

ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT LOVE OF ETERNAL WISDOM

Prayer

O Divine Wisdom, pardon my audacity in trying to speak of your perfections. Do not consider my mind's darkness or my life's uncleanness. In you there is so much beauty, yet you are little known and so much slighted. How can I remain silent? You have shielded me from evils and granted me favors. Therefore, from justice and from my own interests I am urged to speak of you, although imperfectly. I can only lisp like a child and through my lisping attain to the fullness of your age.

There is no order in what I write because I so much long to possess you that I look for you everywhere, wandering like Solomon in all directions. I make you known to the world because you promise eternal life to those who preach you. Accept my humble words as if they were a masterly discourse. See my pen's strokes as steps to find you and, from your throne bless what I write, so that all who read these words might have fresh desires to possess you both on earth and in heaven.

Admonitions to Earthly Rulers

These admonitions come from Chapter Six of the Book of Wisdom:

1. Wisdom is better than strength and prudence is better than courage. Listen, kings, and you who rule peoples. You have received your power from the Lord and he will examine your works. Often, you have not judged fairly nor observed justice. He will appear to you swiftly and judge severely those who rule others.
2. God has compassion for the lowly but punishes the mighty. He shows no partiality because He made everyone, and the great are threatened with greater punishment. So these words are directed to you, rulers, so you will find wisdom and not go astray.
3. Those who perform just deeds will be considered just. Therefore desire to know and love my words. The beauty of wisdom never fades and those who love her will recognize her. If they seek her they will find her. She anticipates them and makes herself known. The early riser will find her at his gate.

To reflect on wisdom is the highest prudence and anyone who foregoes sleep to gain her will have repose because she seeks those who are worthy of her and provides them with loving care.

4. The first step to acquire wisdom, a sincere desire for instruction. This desire loves to keep her laws. Obedience assures a purity of soul which brings one close to God. Therefore, a desire for wisdom leads to an everlasting kingdom.

O rulers of the world, love wisdom and you will reign eternally. All you rulers must love the insights given by wisdom.

5. I will tell you what wisdom is. I will not hide God's secrets. I will trace her right from the beginning. I will not imitate the envious who have nothing in common with wisdom.

Multitudes of wise men will save the world and a prudent king will support the people. Accept, then, my words and draw profit from them.

Preliminary Observations

1. Eternal Wisdom is gentle and attractive and has great splendor. With a smile, He invites us because He wishes to teach us. He bestows thousands of blessings and waits at our door to prove His friendship. Who would refuse so gentle a conqueror?

2. How unfortunate are the rich and powerful if they do not love wisdom because He has said “Those who rule will be judged severely”. Listen to what Jesus said, “Woe to you rich ... It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle’s eye than for the rich to enter the kingdom”. (Mt.19; Mk.10; Lk. 18) The evangelists gave these words without any variations. St. James wrote, “You rich should weep over the miseries that are coming upon you”. The rich receive earthly consolations and do not see the evil that hangs over their heads.
3. Solomon promises that he will give a faithful description of divine wisdom, knowing that no one will surpass him in knowledge. Following Solomon’s example, I will portray Eternal Wisdom (before and after his birth in Bethlehem) and show how we can possess Him.

Chapter 1

To Love and Seek Divine Wisdom We Need to Know Him

Can we love someone whom we know only vaguely? Why is Jesus loved so little? Because He is too unknown. Hardly anyone imitates St. Paul who studied Jesus so intently. Knowing Jesus is the most consoling and useful subject on heaven or earth.

Its subject is uncreated Wisdom which has become flesh. He possesses the fullness of divinity and humanity. Our Lord is the summary of all God’s works and the epitome of all perfections, both in God and in creatures (St. John Chrysostom).

“Jesus Christ is everything you can wish for. Seek him for he is that precious pearl for which you should sell everything” (St. Bernard). Jeremiah said that the wise man, the strong man and the rich man should boast only of knowing wisdom and nothing else (Jer. 9:23-24).

Joy and Consolation

To know Divine Wisdom is the greatest consolation. They are happy who listen to him; happier still are those who seek him; happiest of all are those who keep his laws. They will be filled with infinite consolation.

If we knew the joy of a soul which sees the beauty of Divine Wisdom we would cry out with the bride, “Your love is better than wine” (Song of ‘Songs 1:3). Wisdom says, “Taste and see” (Ps. 33:9) and “be filled with my sweetness” (Song 5:1). “Conversing with me is not distasteful and my companionship is never tedious” (Wis.8:16).

Totally Necessary

Knowing Eternal Wisdom is absolutely necessary. Jesus defined eternal life as knowing the Father and the one He sent (Jn.17:3). The wise man exclaims, “To know your justice and power is the root of immortality” (Wis.15:3). To really have eternal life, we must learn about Eternal Wisdom because the roots of immortality will be in our hearts only if the knowledge of Wisdom is in our minds. Knowing Jesus Christ is all we need to know. Without this knowledge we know nothing (St. Augustine).

