

MEDITATIONS FOR 52 WEEKS SÉDIR

MEDITATIONS 4 To all of you, dear Companions, who have done me the honor of selecting my path, I offer these exercises of apprenticeship while awaiting the authorization to transmit to you all that has been given to me. May you perceive, through my humble words, the One Who has sent His Angels to unite us. May we, henceforth, walk along together in the shadow of His splendor.

MEDITATIONS 5 **FOREWORD** The basic principle of our progress lies neither in our intelligence nor in our instinct but rather in our affective soul; within that spiritual heart of ours which sheathes the inmost sanctuary of the self, the volatile foyer (core of the will); and where the ray of our eternal soul comes to a focus.

The life of the soul manifests itself through the passions: these narrow down to love and hate. In spite of what some oriental asceticism's may teach, these must not be destroyed, because anything is preferable to inertia. One must uproot them from the soil of selfishness; they must be sublimated, transmuted, and restituted to their supernatural state, in God – Pure Love. This may be attained only via an effective imitation of the Word Jesus. We must sculpt ourselves into the likeness of this model, our eyes ever focused upon Him, our hands ceaselessly working for Him.

Every book on religious exercises could be entitled: Imitations of Jesus Christ. May I be forgiven for having written another; I have made it as short as possible and only in obedience to the wishes of my most indulgent friends. The way of using it is as follows.

Each morning, after our first prayer, let us immerse ourselves into the supernatural ignorance of faith and let us ask God again for His Truth. Then, let us read one of these pages carefully, ardently, in the deepest inner silence. Let these "readings" quickly become "contemplations"; let the heart replace intelligence; let us try to love instead of trying to understand. Then let us pledge ourselves to practice the observance with which each meditation ends. Finally, we should rapidly plan our day. The whole exercise should not take more than fifteen minutes. For the life of the true disciple is active, not contemplative; practical, not theoretical.

MEDITATIONS 6 These themes are arranged in groups of four. In each series there is a meditation upon one aspect of Christ's life (Nos. 1, 5, 9, 13, etc.) which is commented upon by the three succeeding meditations on the moral life of the disciple; these three relating to the first. Thus a partial synthesis may be realized every four weeks.

Later on, a Friend will probably be able to transform this rough draft into a complete manual for every day of the year. This will be done easily by condensing the gospels of the Evangelists, just as Catholic liturgy does, and dividing them among the well-known periods, such as: The Preparation for the Birth of the Word within us (Advent), Mystical Christmas, Epiphany. The Childhood of Christ. The Mission of Christ (Ash Wednesday, Lent). The Passion (Holy Week). Easter (Resurrection, Emmaüs). Ascension. Pentecost (Whitsuntide). Assumption. The Apostolic life of the disciple. The permanent and invisible Life of the Master. All Saints' Day.

Obviously, this little book neither takes the place of prayer, nor of charitable acts; neither to resisting temptations, nor to the advice of enlightened men. This is but one path among others; but since its intensive use will give us self-knowledge, and since the greatest obstacle to our perfection is ourselves, this means may become efficacious, even surpassing our hopes.

MEDITATIONS 7 PREFACE "Watch, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the bridegroom will appear" (Matthew 25:13) The parable of "the five Wise virgins and the five Foolish virgins" recurs every day. Let us behold our acts; do we not see our indolence, our inattention to God? Are we not aware of the vitality of our selfishness? Do you not see among us the inoperative Platonism of our mutual friendships; the rigidity which prevents our souls from fusing into each other; this aloofness which makes us incapable of reaching exaltation through one another? Are you not aware of the reason why we are so unsuccessful in comforting the weary and shaking the indifferent out of their lethargy? It is because we are still immersed in vacuity, too preoccupied in the unreality of our personal problems, sunk too deeply in the nonchalance of our petty covetousness. We must, at all cost, with decisive purpose, free ourselves; otherwise, rough shepherds will, someday, prod us forward with spears instead of crooks.

To watch, to remain awake, to be vigilant by overcoming somnolence, lethargy and emptiness of soul – that is what the Master recommends to us. Let us not close the eyes of our spirit before ugliness, before beauty, under the excitement of pleasures or sorrows. We must be aware of everything. There is not an investigation nor an analysis which demands from the scientist as much precision, freedom and honesty, as the Christian needs in his analysis of self and of the world. In that partial sphere which psychology calls the conscious, we must be aware of all that happens there, we must weigh everything therein according to evangelical Law; and in that sphere, we must become tyrants of the self. But, once we shall have reconstructed our personality in the likeness of Jesus, at least as far as we can perceive Him, then let us give free rein to our enthusiasm in order to call with all our might, which discipline will have increased tenfold, the unknown Form, so much more beautiful, true, and lofty, of Him Who is waiting. only for our cry for help, to come down to us. To join the Lord is such a simple thing; it is so simple that we must make numerous attempts before discovering the means. Let us constantly return to basic principles. First, we must acquire the greatest power of attention, then invincible perseverance; also acquire that inner freedom which makes us incapable of regrets, no matter what

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difficulties we encountered in obtaining results, even when we are denied the fruits of those efforts; finally, we must have the calm courage which fears nothing. All of this may be summed up in one word: Patience – the strength to accept, the strength to suffer. Perfect patience consecrates us kings of ourselves. That is why many have cried out: let us either suffer, or die! If we could only see the future of splendor which suffering prepares for us, how we would welcome this harsh visitor; how we would seek it out, and hold on to it with rapture. But, I cannot constrain anyone to this mystical gesture which only a few accomplish, to this embracing of the Cross, to this secret conflagration. I may not even ask Our Friend to "incline" anyone toward it. You are free – you must choose and start of your own accord; I can only repeat: Truth, Reality, Life are to be found therein. I am well aware that we are slumbering in the night but, at least, may the unique star of faith illumine our night; may it be perfumed with the great breaths of Love. Joy is not to be found in things; we shall find it in our heart, after having emptied its powerlessness and scoria into the incandescent heart of our Master, Who alone loves us everlastingly. We are weak only to the extent that we rely upon ourselves; we are lukewarm only if we fail to feed our fire; and fearful only when we find ourselves alone. So, let us lean upon Him Who is Strength; let us burn our selfishness; let us cling to the mantle of the Good Shepherd; He is never happier than when we importune Him. As our body experiences weariness, so does our spirit. These slack periods are to be expected and almost inevitable, though we should endeavor to shorten their duration and reduce our indolence to a minimum. Luke warmth usually results from habitually neglecting small duties; that is dangerous because of its apparent harmlessness. When one ceases to ascend the narrow path, it is because one is sliding backward to the precipice. It is written: "Grant God thou Overt totally cold". Also: "I shall vomit the lukewarm from my mouth". Saint Bernard thought the conversion of a criminal to be easier than that of a tepid monk. We must force ourselves to meticulously fulfill our duties. He who overlooks little faults will fall into bigger ones. We must also force ourselves to pray at every opportune moment, even when we do not feel inclined to do so. If, while praying, we are distracted and are not duly concerned about the distraction; when we are disgusted and are curt toward someone; when we do not give sufficient time to our duties; when we commit faults and no longer care; when we read just to kill time; take our ease; or work only to evade being noticed; all of that adds up to lukewarm indifference. The remedy for it is: action. We must act with pure intentions: for God, for our brothers, Act with exactitude, calm and orderliness, Act with fervor; without negligence; with courage, even if our work holds no interest for us. Act with perseverance; and never leave work unfinished. MEDITATIONS 10 It is not via the intellect that we act, it is by our feelings, through passion, through our anemic center, in a word: through love. The will is but a phase of love; whether it springs from instinct, whether it robes itself in the sumptuous folds of intelligence, or whether it hides under the shield of pride, the essential principle of the Will remains Love. Love needs but itself in order to expand; for the more love gives, the stronger it becomes, and the more magnificent its rebirth. Love is not concerned with the probabilities for success, it ignores prudent temporizations, skillful stratagems, and timid precautions. As soon as love perceives a tear, it hastens to wipe it away; between the aggressor and the victim, love offers itself, and though weak and denuded, without defenses, love triumphs and overcomes all violence. Its power resides in spontaneity, because Love, in its root, is identical with the Spirit. Love, fervor, fire: that is what we should pray for daily, from morning till night. Almost everything is possible for him who wills, everything is possible for him who loves. But we must solely love, love constantly and each hour a little more than we did the previous hour. We must ceaselessly evoke in ourselves the sensitive aspect of God, which is Love. We must force ourselves to love. And when our sensitivity recoils before certain physical and moral horrors, we must force ourselves to perform the gestures of human and divine brotherhood. Many anemic souls claim they are not capable of such efforts, they expect everything from Heaven. This is a mistake. "God helps those who help themselves". Energy is essential; a disciplined, systematic energy. Our nature must be tamed, then it has to be trained like a police dog. Otherwise, our accidental elans would merely incite discouraging failures. When our training will have been perfected, then we shall be able to yield to our enthusiasms because henceforth they will soar toward Jesus only. MEDITATIONS 11 But, may I repeat that, first, we must undergo a preparation, a modification and purification. Preparation is by the desire we all have to do good. Mundification means our corporal, moral and mental discipline. Purification will mean accepting the trials which, coming from the inferior worlds, are conveyed to us by the agents of Destiny, in a slower or faster afflux, according to our goodwill and to our power of resistance. It will also include the invisible work of the angels of Jesus upon our cold and hardened heart in order to soften it and set it ablaze. The pages you are going to read are related to the second of these three periods, the one which consists entirely in the training of the Self. Primarily, we must obey the maxims of renunciation in the strictest sense of the word. Each time that we shall be about to do something which is manifestly neither a duty nor a charitable act – were it the most insignificant thing in the world, – each time that a thoughtless impulse will spring and is not born out of devotion, we must curb it, and force ourselves to perform the opposite act. Jesus condemned Himself to a whole life of sensations, of works, and of promiscuities which were insupportable to the exquisite fineness and subtlety of His nature. Therefore, let us constrain ourselves; let us never give in to the self; let us feed it

generously with that which it does not like. In the face of each acquisition, of each experience, and of each delight that life offers us, let us first ask ourselves: "Do I like this, would I do it gladly?" If the answer is "yes", let us refuse and take the opposite stand; let us eat what is disagreeable to us. After partaking from these bitter cups, to the dregs, our spirit will be assuaged, be enlightened and, at the same time, will become capable of reaching a larger number of spirits. MEDITATIONS 12

