

Spiritual Writings

*Saint Raphaela Mary
of the Sacred Heart*

Edition prepared by
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HANDMAIDS OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Photo on the front cover:

Bell tower of the Church in Pedro Abad

CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE

The documents that we intend to transcribe here are kept in the Archives in two different collections entitled “Spiritual Notes” and “Autograph Manuscripts”. In general, those writings that express personal experiences of the Saint have been included in the “Spiritual Notes”. Others, which are copied from spiritual writers, prayers taken from the liturgy and from Christian tradition, etc. are included under the title “Autograph Manuscripts”. However, the distinction is not always clear. For example, there are some prayers based on psalms that are considered originals, whose powerful biblical inspiration almost equates them with paraphrases, or copies of different short texts.

Ultimately, the Spiritual Notes also include some consultations addressed to Fr Hildalgo, in a telegraphic style, and the Jesuit’s replies written on the same page. However, these can hardly be counted as documents of real spiritual communication.

The chronological distribution and numbering of the texts that we offer here, does not correspond exactly to that used in the Archives. The references to the Archives appear in the introduction to each of the texts.

1. FORMULA OF FIRST VOWS, 1877

Autograph Manuscript penned by Fr. Cotanilla.

*The Saint herself wrote her family name and the name of the Institute:
Rafaela de Porras y Ayllón, from now on Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

Spiritual Notes n.1.

On one sheet of paper (11 x 9 cm.) written on one side only.

Almighty and Eternal God: I, Rafaela de Porras y Ayllón, from now on Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, although most unworthy to come into your presence but trusting in your infinite goodness and mercy and moved by the desire of serving you, in the presence of the most Holy Virgin Mary and the whole heavenly court, vow to your Divine Majesty, perpetual poverty, chastity and obedience in the Congregation of the Sisters of Reparation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to live my life and die therein, understanding all things according to the Constitutions of the same Congregation.

I humbly beseech your infinite goodness, by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, to accept this holocaust as a pleasing sacrifice; and as you have given me the grace to desire and offer it, so you will also give me abundant grace to fulfil it.

Madrid, in the chapel of our house, on the 8th day of June, 1877.

INTRODUCTION

No spiritual notes are extant between 1878-84, unless we give that name to the content of a single sheet of paper, possibly dated 1883, in which M. Sacred Heart asks Fr. Hildalgo's permission to perform a series of mortifications. The Jesuit's reply is written on the same page; one of his laconic phrases is highly significant: "What I want is the mortification of holy observance. And that will do!". Although she practised mortification throughout her life, both exterior and interior, over and above what was demanded by observance, it is evident that M. Sacred Heart took this teaching very much to heart. Community life and daily happenings lived, at times, heroically, were, after all, the basis of her asceticism. If we read many of her letters attentively, we see that this was also the doctrine that she tried to inculcate in her religious Sisters: "Work for solid sanctity... leave aside any peculiar quirks" (Letter 220). "Our Lord does not ask us to walk around, dragging our physical infirmities behind us (Letter 203), because "God does not want us to sacrifice our bodies, but rather our spirits". (Letter 201). Moreover, in this "sacrificing of our spirits", the greater part should correspond to the abnegation that goes with living together, and mutual acceptance: "More than exterior penances, these are what are important to refine the soul, and what God requires, so He can unite himself with us". (Letter 232).

This period finishes with the brief notes that the Saint made about her Retreat in 1885.

2. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1885

OCTOBER 4

This text gathers together, nearly exclusively, the feelings and ideas which the retreatant experienced in the so called First Week: Meditations on The Principle and Foundation. (1,2 and 3), Sin, (4 and 5) the Four Last Things (6,7 and 8) and Mercy, (9). The text finishes with an allusion to the Reign of Christ the King; but it is nothing more than a simple reference.

During these days, the Saint shows her generosity on entering into the retreat at a time when she was feeling dry and tired: “Very dry and sad, resisting indifference”, “just like a stone”, “very cold”, and “very sleepy”... . However, she did manage to fall asleep from time to time, (“The contemplation on the Prodigal Son”). The First Week went by in a fighting mode; on a few occasions she lengthened the time of prayer (“fighting, when I could”). Apart from this struggle, the most important happening was the deep-seated conviction, the profound experience she had of being loved by God, loved to the point of it being impossible for her to imagine God being annoyed by sin: “... I could not move myself to sensible compassion, I could not possibly imagine God being annoyed nor did I feel any lack of peace in my soul...”.

This retreat was directed by Fr. Tomás Padilla, S.J. It seems that he substituted at the last minute for Fr. Cándido Sanz, who had to leave Madrid. Fr. Padilla’s giving of the retreat was not a happy experience. The Saint thought that his talks were too long: “I don’t find it helpful to listen to such long points for prayer”, she writes. However, those days of prayer (4th to 12th of October, 1885) were the ones that were uppermost in her mind when she wrote to Rosalia Tabernero, saying: “I am calling those days the ‘little summer’ of my soul, because I am receiving grace for the whole year and, each year, they seem new all over again.” (Letter of 8th October, 1885).

*Original Autograph text: Spiritual Notes, n.3:
One page, measuring 20 x 13 cm. Written on both sides.*

1. God created me for something, and he has to give me everything I need to fulfil that “something,” even if I were the only person in the world; so I must have blind trust in Him. Everything for God, nothing for me. Everything in God, nothing in me.
I was very fervent and I was able to lengthen my prayer by a whole hour.
2. I must use the things in life only as means to bring me to my final end, and its problems are not meant to be impediments, but rather incentives: just like the waves are for a boat. All I do should have as its only end to please God.
I prayed for an extra half hour.
3. Very dry and sad, trying to resist indifference.
I extended my prayer time for as long as I could, struggling to do so.
4. In the meditation on the Three Sins, I saw that in each one I was very vulnerable and continually falling. In the First, I saw my resistance to submitting my judgement, usually in the rather difficult moments that present themselves so frequently.
In the sin of Adam and Eve, I observed the tendencies in my soul to want to know certain things that put my soul in danger of being lost, and in the meditation on a Single Sin, I understood what a misfortune it would be if I were to consent to any one of them at all. I was very recollected, but I was unable to feel any compunction. I just could not imagine God being displeased nor could I feel unsettled in my soul and this irritated me exceedingly, because I feared that I was insensitive or that I was already condemned.
5. In the meditation on my Personal Sins. As ever, regret for past sins and more so for what they continually make me suffer when I remember them. As for my sins in the past year, pain for those that I have committed because of my lack of humility, towards people for whom I should have enormous respect. And for the future, with regard to them, to be blind, deaf and dumb.

6 and 7. Just like a stone; neither thoughts about hell or death moved me at all.

Resolution, the same as always: to be better every day even though the body has to pay the price.

8. In the Meditation on the Last Judgement, I was very moved because Jesus intervened. I wept for joy and experienced many feelings. I proposed to serve Jesus with even greater generosity.
9. In the meditation on the Prodigal Son, I was moved at the beginning, but afterwards I was very cold. I was very tired and I fell asleep without realizing it.
10. The Meditation on Christ the King. I was dry, as usual; listening to such long points does not inspire me at all. I made resolutions to try to continue each day with greater fervour for him... ¹

¹ Unfinished.

INTRODUCTION

No real spiritual notes of the Saint for 1886 have been preserved. As we said, when talking about the period from 1878 to 1884, a few sheets of paper have come into our hands, in which, in a very telegraphic style, she consults Fr. Hidalgo about spiritual matters. These consultations at times go beyond purely spiritual matters, but among them there are some that are relatively important: “On the Feast of St. Ignatius, shall I renew my vow to avoid all deliberate venial sin?” “Yes, Reverend Mother”, was Fr. Hidalgo’s reply.

“I am rather cowardly”, the Saint adds. “Take courage because St. Ignatius will help you”, was Fr. Hidalgo’s reply; and, referring to himself, added, “And his son also”. The Saint posed other questions about voluntary penances and other unimportant matters. She concludes: “So much writing has made me an old nun and a real one. And it is Your Reverence that has put me in this position”. “That is not what I want”, concludes Fr. Hidalgo, “but rather for you to be a Handmaid of the Sacred Heart”.

In contrast, the content of the collection of spiritual writings corresponding to 1887 is very rich.

That year, marked, as it was, by some very fundamental events, (The Approbation of the Institute and the election of the Saint as Superior General), was also a year of abundant spiritual “lights”, an authentic “moment of grace”, in the life of Mother Sacred Heart.

With the autumn came her annual retreat, during which the Saint wrote down her experiences in order to share them with Fr. Hidalgo. This retreat began in Madrid on November 24th and was given by the same Fr. Hidalgo. However, previously, on November 17th and October 29th, M. Sacred Heart received two spiritual communications of extraordinary value, which can be considered as much more than a preparation for the Ignatian experience of the Spiritual Exercises.

It is important to call to mind M. Sacred Heart’s journeys during the summer and the autumn of that year. In July, after overcoming M. Pilar’s resistance, she visited the two communities in Andalusia, (Cordoba and Jerez). Returning to Madrid on August 6th, she went during the last few days of that

month, to Bilbao to negotiate the acquisition of a house. M. Pilar's sudden arrival made the Saint delegate to her the lead in the negotiation and travel to Saragossa. On September 21st she was back once more in Madrid.

So much travelling and so many worries, meant that, when the autumn finally arrived, the Saint was very tired and complaining of the stress, caused by various tasks that involved not only long working days but also stretched into the very late hours of the night. As she herself says, in one of her Spiritual Notes, she was forced, in November, to accept some rest in order to deal with "the needs of the community". However, the Saint attributes her weakness to other factors: one, her repugnance to the position as General of the Institute; and secondly, that her "human nature" was overburdened by the weight of the divine graces, the truly extraordinary graces, that she was receiving.

In the midst of the comings and goings of the summer, la M. Sacred Heart confesses to Fr. Hidalgo that she finds everything that her position presupposes for her, very hard and, at times, unbearable. Fr. Hidalgo, on this and on other occasions, encourages her to reject her repugnance as a temptation, which, he says, "is based on self-love; because you believe that God needs our talents and human dispositions in order to govern a Congregation, and you are forgetting that God chooses the most despised people for his greatest works. So, be docile to God, open your conscience to whom you must, be humble in your aims, trusting in the grace and help of God, and go forward, because God is Almighty..." (Letter, September 27th, 1887).

The communications that we are going to transcribe are a small example of her docility to almighty grace. As they are addressed to Fr. Hidalgo, they show also her docility to her spiritual guide, and her resolute decision to open her conscience to the one to whom she thinks she should do so.

3. SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATIONS TO FR. HIDALGO

November 17th and October 29th, 1887

Even though this text lacks a title indicating that Fr. Hidalgo is the recipient, it is obvious that the Saint wrote it for him and sent it to him. We even have the Jesuit's reply, which consists in a commentary on her first paragraph. The Saint says that, while moving about the house, that means, in the midst of one of her domestic chores, she "suddenly" understands the meaning of the words "angelic life", and that she feels herself transformed, or "on fire". Fr. Hidalgo tries to help her understand that an angel, first and foremost, has a mission of service; is God's messenger on behalf of humankind:

«1st. Angelic Life! For Your Reverence it means a life dedicated to the service of the daughters of God, the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart.... 2nd. Angelic Life! The angels are so named because of their mission to watch over, protect and obtain all the good they can for humankind. Your life will be called angelic if you watch over, protect and obtain all the good you can for the Handmaids that God has entrusted to you. 3rd Angelic Life! As the angel of the Congregation you will place your glory and God's glory in fulfilling his mission, which consists in sacrificing yourself in order to serve all of them.... 4th Angelic Life! Just as the Sacred Heart has his angels in Heaven, so He chooses you to be his angel on earth. 5th Angelic Life! Just as those "up there" are always ready to fulfil their mission, whatever it happens to be, in the same way, he wants you to be ready for whatever is entrusted to you".

It seems beyond doubt that Fr. Hidalgo wanted to protect the Saint from the danger of any false mystical experiences, that were outside the pressing matters of this world. That might be understandable and even praiseworthy, but it is also certain that his continual warnings, in this vein, did cause M. Sacred Heart painful stress on occasions: namely, having to resist, out of obedience, some interior movements that, she, on the other hand, was experiencing and which were undoubtedly authentic.

In this text two separate experiences are related: one on November 17th (described two days later), and another on October 29th. The first one, dealing with the meaning of the term "Angelic Life" and about the vision she had of a "torrent of love" that seemed to come from Jesus and flow down toward her

soul. The second, concerning the mediation of “the Only begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ”. In both cases, the Saint expresses herself in a language that portrays a true experience, one that had left a profound and indelible mark on her spiritual life.

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.5:
Two sheets (21 x 13 cm.) written on all four sides.*

In the afternoon, on that day, I felt utterly without strength, and I was thinking about how very little I could do for God, as I couldn't even think about Him, because I was unsettled, and also very sad, because my life was going by without doing anything; absorbed with these thoughts, I was going through the house and suddenly, I heard the words: “Angelic Life”. These words totally transformed and inflamed me.

And I understood that their meaning for me was that, from now, on my life had to be in heaven. Not so that I would no longer be busy with the things of this earth, of course I would, and in a completely natural way, but without becoming attached to anyone or anything. Just as when the archangel Raphael accompanied Tobias; in human form, but only on the outside; his spirit was in heaven.

I don't know if it was that same night or the following morning, and even though I was excited and happy, I still noticed that God was having some difficulty in taking possession of my soul, which was, as I saw, necessary and what he wanted. Father, may Your Reverence excuse my use of words, but I have no other way of expressing myself. I saw, as it were, a torrent of love pouring out of Jesus and which seemed to flow towards my soul, but when it reached me only a few drops could actually penetrate me because there were so many little obstacles in the way hindering it. I tried to find out what they were and I understood that they were my fear that I might be deluded and my fear of sinning, that kept me in a permanent state of spiritual warfare. And so it is, that for a while now I am never at peace, because of these two fears. But I think that instead of wasting time with temptations, I should occupy myself rather with deeds. That is, whether gently or quickly, I should get rid of what is in the way and not stop to look at where the water stops or stir up the sediment that was making it muddy. As with a clear stream, that a person in the know clears of its larger obstructions, so that it can run more easily and won't flow over the sides, because he knows that the power of the water will

either remain still or carry with it the smaller hindrances; God acts in the same way in my soul, so that the power of the torrent will wash away my imperfections, and so that it will flow freely. Ah, my Jesus, what a struggle! I said “yes” to him and his love came with such strength that it swept everything before it, and when it came to where it was headed, which was my soul or my heart, thanks only to the strength he gave me, it was not turned into ashes.

And that is how he has me until now, 19th, every time I go to pray, to make adoration or recollect myself a little, and when I don’t, I do worry for a moment that I will never manage it.

As I have abandoned myself to letting this awful body of mine be looked after, because they think that I am unwell, I am getting up at “Second Hour”, which God only knows how much I hate, not because I do not like this gift, but because, as I know myself, I fear accommodating myself to this life, and making my meditation so late. I am saying “my meditation, but I cannot really call it that, but rather “a longing for love”, because that is exactly what it is the whole time. Today I could not resist any longer; because once the heart is involved, it becomes irresistible. I did groan, very quietly, but I experienced a moment of such intense pain that it even took my breath away.

The story now is that I look pale; I, who hide nothing from Your Reverence, I will tell you what I think, and what it seems to me is causing this: if I am wrong, I ask Your Reverence to help me to see that clearly. For Your Reverence has been my director for about six years now, and you know everything that goes on in my soul, and will have observed that the daily spiritual toil and divine communications that take place in me, and as they are stronger, will necessarily harm the body, and I believe that this is the cause and it has no remedy; because as Your Reverence will not want me to go backwards, just so that my body will seem to be well. In addition there are the concerns of my position, together with my lack of virtue.

I had forgotten that, at the same time that I heard these words that I am highlighting, I received such a clear knowledge of solid virtue (I don’t know what to call it) that I felt a strong repugnance to extraordinary things, and a deep desire never to experience them ever.

October 29th. On this day, I had a very great light, and saw that everything good comes to us through the Only Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. And that everything should be asked through his merits, and that our life and

salvation is in imitating him. I experienced a powerful feeling and it seemed that this truth of our faith wanted to fill my being. There is no other way; this was the way of all the saints; and it seemed to affirm that any other way is false. During this time, I was sorely tempted, and I have been for a while now, with suggestions that this way of imitating Christ is not for now, given that worldly things will withdraw and will not make the Institute prosper, nor will it receive anything from mere creatures, So Your Reverence can see how merciful and caring our God is with me.

4. A FRAGMENT OF AN AUTOGRAPH

The beginning is missing. Spiritual Notes n.6:

One sheet of paper (10 x 13 cm.).

...my soul is being torn out. I cannot say more than “Life of my soul, have mercy on me”; and if I were not forewarned, I would scream. In my torment, I throw myself at Jesus, and I see that he receives me graciously into his arms, and somehow I snuggle into them and without knowing how, I find myself peacefully fast asleep, probably just for a moment. But when I wake up everything is over and even my body feels so very well and it seems that I am no longer a woman, but a small child who has been hiding.

5. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1887

The text contains a description of the first two days of the Retreat, together with a short letter, addressed to Fr. Hidalgo, that serves as a heading. In it, she expresses the difficulty she feels when giving an account of her most intimate experiences, and, at the same time her determination to continue to follow her director's repeated advice. ("If Your Reverence does not tell me what is happening, who can say if it is going well or badly? Who could give you rules to hold onto what is good and to avoid what is superfluous? Finally, who could say where and how the enemy is trying to deceive you? And he is deceiving you in this repugnance you feel to give an account of your spiritual life, and Your Reverence knows this, your interior life says so, and Jesus himself is telling you... and that is why I, your servant, am sending you this. In addition, one of the greater inclinations of your spirit is towards the humility of holy simplicity; and if you study this repugnance you will see that it takes away your humility in many different ways"). (Letter written by Fr. Hidalgo, September 15th 1887.)

Original Autograph, with a heading addressed to Fr. Hidalgo:

Spiritual Notes n.7 and 8. Two double pages, (23 x 13 cm.)

Written on the four sides of a folded page, and three sides of the other.

Rev. Fr. Isidro Hidalgo.

My Reverend Father: My silence with respect to you has now come to an end; forgive me once again. How many little narrow streets the Devil has! And how he drags me along the main ones! It has always been my style to keep silent, despite the fact that all those who truly wanted to help my soul, have encouraged me as has Your Reverence. This gave me peace the day that I talked with Your Reverence; I have always believed that I only say foolish things, and that I am boring such respectable people, and that it is ridiculous for me, who can't even see the nose on my face, to talk to them about prayer, etc. But does Your Reverence think that I am peaceful acting in this way? Not at all, and I have never been so, but rather dying with anxiety. So whenever I do share everything, I experience great relief, even though I sometimes muddy it with scruples, which I still hope, with God's grace, to correct. Yes, Father, I need to tell you everything but without thinking about it again afterwards.

1st Day of the Retreat

For a few days now I have been feeling my heart preparing for the retreat, just as if Jesus himself were attracting me to himself, gently but forcefully. Last night, when I listened to the points for prayer on the text: “I will speak to her heart”² the dyke burst and my heart sank down into the heart of Jesus. I prayed the quarter of an hour that Your Reverence told me to, enfolded in His love. Afterwards, although it did not satisfy me, I was forced to stop for the time being, because of things I had to do, and staying for a little longer I took full advantage, without realizing how much I was going to be given: in suspense and feeling intense love I spent about three quarters of an hour but still without being completely satisfied. But despite these joys, I was not really content because this was what Jesus was giving me, and when I heard the points for meditation for today, I decided to work hard, and promised the Life of my soul never to move out of his Heart, yes, but rather inside that Heart to fight my passions, which, as He knows, sometimes push me to the very edge of losing him. So that is what I have done today, praying on the first meditation. At the same time as I was loving, I was also able to think and I realized that I am not really fulfilling my end well, because sometimes, the means to do so escape me. I called to mind my most grave faults, which are my resistance to doing God’s will in so many things, and I do not see, or I blind myself to it, so I must bow my head to everything that happens to me, without making any reply or being judgmental, and avoiding, in this way, the infinity of imperfections that I commit, in my judgement and even in my words. After finishing the Examen, I continued with the same meditation during Mass and until we left the chapel.

In the second meditation, I felt even more dry. I saw my soul battling to go off into its corner to rest in my God and my spirit pulling at it and trying to make me work. Oh, Father, it is so enjoyable to be in God’s arms! But I do not give up on my resolution to work hard, however much it costs me, as Your Reverence does not tell me to do anything different.

During this period, during which I have taken my time over writing to Your Reverence, I have not experienced any of the things that scare me in particular. In my prayer, I am nearly always very recollected, but in an extremely passive and peaceful fashion. I focus on a word, and that satisfies my soul. My heart has not ceased to be involved, as I told Your Reverence on

² Cf. Is 40.2.

other occasions, with trembling or pain, and with a frequent longing for God. During the day, I experienced struggles as if I were being abandoned by God.

I wrote nearly all of this, this morning while Your Reverence was giving a talk in the chapel that I knew nothing about because I was too lazy to ask. Afterwards I remained peaceful until the first meditation of the afternoon which set off a storm in me worse than the last one, and I was angry with Your Reverence for hours. Father, the thought came into my mind that this was quite the greatest humiliation that Your Reverence can imagine happening to a mere creature. I have so very much pride, but it is very well hidden. I even fought with Blessed Margaret Mary: treating her as if she were deluded and Your Reverence too. May this beloved Saint forgive me and Your Reverence too. Terribly angry, because Your Reverence covertly made no mention of my visions, and because Your Reverence ignored me but made some reference to the Novice Mistress and her novices. In this state, I listened to the points for meditation. My mind “went crazy” with so many projects, that I do not remember now, thank God.

One of them was to give up receiving direction because it was a waste of time. Finally, in the end, I managed to tame the wild beast and I even made her weep and helped her to know herself well, and this is the state I find myself in at this time. Now I know what I am, which is nothing; but I am expecting a second attack and many more until I obtain what I need; may God help me. I decided to suggest to Your Reverence that you no longer require me to write nice things to you, but rather, very ordinary ones. Also, on seeing how ordinary I am, it seemed to me that Your Reverence is far too important to be the director of someone like me; but now, refreshed, even though I believe myself to be more unworthy than ever, I would not want that to happen.

2nd Day. Repetition of the meditation on Indifference.

Very recollected in the normal way: praying with the three powers of the soul. At first I experienced some difficulty, but then, humbling myself considerably and working hard, I managed to enter fully into the meditation. I have never seen myself so completely steeped in the power that God has over me, and by the sense of obligation and total abandonment that I should have in God. At the end, I prayed a very fervent colloquy and I promised Our Lord that I would be indifferent to whatever He wished to do with me and with everything that is mine.

2nd Meditation. I entered into it with unction and fervour, but just as I was beginning, I began to feel cold and uneasy, and even physically unwell, so much so that I spent the whole hour so restless and, from time to time, just wanting it to be over. Seeing myself so insufferable, I tried in a thousand different ways to recollect myself and I did not manage to do so until nearly the end, when I tried to make a contemplation and then I was able to enter fully into the prayer. I saw Jesus, as it were on his throne and my soul as a wild animal chained to it, like a spectacle for all to see of the depths in which I found myself, because of my sins, and as if I could see all the Sisters mocking me. Despite seeing myself in such a repugnant state, I was filled with joy, totally absorbed in an interior feeling which I experienced in my soul; my heart was breaking with very violent palpitations, or rather, it was jumping (how does Your Reverence want me to write, if I do not know how to explain myself? This partly holds me back sometimes) and I felt myself, even bodily, disintegrating from such pain and gratitude as I have not felt in a long time. This is how I was until the Examen was finished, which I took advantage of, as I believed that a very great grace had been given to me.

Afterwards, I fell back into my previous stupidity. I have never experienced so many swings in my feelings and so many strange experiences in any retreat as in this one.

It seems to me that my decision not to talk with Your Reverence was a temptation, because on other occasions when I have shared certain things with you, even though it cost me a lot of work, the humiliation that I felt was good for my spirit. The mortification which I would like to undertake, with Your Reverence's permission, I wish to request face to face, because if I do not overcome myself and talk, soon I will not even want to tell you my sins.

Please be patient with me, Your Reverence, and you will receive your reward in heaven.

3rd Meditation on our personal sins.

Even though I did not receive much light, I was recollected and I recalled my sins with great sorrow

4th Even more recollected and with intense feel[ing]³

³ The text is unfinished.

INTRODUCTION

In the life of M. Sacred Heart, the fundamental happening during this year was her final profession. The Spiritual Notes that we possess all revolve around this event, which, rather than a concrete act, represents her definitive consecration, within the ongoing orientation of the whole of her being towards God.

The details of her everyday life are characterized by difficulties and tension within the government of the Congregation with regard to the foundations in La Coruna and Madrid (San Bernardo), brought about, in great part, by the constantly critical attitude of M. Pilar. This situation served to emphasize the repugnance that M. Sacred Heart experienced with regard to her position as General of the Institute.

Her spiritual life seamlessly followed an ever upward curve. When describing her experiences, while making the Exercises, she depicts herself at times “as enraptured by God”, and at others “more passive and intuitive”, but always absorbed in deep prayer, which nevertheless, did not permit her to forget her daily difficulties. She feels “fearful”, “discouraged”, and, on occasion, she sees herself “fighting in a great battle.” Her redoubled efforts nearly always lead her along the path of an honest acceptance of her daily life situation; but not only that: she struggles also, according to the advice of Fr. Hidalgo, not to allow herself to be carried away by the irresistible attraction that God exerts over her in prayer. Obviously, the Spirit trumps Fr. Hidalgo himself in these cases; this can be seen at the end of her notes on the Thirty Day Retreat, in which, after vigorously resisting the movement towards prayer and, as a result falling into an insupportable dryness, she experiences Jesus inside her, “visiting” her soul: “It seemed that your generosity was saying that I am here. I am not ignoring your battles and I know how much you are suffering for obeying me and my representatives”. So we do not doubt the meaning of these words, the Saint adds, as an explanation: “I was prohibited, since the previous evening, from allowing myself to be carried away by that attraction”.

6. THIRTY DAY RETREAT. MAY, 1888

Since 1887, M. Sacred Heart had tried to call a halt to her activity in order to prepare herself for her final profession by making a Thirty Day Ignatian Retreat.

Until that moment, the multiple concerns of government, and, in particular, the construction of the novitiate in Madrid, had virtually made that special experience an impossibility.

Even though she had thought about retiring to a different house, far from everything that could remind her of her urgent daily tasks, in the end, she decided to stay in the novitiate house in the Paseo del Obelisco. The retreat was directed by Fr. Hidalgo and began on May 1st, in the evening.

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.10:
a booklet of four pages (21 x 13,5 cm.) Written on every side.*

IHS

Thirty Day Retreat in preparation for my Final Profession, directed by Rev. Fr. Isidro Hidalgo, of the Society of Jesus.

May 2nd, 1888

1st Meditation, at midnight.

I entered the retreat fearfully but also with courage, and ready to make it with the greatest fervour that I possibly could, even though I might be as cold as a stone for the whole month, which is just how I felt at that moment and also tormented by a very bad headache which I was experiencing. As I said, I was suffering but totally resigned, and suddenly, it seemed to me that the love of the Heart of Jesus was embracing my soul and my body tightly, assuring me that I would be held lovingly there for the whole month, and that I would be comforted all the time, however great my struggles might be. I had a presentiment that I would always find comfort, help and strength in the Sacred Heart of Jesus throughout the long retreat; and such was my conviction, that it was as if my despondency was replaced by a deep peace and a safe feeling of which I could never tire, and that I would finish with the same fervour with which I had begun the retreat.

2nd I exist thanks to God.

I saw so very clearly what I owe God, so much so that it completely drained my mind, and I shed tears of gratitude. I don't know what else to say. At the end, a delicate doubt disturbed me greatly, but realizing where it was coming from, I did my best to keep calm and put it aside until I could consult with you about it.

3rd I belong to God.

For most of the meditation I was totally enraptured by God, in such a gentle contemplation that it felt like enjoying heaven rather than the earth. I fell into a swoon. I experienced such a gentleness that my whole being seemed to dissolve into Christ, my Jesus, my God. From this meditation on, I seemed to sense, in a very tangible way, my guardian angel at my side and I felt his presence with me, influencing my spirit. Also, during the retreat, I felt the devil very close, but that did not make me feel scared, but rather annoyed, even though from time to time, I trembled with horror, at having him apparently so close to me. I say this out of obedience, I just ignored him.