What if an archer can hit only the outer parts of a target and not the center? So, what good is it if we have all other knowledge of salvation but do not have the essential knowledge of Jesus Christ?

Paul's Quest

Although the great apostle St. Paul had extensive knowledge, he claimed that he knew only “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1Cor.2:2). With Paul, let us count all knowledge as loss when compared with knowing Jesus Christ (Phil. 3: 7-8). I now understand that this knowledge is so excellent that I no longer have any interest in other knowledge. Everything else is meaningless and a waste of time.

Paul did not want the Colossians “deceived by specious arguments” or “ensnared by seductive philosophy” (Col.2: 4 and 8). Jesus is the abyss of knowledge. He didn't want them deceived by orators' words or philosophers' subtleties. He wanted them to “Grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ” (2Pet.2:18).

The following chapters are written so all can grow in His grace and knowledge.

Chapter 2 Defining and Describing Wisdom

Wisdom means a delectable knowledge, a taste for God and His truth. True wisdom is a taste for truth without falsehood. False wisdom is a taste for falsehood disguised as truth. The Holy Spirit divides false wisdom (the prudence of the world) into earthly, sensual, and diabolical (Jn.3:15).

True wisdom is natural and supernatural. Natural wisdom is to know (in an outstanding degree) natural things or their principles. Supernatural wisdom is to know divine things and their origin.

Supernatural wisdom is either uncreated or created. Uncreated Wisdom is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. Created Wisdom is when God reveals himself to mankind. Eternal Wisdom is in eternity and Jesus Christ is in time.

We will study Divine Wisdom in eternity dwelling with the Father. Then we shall see him shine forth in creating the universe, becoming a man, living a mortal life and living in glory. Finally, we shall propose the means to acquire him. I leave to philosophers their arguments and to scientists their worldly wisdom. I speak to chosen souls about Eternal Wisdom.

Chapter 2 Origin and Excellence of Eternal Wisdom

Paul declared, “O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Rom.11:33). What angel or man can explain the origin of Wisdom? All human beings are blinded by this light and all voices should be silent. Every mind is inadequate.

Wisdom In Reference to the Father

The Holy Spirit describes Wisdom as “a breath of the power of God, a pure emanation of the Almighty's glory . It is a reflection of eternal light, the spotless mirror of God's majesty and the image of his goodness” (Wis. 7:25-26).

In his gospel, John saw Wisdom as the eternal idea of beauty, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was in God and the Word was God” (Jn.1:1). Scripture speaks of Wisdom being produced before the beginning of time, “I was begotten from eternity, before the creation of the world” (Pr.8:23).

God the Father was pleased with Wisdom throughout time and eternity. When Jesus was baptized, He testified “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased” (Mt.3:17). When the apostles saw this light at the Transfiguration, they were filled with ecstasy.

Eternal Wisdom is sublime, infinite and more ancient than the universe. My words do not give the faintest idea of his beauty. You alone, O God, can know and reveal him to all you wish.

Wisdom’s Activity Within Souls

Wisdom describes her own activity (Sir. 24):

1. I come forth from God’s mouth.
2. I dwelled in the highest heavens.
3. I wandered all over the universe, seeking a resting place.
4. I was told to make Israel my inheritance.
5. I always was and always will be
6. I fixed my abode in Israel and made Jerusalem my domain.
7. Like the best of trees and bushes I am raised aloft giving forth sweet smelling perfumes.
8. I spread my branches and give rich fruit.
9. All are invited to eat and drink of my fruits.
10. Whoever obeys me will not be put to shame.
11. Whoever serves me will never fail.
12. I am like a mighty river which overflows and enriches the soil.
13. No man can comprehend my Wisdom for my thoughts are too deep.
14. I was like a little river wishing to water my flower bed.
15. My stream became like a river and then like a sea.
16. I send my teachings to far off lands .
17. I bestow my instruction on generations to come.

Wisdom compares herself to various trees and plants which refer to the many functions and virtues of privileged souls. Cedars show hearts lifted to heaven. Palm trees show humble endurance. Rose bushes show martyrdom. Terebinths show great love for others. Fragrant plants show souls who want to be known only by God. Divine Wisdom is the source of all good and He wants us to desire him alone. “He gives himself only to those who desire him” (St. Augustine)

Sirach (24:30-31) lists three degrees of holy living:

1. Listening to God in humble submission
2. Acting through him in fidelity
3. Seeking the light needed to inspire others to seek Wisdom and gain eternal life

The third constitutes perfection.