From then on we shall be bathed in the pure light of Love, we shall no longer need syllogisms in order to arrive at actions. True life will be within us. When facing any creature or before any event, our intelligence will immediately understand, our heart will be suddenly moved, and our arms will automatically reach out to relieve the burden of the weak. Prestigious feats of heroism are not the most difficult; on the contrary, the little sacrifices are by far, the finest. These are the minute crystals which amalgamate to form the Imperishable walls of the Divine City when burnt by the billions at the hearth of Love. Mystical asceticism is the admirable common denominator. All you need do, is to focus your thoughts upon Jesus for your most ordinary tasks and for your furthest preoccupations to unite themselves toward that goal which is both so near and yet so far. And if you can remember that among the worlds, the hundreds of thousands of worlds, populated with responsible and intelligent beings, this earth is included among the small number of those which, to date, have welcomed the Word-Manifest upon them, you will understand why those who are the willing victims can also make themselves heard by the One Who is the Word of the Father. The themes that I offer you, in this manual, are intended to give us a breathing spell in the midst of the fight, to realize ourselves, to be reminded of the principles, to concentrate our attention, and to reinforce our personal contact with our Master. These themes are mere examples, you may choose others; the main point is that the disciple may relax his mind occasionally, thanks to which he will realize his powers with more assurance, lucidity, and calm; so that he might prepare himself to lead to the labor of mystical service the sum total of the energies of his reason, body, and heart, welded together in total harmony. The magnificent result of this threefold discipline will be the oneness of our being. * * * MEDITATIONS 13 1. - SELF-KNOWLEDGE "Who is it you are looking for?" (John 18:4) Jesus is here; silently, He stands at the door of my heart. He is waiting. I have just discovered that ambitions, passions and pleasures are mere ashes. Jesus is here; His eyes which pierce everything are cast downward, lest the penetration of His glance might intimidate me; He keeps silent, lest His voice might overwhelm me; He keeps His merciful Hands hidden, because their contact would ignite the conflagration of Love in my blood, too soon. He waits because He wants the whole of me: from my body, built by His ministers, to my heart where His angels are erecting His sanctuary. He waits, for He does not want to take me; He wants His tenderness desires only that which I awaiting this gesture on my part, He has across my path; but since I did not choose undergo these tests. Weariness and fear will I did not want to listen to Him. Just as a beast throws himself into the river, so, some night, maddened by remorse, I shall plunge into the irresistible current of Love. Grant that I may explore my inner deserts to their innermost recesses; that I may grasp all ghosts; taste all fruits; that I might convince myself that there is a universal mirage; so that I will not expect anything from anyone, save from God. May this waiting period be active, not inert. May it be filled with my inmost supplications, by the sorrows of my spirit, to give myself to Him offer Him. Anxiously laid bogs and mirages to accept Him, I must lead me back to Him. man pursued by a wild by its disquietude, precipitations, weariness and its projections Until such time as having prepared within myself a neat chamber and having embellished it with the flowers of charitable acts, the Angel will then sing hymns of thanksgiving and swing the censer of adoration MEDITATIONS 14 therein; so that at last, the Savior Himself will descend therein for the definitive birth which will bring me to the threshold of Eternity. OBSERVANCE: Each evening let us make a short but thorough examination of our conscience. MEDITATIONS 15 2.- LAZINESS "As for the unprofitable servant, cast him into the darkness without." (Matthew 25:30) There is a deep-rooted laziness which prevents even the pursuit of pleasure. There is a more common laziness which merely desires to avoid tedious tasks. The first is almost incurable. The-second can be cured. Many are compelled to perform mechanical and tedious labor which crushes their élan. They are convicts or slaves, doubtless; but, is not the one who considers himself free, really a slave? And, might I not be this madman? However, I know that any work can be profitable to me. Are my aversions justifiable? When I consider a task unworthy of me, might it not be that I misunderstand its significance? Did I really want to raise that task up to my dream? Hence I must try something new; if I have neither this boldness nor this confidence. I deprive myself of the right to complain. To complain is to weaken oneself. Consequently I will have to follow the school of resignation. Am I too vainglorious to accept the dull, humdrum events of everyday life without murmuring? In order to conquer evil-fate I must first conquer myself. And You, Christ my Lord, You builder of the worlds, You have worked with rabbit planes and fillisters. You Who feed the universe, You have sat at the table with men; You Who knew all things, with what patience have You not listened and still listen to our prate? You, Who possess all and needs nothing, have You not come down and have you not toiled, and are You still not doing over and over, unceasingly, the same endless labor to which our rebellious will constrains Your love? MEDITATIONS 16 OBSERVANCE: I must fight against all forms of inertia, both inside and outside myself. MEDITATIONS 17 3. - INTEMPESTIVE DESIRES "Jesus replied: 'You do not know

what it is that you ask'." (Matthew 20:22) The Law does not censure the motives which impel my actions in search of beauty, glory or science. However, I realize there are purer ones. The gods have many worshippers; God has but a few. How many times have I sought a demigod, even a devil, while believing and saying that my sole concern was with the Savior Himself? But that is not a mortal sin. Pursuing a shadow is still pursuing something; and God Who is Life wants me to live. Grant that I do not fall prey to my illusion any more; that I may see clearly within myself! grant that the Spirit may dart His dazzling Splendor upon me! What a man he could be who allies oriental patience to American initiative when conducting his business, and yet who cares nothing for his acquired millions! What a scientist he would be who recognizes his own ignorance! What a leader he would be who devotes his mind and his sensitiveness in working for the benefit of the lowest of primitives! To become indifferent to the result of any act, after having been passionately concerned for its success, is an insoluble antinomy, were it not for the dormant little flame which comes ablaze at the mere passage of the Breath of God inside of me. Neither money, power, renown, love, art, thought or will ever light that lamp, because they are but mere reflections. This flame is the original one, self-subsistent, inextinguishable and victorious. It is gentleness itself, before which all conflagrations abate it gives forth light and warmth without burning, and the heart of the blackest archangel bursts and melts beneath its mysterious radiance. MEDITATIONS 18 I shall tend this lamp in the most secret chamber of my self; it shall give me humility. That it may cast its light all around, I shall carry this lamp, holding it aloft to the brows, and lowering it over the mires; and this will be charity. Thus my desires for the perishable shall die in order to be reborn into the Imperishable. OBSERVANCE: Never satisfy any personal desire. MEDITATIONS 19 4.- INCIVILITY "When you enter into a house, you are to wish it well." (Matthew 10:12) I am right to remain courteous toward an ungracious person but it would be still better were I to dispel my irritation. I would then be sincerely courteous and my courteousness would carry with it the fruits of sincerity. If I am polite only to make a good impression, I pay homage to the gods of worldly opinion, of falsehood and of vanity. Rudeness is only the defense mechanism of my selfishness, lethargy and whims. When I am deeply engrossed in thought over some important matter and an unexpected caller bursts into my office, or if a loiterer stops me in the street, why should I get impatient? These people, like me, are mobile signs from Cosmic Force; they might have something to tell me, without their being aware of it. And, maybe, even if I have not understood their secret message, they will still have made me stronger and better since, thanks to them, I will have mastered my nerves and taken a step toward sincerity; and also, by my having been amiable to them, perhaps they will have remembered that Kindness exists. No, these small things are neither ridiculous nor to be scorned. This whole earth is made up of infinitely small things. I practice to perfect myself to the extent that my weakness permits me to do so. It is up to me to enrich my inner life with such pure splendors and such lofty sumptuousness that my outer life will then become incapable of pettiness. By dint of accumulating the grains of sand of my little virtues into a heap, I shall finally succeed in cementing the foundations of my Temple. MEDITATIONS 20 OBSERVANCE: Grant that my Ideal transude my face, my person, my words, even my bearing, and gestures! MEDITATIONS 21 5. - THE PRECURSOR John appeared in the wilderness....." (Mark 1:4) The Precursor is as mysterious as his Master. Son of the elderly, longtime barren and repentant Elizabeth, and of Zechariahs, the old man athirst for God, he represents my purified Self. He is the fulfillment of divine promise; he is the first among men; he represents abstinence; he is naked; he is filled with the Spirit; he walks straight ahead; he cries in the wilderness; he is terrible, yet he draws me to him. Compared to him I feel as a clod of earth at the base of a mountain; yet he does not frighten me. Something tells me that he too has been a clod of earth, and that I, if I want (if I will it!) I too someday shall reach the height of that gigantic peak. That is if I will! If I will to do everything necessary for that end; if I will as I should. Oh yes, I fathom and understand quite well that, Ram, Fo-Hi, Sesostris, Plato, Caesar, Marcus Aurelius, St. Augustine, Charlemagne, Shakespeare, Napoleon and all other illustrious men, yes, that none can measure up to the Precursor. If it is true that he has indeed preceded the Word on all His paths, if it is really he that walks before the Word on all His paths, and if he has the right of calling all men to repentance, he must, therefore, be the formidable Athlete of God - therefore he must be one of the Knights of the Spirit; therefore, he is one of the perpetual Witnesses. My thoughts, unaccustomed to spiritual grandeurs, stops short here; it is up to my soul to continue the journey. My logic falters; may my admiration leap forward so as to open a gap to Love! May the austerity of the Great Penitent teach me to be hard with myself. May the martyrdom and weariness which he faced teach me to become tender and compassionate toward others. May his isolation teach me to love solitude. May his independence make me cherish sincerity. MEDITATIONS 22 OBSERVANCE: Let us deliberately deprive ourselves each day of some enjoyment, in order to learn how to become humble. MEDITATIONS 23 6. - WASTE "If he is poor, even what he accounts his own will be taken from him." (Matthew 25:29) Do I ever consider the amount of labor, of unfruitful attempts, and of ingenuity which is spent to manufacture the thousand little things which I waste everyday? How much energy has been exerted for me to taste a slice of bread, so that I may button a garment, or write a letter? Could I but recapitulate each evening how many useless gestures I have made, how many useless words I have uttered, how many objects were thrown

away, food wasted, needless steps taken, aimless musing, powers used or wasted through caprice or by idleness! Nevertheless, I am aware that Nature keeps account of everything; of a bruised leaf just as much as of an eye-wink prompted by vanity. I know that I am her debtor and that when I misuse her loans, leaving them unproductive, or when I dissipate them, I contract a similar responsibility. He who throws bread in the gutter condemns himself to ruin; and he who wastes his strength or intelligence, without a valid motive, calls down upon himself, imbecility and weakness. I shall palliate the results of my heedlessness only by learning how to control myself; by utilizing time which is precious by doing everything at the right time. I am an integral part of a great and compact Whole, The Invisible binds me to every creature much more securely than vitality holds the organs of the body and their cells together. None of the energies that I emit are lost. Nothing which is put within my reach, seemingly by chance, is ever without value. OBSERVANCE: Let us be thrifty toward ourselves and generous toward others. MEDITATIONS 24 7. - REVERSES OF FORTUNE "It is easier for a cable to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." (Mark 10:25) Wealth is a favor from the Genie of the Earth; from God's standpoint it is a test, one of the hardest tests. To lose it would mean being relieved of cumbersome baggage. Nevertheless, the parables of the Gospel tell me that the rich men must not try to escape the responsibilities of their status, nor immobilize their wealth either through fear or by distaste of effort. However, a millionaire should not change his status; it is preferable that each one keeps his position according to the social or worldly customs. Anyhow, a really charitable and wealthy family does not hoard; quite to the contrary. Why shouldn't we ruin ourselves for noble motives since people ruin themselves so easily for shameful ones? If I am ruined through my own fault, I have only to start working again with courage and repentance. If I have been ruined through my idealism or charity, peace of heart comforts me. If the ruin occurred through a series of unlucky circumstances, I know that misfortune is a powerful tonic. When gold is flowing, do we not believe it is due to our own cleverness; do we not view our profitable guiles a little with too much indulgence, and do we not despise the unlucky? Every man, whether he knows it or not, almost always accomplishes a providential design, without being aware of and almost always without willing it; whether he is a bungling failure or the most grasping of business tycoons. There will always be poor people and rich people, until such time as men have learned to love one another. A millionaire can be a "poor in Spirit" and when he recognizes himself as merely the manager of his wealth, he is closer to Truth than the hating and crafty beggar. MEDITATIONS 25 OBSERVANCE: We must never refuse to render a service to anyone by using the pretext that our purse is empty. MEDITATIONS 26 8. - APATHY "The Kingdom of Heaven has opened to force, and the forceful take it by storm." (Matthew 11:12) During the dull periods when I haven't any desires, not even for evil doing; when my energy is somnolent, when I do not even have the strength to despair, the masters of inner life unanimously teach that I must not be too concerned about that state of being. I know that, in a solar system, while a certain number of planets are active, some others are in repose. The whole man is a solar system in which the earthly man, the terrestrial part of him, is but a planet. Then, again, it is God Whom I seek. If indeed He is the Universe, the Supreme; the Perfect, how can I, being imperfect in essence, ever grasp Him? Not unless there occurs in my nature a change which is called regeneration. Every time that I feel God inside me, it is because He has abated His greatness to my littleness; and when I do not feel Him anymore, when there remains in me nothing but a distant remembrance of Him, it is because He is approaching-me under a new aspect, with a greater power. It is during these periods of apathy that I must exert the most intense effort, that I must cling to Him, and wring from the depths of my being the supreme cry of an obstinate faith which affirms itself against any evidence to the contrary. May this passing somnolence not prevent me from fulfilling my daily tasks. When everything sickens me and appears insipid and dull, I must conceal my disgusts and go right on living, like anyone else - that is the most perfect act. Suffering is inconsequential when I am filled with enthusiasm; but to suffer is difficult when I am sad, when I am devoid of hope and courage; still that is what I must do. This I shall achieve through the all-powerful strength of MEDITATIONS 27 humility, through the infinite weakness of my nothingness. OBSERVANCE: To love everyone and everything in a practical manner. MEDITATIONS 28 9. - THE VIRGIN "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord." (Luke 1:38) If the envoys of the spirit can be recognized by the hatred that they provoke, the Virgin certainly belongs to their cohort, because, according to tradition, few women have been as humiliated, misunderstood, scorned, or treated with contempt, as she has been. The Virgin is the first expression by which God chose to indicate the nobility of woman and her role. There was nothing noticeable outwardly about this unexplainable figure whose soul was the altar of the greatest sacrifices, and the sanctuary of the most mysterious arcana. As a child she was brought up in a claustral enclosure; during adolescence, she was burdened with the duties of an indigent household; with the problems of bringing up the most delicate of beings; as a mother, for thirty-three years she was martyred through Elithe daily anxieties and frightful anguish of an already apprehended future; and as an obscure widow without resources managing the miserable little community of Disciples the wife of Joseph is the living proof that a life spent in the shadows often veils the most meritorious works. A hero conquers admiration when a sudden crisis sweeps him above his norm and enables him to perform a heroic deed. But the most difficult deed is to forget

