

Preparation for Total Consecration

Part 1: Twelve Preliminary Days

Theme: Spirit of the World

Examine your conscience, pray, practice renouncement of your own will; mortification, purity of heart. This purity is the indispensable condition for contemplating God in heaven, to see Him on earth and to know Him by the light of faith.

The first part of the preparation should be employed in casting off the spirit of the world which is contrary to that of Jesus Christ. The spirit of the world consists essentially in the denial of the supreme dominion of God; a denial which is manifested in practice by sin and disobedience; thus it is principally opposed to the spirit of Christ, which is also that of Mary.

It manifests itself by the concupiscence of the flesh, by the concupiscence of the eyes and by the pride of life, by disobedience to God's laws and the abuse of created things. Its works are: sin in all forms, then all else by which the devil leads to sin; works which bring error and darkness to the mind, and seduction and corruption to the will. Its pomps are the splendor and the charms employed by the devil to render sin alluring in person, places and things.

Daily Prayers:

Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

DAY 1

St. Matthew: Chapter 5: 1-19

The Beatitudes

Seeing the crowds, he went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples.

Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

How happy are the poor in spirit: theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God.

Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.

Salt of the earth and light of the world

You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men.

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.

The fulfillment of the Law

Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved.

Pray Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

DAY 2

St. Matthew: Chapters 5: 48, 6: 1-15

Even the pagans do as much, do they not:

You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Almsgiving in secret (6: 1-15)

Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

Prayer in secret

And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites; they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

How to pray. The Lord's Prayer

In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. So you should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.

And do not put us to the test, but save us from the evil one.

Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.

Pray Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

DAY 3

St. Matthew Chapter 7: 1-14

Do not judge

Do not judge, and you will not be judged; because the judgments you give are the judgments you will get, and the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the splinter in your own? How dare you say to your brother, "Let me take the splinter out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.

Do not profane sacred things

Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls in front of pigs, or they may trample them and then turn on you and tear you to pieces.

Effective prayer

Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him. Is there a man among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish: If you, then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

The golden rule

So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets.

The two ways

Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to perdition is wide and spacious, and many take it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Pray Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

Day 4

Imitation of Christ, by Thomas A Kempis: Book 3, Chapters 7, 40

That man has no good of himself, and that he cannot glory in anything.

Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that Thou visit him? What has man deserved that Thou should give him grace? Lord, what cause have I to complain, if Thou forsakest me, or what can I justly allege, if what I petition Thou shalt not grant? This most assuredly, I may truly think and say: Lord I am nothing, I can do nothing of myself, that is good, but I am in all things defective and ever tend to nothing. And unless I am assisted and interiorly instructed by Thee, I become wholly tepid and relaxed, but though, O Lord, art always the same, and endure unto eternity, ever good, just and holy, doing all things well, justly and holily and disposing them in wisdom.

But I who am more inclined to go back, than to go forward, continue not always in one state, for I am changed, seven different times. But it quickly becomes better when it pleases Thee, and Thou stretchest out Thy helping hand: for Thou alone, without man's aid can assist me and so strengthen me, that my countenance shall be more diversely changed: but my heart be converted and find its rest in Thee alone.

He who would be too secure in time of peace will often be found too much dejected in time of war. If you could always continue to be humble and little in your own eyes, and keep your spirit in due order and subjection, you would not fall so easily into danger and offense. It is good counsel that, when you have conceived the spirit of fervor, you should meditate how it will be when that light shall be withdraw.

Pray Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

DAY 5

Imitation of Christ, continued: Book 3, Chapter 40

Wherefore, but I did know well, how to cast from me all human comfort, either for the sake of devotion, or through the necessity by which I am compelled to seek Thee, because there is no man that can comfort me. Then might I deservedly hope in Thy favor, and rejoice in the gift of a new consolation. Thanks be to Thee from Whom all things proceed, as often as it happens to me, I, indeed, am but vanity and nothing in Thy sight, an inconstant and weak man. Where, therefore, can I glory, or for what do I desire to be thought of highly?

Forsooth of my very nothingness; and this is most vain. Truly vainglory is an evil plague, because it draws away from true glory, and robs us of heavenly grace. For, while a man takes complacency in himself, he displeases Thee; while he looks for human applause, he is deprived of true virtues. But true, glory and holy exultation is to glory in Thee, and not in one's self; to rejoice in Thy Name, but not in one's own strength. To find pleasure in no creature, save only for Thy sake. Let Thy Name be praised, not mine; let Thy work be magnified, not mine; let Thy Holy Name be blessed, but let nothing be attributed to me of the praise of men. Thou art my glory; Thou art the exultation of my heart; in Thee, will I glory and rejoice all the day; but for myself, I will glory in nothing but in my infirmities.