4th Very peaceful and good, just like the previous prayer time but more passive and intuitive, praying about the very many blessings that have been given to me.

5th A very great struggle and battle at the beginning; but, after humbling myself considerably, I was filled with a deep peace and came to union with God. Overall, the day was one of fervour and joy.

2nd Day: The purpose of all creatures

Without expecting it, I felt my spirit being carried away in a quite extraordinary way by the words that I heard when I re-read the points for prayer: that just like me, all creatures, had been in God's mind from all eternity, but in second place. I felt such great gratitude towards God for the dignity that He had bestowed on humankind, that my soul was totally overcome. I remained in that state for about half an hour, rejoicing and suffering only God knows how much; but remembering that I had been forbidden these experiences of the soul, I gently drew my soul into a spiritual movement, with very sweet tears, and it came to rest in a passive and peaceful union. But I did have to work hard for it.

2nd Creatures belong to God

I felt moved to gratitude, but believing as I did that, because I was distracted for a little while, God had been displeased, I began to humble myself very much and so, for about fifteen minutes, without knowing how, I felt myself, both in spirit and body, being swept up into God, so much so that I thought that my soul was being enraptured out of my body. I begged for mercy and compassion, but Jesus, who was the author of that torment, so terrible and yet so tender, was so delighted by it all, that, for then, he did not show me any compassion. Who could possibly imagine that the consolation that comes from God is so terrible! And it surely is, I only wish I knew how to explain it. I remained in that state for about half an hour and afterwards I moved into a passive, but very enlightening contemplation, in which I rested, because I was very tired, and I understood that I had not yet experienced perfect communication with God. I saw very clearly that this was so, but that I still needed to go up higher, just as the saints had done. Now God wants me to require total confidentiality from the director of my soul, but he will also be pleased if I continue to consult him about all the states in which God intends to place me in the future. I glimpsed the obstacles that would block my soul from perfect communication, but I did not have sufficient knowledge of them to be able to describe them or to remove them, nor could I ask or beg to be allowed to know them, because I saw that that was not God's will for me at that time.

3rd All creatures are for God.

Even though I felt moved very soon, I reflected on creatures and tried my best to saturate myself with the realization that they, just like every earthly reality, come from God, and that we abuse them when we do not dedicate them to his greater glory and honour, which is tantamount to stealing from God; usurping them as if we owned them. As I was reflecting in this way, I felt a surge of love in the morning, accompanied by an extraordinary understanding of the perfections of God, and of the beauty of the rational soul, together with the very intimate relationship that God has with it, that can only be destroyed by mortal sin, and even then, not completely: like a dead body, which, even though it has no life, still carries in it its image of a creature. And the soul that is in grace, thanks to its relationship with God, is nearly transformed into another God: into God himself. I also understood that, since our soul is, as it were, a glimmer of God, it is eternal like him. But not so the souls of animals,

which, even though they receive life from him, like any creature, it is only temporal life, and, for that reason, they do not have spiritual powers, but only instinct, which enables them to fulfil God's will for them; and they are not capable of remembering the good things they receive, but act only as a response to the way in which they are treated, and not rationally. Humans, on the contrary, cannot stop loving. Even were the Pope to tell me that the soul does not exist and that it is not eternal, the conviction that I have been given is so strong, that I could not doubt that even for a moment.

4th This meditation was drier, but I was also recollected and the same in the fifth prayer time, at midnight, at least at the beginning, but afterwards, I received many lights for my will, which I do not remember now.

3rd Day. Indifference. First Meditation.

I was recollected and, as it seemed that our Lord was directing my spirit according to the theme of the day, in each of the three days that I have been on retreat, today I experienced a spiritual battle that I have been suffering dreadfully for a while now, in which I see that it is totally impossible that I will ever come to true indifference; and even though I did not manage to reach that indifference that I need so desperately for the peace of my soul, I fought really hard and suffered even better and I received light and strength for the future. I do not foresee that this struggle is going to finish any time soon, and it is so very hard, but I finished the prayer encouraged by the thought that, in the end, I would not be overcome by it.

2nd Indifference with regard to myself.

As I was listening to the points for prayer, I began to feel as if I were on fire, but since this is not appropriate for this way of praying, I tried to distance myself from it, with the result that I became like a stone and even nodded off. Once I realised what was happening, I felt annoyed with myself for my lack of effort, and I began to reflect with fervour, asking God's pardon for this fault. I spent most of the rest of the prayer time battling in this way, until about ten minutes before the end, when I felt Jesus deep within me, visiting my soul. "He seemed to be saying to me that he was here with me, because of my generosity. Telling me 'I have noticed your battles and I know how much you suffer in order to obey me and my representatives'". (I had been forbidden since the previous evening to allow myself to be affected by that attraction).

7. «OFFERING» AT THE END OF THE THIRD WEEK OF THE RETREAT

26 May, 1888

M. Sacred Heart pauses in her notes on the third day of the retreat, perhaps because she usually writes as required by Fr. Hidalgo, but from that day onwards, she was able to communicate with him verbally.

It is clear that the Jesuit guided her in her election, helping her to see that her repugnance to accept her position as General could be the “main dyke” that holds back the flood of grace. Months earlier, the same Fr. Hidalgo had written to her: “I hope that you will see the following points clearly: 1st. I have done absolutely nothing to occupy the position that I now hold: I am here because this is where God has placed me; I should love it as an expression of God’s will for me”. (Letter, September 15th, 1887)

The Saint makes this offering at the end of the third week of the retreat, after the contemplations on the Passion of Christ.

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.11:

One page, 20 x 13 cm. Written on one side.

At the foot of your most holy Cross, Jesus, our Saviour, today, May 26th, 1888, at 8.18 pm. I promise you from the bottom of my heart, in the presence of your most holy Mother and mine, and of St John and the holy women, never to resist ever again, not even in my thoughts, your divine will in my position as General Superior. Even more, I will not flee from occasions of honour or dishonour that may present themselves in the discharge of my office.

With your love and your grace, that I am sure will not fail me, I hope to fulfil it, despite this principal dyke that holds back your grace in my soul. Today, your humble servant sees this clearly, and I kiss with great reverence and love your sacred wounds, inflicted by obedience,

Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

8. FORMULA OF FINAL PROFESSION

November 4th, 1888

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.12:
one page, 20 x 13,5 cm. Written in one side.*

JHS

I, Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, vow to Almighty God, and in the presence of the most holy Virgin Mary, His Mother, and the whole heavenly court, and all those here present, and your, Excellency, the Illustrious, Lord Bishop of Madrid-Alcala, the representative of the Holy See, who holds the place of God, perpetual poverty, chastity and obedience. I also vow to consecrate my whole life to making reparation for the injuries committed against the Sacred Heart of Jesus, following in all things the rule contained in the Constitutions of the same Congregation.

Madrid, November 4th, 1888, in our Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (signature)
A.C.J.

Ciriaco Maria,
Bishop of Madrid Alcalá (signature)⁴

⁴ Ciriaco Maria Sancha y Hervás, bishop from 1886.

INTRODUCTION

In 1889 the battle that would finally culminate in M. Sacred Heart's resignation as General of the Institute, was declared on all fronts. From the autumn of 1888 until the end of August, 1889, the Saint was living a kind of nightmare: all her difficulties seemed much worse due to the worry that M. Pilar's delay in making her final profession caused her. These dramatic months coincided with the problems arising with regard to the house of San Jose (Calle Ancha de San Bernardo), with sickness and premature deaths, with difficulties with personnel (above all for the recently opened school in La Coruna)... In the midst of this mountain of worries, M. Sacred Heart would always remember two moments that stood out for her: a day in October of 1888, in which she received a letter from M. Pilar, informing her that she felt "an invincible repugnance" to making her profession; and a day in March, 1889, in which Bishop Sancha y Hervas, ordered her to close the chapel in the house of San Jose, forbidding all public worship there.

In order to understand the painful context of these moments (distrust, misunderstandings, both small and large daily upsets) it is sufficient to read the Saint's letters between the summer of 1888 and the autumn of 1889. (See, among others, numbers 211, 212, 215, 219, 221, 224 and 225 of her collected correspondence.)

No spiritual notes during retreat have been preserved for this year. M. Sacred Heart must have made the retreat in Madrid and with Fr, Hidalgo, from October 10th to 18th.

The sole spiritual note written in 1889 is a supplication to the Heart of Jesus in which the Saint expresses the depth of her suffering, but at the same time her humility and her trust in God.

9. SUPPLICATION TO THE SACRED HEART

June 23rd, 1889

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.13: a double page.

(13 x 10 cm.) written on all four sides, the last page folded.

JHS

Beloved Heart of Jesus: although I feel tranquil because you help me so much, I still feel a slight apprehension that I might have developed an obsession that perhaps your action in me is that of the enemy. Tomorrow, for the feast of your holy Precursor and for the coming feast of Your Heart, I ask you, Jesus of my heart, for charity for all of us poor sinners, and that you look at me with that divine fire which consumes you for the salvation of souls, and which burns away all my stains, every imperfection, all my blindness, all my darkness, and fills my soul with the divine light that shines out from the depths of your most compassionate heart, so that I will be truly converted and become a perfect consecrated religious, who can give you great glory.

You know well, my Jesus, the chaos in which I am immersed, and that I am only sustained by the hope that I will not lose the peace in my life that I find in you, which is perhaps false. Jesus of my soul, grant me solid virtue and give me light, to know which direction to take and to see everything that surrounds me, for you alone are my helper and my strength and my beloved father, to whom I offer now and forever my promises, together with a firm purpose to keep them with the greatest perfection possible, trusting in your excessive goodness which will not fail me.

Everything for you, Jesus of my heart, both in time and in eternity. Do not ever let me be separated from You, Jesus of my heart.

Mary of your Sacred Heart.

INTRODUCTION

In the life of M. Sacred Heart, 1890 was a year packed with external happenings and rich in spiritual experiences. The months of January and February, 1890, witnessed the intensification of the conflict with the Bishop of Madrid. On February 8th, by way of a solution, the Saint proposed to the Assistants General a foundation in Rome.

On February 14th, the Saint began her annual retreat, on her own. It was an extremely fruitful eight days. On finishing the retreat, she had to leave Madrid quickly, bound for Andalusia, because María Teresa Tabernero lay dying in Jerez. The sorrow that her death caused M. Sacred Heart is indescribable. Yet, only a few days later the foundation in Cadiz was opened, thanks to her enthusiasm and support, and then, she herself set in motion the last of the great projects of her Generalate: the foundation in Rome. Her stay in that city (May to September) provided a happy parenthesis in a year packed with contradictions and pain. Her return to Spain was like a bitter awakening from a wonderful dream.

10. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1890

In the *House Diary of the Madrid Community* there is an entry in February: “On 14th M. General began her retreat and finished on Sunday, 23rd, the first Sunday of Lent”. These were the eight days, slightly extended, of her annual retreat.

The account of the experiences of these days constitutes one of the most complete spiritual writings of M. Sacred Heart. She wrote notes every single day and about all the meditations or contemplations of St. Ignatius, but with a freedom that indicates the absence of a guide, who with his talks determines the subject matter of the prayer times. It is important, as an orientation for the reader, to underline several points:

1st M. Sacred Heart, having experienced the pain of seeing her favourite projects come to nothing, (“So many plans failed in such a short time!”), feels that her hope is being sorely tried, and her security very exposed (“Jesus, was kept in place by his nails, hanging from them in the air... the same is happening to me”).

2nd Despite the contradictions which clashed with all her initiatives, she sees the apostolic mission of the Institute with great clarity and succeeds in expressing it with very vigorous phrases (“Meditation on Christ the King: I left my prayer very excited and thrilled to be able to do something for my Captain Jesus, above all to make it possible for all nations to adore him”. Praying on the Ascension: “Work very hard for Him now; for later there will be plenty of time to celebrate”. Contemplation to Obtain Love: “... very strong desires to do everything in my power, and if not, with prayers, that everyone will to come to know and love Him”. She intuitively and painfully foresees her future inaction: “when I find myself without physical action to express my zeal, as I truly desire, I will be content to pray and do gently whatever I can, as my Lord teaches me”. One could say that this retreat serves as a preparation for the universal and ecclesial experience, which she would enjoy, quite soon afterwards, in Rome.

3rd The Saint begins to experience a lack of understanding even by her spiritual director. On the fifth day of the retreat, she writes that she does not feel “strongly attracted by anything at all; but only that I need to give up this spiritual direction”; she intuitively feels that God can ask her to make this sacrifice, not

because of a prophetic vision of the future, but rather because the difficulties with M. Pilar and the Assistants are beginning to interfere with her relationship with Fr. Hidalgo as well.⁵

4th Despite all her pain and the confusion into which she finds herself plunged, the Saint feels, as on so many other occasions, and perhaps even more so now than ever, her smallness: and together with her weakness, the conviction that the Lord loves her with predilection.

The expression of this total trust is a constant feature of these days.

5th For the very first time in her Spiritual Notes we see her desire for the “third degree of humility”, which from now on is going to be repeated continually in her writings. (Meditation on the Two Standards: «...I understood that my ardent desire has to be to achieve the third degree of humility, which is the fruit of the tree that was shown to me at the beginning of the retreat...”).⁶

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.14: a notebook of 22 pages, with ruled lines, (13,5 x 10,5 cm.) written on both sides.

⁵ This point is brilliantly understood and much better expressed by ENRIQUETA ROIG, A.C.I., *The Foundress of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, p. 233 ff.

⁶ ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, EE [167]: “The third model of humility is the most spiritually mature humility, and is this: Given that I keep practising the first and second models, and given that the praise and glory of the Divine Majesty would be the same one way or the other, then for the sake of imitating Christ our Lord and of really being more like Him, I choose and elect poverty with Christ poor rather than wealth, contempt with Christ burdened with it rather than the world’s honour. And I prefer to be regarded as a worthless fool for Christ’s sake who was first so regarded, than held as wise and judicious in the world”.

IHS SPIRITUAL EXERCISES 1890

FEBRUARY 15

Although I dislike anything that is out of the ordinary, I think I can say that all hell broke out as I began the retreat. Yesterday, I had an infernal day packed with impure temptations, to discouragement, to ill humour, and finally, and the most painful, to vanity, seeing myself as very big in my own eyes and believing that others saw me in the same way. So I was most grateful in my soul when I began to feel contrary movements, seeing myself treated with much less attention than someone else in my position; and even by my God, who in the preparatory meditation, kept me in extreme desolation to my great delight and desire that it would continue like that.

With such bad preparations, I thought that I would continue like this in the first meditation, and was happy, but my God opened my understanding and took me back to my true self, which is nothing. Blessed be God, may he never take that away from me, or my crosses. I saw with a light from above what my God has done for me by creating me, and above all, by giving me a heart capable of loving him, but I saw that there was another, higher reason, that was leading towards a love that is more elevated, much greater, and more capable, and without which there would be no life: and I understood that this was my soul. I saw my heart like a tree, which produces fruit, but this tree receives all its sap from my soul; and my soul was the root of this tree, which was stronger, or weaker, depending if the root was deeper and comfortably planted in this divine soil, namely the Heart of Christ Jesus. Unless the root is deeply planted, receiving all its sap from this very fertile soil, this tree can neither grow nor give good fruit; but, on the contrary, if the soul is growing in its knowledge of God, through the purity of its life in the practice of virtues, it produces not only leaves, but also flowers and fruit; it will be a tree planted at the side of streams, as we read in the holy Gospel.⁷ And these roots would go deep into Christ Jesus and be united with Him through His most sweet Name, and, like oil running over, soften the soul so that it can insert itself into Him, and what I felt in those moments is what I have just described. And I

⁷ The Saint writes “Gospel”, instead of “Scripture”. (Jer.17: 8; Ps. 1:3).

also came to know that, by making contemplations, I received light in my understanding. And that it was the root of this beautiful tree, and that through the knowledge that I was given, I could communicate with the will of that love, which was the sap which flowed into my heart and impelled me to action. But I realised that without the soul, the heart is nothing; and for that reason I had envisaged it occasionally with wings, which signified what I have just said. If it is not pride to say so, my soul was, as it were, ecstatic and the hour went by very quickly. I did understand better, but I lost track of my ideas.

2nd My understanding did not function at all; and in the end, after humbling myself considerably, I realised that when God doesn't want it, I can do nothing.

3rd I could hardly put a few thoughts together; the divine blessings totally overwhelmed me.

4th This time, I did enter fully into the prayer: it was contemplation of the highest order, and as if I was being shown the divine riches, and I entered into this grandeur with extraordinary delicacy, so much so, that it was as if I were drunk with so much greatness, and I saw my soul dumbfounded, as I observed the face of God and then again, laughing like a little girl that God would deign to give such knowledge to someone as ignorant and miserable as me. Afterwards, praying over indifference, I understood that I should not allow God the freedom to take away whatever He had placed in my power, but rather be totally dependent on his will and to offer Him the very best I could, and hand it over with complete generosity however painful it might be for me, cut it off and sacrifice it, as it is his. And whatever pains and trials I could undergo, desiring them as if I were inebriated and when he gave them to me, to receive them as though it were a great favour.

And being overwhelmed by so much grace, seeing my self too enriched, I asked Jesus to humble me well, which He did, leaving me dry but united to him, his only action in me being to humble me.

Day 2

1st Meditation on Sin.

As I said before, I was not actively doing anything at all but spent the whole hour trying to humble myself and being delighted to see myself like

that. So, on coming to the end of the prayer, I suddenly felt Jesus in me, giving life to my soul and unction to my spirit, and with this disposition, I received Holy Communion.

On receiving Our Lord, I became drunk with the “wine that engenders virgins”⁸ and really, in all charity, I should not have received Communion because I noticed that my soul was so overwhelmed by such richness, that it was totally lost in it, and desiring to take refuge in my nothingness and my poverty, it seemed to me that the Author of so much good took me into his arms and held me tenderly, pressing me to his divine face, and filling me with a sweetness that is not of this world nor are there words to express it. It seemed to me that a verse from the Song of Songs, that I had read as applied to Our Lady, was being fulfilled in me, I think it goes like this: “With his left hand he will hold your head and with his right hand he will embrace you.”⁹

2nd The same meditation.

I spent the whole prayer time trying to humble myself as much as I could.

3rd Very dry, but not distracted. As in all my prayer times, I abandoned myself totally into God’s hands without denying Him any of the things he was asking of me, even it were to cost me my life to fulfil them.

4th I was very moved, with more unction than in the previous prayer. After relishing very gladly all the fruits that religious life brings, I turned over in my mind all those things that I find naturally very painful and tried to make myself indifferent to them, and I suddenly wondered if they might be punishments but I was calling them trials. I was greatly affected by this and begged with tears, with all the humility I could muster, asking Our Lord to deign to clarify it for me. I spent more than half an hour very afflicted, without light, without consolation, as if I were abandoned; until I finally realized that my pains were a consolation in themselves and my anguish was a relief, and that God was treating all the friends and benefactors of the Congregation that were afflicted, as his very intimate friends; and I became very consoled, but, I will insist on asking for more light, because I fear being deceived as some very good people have, on occasions, indicated that they think that I am.

⁸ Cf. Zac 9: 17.

⁹ Cant 2: 6.

Day 3

1st Meditation on Sin.

I spent the prayer time in a sort of passive union with God, trying to humble myself all the time. All during Mass, I experienced an excess of love and also sorrow, so much so that I shed tears, deep inside me, on seeing my Lord so badly treated. I imagined that I saw Him in the hands of the Jews, something I have done many times, even before this.

2nd Meditation on Sin

I began as in the previous prayer, trying to reflect, but I remained as dry as usual, but then, towards the end, I received a light, even greater than before which filled me with gentleness, tranquility and peace in my spirit; and this experience caused considerable interior movement in me, as I felt the effects of the graces I was receiving as a result of the acts of humility that I had practised in the previous prayer times. And I understood and saw that our Lord wanted my spirit to be pure, not like crystal, because it is not always totally like that, but rather pure and shining like light that does not allow any spot or stain.

When praying on Death and the Last Judgement, I was bored and had to work very hard, but remained dry: the only thing I could do was to humble myself.

Day 4

The Meditation on Hell. Just the same as the previous prayers. On making the Examen I did feel a soothing comfort.

During Mass I was so anxious to receive communion that I could hardly bear it; I found it impossible to imagine what I experienced today, that the soul could hunger so much for this food that it would die without it, just as the body would without food.

I prayed all the time, in the moments that remained until eight o'clock, when I was overcome a profound experience of recollection that was granted to me, and I understood that I had received in my soul all the effects of Divine Love (tailored to my smallness): ecstasy, visions, etc.; and that these had been like the flowers of a tree planted by my God in my soul, but that he still wanted to grant me the fruits that come from these flowers; and one of them was the

grace of miracles. I saw before my eyes, all my sorrows and the trials I had suffered until now, but one by one, and I also saw the virtues I have acquired, but saw that all of them had to grow much more, especially humility, in order to ripen those fruits. And I saw very clearly that that was true: or rather, I saw my soul as needing to begin over again a more difficult life, characterized by more trials. Yes, God's Spirit, or God Himself, was flowing in my soul with total freedom, but so far, he had not found me capable of receiving these other graces. And I saw, far off in the distance, that yes, one day I would be given them and I also saw the path, full of thorns, that I would have to travel to attain them. I would have to live here on earth as if I were not living, as if I were not here, suffering, but without it overwhelming me; in short, acting in a totally supernatural way; in a very simple way, as if I were already like God. I don't know if I am explaining myself or if I am talking nonsense: I will be told, and that gives me peace.

2nd Meditation on Mercy.

I was recollected and counting all the many mercies the Lord has shown me, and also my own ingratitude, and my soul was filled with light, consoling me and pouring over me so much sweetness, so that I seemed to understand that today I was totally cleansed and forgiven.

On one of these days, I understood that during unitive contemplation, God communicates, in contemplation, the four wonderful gifts: detachment, clarity, agility and discretion, and it was as if I could feel them in me and saw them working in me.

3rd The Meditation on Christ the King.

I was recollected, and I not only dedicated myself unconditionally to the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, but I promised Him that, with his most holy grace, I would give Him the greatest glory I possibly could, even if it were to cost me my life and my honour. I left the prayer very excited and happy to be able to do something for my Captain Jesus, above all to enable all peoples to adore Him, for I have understood how important this is and how underestimated. I must constantly practice the third degree of humility or Rule 11.

4th Meditation on the Incarnation.

I was very recollected praying on the decree of the Incarnation, and made several practical applications to what is happening in my own life today. Adam's sin was very great, but even greater was the reparation of that sin. Many years passed, but finally, it arrived in superabundance. In our own circumstances it will also come in the same way. I left the prayer totally convinced that it would happen.

I received many lights on this subject; namely the Annunciation and the Incarnation, but I felt sorry that I rushed through the prayer,

Day 5

Meditation on the Nativity. I had some lights that were far from ordinary, with very great sweetness and spiritual joy and I made firm resolutions to imitate, insofar as I am able, what I have learned from the three Divine Persons. Trying to despise, with my whole soul, anything that smacks of earthly things, and working hard to inundate myself completely with supernatural life and all that it teaches, living as if I were not living here below, and turning over in my mind all the teachings I am receiving, all of them being in conformity with what we all learn.

2nd Meditation on the Flight into Egypt.

I was recollected and feeling very fervent, but I became frightened, which was the work of the enemy, and I became cold; but then I was able to recollect myself again and I did all I could to root myself in that unwavering and deep trust that I should have, in imitation of Mary and Joseph as they fled, and I must continue to meditate on this for at least the next five days, if I am allowed to. How God endowed his divine Son with such virtues and also his most holy parents, in whom he delighted, and yet he tested their faith in a dreadful way, and all their virtues too: and yet he loved them ... and they were very holy... an example for all of us..., how much they teach me. In similar circumstances, I will hold onto this mystery tightly, and I will try to imitate the Holy Family and nothing will be able to shake my resolve. The more difficulties I experience, the more I will trust and abandon myself in God's hands and cling to Him in prayer, which must always be my nourishment, and I must not abandon it for anyone or anything. And if I seem to be abandoned by God, I will hold on to him more tightly and hand myself over to him even more.

3rd Jesus goes up to the Temple.

I received only a very few lights, and I did not seem to be focused on anything with any particular intensity, only that I should give up receiving spiritual direction: and I saw all the countless graces that I had received thanks to it, the dangers from which it had set me free, the firmness with which it had helped me to progress in the knowledge of God, and in the joyful practice of virtues, and all thanks to such accurate direction; in short, I saw that it been placed there by God's hand, and I recalled the impact that I felt in my soul on meeting the Father that God had given me. However, despite all of this, if God is asking this great sacrifice of me, I will do it, unconditionally.

4th The Hidden Life.

Very recollected and I thought deeply about how the hidden life fitted into my smallness, but above all, the life that Our Lady lived. And I wanted to know if, because she always had Jesus before her eyes, the Virgin Mary never suffered. But I understood that, yes, she did, and very much, and that she practiced many types of virtue. Especially, in her faith, because Jesus concealed himself and his work, and not being able to see him amounted to a terrible martyrdom for her, as her anxiety for Him increased, and nothing could assuage it. And, when she lacked what was necessary, she showed patience and gentleness, seeing and believing that this pleased the Eternal Father, and yet, despite seeing that he did not provide what they needed, and scarcely what the tender and delicate Child needed, and poor St Joseph, too, who by that time was perhaps unwell, while they had to earn their living by the sweat of their brow. All this taught me to be patient and long-suffering, whenever I lack something and to know how to wait when my petitions are not answered immediately.

Day 6

1st Repetition of the Hidden Life.

Even more recollected than in the previous prayer time and with similar lights.

2nd The Circumcision of Jesus.

I felt very passive and dearly wanted to be more active. And I did manage to, but first of all, I experienced a wave of love, which came from seeing this little child shedding the blood that was formed in his Heart... And after a

while, in which my soul was somewhat satisfied, I began to examine my feelings and powers in order to see what I needed to circumscribe in them. In the beginning, I hardly found anything, but then a great deal, a very great deal. And appointing this sweet Child to be my Teacher, he led me through them all and helped me to see where there was too much or not enough, together with the mortification that he now asked of me. I was crucified in everything, and that was enough for me.

3rd The Finding in the Temple.

I was recollected and I applied this mediation to my own situation when I am hidden, and the loneliness that it causes me, and I resolved to do what I am always doing, but with greater perfection: to serve Him with the same fervour, even if it means using very much violence. As in nearly all the meditations, I experienced great familiarity with my Jesus.

4th Meditation on the Temptations of Jesus.

I moved into the prayer very quickly, but afterwards I did not receive many lights, and I applied the Temptations of Jesus to my own circumstances, especially when the temptation is to try to control divine things with human prudence; and what I need to do in these cases is to remain silent and act in accordance with what I see as the will of God, and not to hesitate.

During the Examen, which I made in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, I was filled with a very powerful excess of love, which lasted nearly half an hour. There, even though I saw God as so very big and myself as so very small, this did not make me feel inhibited, on the contrary, I felt my whole being expanded, because I saw what God is and what I am. Seeing myself so small, I am at the centre of my being, because I see everything that God does in me and in my life, which is what I really want.

Day 7

Meditation on the Two Standards. There is nothing to say about the Election; I was recollected and received lights, in the application of the powers of my soul, and also in my understanding and my will. I truly resolved to imitate with my whole being, what I learned in contemplating the Standard of Christ, especially gentleness and humility in both my exterior and interior and in my actions. On hearing the explanation of the standard of the enemy,

I felt a tremendous urge to work with all my strength against it, so much so that, if necessary, I will lose my life, my honour and everything that one can possibly lose; but I did not experience any fear at all

During Mass, or better, on receiving communion, I felt Jesus in my soul and it was filled with light and I experienced the effects of intimate union with Jesus, and I understood that my ardent desire had to be to attain the third degree of humility, which was the fruit of the tree which I had seen at the beginning of the retreat, but in order to attain it, I would need considerable immutable strength of spirit.

2nd Three Classes of Man or three sick people.

I must try to bring healing, even if it costs me my life; that is saying a great deal, because the flesh is there in the middle, but the grace of God and humble prayer will give me strength.

3rd The Poverty of Christ on the Cross.