oneself, coldly, reasonably, systematically, through all the small platitudes of household duties, of the workshop, or of the street. The imitation of Christ is impossible for my human nature left to its own resources; but the imitation of the Virgin is possible for me. Mary is closer to my wretched soul, and more commiserating to the misery in my everyday life. MEDITATIONS 29 I am well aware that the figure of the Virgin is to be found in a great many religions; in symbolism and hermeneutics; these are mere decors, even facets which stimulate the intellect and perceptions. But I know that actions alone count; so, during my lassitude's I shall solely evoke the precarious existence of the Mother of Christ, who, seen from without, appears silent and hidden; but who, seen from within, is ardent and dazzling. OBSERVANCE: Never complain. MEDITATIONS 30 10. – CONJUGAL QUARRELS "And so they are no longer two, they are one flesh; what God, then has joined, let no man put asunder." (Matthew 19:6) How many dissertations upon-marriage or celibacy sleep on library shelves! Seen from Above, the problem is quite simple. Our main task herebelow is to become kind. Will it be easier for me to learn kindness in the marriage state or outside of it? The answer remains a personal one. Conjugal life should be the school of true Love. It alone furnishes to my aspirations the necessary tribulations found in daily living; it alone keeps me from dangerous experiences and unworthy capitulations. Marriage brings the phantasmagorias of youthful dreams to a focus, frees them from tenebrous veils and changes them into living, constant lights. No man is a great hero to his valet, according to the common saying. Just as rare are the old couples who have, for each other, the admiring fervor of the engagement period. How much care must a husband or a wife deploy to remain worthy of each other's mutual choice! what a masterpiece is the marriage which keeps intact the beauties of the first months until death parts them! The combination of intelligence, of will, and delicate attentions will be sorely needed. Conjugal life, alone, teaches mutual service and abnegation in the very small things which serve as pedestal to the bigger ones. Married couples are working on a masterpiece which is bigger than they are, and worth more to them as well as to others than any other exceptional effort. No dissention, no dissonance should affect that union; even the serious faults of either husband or wife should be used and serve to render their union indestructible. Remember marriage alone tests our patience, our tenderness; tests the inalterable serenity, the kindness full of grace and those generous forgivings of the Infinite which prove to be the various stages on the road to Heaven. MEDITATIONS 31 OBSERVANCE: May each marriage partner apply himself or herself thoroughly, by every means which is not Evil, to give happiness to the other. MEDITATIONS 32 11. – SORROWS OF THE HEART "Abide then. in my love". (John 15:9) Love becomes the most illusory of mirages if it is my own image I am seeking to find in it. If it is nothing but an echo of myself that I attempt to find in the person I love most, this kind of love can only be explained as a search for pleasure. or I am merely satisfying my sentimental selfishness. Love becomes the stablest of realities only when I use it as a fervor of sacrifice. Most loves are but magnetic fascinations. We know so little about these mysterious forces; that is why passions are often disconcerting to the spectator, and why their psychology almost always remains speculative. As we are incapable of giving ourselves to others through duty, Nature pours us a magic draught; this fluidic inebriation which hurls us from exaltation to bitterness, from frenzy to disgust, teaches us at least the elementary gestures of altruism, or rather it impels us into performing them. There isn't any precedent which disproves that two lovers, no matter how well matched they may be, will not, sooner or later, be obliged to sacrifice some preferences or some comforts for each other. Besides, the sum total of these annoyances quickly exceeds the sum total of their joys. But even more than debauch more than passion, that which poisons in us our power to lover that which dries up our inmost and deepest springs, is that perversity of breach of faith and of deceit which many glory in with miserable pride. That a man should covet a woman is a weakness, a lack of restraint; but when he feels no compunction in stealing another-man's possession, in breaking up a home, or dissolving a contract which had been freely entered into previously – that is a grievous matter. It condemns him, it chains him up for perhaps several centuries of that life beyond the grave, the duration of MEDITATIONS 33 which remains forever an "unknown quantity" to us, here-below. Furthermore, marriages are inscribed in Heaven, from the very beginning. Hence, except with marriage in view no man should desire a woman, woman should let herself be seduced. OBSERVANCE: When the one we love makes us suffer, let us try to love him for himself, or her for herself; in God, forgetting ourselves. MEDITATIONS 34 12. – FAMILIARITY "It was I Who chose you, that you should go out and bring forth fruit..." (John 15:16) When I resent the rather overwhelming exuberance of certain people, I seldom try to avoid being politely distant, nor do I refrain from seasoning my politeness with a sting or two. Nevertheless, am I justified? Had I kept my distance with everyone, under all circumstances, I would not have had to endure these interpretive effusions; unless of course, my reserve stemmed from arrogance rather than from kindly discretion. After all, have I not annoyed someone either through thoughtlessness, importunity or vanity at some time or other? There has to be a just measure in everything. I must not shun my neighbors any more than waste hours with them. I must neither be timid nor disdainful, nor a gossip. I must always maintain a certain detachment which keeps me sufficiently free from expecting anything from anyone, since, after all, from God's standpoint, no one owes me a thing! I must also be ever-ready to sympathize with others so as to respond cordially to the tokens of affection they give me, even if I believe those tokens to be

banal or prompted by self-interest. Up till now, I have almost always met others with outward courtesy, while inwardly wondering what I could get from them. From this day on I must eradicate from my heart this involuntary calculation; I must greet one and sundry with a fraternal glance; I must attempt to reverse this mute interrogation so that it will ascend from my heart up to my brain, so that I may think: How may I be of service to my brother? OBSERVANCE: Cordially welcome everyone; never impose upon anyone. MEDITATIONS 35 13.1 – CHRIST "You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger..." (Luke 2:12) After man's intellect has exhausted every explanation regarding this mystery, it has to declare itself powerless before this definition of the Infinite, this localization of the Universal, and this particularization of the Perfect. No matter how vast or complex the intellect may imagine the Relative to be, there is an impassable abyss which separates it from the Absolute. Ever since men have begun to think, they have always felt it impossible to grasp primary Unity, unless there were a total annihilation of the Self. It will always be impossible for me to understand the Incarnation of the Word as long as I shall be a creature in Creation. But I may become the recipient of this miracle: the miracle which permits my receiving the splendor of the humanized Word in the Holies of my being. The Word is born of the Father since before the beginning of Time, One day, He was born in Bethlehem; and He can be born again, in countless births, in the soul of all those who follow Him, on this earth and upon all earths where humans live. To believe that Jesus is the only Son of God made flesh is a gift awarded to anyone who recognizes his own and total nothingness. But it is only at a particular stare of our voyage in Existence that each of us becomes capable of receiving that light. To feel God being born in us is another gift receivable, as soon as we are sufficiently impoverished, denuded, and purified; when all temporal powers and things within us will have made room for the eternal ones. To feel God living in us; to participate in His omnipotence, His omniscience; to be free, because having accepted the fetters for so long we have finally worn them away; to offer the Father the supreme homage of this liberty finally won; then, by acting like Jesus, Son of Man; to us is revealed that He acted, living in the Father and the Father living in Him – this final form of our being, the only true one, is still a gift. To obtain these three privileges, there is but one lone thing, only one to accomplish: the imitation of Our Lord Jesus Christ. OBSERVANCE: Covet nothing, not even spiritual favors. MEDITATIONS 36 14.2 – LIBERTY AND FATE "If the Son makes you free men, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36) Why? Because Jesus, Son of the Father, God Himself, equal to the Spirit, Master of the Spirit, is the only free one. Fatality is the law of Platter and the enigma of Science. Liberty is the essence, the very manifestation of the Spirit and the enigma of Religion. These two forces co-exist within myself; seeds of all other powers, they counterbalance each other alternatively therein. If I obey the Self, Destiny, through atavism, habits, and influences of environment, will finally reduce me to complete slavery while letting me believe that I am free. But if I resist the Self, though seemingly making myself a slave to it, I shall become free. Liberty has been promised me; but I must learn how to make use of it. What terrible power it is, in fact, not to find any obstacle to my desires! Individualism is a fight, a decomposition, a crumbling and the only true death. Slavery freely accepted shall then be my road to Liberty. I have but to look around me to notice that one becomes enslaved by obeying one's passions. Close observation shows me that I shall be still more enchained if I fight my passions only because of my pride to see myself surpass the crowds. In short, I must enter this battle only through Love, through Humility, in obedience to God, for His service, and to be useful to mankind. Then, and then only, will I escape the nets of Destiny, from the coarsest to the least perceptible. Only then will my powers develop in directions other than those toward which anterior causes drove them, toward really new directions; then someday my most glorious dreams will be surpassed. MEDITATIONS 37 15.3 – THE MOTIVES BEHIND OUR ACTS "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." (Matthew 6:10) The final word of all psychologies, the primary incentive of my acts, of my emotions and of my thoughts is Desire. In fact, my intelligence and my energy only get started under the impulse which, in the final analysis, comes from my "affective" center. Sensation, emotion, ideas are but secondary phenomena. Consequently, it will be the hidden motive which will give my acts its particular quality. Thus, a loafer wastes the same amount of energy hacking grass with his cane that the therapist expends in gathering healing herbs. The quality of the energy output varies according to the motive. I must then scrutinize my motives, discard all those which are not of the best moral caliber and choose among my goals the one which seems to be devoid of selfishness. Then and only then, will my work be sound, harmonious and alive. My being only possesses but half of the answer to the riddle of life, the world has the other half; they interpenetrate each other; man is a little universe – a microcosm; the universe is the macrocosm – an immense man. Any act is a holocaust sacrificed to an idol: be it fortune, glory, love or science. The true God has but few rare followers; and in the final analysis, how many Christians are really nothing but idolaters! On the other hand, the concentration of a force increases it tenfold, or a hundredfold. Normally, I disperse my energies, among the many daily tasks; but those are my natural forces or exterior faculties which I can expand outwardly. I can still retain in my innermost center, however, my concentration and my unity. This is particularly so iff I choose God as the basis or principle of all my motives and as the goal of all my works. MEDITATIONS 38 40