Pray Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

DAY 6

Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 18

On the examples of the Holy Fathers

Look upon the lively examples of the holy Fathers in whom shone real perfection and the religious life, and you will see how little it is, and almost nothing that we do. Alas, what is our life when we compare it with theirs? Saints and friends of Christ they served our Lord in hunger and in thirst, in cold, in nakedness, in labor and in weariness, in watching, in fasting, prayers and holy meditations, and in frequent persecutions and reproaches. Oh, how many grievous tribulations did the Apostles suffer and the Martyrs and Confessors and Virgins, and all the rest who resolved to follow the steps of Christ! For they hated their lives in this world, that they might keep them in life everlasting. Oh what a strict and self-renouncing life the holy fathers of the desert led! What long and grievous temptations did they bear!

How often were they harassed by the enemy, what frequent and fervent prayers did they offer up to God, what rigorous abstinence did they practice!

What a valiant contest waged they to subdue their imperfections! What purity and straight forwardness of purpose kept them towards God! By day they labored, and much of the night they spent in prayer; though while they labored, they were far from leaving off mental prayer. They spent all their time profitably. Every hour seemed short to spend with God; and even their necessary bodily refreshment was forgotten in the great sweetness of contemplation. They renounced all riches, dignities, honors and kindred; they hardly took what was necessary for life. It grieved them to serve the body even in its necessity. Accordingly, they were poor in earthly things, but very rich in grace and virtues.

Pray Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

DAY 7

Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 18

Outwardly they suffered want, but within they were refreshed with grace and Divine consolation. They were aliens to the world; they seemed as nothing and the world despised them; but they were precious and beloved in the sight of God. They persevered in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in charity and patience, and so every day they advanced in spirit and gained great favor with God. They were given for example to all religious, and ought more to excite us to advance in good, than the number of lukewarm to induce us to grow remiss. Oh! how great was the fervor of all religious in the beginning of their holy institute! Oh, how great was their devotion in prayer, how great was their zeal for virtue! How vigorous the discipline that was kept up, what reverence and obedience, under the rule of their superior, flourished in all! Their traces that remain still bear witness, that they were truly holy and perfect men who did battle so stoutly, and trampled the world under their feet. Now, he is thought great who is not a transgressor and who can, with patience, endure what he has undertaken. Ah, the lukewarmness of and negligence of our state! that soon fall away from our first fervor, and are even now tired with life, from slothfulness and tepidity. Oh! that advancement in virtue be not quite asleep in thee, who hast so often seen the manifold examples of the devout!

Daily Prayers:

Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

DAY 8

Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 13

Of resisting temptations

As long as we live in this world, we cannot be without temptations and tribulations. Hence it is written in Job “man’s life on earth is a temptation.” Everyone therefore should be solicitous about his temptations and watch in prayer lest the devil find an opportunity to catch him: he who never sleeps, but goes about, seeking whom he can devour. No one is so perfect and holy as sometimes not to have temptations and we can never be wholly free from them. Nevertheless, temptations are very profitable to man, troublesome and grievous though they may be, for in them a man is humbled, purified and instructed. All the Saints passed through many tribulations and temptations and were purified by them. And they that could not support temptations became

reprobate and fell away.

Many seek to flee temptations, and fall worse into them. We cannot conquer by flight alone, but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies. He who only declines them outwardly, and does not pluck out their root, will profit little; nay, temptations will sooner return and he will find himself in a worse condition. By degrees and by patience you will, by God's grace, better overcome them than by harshness and your own importunity. Take counsel the oftener in temptation, and do not deal harshly with one who is tempted; but pour in consolation, as you would wish to be done unto yourself. Inconstancy of mind and little confidence in God is the beginning of all temptations. For as a ship without a helm is driven to and fro by the waves, so the man who neglects and gives up his resolutions is tempted in many ways.

Pray Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

DAY 9

Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 13

Fire tries iron, and temptation a just man. We often know not what we are able to do, but temptations discover what we are. Still, we must watch, especially in the beginning of temptation; for then the enemy is more easily overcome, if he be not suffered to enter the door of the mind, but is withstood upon the threshold the very moment he knocks. Whence a certain one has said, "Resist beginnings; all too late the cure." When ills have gathered strength, by long delay, first there comes from the mind a simple thought; then a strong imagination, afterwards delight, and the evil motion and consent and so, little by little the fiend does gain entrance, when he is not resisted in the beginning. The longer anyone has been slothful in resisting, so much the weaker he becomes daily in himself, and the enemy, so much the stronger in him. Some suffer grievous temptations in the beginning of their conversion, others in the end and others are troubled nearly their whole life. Some are very lightly tempted, according to the wisdom and the equity of the ordinance of God who weighs man's conditions and merits, and preordains all things for the salvation of His elect. We must not, therefore, despair when we are tempted, but the more fervently pray to God to help us in every tribulation: Who, of a truth, according to the sayings of St. Paul, will make such issue with the temptation, that we are able to sustain it.