Chapter 3 **Wisdom’s Power Shown in Creation**

Creation of the World

Eternal Wisdom first manifested Himself by creating heaven and earth. “All things were made by him” (Jn.1:3)

Wisdom 7:12 calls Wisdom the mother and maker of all things (Wis.7:12, 21). Notice that Wisdom is called mother to show that God totally loves his creation. After creating the world, Eternal Wisdom

abides in all things and gives them order by separating and arranging everything. He arranged the sun, moon, stars and planets in perfect order. He set limits to the sea and depths to the oceans. "I disposed everything with perfect precision, like playing a game to entertain my Father and myself" (Pr. 8: 30-31).

The great variety of creation manifests this mysterious game. We marvel at the almost infinite species of angels and the varied stars, at the seasons, the weather, the animals (with their instincts) and the variety of flowers and fruits. "Let him who is wise understand these things" (Hos. 14:10).

Wisdom has revealed this to the saints who went into ecstasy, astonished by God's order in the smallest creation (like bees and ants).

The Creation of Man

Wisdom's power shines forth far more brilliantly in the creation of man, who is his supreme masterpiece, the image of his beauty and his representative on earth. "By your wisdom you appointed man to have dominion over every creature you made" (Wis. 9:2). I will try to describe man's original excellence but I am a miserable child of Eve and only imperfectly understand this excellence of man's creation.

Original Creation

Divine Wisdom made souls as copies of his own intelligence and will. He infused these into man so he would be the living image of God (Gen.1:26). Man's heart had a fire of pure love because God enshrined in man all the perfections of angels, animals and other created beings. Man's being was bright, beautiful, pure and perfectly portioned. His nature was without shadow, blemish, stain or deformity. His mind perfectly understood both the Creator and creature. Grace made him innocent and pleasing to God. His body was immortal. He loved God ceaselessly without any fear of death. He was so absorbed with God that he had no unruly passions and no enemies. By Wisdom's generosity man enjoyed the state of innocence.

Effects of Sin

By sin, this vessel was shattered into a thousand pieces and the brilliant sun lost its light. Man lost his wisdom, innocence, beauty and immortality. He was burdened with many evils. His mind was darkened and his heart was cold. His sin-stained soul resembled Satan. His passions became unruly and his companions were devils (who made him their slave). Material creation became his enemy and he was an object of God's wrath (Eph.2:3).

Man's Plight

Hideous in his own sight, he hid himself. Condemned to death, he was driven from his earthly paradise and excluded from heaven. He was doomed to make a living on an earth that was under curse. He would eventually die and share the devil's damnation. This was man's frightful calamity pronounced by God's justice.

Adam came close to despair, receiving no hope from angels or other creatures. He who had been magnificently fashioned was now hideous and repulsive. He saw God's justice pursuing both himself and his descendents. Heaven was closed. No one could open it. Hell was open and no one could close it.

Chapter 4

Wisdom's Goodness and Mercy Before the Incarnation

Eternal Wisdom was profoundly distressed to see the plight of Adam because his masterpiece had been destroyed and his representative in the world had been overthrown. He listened to Adams's sighs and had pity when He saw his sweat, his tears, his fatigue and sadness.

Decreeing the Incarnation

This loving sovereign convoked a second meeting of the Trinity to restore man. We can picture a contest taking place between Eternal Wisdom and God's Justice.

Wisdom had to admit that because of sin man deserved eternal condemnation. However, he had sinned by ignorance and weakness, not by malice. What a pity for God's masterpiece to become the devil's slave, and for millions to suffer from one man's sin. Also, the fallen angels had left many places in heaven vacant. Should these places not be filled? Would there not be greater glory if man were saved?

God's Justice responded that the sentence had already been pronounced and no pardon should be given. Man was ungrateful, had followed the devil in pride and should follow him in punishment.

Seeing that nothing on earth could satisfy God's justice Wisdom wanted to save unfortunate man. He devised a wonderful plan to accomplish this. With incomprehensible love, this tender-hearted Lord offered himself to appease God's justice to rescue us from the devil's slavery and to merit eternal happiness.

His offer is accepted. A decision is made that, at a suitable time, He would become man. Until that moment, Adam and his descendents were subject to death. However, because of the future Incarnation, they received graces to obey the commandments and to do penance for their sins. If they died in the state of grace and God's friendship, they went to limbo to await their Savior and the opening of heaven.

The Time Before the Incarnation

Before becoming man, Wisdom proved his desires to give favors and to converse with man. "My delight is to be with the children of men" (Pr. 8:31). He even sought out those worthy of his gifts and his friendship. He went everywhere, entering holy people and making them friends of God. He instructed the patriarchs, saints and prophets (Wis. C 7).

He inspired men and spoke through the prophets. He directed their ways and saved them from harm.