Very recollected, in active but very peaceful and ordinary contemplation. I saw Jesus exteriorly very poor, without anything, and applying this to myself, as today I find myself in a somewhat similar situation. Oh, how fragile are our human hopes! So many plans have evaporated in such a short time! But God is always there, and whoever trusts in Him, will lack nothing.¹⁰ Applying it to myself interiorly: Jesus, it would seem, totally poor, so poor that He did not even have consolation from his Eternal Father, who allowed Him to suffer in the most total abandonment. I have nothing, not even virtues, only whatever God wants to give me, according to my smallness. Nor can I receive any credit for my actions or words, which are well known; and I have been abandoned to my own devices and strength, even by my God, who it seems is punishing my mistakes, and I have to bear the weight of my complete blindness. And my God keeps me in this state; if it is one of his tests, then I am fortunate, for it is not by reason of my sins (even though they are many) but not committed with a bad intention; may I have enough strength and magnanimity; and may I not put any limits to Jesus' plans for me, and if I am mistaken, may he open the eyes of my soul, for he has me at his disposition, to do or to undo whatever pleases him.

¹⁰ Eccl. 32,28.

4th The Obedience of Christ on the Cross.

Physically nailed with four large nails, or at least with four very painful wounds in the most sensitive parts of his most holy body, and hanging in the air. Applying this to myself, I also am nailed to my cross by four very painful nails, even though they, for their part, are inoffensive, because they are put there, as were those of Jesus, by the will of the Eternal Father. And what did Jesus do? He loved them and united himself to them despite the martyrdom that they caused Him. What must I do? The same, live joyfully nailed by them and allow myself even to be killed by their harshness, which is exactly what I experience nearly all the time. Jesus, held in place by his nails, was hanging from them in the air, and despite seeing himself torn apart by them, he never tired of suffering nor did he try to alleviate the martyrdom which they were causing him; so I too, have to remain with them for as long as my God wills it.

Day 8

The Chastity of Christ on the Cross, in short, the fulfilling of this vow.

Very recollected and reflecting on the grandeur of this vow, which is so beautiful but also so delicate, and I resolved to mortify my senses and the powers of my soul so as not to plunge new thorns into the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And I also understood certain things that I need to take time to write about, slowly and after considerable thought.

2nd The Tomb.

I was very recollected and at the same time very involved. I entered into this very long chapter of the sufferings of Jesus with a new and delicate savour. Of course, I applied everything to my own life. And I thought that, just like Christ, when his Heart died, His love did not die, because it was living in his soul, and convincing myself that the light that I received at the beginning, that this had to be the source from which it sprang, I resolved that when I saw myself without physical action to extend my zeal, I would be content to pray and do gently whatever is in my power, as my Lord teaches me. And with regard to the things that I have to do, a firm resolve to try to live as if I were dead: in imitation of Christ, whose body was dead, and only his soul was active, full of love for God and his neighbor.

3rd Meditation on the Apparition of Christ to His Mother.

I was recollected but unable to reflect very much; my imagination seemed to have stopped working. I was not idle, but very happy. .

4th The Ascension.

I was very recollected, even to the shedding of tears of pity for the poor apostles, when the angels asked them what they were waiting for now. All their joy left them and they were mesmerized looking at the place from where he had disappeared. How sad they were, even though they had been strengthened, as they return to Jerusalem. At the end of the Examen I felt a special joy in my soul: because, even though they returned sad, they would also experience a special desire to work for the glory of him who worked to win it for them and suffered so much too. I also felt, at that moment, those same desires, and during the whole meditation, and even in the previous one; rather than joy, I felt an anxious desire to take a very great interest in the glory of Jesus. To work hard for Him now, and afterwards there will be a long time to rejoice.

5th The Love of God.

I was very recollected in the first point, with very many lights about how much God has done for us by creating us, and of all the good things with which he has enriched us; and, then, by redeeming us. What amazing mysteries! A God raises us and He gives us and provides us with everything; not just with what is necessary but rather superabundantly, even in the most insignificant details, without any recompense for using everything, other than recognizing such wonderful blessings and using them as such for his greater glory and for his love, nothing else. Some of the people that he nurtured first of all obeyed this precept, others did not; and since He loved everyone the same and wanted all of them to be saved, he punished them, as we know, in order to draw them to Himself now by fear, since he could not do so with love, and yet they did not respond even to this. And since what God has done remains forever because he is immutable, and humankind was formed in his likeness and image, and therefore, made perfect, and since the offenses were committed against his Eternal Father, the love of the Second Person, who is the Son, had to restore God's work of art, and he knew that the only way to do this was to make himself like the offender, and for this reason He came down to take on our nature; and, since humankind was lost because of the abuse committed by us creatures, because He wanted us back, he made reparation, and, suffering in

his most holy body, He died. I felt so much compassion for the unfaithful and the heretics who blind themselves by not acknowledging these gifts of God, and the same for bad Christians, and I had very ardent desires to do everything I can, and, if not, at least with my prayers, that they will come to know and love him. Surely, St. Francis Xavier derived from this meditation, strength to do all the work that he did to make God's glory known. With this in mind, I asked myself, what is hindering Christians? My Jesus, grant that since I have already had the bliss, both in this and all the meditations, to know you so well, so very well, that your divine teaching not remain without fruit. I ask you this through your own merits, those of your Most Holy Mother, and of all the saints, who have all cooperated with your lights and teaching.

And now I ask for your forgiveness, my Jesus, for any way in which I have failed you during these grace-filled days.

11. SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATIONS TO FR. HIDALGO, SJ.

*Autograph draft: Spiritual Notes, n.15: one double ruled page
(21 x 13,5 cm.) written on three full sides and part of the fourth side.*

a) I am afraid of not talking to you and I cannot be silent any longer. My blindness is very great, as Your Reverence knows, in what concerns me, without failing to be aware that I have very strong passions and I do allow myself to be carried away sometimes, and yet, miraculously, not totally; at the same time, I believe I am obsessed with being unable to see myself as Your Reverence and everyone else does, and I believe that I am even more deceived when I turn to God and he receives me with mercy and so many times with such a close union, that I am beside myself: because it seems that he is transforming me into Himself, and lives in and goes in and out of my soul as if in his own house, without the slightest obstacle; and he teaches me something that, if it is not crazy, seems to be very delicate divine wisdom that enables me to know him and to know myself and everything around me. But afterwards, even though I do not lose this enlightenment, my understanding remains as it were, wrapped around by a dense fog that prevents it nearly totally from being revealed exteriorly. Sometimes totally, but usually when the light is brighter; so I do not manage to talk nor do I know how to reflect, nothing at all, as if the powers of my soul were like the screen of my soul, and so thick that they hide it from everything. I do not know how to explain myself better. It seems that, in my soul, there are no spiritual secrets from God. All the readings, talks, etc., seem to confirm it for me and sometimes it happens that these words rise up from within me, from my soul, "He who is mighty has done great things in me".¹¹

Despite resenting so much hard work, I cannot live without it, and when it lessens, I feel hungry for it, and it is fed with continual humiliations, so much so that sometimes I feel such confusion that it seems that I have contempt and confusion written on my forehead and that everyone can see it. To resist requires a great deal of strength.

¹¹ Lc 1, 49.

I work hard to remove exterior sufferings, because I don't want to depart from an ordinary path, and as everyone fights against them, according to general opinion, and as darkness and silence drive me on, in order to be safe, I rush along the sure way, and I am very happy to be able to manage that, because I ardently desire to do well in the practice of the virtues, the ones that are easily seen, and in their fullness; above all in the practice of them. Please do not misunderstand me, Your Reverence, and look carefully: please forgive me for speaking like this, Father.

I must tell you, even briefly, so that Your Reverence will know everything, that my nature resists this state of obscurity and abjection in which my God has placed me, and I escape it from time to time, and very often I have to do great violence to myself so as not to say that others attribute to themselves what is not theirs. But I am working at trying to overcome it and I am beginning to make headway. It seems that God is saying to me: What does it matter to you whether others have a good opinion of you, but only that I do?

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.16:
One ruled page (21 x 13 cm.) written on one side.*

b) The sufferings in my soul are being honed, but God lives in my soul and gives me superabundant strength, like the sap in plants, to develop and grow in freshness and strength. In addition, it seems that there is a very close union of an unbreakable sacrament between God and me and, consequently, there cannot ever be any separation between the two of us. But this demands of me great purity in my soul, and as his gaze fills me with light, he shows me the slightest blemish in her and demands that it disappear. This scares me a little, because I am weak and I see what the sacrifices involved will cost me, but at the same time, I feel courage.

God allows me to voice my complaints because he reveals himself to me obscurely, although not separated from my soul as he is my Life, but he is mortified on not seeing it in its fullness. But why does he leave it alone?

12. VARIOUS RESOLUTIONS. 1890

There are two spiritual notes that appear to be very similar. Even though they have neither a heading nor a date, they are definitely later than September 17th, 1890. On that day, M. Sacred Heart, who had just arrived back from Rome, met with her Assistants General and proposed to them a governance plan that she had been maturing in the previous months. Hardly ever had any project received such total rejection as that one.

The Meeting was extremely violent, without even a single of M. Sacred Heart's proposals being accepted. Since she also spoke favourably about some of the Sisters, the Assistants involved them too in this same rejection.

The Saint had brought her developed plan in writing. According to the plan, the General and the Assistants would reside in Rome, while M. María del Salvador would stay in Spain, as Provincial; the Saint presented it "without any human considerations or bias, but rather because of what experience teaches me". However, in that meeting and in the following meetings, she understood in practical terms that sometimes it is necessary to accept not only criticisms that are directed against one's person but also to endure being insulted, without any possibility of self-defence, precisely by those people who are most dear to you. Objectivity was always a characteristic of the Saint's personality; and that same objectivity now required of her the sacrifice of refraining from defending María del Salvador or Magdalena, but, instead, of listening to everything they were alleging against them, "and gently, once only, to say what I know about them to the contrary; and if they are not convinced, leave it in God's hands..."

The time for great patience had begun; it was the only path to peace. "The gift of knowing how to wait is the gift of getting it right," with these words the Saint began one of her writings – "It was a piece of advice that I had received from Fr. Hidalgo a long time before, but one that I was experiencing in real life today".

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.18:
A double page, (13 x 10.5 cm.) written on three sides.*

a) The gift of waiting is the gift of getting it right. Advice that I received from Fr. Hidalgo a long time ago, but today I am experiencing it in real life. I must be like a bottomless well into which everything to do with the Congregation and each member can fall, without ever filling up, and I must remain totally unperturbed when I listen to each one and all in general, trusting in God who helps me, that He will work everything out, as He usually does, with incomprehensible wisdom, through means hidden from human reason, and not as a result of the experience of the one whom the thread of his universal providence guides.

God is asking me to practice solid virtues, and for this reason, he puts me in the situation where I can practice them. I must not forget this.

I must not cling to defending any Sister, but listen to what they say against her, and gently, and only once, say what I know about her to be the contrary; and if they are not convinced, leave it in God's hands. Meanwhile, try to find out if, by any chance, I am deceived about this Sister.

All the virtues, but now I must be outstanding in patience.

In our meetings, I must be very cautious in my words and listen to everyone with the greatest benevolence

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.19: a double page (15.5 x 1.5 cm.)
written on two sides and on part of the third.*

b) From today on, in dealing with the Sisters I will employ a little holy mischief and the same with outsiders.

I will listen with great humility to all the admonitions that they give me; and I will remedy whatever I can, and that which I cannot, or I do not see clearly, I will keep in mind so as to find out about it.

I will be very careful in praising people, especially those whom I love the most.

I will do all I can to ensure that there will be honesty and union among us all, and I will try to gently encourage this.

I will admonish all for their faults when I am peaceful, never when I am annoyed.

I will listen to everyone patiently, and I will allow them to speak when they so desire.

When I observe that someone is displeased when I point out their faults, I will do it through someone else; and it will be appropriate to do so when we are gathered together in a meeting.

From time to time, I will visit the bedrooms at night.

When I see that a fault is committed frequently and by someone who has been seriously notified, she should be made aware discreetly, either with a reading or a talk.

INTRODUCTION

Given the evolution of the transcendental events that forced M. Sacred Heart to resign from the government of the Institute, it would seem opportune to gather in a single chapter all her spiritual writings that span the period from the Autumn of 1891 to the Spring of 1892.

There are no notes written during the winter, spring or summer of these years, but the Saint's letters written during this period reveal her frame of mind perfectly. 1891 was a turbulent year; M. Sacred Heart had to face the final problems concerning the house of San Jose, the lack of personnel for the houses, the special attention needed by certain communities... From the end of 1890, M. Pilar was in Rome, where she spent all of the following year too, looking for a house. The whole atmosphere was charged with the tension rooted in the return of the General from Rome (September, 1890). She herself found a certain unity in this whole period when she said, in March, 1892, "What we have been dragging around with us for a whole year and a half now cannot be called life". (letter to M. Pilar, March 11th.)

One of the clearest characteristics of this period was the Saint's growing loneliness. The Assistants transferred their support to M. Pilar's stance; a few Jesuits, too, became advocates of her critics and the "prophets" who denounced the misfortunes of the Congregation, blaming them on M. Sacred Heart. She remained silent, because she did not wish to contribute to the destruction of their fellowship. Her silence did contribute to the alienation of the people who could have supported her (Fr. Hidalgo), and kept others in a blissful ignorance (principally Sisters of the Institute) who had not the slightest notion of the suffering of the General.

The biographies written up to now have analysed this period sufficiently and all the circumstances (See for example, *Foundations for a Building*, cc.V VI, p. 445 - 447). However, another good way to grasp everything that happened, and so, to understand her spiritual notes which follow, is to read some of her letters. (nn. 291 to 363 in this collection).

13. SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATIONS TO FR. HIDALGO

Spiritual Exercises, 1891

The Saint writes, having finished her 8 day retreat, (“Throughout the whole retreat I experienced a contemplative light...”), with the purpose of giving an account of her spiritual life to Fr. Hidalgo.

In this passage, we can clearly discern two very different parts: one, the more important, refers to this “contemplative light” that the Saint affirms never leaves her; in this retreat, as in other moments in her life, she sees in this, God’s predilection active in her even in the midst of “these trials and troubles”. The enlightenment she received in November, 1891, was truly blinding, above all on the third day of the retreat. The other part of this passage refers to Fr. Hidalgo’s spiritual direction. M. Sacred Heart is conscious that the Jesuit, when he gives her advice, is unduly influenced by the confusion that exists in the general government.

In order to understand the first paragraphs of the passage, that is, the allusion the Saint makes to “trials and troubles”, “injuries and humiliations, and misunderstandings”, we have to recall certain facts: in September, that is, barely two months before, the house of San Jose was finally closed; in the same month, at M. Pilar’s suggestion, the whole General Team travelled to Oña with the purpose of bringing the situation to the attention of Fr. Urráburu and to ask him to throw light on the reigning confusion; but, according to M. Maria de la Cruz, the end result was “bitter and without any solution”. In November, M. Sacred Heart urged M. Pilar, who was in Rome at that time, to acquaint herself with the steps necessary for the General Congregation. She was now set on seeking to resign. However, there were some who still insisted that it was not yet the Saint’s real intention to leave the government of the Congregation: among them was Fr. Cermeño, who told her exactly that in a very cruel letter sent to her at the end of October of that year.

Just before beginning the retreat, the Saint sums up the situation, expressing her sorrow in a letter to Fr. Muruzábal: “As Your Reverence can see, there is no remedy here, and for a year and a half now, I have been experiencing the effects of this discomfort which is affecting the whole Institute...”. She adds a few phrases that are key to understanding her frame of mind: “I am able

to overcome this intense suffering, because thanks to prayer, God supports me. If this is coming from God, in no way do I want to push it away from me...". (Letter dated, 14th November, 1891).

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.20: four sheets, in the form of a notebook. (21 x 13,5 cs.) written on three sides and part of the fourth.

IHS

Spiritual Exercises, 1891

All during this retreat, the contemplative light that has been with me, gently, for a long time now, did not leave me, nor did it cease to enlighten my soul. With this light, I have seen the predilection that God has for me, by sending me these trials and troubles (I feel ashamed to even call them that), and I will never know how to thank God sufficiently for them and, one day, I will surely regret not having been more generous.

If I have to please Him, I need to enroll in this school and make enormous progress, but without any facade. I must accept the injuries, humiliations, misunderstandings, etc., as nourishment for my soul, for, as I understand it, Christ was sustained by this food, and He enters into intimate union with a soul kneaded in this way because He fills it with his pure love.

All this is really the fulfillment of an inspiration I had two years ago, when the most Holy Trinity seemed to want to take possession of my soul, but firstly, had to transform me into the cross of Christ. And I do not know if it was on that day, or another, that I understood that this cross would be made up of heroic virtues. And now I seem to see that all this is coming true.

I understand why Your Reverence does not venture to give your consent, because this is somewhat confusing and wavering, and Your Reverence does not see the subject, I myself, with the right conditions, and that you are giving more credence to the instruments that God is using ... and that causes you to be afraid.... Well, for that reason, Father, I have not spoken to you for a while and I have been, as it were, abandoned to Divine Providence, which, I assure you, has been more than a mother for me; but now it would seem to be God's

will that I turn to you once again, and that Your Reverence be deprived no longer of your co-operation in the work of my soul, namely, its sanctification. And I understand that it is pleasing to God that Your Reverence direct me exactly as God inspires you to, not because of what they are saying, although that may help you, not only to direct me but also to test and humble me. I don't know if I am explaining myself well.

When Your Reverence directs me, you speak to me according to your conscience, without any other considerations, and I simply cannot explain the light and strength that my soul receives from that; but when something different is involved, I am saddened because my soul, without my wanting it to, draws back.

In this retreat, as in all of them, thanks to your advice, I have tried to reflect but I have never be able to do so less than now. Am I wasting my time? No, this contemplative light took possession of my senses in such a way, that it taught me more than in all my previous most fervent meditations. All I could do was to be silent and look deep inside myself, and in the amazing silence and loneliness, observe in my soul, the effect that I really needed from the meditations and the homilies, that were very solid and most practical. I had never experienced such a state of fullness in myself, nor one that has lasted for such a long time; in addition, as I saw myself as very bad and without anything that would merit such richness, which seemed to me to be very, very extraordinary, I kept quiet and allowed myself to be led, filled with so much gratitude that I wept, in thanksgiving for that loving hand which did not leave me even for a moment but rather expanded the core of my soul, not without showing me my wounds and granting me his healing. And what is more, showing me what the result would be if only I applied them very carefully. This is how I was, and on the last day, in the reading during Mass, I saw everything that I had experienced confirmed and saw that it was very much according to the spirit of the Exercises. I was so happy!

It was, I think, on the third day, while I was making the second meditation, that I saw myself inside God, filled with light and brightness. I was totally amazed at such a gift and fearing that I was wasting my time (because where would so much goodness be taking me?) I was shown myself, and I saw my person surrounded by a very bright light: or rather, by a sun that was God and there I was inside this sun, like a tiny little flame of a different colour, and all

round me there was a dark circle made up of my weakness and my imperfections. And I was thinking: How is it that, being inside God, his light does not darken these shadows, and how is my small amount of brightness not fused into his light? And I understood that no other light can mingle with God's light, and much less any imperfection. And so, as the light, even although it might seem to mingle with the sun, they are not two things that are different, and although when the sun shines on anything at all, that thing is made more beautiful, but it does not lose its own properties and stays the same, but is just known better, so the just soul, with God's light, that is the brightness that lives in it, seems to be what identifies with God, it is not really so; yes, they do receive from God the gifts of his grace, but can never count themselves as equal: obviously not in greatness, which would be impossible, but not even in purity, and that not even in heaven.

We have to be there, in God and receive everything from him but we cannot ever confuse ourselves with him, not even Most Holy Mary did that, nor the most sacred humanity of our God; but, his divinity, yes, which is one and the same with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

14. RESOLUTIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1891

These resolutions resemble very closely the resolutions of the previous year, and reflect, above all, the tensions existing in the General Council and in the Institute: “a very worldly spirit is creeping in, and the time is spent unravelling stories and listening to complaints and comments”. These are the words of M. Sacred Heart herself (letter to Fr. Muruzábal, S.J., 14th November). In these circumstances, the Saint proposes very high, sublime goals for herself, (“to see God’s image in all the people I have something to do with...”), but with very down to earth strategies: “Never reply to anything hastily... Lay out the truth with tranquillity and peace... just once, or, at the most twice... Talk attentively with the Sisters, listening to what they say to me... Never give any importance to female imaginations...” etc.

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.21:

One ruled page (21 x 13.5 cm.) written on one side and part of the second.

Resolutions that our Lord has inspired during this holy retreat in 1891.

Do all my spiritual duties with great recollection, thinking only about what I am doing.

See God’s image in all the people with whom I am involved, and show them simple, exterior reverence and great courtesy, according to their dignity.

Be very cautious in my words and never reply to anything hastily.

Make no excuses for anything unreasonable they say about me.

Lay out the truth peacefully and with great tranquillity, never with passion. And normally, just once, at the most twice, if they question me; and if they do not believe me, remain peaceful with the witness of a good conscience.

Always make my Confession, and the Examen very well.

Speak attentively with the Sisters, listening to what they are saying to me.

Avoid comfortable positions, even when I am alone.

Nourish an interior spirit of charity, focusing on the good that is in people rather than on the bad that is seen on the outside.

Consider myself a worm and worse than a worm.

Refuse to be saddened by anything at all.

Delight greatly in the spiritual and physical good of others and sometimes talk about these gifts and make an act of thanksgiving to Our Lord for having bestowed these gifts on them.

Never give importance to female imaginings.

Always encourage others with my words.

When they tell me my faults or those of others, never rush to their defence; but instead at a later time.

15. VOW OF PERPETUAL PERFECTION

January 1st, 1892

The Saint made this vow on January 1st, probably reading it from a paper written by Fr. Hidalgo. We have a letter (December 31, 1891) which explains how the document came to be written: "My venerable Father: If it is convenient for Your Reverence, tomorrow would be a good day to make this offering, after Holy Communion. I feel moved to write it with my blood, if I am so permitted and if Your Reverence so indicates to me. This afternoon they will go to fetch your reply. Your Reverence, if the offering is not well written, please correct it". The Jesuit replies on the same paper: "It is perfectly all right, except for too many "t's" and forceful phrases. Your Reverence writes just as you speak". He also replied negatively to the suggestion of writing it with her blood.

Fr. Hidalgo corrects the wording of the vow and writes it out very carefully, returning it to his directee. She copies it out, and signs it, finally keeping both documents.

From all this we can deduce that we do not have the original draft written by the Saint, but we do have the substance of it.

Fr. Hidalgo's handwritten document, unsigned, years later provided an opportunity for the Saint to renew the act she had carried out on January 1st, 1892; and thanks to this type of renewal, she recalled and disclosed for us the vow of perpetual chastity that she had made when she was fifteen years old, on December 25th, 1865.

There are two original documents in existence (Spiritual Notes, n.23):

*a) Fr. Hidalgo's Autograph : a single page (26 x 20.5 cm.)
written on one side and on part of the other.*

There is also an Autograph Note of M. Sacred Heart's. "I made this vow, even though I did not sign it, on January 1st, 1892, in our house in Madrid..."

b) An Autograph copy by M. Sacred Heart of Fr. Hidalgo's original: a double sheet of paper (15.5 x 12 cm.) written on all four sides.

January 1st, 1892. After receiving Holy Communion.

Perpetual Vow

Heart of my lover Jesus, pierced by the lance: I, Maria of Your Sacred Heart, on this day and at this time, at which you shed torrents of your most precious blood for love of me, in gratitude and as a just response for that divine blood, I vow to do everything in perfect observance, in profound humility and the most perfect mortification possible, to the greater glory of your most loving Heart.

Sprinkle me, Heart of Jesus, and my Life, with that precious blood, so that, it circulates through my heart, and that I may always live your life of sacrificed love, until you decide to transform me into your glorious love in your Heavenly Jerusalem, where I will praise you and rejoice on seeing you and being in your company, to your greater glory, Amen.

Immaculate Virgin, my beloved Mother, be the witness of this my vow and help me to fulfil it faithfully all the days of my life; and, with it, you will receive from me, your loving daughter, the glory to which, as Mother of your Divine Son and my Mother too, you have a right from me. Amen.

And in order to increase my obligation with this voluntary and irrevocable vow, I sign it in Madrid, on the month and year stated, after receiving Holy Communion.

I made this vow, although I did not sign it, on January 1, 1892, in our house of Madrid. And, as it came into my hands quite providentially fourteen years after having made it, I sign it today, in Rome, on the Feast of the Annunciation of the most Holy Virgin and the Incarnation of the Son of God, in our house in that city. Also on this very day in Cordoba, in 1865, in the Parish Church of St. John, which today is our church, I made my vow of perpetual chastity.

Rome, March 25th, 1907.

Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
E. C. J.

16. SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH FR. HIDALGO

April 3rd, 1892

The writing begins with some really moving paragraphs. The Saint speaks in the first one about “the uncertainty”, that Fr. Hidalgo exhibits with regard to both the progress of her works and also of her spirit. That is to say, she is convinced that her spiritual communications do not merit credence. In the second one, she describes the security, that, on the contrary, she finds when she turns to God. People are all “only instruments”, and in reality she feels “compassion for those who suffer, in order to make her suffer”.

Only a short time had elapsed between January (date of the Vow of Perfection that we have just seen) and the first days of April. It was a short period of time, but extraordinarily packed with suffering. Several people had judged it a convenient moment to criticise M. Sacred Heart’s conduct (Fr. José María Ibarra, Fr. Molina...). She prays for “light to understand what Your Reverence, and everyone else, sees in me, so as to be able to go forward securely in the way you wish, but which I do not understand...”

In March, the Cardinal Protector asked all the members of the Council to provide him with a personal, confidential report about the situation. M. Sacred Heart feels in her soul that she must talk “officially” with her sister. She consults with Fr. Muruzábal about this matter, and he exhorts her to open herself “just as if you were talking to Our Lord Himself”: (Letter, March 13th, 1892). Sure enough, M. Sacred Heart writes and sends her report, dated March 27th.

We are now coming very close to her resignation and the resulting, definitive removal of the Saint from the government of the Institute. Against the dark background of her anguish, “submerged in a sea of bitterness and the darkness of hell”, a splendid light shines that comforts, encourages and gives her “peace, light and a gentle happiness”.

Original 55: Spiritual Notes, n.24:

A double page, (21x13,5 cm) written on all four sides.

The lack of certainty that Your Reverence displays with regard to my actions and my spirit afflicts me so greatly, that, filled with bitterness, I turn to Our Lord and ask Him for light and understanding concerning what Your Reverence and everyone else sees in me, so that I can move forward securely, as you wish me to, even though I do not understand; or rather, I understand it all back to front.

There with God, I battle and even weep, and does Your Reverence know what I take away from this? An even greater sureness than ever, that what is happening to me is a test, and everyone, without sin on anyone's part, is an instrument; and also great clarity around all the many mistakes; but all this with great humility and compassion for those who suffer so much for making me suffer, to the detriment, nearly always, of the glory of God or, at least, on many occasions.

And so I am re-energised, I am strengthened, and I am even joyful, placing before me the advantages and riches that my soul is receiving and how grateful I am to God.

This is what I experience always, but the other day I felt it sensibly, and I have no wish to conceal it. During the Examen, on April 1st, I suddenly, pictured my soul as a little girl, as usual, but as very beautiful and full of life. I understood that I had acquired that improvement through my trials and struggles. I saw that I was very loved by Jesus, and more closely united with Him; He delighted in me in a quite inexplicable way.

I was amazed at such bliss, for on that day and at those moments, I found myself submerged in a sea of bitterness and the darkness of hell, because I believed myself on the edge of it, as a result of my blindness and stubbornness. The peace, light and gentle joy that flooded my soul are known to Him who granted them to me, for this could not possibly be faked: nor could this amazing sight, that was so instructive and so definitely sure. The only thing I can do is to leave myself in God the Father's hands and say in everything: may your will be done in me, even though all of hell opposes me.

Father, I understood that I was very loved, with predilection by God, but in a most singular way. I was given to understand that for Jesus this was the same as for his most loved souls and... forgive me Your Reverence, but you will comprehend the embarrassment this confession will cause me (I am trembling with fear wondering if it would be better to keep quiet about this

and dismiss it): for the lights, communications, touches, sights, comprehension of the virtues and the most intimate union of my soul with God was similar to those in the saints that we venerate. But, at the same time, I learned that I am walking along a precipice, and that I could lose it all at a moment's notice, if I were to separate my eyes from that interior light that guides me like a beacon.

I still have a great deal to suffer, Father, and this bitter chalice will be my refreshment now until I die, as it is now, and, as Your Reverence knows, has been for some time now; or rather, since I handed myself over to God, and only these intervals of light sustain me, as sometimes my life nearly fails me, because as I move forward, all these temptations are revived. I thought it would be just the opposite.