From then on, having become one through Spiritual Love which is father to my desires, and multiple in my faculties, I shall live in the image of the Absolute in an ever increasing state of beatitude proportionate to my fervor. OBSERVANCE: Live only to serve God. MEDITATIONS 41 16.4 – PEACE OF HEART "Peace is my bequest to you, I give you My peace." (John 14:27) In order to possess a force so that it may become a constitutive part of my personality, I must bring it down from the summit of the spiritual heights where it exists in a state of perfection. And the sole and all-powerful evocation is the Act. Hence, I must act conformably with the Ideal which I expect to reach. If it is peace that I desire, I must eradicate all conflicts within myself and all battles around me; to possess concord, all discords must vanish; to enjoy harmony, I must function harmoniously. All of which is contained in one word: Forgiveness. Forgive all outer enemies, forgive all inner enemies. Forgive the former by offering them what they demand; and the latter through our perfect conformance to the Law. To forgive evil does not mean to obey evil. If I alone am to suffer, I must submit to evil, but if others are being attacked by evil, then I must prevent it. La Fontaine, in his poems, which I read during my youth, showed me how the gigantic oak tree was felled by the same storm which the reed withstood. The smaller I become, the less envy I shall provoke; and the more I shall be at peace. But – this is but humility derived from fear and peace derived from selfishness. I must shrink the self, out of sincerity, because I see myself as I am, contemptible and unworthy; and out of love, in order to give to my brother, for his various needs, all that which is superfluous beyond my bare necessities. Whatever may happen to me through this unreasonable regimen, what have I to fear, since by so doing I imitate the infinite shrunkenness of Jesus, and since the Spirit blows where He wills? OBSERVANCE: I must work without seeking personal or selfish gain. MEDITATIONS 42 17.1 – THE MISSION OF JESUS "I have come so that my sheep may have life more abundantly.... so that all those who believe in me will not remain in darkness." (John 10:10;12:46) If I do not believe that Jesus is the only Son of God, I then accept all human exegeses: legends, solar myths, symbolisms, the initiations of Egypt, India, Chelsea, or of Tibet. But if one particle of the meaning of divine things has been given to me – I who am so unworthy – (because one always remains unworthy of receiving the smallest glimmer of Eternal Lights) I shall indubitably know that Jesus has never been taught by any adept, nor by any god. Inversely to creatures who evolve from below to above, He developed His terrestrial manifestation by proceeding from the inner realms to the outer ones. He involuted. Being the Way, the Life and the Truth, He had no need of any instruction in order to know everything, no need of any kind of training to have all powers, He only had to be Himself. Christ is a dual perfection: perfect Man and perfect God. Not merely a man more advanced than others – He is the Man. Not merely a god greater than the Brahmas, Ahoura-Mazdas, or Jupiters – He is God. He is all the Powers of creatures, He is all the Powers of God -these are His robe and His mantle. Hence, from birth He knew all things and had command over all things. Only the expression of His knowledge or of His power was subjected to the laws of physiological growth, because He descended only to obey all of these laws which He, Himself, had decreed from the beginning. His gestures, His glance, and His words were sowing life. The soil, upon which He trod, was receiving benediction from the contact of His feet. And each of these innumerable sparks from the divine, which were left here and there in the dark mold of the world, is awaiting the collaboration of my good will in order to rise and fructify. MEDITATIONS 43 I, too, may become a Gardner of these eternal flowers. Love is the supreme master. OBSERVANCE: Before performing any act, I must ask Jesus to enlighten this act and its purpose. MEDITATIONS 44 18.2 – COMPASSION "Have pity on us and come to our succor;" (Mark 9:21) There are three kinds of compassion. The first is a sickly sensitiveness which reduces us to becoming the plaything of our nerves, the dupes of the faking-poor, and even the victims of our own deep-rooted vices. The second kind is to be found among those who, when ensconced in a comfortable armchair by the fireplace, exclaim: "How I pity those poor wretches who are going to sleep in freezing garrets tonight, and all those who huddle under bridges with an empty stomach!" The third kind of compassion which is the only fecund, real and living one, is when, after having been moved by such thoughts, one grabs one's hat and goes out on the street in search of one of these wretches, to offer him a meal and a room. And if we do not have the money, it means bringing him home with us; he, with his filth and vermin, to give him food and our bed. Compassion means wasting my time, good-humoredly, at the bedside of a cranky invalid. It means not to become angry when a poor man, hardened through misfortunes, becomes insulting and badgers me. It means finding comforting words for those who seem to have earned their troubles, or for those who whine about everything. I shall be indulgent, not with the sneaking hope that others will be indulgent toward me someday, but because I am aware that had I met the same temptation, and had the same temperament, I would have succumbed exactly as my neighbor did. Whatever part of me is free from malevolence and contempt will give room to healthy reasoning, clear judgment and indulgence. Thus it will be easier for me to find how to remedy the sorrows of others. The more man worries about his self, the pettier he becomes; but the more outgoing he is, the more he acquires a greater involuntary power and a broader vista. MEDITATIONS 45 OBSERVANCE: To forbid oneself the thought that any wretch or sick person suffers through his own fault. MEDITATIONS 46 19.3 – VENGEANCE "...Here is what I say to you-who are listening to me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you, and pray for those

who insult you." (Luke 6:27-28) No one receives an insult nor suffers from hatred without having deserved it. Only the justice of created beings is lopsided; the justice of the Creator is infallible; it is the very equilibrium of the Universe in the physical, moral, or spiritual realms. If I do not see any motives for this. hate nor for these insults, it merely means that I am near-sighted; in any case, I must forgive because a fire is not put out by adding fuel to it. Solomon stated, and the apostle of the Gentiles repeats this: "If your enemy is hungry, give him food; if he is thirsty, give him drink, for in so doing you shall heap burning coals upon his head." The hardened Rabbis probably saw therein a refinement of immaterial vengeance; the Fathers of the Greek Church probably believed that one has to be irreproachable so that our enemies will attract to themselves all the reaction of their anger. The author of the Vulgate (St. Jerome) is more Christian because he believes these coals are burning only from the fire of remorse and shame. Yes, the painful pardon to which I subject my wounded self-esteem is a light which will later cause remorse, repentance and penance to germinate within the heart of my enemy. After all, I am only offended because I am vulnerable. A tenacious desire for friendship, homage, respect and possessiveness still persists within me. I would like others to believe me to be superior. If nothing mattered to me except obeying God, who could ever wound me? what demon, god, or man? And is there not but one sole, faithful, definite, and ever-increasing friendship – that of my Lord Christ? MEDITATIONS 47 OBSERVANCE: In spite of everything, keep your feeling, your thoughts and the expression on your face serene. MEDITATIONS 48 20.4 – FEBRILITY "Believe me, heaven and earth must disappear sooner than one iota, one flourish disappear from the law; it must all be accomplished." (Matthew 5:18) Anything badly done, almost always has to be done over again; haste merely results in a waste of strength and time. Men demand that I succeed; the Father asks only for my goodwill and for my efforts to be sincere. A work done perfectly and conscientiously satisfies the Law. Whether I am an artist, a clerk, a thinker or a workman, I shall take time to be thorough and bring my piece of work to fruition, by making use of all my skill, enthusiasm and enlightenment. If I spare myself the smallest stroke, the least research, pitiless Destiny will oblige me to redo my work someday. In order to saturate my work with the maximum of beauty, energy, or truth, must I not build for it a perfect body and breathe a living soul into it? Are not long exhausting days, long nights fraught with anguish and supplications, necessary? The turbulent individual bestirs himself only in order to satisfy his mania for novelty, so as to escape boredom, or to satisfy an overwhelming covetousness. I must calm my effervescence, if only to see more clearly. I shall become calm, especially because the outbursts of the Self are always fomenters of discord, inwardly as well as outwardly. It is good, at times, to force ourselves to wait in the antechamber of the self. "Le temps ne respecte pas ce que l'on fait sans lui." (That which is done without due respect to time does not last.) If the projects which are born with the most evident clarity come from God, He will not take exception if I defer their execution until such time as I feel they are ripe, since God has given me a critical or fine sense of evaluation. MEDITATIONS 49 After all, is it right for me to believe myself pure enough, sufficiently upright, to receive providential solicitations without distorting them somewhat? OBSERVANCE: Never leave any work till you have completed it. MEDITATIONS 50 21.1 – THE TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST "He remained 40 days and 40 nights in the desert and was tempted by Satan; He lodged with the beasts, and the angels came and ministered to Him." (Mark 1:13) Man can do evil, either from within himself, or because he is spurred by some external agent. This agent might be either the natural seduction of some creature or it may operate through an attack by one of the sides of Darkness. This latter possibility is quite rare; it occurs only in the case of very advanced disciples; moreover, even among the saints, barely has there been but two or three who have been approached by the perverse halo of the Great Rebel. Jesus is the only "man" with Whom Satan talked in the open – unmasked. To attack Him, Satan surrounded himself with the infernal elite. This had to be so, because all creatures must, at least, once, come face to face with the Word so that they may perceive Truth; also because no one is ever lost forever. The man who is the first to accomplish something entirely new really expends a great deal of energy to achieve it; his imitators copy him and follow his footsteps with less effort. That is the reason why, during the course of what is known of His life, as well as during the lightning-pierced darkness of His unknown life, Christ has performed every kind of act that human beings will ever be called upon to accomplish; that is why He endured all possible states of soul; that is why He has given thought to all accidents...to all, inventions, and to all masterpieces; why He climbed all summits and crossed all mires. He has been everywhere. Even in the least foreseen of circumstances, no matter what kind they are, there is a large part of old elements contained therein; moreover, the adversary with whom I come in contact is always of a force equal to mine; MEDITATIONS 51 finally, no matter what the effort or the struggle may be, Christ, for certain, has already executed the one and sustained the other, since that is what He came for. OBSERVANCE: In the midst of my fears, perplexities and terrors, I shall call with calm and confidence upon Him Who, by anticipation underwent everything in my behalf, two thousand years ago. MEDITATIONS 52 22.2 – CUPIDITY "With what difficulty will those who have riches enter the Kingdom of Heaven!" (Mark 10:23) Jesus has said: "It is easier for a cable to pass through the eye of a needle than for him who relies upon wealth to enter the Kingdom of God." One can be avaricious and greedy without being wealthy; it is neither my work nor my state in life which will classify me in the

spiritual hierarchy, but the intention which I for shall have accomplished the one and fulfilled the other. Any passion is greedy; the collector, the Don Juan, and the erudite adore various aspects of the same idol: possessiveness. Each one of us, whether it be due to our anterior merits, or as a necessary test to the solidity of our virtues, receives from Destiny a certain amount of bliss: it might come in the form of natural gifts, fortune, friendships, or success. But, as the saying goes, if we are offered an inch, we grab a yard. Yet, everything in Creation is measured. Whoever grabs happiness, money or any other item whatever it be, consequently deprives others or it. No matter whether the monopolize or the despoiled have ever met – nevertheless, in the moral realm all are present to all; and the groans of the cheated one poisons the happiness of the ostentatious extortion. Gold is a curse to everything which it contacts; its fascination makes men blind to spiritual lights. The rich man should consider himself merely as the trustee of his wealth, even if he has acquired it through his own labor. Hence, I shall take only that which I need; but, when I give, I shall imitate our maternal Nature which always adds something superfluous to her gifts. In any case, to the gift-shared, I shall add the superfluity of a smile and my affectionate greetings; also I shall make use of the treasures of the unjust MAMMON, with discretion. OBSERVANCE: Never amass unproductive treasures. MEDITATIONS 53

MEDITATIONS 54 23.3 – IN SEARCH OF PRAISE "The men of this generation resemble children as they sit in the marketplace, who call to one another: We have played the flute and you have not danced; we have sung mournful songs and you have not wept." (Luke 7:32) To seek approbation is a mania, the candor of which causes me to smile when it applies to others; but I do not see it when in myself. The celebrity and renown seekers cleverly put wheels in motion to obtain numerous votes; they are held responsible for such vain maneuvers; being hunters after illusion, some day Destiny will force them to feed upon illusions. Are we stoics? If so, what matters blame or praise when one only seeks for the testimony of one's own conscience? So, popularity and reputation appear as nothing else but the tactical means needed to influence the crowds. When we have stopped believing in the primacy of Will, then let us beware of praise; flattery, even less than that, our quest to be surrounded by those who flatter, emit a heady magnetism, from the effluvia's of which we must either be very strong – or very small – to escape. The commendations we receive may be sincere or hypocritical. There is, in the former, a fresh perfume which makes them more dangerous to our modesty than the hypocritical ones. Were we wise, we would accept any compliment as a snare. Because the affection that our friends feel toward us may only be partial; and is it not in the interest of the flatterers to seduce us for their own ends? If we wish to judge ourselves rightly, we must take the stand not to seek praise, and to abstain from blaming anyone. Other kinds of effort in the same vein may be attempted later. But maintaining a simple, reserved attitude, quite sufficient for our present strength, will give us a clearer mind and a more independent character. MEDITATIONS 55

