canonical erection of the *Dames de l'Assomption*
: “Jesus Christ, Mary, the Church: this is our motto. Why seek another?” Nevertheless, as his writings show, it was only gradually that Father d’Alzon arrived, about 1858, at the formulation that heads our DIRECTORY.

[8] As first prepared for the Religious of the Assumption, a newly-founded congregation of Sisters of which Fr. d’Alzon was the spiritual father, the DIRECTORY bore the following order of chapters for Part I:

1. The Assumptionist Spirit.
2. Love of Our Lord.
3. Awareness of the Presence of God.
4. The Mind of Jesus Christ.
5. Love of the Blessed Virgin.
6. Love of the Church.
7. Desire for Holiness.

When Fr. d'Alzon adapted the DIRECTORY for his own Congregation, he revised the order of chapters as follows:

1. The Assumptionist Spirit
2. Love of our Lord
3. Love of the Blessed Virgin.
4. Love of the Church.

5. Desire for Holiness.

6. Awareness of the Presence of God.

7. The Mind of Jesus Christ.

This second order of chapters, which we follow in the present translation, is the order used in the edition of the CONSTITUTIONS of 1865, where the DIRECTORY was inserted between the two sections of the *Constitutions*. Fr. d'Alzon maintained it in every successive revision of the DIRECTORY in order to insist, it appears, on the unity of our love: our love for Christ is a total commitment that extends to Mary, His Mother, and to the Church, His Bride.

The last three chapters of this part then bring out the implications of the all-embracing love of Jesus Christ. It urges us on to desire the fullest holiness possible to us, and it is nourished in us by the awareness of the presence of God and by the study of the mind of Jesus Christ.

It is also fostered by devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, as Fr. d'Alzon made clear in introducing this chapter on the love of Our Lord, but the chapter he thus announced was in all probability never written.

Later editions of the DIRECTORY, following the death of Fr. d'Alzon, reverted to the first order of chapters outlined above

[9] Reacting against the human tendency to revolt, Fr. d'Alzon insisted more and more, as time went on, on the spirit of adoration. In all its forms — whether addressed to the Blessed Trinity, or to the rights of God, or to the Blessed Sacrament — adoration is an essential trait of our spirituality. This »spirit of adoration of the Blessed Trinity, among other influences, inspired Fr. d'Alzon with his most profound and most original ideas on prayer, on education, on the modern apostolate, on devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

[10] 1935 ed.: “. . . where she flees to save Him from the wrath of Herod.”

[11] Variant: “Have I accepted even separation from Jesus?”

[12] This vow was proposed at the foundation of the Congregation, but permission for it was not granted by the Holy See. It shows both the unremitting zeal for the Church the Founder required of his religious and the wide apostolate they were to embrace.

[13] The 1935 ed. has this sentence in parentheses, but it is omitted from the 1956 *Ecrits Spirituels*

[14] Variant: “The Church is also my mother: I am a child of God, and . . .”

[15] The 1935 ed. adds: “I may not be capable, at first, of making great sacrifices, but can I not start with small ones? This indication of my good-will can only move God to strengthen me and give me the final mastery over my unruly human nature.” This paragraph is to be found only in the Sisters’ DIRECTORY, to which Fr. d’Alzon had added it in a later arrangement of the original material, when he was composing the chapter on the interior life.

[16] Ps. 4:6. Greek and Vulgate translations; *The Jerusalem Bible*: “Show us the light of your face, turned toward us.”

[17] Rom. 10:4. The Jerusalem Bible translates: “The Law has come to an end with Christ.”

[18] 1935 ed.: ... to reach up toward God. “I should direct all my efforts to sealing the union with God which is my supernatural destiny and which will be achieved by the grace merited by my Savior.” How do I revere ... The added sentence is not found in any of the manuscripts of the men’s DIRECTORY

[19] 1935 ed.: ... in turn; “or again, if an inner urge leads me to do so, I may concentrate” for a time . . .

[20] A single manuscript (the first manuscript of the women’s DIRECTORY) reads “admiration,” which seems to be more in keeping with the context.

[21] The next sentence in the 1935 ed.: “Have I any conception of the value of truth?” had been deleted by Fr. d’Alzon.

[22] Our Constitutions of 1855 contained many spiritual considerations, especially on the Christian virtues. In accordance with the desires of Rome, all of them were removed from the text of the Constitutions of 1865. To preserve these developments, already approved by five general chapters, Fr. d’Alzon incorporated them into the corresponding chapters of the second and third parts of the DIRECTORY. In the present edition they are placed under the Roman numeral “I”

[23] Is. 58:3, Confraternity translation. Jerusalem Bible: “Look, you do business on your fast-days.”

[24] Variant: “If God is everything, if I am nothing, I must attribute . . .”

[25] The three divine Persons together ordained the Incarnation, but the Son who was to become man accepted the divine decree. See Fr. d’Alzon’s meditation on the excellence of obedience, *Egrets Spirituels*, pp. 542-43.

[26] 1935 ed.: “accepted the orders of His Father.” None of the manuscripts of the men’s DIRECTORY has this expression

[27] Cf. Phil. 2:8.

[28] The next paragraph was deleted by Fr. d'Alzon when he last edited the DIRECTORY; it was restored in the 1935 edition: "Such hope will give rise to a deep gratitude to God for His gifts; it will keep before us the advice of Saint Paul: 'Always and everywhere you are giving thanks to God' (Eph. 5:20)."