Secondly, after receiving Holy Communion, I felt myself closely united to God. He does not want me to ask Him to remove these trials and troubles, but rather to beg for courage and constancy.

17. THE BEGINNING OF AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In a letter written to Fr. Hidalgo, from Rome on August 15th, 1892, the Saint says:

“As I find myself in this state, and I believe it will be so for some time, my spirit and body need to be occupied with something, and so I beg your advice as to whether I could occupy myself in some ordinary task, just like any other Sister. Also, I would like to stop writing spiritual notes – I have not done so for a while now - and I have drawn a line under everything that I thought Our Lord was asking of me, like writing about the events of my life, etc., etc., given that it would all seem to be fiction”.

There is a clear similarity between the final phrases in the last paragraph of this letter and the title of the Spiritual Note that we are about to transcribe here: “Some events in my life in which I have observed mercy and providence...”. We do not find any allusion to “events in her life” in any of the Saint’s other writings.

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.25:

One page (20,5 x 15 cm.) written on one side and part of the other

SOME EVENTS IN MY LIFE IN WHICH I HAVE CLEARLY SEEN THE MERCY AND PROVIDENCE OF GOD

The death of my mother, whose eyes I closed and with whom I was alone at that moment, opened the eyes of my soul with such disillusionment that this life seemed to me to be like a desert. I was sixteen years old.¹²

¹² Obviously she is mistaken about the date. Doña Rafaela Ayllón died in February, 1869; the Saint was eighteen years old and approaching nineteen.

Holding my mother's hand, I promised the Lord that I would never fix my affection in any earthly creature. And it would seem that Our Lord accepted my offering, because on that day, he filled me with the most sublime thoughts about the emptiness and nothingness of all the things of earth and of the one thing necessary, which is to aspire only to what is eternal, so that my sorrow nearly, or totally, left me. The ejaculatory prayer impressed me so much, that it served me not just on that day but all through my life, as a stimulus to virtue, "For what was I born? To save my soul." etc. Every day it continued to go deeper and deeper into me, and Divine Providence, that was already forming its plans for me, continually placed before my eyes things that were disillusioning me more and more of this world.

INTRODUCTION

The period that begins with the Saint's departure from Spain for Rome (June 9th, 1892) constitutes a truly dramatic summit in the life of M. Sacred Heart, parallel with the summit in her spiritual life, a peak climbed only with great difficulty.

All the notes made during these months are about the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, which the Saint made three times in less than a year, 7th - 15th October, 1892, and 27th May - 3rd June, 1893, and 23rd - 30th November of the same year. We do not consider these repetitions unnecessary, nor do we think that repeating the Exercises in any way favours a trivialization of the experience. On certain occasions, twelve months can be much more than one year; for the Saint, between June, 1892 and the end of 1893, it was as though a whole lifetime was being lived, but condensed into a few happenings.

The principal events were as follows: 9th June, 1892: departure from Spain to Rome: 19th June: delegation of her authority to M. Pilar. 17th July: publication of the document of delegation in all the houses of the Institute. 7th October: 8 day retreat of the Community in Rome. 3rd March, 1893: collective resignation of the General Council of the government of the Institute. 27th March: the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars accepts this resignation. 31st March, Good Friday: M. Sacred Heart was informed of this event. 27th May: M. Sacred Heart's personal retreat, made on her own. 29th June: M. Pilar's election as General of the Institute. 23rd September: Spiritual Exercises of the community in Rome (M. Sacred Heart makes them for the third time).

The account of the enormous spiritual richness of these months is not contained exclusively in her Notes. All the letters written during this period exude the same sentiments and experiences of M. Sacred Heart. They can be read fruitfully, especially those addressed to Fr. Muruzábal and Fr. Hidalgo. With regard to the correspondence with the latter, it is difficult to distinguish between what is just a letter in the ordinary sense of the word, and what is a spiritual communication, as from June, 1892 all communication had to be

done by post and so was subject to epistolary formulas. The distance and the remoteness, which was not just physical, made the exchange rather difficult and also normalized the mixture of strictly spiritual confidences and the narration of external happenings.

From the point of view of content, the spiritual writings from these are centered in a very impressive degree, on what St. Ignatius called “the third degree of humility”. All of her offerings and resolutions, but above all her lights and graces point towards the ideal “to imitate and be in reality more like Christ our Lord”, “and choose poverty with Christ poor,” “insults with Christ loaded with them”, “provided equal or greater praise and service be given to the Divine Majesty”. (SE [167 168]).

18. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES 1892

Directed by Fr. Alejandro Mancini, S.J., to the community in Rome.

They began on October 7th of that year.

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.27:

A notebook of ten pages (19 x 13 cm.).

a) NOTES RELATING TO THE FIRST WEEK

Exercises of October, 1892, First Friday of the Month. Rome (day 7)

I belong to God, exclusively to God. And as I am his, I should receive everything that happens, positive or negative, as coming from His most holy hand; and so, my essential study and continual duty should be to repress every word, action or thought that could separate me from the conviction that I saw so clearly in this meditation: this has been my path from the moment I was born.

I have seen with great clarity the horrible martyrdom which I am facing, by the fierce treatment to which I am being subjected by creatures, by my flesh, by the Enemy and God, but in everything, I must try to see God's action in all and submit myself to his will without thinking about or talking about it; and that only with those who can give me the light that I need, and for the security of my conscience. I must frequently consider that, if God ever wanted to use me for works that were to be seen by all, now he wants me in obscurity and despised in the eyes of the world, and that I can give him the same glory, being hidden and unknown, and fulfilling his will exactly and joyfully. And even though it is always pleasing to him that we serve him in all situations, for me, at this time, it is much more pleasing to him to do so in this abject situation in which his most holy will has placed me, where I can practice virtue with greater purity and heroism.

2nd Creatures were given to us humans to use, but not to abuse.

So, for that very reason, we are superior to them, for we are made in the image and likeness of God, we must imitate them in their perfection, exactitude and constancy in fulfilling his holy will. Sanctity does not belong to the person

who is the most ingenious, famous or esteemed, but only to the one who has fulfilled the divine will the best; therein lies the pinnacle of sanctity.

The capital vices of us humans are pride and sensuality, and from them come all evils.

First Sin, that of the Angels: “I will not serve”. Whom? God? Well, in one single moment their beauty was disfigured into a horrendous monstrosity. That was the result of their rebellion. And what came next? They were separated from his divine presence forever, because they would not submit to their Creator, and plunged into horrible torment. And when I fail to humble myself when the Lord provides me with the opportunity, I incur an immense loss of grace, and terrible remorse followed by dreadful weakness. I must obtain profound submission to the plans of God.

The Sin of Adam. Opinions against holy obedience.

As the fruit of the first week of the retreat, I will try to renounce my feelings and imagination, the powers of my soul and fantasies of my spirit. With regard to my memory, I will not call to mind anything other than what is for God and his glory. As for my understanding, I will try not to think about anything, unless it is about the same – God’s glory – and I will try, and without rest, to sacrifice my will to God’s will and only his divine will. With regard to my imagination, I will not exaggerate things as if I had a magnifying glass to hand, without trying to see everything with serenity of spirit; and when anything upsets me, I will not say a word, nor even think about it until I have slept on it, for as we know from experience, what seems black before we fall asleep, looks white when we wake up. For my senses, I will not listen to anything, absolutely anything, that does not seem right; even if it is said in different ways. As for my sight, I will not fix my gaze on anything that has nothing to do with the glory of God. And my sense of smell, I will try to be very moderate with this sense, as if I were dead. What does it smell like? With regard to touch, use it as one would a dead body, with horror. I will direct my taste, always to what is worst, and when I enjoy the taste of something, think holy thoughts. With regard to touch, I always remind myself: What will my body be like after I die? What sort of a bed will I have? What utensils? What will I have to protect myself from the cold? What Company will I be keeping? Worms! Putrefaction... Every single person dies; however important they might have been, it is all over. Well, now, I must die to everything, desiring to be forgotten, despised, and treated as we will be, once we are dead.

b) THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. OFFERING ¹³

Divine Captain and Saviour of my soul: today, 12th October, 1892, I enroll myself once again in your ranks to follow you even closer than up to now with sorrows, trials, humiliations, disrespect, dishonor, bad interpretations, distrust, and everything that goes to make up the divine Standard of your most holy cross, beseeching you¹⁴, with all humility, not to despise my desires, as unworthy of so much grace; and you know my King, that although I am weak and cowardly, I have made some efforts to turn my back on the enemy and not to be separated from your side.

Today, once again, in order to confirm my loyalty, I renew my holy vows¹⁵ together with those of devotion¹⁶ and the promises made in your divine presence, promising you that I will be faithful¹⁷ to the death, if your most holy grace, as I hope, will help me as You have up to now.

My King, I will go to you frequently to ask for advice, and I will listen to your divine word in the secret¹⁸ of¹⁹ your Divine and most merciful Heart; and not only will I listen to you, but²⁰ I will copy your divine teachings in order to put them on and so appear less unworthy in your eyes²¹ to accompany you closely²².

In order to obtain even more strength and help, I will ask it of your Most Holy Mother and mine, who is the one who took an interest in enlisting me in your company, and afterwards, has sustained me in all my weaknesses like a tender and merciful mother.

¹³ There are two versions of this document in existence: a previous draft, included in the notebook of the Retreat that we have been transcribing (n.18 in this collection), and a final version, corrected by the Saint herself, and included in another notebook of resolutions. Here we transcribe this last version, indicating in a note variations on the draft copy.

¹⁴ The draft adds and then deletes the words "again".

¹⁵ Adds and deletes "all".

¹⁶ Inserts "the others of devotion" », written above the line.

¹⁷ "promising you to be faithful" above the line; below deleted "and I promised...loyalty."

¹⁸ Above the line inserted: "in secret". In the line deleted "within your royal dwelling."

¹⁹ "There" added above the line; below, crossed out, "I will learn".

²⁰ Adds and then crosses out "weak".

²¹ "that" not crossed out, perhaps because she forgot.

²² Crossed out "separate myself from your side".

I do not exclude, either, my most zealous protector, the Archangel Raphael²³ nor my beloved companion, my Guardian Angel²⁴; nor the Saint of my special devotion, Saint Ignatius of Loyola²⁵; to whom I owe so much; nor any of the heavenly court, so that they all help me to fulfil my promises and desires and, some day, even if I am in the lowest place and at the feet of everyone, may I rejoice at seeing you, which is what I, your most unworthy Handmaid, daughter and spouse²⁶ desire.

Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In the Prayer in the Garden, reflecting on the most generous self-abandonment of the Heart of Jesus into his Eternal Father's hands in that most terrible moment for his Most Sacred Heart, I felt myself very moved to...²⁷

c) RESOLUTIONS

Drafts:

As we will see next, there are several drafts and a definitive copy. In all of them, very sublime spiritual aspirations are mixed with very concrete practical applications of her resolutions in everyday life. We have numbered those different drafts 1, 2 and 3. In all three, the "unique resolution" with which she begins the draft, appears in one form or another: 1: "to despise myself and long for others to despise me too". This resolution has, as its aim, identification with Christ, and only in that identification will she find her true meaning: "I must be able to say always and with all my soul, 'It is not I who live, but it is my Lord Jesus Christ who lives in me' ". (draft 2).

Handwritten original: Spiritual Notes, n.27:

A notebook, ten pages (19 x 13 cm.)

²³ She adds "most zealous protector of my good"; underlined: "since I received your name in my holy baptism".

²⁴ In the draft: "my beloved companion, my guardian angel".

²⁵ In the draft: "nor the blessed St. Ignatius of Loyola".

²⁶ In the draft: "and one day...daughter and spouse".

²⁷ These are the only, if inconclusive lines, that refer to the Third Week of the Exercises.

Draft 1:

Only one resolution that will be my rule of life: despise myself and long for others to despise me too. Receive honours as if they were the heaviest of crosses and see the enemy “pride” in all of them. To see myself as very honoured when people calumniate me and cause me injury, without fault on their part, only excusing myself very rarely, and that only after consulting, not with a woman, but rather with a spiritual and knowledgeable person, who approves it. And when I receive insults, to listen to them always silently and humbly, and not speak of them to anyone, except if I am ordered to do so. Never to talk about myself, either for good or ill. To speak only when necessary about those who oppress me, and always lovingly. And never, if I happen to meet them again, to give the slightest sign of complaint, either in words or gestures, and the same with regard to letters, even though they provoke me to do so.

As for things in which I have the liberty to act, I will remain indifferent and will not tie myself down to peoples’ opinions, and if they give them to me without being asked, I will ignore them.

When dealing with people who tend to gossip, I will use few and very well thought out words.

At home, in community, simplicity in my actions, but I will open my heart, if I am a subject, to my Superior; if not, only to my Director. And I will only share the intimate things of my soul with my Director, without anything showing on the outside.

I will see the one who governs as my legitimate Superior and respect her as such in my words and actions.

I will revive in my soul the desire to be despised, humiliated and insulted by everyone, and if I am so permitted, I will ask Our Lord that it will be so not only in spirit but in reality also. When these moments that are so bitter to human nature happen, I will turn to God and follow His advice, as I now know from experience how truly helpful it is, and if I have to make any decisions, I will take counsel from spiritual and impartial people, and avoiding, even with them, a natural venting of my feelings, and on these occasions, I will remember my desires to become a saint, even though it cost me my life, as I have declared so many times to Our Lord.

I will control my tongue, especially when I have to speak about the defects of other people.

Draft 2:

I must live as though I had died, not living for creatures or for myself but only for God.

I must be crucified to the world, just as the world should be crucified for me.

I must work with all my soul so that I can always say: It is not I who live now; my Lord Jesus Christ is the one who lives in me, and so everything I am and do should radiate the life of Christ who lives in me²⁸. My feelings, the powers of my soul, the emotions of my heart, should act only in Christ and for Christ; everything should pass through this divine prism in order to make me one with Him.

And I must not be content with this; but I must work with discreet and constant zeal to draw everyone to know and to love Christ and to serve Him. And even more; with my prayers.

I have to work with all my soul, so that honours become unbearable crosses and being despised becomes a joy for me.

Draft 3:

1° Never reject any opportunity that comes my way to humble myself.

2° Whenever I feel troubled, to turn to God, because I know, from experience, just how much he takes care of me, and not to say a single word, however much I see myself provoked, until I have calmed down.

3° Listen very much, especially to those in the community, and speak very little. When anyone who is distressed approaches me, allow them to unburden themselves, without confronting them.

4° State the truth, without insisting; whether they believe me or not.

5° Make no reference to anything, unless I am completely sure about it.

6° Be trusting with very few people, at the most, with one or two persons who are prudent and tested, and follow their advice firmly.

²⁸ Gal 2: 20.

FINAL VERSION

Included in this last version are practically all of the resolutions contained in the drafts.

Note that in this exhaustive version, the Saint has tried to place her aspirations in the order of their importance. Beginning with her desire to be despised and to “receive honours as if they were very heavy crosses”, she continues by detailing her strategies one by one to obtain her sublime goal: “to live for God alone” (23), and to work so that the “life of Christ might shine through all her actions” ... “In Christ, for Christ and with Christ, in order to become like Christ...” “To draw every single one I can to enjoy Christ”, (25 26).

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.28:
a notebook of 16 ruled pages (10,5 x 7 cm.) written on all sides.*

A.M.D.G. IHS Resolutions Made in My Retreat, 1892

- 1° Despise myself and desire that others despise me.
- 2° Accept honours as if they were very heavy crosses and see the enemy of pride hidden in them.
- 3° Consider myself greatly honoured when I am calumniated without cause, not excusing myself without being advised to do by a spiritual and prudent person.
- 4° When something unjust is said to me, listen in silence, and afterwards make no mention of it. Jesus remained silent before his judges.
- 5° Speak only when necessary about those who oppress me and always with extreme charity.
- 6° When I meet these people, never show the slightest sign of grievance or resentment
- 7° Pray for them very much and see in what they have made me suffer, only the most holy will of God, with no malice on their part.
- 8° Never speak about myself, either for good or ill.
- 9° Never reject any opportunity that presents itself to humble myself.
- 10° Whenever I feel troubled, refrain from saying a single word, however harassed I may feel.

- 11° Listen much and speak little, even with members of the community.
- 12° When someone who is troubled approaches me, allow them to vent their feelings, without confronting them.
- 13° Never demand that others judge things as I see them.
- 14° State the truth and then let each one interpret it as they see right.
- 15° Never make reference to anything unless I am totally sure about it.
- 16° Trust very few people, and only those who are prudent and tested, and follow their advice to the letter.
- 17° In those things where I am free to do so, refrain from allowing myself to be tied to people's opinions, and if they offer them to me without being asked, ignore them.
- 18° With people who tend to gossip, few words and well thought out.
- 19° In community, great simplicity in my actions; but I must open my heart to my superior, if I am a subject; and if not, to whoever is directing my conscience.
- 20° Always control my tongue well.
- 21° Carry out all my actions, even the most indifferent ones, with religious maturity and ensure they are well done, without falling over myself with my eagerness to do too much. The one who does things well is the one who does a great deal.
- 22° Refrain from venting my feelings about my troubles with human beings, only with God; because I know from experience, how much can be lost spiritually with the first, and how much we gain with the second, who is God.
- 23° I should live as if I have died, no longer living for creatures or for myself, but only for God.
- 24° I must be crucified to the world, and the world should be crucified to me.
- 25° I must strive with all my soul that the life of Christ, who lives in me, shine out in all my actions. My feelings, the powers of my soul and the affections of my heart, should only act in Christ, through Christ and for Christ, in order to become like Christ.
- 26° And I must not be content with this, but with discretion and prudence, draw everyone that I can to enjoy Christ.²⁹

²⁹ Fr. Mancini writes immediately afterwards, "May God confirm what he has done in us". (cf. Psalm 67:29)

19. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

May, 1893

The Saint began this retreat on May 26 in the evening. “The Superior of the community wrote to M. Pilar saying that she would make it on her own, but that Fr. Mancini would come to hear her confession, and, if he could, he would come at some other times too.”³⁰

The notes that we transcribe here are different from those of other retreats, which were usually rather fragmentary and of different lengths, on different days. The ones transcribed as follows, contain a type of summary for each day. The fruit of this experience appears expressed from the very first moment: (“A very lively faith in Him, in order to allow His Divine Providence total freedom to do with me whatever he most desires..”) until the very last day in which, “drawing the veil completely aside”, she sees that all her efforts should be concentrated on “abandoning myself, without reserve, into the hands of Our Lord”. One of the final paragraphs could well figure in any spiritual anthology of M. Sacred Heart: “The greatest action I can do for my God is this: to hand myself over totally to his most holy will without placing the slightest obstacle in the way.”(day 8).

Her very clear option for the “third degree of humility” is expressed on the seventh day of the retreat. Her firm commitment to this option is understood more easily if one reads the statement that follows immediately (“in the presence of the Adorable Trinity...”)

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.30: pages 1 - 10
of a notebook of 25 pages,
(13 x 10 cm.) written on both sides.
The notes of another retreat begin on page 10.*

³⁰ Letter from M. Ma. del Salvador to M. Pilar (24th, May, 1893).

a) NOTES WITH REFERENCE TO THE MEDITATIONS IN THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Day 1. In all the meditations, I have come to know that what Our God is asking of me is a very lively faith in Him, so as to allow his Divine Providence complete freedom to do with me whatever is most pleasing to him, just like a little lump of clay in the hands of the potter and I, like the clay, must allow myself to be moulded to His satisfaction, without any complaining, either in word or thought. Fiat: «Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum».³¹

Day 2. All of my failures have really consisted in my lack of trust in God, failures that, had it not been for the very intense, even excessive, love that God has for me, would have precipitated, if not to abandon him, to grow cold in God's service; but I know that He has been for me more than a Father, a very tender grandfather, for whom, my countless defects and all my ingratitude have only served to increase his care and concern for me, in ways that only he and the sinner, who has experienced the effects, know.

What should the fruit of this knowledge be? The same as yesterday: to abandon myself into his divine hands like a beloved daughter, and allow Him to work in me, even though it were to cost me my honour and my life and I were to see myself enclosed in a dark tomb by his love. I have seen that the path that has opened before me as my lot, is something similar to that of His most precious Son. He wants me to have this engraved in my heart, so that I do not lose a single grace from that very rich mine, and since it is a mine, it is very hidden even from the keenest eyes of this world, above all in moments of the greatest stress.

Day 3. A day of pure delight, that was about things that are so beloved to me, death and judgement. Hopefully, at that moment, I will see the gentle eyes of my Jesus, filled with goodness towards me, as I seem to have seen them today, and, quite soon, I will be able to give him an eternal kiss. I pray that his infinite goodness will revive my faith to overcome myself well on the path to Calvary and, please God, I will be able to do so. The right way lies in abandoning myself to His most holy will. My dear, sweet, Jesus, grant that I achieve this and that I do not offend you anymore, not even with the tiniest thorn, because my heart cannot bear the thought that, after leaving this sad world, I would be separated from you for even a moment. I feel overjoyed after

³¹ Lk. 1: 38.

making my confession! And You have granted me this, as you do all things, without any merit on my part.

Day 4. I felt very vehement desires to follow Christ in the Third Degree of Humility, but at the same time, at the sight of my utter smallness, I experienced a dreadful struggle over the difficulty of doing this. And the greatest battle of all, was because I know that God Our Lord wants this at all costs; and since I could not possibly think of denying him this, nor could I or even want to. And it is obvious to me that He has to leave me, as it were, alone, for my good, so much so that I live through some moments in agony, like death throes. He who sees everything, has me in his hands; and although it costs me my life, both physically and morally, that will not separate me, with His grace, from my one resolution in this Retreat: to long only for what God wants for me.

Day 5. An awful struggle. At times, I was terrified by the struggle that awaits me in the very difficult life that lies ahead, and I want at all costs to win it, following the divine will, and that will mean a great deal of suffering. I see ever more clearly, that my path is at the moment one of darkness. Just the same as every day, I resolved to follow God's holy will and place myself in His hands like a ball of wax; as Christ Jesus abandoned Himself into the hands of his Eternal Father, and this caused Him to live always surrounded by such troubles and humiliations, until His death on the cross.

Day 6. I experienced an absolutely firm conviction that everything that has happened to me has come directly from God's hands, without fault on the part of anyone. All the persons involved and the events that have happened have been instruments to punish my pride and rebelliousness, which I have always experienced in fulfilling the divine will. For this reason now, repentant of everything, I resolve in the presence of the Divine Majesty of the most Blessed Trinity, of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Heavenly Court, begging them humbly for their aid, to make good my fault, submitting myself in everything to His divine dispositions, not only with obedience, but even with joy, without wasting even the tiniest splinter of the most holy cross that comes my way, and I will strive with all my soul to obtain the third degree of humility, heroic patience and invincible strength; realizing that, on feeling the weight of the cross, I am suffering in my combat, just like the martyrs, and how this will result in a greater amount of grace now and of greater glory hereafter.

Day 7. This is the fruit of the retreat today, and have no need to add anything else. In the presence of the adorable Trinity and the most holy Virgin Mary, and the whole Heavenly Court, I promise to work with my whole soul to obtain the third degree of humility, since I have known for a while now, and have received firm confirmation in this retreat, that this is God's will, and the only way to obtain what the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus desires of me, which is to abandon myself totally to his holy will, however difficult and repugnant it may be to my rebellious will and my highly refined self-love, without allowing myself any other relief except that of embracing His crucified love, and not looking for consolation from any creature, not even from myself, or calling to mind any injuries, but rather considering them all as God's instruments for my good, which is truly what they have been. And I will communicate only, and as little as possible, with the person who is in charge of my spirit, so that he may know my weaknesses and may strengthen me with his advice, which I will follow blindly, as if it came from the very mouth of God. Who, on contemplating the sorrows that Jesus suffered in his most holy humanity and in his most blessed soul, would not hand themselves over to suffer, if it is necessary, martyrdom of both body and spirit? Grant, my Jesus, that I will never forget the understanding that I have been given about the value of a crucified life with you³², above all in my moments of trial: do not leave me unprotected at that time. I place everything in your hands, my most beloved and most gentle Father.

Day 8. Having drawn aside the veil completely, and seeing palpably the fruit of the previous meditations, I must put all my effort into abandoning myself without reserve into the hands of Our Lord and receiving everything that he sends me, however hard and bitter it might be, as proofs of His love for me, and not attribute them to any other cause. This means giving him all my heart, as he asks me to, and the greatest proof of love that I can give Him and with total confidence, believing without the slightest doubt that on this generous self-giving, depends not only my salvation, but also my sanctification. And I must not just run, but fly, along the path of perfection. The greatest work that I can possibly do for my God, is this: hand myself over totally to his most holy will, without putting the slightest obstacle in the way.

May the most Sacred Heart of my beloved Jesus, bless my desires, as I humbly beseech Him, and may His Immaculate Mother obtain for me the grace to fulfil them perfectly.

Rome, June 3rd. 1893.

³² Cf. Gal 2:19.

b) PROMISE TO WORK FOR THE “THIRD DEGREE OF HUMILITY”.

We are dealing here with a perfectly written text, well-constructed and in excellent handwriting, in which the Saint lays out her decision to strive for “the third degree of humility” as a “means to obtain what the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus wants” of her.

The importance of this act is underlined by the formulas she uses, which are all more or less the same as those used for the ceremonies of Vows in the Institute of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, from the solemn beginning “In the presence of the adorable Trinity, and of the most Holy Virgin Mary, and the whole Heavenly Court, I promise...” right through to the sober and humble ending (“ I humbly implore You, Most Holy Trinity, through the most precious Blood of Jesus, that you will deign to accept this my promise...”).

Another detail that helps us to understand the importance of this promise is the exact date added at the end. As on other occasions, M. Sacred Heart wanted to determine the exact day on which she received a special grace from the Lord and that she made an offering of herself so that this gift would bear fruit in her.

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.28:
pages 11 - 13 of a notebook of 16 ruled pages
(10,5 x 7 cm.) written on both sides.*

In the presence of the adorable Trinity, of the most Holy Virgin Mary, and of the whole Heavenly Court, I promise to strive with all my soul, to obtain the third degree of humility, as I have known for some time now, and it has been confirmed with complete clarity in this holy retreat, that this is God’s will for me and the only way in which I will obtain what the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus wants of me, which is to abandon myself completely to his divine plans, however difficult or repugnant they might be to my rebellious will and very refined self-love, without allowing myself any outlet for my feelings, apart from

embracing his crucified love, and without looking for any consolation in any creature, not even from myself, not recalling any insults, but rather seeing them as His instruments for my good, which is what they have truly been; and to communicate only, and as little as possible, with the person who is responsible for my spirit so that he will know my weaknesses, and would strengthen them with his advice, which I will follow blindly, as if it came straight from the mouth of God.

And now I humbly beseech you, Most Holy Trinity, by the most precious blood of Jesus, that You will deign to accept my promise, and as You have given me the grace to desire and offer it, You will grant me abundant grace to fulfill it.

Rome, June 2nd, 1893, First Friday of the month.

Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. E. C. J.

c) RETREAT RESOLUTIONS

The precision and extraordinary brevity of these resolutions underline the fundamental importance of the previous note. (The decision to work to obtain the third degree of humility). As a matter of fact, M. Sacred Heart had very little to add to this promise.

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.28: pages 15 and 16
of a notebook of 16 pages (10,5 x 7 cm.), written on both sides.*

IHS

RESOLUTIONS

1. Docility and a deep spirit of faith in whoever is my superior.
2. Submission, in imitation of the Most Holy Virgin, to the plans of God for me, no matter however inscrutable they may be; always saying, in the spirit of the Most Holy Virgin, however repugnant they may be to me: "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your will".

20. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

September, 1893

The community in Rome began this retreat, given by Fr. Mancini, S.J., on September 22nd in the evening. The notes made during these days were very brief.

The ideas in the first are linked together with those of her retreat in May of the same year (“... abandon myself into His divine hands like a small lump of clay in the hands of the potter”) The rest, two or three pages further on, seem to be notes written from words dictated by Fr. Mancini; indeed some paragraphs are in Italian.

Original Autograph; Spiritual Notes, n.30: pages 10 - 14 in a notebook of 25 pages (13 x 10 cm.) written on both sides.

a) NOTES REFERING TO THE MEDITATIONS OF THE RETREAT

1st “giorno”³³ As I belong totally to God, I must leave myself in his divine hands like a small lump of clay in the hands of the potter. I must adore His divine plans and submit myself to them not just with all my heart, but joyfully and refusing to reject any occasion to humble myself which might present itself.