OBSERVANCE: Shun adulation and publicity. MEDITATIONS 56 24.4 – DESIRE FOR SHOW "They perform all their deeds, to win the esteem of men." (Matthew 6:2) We do not judge apparel at its true value. Being a slave to style and fashion is either vanity or stupidity if we are impelled by conceit, perversity, or, because of social-climbing. Even the dandy reaches but a superficial summit! And yet, we must dress, decorate our home and maintain a certain household in keeping with our social position. There again, conscience should be our guide. We also need courage. Women know that a day will come when makeup will cease to hide their wrinkles; men know that someday their tailor will be unable to hide their faulty posture or bulgy figures. Death is on the way, yet we continue to wear blindfolds, we hang on to everything we have craved for which is now escaping us, the loss of which we are not willing to accept. I do not mean to imply that virtue should be ridiculous or peevish. Inner dignity Always transpires through our physical demeanor; when our thoughts are lofty, our clothing takes on a tailor's cut. The wise man leads an average life with a resplendent heart. While around some supermen the nimbus of summits floats sufficiently visible so as to endow the simple garb they wear with an astounding and moving nobility. But as for myself, whose mediocre soul cannot attain either the azure heights nor be sunk in the mud; I, who am merely "lukewarm", who nourishes so many desires and who Accomplishes so few deeds, I must shun affectation as well as coarseness; I must follow the ordinary customs, conventions, and hygiene. I shall not allow myself to be eccentric; this only fits exceptional souls; it is part and parcel of their character. MEDITATIONS 57

OBSERVATION: Seek anonymity. MEDITATIONS 58 25.1 – THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST "It Is the Father Who sent me, that commanded me what words I was to say, what message I was to utter." (John 12:49) When a man teaches, he may spread error; especially, he may not impart the opportune truth; the one which each and all of his auditors are ready to receive, the truth which is suited to their present state, their future development, their environment and their posterity. No one attains perfection, much less so in the field of spiritual teaching than in any other field. Jesus possessed perfect Truth, with all of its perfect applications, since the Word is this Truth. Knowledge is nothing but the mental image of the Being. Because Jesus knows all those whom He addresses, throughout from their very center to their ultimate limitations, from their ante-secular origin to their post-secular end, consequently, He can tell each and all just what they need to know about this Absolute which He incarnates. My words float in and around me for a certain length of time, then they dissolve and

disappear. The words of the Word, being Life, implant themselves into all hearts and, just like the seeds found in the Egyptian necropolis, they are always ready to germinate. Because Life is not an abstraction, in it everything is active, real and spontaneous; Life is a kind of dynamite; the more resistance it meets, the more it intensifies, magnifies, then explodes. Hence, we who in our discourses possess nothing but a reflection of this intangible energy, it is through our acts that we shall give our convictions the strongest existence. Good example is the best sermon and the finest of prayers. Powers, science and all other kinds of enlightenment can descend only in proportion to the degree that the finite leaves room for the Infinite within myself. This is the unique efficacious method which regenerates me, from my body up to the still virgin summit of my spirit; through it alone I may become a temporary guide for those others who have gone astray. **MEDITATIONS 59**

OBSERVANCE: Each morning, upon awakening, I will read a verse from the Gospel as attentively as if I were opening the book for the first time. **MEDITATIONS 60** 26.2 – **SLANDER**

"What defiles a man is that which comes out of him, for it is from out of the heart of men that evil thoughts proceed..." (Mark 7:20-21) Man is made in such a way that he can neither conceive nor perceive anything which comes from the outside unless first of all, he already possesses its counterpart within himself. The beauty of music moves me only because my sensitivity already comprises and contains its inner harmonies. And ugliness shocks me by a reverse mechanism. I cannot help seeing the vices or faults of my neighbors; but do I not carry the same morbid germs? What right have I to criticize, to scorn, or publicize these faults? Slander is pusillanimous meanness; treachery. If I believe that my neighbor is acting badly, why not tell him to his face when we are alone? Moreover, I am only responsible for the beings who have been entrusted to my care. To speak of evil propagates evil; I shall bear the responsibility of the criticisms, sneers and vexations that a third party will hold against the absent ones because of my slanderous remarks. And for what reason? For a mere gesture, the intention or motive of which, I ignore? Am I really able to evaluate the real value of my own actions, and do I even discern the true nature of my deepest motives. To judge should mean: to compare by means of an exact inner criterion. But, since I am not perfect, my criterion is inevitably defections; always, there exists, somewhere, a soul greater than I am. So when I say: "I certainly would never commit such an act!", it really is a challenge to Evil. Evil is alive; it will hear the challenge, and will respond; and a similar temptation will come to me. Blusterers are usually defeated. **MEDITATIONS 61**

Thus, by bearing down upon others, I enchain myself, I force myself to a setback, or to a standstill which will last until such time as the play of circumstances will permit me to make amends for my wrongdoing. **OBSERVANCE:** Never say anything evil about anyone who is absent. **MEDITATIONS 62** 27.3 – **FALSEHOOD**

"He abides not in truth since there is no truth in him; when he utters falsehood, he is only uttering what is natural to him. (John 8:44) Why did the Absolute, when He manifested as Creator and Savior, allow men to call Him: the Word? Speech hides a redoubtable mystery. One may only guess that it is saturated with life; the more the words are true, the more fecund is that life. My words should be an exact image and a sincere expression of my inner motives. Thus my inner life will be alive and true; commensurate with its conformity to the Law, the Supreme Law, the Reason of the World, and the creative Word. Ruse and hypocrisy serve nothing but evil; from illicit processes can result only an appearance of good. The chemist knows quite well how to extract a medicine from a poisonous juice; but, what proof have I that these scientific therapeutics means might not have cured one form of disease only to have it replaced with another? Man is an incomprehensible mystery to man. God alone knows man because He created him. As mediocre as I am, within myself, I unite all extremes, bring the antipodes together; I carry within myself the worst microbes of spiritual Nothingness as well as the shining seed of the perfect Being. I am the plaything of all breaths, while, at the same time, I am the sole master of my own destiny. Hence, a falsehood, which creates a scission between an inner feeling and an outer expression, is nothing else but a moral suicide. It poisons some of the lights and virtues within me; it also withers some lights and virtues in those to whom it is addressed. **MEDITATIONS 63**

If I respect my own words, by never misusing them for anything which is useless, false, selfish or wicked, my speech will be purified, will recover its native energy, little by little; it will become creative and thaumaturgy again; and for those who ask me for help, it will be for them, what the Word of God is to me: an active and vivifying blessing. **OBSERVANCE:** I shall be sincere in thought, in words, and in actions. **MEDITATIONS 64** 28.4 – **CALUMNY**

"They stood there, loudly accusing Him." (Luke 23:10 To calumniate; to accuse someone of a wrong he has not committed, is to commit a murder, an assassination. For, what is bound in a particular place of the Universe can only be unbound in the same place at a later date. The expiation of a calumny demands that the aggressor, the victim, and the witnesses be reunited, whether here on earth or elsewhere, in a set of somewhat analogous circumstances and that the calumniator then asks and obtains his pardon. On the other hand, the victim of a calumny should neither become irritated, be distressed, nor be surprised by it. Really, no one can attack me unless I myself have given him the right; unless my Destiny has authorized it. Everything is Just, strictly speaking. Injustices are justices whose causal roots we do not see. Let us extract the almond from its bitter shell. One thing is certain, it is I, who has sown these humiliations and ordeals in the past; there remains nothing for me to do now, but to reap them. Hence, I shall not fall prey to the tyrannical passions which despoil, and whose unsatisfied demands would reduce all men to

slavery. Christ was right when He said: "God alone is good." We are fundamentally evil; in how many circumstances have I not been wicked? If I were to draw up the list of sufferings that I have imposed upon those who were close to me, upon animals, plants and even things; when I have despised the beauty of life, insulted the charms of life; sown rancor and hate, or wrenched from innocence a more frightful scream than that of anger; yes, were I to draw up that list, how quickly would I hide my shame from my so-called defamers! I would repeat these words of an "unknown servant" of Heaven to whom calumnies about himself had been related: "Oh! they will never tell all the evil that there is to tell about me!".

MEDITATIONS 65 OBSERVANCE: We must defend those who are being slandered; rehabilitate them, and point out their virtues. MEDITATIONS 66 29.1 – THE MIRACLES OF JESUS "No one could do the miracles you are doing, unless God were with him." (John 3:2) There are two kinds of miracles: the natural miracles that are produced by an unknown natural force brought into operation, which starts to put physical laws that are not yet discovered, into motion; and there are the supernatural miracles, which are due to direct divine intervention. The unknown powers of Creation may belong either to the human being, to Nature, or to the powers of Darkness. Divine intervention may be spontaneous, or may come as an answer to prayer. Esotericism, among other problems, studies the means of producing natural miracles. But these practices, always partial, because they are human ten.' cause confusion in the immaterial atmospheres, and create, within the normal development of beings and things, long-termed perturbations which are far more pernicious than the evil which the initiate wanted to cure. Magnetism, spiritualism and magic are not infernal things; but they are things into which Hell can easily enter. Also the will power, which is indispensable to the adept, facilitates the snares of the Adversary, still that much more. Perfect man will be the king of Creation. We shall have the legitimate right of command over Natures only when Nature will see that we have become masters of ourselves; when we shall have followed the school of the Gospel, to the end. Thus, to possess a spiritual power from birth signifies that it is normal; but that entails the duty of exercising it for good only, without ever using it as a source for material gain. Thus, all of the powers of Jesus were innate, spontaneous; they radiated effortlessly, surpassing ancient magic and future wisdoms, just as the MEDITATIONS 67 closest infinite surpasses the greatest finite. And yet, never did He operate a miracle without first asking for the Father's permission. OBSERVANCE: Before performing any deed, ask the Father what His good pleasure is. MEDITATIONS 68 30.2 – MISANTHROPY "There was a multitude seated all round Him." (Mark 3:32) When the society of my fellowmen becomes unbearable, I somehow feel that I should not run away from them, that here is an opportunity for my patience to increase; and that perhaps my amiability, because of the effort it costs me, will make unforeseen ameliorations possible in those whose presence riles me. The smallest things are important. The mere exchange of a glance with a passerby may exert a mysterious influence over him, upon me, and upon the witnesses. To refuse going to gatherings expresses a kind of scorn; remember that all plants yield fruits conformable to their specie. Alcester, for instance, has an exaggerated opinion of his own importance. By making an effort of being amiable when I have sorrows, or when I am in a morose mood, this will distract me or counteract this lack, and it will strengthen me; while solitude would only increase my sorrow and make my character still more vulnerable. In any case, why shouldn't people merit my attention? I only see the mask they wear; their real being escapes me, the cleverest of soothsayers never really catches but a glimpse of some of the apparent characteristics of their consulters. There is not a man nor a creature who is useless; from one and all I can learn a lesson. And, after all, my tastes change faster than does the shape of the wind-driven clouds. The very ones who horripilate me today might be the very ones for whom, tomorrow, I shall forsake my duties so as to "run after them". Is it not plain wisdom to follow the school of life in the order of its successive lessons, and to do each thing in its proper time? Finally, my Master, He in Whose intelligence all ideas were contained, Whose heart reflected and radiated all nobility, Whose gaze saw through all miseries; He for Whom the society of humans was certainly a perpetual martyrdom, has He not endured the cowards, the fools, the slothful and the vainglorious? MEDITATIONS 69 OBSERVANCE: We must abstain from judging anyone from the outward appearance of their personality. MEDITATIONS 70 31.3 – DISGUST WITH LIFE "I have prayed for thee, that thy Faith may not fall." (Luke 22:32) Sadness may become so deeply ingrained that it may even take away the courage of committing suicide. Yet, if I have understood anything about the meaning of life, I know that it is not success which elevates me but all the efforts I made priorly; that it is not the love I have received which embellishes my soul, but the love I have given; that it is not science per se which develops intelligence, but the work expended in acquiring that science. I despair only because we are too concerned about our self. Where does one find the man capable of giving up his hopes and preferences continuously? Educators can do nothing more than to suggest to our will higher and still higher incentives, in proportion as we advance, indefinitely. Isn't the Imitation of Christ "the most wonderful book that ever came out of the hands of men", anything else but an inner gymnastics which enables us to escape from the grasp of earthly sorrows? The Gospel alone dares show me what the supreme goal is; and the Gospel alone dares tell me that I shall reach this goal precisely by the means of the energy I spend in pursuing the provisional and successive goals which are the culminating crests of the world, the summits of my own nature, and as such,

subject to change and to death. If I vitalize that expended energy with my intention of reaching God, I transmute it, and I transpose it from the temporal to the eternal. For, in any situation and on any kind of mental plane, this intention remains forever accessible to me, because God remains, in short, my principle and my goal. When ordinary ambitions and joys will have lost their savor, so much the better. Once these mirages are dissipated, my method will become that much more lucid and serene; no more will idols be able to stop me. The disciple knows that his Master is always close by. Therefore, suffering becomes for him the blessed breath which fans the spiritual flame of his love.