Wisdom (C. 10) says that:

1. Wisdom safeguarded Adam and rescued him from his sin.
2. During the flood, Wisdom saved Noah by guiding him on the frail ark.
3. Wisdom preserved Abraham and kept him resolute even in the command to kill Isaac.
4. Wisdom rescued Lot from wicked men and made the destroyed cities (Sodom and Gomorrah) a memorial, so that their crime would never be forgotten.
5. Wisdom guided Jacob as he fled from Esau, giving him prosperity and protecting him from defrauders. He saved him in his struggles so he would know the might of Wisdom.

6. Wisdom safeguarded Joseph and went down into the well with him. He saved him from chains and gave him the power of royalty.
7. Wisdom liberated his holy people through Moses who withstood kings by signs and wonders.
8. Wisdom led his people along a perfect way, sheltering them by day and by night, bringing them through the Red Sea while submerging their enemies and turning over their spoils.
9. The Israelites extolled God in song for Wisdom who made the tongues of babes to speak fluently.

Scripture and history described those who were saved by Wisdom:

1. The Israelites in the desert
2. Daniel in the lions' den
3. Susanna from false accusations
4. Peter from prison
5. John from boiling oil
6. Martyrs and confessors from physical evils and calumnies

“O Lord, those who pleased you from the beginning were healed by Wisdom” (Wis. 9:19).

Conclusion

A thousand times happy is the man in whom Wisdom has his abode. He will be victorious in battles, unharmed in dangers and joyful in sorrows. Amid humiliations, he will be glorified in time and in eternity.

Chapter 5 Excellence of Eternal Wisdom

Wisdom (C.8) shows the following:

1. “Wisdom reached mightily from one end of the earth to the other and orders all things graciously.”
 2. Wisdom is gracious to those who love him. He never shows bitterness, displeasure or severity. He is so gentle that you might think he is not present. With his invincible power, even in difficulties, he brings about a happy conclusion in ways unknown to men.
 3. To find this treasure, you must:
 1. Search for him early.
 2. Be like a chaste young man seeking a bride
 3. Seek unceasingly until Wisdom is found
- “From my youth I have loved and sought Her and desired to take Her as my bride” (V.2).
4. Wisdom loves souls so much that he enters into a true, spiritual marriage. The world does not understand this but history attests to it. “Even the Lord of all loved her” (V.3).
 5. Wisdom is God himself and the Father has testified that he is pleased with him.
 6. Wisdom alone enlightens every man coming into this world (Jn. 1:9). Wisdom came from heaven to teach God’s secrets (Jn.1:18). Only Jesus Christ brings God’s works to perfection by teaching the saints all that they must do (Mt. 23:8, 10).
 7. Wisdom teaches temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude. Nothing in life is more useful than these (8:7).

8. We must love Wisdom because only from him can we gain natural and supernatural knowledge as well as all the virtues.
9. If anyone desires deep knowledge, Eternal Wisdom ... knows all that is going to happen as seasons and ages pass by”.
10. To gain a special knowledge of nature and grace (not a dry, superficial knowledge) the soul must strive to acquire Wisdom. Otherwise, no matter how learned, “He will count for nothing”.
11. To gain Wisdom, the soul must be resolute. “I, therefore, resolved to take her as my companion in life knowing that she would share her goods with me and be my consolation in my cares and sorrows”. (8:9)
12. No one can be poor who possesses the riches of Wisdom. No one can be unhappy who has her as a companion. Yet how many have resolved to possess Wisdom? If their decisions are wishful thinking or wavering resolves, they will never find Eternal Wisdom.
13. “Through her, I will be honored by the elders although I am still a youth” (V 10). I will be shrewd in judgment and even the most powerful will be surprised. “I shall govern people through her, and nations shall be my subjects” (V 14).
14. St. Gregory wrote “These writers, filled with the Holy Spirit rise above themselves and become mouthpieces of God. Concerned with God alone, they speak as if someone else is speaking”.
15. “I went about seeking her everywhere to make her for my own” (V. 18). To possess Wisdom, we must seek her ardently, ready to surrender and to suffer everything. Only a few find Wisdom because only a few seek her in this way.
16. Wisdom is intelligent, holy, fruitful, active, gentle, benevolent, irresistible, all-powerful, all-seeing, understandable, pure and subtle. Wisdom is an infinite treasure and whoever finds Him is God’s friend.

After reading these words by which the Spirit shows the excellence of Eternal Wisdom, we must love and search for her. She is an inexhaustible source of riches and “infinitely eager to give herself to man”.

Chapter 6

Divine Wisdom Gives Himself to Man

The bonds of friendship between Wisdom and man is beyond our understanding. “She is an infinite treasure for man” (Wis. 7:14).