2nd The salvation of my soul is the only thing that is important for me; when the things that so afflict my self-love happen, I will say: What is better, to nurture this pain or, seeing it as a sign of Jesus’ love for me, Jesus who wants me to be perfect, to accept it with joy in order to receive greater grace and afterwards greater glory, and so contemplate the beauty of my Jesus with greater clarity.

3rd In the Meditation on Christ the King, I felt very encouraged to follow Him along the Way of the Cross. In the meditations on the Incarnation, the Nativity and Flight into Egypt, I had a very strong desire to imitate Jesus, in practicing the five virtues that He practiced: 1st, the glory of his Father; 2nd, His obedience; 3rd, His Poverty; 4th, His Pain, and 5th, His sacrifice.

³³ “Giorno”: day.

The Meditation on the Flight into Egypt.

Jesus, the King of Heaven, and His Most Holy Mother and Saint Joseph flee because this was the will of the Eternal Father. He could have made him invisible or have punished those who wished to kill him; but no, he commanded the Highest Omnipotence to flee. During the journey and once there in Egypt, did He perform miracles to prevent them from experiencing troubles and discomfort? Not even one. He tested and treated them just like the lowest of mortals. So do I want any other treatment for myself? Humble yourself, pride, and believe yourself dishonoured when the Lord alleviates your pains and does not treat you as one of His most dear creatures, as were his most precious Jesus, and His most holy Mother and Saint Joseph.³⁴

The Meditation on Jesus Remaining in the Temple. The distress of his Most Holy parents, when they thought he was lost. The courage of Jesus when He left them, knowing that this was the will of His Eternal Father. He knew that this would pierce their hearts: but it did not matter, because it was necessary, and he acted exactly as his Eternal Father commanded him. He stayed behind in the Temple and He did not offer the slightest comfort to the hearts of his Most Holy parents. And after this great test, when he had already enriched their hearts with grace, he inspired them to look for him in the Temple and there they found him, which filled their hearts with joy.

If we work through all the tests that the Lord deigns to send us for our good, with constancy, and in the same way, we will find Jesus, and we will obtain consolation, 1st, because we will have overcome the Enemy, and 2nd, because we will have imitated him.

I am convinced, by the evidence, that the cause of all my imperfections, sins, and failure to take advantage of the most precious and abundant graces that I have received, has been my resistance to placing myself in the hands of God, namely, to submitting my judgement and my will to his divine plans, which have been so clearly manifested, even in extraordinary ways, and confirmed by God's representatives, who have so often inculcated in me that I was being carried in...³⁵

³⁴ While taking notes from the retreat director, the Saint uses a mixture of Spanish and Italian. At this time she was not yet fluent in Italian, which is the reason for the numerous spelling mistakes and the errors of phrasing. The editors translated the final paragraphs into Spanish.

³⁵ Unfinished.

b) RESOLUTIONS: DRAFT

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.30: pages 15 and 16.

I know that what Jesus requires of me is total abandonment to his divine will.

2nd A life of continual interior suffering and a few exterior events, endured in profound silence and with a smiling face. He wants me to love my neighbor, both in and outside the Congregation, very much.

To conceal from the eyes of everyone all the graces that he grants me, without this being contrary to the good example that I should always give, with the utmost simplicity, and without anyone being aware that I am doing God's work. This is what it is about: that everyone will follow me without realizing it, just as up to now.

God also requires of me a renewed fervour and continual mortification.

To appreciate and love everyone from my heart, according to our rule.

In times of darkness to remain silent, unless I am very upset, and then only with the person who is directing me.

Not to desire, rather to abhor from my heart, the esteem of creatures, or to be held in good standing, or that they feel sorry for me, or that they give me pleasure, etc. On the contrary, to ensure with all my energy, that nobody cares about me or takes any notice of me, just like a dishcloth in the kitchen.

Venerate our Major Superior, as Christ, whom she represents, and also the other four (Assistants).

Not to become involved in anything at all, and even less so in important matters; excuse myself graciously.

The very strong desire that I feel to work for the Congregation, to dedicate everything to it, dedicate it all, because this is God's will, and to sanctify myself as much as I can, and acquire virtu...³⁶

³⁶ Unfinished.

c) REFORM OF LIFE, MADE IN MY RETREAT, 1893

Although she repeats some of the ideas that figure in the previous text, this reform is not just a definitive version of those resolutions but a very well-crafted document, in which resolutions, aspirations and feelings are included. The third point is particularly moving : “You also want of me the total death of myself and that I would live in and act out of a lively faith. This is a huge commitment for me, Oh Good Jesus, and even more so in the situation in which I find myself” Her situation from the beginning of this year, 1893, is namely one of hiddenness and obscurity and, even worse, distrust and disrespect. There has not yet been time for the oblivion that will come later, gaining ground day by day and year by year.

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.32:
a notebook of 20 pages, (13 x 9,5 cm.) Written on both sides. Pages 1-11.*

IHS

Take as my model the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and copy his most holy life in mine. But I will invest considerable care this year, principally in the following three points, because I believe that this is what he is asking of me, with even greater insistence:

1st Total abandonment into God’s hands, with childlike trust. Firstly, because I am his, I should trust his plans for me blindly. I am his, because he created me, and afterwards not only has he overwhelmed me with blessings, but also He has freed me from so many bad things, despite finding so much resistance on my part. Yet I have not tired him out! So, what does He say to me? If I ever, even remotely, doubt Jesus’ loving providence on my behalf, I am crazy and worse than Lucifer, even though it might seem that I am abandoned. Jesus doesn’t change, and his very great love for me is so obvious, more the love of a tender mother, and he longs for me to always take refuge in him, entrusting everything to his loving care. What must I do? Cuddle always ever closer to his breast, even though it might seem that he is tossing me away from him, and overcome all with the strength of my constancy.

Also, I will continually keep before my eyes, according to the circumstances, the examples in his most holy life, and especially the following; his flight into Egypt, his Hidden Life, the lack of response from people, especially the apostles; his silence in front of his judges during his Passion, and his helplessness on the Cross, even with regard to his Eternal Father.

2nd Docility to his holy inspirations. Here, my soul is covered with shame. I pray that God will insist with such great tenderness so that I may see how much I need this, after having responded so badly until now. Oh, My Lord, you have been more than a Father for me; yes, My Lord, as well as a Father, you have been the God of my soul. Because not only have you granted me an understanding of these things, but an anticipation of everything that was going to happen, with a light that only you know about, and the rewards that go with his fidelity. And when I have dimmed this light by trying to guide myself by my own caprice, as a last effort, you have enabled me to touch, as it were with my hand, the regression of your action in me, with that loving disappointment that you know how to share with those with whom you have shared it several times. You know only too well, my Lord and my God, that I am not lying. But, despite everything, I have turned my back on you, on the false pretext that all this is an illusion that I am making up. An illusion! My only illusions were to take my eyes off you, Infinite Truth, who as the Owner of all your blessings, grant them to whomever you please, without taking into account at all their unworthiness and miserable condition; but my false humility, suggested by the Enemy of my good, who persecutes me relentlessly, as you know only too well, said to me: "Who told you that it is God?" And I took notice, and did not mention the trials that my God sets me, and are approved by his ministers. It will not happen in the future; I will blindly follow you, my most Beloved Jesus, in the practice of the virtues with the greatest possible generosity, in dark and difficult moments, and whatever the director of my conscience approves, and only he, and no one else without his authorization. You will bless this blind faith of mine, and you will sustain me so that I do not vacillate during these trials.

3rd You also require of me the total death of myself and that I act only with a lively faith. This is huge for me, my Good Jesus, and even more so in the situation in which I find myself. But you say to me: "What can you call huge if you have me as your protector?" It is true, with you nothing is too big, and even less so with the example of your most holy life, but my passions are very

deeply seated; as you know only too well, who could ever have the strength to work ceaselessly to eradicate them? In addition, You desire this work to be hidden from human eyes, and for that reason, it is even more difficult and requires double effort; but that is what you want and what I do too. But you are well aware of my concerns and all I do to fulfil your desire. “Love is as strong as death and as cruel as hell”,³⁷ and it is only right that it is so, but we creatures are so weak that we think we are helpless to respond. So what will I do, my Lord and my God? Love and love more, because love overcomes everything; and pray for this love, without ceasing.

³⁷ Cant. 8:6.

21. NOTE MADE FOR A SPIRITUAL DIALOGUE WITH FR. HIDALGO, S.J.

(Second half of 1893)

Even though M. Sacred Heart's writing reveals great serenity of spirit, it also reflects the close proximity of the events that brought about her present situation of marginalization. "From all the things that have happened, I take away an outstanding proof of just how much God loves me...and as for those who have been the cause, they are the instruments that God has used...".

It would seem to be the Saint's intention, that the person to whom she addressed this document, was still Fr. Hidalgo, her Spiritual Director for so many years. In any case, what we are talking about here is a draft which, in the end, she never sent.

There are a few ideas or feelings underlined in this document about prayer and suffering that can be numbered among the best the Saint ever wrote: "In my prayer I now experience very often that... I am like a child talking with my father, who always has everything ready and that I receive from him whatever is best...". "... I must expand, as much as I can, the depths of my soul...", "... my open mouth is turned towards my God, begging him for more and more: like the little chicks asking their mother for the food that they need".

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.34: three pages (21 x 13 cm.)

Written on both sides.

I do not find any lack of clarity either in my faith or in the holy books, but only in the last sacrament, which is my continual martyrdom. And I see it as a very great benefit in order to be humble and to always be on top of myself.

In prayer, I had the same feelings as usual, and so my spirit is always ready, without bothering whether I am in dryness or consolation, as a little child who talks with her father, who always has something to talk about, and she receives from him whatever is best for her, and so is not only always happy but satisfied, grateful and convinced of what she needs and longing more and more to return to his side.

Always hungry to suffer more, and the more I am overwhelmed and needy, the more satisfied I am. Even one moment of consolation is a veritable cross, because I understand that time is short and the harvest is plentiful, and this has caused me, for a few years now, to say: “Just a little more, Lord”, and I fear that my infidelity tires him, and holds back his merciful hand.

I never get used to receiving holy communion; every single day I am granted an even deeper understanding of the wonder of this treasure and the perfection of every action.

Not even the least failure is exempt from a rebuke from Our Lord, which leaves a bitter and yet humble pain in me.

My passions, like wild beasts, fight with me, sometimes very fiercely; with God’s help, indirectly, namely, in a hidden way, I can take advantage of them in order to merit his help.

At times, I experience terrible bouts of darkness, as if I were already in the depths of hell, but the mercy of God protects me, and my making acts of contrition and humility, so I remain peaceful like a little chick under the wings of its mother.

From all that has happened, I derive an outstanding proof of just how much God loves me, by giving me the opportunity to practice solid virtues which, otherwise, I would never have been able to do. And, as for the causes, they are the instruments which Our Lord has used, and, for that very reason, they inspire in me compassion rather than antipathy. But notwithstanding, my blind stubbornness makes me sad, and I ask the Lord to give me light in the midst of such thick darkness, despite the fact that these instruments firmly believe that they are fully in the light. I have before my eyes the conduct of the scribes and Pharisees against Jesus, but I put this away from me, fearing that it was irreverent for both sides, both for the instruments and for me.

I see myself stripped of every good, and disposed to accept every evil, and every day more so, and I see with what seems a light of heaven, that seems to be so very bright, that all the blessings that my soul receives, every single one, without exaggeration, comes from God and only from God.

When it comes to listening to things of God, my heart is like a sponge that sheds tears at the slightest squeeze, but I try to hide it with great effort.

I will overcome my repugnance, as I said before, speaking about my prayer: which I feel habitually, and so I will not focus on what I like or dislike, but rather, to accept what comes my way with a smile: this is what gives extraordinary pleasure to Our Lord.

His nearly continual presence in my soul, causes me to experience, from time to time, the delights of heaven, because I see how very happy he is with me, very relaxed and very pleased: as if he were in his very own house. This interior life, Father, is like an anticipation of Glory, and teaches me about the mystery that I was working so hard to understand, but could not unravel, namely how the saints can rejoice in their crosses, and the martyrs their battles, and how the greatest suffering is also the greatest joy. Obviously, it must be because they have that great strength in proportion to their generosity. For this reason, I want to be very generous, in order to expand the bosom of my soul as much as I can, and this impels me to keep my mouth wide open towards my God, begging Him more and more, just like the little birds who ask their mother for the food that they need.

22. SPIRITUAL NOTE IN PREPARATION FOR MAKING HER CONFESSION

(Around the year 1893)

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.29: a double page
(11 x 9 cm.) written on both sides.*

(On the blank part of a letter from Fr. Muruzábal, S.J.)

With regard to indifference, my lack of faith that everything comes from God and is permitted for my greater good, and that is where my lack of submission to his divine will comes from.

About pride, I notice weakness in that disappointment irritates me, and that is where my battles come from. Feeling sorrow that they do not praise some things about me. I am tempted to envy when I see my neighbours preferred, and I complain even against God. I feel sorrow when people do not bend to my decisions.

Sensuality, tendency to freedom of the senses, especially the eyes, ears and the tongue.

INTRODUCTION

After the intense period from 1892 to 1893, and the dramatic unfolding of events which justified the Saint's making the Spiritual Exercises three times in only 14 months, there begins, in 1894, a long period characterized by an exhaustingly slow tempo.

Only a very few incidents lend some variety to this ten year period, which coincides with the Generalate of M. Pilar.

1894 is the year in which the definitive text of the Constitutions was drawn up, a task carried out to its completion, nearly exclusively, by M. Purísima. Her presence in Rome is a worrying element in the life of M. Sacred Heart, as they were now withholding from her all details of the progress of the matter.

The Constitutions were approved on September 25th of that year. In the years that follow, the only colourful happening, in a dreary and inescapable monotony, is the trip the Saint made to Loreto and Assisi. The pilgrimage, that passed through the territory of Umbria, took place in the Spring of 1895. The Saint travelled these roads with a spirit of joyful faith. The mysteries of the life of Mary and the Infancy of Jesus light up the darkness of her hidden life "like the brilliant stars which delight our eyes, in a very dark night"³⁸. The contact with "the Poverello" was yet another encouragement to live in this state of radical dispossession, in the total detachment which characterised these years.

The human experience on which this colossal building of faith was built was truly painful and crucifying. Isolation and incomprehension surrounded her, without leaving the smallest space for anything but a superhuman hope. She feels "banished, spied on, surrounded by distrust". Very frequently, doubts about the people she had thought to be completely loyal, in another time, take hold of her. On the other hand, she experiences, with extreme pain, a sensation of being useless, together with an ever more lively desire to work in the apostolic mission of the Institute. "My greatest martyrdom is not be able to do so...", she writes in 1898, after nearly six years of inactivity; but she adds, in the following line: "If I manage to become a saint, I will be doing more for

³⁸ Letter to M. Maria de la Cruz, n. 439 in the collection of letters.

the Congregation, for the Sisters, and for my neighbor than if I were employed in tasks of the greatest zeal”.

From 1893 on, the lowest point in the relationship between the Foundresses, and for the rest of these ten years, a progressive rapprochement begins to happen between the two sisters. M. Sacred Heart writes to M. Pilar in 1901, “For a long time now, I have been praying for you for great strength, because I am beginning to see that your hour has arrived”. M. Pilar’s “hour” presupposes so very much; not only her explicit petition to her sister for forgiveness (1902), but also a series of events which transform 1903 into yet another dramatic climax which glitters with the Saint’s generosity and heroism.

23. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1894. RESOLUTIONS

The community in Rome made their retreat this year between November 25th and December 2nd. The retreat director was Fr. Francisco Javier Rondina, S.J.

Only two short notes, containing resolutions, are preserved from this retreat.

The beginning explains why this is so: "I have nothing to add to what I wrote previously ...". What follows is no more than the putting into words of a resolution made to imitate our Lord "in His Hidden Life in Nazareth."

*Original Autograph, Spiritual Notes, n.32:
page 11 of a twenty page notebook. (13 x 9.5 cm.).*

a) NOTES WRITTEN IN THE SAME NOTEBOOK FROM THE RETREAT IN 1893.

There is no need to add anything to what I wrote before, except that the plans Our Lord has for me continue to consist of a slow but very painful martyrdom, in which He has kept me for the last five years, because of my very great pride.

I must trust blindly that His grace will not fail me during these terrible battles which I have to undergo in order to obtain what My God requires of me, that is, the total death of natural life in my soul.

The means that the Lord has inspired me to use are: with regard to the exterior or moral dimension: the imitation of his hidden life in Nazareth. In the spiritual or interior dimension: to form his feelings in my heart, to make mine like his, and in imitation of his gentleness and humility, to bear the sorrows, humiliations, contradictions and struggles which come my way, without ever turning my back on them. Those that do come my way, be they ever so many, could never, ever resemble, even in the slightest way, what Christ, My Lord and My God, suffered for me.

b) LATER DRAFT

These notes develop further the previous short note, and repeat, literally, some of its most typical expressions. Making reference to her personal situation, the Saint speaks in both notes of a "long but very painful martyrdom". In the

first one, she speaks about the Hidden Life of Jesus in Nazareth; here she says: "The more I perfect my community life, the happier Jesus..." and "... there is no holier life than that which makes us like Christ and His Most Holy Mother".

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.37:
one page, lined (21 x 13 cm.) written on both sides.*

Our Lord has made it very clear to me that I will continue in this slow but very painful martyrdom in which he has me, until, thanks to my struggles, I obtain intimate union with his divine will.

He wants me to submit joyfully to all his martyrdoms of love, seeing in them, rather than punishments, signs of his special love.

He also asks of me blind faith in his plans for me. And, being proud I find that so hard: but he will help me.

In all my actions, I must seek with even more effort the greater glory of God and try to carry them out with the greatest perfection that I possibly can.

He also wants me to forget myself, so that nothing bothers me, absolutely nothing, whether they like me or not, whether they honour me or dishonour me, whether they give in to me or deny me; so I must live as if I were not living, with regard to everything and in everything. God's grace pushes me to this once again, without depriving me of the merit of the struggle and the suffering involved, because this is the most perfect way, and that is exactly what He wants from me. He does not predict rest for me, but rather work and very hard work.

The more I perfect our life in common, the happier Jesus is.

I will flee from all distinction, and will do all I can to lead a life that is as hidden as I can possibly manage, providing that obedience is not compromised. Keeping in mind that the holiest life is that which makes us most like Christ and His Most Holy Mother.

On the last day, I felt as it were a sudden grace of God, telling me that my path is leading to sanctity.

Safeguard the modesty of the eyes very well. In recreation to be very careful not to become involved in contentions.

When beginning all my actions, to say first: "Our actions , etc...". Eat, sleep and do everything as Our Lord and His Most Holy Mother would.

24. ADVICE RECEIVED FROM FR. MANCINI, S.J., 1894

Even though, as it says at the end of this text, the ideas collected here come from her “director”, (at this time, that was Fr. Mancini), it is obvious that the Saint herself has given them a personal touch, that brings back what she had retained in her memory. On some occasions, she speaks in the third person and on others in the first.

This text was written in 1894; we cannot be more exact with regard to its date. The second paragraph (“... stifle the desires that sometimes overcome me to know what I should not...” “Speak with caution about N..., the less the better”) alludes to the presence and actions of M. Purisima in Rome, in this same year, 1894, during which the drawing up of the Constitutions was being carried out.

Original Autograph : Spiritual Notes, n.35; a double lined page (13.5 x 10.5 cm.) written on both sides, but the first one is crossed out.

Now God wants her to be crucified: so she must submit herself with all her heart to the most holy will of God, and see, in her sorrows and troubles, no human hand, but rather the divine will in everything that happens to her. And even more, not only should she submit, but also say to God, if you want me to suffer even more, I welcome sorrows and trials. Today I ask God to make me holy in this way.

I must be very happy, tucked away in my little corner, without getting involved in anything at all, whether in the community or the government, happen what may: I must put up with everything in silence. At this moment, the only ones who exist in this world are God and me; I am dead to everything, and that is how I must live, as if I were dead to the world. My determination must be to keep my vows and our rules very well. I must mortify myself by stifling any desires that occasionally overtake me to know what I should not, so as to avoid being disturbed afterwards. I must speak about N., with great caution, the less the better. This is a form of mortification that pleases our Lord very much.

Thanks be to God that I have no responsibilities, and is this a cause of a small amount of joy, having to think only about my own sanctification?

In recreation I must be very careful with my words, and never speak when I am troubled; and this even outside. Never be cocky.

Not take any notice of anything and never judge the actions of others, absolutely no one. Never think that there is some ulterior motive, as I am very tempted to think, nor think that others have hidden agendas, neither those inside or those outside. Think that nobody is interested in me or even knows that I exist. I must struggle against this at all costs, because it is a serious fault against charity and one that is very deep seated in me. I must make my particular Examen on this.

I must not doubt the people who are so loyal to me.

All the advice that I receive from the person who takes God, Our Lord's place for me, I will take as God's declared will for me.

25. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF 1895

M. Sacred Heart and the Community in Rome began this retreat on November 28th. Once again, the retreat was given by Fr. Mancini, SJ.

The spiritual notes made during these days are brief and somewhat fragmentary. However, among them there are some very beautiful paragraphs, such as the one that speaks about love in community. At the end, there is a “summary of the retreat and the fruit received”. (some very brief resolutions)

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.38: four pages (21 x 13,5 cm.)

Written in the blank spaces of a printed communication in Italian.

I must convince myself once and for all that I was born to save my soul, that I belong totally to God, and, as I am his, my will is a very powerful enemy, which battles with the most holy will of God for my perdition.

I know now where to find this most holy will, and so the only thing left for me to do is to say when I wake up, and frequently during the day: “take Lord, receive...etc.”, and accept whatever comes my way, as coming from the most loving hand of God, because I now know from experience just how much God loves me and has taken care of me ever since I was born; also I must submit myself always to the will of others. When things seem hard or dark, I will revive my faith and confidence and throw myself into the hands of the One who I know loves me so very much, that is God; may he help me to see, and my experience proves to me that he will, the reason he had in placing my soul in this trying situation. I must always be firm in my religious observance, every day more perfectly, and with regard to everything else, allow myself to be controlled by others, even though it seems to me that they make me walk backwards, with my head down and my feet up in the air, and, as the ways of the Lord are incomprehensible, he writes straight with crooked lines: as he is Almighty and can do whatever he wants, he laughs at our plans and projects. And he just turns them upside down!³⁹

³⁹ Cf. Wis. 5:7; Psalm 2: 4; 146: 9; Job 1: 2.

With regard to charity. Our Lord said, in the Sermon at the Last Supper, that we should love one another as he loves us. In the Law of Moses, it said that we should love our neighbour as we love ourselves; but even more perfect is the love that goes as far as to give one's life for another, as he gave his for us. True love does not mean loving only those who are perfect but rather those who are imperfect; and more so, because it is in this that the purity of our love is shown. We must do what Christ did; suffer in agony for our brothers and sisters, even if they are bad people, and to try in this way to help them to become good. For Christ saw how evil we were, very evil, and yet, despite that, in order to make us good, he did not abandon us, but goes on transforming us into good people, as long as our lives last. If every single one of us decided to please others and to suffer in silence, this world would be heaven: and that is what religious life should be. God also told us to forget offenses, and totally, and even though we still have a wound in our hearts, to "get over it".

We must do all things well, and with peace. There are some necessary conditions: 1st right intention; 2nd think through very well beforehand what one is going to do, as if the outcome were in our hands. And after thinking about it and doing everything we can, comes the 3rd, leave the outcome to Our Lord and God; if it turns out well, we give thanks to God; if not, we must be patient and not lose our peace.

Temptations come from both inside and outside of ourselves. Inside us are our passions. Never fight the temptations against purity, faith and confidence: rather always toss them aside. Even when in bed, we should make up something in our minds to distract ourselves, like making something, etc., that is, if we have tried other more spiritual solutions that did not work. Secondly, against anger, etc.; yes, fight and very forcefully. When we are about to say a chosen word, that comes out and fires our anger against another person, no; call to mind some offense that we ourselves have committed⁴⁰

Eternal salvation is beset with difficulties and uncertainty: but obedience makes it easy and certain. I have nothing to fear with regard to my salvation, as long as I am obedient. Live in the presence of God, whose gaze is worth infinitely more than the esteem of all the inhabitants of the earth.

⁴⁰ She does not finish the sentence. What follows is on another page.

Christ Jesus' obedience to his heavenly father: even though the world was being lost, with souls descending into hell, at the same time, his Heart, filled with love, is burning with zeal to save it, and nevertheless,⁴¹ knowing that the plan of his Heavenly Father is that he should be hidden until he reached the age of thirty, doing violence to his zeal by hiding it in his heart, with no exterior action whatsoever, in order to be subjected to the adorable will of the Eternal Father. I too must subject myself, likewise, to the plans of God. And if it is his will that I always continue to be as I am at present, I must make this sacrifice for him, with great generosity, and carry the weight of this Cross with peace and deep joy.

The cross of Christ is made up of four pieces: poverty, contempt, pain and abandonment.

Summary of the retreat and the fruit received.

1st. Avoid deliberate faults. There are three sorts of faults: 1st deliberate faults, even if they are small, offend Our Lord very much, and we have to work on these with great determination, so as not to commit them; 2nd the faults that take us by surprise, for example, a person who loses their temper easily. Most probably this cannot be remedied, but one can correct it with reflection and constancy; 3rd, faults of our nature.

⁴¹ Translation of the paragraphs in Italian.

26. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES. 1896

The community in Rome made this retreat in the middle of the month of October. The retreat was given by Fr. Mancini, SJ.

a) SPIRITUAL NOTES REFERING TO THE MEDITATIONS

But only for the first three days.

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.30, sheets 17 - 19 of a notebook with 25 pages (13 x 10 cm.) written on both sides.

1st Day. What God is asking of me is to be a saint. I must obtain sanctity in this world because in the next we only receive our reward. My model, Jesus. My means: to see everything that happens to me as sent from the hand of God and not to attribute anything at all to creatures, since they are only his instruments to sanctify me. This is the chain that holds me back the most on my journey, and gets in the way of open communication with God. I must leave myself in God's hands with complete confidence, accepting everything that happens to me as coming from his most holy hand. All my actions must be always and only for him, without ever trusting in creatures, and I already know from experience that they are like leaves blown away by the wind.⁴² God is unchanging, and nothing is hidden from his divine gaze, and he gives to each thing the value which is inherent in it. With creatures, it depends on how they look at things. Creatures out! Only Jesus, is the object of my love and forever, and my trust in him must be total.

2nd Day. Sin, the beginning of creatures' bad behaviour and of their refusal to submit and place themselves totally in the Lord's hands.

I can see so many stains in my soul! It should be as pure as an angel, and now my life is like that of an angel, dedicated totally to loving Him and serving Him, without stumbling at all. And I have not known how to take advantage of this; rather I have been looking at this situation as if it were an unbearable

⁴² Cf. Wis. 5: 14; Psalms 1: 4 and 83: 14.

cross. As if there were more merit in pleasing creatures and conversing with them than with Jesus.

3rd Day. Hell, judgement, death and the Prodigal Son.

The miraculous mercy of Our Lord to me, proves to me that I will not go to hell if I persevere in loving him. On judgement: my Jesus having instilled in me a spirit of simplicity and honesty in my way of being and acting, proves to me that I will not experience any great confusion in this. Yes, I must make sure that the intention to act always and only for my God is deeply rooted in me, together with the desire, at all costs, to pass through this life hidden from the eyes of all. That is what will afford me the greatest possible joy, because it is very pleasing to God when our right hand does not know what the left is doing.

With regard to Death: hold all things in contempt; and look at myself with disgust and repugnance. I saw myself as living inside rotting flesh. The Prodigal Son. I could barely think in this meditation, but I did feel myself enfolded in the wonderful tenderness of the Lord, and I experienced the certainty that I will not be lost.

b) RETREAT RESOLUTIONS

As on other occasions, here, very concrete resolutions are mixed with more sublime aspirations, many of which were constants in the spiritual life of the Saint. Some paragraphs figure in all the collections of her thoughts and spiritual experiences: "I want to model my life on his mortal life or that which he has in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar...". "...Nourish and increase my zeal for souls. Be inflamed and on fire in my prayers that not one should be lost..." "Only in Jesus, for Jesus and with Jesus, my whole life, and all of my heart, and for ever".