MEDITATIONS 71 OBSERVANCE: Have faith in the future. MEDITATIONS 72 32. 4 – DESPAIR
"My soul is sad unto death ... Yet Father, not what I will but what Thou wilt." (Mark 14:34-36)

The Father forbids Destiny from burdening anyone beyond his strength. What makes my chains seem heavy comes from my believing that they are unjust; it also comes from my secret hope that I can get rid of them; but, the contortions which I execute to this end, only serve to wound me; and as I wear myself out, they seem still more unbearable. It takes so little to lose courage. Courage is not an abstract entity; it is an organ of my psychic personality; it possesses a form, has an existence of its own, as real as my hands and feet. Just as a muscle is strengthened and develops through exercise, so, all intellectual and moral faculties – among which is courage – are developed when they work, and wither when left inactive by me. If I am in a state of despair, and if I do not find the ingenious method nor the decisive energy which would help me today, it is because I have not known how to will in the past. The strong south winds compel the tree to strengthen its fibers; hardships compel man to expend his energies. I must not desire death anymore than I should desperately cling to life; I do not have the right to do either; my body does not belong to me, it is not I who has erected it; dare I consider myself wiser than the governing laws of the Universe? The black angel of despair whispers to me that I have been abandoned. Yes, of times, it is true that friends leave me; those whom I love and those who love me. But not for an instant does the One Who has undertaken to lead me ever lose interest in my fate; His angels are always by my side. Without their being aware of it, even those poor men who refuse this constant offer of help, are protected and watched over by the Shepherd, from afar.

OBSERVANCE: I must try to forget my worries for a few minutes each day. MEDITATIONS 74
33.1 – THE TRANSFIGURATION "Lord, how good for us to be here!" (Matthew 17:4) One does not give wine to little children. So, when Heaven dissimulates itself beneath the undecipherable entanglements of cause and effects or behind the veils of the physical, intelligible, as well as invisible worlds, it is because Its Splendor, laid bare, would be too dazzling for my weakness. No one can see God without dying. Were my eyes limpid, were my gaze able to pierce the millenary walls of the spiritual prison where I have incarcerated myself, I would recognize that my sufferings cannot repair the harm which I have caused; and I would find out that evil is extraordinarily prolific in this wicked world whose purified humus suits it to a "t": I am constantly despoiling some creatures; had I to pay my debt, down to its last bitter penny, and the compounded interest which it has engendered, never would I see the end of my labor. But the Father's Mercy indemnifies His justice. Were I to go forward toward Supreme Goodness solely by my own efforts, the road would be endless. But with each step that I take toward Him, my Savior rushes to meet me, as rapid as the bolt of lightning which I believe to be a sign of His wrath, instead of which it is only the rage of some demon from whom Love has wrenched a prey. Mystical rapture, suavity, and ecstasies are but the faraway smiles of this Love which only my lukewarmness prevents from reaching me. Doubtless, Love shines under diverse forms through the magnificence of the world. But these are merely encouraging prodding's for my lackadaisical slackness. The Friend is always to be found and is closest to me in my grief's; during times of poverty; behind unhappiness and crime; acridities and inner solitudes; at the bottom of everything which troubles my heavy soul. For He came for the sick and He will never come except for them. OBSERVANCE: Before making any decision, I shall lay human wisdom aside, and I shall ask myself: What would Jesus do in my place?

MEDITATIONS 76 34.2 – HEEDLESSNESS "Who is it you are looking for?-Jesus of Nazareth-It is I." (John 18:4-5) Carelessness, distraction, forgetfulness, inaccuracy, imprudence, improvidence, inconstancy and thoughtlessness are all failings stemming from lack of attention. They lead to discouragement, exhaustion and failure. To increase our power of attention means that we must draw from unlimited patience; begin without fanfare, without shock, but gently, with tenacity; the least detail is important; the least obstacle must receive my minutest care. Acts, emotions, thoughts and words project into the secondary atmosphere a dynamic emission which, after a long, and a more or less sinuous trajectory, return to its point of departure. Any concentration produces in the fluidic organism a void-point or vacuum to which these little comets are drawn; thus are born those bothersome association of ideas which come when we want to abstract ourselves in work. Adepts possess methods which increase the power of attention, which calm effervescence and liberate thought. The American "mentalists", psychism, and personal magnetism have appropriated all that they could from oriental psychology. But all of this is nothing but artifice and a transplantation which abuses energies. Man doesn't have the right to take a force out of its domain, to install it elsewhere. By so doing, he believes himself to be very clever; he is nothing but a destroyer, a tyrant, one who sows disorder. The human being is like all other creatures: it is from the center that he develops, and not from the circumference; and that center, is his heart. This kind

of training is not a lopping off any more; it is the normal cultivation of the rich soil of material tasks, under the vivifying rays of the sun of good will; it does not kill anything; it consolidates, organizes, and unifies. MEDITATIONS 77 OBSERVANCE: I must never allow myself to give in to daydreaming or to inaction. MEDITATIONS 78 35.2 - OBSTINACY "Jesus reproached the Eleven for their unbelief and their obstinacy of heart." (Mark 16:14) Obstinance is not the same as will. To will means to do all that which judicious reasoning indicates as opportune with our body, intelligence, and even with our passions. A willful person sees clearly. A stubborn person only sees one point. He does not admit that another might think rightly; everyone should think as he does. For instance, am I not convinced that I hold the only truth, at least on a few subjects? Even when an opinion is exact, it is far better for us to blunt its cutting edges rather than to start endless discussions which might offend, and probably not even persuade our opponent. All truths need not be told. If I obstinately set out to satisfy a purely personal desire, against one and all, I risk embarrassment and pitfalls. Because, this obstacle which irritates me and makes me impatient, is a warning. Or rather, this particular irascible impatience should point out that my project is not right. If I confine myself to following obsolete methods, I am "pawing the ground", I am merely marking time. One must respect the opinion of elderly people, of course; but if to an old man, the period of his youth appears to have been almost irreproachable, still it had its own turpitudes. The difference between yesterday and today is slight, though, in any case, it is always to the advantage of the present, since evolution always marches on. The only trouble is that I merely see the edge of things, just the very small nooks and corners from out of this multitude of one's own personal progress. Hence, I judge badly. If I refuse to pay a visit, if I refuse an idea, a book, those are two doors which I am closing: one to myself and one to the thing offered me. MEDITATIONS 79 Therefore, I shall welcome and examine everything which is presented to me with clear judgment, comparing everything to the model which Jesus offers me. Nothing will be able to seduce me except Jesus Who personifies the Ideal of all. OBSERVANCE: Distrust one's own opinions. MEDITATIONS 80 36.4 - ANXIETY "The morrow will take care of itself." (Matthew 6:34) Fear, even in its most attenuated forms, weakens our moral and physical bodies. What have I to fear, since nothing happens without God's permission? Nothing happens unless I have deserved it; nothing happens unless it be for my good; no one, who is truly and spiritually stronger than I, can attack me. If I could only see how many things and forces have worked that I might be born; how many, that I might eat a meal; how many, that I might cross this thoroughfare! I would then understand how precious my life is and how profoundly my Friend loves me; but I would have no other merit than that of being reasonable. My Friend does not crave for a reasonable friendship; a natural friendship; He wants me to enter into the supernatural with Him; there where reason does not hold sway, where there is neither logic nor customs; He wants me to enter into His love. That is why He leaves me in ignorance. These worries which debilitate me are reasonable; that is the very reason why I should suppress them. If I am attacked by a highwayman, it means that I have been a brigand too. If my associate cheats me, it is due to my having betrayed trusts. Man reaps what he has sown. Anxiety spreads havoc in one's intelligence, blinds intuition, attracts the very misfortune, illness, or failure which it fears. If duty calls me, even the clear presentiment of a catastrophe must not deter me from following my path, since I am in the hands of God. I shall be neither pusillanimous, nor rash. Calmness attracts luck and spreads it; it thwarts intrigues, dissipates obstacles. Calmness is the herald of MEDITATIONS 81 inner life. What can possibly trouble me, since the Master walks with me? OBSERVANCE: Ask the Word for help, and then walk right on to meet the obstacle. MEDITATIONS 82 37.1 - THE LAST SUPPER "Such is the bread which has come down from Heaven." (John 6:58) The Word feeds the Universe. All creatures owe their existence to Him, and they subsist only because He gives Himself to them perpetually through a sacrifice renewed ad infinitum. This is the way a pantheist understands the relationship between God and the world, and how he explains the rite of the Eucharist. The Christian believes the Last Supper to have a higher meaning, and he believes it to have a more precise and living virtue. He is right; he is even more infinitely right than he imagines. Take the first hypnotist who comes along, an average man as far as his inner life is concerned; it is possible for him to make his subject experience all sorts of sensations from a glass of pure water. Could not Christ, the first among all beings, could He not confer upon bread and wine the very virtues, the totality of which constitute His own personality? This explanation is still but an outer exegesis. When He said: "This is my Body, this is my Blood", Jesus transmuted and recreated the spiritual essence of the vine and of the wheat. There is still something more. In His hands, matter is not inert dust; and I foresee that gradually and in proportion to my greater inner attainments, the truer and more genuine facets of the mystery of transubstantiation will be revealed to me. Moreover, when the Word, for our sake, made Himself flesh and created an individuality with which He clothed Himself, and began His descent, He did so at the price of unspeakable suffering. During His descent, the deeper He penetrated into matter, the more did universal crime martyrized Him. The Word, so to speak, authorized Himself to choose only those elements from the sufferings of His divine nature in order to form His human nature. That is why "His body is food", since it has been formed through the laboring pains of His divine descent; and "His blood is drink" because His MEDITATIONS 83 agonies have vitalized His works. OBSERVANCE: Once a day, I must impose upon myself some