This friendship comes from man being Wisdom’s living image and her representative on earth. Wisdom took man’s nature and died on the cross. Therefore, Wisdom loves man as a brother, a disciple and heir of the kingdom. It would be an outrage for man to withhold his heart from Wisdom.

Eternal Wisdom’s letter of love

To win man’s heart, Wisdom wrote the Book of Wisdom that describes her desire for man’s friendship. This book is like a love letter filled with tender longings, loving invitations and promises. Could this possibly be the Lord of heaven and earth needing man’s friendship to be happy?

In pursuing man, Wisdom goes to mountain tops, city gates and public squares proclaiming, “It is you I desire and seek. It is you I am claiming. Listen, draw close to me for I want to make you happy” (Pr. 8:4).

Wisdom continues, “Through me kings reign and princes rule. Legislators exact just laws and magistrates administer justice. Those who seek me diligently, find me.

Benefits of Wisdom

Riches and glory are found in me. Far better for a man to possess me than to have all the wealth of the universe. Those who come to me I will enrich with their rightful inheritance and fulfill their greatest desires” (Pr. 8:15-21). “My greatest pleasure is to be with the children of men” (Pr. 8:31).

“Happy is the man who listens to me ... waiting beside my door. He who finds me finds life but he who sins against me wounds his own soul. All who hate me love death” (Pr. 8: 32-36).

God has spoken so kindly. Yet, he still fears that men will not approach him due to his sovereign majesty, so he adds that Wisdom “is easily accessible, quickly recognized and found by those who seek her. She hastens to meet them and if they rise early, they will find him sitting at the door. (Wis.6: 13-15).

Wisdom Becomes Man

To draw even closer, Wisdom became man. Born as an infant, Jesus embraced poverty and died on a cross. Jesus often said, “Come to me. Do not be afraid. Are you afraid because you are a sinner? I am the friend of sinners. I am the Good Shepherd who seeks the strayed sheep. Because you are weighed down with sin, you must come to me so I can purify you and console you”.

The Eucharist

Wisdom died to prove his love, yet he could not bear the thought of leaving man. So he devised a way both to die and to stay with man until the end of time. To satisfy His desires, he instituted the Eucharist, changing and overturning nature itself.

He doesn't hide himself under a precious stone but under the appearance of bread (Man's usual nourishment). In this way, he can delight by entering man's heart. “Those who love ardently act in this way” (St. John Chrysostom). “God is lavish in his desire to be with us” (Blessed Gueric).

Our Ingratitude

How ungrateful we would be if not moved by Wisdom's eagerness for our friendship. What punishment we deserve if we turn a deaf ear or if we flee him instead of seeking him. Scripture says that those who neglected to acquire Wisdom “left a memorial of their folly” and “their sins could not go unnoticed” (Wis. 10:8). They suffer a triple misfortune falling into ignorance, folly and sin.

At death, they will hear Wisdom say, “I called you and you did not answer” (Prov. 1:24). “I waited for you and you did not come. Now it is my turn to deride you” (Prov. 1:26). No longer do I have ears to hear your weeping or eyes to see your tears.

How great will be their misery in hell. The Spirit speaks of their despair and regret as they realize (all too late) their folly in neglecting Wisdom.

Conclusion

Let us seek Wisdom because “Nothing that you can desire can be compared with her” (Prov. 8:11). Even if you seek heavenly treasures but not Wisdom, you seek what is of less worth. If we realized Wisdom was an infinite treasure made for man we would seek it night and day, cheerfully enduring fire and sword if necessary. I will now write of choosing true wisdom because there is more than one.

Chapter Seven **Choice of True Wisdom**

We should seek the Wisdom of God and detest the destructive wisdom of the world. Even the philosophers wisdom we should spurn. Paul writes, “We do speak a wisdom to those who are mature” (1Cor. 2:6). Let us now unmask worldly wisdom.

The Wisdom of the World

The world sees someone as wise who is a keen businessman and turns everything to his profit. This man is a well-concealed fraud. He thinks one thing and does another. He knows the world’s manners. He accommodates everything to his goals and ignores God’s interests.

He makes a fatal reconciling of truth with falsehood, of the gospel with the world, of Christ with Belial. He wants to be seen as honest but not devout (for he scorns devotions). He is worldly-wise and follows his senses and reason. He poses as a Christian but does little to please God or atone for his sins.

The World’s Ten Commandments

He is concerned about “What will people say?” He relies on self-interest and witty conversations. The world canonizes him for tactfulness, shrewdness and politeness because he faithfully obeys the world’s ten commandments.