Together with these quotations, a paragraph which is truly amazing in its total realism: "To rejoice exceedingly on seeing everyone else honoured and loved, and myself humiliated, despised and left in a corner, and only noticed to be ridiculed".

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.40:
a booklet of eight lined pages (10 x 8 cm.) written on both sides.*

IHS

RESOLUTIONS

At all costs, the mortification of the eyes.

Be more moderate in my words. Never speak with too much passion.

Submit myself totally to others.

Have blind faith in the person who is directing my conscience, because I know from experience that in him the gifts of knowledge, virtue and experience are all combined.

I must seek to be despised, at all costs. The more I suffer, the greater glory I shall receive. I must ask the Father to let me suffer, because that is what Jesus wants of me. I must renew my desires to be a saint with greater fervour than ever. That is what I must be above all, whatever it may cost. It is what both God and the Congregation expect of me. God's help will not fail me: I know from experience, that God has always had a very special love for me, and if he has placed me in difficult places, he has always given me most abundant grace and let me feel him helping me, as an excellent guide. What does this mean? That I must abandon myself blindly to Jesus' plans.

See the divine will in everything that happens to me.

Eliminate the fear that I experience that people will know all my affairs, because they will either praise God or they will despise me, so I win whatever the outcome.

Foment energetically my desires to become a saint, a very holy saint, and as soon as possible. To obtain this, I must not refuse any suffering or humiliation.

Perform all my actions, even the most mundane, in the presence of God, and only for God.

Rejoice immensely to see everyone else honoured, praised and loved, while I am humiliated, despised and banished to a corner and only noticed to be ridiculed.

Never leave Jesus alone in my heart.

Acknowledge and be grateful for all the graces with which God enlightens me, and cooperate with them, but never ever attribute anything to myself, but rather see myself exactly as I am, a fragile and dirty cup, sustained only by the mercy of God.

Jesus is the Spouse of my soul, with a special bond of union between us; I, as his true spouse, must seek only his interests and try to become like him. Model my life on his life on this earth, or that which He has in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Nothing external, only humiliations and total obscurity; that is what I want and will try to achieve for myself.

I must do my best to kindle zeal for souls in my heart, inflamed and burning with desire that not one of them be lost. They have cost all the Most Precious Blood of my Spouse, and if I am, as I really am, His spouse, how can I possibly want even a single drop of his blood not to bear fruit?

Be less and less concerned about myself but much more, very much more, with Jesus' interests in their fullest extension. He listens to me propitiously. If I do not practice this ministry, I am not fulfilling his plan for me. The women saints, my sisters, whom he wants me to imitate, like Saint Teresa, Saint Catherine of Siena, etc., held greater power over his Heart, than all those very wise and eloquent men. The supplication of a humble and simple heart conquers his Heart and he cannot refuse it anything.

The whole of my life and all my heart should be only in Jesus, for Jesus and with Jesus, and that forever.

I must frequently engage in battle with my passions, anger, etc., and I must not ever be content to live in a state of lazy tranquillity. There is no crown or triumph without a battle, and as long as I live, I must fight without rest.

I must strengthen trust and love in my beloved Mother, the most holy Virgin.

27. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1897

Retreat given by Fr. Mancini to the community in Rome, begun on November 25th.

Although brief, these notes are a true summary of the Retreat, which we can follow by reading what M. Sacred Heart wrote each day. The central issue is the very same as during the whole of this period from 1894-1903, but in this document it finds one of its best expressions: namely, the acceptance of God's will in her hidden life, and the conviction that this unseen life can be apostolically very fruitful. See, for example, what the Saint writes about the Incarnation and the Life in Nazareth.

a) SPIRITUAL NOTES REFFERING TO THE MEDITATIONS

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.41:
pages 1-14 of a notebook of sixteen pages (10.5 x 7.5 cm.).*

I belong totally to God, and so he must do with me whatever he pleases, and I must submit without a murmur. If I were not to do so, it would be a new sort of rebellion. Always and in everything that happens, I must say: "I belong to God, and I am only a lump of clay in His hands", and try to imitate the properties of clay.

Indifference. Accept what is good very gratefully, something I nearly know how to do, and also learn to esteem God's gifts, be they natural or supernatural. And receive the painful ones with great submission and gratitude, as medicine for my very grave ailments, instead of attributing them to secondary causes, where there is a danger of acting against charity.

Sins. As mine are so numerous, more than the hairs on my head... ⁴³ and large enough to increase the simplicity of my actions.

⁴³ Cf. Psalm 40: 13. It is unfinished; some pages are missing.

The Kingdom. A very strong desire to follow Christ along the path of suffering, even though I seem to be useless and worthless in the eyes of others, who despise me and keep me in this situation, in which I find myself totally forgotten, and which I will try to foment, until I see that God wants something different.

The Incarnation. Rejoice and consider it a great grace to live forgotten and hidden away, without being lazy, just as Jesus was not while living in his mother's womb. But rather I must sacrifice myself every moment, just as he did, for the whole world, and I, as the victim, chosen by Him, even though most unworthy.

The Nativity. Foment in myself the desire not to be seen by anyone, not even by myself. Give great importance to small virtues.

The Flight into Egypt. What submission and abandonment to the will of God! Is mine like that, always accepting that God's action in me is for the best and keeping an eye on myself when my desires are not being fulfilled? Here indeed, one should weep tears of blood! Do I not belong to God? So why on earth should I fail to trust his plans? Here, I find ammunition to combat my pride. And that I will do with my God's help.

The Hidden Life. This is a positive gold mine for me, full of merits. The three greatest, most holy and wisest persons in the world, giving the impression that they were living a completely useless life. Above all, Jesus, who was silent for thirty years and did hardly anything for his mission of salvation and teaching for the whole world, which the Eternal Father had entrusted to Him. And I get so upset because I am not doing anything; I who am not necessary for anything, while the few gifts I have are only useful to mess everything up. Oh my Jesus, grant that your wonderful example will be my model! In addition, your humility with Saint Joseph, who was so inferior to you in every way, but to whom you showed such respect and whom you obeyed, as if you were ignorant about everything.

The Child Jesus Lost in the Temple. Are my respect, love and humility like those of Jesus before His Eternal Father? Not in the slightest, and I pass several hours during the day in the presence of the Three Divine Persons, just as they are in Heaven, even though they are concealed from us. As I pray their praises, am I devout? What must I do from now on? Prepare well and act as if I am doing these things for the very first time. During Holy Communion, I must increase my fervour and unite myself to Jesus' own communion.

The Two Standards. How often to I experience agitation in my heart, like that on the plain of Babylon, which makes me commit so many imperfect acts! So what can I do? Imitate the plain of Jerusalem. Learn to suffer injuries in silence, to pretend I do not see what is imperfect; and if I do, try to correct it with great gentleness and meekness. I must be patient in contradictions, etc. I must take as my example your state in the Most Blessed Sacrament. My suffering comes from you, and so what do I do? Remain silent, or I repay your goodness with evil?

Three classes of Men. Until now I have been in the second group; from now on, I will be in the third with all my heart. I will say to the Lord: cut, set fire to and burn away, even though the flesh resists. And it does resist. Take Lord, but give me your love and your grace.

Faithfulness in small things. I will say, like Saint John Berchmans: I will not despise anything, or stop appreciating little things. And Our Lord says: the one who is a good and faithful servant in little, will be the same in much. Each little act is one more step up in grace and a further step towards glory. At the end of the day, I can count them in their hundreds.

Two Models of Humility. I do have something in the first one, but very little in the second, and I have an obligation to obtain it. How will I do that? With a pure heart and by despising myself, which ought to be the fruit of my retreat.

Third Model of Humility: This is what the Lord is calling me to and, very plainly, placed me on the path to it, about five or six years ago. How have I responded? Very badly, because I failed to give it the esteem that it merits. I had the key to the Kingdom of Heaven in my hands, and I let it go rusty because my reason was clouded by pride and arrogance. From now on, that will not happen, with the grace of God, and thanks to the lights that I have received during these sacred days, that this is the right way to arrive at sanctity and is the one that Our Lord Jesus Christ took while here on earth. And even though what I hear and see is just the opposite and fires up my passions, I will say, when that happens: “How would Jesus have acted in this situation? How would he have behaved and what importance would he have attributed to this honour or that praise?” And I must reassure myself of this, even if all hell is released against me.

First. *The Passion.* Who suffers? What does he suffer? How does he suffer? For whom does he suffer?

For sin, for me. So will I flee from suffering, from being humiliated or despised, or from not being appreciated by anyone or being taken any notice of? Will I dare to complain, as I have done until now? Will I not try to desire to be seen as I am, dust, and harmful dust? Will I give my body? Will I give free rein to my feelings and my passions? How can I not do all I can to be always crucified with him, both in my soul and in my body?

Second: the same. How can I not foment in myself the sorrow that Jesus felt in the Garden while he was praying? This is my duty, because of our spirit of Reparation in the Institute, and because of the vow that I made to live it.

Jesus is Arrested. Jesus does not wait for the soldiers to come to him, he knows why they are coming and he goes to meet them. And how? Like a lamb; caressing his executioner. He gives me proof, right up until the end, of his gentleness, of his fatherly love. He is rejected, but performs miracles on behalf of his enemies. Jesus' love is just so amazing! Who could possibly transfer his love to my miserable and shriveled up heart? Oh my beloved Jesus! Give me a large, magnanimous heart into which all your admirable virtues can fit, and please close all the doors through which all the thieving vices can enter, especially those against humility and charity.

Three Degrees of Love. Oh my Jesus, you have planted all of them in my soul, but the first one is still very weak. What can I do to strengthen it? Reverence everyone in my heart and long to see them respected by all, and I myself honour them as much as I possibly can, exteriorly, but always with great simplicity.

Jesus' Passion in both Body and Soul. How many trials and sorrows my God suffers for me! And what do I suffer for Him, for He wants me to walk this path? Yes, I do suffer, but without humility; fighting always with my "ego", which is stronger than a raging lion. And do I still want to attain great sanctity? It will be impossible if I do not put on the sentiments of the Heart of Christ, which are gentleness and humility.

Repetition. The same lights. The person who does not suffer with the spirit of Christ, cannot be united with Christ. God is always asking me for gentleness, humility and contempt for myself, and to deny myself until I am squashed like a worm. Jesus does not want important works from me, or lights, or anything of that sort, but rather death, the death of all my wants and desires and all my judgements. I must regulate my passions, whether they be joyful or sad. I must imitate the Most Holy Virgin Mary rather than Mary Magdalen; because she

it was who showed total moderation and prudence and is the one who acted and loved more perfectly than anyone, after her Most Holy Son.

Resurrection. Everything came to an end and eternal glory was the only thing left for the body and soul of Jesus. That is what will happen to me too, if I only know how to suffer with Jesus, and fulfil His most holy will with humility and gentleness. That is quite a tall order for my fiery, proud and irascible character, but Jesus will help me, and will never abandon me in my struggles; together with the prayers of my father Saint Ignatius, who himself suffered so much to acquire gentleness and humility.

The Glorious Body of Jesus. How lovely he is, both because of his sufferings and also because he is both God and Man. The saints who have imitated him will see him forever and ever. And what about me? It is in my hands to imitate them in solid and perfect virtues, and with a fervent, gentle, prudent and constant love, like that of the holy women, especially Mary Magdalen. Oh my very own saint, I also want to imitate you, to be truly converted and do great things for God, even though it is only in my soul, if such should be the will of Our Lord, whom you loved so much and whom I long to love, and to give him pleasure, even if it is made up of small pieces along these paths, or my being despised by everyone, like the most vile worm, until the day I die.

b) RESOLUTIONS

Original Autograph; Spiritual Notes, n. 41:

Page 15 of the previous notebook.

IHS

Resolutions to try to obtain what God wants of me.

1st Accept everything that comes my way, however bitter or hard, for what it is: a wonderful gift from God to unite me to him; and to love the instruments, the means that he uses, with all my heart, affording them respect, and being grateful to them, and praying for them often and desire that ... ⁴⁴

⁴⁴ It is unfinished.

28. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1898

Made by the community in Rome, beginning on November 1st of that year and directed by Fr. Mancini, S.J.

Three fragments, written by the Saint during these days, are preserved. The first two seem to have been written at the beginning of the retreat (“My desire is to go into this retreat in order to learn the true science of suffering”. “I have begun this retreat in order to learn to suffer well”). Rather than considerations that follow from listening to the Retreat Director, they seem to be resolutions made prior to the retreat with the view to receiving as much fruit as possible from it.

The third fragment is made up of resolutions in the proper sense.

It would seem evident that the Saint, at this time, finds herself in a situation of intense interior struggle. She is searching for “indifference” in order to accept her extraordinarily painful life, but, despite her acceptance, she confesses that her inaction “hurts”, and that she longs with all her heart to be involved in the apostolic works of the Institute. “My spirit groans, but it is more important to please Jesus by groaning than by laughing...”. One of the central phrases of the second fragment is one that expresses with the greatest clarity, the conviction, in pure faith, that sustains her life: “If I manage to become a saint, I will do more for the Congregation, for the Sisters, and for my neighbour than if I were engaged in the works of the greatest zeal”.

a) NOTE BEFORE BEGINNING THE RETREAT

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.42: a double, lined page (13.5 x 10 cm.) written in the blank spaces of a letter addressed to her

I want to enter the retreat to learn the true science of suffering, which is the veritable science of the saints; and I want to be a saint even if it were to cost me my life.

I must live indifference so that Our Lord can do with me whatever he wants in this extraordinary life, into which he seems to be wanting to lead me. It hurts; and I really want to do better.

I must take care to practice mortification, both exterior and interior.

The way to help virtues to grow, after having asked for them, is to offer them in union with the virtues of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints. This is very useful. If Christ is to live in me, I must die to everything else.

I must abandon myself to the will of God without any limitations. Even though this will involve great trials and persecution.

I will pray very hard for the salvation of souls. I will not rest from this determination.

I must develop my self-control through mortification so that I can remain the same internally and exteriorly, in both sweet and bitter moments.

Courage⁴⁵ in order to overcome whatever comes my way, with my gaze fixed on heaven and leaving everything else behind, as if it has nothing to do with me.⁴⁶

My heart must be cleared of the deep roots of my passions, but I need to cultivate virtues more: especially gentleness, trust in God and not to desire to please or to be known or loved by anyone but God, and only him. My heart is prepared and grace is flowing into it.

⁴⁵ Italian *fortezza*= courage.

⁴⁶ Italian.

b) NOTES DURING THE FIRST DAYS OF THE RETREAT.

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.43:
one page (11 x 9 cm.) written on both sides.*

I have entered the Retreat in order to learn how to suffer well. I still need a profound purification if I am to acquire that which my God wants of me, which is the sanctification of my soul. This purification will come, as long as I apply myself to it. I must also acquire great courage and bite the bullet. My greatest martyrdom is not being able to do anything. God wants me to be a saint; and I cannot not become one without disrespecting his holy will. If I do manage to become a saint, I will do more for the Congregation, for the Sisters and for my neighbour, than if I were to be engaged in works of the greatest zeal. My spirit groans, but it is much more important to please Jesus groaning than laughing. Rejoicing is for the next life. Jesus loves me so much, and this must always be my source of strength. I know that from experience. He loves me with predilection: he wants what is best for me. He only wants me to do my part and he will do all the rest, because he knows that that is all I am good for.

c) RESOLUTIONS

*Original : Spiritual Notes, n.41: page 15
of a notebook of 19 pages (10,5 x 7,5 cm.).*

IHS

Resolutions to acquire what God wants of me.

1. Accept all that comes my way, however bitter and hard it may be, as a very big gift of God in order to unite me to himself; and love his instruments, the means he uses, with all my heart, hold them in respect, be grateful to them and include them very often in my prayers, and desires ... ⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Unfinished.

29. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1900

The community in Rome made the retreat between 14 and 21 of December, 1900. The Retreat was given by Fr. Laurenti, SJ.

The fragmentary notes that are preserved reveal M. Sacred Heart's firm determination to embrace a situation that is going to last for many years. The affirmation with which she begins the first of these notes is quite striking: "I see very clearly, now that I am completely at peace, that the anxieties that I have been experiencing about working for God is a temptation from the Devil, because what God wants at all costs is for me to break my own will even with regard to what is best..."

On the last day but one of the retreat, the Saint makes one of those extraordinary offerings that are relatively frequent in her life. She makes an irrevocable commitment to be a "victim of love".

a) THREE FRAGMENTS

1. Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.44: on the blank part of a card sent to her by Fr. Mancini (6 x 10 cm.).

I see very clearly, now that I am completely at peace, and that the longings that I have been experiencing about working for God are a temptation from the Devil, because what God wants at all costs is for me to break my own will, even with regard to what is best, allowing myself to be led by the person he has placed here for me, and to follow blindly whatever he lays out for me, directly or indirectly, even though it means enclosing me in a dungeon or dressing me up and treating me as a queen. Submission of my own judgement and total blindness. Whatever occurs to me or I do to the contrary, is at the suggestion of the Devil. I see that clearly.

*2. Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.45:
One page (6.5 x 10.5 cm.) written on both sides.*

God Our Lord wants my total submission to his will, to all the events that happen to me at every moment. So I must never judge them, no matter how hard they may be, by my self-love. He does not want my work, but rather blind submission to whatever he decides for me. If I do not take this to heart, I am in danger of living like a crazy person and of being lost. I write this with a clear mind and a tranquil spirit.

3. Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.46: one ruled page (10 x 8.5 cm.) written on one side and part of the other.

The only thing in my soul is this terrible obstacle of my pride: the inability to see everything that happens to me as being God's will.

I see clearly that what God wants of me is to submit to everything that happens to me, as if he were visibly sending it to me.

b) OFFERING TO BE A VICTIM OF LOVE

December 20th, 1900

The text of this offering, which is basically much better crafted than in the previous three, is probably the result of an interior movement on the fifth day of the retreat, during the Meditation on the Kingdom of Christ, or perhaps, on the sixth day, (corresponding to December 20th, the day on which it was signed).

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.47: one page (22.5 x 16 cm.) written on one side and part of the other.

IHS

My God and my Lord, I am fearful of handing myself over to your infinite will as if you were a rigorous judge and not a loving father, and for this I am offending your infinite mercy, of which I have received so very many proofs, all through my life. That has now come to an end, and at this moment in time, I hand myself over irrevocably to your divine plans for me, be they sweet or bitter, so that You may dispose of me, my Jesus, just as You wish, as Your own, which is Your sovereign right, for so many reasons.

I hope, with Your grace, to eliminate once and for all, my own desires, to be content with everything, and to say yes to everything, and constantly nourish total trust in you, so that I can accept every single happening that comes my way, even the most humiliating and painful, as a most precious gift of the love with which Your Divine Heart burns for me.

Rome, December 20th, 1900.

Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Victim of love

Sole resolution: Blind faith in the hands of God and complete abandonment to his most wise and holy will.

30. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1901

RESOLUTIONS

A retreat made by M. Sacred Heart from October 1st onwards and directed by Fr. Mancini, S.J. We do not have any notes made during the different days of the retreat, but only a list of her resolutions. In them she insists on the same ideas and sentiments of the whole of this period in her life: "To live...as Jesus lived in the house in Nazareth for thirty years, seemingly, without having anything to do with the world that he had come to redeem...". "To work with all my soul to reach the third degree of humility.... I would much rather suffer with my patient Jesus than enjoy consolations...".

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.49-50: a double page (21 x 13.5 cm.) written on the blank side of a letter addressed to her.

IHS

1st Total abandonment into the hands of God with regard to the situation in which I find myself, and which is so painful for me, receiving everything that comes my way, every moment, as coming from his most holy will, for my greater mortification.

2nd Go to the parlour punctually and without showing any repugnance.

3rd Take care to be very careful with my words.

4th Avoid showing how passionate I am about my desires, and also avoid speaking passionately.

5th When things are not going well, reject the temptation to give the impression that a different way would ensure that things would go better, and much less to say so; but only if it is absolutely necessary.

6th With regard to the Institute, to live as though I were dead. Like Jesus living in the house in Nazareth for thirty years, without appearing to have anything to do with the world that he had come to redeem. And I, the same, as if nothing concerns me.

7th In all things seek the greatest abnegation possible and continual mortification, as Rule 12 asks of me.⁴⁸

8th Work to acquire the spirit of Rule 11⁴⁹. To acquire it, after the grace of God, it would help to make the Particular Examen for some time, on the following points:

- Persecute my self-love without rest.
- Work with all my soul, to obtain the Third Degree of Humility. Using these strategies: never to flee from humiliations; to suffer all disrespect in silence; to want people to despise me; if people condemn my desires, my opinions and intentions, to rejoice with all my heart and give thanks to God.⁵⁰

As a victim, to prefer to suffer with Jesus suffering, with patience, rather than to rejoice in consolations even though it would give him the same glory.

My spirit is weak because my self-love controls it. The nourishment that I need is humiliations. And I certainly need an awful lot of them. I must become importunate in desiring this and asking for it, and when they come, “gobble” them up with alacrity⁵¹ and always with perfect external silence and, above all, internal.

⁴⁸ In the Summary of the Constitutions, Rule 12, which is connected to the content of Rule 11, speaks about the degree of identification with Christ as “precious in the spiritual life”. In order to reach this it is necessary to “seek, in Our Lord, our greater abnegation and continual mortification”.

⁴⁹ Summary of the Constitutions, 11: “It is important to note and to reflect in the presence of Our Creator and Lord., to what extent it is useful and helpful in our spiritual life to totally abhor, and not partially, whatever the world loves and embraces; and to accept and desire with all possible strength whatever Christ Our Lord, loved and embraced. As worldly people who follow the things of this world, love and seek honour, fame and the esteem of a great name here below, with such diligence, as the world teaches them; so those who move forward in spirit and truly follow Christ, Our Lord, love and intensely desire everything to the contrary; that is to put on the livery of Christ their Lord, for his love and reverence; so much so that, wherever it does not involve any offense against his Divine Majesty nor implying sin on the part of their neighbour, they desire to suffer injuries, false testimony, affronts and to be held and considered as mad people, without giving occasion for that, because they wish to be like and imitate in some way Our Creator and Lord Jesus Christ, putting on his livery with which he dressed for our greater spiritual growth, giving us an example that in all things that are possible for us, with the help of His grace, we desire to imitate and follow him, because he is the Way that leads us to life”. (Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, The Examen. chap. IV , 44).

⁵⁰ With these means...thanks be to God for them: at the foot of the page, as a note.

⁵¹ “Gobble them with alacrity”.

31. SPIRITUAL NOTE WRITTEN ON THE FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS. 1902

If we take into account the constraints that surrounded M. Sacred Heart at this time, we can find some very dramatic elements in this very brief text. The Saint has no confidence in Fr. Mancini, and with good reason! That is to say that she is not sure what he thinks about her; at times she feels that the Jesuit shares the negative opinion that surrounds her. Yet, despite everything, she tries to persuade herself that “he is put there by God for the sanctification of her soul”; and that all her uncertainty is “a wile of the enemy”.

We know, indeed, that while Fr. Mancini never doubted M. Sacred Heart’s virtue, nevertheless, he thought that she was an unbalanced woman; “a pious woman, good, very pious, but her head...”⁵²

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.52:

A card (11 x 7 cm.) written on one side only.

Fr. Mancini is put here by God for the sanctification of my soul. All my uncertainty is a wile of the enemy.

I must give absolutely everything in order to arrive at where God wants me to be, which is at great sanctity. And so, I must abandon myself and submit to the direction of this priest with regard to all the events in which Divine Providence places me. And with courage. Without turning aside either to left or right, as I now know from experience that my soul emerges victorious from every storm.

Today, 19th, Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus.⁵³

⁵² MARIA DEL CARMEN ARANDA, History of M. Sacred Heart, II p.194.

⁵³ This detail enables us to date this note chronologically: the feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus - The third Sunday of January which in 1902 was on the 19th.

INTRODUCTION

The monotony of the previous ten years contrasts vividly with the dramatic nature of these three years, which could be considered as an “intense period” in the life of M. Sacred Heart.

In May, 1903, M. Pilar was relieved of her office as General of the Institute. The Saint lived all the details of this event very intensely, one which she has no hesitation in describing as “a sorrowful tragedy”.⁵⁴ A few days later, the new ex-General left Rome bound for Valladolid; the two sisters said their definitive goodbye.

M. Pilar’s suffering during these years, constitutes an added cause of pain for M. Sacred Heart. It was also a new trial for her faith, and was decidedly an incentive for her continual recourse to God.

During the three years between 1903 and 1906, M. Purísima, who had been appointed Vicar of the Institute by the Sacred Congregation, governed the Congregation. In 1906, the General Council was due to meet, in accordance with the Constitutions, to elect a new Superior General. The extraordinary character of the Office of Vicar General favoured the transitional nature of this period, in which there were very many expectations, but M. Purísima invalidated them all, as she prepared, with her actions, the result of the Chapter in 1906. As all the persons who could have been obstacles had disappeared from the public scene, the Vicar was elected General Superior, without any great difficulty in February, 1906

The gradual growth of the prestige of M. Purísima in the Institute coincided, not by coincidence, with the increasing marginalization of the two Foundresses.

The Saint lived all these happenings, and reflected upon them, more or less directly, in her spiritual notes. These, during the period that we have been describing, open and close with texts that correspond to her Spiritual Exercises. Fortunately, M. Sacred Heart includes in them some very detailed annotations that permit us to grasp her basic attitudes quite well.

⁵⁴ Note in preparation for the interview with the Apostolic Visitor, Bologna, 1907.

32. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1903

The community in Rome began the retreat on October 1st. This year the retreat was given by Fr. Tovarelli, S.J.

The notes made by the Saint refer to different days, but do not follow the complete course of the Exercises of St. Ignatius. There are some paragraphs about the Meditations on Death and Sin (or, rather, about the confession of sin) and others, rather longer, about the Incarnation and the Hidden Life of Our Lord. There is also a brief reference to the Contemplation of the Kingdom, but her emphasis is firmly placed on the Contemplation of the Passion.

Without making any explicit mention of the events that took place in the Spring, the suffering she experienced appears, with a hint of nostalgia, throughout the notes. This is even more evident if we compare some of the phrases in these notes with others that appear in her letters during these months. "Here, we both continue to live our ordinary lives, alone, but always raising our cry to heaven, our true homeland", M. Sacred Heart writes to her sister on June 4th of this year. "So we have to deal with the events of this life, as though in passing; with our gaze fixed on heaven, which is where we are going", she writes, at this time, in the first paragraph of the retreat.

One of the expressions that is repeated over and over again, in everything she writes, is the word "Fiat": "May your will be done", "Fiat with all my heart", (meditation on the Doubts of St. Joseph and the Journey to Bethlehem), "In time of affliction, look towards God and say to Him 'Your will be done'...". "Fiat, Amen and call to mind Our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane...". Our "Fiat on this occasion is the most pure and most beautiful act of love that we can possibly offer to the Lord". The translations of this expression are even more abundant, and they reveal the attitude of the Saint in the face of great trial, one of greatest trials of her entire life.

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.30: pages of one notebook 19-25

(13 x 10 cm.) written on both sides.

Pages 1-7 in a second notebook (12 x 7.5 cm.) written in both sides.

1903. *Meditation on Death*. In this life, we are travelling, as if on a train, for example, to Florence. If I had to go there, would anything that happened on the way be important? I would see it only in passing. So we should go through the events of this life, in passing; with our sights set on heaven, which is where we are heading. Neither creatures, nor things, nor houses should control our hearts; but only God and his holy will. As far as creatures are concerned, we should treat them as though they were passengers travelling in the same carriage. When in difficulties, or we experience some setback, pray and trust the driver who is God, and who will drive us perfectly safely. If we live in this way, what a wonderful welcome we will receive when we arrive. And we must desire and long for that arrival. While we are on our way, we must not lose a single opportunity that could bind us to him; if we can, let us shorten the way, taking the shortest and fastest route, which is that of continual suffering for love. Sanctification happens in the soul, and not in the body. It is our soul that commits sin. What sins is our soul. Our understanding has knowledge, and our will exercises itself. The body without the soul is dust, mud. The soul is what gives life and natural beauty to the body; and, at times, spiritual beauty too, which in some saints has shone in an extraordinary way, and in good people as well, in some way or another. The more holy the soul, the body will be holy too, and afterwards, it will be more glorious. All the good that the soul practices comes from God, because without God we are nothing.