self-sacrifice for a charitable cause, in remembrance of Christ. MEDITATIONS 84 38.2 – PRAYER "While He stood praying, the Heaven was opened..." (Luke 3:21) Jesus tells me that long speeches are not necessary when speaking to God. As I can and should refer all my material and spiritual needs to Him, I also must ask Him for His help, even when it seems possible to me to rely solely upon my own forces. Yet, and in any case, few words are necessary, because He is well aware of my needs long before I set them forth. However, because He loves me, He likes for me to lean upon Him. He is infinitely above any kind of eloquence; therefore I shall speak to Him in simple terms. He is present in all the emotions that I may feel as I invoke Him, and in all the favors which ensue; but then He proportions His splendor to my lowliness and shrinks His greatness to my littleness. That is why He is closer when inner suavities do not come, as well as when the extreme center of my heart is fixed solely upon Him; for, then, He comes to me with a degree of light just surpassing that which my unworthy nature can perceive and bear. Whenever I feel I am in an arid, languorous and solitary state, if I continue to cling with an indefectible grasp to Christ, this night of my nature will become the dazzling day of faith. This is the time when I am given the chance to surpass myself; and when I advance. Whereas, the fervors and ecstasies I experience, are but the pleasures of my personality enjoying its state. No matter how high I may rise, God is still higher. Whenever I feel His touch, it is because He stoops down to encourage me. MEDITATIONS 85 Thus my prayer will be heard only if I am humble. Hence I must abase myself ever lower in order to meet Him, Who, being the All Highest, has come down to nothingness, just for me. Humility is the cornerstone of one's whole inner edifice; it is the atmosphere of the disciple. OBSERVANCE: Daily, I shall meditate upon one of the sentences from the Lord's Prayer. MEDITATIONS 86 39.3 – CHARITY "You should love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:12) All spiritual virtues are really but one virtue; whoever possesses one has all the others. But, charity is the foremost one which God asks of me, because, among them all, it is the one I can make the most precise efforts to acquire. Charity takes innumerable forms. If that fire is burning in my heart, then all my actions, words, and thoughts shall become offerings and alms. If that fire does not burn therein, I still have the inestimable resource of acting, speaking and thinking as if I loved. This is the divine falsehood to which I must constrain myself at all times and in all situations. Charity is not benevolence nor is it philanthropy. These are human, prudent, and reasonable; while charity is rash; it consults nothing but its own compassion; no obstacle stands in its way; no ingratitude rebuffs it; no reward excites it. Intuitively it knows all niceties, it speaks all tongues; it places itself on the level of any and all conditions. Thanks to it, I shall be able to reach even the confines of the Universe; through it God obligates Himself to serve me. Out of charity God has created the world and recreates it. It is Charity which forms the body of the Son of Man and the soul of the Son of God. Through it all miracles become possible, all mysteries are unveiled, all the chains of matter are shattered. Now – this principle of all powers, this source of all beauties, and this secret of all deliverance is the only virtue, amongst all, for which I will use the same discipline and rigor as one who is training to be an athlete. In the cultivation of the other virtues, something escapes my control, whereas a gesture, a thought, a word of help for a creature in distress are always subject to my conscience, and possible to my will power. MEDITATIONS 87 OBSERVANCE: Never let a day go by without helping someone in one way or another. MEDITATIONS 88 40.4 – HUMILITY "He is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven who will abase himself like this little child." (Matthew 18:4) Essentially, humility does not consist, in the knowledge I may have of my weakness or wickedness; or in my being conscious of divine grandeurs; or in the search of menial tasks; for an obscure existence in performing exhausting toils, or in accepting to be scorned; nor in the public avowal of my sins; or in the forgetfulness of the good I might have done; or in the pleasure one experiences in seeing others succeed or being preferred; neither in the certitude of being the least among men. All of this are but acts of humility, the conditions or fruits of humility. Besides being all of this, humility is also something else which I sense and yet cannot quite define. When one believes one is humble one ceases to be. Humility is a mystery in the center of my being, a limitless and fathomless mystery. All the virtues are based upon and live from humility. It is through humility and because of humility that it becomes possible for God to dwell in me. It is up to God to establish humility within me, in so far as my incurable pride permits Him to do so. To prepare myself to receive this gift, I shall try to understand that it is God Who accomplishes in me and through me all the good that I do; and that the evil I do comes from me. I will thank Him for everything: happiness and unhappiness, gifts and disabilities. I will let others see His benefactions only in order to help them. Praises shall sadden me. I shall rejoice when criticized. I will hide the failures of others. I will not seek for positions in the public eye. I shall not be vain. I shall not fear ridicule. I shall ask my Master to reveal me to myself; to let me see that particular secret perversity of which I am not always aware, but which I know to be in me, and which poisons all the good that I want to do. MEDITATIONS 89 OBSERVANCE: I must cultivate the feeling of humility within myself rather than express it through artificial gestures. MEDITATIONS 90 41.1 – THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23:46) My actual state of being is both my workshop and my battlefield. The stirrings of my passions tend to translate themselves into acts; they feel that they must incarnate in order to subsist, and if I do not take care to build for them a very concrete body, they become

extinct. This material existence which I give to these immaterial essences subsequently reacts, Prom within upon the world itself, upon this imponderable which saw them born. But the primary as well as the general law is that nothing happens in the visible realm which does not already exist in the invisible. The visible phenomena, the proceedings, meetings, and harangues which occur whether for an illness, or for an enterprise or in a revolution are but marionettes set in motion by a hidden hand. Since Christ wanted to give the world a living example, He complied submissively to the law of the world, a law He had promulgated in the past: He worked with His hands; He underwent suffering in His body; He visited everywhere, even the Kingdom of the dead. Death is a living goddess and she is the strongest of all; she triumphed over her immortal sisters until that particular night when, for the first time, she met defeat. She too had to obey her Lord; the long expectation of the ancient Jests had to come to an end so that they might go on to Heaven; it was necessary that the future resurrection of the flesh, this mysterious transmutation of our dense and crippled organisms into impassible and radiant bodies, had to be made possible. No matter how dark may be the tenebrae where creation slumbers, there are dawns which bring it light occasionally. Creation marches forward in spite of divisions, struggles, alternate excesses; it marches toward harmony and peace. There is only one Master: The One Who has traced all plans, grouped all masses, scoured all roads; the One Whom everything must obey, yet Who, because of His love for me, demands from me only the obedience of love; to show it to me He even came down to me; and Who, finally returning to the Heights, invited me to follow Him. OBSERVANCE: Each morning, I shall believe that, during the night, some evil has died in me, and that I am reborn purer for another effort. MEDITATIONS 91 42.2 - ILLNESS "He took our infirmities upon Himself, and bore our sicknesses." (Matthew 8:17) Among all the systems proposed to establish a philosophy of medicine, only the religions tell the truth. An accident, vital disturbances, or pernicious heredity are nothing but "how"; the "because" are the merciful, and just permissions which the Father gives immanent Justice to let us feel the counterblows of the licenses we took in the past. Sin is what makes my body vulnerable. An infraction of the Law is a malevolent force which circulates, sowing disorder, through the invisible multitude of secondary causes, then it returns fatally to its point of departure, reinforced by everything which, analogous to its venom, has been able to adhere to it during its trajectory. It is I who am the true author of my physiological blemishes and accidents. It follows, that only he can heal to whom Truth gives cognizance of the causes, and the power to remit sin. Any other medicine, no matter how mysterious or scientific it may be, only enchains the disease for either a short or long period, but this prisoner always succeeds in breaking the chains and returns to its victim until the debt is approximately paid. Yet, I have a duty toward my body - which is to bring it relief. After all, my body has been an instrument; it is I, the self, my heart, my will and selfishness which bear the greater responsibility. I shall try to be cured, but shall not use any, means which would only be another fault, a new debt and the; principle of a future illness. Then I shall add my prayers to the remedies. And when I shall have recovered my health, I shall go and visit the sick, help them, pray for them, and try to extend the hand of love and the compassion they merit, since my Master says that these people are: Himself. MEDITATIONS 92 OBSERVANCE: Let us try not to complain when suffering. MEDITATIONS 93 43.3 - MOURNING "Leave the dead to bury the dead." (Luke 9:60) Our beloved ones whom Death wrenches away from us are not lost. Regardless of the frightful complexity of the world, everything finds its own place that much quicker when creatures let themselves be guided. On the contrary, by not obeying they delay this "putting in order" which Religions call: the Judgment. If men could only see what happy consequences resignation engenders; if only they could see what disturbances occur in the dual motion of souls because of spiritualistic séances and obstinate regrets, they would peacefully await the hour to go and meet their departed ones; they would be satisfied with the spontaneous manifestations of survival; these alone are licit and opportune. The immortal spirit does not need rest as often as the body does. When it has returned its instrument of labor to the earth, it receives another in another world. All religions teach this. When this ultra-terrestrial life is expiatory, it is called either purgatory or hell; when it is a life of repose it is called paradise. When I weep for my departed ones, is it not merely the loss of the joy that their beloved presence gave me that I regret? But, does not each one have his work? Does not the one who tries to prevent me from getting an education do me harm? The departed are attending a new school; I do not have the right to distract them nor to pull them back; if I really love them, I shall leave them entirely free to perform their unknown tasks. I weep for them because I love them; and I do love them for the happiness, the peace and the strength they were giving me. It is thus that, through baits proportionate to my selfishness, industrious Nature gives me an interest in pure Love. Little by little Nature teaches me to love higher beings, it leads me kindly to the summit from where one discovers the horizons of sacrifice. MEDITATIONS 94 OBSERVANCE: Let us hide our sorrows, when in mourning. MEDITATIONS 95 44.4 - THE FEAR OF DEATH "He who listens to my words, enjoys eternal life. (John 5:24) The reason we are afraid of death, is not so much our apprehension of the unknown as because of the rupture of the thousands of ties which bind our body, our sensitivity and

our character to this world. It seems as though we are losing everything we love, forever. And yet, there exists innumerable realms where landscapes are more beautiful, beings better, works more august, and friendships more faithful. But our lack of confidence dominates the fear of the morrow; we refuse to accept that never would the Kindness of the Father throw defenseless beings into isolation or into unmerited down-crushing. The enemy has to be faced. If I dare look death in the face it will lose its horror. All that which surrounds me, that which is familiar and which I love, such as beings and objects, are only trusts which I must administer, or they are an aid to my progress, or students to whom I have had a mandate to teach something. None of them belong to me; nothing belongs to anyone, only to God. It is by God, through God, because of God, and for God that I am licensed to care for, perfect, and love those with whom I come in contact; whether people or things. Even the beings that I cherish most profoundly, I cannot take along with me. Have I chosen them freely? No, I was drawn to them by something, I know not what, by something much stronger than my reason. Hence, it means that no matter how deep my love may be, it is nothing but the sign of the true bond that unites them to me: an anterior, solid bond, which was tied by the strong hands of Angels upon the order of the Father. We have known our beloved ones in former times; we shall find them again, later; we did find them today. And the more I advance, the quicker will fall the veils which hide the true faces of beings from me; the more intimately will I be united with those I love, within the splendor of essential Reality.