1. Know the world
2. Be responsible
3. Be successful in business
4. Hold on to what is yours
5. Rise above your background
6. Make friends for yourself
7. Frequent fashionable society
8. Seek the good life
9. Do not be a kill-joy
10. Don’t be over-pious

Never has the world been so corrupt, cleverly using virtue to justify vice. The world often uses the sayings of Jesus to endorse the world’s wisdom and deceive God’s children. “Infinite are those wise in the world’s sight but foolish in God’s eyes” (Sir. 1:15).

Earthly wisdom loves the world’s things and leads men to become rich. In all their actions they aim for temporal possessions and pay little attention to saving their souls. They frequent Communion and confession once in a while for appearance sake.

Wisdom of the Flesh

By Wisdom of the flesh men love pleasure and satisfy their senses. They shun fasting or austerities. They like drinking, entertaining pastimes, the best of food and company. They use these pleasures without scruple and then look for a “broad-minded confessor” (the way they describe lax confessors) to obtain the pardon of their sins “on easy terms”. “Easy terms” is a few little prayers which causes them no discomfort.

Diabolical Wisdom

Diabolical Wisdom loves honors. These people secretly long for distinctions and high offices. They want to be applauded by men. In their work and studies, they want esteem. They seek to be seen as

learned and men of great merit. Because they cannot accept blame, they hide their shortcomings and parade their best qualities.

Detesting These Wisdoms

We must detest these three kinds of wisdom (worldly, fleshy, diabolical) to possess the true Wisdom which is not self-seeking, nor found in the world nor present in the hearts of those seeking comforts.

Philosopher's Wisdom

Besides worldly wisdom there is the wisdom of philosophers. Paul wrote “the Greeks look for wisdom” (1Cor. 1:22). This wisdom is an eminent knowledge of nature, given in full to Adam and Eve before the Fall. Philosophers say that this wisdom comes by philosophical argumentation. Truly, the Church's scholastic philosophy develops the mind but this is not the same natural wisdom which these men pride themselves on.

(Editor's note – St. Louis gives now a long account of the false wisdom of alchemy and the “Philosopher's stone”. Since this is no longer a problem, these paragraphs are omitted.)

Conclusion

Let us remain with Jesus. He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6). Apart from him, we only wander aimlessly. Now I will explain Wisdom's effects in our souls.

Chapter 8 **Effects in Souls Which Possess Wisdom**

Wisdom loves everything that is good for man and therefore communicates himself to man. Wisdom forever seeks souls who are worthy of him, filling these souls and making them “friends of God” (Wis. 7:17).

Wisdom entered into Moses, giving him abundant light and power to gain victories. “She entered the soul of God's servant and he withstood fearsome kings with signs and wonders” (Wis. 10:16). Wisdom always bring good things, “All good things come to me along with her”.

Wisdom produces countless effects (often hidden from the soul).

Effects

Wisdom gives the Spirit of Enlightenment “I prayed and understanding was given to me” (Wis. 7:7). Enlightenment enables a man to judge everything with keen discernment. “I shall be found keen in judgment (Wis. 8:11).

Wisdom gives access to the great science of holiness and natural sciences (when needed). “Wisdom understands the subtle ties of speech and the lessons of parables (Wis. 8:8). St. Thomas testifies that he drew eminent knowledge from Wisdom.

This enlightened understanding is not dry and barren but radiates unction and devotion. It satisfies the heart while enlightening the mind.

The Art of Speaking

Wisdom also gives light to impart the truth to others. Wisdom knows what we want to say and gives us the art of saying it well. “He made the tongues of babies eloquent” (Wis. 10:21). Wisdom cured

Moses of a speech impediment (Ex. 4: 10-12) and gave prophets words “to build and to plant” (Jer. 1:10). These prophets acknowledged their inadequacies if left to themselves. Eternal Wisdom gave the apostles the power to proclaim the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11). Wisdom is the Word of God throughout time and eternity. He never stops speaking. By his word all was made and all was restored (Jn.1:3-13). He spoke through the prophets and apostles, and He will speak until the end of time through those He uses.

Wisdom does not communicate ordinary human words. Wisdom bestows “truly the word of God” (1Thes. 2:13) which is “sharper than a two-edged sword” (Heb.4:12). These words go straight to the heart for Wisdom is “the director of the wise” (Wis.7:15).

Wisdom and Preachers

Jesus said, “I will give you ... a wisdom which your adversaries cannot resist” (Lk.21:15). How few preachers can claim with St. Paul. “We preach the Wisdom of God” (2Cor.1:7). Most preach from natural light or what they read in books, not under the impulse of Wisdom. Therefore, we see few conversions.

People could not resist the words given by Eternal Wisdom. “They could not withstand the wisdom with which Stephen spoke” (Acts 6:10). Guided by Wisdom, preachers can preach with authority. “He taught them as one having authority” (Mk.1:22).