Confession. There is no obligation to confess venial sins. Venial sin is forgiven in the nine known ways, and so, if we practice them, our sins are forgiven. And so, why should anyone who has no mortal sins go to confession? In order to receive an increase in grace, which we receive in abundance through sacramental absolution. And so, even if we confess a few faults, we should accuse ourselves of all the faults of our past lives, or the ones which we know are more grave, and act well in our sorrow (and our resolutions), which is what absolution brings about, together with an increase of sacramental grace. And this will be greater in proportion to our sorrow for having offended God. And in order to experience great sorrow, we must experience great love. The more our love, the greater our sorrow and the more grace. If anyone lives love and sorrow in a measure of fivefold, they will receive fivefold; and if a million-fold, they will receive a million-fold. Everything is about the dispositions with which we do things.

The Kingdom of Christ. I will follow you all the way to Calvary. Your life will be the model for mine. My will will not distance itself from that of God; the Devil is the one who fights this fiercely. Prayer and humility will overcome him.

Annunciation and Incarnation. Humility and love drew Jesus to the Virgin's womb. God does not look at exterior gifts, but rather those of the soul. However much we are enriched by the beauty of love, so much more are we pleasing to God. Mary had not yet married St. Joseph, she was only engaged to him. Among the Jews marriage was celebrated sometime after engagement. It is believed that she was busy with her household chores when the angel appeared to her. The Angel, when his mission was confided to him, received it with so much joy, because it was entrusted to him by God, whom to serve is to reign, and such was his humility that he did not feel that he was belittling himself by showing reverence to a human person, and if anyone had said anything to the contrary, he would have counted it as offensive, because he knew how valuable even the smallest act of obedience to the great majesty of God is. What shame and confusion I should feel, for showing such little reverence and esteem for the things of God. I look at them just like that, when in fact, even the tiniest thing that comes from God has infinite value.

Jesus was formed in the virginal womb and immediately received the mission that had brought him to our world. And he accepted it with his whole heart, and offered himself to his Eternal Father irrevocably. What was it that he submitted to? To suffer and to die for us, ungrateful people. And he maintained his burning will to accept this submission without ever growing cold. Rather he repeated over and over again: "What I have come to do ...".

5th St. Joseph's Doubts and the journey to Bethlehem. What amazing fortitude the Virgin demonstrated by remaining silent, even though she saw her holy spouse in such anguish, and saw that she herself was open to dishonour! Ah, my Mother, teach me the precious virtue of complete abandonment into the hands of God, even though everyone, the devil and the flesh are encouraging me to bare my soul. Be silent and trust always: and fear nothing and no one. You would say: God will come to my defence and that is enough; and if He does not, may His will be done. Afterwards, during the journey, despite the very considerable difficulties, involving situations so contrary to your virginal modesty, for you everything came from God, and you say, "Your will be done", always resigned, always trusting, always in agreement with the evidence of God's will. I want to be like you, my Mother, God was your only love, all your

likes, your desires, even the most holy ones, you deferred them all to God's most holy will. The only love that existed in you was love of God, and for that reason, you have no equal either in sanctity or in the love that God had and has for you. Your judgement, your desires, your everything were all centered on God: your labours, your sorrows, and setbacks, you saw them all as coming from his divine hand and, for that reason, you never ceased repeating "fiat" with all your heart.

6th There is nothing that is more pleasing to God than submitting to all that he disposes and obeying him and his representatives; and our example of this is Jesus, for thirty years.

7th Because Jesus loves me infinitely, because he was God, and so could not show me just how much he loves me, because divine nature cannot undergo suffering, he took on our human nature, that was capable of doing so, and with one drop of His Blood, not only because he was man, but because he was both God and man thanks to the hypostatic union, and so it was not just human blood but divine blood also, he was able to redeem us and fill us with blessings. As he loved us infinitely, he wanted to give us not only his poor and humble life, but also to give it while suffering torments, which is the most that one can give; suffering terrible torments. And, if God the Father had not imposed certain limits, he would have desired to suffer very many torments, and even more, if that had been his will, until the end of the world. That is how much God loved us. Is he worthy of our love? Does he want our love? He does want it, and so badly that it is the only thing that he wants, and that he asks of us, that he commands us. For his benefit? Why? No, for our benefit, in order to unite himself to us and then, to give us our great reward. How can we respond? Above all, by conforming our will to his whether it be in honour or dishonour, etc. But in order to become more like him, loving what he loved: dishonour, scorn, suffering.

Accept joyfully whatever unpleasant things are presented to our will and ask that many come our way, and resign ourselves to them, always joyfully and with gratitude. The harder and more humbling they are, the better. This is what Jesus did, for love of us, And if we truly want to love him, we must imitate him in this, more than in anything else. Hand ourselves over to him totally so that he can do whatever he pleases, and we on our part must seek suffering, run ahead to meet it, whenever we catch sight of the occasion for it; and never

ever flee or excuse ourselves from it. He, Jesus, when the time approached for him to suffer, hurried quickly to Jerusalem, he, as it were, moved out of himself, and on every occasion said: When will the hour come when I see myself, bathed in my blood, covered in wounds, scorned and insulted, and nailed to a cross for love of my Father, to make reparation and fulfill his most Holy Will, and for love of humankind whom I love with an infinite love and whom I desire to see pure and worthy to unite itself with me, in this life in order to fill them with my love and merits, and in heaven, to crown this love and these merits for ever more?

The Last Supper and the Prayer in the Garden. Peter's boastfulness was his rapid and terrible downfall. Always mistrust myself and trust in God. I am stronger in big things than in small, because in big things I place all my trust in God, and in small things I trust in myself, and so I do not correct myself more quickly, and I fall more often.

Fidelity in small things. And because he failed to do this, Judas sold his master. Approach Holy Communion with great confidence and intimacy, which at the moment, thanks be to God, is the grace he grants me.

In time of affliction, look towards God and say to Him: "Fiat voluntas tua", wait with much patience for the torment to finish and remain silent within oneself and with everyone else, without giving vent to feelings, not even in writing. Nor ask that it go away, until God wills it. "Fiat". Amen and remember Our Lord in the Garden. Avoid being cowardly either because of the intensity of the trial or its prolongation. The "Fiat" in this situation is the most pure and beautiful act of love that one can possibly perform for Our Lord, for God.

The Passion and Crucifixion. Encourage suffering very much. Do not fear anything or anyone in order to please God. Despise human judgements about me and what happens to me: the day will come when everything will be clearly revealed, if not here, in heaven. The more we suffer⁵⁵, the more glory will be ours, if we suffer for God. Only God, in everything.

8th If I had changed something I owned that involved much income but many difficulties⁵⁶ and in exchange had received a very good and excellent

⁵⁵ suffer.

⁵⁶ A Spanish translation of the word «impiccio» (plural: «impicci»): obstacles, hindrances.

possession, but without any difficulties, would it be right for me to say to the one who now had mine: "That is not the way to do things, because it will involve a loss; and as for this other one, thieves are going to break in to steal it". So I would be always thinking about that and not enjoying my own? What would people say about me? That I was quite crazy? Well that is what I am doing when I occupy myself in thinking about what is going to happen to me, or what is going to happen to the Congregation tomorrow, etc. Today, what I need to do, is to think about fulfilling God's will in what I see clearly that he wants of me, and abandon myself and everything else to his infinite Providence, because he knows much better than I do what is for the best.

The person who suffers most, gains the most. The people who despise themselves in this life and want and seek to be scorned by others, receive more glory and honour in the next life. Bad people help us to gain more merits, a thousand times more than good people. We must long anxiously to be persecuted and treated badly. We do not sin with our bodies, but rather with our will. The greater our tribulations, if only we trust in God, and bear them with great patience, the more support we will receive afterwards. The Divine Will is obliged to help us in all the situations in which he places us, and extract us from them very well.

Never say: "So and so is to blame for this misfortune", but rather see that person as an instrument of God's will. He does not want us to commit sin, but in a just person, he allows it for their good, because, afterwards, he draws out glory from it and the good of the person they have offended, even though it was by taking their life, as in the case of the martyrs. He could prevent sin, if he so wished, but he has given us free will and very seldom does he curtail it. The Lord always brings good out of evil, in ways that are incomprehensible to human reason. In the Particular Examen we should above all, root out our dominating passion and firmly fight against it, until we pull that root out. The best way to do this is through conformity to the will of God, namely, by submitting ourselves to it in everything: perfect obedience to God and his dispositions, however bitter they may be. Our special study should be to go against ourselves always. We should always abhor anything that is our will, be it indifferent or disordered. We must believe, in so far as there is no sin, that others are right and we are not. Never argue. Respect everyone as if they were images of God, which is what they are.

33. VARIOUS PRAYERS

a) THE SAINT'S PRAYER FOR HERSELF AND FOR M. PILAR

(Around 1903)

Original Autograph: Autographs, n.7: page 108 in a notebook of 112 pages (9 x 5.5 cm.) Written on both sides.

Oh most beloved Lord, I beseech you by your opened Heart, to pierce the heart of N.⁵⁷ and mine with the arrows of your love; so that, unable to contain anything earthly, it finds itself totally enveloped and penetrated by your divine action.

b) SUPPLICATION TO THE VIRGIN

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.74: one page measuring 8.5 x 12 cm. Written on one side.

My most beloved Mother, I do not know what to ask of you. You know, Mother of mine, everything that I hold in my heart; give me whatever you want to, but as a very powerful; very, very powerful, Mother. Everything that I desire, if you approve of it, and much more, if that is pleasing to you. My only desire is your greater honour, and, even more, that of your Most Holy Son.

c) PRAYER ASKING FOR THE DOGMATIC DEFINITION OF THE DOGMA OF THE ASSUMPTION.

Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.75: one page (12 x 17 cm.) Written in 5 lines.

By Your infinite love, oh Most Holy Trinity, for our Lady and Mother, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, grant us the speedy dogmatic definition of her glorious Assumption into Heaven.

⁵⁷ M. Pilar.

34. VARIOUS SPIRITUAL NOTES

Around the year 1904

a) ASPIRATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS CONNECTED TO THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF THAT YEAR

The community in Rome made its annual Spiritual Exercises at the beginning of October. Fr Basilli, S.J. was the retreat director.

There are two texts which seem to be related to each other and also to the retreat.

1) Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n. 67: one page written in the blank spaces on a printed paper in Italian (20.5 x 14 cm.)

I see my soul like an olive tree, green and leafy, but its fruit is very sparse and not matured. God asks me to ripen this fruit so that it will produce much oil, made up of holy works for God and my neighbour.

With regard to God, I must nurture a spirit of continual prayer: my whole life should be a continual act of love. I keep this channel wide open, and yet I do not use it as much as God urges me to.

I should also foment in myself a spirit of filial trust, without ever doubting that the Lord can permit that nothing will happen to me unless it is for my greater good.

The spirit of abandonment to his divine Providence comes in here too. And for me that should be very easy, because I know from experience what God Our Lord has done for me, ever since I was born: very big miracles, whenever necessary. And so in order for the olive tree to bear fruit... ⁵⁸

*2) Original Autograph. Spiritual Notes, n.59: one ruled page
(20.5 x 13.5 cm.) written on the blank space of a letter addressed to her.*

⁵⁸ Unfinished.

I must reform my feelings, mortifying them a great deal, without any quirks.

I must take care in recreation never to speak about the things that they bring to my attention, and in all events whenever my conscience tells me so, to mortify myself.

I must not talk any more about the unpleasantness from the past.

I must strengthen my trust in God considerably, and perform my actions only after a great deal of reflection, so as not to lose my peace.

Never lose my peace of soul nor fear other people. Avoid overwhelming myself with prayers. My way is not to say many prayers, but to pray much.

b) SPIRITUAL NOTE ABOUT OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION

In a very brief note, the Saint alludes to her relationship with the Superior of the Community in Rome, M. Patrocinio. “That terrible repugnance has returned”. We can understand that sentence perfectly. M. Patrocinio, in previous times, was someone that M. Sacred Heart did not like, but in the events that led to the removal of M. Pilar, she always showed herself loyal to the latter. For that very reason, 1903, was proven to be a time when the Superior and M. Sacred Heart, who felt herself totally identified with the cause of her sister, came to a certain mutual rapprochement.

After the initial period, M. Patrocinio submitted herself to M. Purísima, more or less happily, (she would have found it very difficult to have adopted a different attitude) and, logically, M. Sacred Heart’s previous difficulties were intensified.

Original Autograph, Spiritual Notes, n.58: one page, measuring 3 x 10.5 cm.

She uses the blank space of a letter that had been addressed to her.

That terrible repugnance to M. P.⁵⁹ has returned. I turned to Our Lord, thanks to Bellecio, and I understood that, in this battle, the one who submits and deals lovingly with the person who makes her suffer, wins.

Blind obedience and submission to everything without exception. God writes straight with crooked lines.

c) PRAYER

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.57: a ruled page (10.5 x 7 cm.)
written on both sides.*

Most Sweet Jesus, we are living through a time of joy, so grant happiness to the soul of your beloved daughter, banishing every storm and bestowing on her that which she desires so much, and which you also know only too well. She, in part, finds it difficult to explain this, and what is an insurmountable mountain for her, for you, is as nothing; level it, my beloved Jesus. Please give us the church wherever you want, and grant that many worthy souls will consecrate themselves to you.

My soul, and the soul of N. N.,⁶⁰ you know all that is in my soul, but I do not know how to decipher it. I trust you blindly.

⁵⁹ She is referring to M. Patrocinio, Superior of the Community in Rome.

⁶⁰ She is referring to her sister, M. Pilar.

35. ACT OF FAITH AND TRUST

(4th March, 1905)

Even though this Spiritual Note is undated, it belongs almost certainly to the date indicated above: the handwriting and the paper correspond to 1905 and the allusion to St. Francis Xavier and St. Joseph, as feast days around that time, lead us to think that the Saint is writing on the day when the so called “Novena of Grace”, (4th to 12th March), dedicated to the Patron Saint of the Missions, began.

M. Sacred Heart reveals herself to us here as praying with great intensity and with “considerable anxiety”. She speaks about the chains and bars that limit her freedom and that of the Congregation. As on other occasions, she offers to fulfil the divine will; but now, it is not a matter of simple acceptance of what God is laying out before her, but rather the implementation of, or personal participation in something that presents itself as part of the Lord’s plan for the Institute. Most probably, the Saint is referring to some initiative leading to the rehabilitation of M. Pilar.

There is a later note that confirms the feelings of anxiety which are reflected in this prayer. In that entry, written in 1907, the Saint speaks of her struggles and indecision in the face of the Apostolic Visitation in May of 1905: “The Apostolic Visitor came and met with Ines⁶¹ the day and date of which was somewhat of a mystery. She wrestled a great deal with whether to speak with him or not, prayed relentlessly, and, once her turn came, which was on May 19th... as she was waiting for M. San Javier to come out, in the community chapel, she prayed the rosary, asking Saint Dominic with all her heart, to make happen now, what he did by this means, against the Huguenots; and I experienced a dreadful battle between whether to be silent or to speak out, and I did not know what would be the best. I was with the Visitor, and I did not say anything to him about my trials: and in response to his repeated questions, I limited myself to speak to him of the miracles which the Lord had used to form the Institute and to continue consolidating it, and I left. But that same day I experienced great remorse; I sought out M. San Javier, and asked her advice, (because she privy to everything, and she had dealt with one and all) and she replied that it would be best to remain silent. I felt very calm

⁶¹ She is referring to herself.

immediately, but afterwards, I experienced remorse, but even more strongly... and from that moment on, a relentless struggle began within me and I begged the Most Holy Virgin, to open the door for me...”.

In the light of this entry, which is by no means the only one of its kind, it is very easy to see the meaning behind the Saint’s prayer, which we are about to transcribe.

Original Autograph : Spiritual Notes, n.62:

One page measuring 8 x 11,5 cm. written on both sides.

I believe most firmly that You are Almighty God and that you desire only one thing of me; here I am, my most sweet Lord: reveal your most holy will to me and give me the strength that I will need to fulfil it. You, my God, know only too well, who I am. I choose as my intercessor my dearly beloved Saint Francis Xavier, whose Novena begins today, and also, the great Patriarch, your adoptive father, my Jesus.

Most Holy Trinity, You see the terrible anxiety that I experience in my soul, which is pleading to you to grant me mercy, forgiveness and grace.

One day, I will praise, with the grace of God, his fidelity in remaining true to his word, that he will grant me absolute freedom. I hope in him and I have no fear, nor will I take account of human efforts.⁶²

And to you, my Mother, you also know how much I trust in you, I pray that I will be free, and also the Congregation, of all these chains and bars.

⁶² Original in Italian.

36. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1905

This retreat was made by the community in Rome, between the 20th and 29th September of that year, and was given Fr. Gervasio Celi, S.J.

For M. Sacred Heart, this retreat provided one of the deepest experiences of freedom in her entire life.

Her starting point was the most absolute desolation, as she herself describes it in the first few lines of the notes that she made during those days: “I am beginning my retreat in a state of deep desolation; I do not believe that I am going to receive any fruit or strength from it at all...”. This description of her spiritual state could not be more expressive.

It is easy to imagine the reasons underlying such a profound state of dejection: the disorientation in the Institute, her basic ignorance of the reasons leading to the deposing of M. Pilar. The conspiracy of silence around her (“I never hear her mentioned by name, and, if that happens by chance, the conversation is cut off quickly”, writes the Saint to M. María de la Cruz on August 26th of that year). The interference in the written correspondence between the two sisters, who were the Foundresses. The loss of normal and simple relationships among all the sisters... . The situation painted of the Institute in the autumn of 1905 is by no means an encouraging one. Peace had been restored, but it was a very tense peace, which masked many burdens of suffering. All of this weighed heavily upon M. Sacred Heart.

To this sad situation, was added a further ingredient, namely her apprehension and doubt concerning the Apostolic Visitation that had taken place at the convent in Rome in May of that year. The Visitor, Luigi Palliola, was a Redemptorist sent by the Holy See to draw up a report on the state of the religious communities. The tension that this caused in the situation that M. Sacred Heart was experiencing is readily understandable. Was it advisable or not to inform him in detail of what was happening in the Institute? The long paragraph that we transcribed in the previous document, gives us an idea of this interior struggle. However, it is not about just a one day occurrence. The Visitor concluded his mission and left very happy with the state of the community, but he returned on other days. He spoke with everyone including M. Sacred Heart, who eventually confided in him, when, in reality, the Visitor

had already formed a favourable opinion of M. Purisima, and when he had surely been forewarned against the Foundresses, and, specifically, M. Sacred Heart. In short, she very quickly learned that all her efforts were useless.

It is very striking to read how many times she makes reference to her painful situation in the spiritual notes made during these days. Both the words and the expressions she uses are highly significant: she finds herself “in the deepest desolation”, “in tribulation”, “exceedingly dry”, “as dry as a bone”, in a “terribly painful situation”, in a “terrible interior struggle”; she feels “repugnance”, “despondency”; she sees herself in “very difficult circumstances”, and foresees “even greater difficulties that might come along”, she is “extremely discouraged, as if without any strength at all, to suffer even more”.

Nevertheless, from the very first day of the retreat, she feels that the Lord is with her, and that her strength lies in him, and him alone. She feels this so strongly that she energetically underlines the brief phrases in which she expresses “how the cloud that overshadows her faith, is dispersed”.

This retreat is, without doubt, about freedom, about the “holy independence of the true children of God”, and it is the retreat that will prepare her for one of the most dramatic events in her intense life story: the Third General Congregation of the Institute, in which M. Purisima would be confirmed as the one in charge, together with the total marginalization of both her sister and herself.

An attentive reading of her spiritual notes during these days can help us to take very seriously the special experience of freedom that the saint was feeling. For her, freedom was something both broad and deep, comprehensive and unifying, which enabled her to interpret all events, whether positive or negative “as means that God places in my path, in order to obtain my sanctification”, and live in this world always “as in a vast temple”.

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n .63: a notebook of 24 pages
(11.5 x 8 cm.) written on both sides.*

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1905

20-29 [September]

I am beginning my retreat in a state of very deep desolation. I do not believe that I am going to be able to draw any fruit out of it at all, or receive strength from it, and I foresee that Our Lord is going to ask of me very big sacrifices

I remained in this state of desolation all through the first meditation, just humbling myself and begging for strength. During Holy Communion I was very recollected but without any light or consolation. Afterwards, as I was arranging my room, the cloud disappeared *and I felt great courage in my soul, so much so that I could not refuse anything, and also felt an extraordinary conviction that Our Lord was with me, and would, in his own good time, rescue me from all this great tribulation that surrounds me. So the fruit I received was unlimited trust in God, my strength, and my only strength; none at all in human beings. God is Almighty.*⁶³

2nd Meditation. I must live in this world dependent on God's will alone, and never ever become enslaved to any creature who gets in the way of this sacred independence that belongs to the true children of God. So, I must make use of everything, both the negative and the positive, in order to work out my sanctification. Also I must maintain myself firmly in this state and draw out from it all the fruit I possibly can for my soul. I must be aware, in all my actions, that I am in this world as in a vast temple, and that I, as God's priest, must offer him continual sacrifice, provided by the creatures who go against me, whoever they may be, and also continual praise for those who satisfy me, and always, everything for the greater glory of God, which is the reason why he has placed us here, in this world.

3rd Meditation. *Very dry.* I must prepare my heart to suffer; for this is what it seems that my path will be. And even if it were not, I must incline my will towards it, because of the repugnance that I feel. Repugnance more towards this life of inactivity, than to suffering.

4th Meditation on the Three Sins. I did absolutely nothing, because I was unable to; I could only humble myself, a great deal and pray never to fall into pride.

⁶³ Underlined in the original.

Day 2. ⁶⁴Repetition. Humble myself and resolve very firmly to submit myself, with all my heart, to everything that the Lord wishes to do with me.

2nd As in the previous meditation, as dry as a bone.

3rd The same.

4th *Meditation on Hell.* The idea of separation from God forever, and the lost souls made a deep impression on me and inspired in me a burning desire to pray and do whatever is in my power to save them. But this last idea is a very great desire that I have always entertained, and to think that I will never escape from the state of inactivity, that I have been enduring for thirteen years now, and is so terribly painful for me, caused me immense sorrow. The Lord loves me as the apple of his eye. He will decide what to do with me; I trust him. All creatures, those who could release me from it, would seem every day to be less and less inclined to do so. But what are creatures, if one fine day God decides to say “enough”? Just like straw blown away by the wind⁶⁵; and I believe blindly that that is what he will do, and that he will also console N.⁶⁶

Day 3. Repetition. Humble myself, and nothing else. I will not go to Hell, thanks purely to the mercy of God, who loves me so much and who has always loved me in such an extraordinary way.

2nd Meditation. *On death.* I have no remorse, and I am totally abandoned to the will of God, whenever he chooses to call me and in the way he chooses. All I must do is change and trust much more in God, in order to acquire a more peaceful spirit; and occupy that spirit in enjoying God’s most holy life and divine perfections more, rather than in struggling so much. I must work at uprooting this craving to be engaged in apostolic works. I must trust God blindly, as a child in its mother’s arms, and think only about the present moment and about living it well, and leave aside all superfluous concerns. God only has to ask me to give an account of whether I have fulfilled his most holy will well, with the talents which he has given me. Whatever I have failed to do, because I lacked the capacity to do so, will not be taken into account at the Supreme Hour.

⁶⁴ The original word for day is in Italian.

⁶⁵ Wis. 5: 14.

⁶⁶ She is referring to her sister, M. Pilar.

And consequently, I must rejoice in all the goodness that God puts into all creatures, because since I should not want more than that which God wants, I must enjoy all the good that he brings about in others. And so, if God wants me to remain in this same state, lacking activity as I do now, while others are occupied working for his glory, I must not desire to be, nor seem to be, better than that which my God wants and permits. Just as he always lived a life of humiliation in this world, because that was the will of his Father.

Nor should I want anyone to know me. Rather I must hide myself as much as I can, and write my story in God's mind alone with my major hidden works, while in the sight of others seeming to be dust and ashes, which is what I came from. God alone is my reward; I should not desire anything at all from creatures, nothing. But with great fervour, I should form a divine life deep within me. That means: seconding, with great delicacy, all that God does in my soul. Like Saint Teresa, Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Gertrude. My beloved Saints, beseech the Lord to grant that I respond to him as you did.

3rd Meditation on Mercy. Humbling myself, and nothing more, I could not do anything.

4th Meditation on the Kingdom of Christ. Burning desires to be one of God's closest friends. And who are they? Those who are the most marked with the seal of the Holy Cross. The most despised, humiliated and persecuted without any fault of their own. This is the great wisdom that I love so much in theory, but so little in practice. I trust that the Lord, and his Mother and mine, will strengthen my will. I, for my part, will really try not to refuse any humiliation or trial that is presented to me, giving thanks to God, and praying and doing all the good I can to the instruments that God in his goodness is using.

The Kingdom of Christ. I dedicated the whole of my being to God's most holy will.

Day 4. Repetition of the Meditation on the Kingdom. I experienced the same feelings.

2nd Meditation on the Annunciation and Incarnation. The Most Holy Virgin never feared for the loss of her virginity; she was very enlightened by the Holy Spirit and by Holy Scripture, which stated that the Saviour was to be born of a virgin mother. The consternation that she showed, was due to the

grandeur of what was being announced to her, and her response, “I have had no relations with a man”, provided an explanation for her confusion. That is, as it were, disregarding the fact that she had been granted an extraordinary grace, she chose to speak of the normal way of conception for all human beings in general

An explanation that totally filled my heart. To recognize the graces that God grants, is not only not a bad thing, but good, but as long as we attribute them entirely and only to God and not to ourselves. We always have to be who we are, namely, dust and ashes. But just as dust is, at times, useful for us and has no reason to puff itself up with pride, so, if God wants to use us humans for His glory, we should recognise that all that is good and all the glory belongs to God and not to us. As that is so very true, what do we mortals possess, that we have not received? And if everything comes from God, in what can we glory? According to St. Paul, in our nothingness.

In the colloquy, I asked the Most Holy Virgin to look on us with mercy and to open the eyes of many of the leaders in the Congregation, who fail to understand what true humility is, and are bringing about a great deal of harm as a result. This is a great wrong, and it is necessary that Our Lord and his Most Holy Mother remedy it, as I blindly believe they will do, when the time already indicated by Providence comes. Meanwhile, I will not cease to pray that this moment arrives quickly, if that is His holy will, which for me is more important than anything else, and which gives us the strength to sustain this terrible struggle

3rd *The Visitation*. What I took away from this meditation was the Most Holy Virgin’s promptness in following God’s inspiration. I must obey God blindly and abandon myself totally into the hands of Providence.

Day 5. *The Birth of Christ*. Our Lord has uncovered the wounds in my soul, that are the result of my failing to submit my judgement. Firstly: too little order in my exterior actions. Too much activity in everything, especially with regard to talking. I must make a great effort to correct this. Composure in all things, without undue haste.

Jesus’ Circumcision, The Purification, The Flight into Egypt, The Child Lost, and the Hidden Life.

I see the divine life of the Divine Family in everything. Total obedience, submission of judgement, to all of God's plans, without objections, even interior ones, without accusations or excuses. God has spoken, that is enough; put it into practice with complete abandonment to his most holy will and blind trust that everything will turn out for the greater good. I must keep this in the forefront of my mind, in the very difficult situation in which I find myself, and in the even greater difficulties that might yet come about.

Day 6. *The Two Standards.*⁶⁷ Now is the "sweet time", my Jesus, in which you reveal your plans for me. You hold me in your hands, like a small lump of clay; do with me and in me whatever pleases you, even though it costs me my life, as you know, I am ready to fulfil your most holy will, as I have been doing always, ever since you called me to serve you but nearly always with so very much pain. But just as you have strengthened me until now, I hope, in your goodness, that you will continue to do so in the future.

The solution lies in choosing a good guide; so please choose for me according to your most holy will, and if it seems good to you, given the struggle in which I find myself, that I propose the means, grant that they may afford me the freedom to accomplish it.

My Mother, I appoint you my Intercessor, and your most holy Spouse, and Saint Rafael Archangel, and my Guardian Angel, and the whole court of heaven and the holy souls in Purgatory.

*The Three Classes of Men and the Three Degrees of Humility*⁶⁸ The last Class. Accept whatever happens to me as coming from the hand of God, which will, perhaps, include many very hard things. Fiat and trust. With regard to the three degrees of humility, I try to practice the first two out of duty, and even the third, but I know that what the Lord is asking of me now, is not to refuse, but to accept both the bitter and the sweet with the same countenance, as with everything that is sent from his hand, for my good.

⁶⁷ The Two Standards in Italian.