OBSERVANCE: Think of death as the ever-blessed liberator. MEDITATIONS 98 45.1 – THE ASCENSION "Even as He blessed them, He parted from them, and was carried into Heaven." (Luke 24:51) A comet egresses from the unexplorable depths of space, it descends to the nether abysses, encircles a star, then rescinds to the spheres above, meanwhile sowing new powers, regulating and reorganizing everywhere. In the same way, when the Word descends to the very depths of Nature, He promulgates precepts and gives example; then He returns to His abode by the new path which He Himself has just hewn, and where all those whom He has called to follow Him during His course, will travel someday. The Ascension completes the messianic work. Never could man, even had he undergone all tribulations, have obtained passage from those who guard the darkest hells or those who guard the luminous paradises. The rebels who covet his body and spirit would always have invented some new ambush or insurmountable barriers. But Christ has opened a secret path; He has built bridges across chasms and placed life-guards at the dangerous crossings. Man never walks for a moment without a guide; in all his acts invisible collaborators aid him; the tears he sheds are brought and laid as precious gems at the feet of the Lord; his prayers are always conveyed, from one sphere to another sphere, up to the eternal throne. Thus the Ascension, which is nothing but a legend to the exegetics, and nothing but the symbol of the final phases of the subjective attainment of the adept to the esotericism, appears to the one who knows Jesus, as the ultimate sign of His solicitude, and as the supreme effort of His Mercy. May the whole of humanity set forth upon this blessed road in one definite leap, (élan) and in one triumphal flight reach, as soon as can be, this unique summit which soars above everything, beyond everything, and yet which is everywhere at the same time. MEDITATIONS 99 OBSERVANCE: When I have a free moment, I shall repeat to myself, that Jesus asks me to follow Him. MEDITATIONS 100 46.2 – CONTEMPT "You must not give that which is holy to dogs. (Matthew 7:6) Even if I did possess all talents and knew all sciences, if I hold inferior beings, the pairs, and unintelligent people in contempt it proves that I am stupid and hard-hearted. In fact, what do my renown and success depend upon? From a centigram of phosphorous or iron in my organism; from a gesture of my guardian angel; from a word or a meeting; from the secret devotion of some friend, visible or invisible? I wonder! How do I know? If I live outside the pale of society or at the bottom rung of the social ladder, I do not have the right to despise their underpinnings either. There is always a just reason for everything. If things seem disorderly it merely appears to be so, due to the fact that my opera glasses are not in focus. All of us, rich, poor, good, wicked, ruffians or intelligent people, we are taking classes; if we tease one another, we lose the value of the teaching; we shall have to make up for the hours we have dissipated and pay for our disobedience. If I believe myself to be innocent and just, I become sensitive to the least prick against my self-esteem. But, when I recognize my worthlessness, and see how little of this complex, inconsistent, and anemic personality belongs to me, the attacks will not affect me anymore; they will be like a thorn in a finger, or a rent in my clothing; but I shall not become irritated; I shall joyfully continue my fortifying walk through the vast forest of the world with good humor. The debonairness – the humble do even better; they thank the Father; they know that each suffering is a little bit of impurity, which is washed away; it is a little bit of darkness, which the sun chases away. Does such heroism frighten my timorous courage? At least I shall abstain from believing myself to be superior, and I shall welcome the attacks with a smile of love and surrender. MEDITATIONS 101 OBSERVANCE: He kind toward everyone, even to those whom I believe to be unworthy. MEDITATIONS 102 47.3 – CRITICISM "Do not judge others, that you may not be judged." (Matthew 7:1) No critic ever wins a sympathetic ear; even were his remarks judicious, few people will put them into practice. However, the man who is modest knows how to profit from partiality; an envious glance or a disdainful glance will always be of benefit to me, because he who has ugliness in his character is an expert in ugliness. Indulgence does not see evil. If due to circumstances I am placed in such a

position that I, in turn, must judge some of my brothers, or some of his works, I know that Love will offer some other methods. I know, for example, that Love does not tear down; it builds something on the side; it constructs something else. I know that neither the spoken nor the written words possess the compelling force of example; that true humility, the secret conviction I have of my ignorance and of lack of skill, though they may prevent me from seeing the defects in the works of others, they will permit me to discover therein the outline of some new beauty, and the germ of a force which is still unaware of itself. These new findings being positive are far more important than the scrapings or the pickaxe blows from the wrecking-critic. He only stockpiles miasma upon other miasma, adds ferments to ferment, and cracks to an already tottering wall. I must not permit myself any intolerance; I must respect the free will of another even if I am strong enough to constrain him. Why should my opinion be the best one, since the number of possibilities and probabilities is infinite? If a desire to criticize wells within me, I shall put myself in the place of my brother, I shall picture to myself his state of soul, his motives, his temperament and his milieu. That will be an instructive study as well as a step toward my own self-mastery. MEDITATIONS 103 Thus, I shall learn how to discover evil within the good, which I attribute to myself, and the good, which lies dormant in the evil I perceive in others. OBSERVANCE: Be tolerant; look for the good; point it out. MEDITATIONS 104 48.4 – IMPATIENCE "It is by patience that you will secure possession, of your souls." (Luke 21:19) All the events from which Destiny weaves the pattern of my existence are but exercises to develop my faculties. When a goal interests me, when I believe that by attaining it I shall experience a profound joy, I feel capable of superhuman efforts. This kind of energy is nothing but selfishness. I should be able to expand it for goals, which are of no profit to me. The perfect realizer acts, just as the ambitious man does, with all his might, but he remains as impassible before defeat as before success. Impatience is a loss of strength. Whether it is born from an external obstacle or through my own awkwardness, it never results in anything but to delay the objective I am pursuing, since it disturbs the lucidity of my reason, and sometimes even that of my senses. Its effervescence, which will affect the future, renders, even more bitter the disillusion, which will follow my selfish success. I am loaded down with the chains of time, of space and matter; I can only do what they permit me. Quite often they are salubrious to me, because the mirage of the greedy happiness toward which I am rushing headlong, often transforms itself into suffering the moment I reach it. Just as a child never believes his mother's counsel; he has to feel the burn to keep away from the fire. "That which is done without due respect to Time does not last." Patience, whether it is constancy, endurance, resignation, waiting, indulgence or mansuetude, is the most efficacious virtue, which forces me to become master of myself. Patience imposes the attitude of immutability upon the febrile self; it gives my faculties the time to grow, especially to those whose existence I do not even suspect; it permits my learning the lessons of life in depth. In MEDITATIONS 105 short, the primordial discipline for my will is patience. OBSERVANCE: I must compel myself to be gentle with everyone. MEDITATIONS 106 49.1 – THE APPARITIONS OF CHRIST AFTER HIS DEATH "I am with you until the consummation of the world." (Matthew 28:20) The real "how, whys, and wherefores" for the visits which the Master paid to His disciples after His Resurrection, escape my comprehension. I only know that the witnesses were Not hallucinated, that there is no question of legends, nor phenomena, such as those which are produced by mediums, magnetisms, or magicians, because, in Jesus, the power is supernatural, while these seekers, no matter how intrepid they are, nor how strongly animated by an admirable thirst for knowledge they are, they can only grasp natural forces. The reality of the Resurrection can be historically proven. But to me, that should be inconsequential, otherwise the Christ that I imagine is not the true Christ. What are analyses good for, since I know that He can do everything? His spirit is perpetually hovering; He is there, at births, at deaths, at reconciliation's. It is from Him that the unknown passerby I met receives that startling radiance which moved me tenderly to my very depths. It is He Who gives to the glance, which I caught by chance, the miraculous virtue of leading my soul to the shores of eternal Beauty. It is because of Him that the frozen mantle of despair And worries falls from my shoulders because of the smile of a child or of an old man I saw. If my yearning for Jesus animates my whole being, I shall see the image of Jesus everywhere. I know that Christ can manifest before me under any kind of form; that He may appear to me in dreams or in an ecstasy; that He can make Himself visible in flesh and blood simultaneously, in many places, and upon many worlds; He is the Master; He commands All substances and forms. He is everywhere; He is at my side with His whole Heaven; may I, at least, never MEDITATIONS 107 close my eyes or my heart to this marvelous encounter. OBSERVANCE: I shall conduct myself, in such a way, knowing that everything is able to repeat some word of Jesus. MEDITATIONS 108 50.2 – MELANCHOLY "When you fast, do not show it by gloomy looks." (Matthew 6:16) Melancholia is an inappetence of desire, due to fatigue, disappointments or weakness; it is usually the result of strenuous research or of having made foolhardy experiments; it might also come from fatigue due to tedious routine life, from shattered dreams, from the ugliness of our surroundings, or because of some renunciation, which is not based upon Love. The zest which facilitates my performing the daily chores is the alcohol poured by some compassionate genii, so that I might surmount my anxieties; because, I am still not courageous enough to work by reason of sheer duty. I still need, alas! The fallacious attraction of desires; they transfigure the ashes and

give body to daydreams. Eyes, which are just opening to light, remain tender for a long time. I must neither mock the forlorn dreamer nor the lazy or indolent man. All creatures work, serve in spite of themselves, but they do work. There are also other kinds of tasks than those I am able to perceive. Hence, I shall not judge the unproductive; rather, I shall attempt to be twice as productive. Gaiety denotes an over brimming strength; it is the sign of physical and moral health. I must take hold of myself so that no one will see my sadness; I must not expect consolation from any one except from the Consoler. My sadness shall be replaced by another kind of sadness if I treat it merely with gaieties and outer distractions. One can only be liberated from a debt by paying it, not by denying it. To become perturbed by failure is not wise. If I have worked for selfish ends, failure becomes a grace, since it shows up my vanity. If I have worked for an Ideal, have I really done all I could? And after all, does not God know far better than I what is good for me? OBSERVANCE: I must give of myself, of my life, if I wish to receive life. MEDITATIONS 109

51.3 – INSUBORDINATION "Take my yoke upon yourselves...; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:29-30) Resistance, refusals, debates, sulkiness, impatience, mutiny, grumbling, rebuffs, rebellion and revolt are all diverse phases of the same spirit of personal egotism. The human being, even the god and the earthworm are born here-below, just for the purpose of learning to obey. God is the father of a family who asks of His children docility, not for His sake, but for theirs. He knows that revolt leads them to perdition. When He is certain of their submission, He gives them back their freedom; even more, He makes Himself their servant. By considering all things profoundly, it is from God that everything flows. Neither the king, the minister, the policeman, the foreman, nor anyone would have any authority over me unless God gave him, more or less immediately, the power. There again, it is I, the former "I", who gives, to the present "I", the authorities to whom I must submit. If my pranks of the past were such that I find myself today riveted to the yoke of oppressive regulations, whose fault is it? If the law which tyrannizes me seems unjust, my revolt will only serve to tighten the bonds; and my temporary victory over it will only engender a still more inexorable tyranny. Violence is not annihilated by the opposite violence; it merely changes form. The execution of a murderer does not purify his heart; something else is necessary to do that. If I am sufficiently master of myself to obey any order effortlessly, no one will ever have the power to control me. Life demands obedience from me only because revolt still dwells in me. Moreover, had I reached the state of perfect obedience, such as the obedience of Angels, I still might have to obey orders which appear to be spurious, in order to offer the revolted ones a living and pure example. Innocence alone is truly creative. MEDITATIONS 111

OBSERVANCE: If I want to advance faster, I shall try to obey not only my superiors, but my equals and my inferiors as well. MEDITATIONS 112

52.4 – PERFECTION "You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) Perfection is not to be found in impassability, nor in holding the works of Nature in contempt, nor in living a peculiar mode of life, nor in minute observances of piety, nor in long drawn out prayers, in physical chastisements, in scruples, nor in blind adherence to my own spirited views, in ecstasies, nor in the gift of miracles. Perfection lies in conforming my will to the will of God, and in the energy deployed to subject my body, my brain and my heart to this obedience. Perfection is as accessible to me as to everyone. God chooses as prophets, seers, and thaumaturgies, individuals whose physical and psychic organisms offer certain particular virtues and special properties for that purpose. Everyone has a heart which he can purify, and a Self to which he must renounce. God offers Himself to me. I must give myself to Him; through my will, whose principle is love, I imitate the step which I shall perfect through my acts. My first effort will be to purify my heart; my second effort will be to purify my whole being, according to the indications offered to me by life. Perfection is the absolute. I can only set my heart upon it, but set my heart upon it, I must; I must relentlessly surpass myself. Perfection is the fulfillment of the self; and as I am a human being, my supreme fulfillment is in God, and in God alone. Perfection does not mean to be immersed in the ocean of the Indefinite; it is not the exaltation of individuality, either; it is the development of all my powers brought to their very limits; it further means that upon this natural perfection descends the supernatural Perfection which comes not to destroy it, but to create it anew; not to enlarge it further, but to transmute it, to transplant it upon thin splendid and pure land which is called eternal Life. MEDITATIONS 113

Perfection is called Jesus Christ; the road to perfection is Jesus Christ; the strength to follow that path, it is Jesus Christ, Who is singular unity, innumerable multiplicity, inconceivable dream, indestructible reality. That is the goal of the Universe, this is the goal of my existence. OBSERVANCE: Each time I hear the clock strike the hour, I shall ask God to light His Love within me.