Let us then humble our souls under the hand of God in every temptation and tribulation, for the humble in spirit, He will save and exalt. In temptation and tribulations, it is proved what progress man has made; and there also is great merit, and virtue is made more manifest.

Pray Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

DAY 10

Imitation of Christ: Book 3, Chapter 10

That it is sweet to despise the world and to serve God

Now, will I speak again O Lord, and will not be silent. I will say in the hearing of my God and my King Who is on high: Oh, how great is the abundance of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for those who fear Thee! But who art Thou, for those who love Thee? Who, to those who serve Thee with

their whole heart? Unspeakable indeed is the sweetness of Thy contemplation, which Thou bestows on those who love Thee. In this most of all hast Thou shown me the sweetness of Thy love, that when I had no being, Thou did make me; and when I was straying far from Thee, Thou brought me back again, that I might serve Thee: and Thou has commanded me to serve Thee, O Fountain of everlasting love, what shall I say of Thee? How can I forget Thee, Who hast vouchsafed to remember me even after I was corrupted and lost? Beyond all hope Thou shows mercy to Thy servant; and beyond all desert, has Thou manifested Thy grace and friendship. What return shall I make to Thee for this favor? For it is granted to all who forsake these things, to renounce the world, and to assume the monastic life. Is it much that I should serve Thee, Whom the whole creation is bound to serve? It ought not to seem much to me to serve Thee; but this does rather appear great and wonderful to me, that Thou vouchsafes to receive one so wretched and unworthy as Thy servant.

It is a great honor, a great glory, to serve Thee, and to despise all things for Thee, for they who willingly subject themselves to Thy holy service, shall have great grace. They shall experience the most sweet consolation of the Holy Spirit, who for the love of Thee, have cast aside all carnal delight.

Pray Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

DAY 11

Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 25

Of the Fervent Amendment of our whole life

When a certain anxious person, who oftentimes wavered between hope and fear, once overcome with sadness, threw himself upon the ground in prayer before one of the altars in the Church and thinking these things in his mind, said, "Oh, if I only knew how to persevere." That very instant he heard within him, this heavenly answer: "And if you did know this, what would you do? Do now what you would do, and you shall be perfectly secure." And immediately being consoled and comforted, he committed himself to the Divine Will, and his anxious thoughts ceased. He no longer wished for curious things, searching to find what would happen to him, but studied rather to learn what was the acceptable and perfect will of God for the beginning and the perfection of every good work.

"Hope in the Lord," said the Prophet, "And do all good, and inhabit the land, and you shall be fed of the riches thereof." There is one thing that keeps many back from spiritual progress, and from fervor in amendment, namely, the labor that is necessary for the struggle. And assuredly they especially advance beyond others in virtues, who strive the most manfully to overcome the very things which are the hardest and most contrary to them. For there a man does profit more and merit more abundant grace, when he does most to overcome himself and mortify his spirit. All have not, indeed, equal difficulties to overcome and mortify, but a diligent and zealous person will make a great progress though he have more passions than another, who is well regulated but less fervent in the pursuit of virtues.

Pray Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat

DAY 12

Imitation of Christ: Book 1, Chapter 25

And, whatever you see that is worthy of blame, take care that you do not do yourself, or if you have ever done so, study to amend as soon as possible. As your eye observes others, so again, you are observed by others. How pleasant and sweet it is to see brethren fervent and devout, well-mannered and well-disciplined! How sad and afflicting to see them disorderly, and not practicing the things they are called to do. How mischievous it is to neglect that purpose of their vocations, and to turn their minds to what is not their business. Be mindful of the purpose you have undertaken, and place before you the image of the Crucified. Well may you be ashamed when looking into the Life of Jesus Christ, that as yet you have not studied more to conform yourself to Him, long as you have been in the way of God.

The religious who exercises himself earnestly and devoutly in the most holy life and Passion of our Lord shall find there abundantly all that is useful and necessary for him, nor need he seek out of Jesus, for anything better. Oh, if the Crucified Jesus should come into your heart, how quickly and sufficiently learned would you be. The fervent and diligent man is ready for all things. It is harder labor to withstand our vices and passions than to toil at bodily labors. He that shuns not small defects, little by little, falls into greater ones. You will always be glad in the evening if you spent the day profitably. Watch over yourself, stir up yourself, and whatever may become of others, neglect not yourself. In proportion as you do violence to yourself, the greater progress will you make. Amen.

End of Part 1

Pray Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella and the Magnificat