[29] The 1935 ed. adds: "with grace, all things are possible to me."

[30] Cf. Rom 8 28 and Eph. 5:20.

[31] The following paragraphs from the 1855 Constitutions had been placed at the head of this chapter; they were deleted by Fr. d'Alzon when he last edited the DIRECTORY, and were subsequently restored for the 1935 edition:

"Our practice of charity includes especially a love of the Virgin Mother of Jesus, our special Patroness; a love of the Church, whose interests we make our own; a devotion to the Guardian Angels of our brethren [1935 ed.: "a devotion to the Holy Angels, and especially to the Guardian Angels of our brethren"]; a deep regard for the souls that have been entrusted to our care.

"Our love of neighbor will appear in the equanimity with which we endure the evil he can inflict on us, in our readiness to serve him in the true spirit of our vocation, in our cordiality and frankness, but above all in our zeal in all we do for the salvation of men.

"Finally, charity will make known to us that spirit of unity which Our Lord asked of His Father, after He had instituted the Holy Eucharist and when He was about to offer His life for the redemption of mankind: 'May they all be one' (Jn. 17:21); 'So that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and that I may be in them' (Jn. 17:26)."

[32] cf. Jn. 4:16.

[33] cf. Jn. 17:21-23.

[34] This part, like those marked “I”, is taken from the Constitutions of 1855.

[35] This paragraph is not found in Fr. d’Alzon’s final manuscript of the men’s DIRECTORY. It is included, however, in a first copy of that manuscript. To all appearances, it was not deleted by Fr. d’Alzon but was omitted through the error of a copyist; it was restored in the 1935 edition.

[36] Fr. d’Alzon drifted here the translation of the Gospel verse, “Happy the pure in heart . . .” which had been quoted in Latin in the preceding paragraph; the 1935 edition restored it.

[37] Song 2:2.

[38] The word “Order” indicates Fr. d’Alzon’s desire to take solemn vows and to found a real order of monks.

[39] In the original text, intended for the Religious of the Assumption, Fr. d’Alzon had just enumerated the various works of the Sisters. When he revised the text for his Congregation, he retained only what could pertain to his own religious.

[40] This is in accordance with the desire expressed in the Constitutions of 1855 and 1865. Permission for this vow was denied by the Holy See.

[41] 1935 ed.: “the prudence of the founders.”

[42] One of the early manuscripts adds the following paragraph, separating it by a dash from

the preceding text: “Our Lord Jesus Christ followed a Rule point by point during His mortal life, fulfilling all that the Prophets had said of Him: ‘It is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that Scripture demands’ (Mt. 3:15, which has “righteousness” instead of “Scripture”).

[43] Is. 30:15. The Jerusalem Bible translates: “Your strength (lay) in complete trust.”

[44] Here again, an early manuscript adds a paragraph, separating it by a dash from the preceding text: “Unless the soul is completely purified here on earth it will inevitably pass through purgatory. I must therefore choose between a merciful, earthly purgatory, in which my soul is cleansed through mental prayer and the purgatory of justice after death. If I do not choose prayer, do I not show contempt for God’s proffered graces?”

[45] 1935 ed.: “. . . if I accepted . . . , if I prayed . . .”

[46] In the women’s DIRECTORY, this chapter ends with the following paragraph: “Do I thank Him after Holy Communion? ... What results does my gratitude produce? ... I have been nourished with God; my life should, then, reflect God. Has it in fact changed enough to bear witness to the coming of God within me? . . .”

[47] Rom. 10:4. The Jerusalem Bible translates: “The Law has come to an end with Christ.”

[48] The sisters’ DIRECTORY, and the men’s edition prepared from it by Fr. Picard, gave the following order of chapters: Ch. 8, Study; Ch. 9, Teaching; Ch. 10, Supervision; Ch. 11, Manual Work. When Fr. d’Alzon adapted the sisters’ DIRECTORY for his own religious, he placed the chapter on manual work immediately after the chapter on study and combined into a single unit the two chapters on teaching and supervision. Fr. d’Alzon was thinking particularly in terms of the novitiate when he made this adaptation. For the lay brother, at that time and until recently, manual work was die primary occupation, corresponding to the studies of the choir religious. The new order of the two chapters was meant to bring this out more clearly.

[49] Part I, Chapter 4, p. 12. note 1.

[50] Variant: “by frequent acts of kindness and thoughtfulness, but without going beyond the bounds of Christian politeness; finally . . .”

[51] Variant: “I am nearer to the voice of God.”

[52] In the first surge of inspiration, Father d’Alzon was not able to perfect the preceding sentence and he never succeeded in recapturing it. The 1935 edition gives the following noteworthy variant: “If I recite it with attention and recollection, I will find it provides excellent material for meditation. For this, however, I should follow the mysteries in their order and know how to apply them practically to myself; thus, the Rosary becomes for me a kind of review of the virtues of religion, in which I can see how faithfully I cultivate them and in what I am lacking. Then, I must ask for the grace to acquire the virtues I do not yet have.”

[53] 1935 ed.: “the daily falls.”

[54] Variant: “. . . and reaches to the divisions of the spirit.”

[55] The sisters’ DIRECTORY reads: “God is a jealous God Who wishes to be the sole master of my heart.”

[56] 1933 ed.: “dryness.”