Source of Joy

Eternal Wisdom is the source of man’s purest joy. It gives him a relish for all of God’s blessings and takes away his desires for created blessings. Wisdom gives brightness to the intellect, joy to the heart, and peace in the midst of suffering. St. Paul claims “I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations” (2Cor.7:4).

Wisdom’s company is always “satisfying and joyful” (Wis.8:16). Solomon found this joy everywhere and in everything. Wisdom brings true joy. Created pleasures are illusory and lead to affliction of spirit.

Source of All Virtues

Wisdom gives souls all of the virtues in the highest degree. These include the theological virtues (faith, hope and love); the cardinal virtues (temperance, prudence, justice and fortitude) and the moral virtues (religion, humility, gentleness, obedience, mortification, prayer, etc.). “Great virtues are the handiwork of Wisdom ... and nothing is more useful than these” (Wis.8:7).

Source of Great Works

“Nothing is more active than Wisdom” (Wis.7:24). His friends do not languish in mediocrity. Wisdom sets them on fire to do great works for God’s glory and for souls. Wisdom even leads them into strenuous conflicts, contradictions and disappointments to make them more worthy of himself.

Wisdom allows the devils to torment them, the world to scorn them, enemies to defeat them and friends to betray them. They suffer illness, losses and heartbreak. “God has tried them like gold in a furnace and when the time comes, he looks upon them with favor” (Wis.3:4, 6).

Help to the Just

Wisdom enriches the just man in his labors to reap the fruit of his toil, aids him against his deceivers, protected him against his enemies, and engages him in combat to win the victory that he might know that God is mightier than all else (Wis.10:10-12).

An Example

Blessed Henry Suso (a Dominican) was eager to possess Wisdom. One day he reminded himself that people endure great sufferings for the sake of the one they love. If men went to such lengths for a mortal person, why should he do less to gain Wisdom? He resolved, "Eternal Wisdom I will never falter in my love for you. If I have to undergo a thousand torments, I will always prize your friendship more than anything else".

A few days later, he fell into the hands of robbers who beat him unmercifully. Forgetting his earlier resolve, he gave way to depression and wondered why God had afflicted him. He fell asleep and in the morning he heard God's voice "Look at my warrior. He can cut the enemy to pieces when all is going right, but in adversity his courage fades and he is useless. In consolation, he is a fierce lion but in tribulation he is a timid deer. Wisdom does not share his friendship with such cowards". Blessed Henry confessed his wrong and asked Wisdom to allow him to weep to unburden his grief. "No", said the voice, "All the saints would lose respect for you. Wipe away your tears and show the world a cheerful face".

Anointed Crosses

The cross is the reward of those who seek or possess Wisdom. Our Savior measures everything and then sends crosses proportioned to our strength, giving these crosses an anointing to fill our hearts with joy.

Chapter 9 The Life of Wisdom As A Man

God Becoming Man

In the grand council of the Trinity, Eternal Wisdom decided to become man to restore fallen humanity. Scripture says he revealed this to the Jewish Patriarchs. This explains why Israel cried out for the Messiah "O clouds, rain forth the just one. Earth, bud forth the Savior" (Is.45:8). These prayers and sacrifices were powerless to draw Eternal Wisdom from his Father's bosom. Their arms were not long enough and the sacrifices of their hearts were not worthy to obtain this greatest grace.

The Fullness of Time

When the time appointed time for redemption came, Wisdom built himself a worthy house, when He created the holy Virgin in the womb of her mother, St. Anne. He experienced greater delight than in forming the universe. No words can describe the gifts given Mary by the Trinity or her faithfulness in responding to these graces.

The torrential outpouring of God's infinite goodness which was stemmed by man's sins was now released in a full flood within Mary. Eternal Wisdom gave her all the graces that Adam and his descendents would have received (Berulle). The fullness of God was poured into Mary in the measure a creature is capable of receiving it. O Mary, masterpiece of the Most High, only God knows the height, the breadth and the depth of the graces He gave you.

Mary's Growth in Grace

During her first 14 years, Mary grew so much in grace that the angels (and even God) were filled with admiration. Her humility delighted Him. He found her faith and love so irresistible that He was lovingly conquered. "So great was the love of Mary that it conquered the omnipotent God" (St. Augustine).

Wondrous to say, Divine Wisdom chose to leave the Father's bosom and enter the virgin's womb. He sent the archangel Gabriel to declare that she had won his heart and that, if she consented, he would become man within her. She was assured that she would remain a virgin while becoming a mother. Although desiring to be lowly, she gave that consent which God, the angels and the whole world awaited. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord! Let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk.1:38).

Three Miracles

Several miracles took place. The Spirit formed from Mary's pure blood a little body of a perfect living being. God created the most perfect soul that could be created. Eternal Wisdom drew the body and soul into union with his Person. "The Word became flesh" (Jn.1:14). God became man without ceasing to be God. This God-man is Jesus Christ and his name means Savior.