⁶⁸ She writes these titles in Italian.

Day 7

2nd Christ's Discourse after the Last Supper. His Prayer in the Garden and Arrest. I was totally overwhelmed by all the pain being suffered by the members of the Congregation, the pain I suffer myself, and that which, perhaps, I will suffer, and I found myself very discouraged, and without the strength to suffer any more. So I began my prayer in this state, but always resigned to the divine will, and suddenly I felt consoled with this thought: "Human beings can do nothing, unless I allow it. For am I not omnipotent? Am I not able to overturn all their plans, as I have done from time to time?" And I recalled those occasions. Truly God has done marvels for me, so why should I fear? I must submit to everything that my Superiors command me, and so win Our Lord with my patience and resignation, which is the way he wants his children to prevail.

Meditation on the Way to Calvary, the Crucifixion and the Burial of Our Lord. When his cross weighed heavily on him, what did Our Lord do? He forced himself to carry it, all the way to Calvary. What should we do when ours wants to defeat us, with the trials, anxieties and tribulations of life? Embrace it tighter, and never let go of it, until death, if that is what must be. What a lesson and consolation for me! I see so very clearly that health and life are to be found in the cross!⁶⁹ And that the livery of the greatest saints of the Society of Jesus, its aristocracy, consists of the suffering of humiliations, contradictions and insults. When praying about the burial of Christ, I felt a lively faith and total trust in God's work, and in his will, because for the one who is Omnipotent, nothing is impossible.

And from all this, I took away the desire to muster a great deal of courage in the midst of tribulations, and not to fear them, but rather seek them out in order to wear the livery of Christ. And I can see that clearly, in everything that has happened to N.⁷⁰ and me has been ordained by Our Lord in order to give us a firm foundation in virtue. With that resolved: I will not think or speak about it again, but abandon myself into the arms of Providence. And, in order to give witness, I will write asking permission to go to Bologna, so as to suffer and live there, hidden away from the eyes of all, and to practice charity to the Sisters there, because that is what should be worth more to me than attributing to myself some importance for being in Rome. Our works are what save us, not our fancies or what others say.

⁶⁹ Mass "The Lord's Supper"; cf. Gal 6: 14.

⁷⁰ M. Pilar.

Day 8. *The Resurrection.* I experienced great encouragement and confidence. My Jesus was able to rise again, by virtue of who he was, and left his enemies laughed to scorn. Surely he can do the same for the one he loves so much! He will do it without a doubt. Meanwhile, the more I suffer and humble myself, the better; it is necessary for the grain of wheat to die, in order to bring forth fruit later, and the deeper, the better, and the more rooted.

I should also follow the example of the courage and the constancy of the holy women, in seeking Jesus, taking whatever comes my way, following the path that opens before me, even though it might seem crazy. Who understands God's plans? We must allow ourselves to be guided by the light of faith, and always trust that the divine searchlight will never fail us, if only we have the right intention, to please God alone and to do his divine will.

RESOLUTIONS

To work with all my strength to increase my trust in God.

Never speak about myself, and rarely about my family and what I left behind.

Ensure that my senses are consecrated to God, and only use them for him.

Say frequently: I am dust and to dust I shall return.

REFORM OF LIFE

Put order in my interior and exterior life, being more serious in all my actions. In the way I walk, and above all, how I speak, and in my work.

Interiorly. Greater abandonment and trust in the Lord, greater faith and submission. To what my superiors command me, more respect for their words and orders. More scorn for myself; basically I think I am something, when in fact, I am nothing, as I experience from time to time.

37. PRAYER TO SAINT JOSEPH

January, 21st, 1906

Written on the Feast of the Holy Family (Sunday, January 21st.), and on the eve of the Third General Congregation of the Institute. This met on January 29th. The election of the Superior General took place on February 2nd, and the result went in favour M. Purísima.

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.64: a double page measuring (18 x 11.5 cm.) written on both sides but crossed out on the last page.

IHS

My dearly beloved Saint: Today, as we celebrate you, the Most Holy Family, I beg you with all my heart, and with more confidence than ever before, for everything that I have already asked for, because it is my most pressing need now. May everything turn out perfectly according to what your most sweet Son holds in his Heart; he knows all things, he can do all things and he has to do it, and he will do it for his greater glory and the greater glory of the Most Holy Trinity, which is what I desire with all my heart, because in this way, he is obliged to instill his spirit into all of us, and to sanctify the Congregation, which is what I want, for the reasons that you, my Saint, already know.

My saint, I want nothing of human origin; get rid of anything that might intervene contrary to the will of Our God.

When we choose, give us a single soul and heart, and may our meeting resemble that of the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost, and afterwards, may everything be done with the same spirit.

My Saint, another favour. For those who do not receive what they desire, and who bear it with patience, humbly and with resignation, like you, my Jesus, I ask the dispositions that Your Mother had in the Garden.

My dear Saint, bless us, direct us, be our helper, our guide and our all. Finally, she who trusts you blindly, leaves everything in your hands and humbly kisses your feet, desiring that you would do so to Jesus and Mary

Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, ACI

Dear Saint I trust in you, be our Protector.

May all the wiles of the devil be thwarted: and may your holy name make your great power shine out. A thousand thanks in advance.

INTRODUCTION

The monotony of M. Sacred Heart's life was interrupted by various events: after the General Congregation in which M. Purísima was elected General of the Institute, she, the General, proposed a journey for the Saint to Spain, which took place in the spring of 1906. Between 1907 and 1908, M. Sacred Heart spent various periods in Bologna. There, she was present for the Apostolic Visitation that took place in September, 1907, conducted by the Dominican, Tommaso Maria Boggiani.

These were the initial years of the first mandate of M. Purísima as General, given that in 1911, the 4th General Congregation was due to be celebrated, in order to proceed to a new election. M. Sacred Heart maintained the hope, even still, that the government of M. Purísima, would only be transitory. However, this fragile hope implied yet another source of tension, namely, raising, as a question of conscience, the need to inform the Holy See concerning the state of the Institute. Her awareness of this duty became even more urgent for her, after her journey to Spain.

In 1908, to all these reasons for concern, was added that which was raised by the renewal of her will and the renunciation of her family assets. The matter is complex and has been sufficiently explained in other works (*Foundations for a Building*, p.735 ff.). It is enough here to recall it as being yet another occasion in which the Saint helps M. Pilar to overcome a difficult situation, and also as an episode which, while causing her untold suffering, is another example of her dedication to God and of her faith.

38. NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Probably written in 1907

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.65:
One page (21 x 13.5 cm.) written on part of one side.*

REFORM OF LIFE

This year I want to be the joy of Our Lord. And who will be my model? “This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” spoken by the divine voice of the Eternal Father, and referring to Our Lord, after He received His Baptism,⁷¹ Jesus Christ who is the way, the Truth and the Life.

And what did the Eternal Father add? “Follow Him”. He is my model, blessed be God.

⁷¹ Cf. Mt 3: 17; 17:5.

39. PRAYER BASED ON THE PSALMS

A moving supplication, composed by M. Sacred Heart with lines from psalms. Possible date between 1907 and 1908.

*Autograph, n.7: pages 109 - 111 in a notebook of 112 pages,
written on both sides.*

O God, in my tribulation, I have presented to you the situation in which I am living; my tears are always before your eyes⁷² Have pity on me, O my God, because I am being trampled undeservedly; I am living in anguish, being attacked all the day.⁷³

I have cried out to you, my God, because You have always listened to me graciously⁷⁴; so now incline your ears to me, and hear my words; guard me as the apple of your eye, hide me beneath the shadow of your wings.⁷⁵

Perform, dear Lord, some miracle on my behalf: so that those who hate me, may see, to their confusion. how you, oh Lord, have come to my aid and consoled me.⁷⁶ Incline, Lord, your ear, and listen to me; because I am afflicted and needy. ⁷⁷

In You, O Lord, I have placed all my trust, never let me be confounded; save me, for you are just.⁷⁸ Take pity on me, O Lord, because I am sorely troubled⁷⁹: save me and set me free from the power of my enemies, and from those who are persecuting me; O Lord, I have invoked you so may I never be confounded.⁸⁰

⁷² Ps 56: 9.

⁷³ Ps 56: 2.

⁷⁴ Ps 17: 6.

⁷⁵ Ps 17: 8.

⁷⁶ Ps 86: 17.

⁷⁷ Ps 86: 1.

⁷⁸ Ps 31: 2.

⁷⁹ Ps 31:10.

My enemies speak words of peace to me; but, in the midst of my indignation, they have proved very irritating to me.⁸¹ O Lord, You yourself have seen this, do not remain silent any longer, and do not abandon me.⁸²

Free me, O Lord, from my enemies, I cling to you, teach me to do your will, for you are my God.⁸³

My drink is laced with tears, for you lifted me up, only to throw me down; and I am as dry as hay;⁸⁴ but you remain forever, and you will rise up, and will have compassion on the Congregation, because it is now time to have pity on her.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Ps 31: 18.

⁸¹ Ps 35: 20.

⁸² Ps 35: 22.

⁸³ Ps 143: 9-10.

⁸⁴ Ps 102: 11-12.

⁸⁵ Ps 102: 13-14.

40. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1908

M. Sacred Heart made this retreat with the community in Bologna. She had been in that community since September 4th. This time, the retreat was directed by P. Rodolfo Isolani, S.J.; it began on the evening of September 30th and finished on October 9th. That very same day, the Saint left for Rome but returned to Bologna at the end of October.

The only writings that we have are the following resolutions which she entitles “Reform of Life”. In one of them she refers to M. Pilar, “Ask for her not prosperity but rather sanctity”.

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.67:
one page measuring 21 x 13.5 cm. Written in two columns, on both sides.*

IHS REFORM OF LIFE, RETREAT, 1908

Means

Blind trust in God, who, maintains a special providence for my sanctification, in everything that happens to me, and so I should live, resting in that providence, and see in everything, the means which God uses to heal my soul, and make it pleasing in his divine eyes. .

Keep my rules and constitutions with great care.

Pray for N.⁸⁶ to be granted, not prosperity, but rather, sanctity.

My fragility is enormous, but your power is infinite; please grant me even a tiny particle of grace, so that from today onwards, I will belong totally to your Sacred Heart and that of your Immaculate Mother.

⁸⁶ M. Pilar.

A very lively awareness of the presence of God, who loves me as the apple of his eye.

Accept all that is negative with joy, realising that I am receiving jewels for my crown.

Be very mortified in my speech; never talk about my trials (that loses many graces) even though I am provoked to do so.

Be avaricious in enriching my soul but only with virtues.

Never want to be loved.

Rejoice when I am forgotten.

Never desire to receive news.

Never, ever, read the “Mensajero”.

Love my room dearly.

Never look around in the dining room.

Be careful, always, to give good example.

To fulfil all my spiritual exercises very well.

41. RESOLUTION ON OBEDIENCE

(January 5th, 1909)

It would seem that she made this resolution in order to accept, with all her heart, Fr. Marchetti's decision in this matter.

Fr. Mancini had died on July 4th of the previous year. Marchetti, according to the House Diary of the Community in Rome, began visiting the community in 1905 (giving talks to the community, and celebrating Mass on various feast days). In reality, the Saint failed to find the help she needed in him, but did everything she possibly could to take advantage of the advice of a director who never really understood her.

In this case, we are not looking at spiritual direction in a general sense, but rather Fr. Marchetti's opinion concerning the possibility of an appeal on behalf of M. Pilar.

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.68: one page (17.5 x 11.5 cm.)

Written on one side and one line on the other.

I must surrender myself totally to obedience to Father⁸⁷ and submit to all that he commands me. If I need to speak, it must be with the conviction that I am listening to God, and whatever he decides comes from God; and I must leave all to his prudence, because I believe it prudent, that His Reverence, says this to whomever he deems appropriate in Our Lord, and I submit myself blindly to whatever is decided, sacrificing my sister's working or not for the Congregation, and being even more locked away than I am.

This is what I have seen during my Adoration at midday, today, January 5th, 1909.

⁸⁷ Ottavio Marchetti, S.J.

42. SUPPLICATION TO SAINT JOSEPH

(January 15th, 1909)

The Saint expresses, more or less explicitly, a series of concerns in this prayer, in the form of a letter, “My Beloved Saint, you can see all my anguish and my sorrow, please put everything right, according to the will of Our Jesus, and to His greater honour and glory, the good of the Congregation and of the one who is a tiny part of my heart...”. It is obvious that these last words refer to M. Pilar.

Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n.69:

A double single page (21 x 13 cm.) written on all four sides.

January 15th, 1909

To my beloved Father, the Patriarch, Saint Joseph:

Most powerful Saint in whom I have unlimited confidence: You can see all my anguish and my sorrow, please put everything right, according to the will of Our Jesus, and to His greater honour and glory, the good of the Congregation and of the one who is a tiny part of my heart...”.

Look at everything, my Saint, as if it were really yours, console everyone and make them happy.

All the nephews and nieces whom I love are delighted with my God, and with his Mother and mine; and you know exactly what my words mean.

My Saint, if it is convenient, the Church of Saint Susana, and if not, then this one.

With regard to my spiritual direction, I ask for light for my director and for me, so that he will guide me according to the will of my God, and that both of us may fulfil it most perfectly.

Dear saint of mine, I pray for the Church, her victory, and the conversion of the world.

Also, a very special blessing for our Congregation, may we all be of one heart and one spirit, and love one another, as you wish us to.

For health for those in the Congregation who are sick, especially those who are giving greater glory to God.

And now, my holy saint and father, grant me whatever you desire, for you are the absolute master, after Jesus and Mary, of this humble child of yours, in all her thoughts, words and deeds. Guide her always, until she kisses your most holy feet in the glory of heaven and you lead her into the arms of Jesus and of his Mother, who granted her a great grace on this day.

Mary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. ECJ.

INTRODUCTION

This period is the longest, and also the simplest, as far as the spiritual writings of M. Sacred Heart are concerned.

In 1911, the 4th General Congregation of the Institute met in Rome, at which neither of the two Foundresses was present. M. Purísima was re-elected Superior General, followed by a request that this office be granted for life, to her personally. M. Sacred Heart did not participate in this Meeting, hence, any resistance to this initiative was lacking. The Sacred Congregation gave the green light to this petition, presented by the Handmaids.

With the definitive election of her former novice as General, a period of serenity began for M. Sacred Heart. Now, yes, she could and had to rest from her previous attempts to rehabilitate M. Pilar's position in the Institute. The inevitable, in this case, served to reinforce an attitude of sincere acceptance.

Without doubt, the Saint continued to make a retreat every year, and receive light from Our Lord. Perhaps, she also wrote down something of those blinding clarities in her tiny note books, but very little has come down to us. However, the only record that we have, of her retreat made in 1914, is worth very many pages of writing. "God loves me very much, with a very special preference. He wants me to know him, so that I can nurture my love for him, together with a limitless confidence in him... May I live and spend my life doing everything only for him, and in order to give pleasure only to him."

Apart from this brief text, there are other pages of hers that reveal the peace in her soul, acquired, thanks to a long pilgrimage and heroic efforts. We have only to read certain of her letters, written to her family, to sisters in the Institute, to her own sister... The correspondence with her sister was interrupted in 1915. In 1916, M. Pilar slipped silently out of this world, the person who had been the instrument for her sanctification from childhood, as the Saint said on one occasion in 1892. But, at the same time, according to her own words, too, "the one I loved so much", "a little piece of my heart"... Her dear sister, with whom she shared the role of Foundress and of cornerstone, with whom she bore the weight of marginalization and obscurity as the foundations of the building which was the Institute.

43. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1914

Retreat made with the community in Rome, directed by Fr. Augusto Spinetti, S.J. It began on August 23rd of that year.

*Original Autograph: Spiritual Notes, n. 70:
Sheets 1-4 of a 12 page notebook
(10.5 x 7 cm.).*

Retreat, August 23rd. 1914, given by Fr. Spinetti.

I cannot find any obstacles in my soul, it is ready for whatever God wants to do with it.

He sees that in my soul there are two different states: one very bad and the other very good. The bad one is made up of my passions and bad tendencies, which I certainly have, and in abundance, enough to make me keep my head always bowed down to the ground.

The good, in contrast, is excellent. As long as it is not deceived, but often touched by the divinity, and the superabundance of grace, it is the brake that stops the bad.

This very clear understanding should oblige me to be very, very appreciative and to have great confidence in Our Lord, not any old confidence, but rather blind, unlimited trust, especially in very serious moments. God loves me very much, with special predilection; he wants me to know him, in order to foment my love for him, and develop a limitless confidence in him. He wants us, him and me, to have the love of spouses for each other, but he wants me to be more perfect in my love, doing everything with greater perfection and tenderness. He wants me to live and do everything only for and through him, to give him pleasure, and only him.

These are the lights that I have taken away from the first two days of the retreat.

Day 3 and 4. A battle. But in the depth of my soul I was very united to the most holy will of God, and that even though it costs me my life, and I have to suffer martyrdom.

But I need a great deal of grace to sustain me, and to master that self-control that is so necessary for perfection; I hope that the grace of God will grant it to me.

Reform of Life

Today, the last day of the retreat, as a summary of the same, I know, and even have evidence, that what God wants of me is exactly what I wrote on Day 2. This should be my reform of life for the year, and that on which I have to work to perfect it, and implant it in myself. I trust blindly that God's help will not fail me, nor will that of my beloved Mother, the Most Holy Virgin Mary, or my angels and the saints who protect me.

So much so, and all to the greater glory of God, the good of souls, and the conversion of poor sinners, for whose salvation we should be really concerned.

44. PRAYER COMPOSED BY THE SAINT

After August 20th 1914.⁸⁸

Autograph, n.5: sheets 2- 4 of a notebook with six pages (9 x 5.5 cm.)

In honour of Fr. Antonio.⁸⁹

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, we pray to you with great humility, for your benignity in honouring you faithful servants, who have served you most faithfully in this world, provided it be for your greater glory and honour, and since your faithful servant, José Antonio Ortiz, has shown such zeal in honouring you, grant that his virtues may shine out and that he be raised to your altars.

I likewise beseech you for our Holy Father, Pius X, for our family members and for the Congregation. Listen to me, my Father, even though I am unworthy, grant him the joy of seeing some people so honoured, that they will serve as an inspiration for many others to follow the right path. I thank you with all my heart, as if you had already heard me, for such us my confidence in you, My most sweet Jesus.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, for your kindness in honouring your faithful servants, who served you in this life so very faithfully, and seeing that Fr. Antonio is one of them, we ask you very humbly, that, if it is for your greater glory, that through his intercession, that this sick person be cured completely, and very soon.

Listen to me, my Father, even though I am unworthy, and I give you thanks, in anticipation, most gratefully and from the bottom of my heart.

⁸⁸ On this day Pope Pius X died, the Saint prays for his glorification in the second paragraph.

⁸⁹ A reference to a Fr. Jose Antonio Ortiz Urruela.

VARIOUS AUTOGRAPH MANUSCRIPTS

INTRODUCTION

A series of manuscripts are preserved that were written by M. Sacred Heart, but which came to light after her death, among books and objects that she used daily. They are copies or paraphrases of prayers or liturgical texts, selected excerpts from mystical and ascetic writers, etc. These writings, unlike those that we have transcribed up to now, do not have any original value but they are very useful in confirming certain aspects of M. Sacred Heart's spirituality.

The manuscripts are very varied: very brief prayers together with long paragraphs that relate to suffering, or the value of the cross... It is surprising at times to calculate the amount of time she must have employed in copying some of these texts, but the majority of them can be situated in the chronological context of the long period of her definitive stay in Rome, during which time she had plenty of long hours to spend searching in her readings, and also, in her tireless writing, to be aware of the consolation and light she received, together with the support of good reasoning, or the warmth of an encouraging phrase.

As with her original writings, the autograph manuscripts reveal the depth of the Saint's ecclesial spirit, her openness to the Word of God and a profound appreciation of the best Christian tradition represented by the saints and the great sacred writers.

45. ADVICE AND IDEAS ON HOW TO GOVERN WELL

(January 15, 1909)

This is a very old manuscript, probably going back to the first years of the Institute. The handwriting enables us to date it to sometime before 1880. The content is taken from various books in the Old Testament.

*Autograph Manuscripts, n. 1: one sheet of paper (16 x 11 cm.)
written on both sides.*



Solomon's advice on how to govern well

Place your trust in God, with all your heart, and do not rely on your own prudence. In all your ways, think about God, and he will accompany you, step by step. Do not consider yourself wise, but rather fear God and turn your back on evil.⁹⁰

Solomon's Prayer

You, Lord, have wanted your servant to reign in the place of his father, David. I am a boy and very small, and very ignorant, so much so, that I do not know the ins and outs of business matters.⁹¹ Give me a docile heart, so that I can judge your people and discern between good and evil.⁹² Give me wisdom and intelligence, so that I can enter and leave, in the presence of your people, judging and governing them rightly. Because, who on their own could judge and rule such a great people with dignity, if You did not help him to do so? ⁹³

⁹⁰ Prov 3: 7.

⁹¹ 1 Kg 3: 7.

⁹² 1 Kg 3: 9.

⁹³ 1 Kg 3: 9.

This request so pleased Our Lord that he granted Solomon both wisdom and prudence in abundance, together with a heart as wide as the sandy beach at the edge of the sea.⁹⁴ So much so, that neither the infinity of people nor the multitude of occupations, nor the gravity of business matters troubled him nor caused his heart to grow smaller, but rather, he dealt with everything very peacefully and with great success.

Lord, I am weak and my life is short, and I am not at all capable of judging or understanding laws. And even though there are some people who are experts, if your wisdom is lacking, they count for nothing. You have chosen me to be King of your people, and to be judge of your sons and daughters: give me the wisdom that dwells with you, next to your throne, and send her from your heavens and the throne of your grandeur, so that she will be with me, and I will always know what is pleasing to you, for with her help, all my works will be acceptable to you, and I will govern your people with justice, and I will be worthy of the throne and the kingdom of my father⁹⁵.

This autograph manuscript, and the following ones, almost certainly belong to the period when the Saint was living in Rome (1892-1925).

However, there are no details that enable us to date them exactly.

⁹⁴ 1 Kg 4: 29.

⁹⁵ Cf. Wis. 9: 5-12.

46. PRAYER OF SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

(January 15, 1909)

*Autograph Manuscripts, n.15: a double page (13.5 x 11 cm.)
written on three sides.*



Prayer of Saint Thomas Aquinas

O God, full of goodness and mercy! Grant me the grace to know truly, to desire with fervour, to seek with wise solicitude and to follow perfectly whatever is most pleasing to you, and always, for your greater glory. Please order all things, yourself, in the situation to which you have called me, and grant that I may know what it is that you want me to do in everything. Grant that I know all my duties and perform them with timeliness and fruitfully. Give me the grace, my Lord and my God, never to displease you in the diverse happenings in this life. Make me humble in prosperity and in adversity, may my confidence not falter; and may I feel neither sorrow nor joy, but only whatever brings me closer to you or further from you; may I desire only to please you, and may I fear nothing as much as displeasing you. May nothing that happens bother me, and may I love only what comes from you, for love of you, for you, above everything. Lord, grant that any joy will be bitter for me, if you are not part of it, and may I only find pleasure in what pleases You. Finally, O Lord, grant me, through your mercy, the grace to use your blessings in this life in such a way, as to have the bliss of possessing you and of rejoicing in the eternal beatitude of our celestial home. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord, who with You and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

47. FROM THE STORY OF THE SACRED PASSION BY FR. LUIS DE LA PALMA, S.J. (C.42, 7)

(January 15,. 1909)

*Autograph Manuscripts, n.34: a double page (13,5 x 10,5 cm.),
written on three sides.*

IHS

So, let us persevere firmly on the cross, and let us run with patience, without faltering in the battle of the faith. Keeping always before our eyes, the Author of our faith, Jesus Christ Our Lord who, having before him the joy and the rest to come, chose to suffer on the cross for our healing and example, ignoring the confusion and the scorn which followed, and is now seated at the right hand of God.⁹⁶ For this reason, as the Apostle advises us, we should, very often, turn around in our minds with great consideration, the example of the Lord, who suffered such great contradiction from sinners so that we will not be distressed nor will our courage fail in the midst of difficulties and trials, for we have not yet resisted to the point of shedding our blood in our battle against sin.

And indeed, it is good for us to fight and agonize for justice, to the point of shedding our blood, and to remain faithful to death, if we wish to win the crown of glory. And we must not run away from the cross, but remain on it until the will of God is totally accomplished in us, just as our Saviour persevered until he was able to say: "It is finished". The trials that do come to an end, cannot last too long; everything that passes with time is brief and small. God willed that the tribulations of his friends should be over soon and quickly. What seems intolerable in the beginning is over in a flash, if we just suffer a little. And so that we do not lack this consolation from the Saviour's own lips, after enduring such a great tempest of passions and, at the point of death, just before breathing his last, he said: "It is finished. Consummatum est".

⁹⁶ Cf. Heb. 12: 1-2.

48. THE LITURGY OF THE PASSION (ACCORDING TO THE ROMAN MISSAL)

*Autograph Manuscripts, n.34:
last side of the double page of the previous text (47).*

We should glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection, through whom we are saved and delivered.⁹⁷

Christ became obedient unto death for us, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.⁹⁸

Look, Lord, we beseech you on this your family, for whom Our Lord Jesus Christ did not refuse to be handed over into the hands of wicked men, and suffer the torment of the cross.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Introit of the Mass In Coena Domini: (Holy Thursday).

⁹⁸ Gradual of Holy Thursday (Phil. 2: 8-9).

⁹⁹ Prayer over the People (Holy Wednesday).

49. FROM THE MEDITATIONS OF FR. LUIS DE LA PUENTE, S.J.

This represents one of the colloquies with which Fr. La Puente used to finish his meditations. It corresponds to part V, 7th. meditation, point 4, 2.

Autograph Manuscripts , n.57: (13,5 x 10,5 cm.) written on both sides.

IHS

Stay with us, Lord, because night is drawing on and the day is coming to an end. O good Jesus, stay with me, because the light of faith in my soul is growing dim, and the radiance of virtue, and the fervour of charity, are growing cold and are declining, and if you leave, I will be transformed into a dark and cold night. Stay with me Lord, because the day of my life is coming to an end, and now I have an even greater need of your presence, as the night of my death is coming nearer. You said: "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my father will love him, and we will both come to him and we will remain with him". My desire is to love you and obey you, with all the affection of my heart. Stay with me Lord, so that I will be able to fulfil my desire, and come to life eternal, where I will be with you forever. Amen.

50. FROM THE MASS FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH (ROMAN MISSAL)

*Autograph Manuscripts, n.2: a double page (10.5 x 6.5 cm.)
written on three sides.*

O God, you desire all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth! Send, we beseech you, workers into your harvest, and grant them the grace of announcing your Word with total fidelity, in order to extend your voice and make it well known, so that all peoples may recognize you as the one true God, and that you sent Jesus Christ, your Son, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with youetc.¹⁰⁰

Listen, O God, our protector, turn your gaze on the face of your Anointed One, who gave himself as a ransom for all of us; and grant that, from the rising of the sun to its setting, your name will be exalted among the nations and that a pure oblation be sacrificed and offered to your name everywhere. For the same...¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Collect prayer. A part from the copy that is preserved in the General Archive ACI. The Saint made many copies of this prayer and gave one to each of the Sisters destined to the foundation in London in 1910.

¹⁰¹ Secret prayer.

51. A VERSE OF THE «STABAT MATER»

This is a small piece of paper (13 x 4.5 cm.), a sort of reading log, found inside a book in the house in Rome, thirteen years after the death of M. Sacred Heart. The text, written by her in pencil, takes us back to the last years of her life.

Spiritual Notes n.76.

Holy Mother, pierce my heart with the wounds of Jesus crucified, and grant that my gaze will always be fixed on him.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Translation of the eleventh verse of the hymn “Stabat Mater”: «Sancta Mater, istud agas, Crucifixi fige plagas cordi meo valide».

52. FROM THE EASTER LITURGY (ROMAN MISSAL)

*Autograph Manuscripts, n.39: one page, divided in half, (12.5 x 13.5 cm.)
taking advantage of the empty space in the draft of a letter.*

If you have risen with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Taste and set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.¹⁰³

O God, who on this day, through your Only Begotten Son, have conquered death and unlocked for us the path to eternity, listen favourably to our vows, which you yourself inspired by your grace.

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Epistle of Holy Saturday (Col 3: 1-4).

¹⁰⁴ Collect of Easter Sunday.

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