The Life of Wisdom Incarnate

Let me summarize Jesus' life on earth:

1. He wanted to be born of a virgin, yet she would be a married woman to avoid any reproach. He became a child of Adam without Adam's sin.
2. He was born in a manger in Bethlehem. An angel told the news to shepherds (who were guarding their flocks in a nearby field) and were invited them to go to Bethlehem. They heard angels singing "Glory to God in the highest" (Lk.2:14).
3. Although not subject to the law, he was circumcised on the eighth day and was named Jesus (a name given by the angel). Three wise men, led by an extraordinary star, came from the East to adore him.
4. Forty days later, his parents presented him in the Temple (according to Mosaic Law).
5. An angel told Joseph to take the family to Egypt to escape King Herod's wrath. During those years he sanctified that country and made it ready for the holy hermits (as history attests). Devils took flight (Eusibuis) and idols toppled (St. Athanasius).
6. At twelve, he astounded the learned men in the temple by questions filled with wisdom.
7. At thirty, he was baptized and then spent forty days of fasting in the desert where he vanquished the devil.
8. He then preached in Judea, chose apostles and worked miracles. At thirty-three, he raised Lazarus from the dead, made his triumphant journey into Jerusalem, washed the apostles' feet, and instituted the sacrament of Holy Eucharist under the species of bread and wine.

Passion and Death

After the Last Supper he was captured by soldiers (led by Judas the traitor) and he was condemned to die on the next day, even though it was a Jewish feast day. He was nailed to a cross between two criminals. The God of innocence chose to die this shameful death. The Church Fathers believed that four nails were used and his body rested on a wooden support in the middle of the cross. He died after three hours on the cross. Joseph of Aramathea, a disciple, buried the body in his new sepulcher. Nature showed its sorrow by marvelous happenings at the moment of his death.

He rose from the dead and appeared to his mother and disciples several time during the next forty days. On Ascension Thursday, he took his disciples to Mt. Olivet where they saw him ascend into heaven.

Chapter 10 **The Captivating Beauty and Gentleness** **of Incarnate Wisdom**

Since Wisdom came to earth to gain our hearts, his human nature had every good quality, especially gentleness and kindness.

Wisdom is gentle in its origin

Jesus is a gift of the Father's love and a product of the Spirit's love. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (Jn.3:16).

He is the very love of Father and Spirit. He was born of the most tender and most beautiful of mothers, Mary. Therefore, we must consider Mary's gentleness because Jesus is her child. There was no haughtiness nor brashness in him, in fact, infinitely less in him than in his mother. As Wisdom, he is pure gentleness and beauty.

The prophets declare him gentle

Because of his gentleness, the prophets call him a lamb and a sheep. They foretold his gentleness for "He would not break the bruised reed" (Is.42:3). He is so kind that he would not condemn a sinner with one foot in hell unless the sinner compels him.

John the Baptist

St. John the Baptist lived in the desert for years to gain knowledge of the Incarnate Wisdom. In pointing him out he said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn.1:29). Notice, he didn't call Jesus "the Almighty" or "most high". John called him the "lamb of God" because he would captivate our hearts by every quality of meekness.

Gentle in his name

His name, Jesus signifies ardent charity and engaging gentleness. Jesus is the savior. Love for men is his distinctive characteristic. "The Name, Jesus, is sweet as honey to the lips and is a thrilling joy to the heart" (St. Bernard).

Gentle in his looks

"Jesus is gentle in his looks, his words and actions" (St. Augustine). His face is serene. It charmed the hearts of those who saw it, like the shepherds who were spellbound. The Magi forgot their high dignity when they saw his face. They fell on their knees and said to each other, "How good to be here. No enjoyments in our palaces compare with looking at this infant-God".

When Jesus was young, people in trouble found comfort when they saw him. "The beauty of his face was so worthy of respect that people could not prevent themselves from loving him" (St. John Chrysostom).

Some say that the Roman soldier had to cover his face to strike Jesus because the kindly radiance of his eyes would disarm the cruelest of men.

Gentle in his words

Jesus won everyone by his gentle speech. Isaiah prophesied that he would “Not cry out. Not shout or make his voice heard in the street” (42.2). People were charmed by his words, “No man has even spoken as this man” (Jn.7:46). His speech surprised even those who hated him, “Where did he get such wisdom?” (Mt.13:54).

Multitudes left their homes and followed Jesus into the desert. They went days without food, for his gentle words were food enough. His words healed the sick and comforted the afflicted. He merely said “Mary” and Mary Magdalene was filled with joy.

Chapter 11 **The Gentleness of Incarnate Wisdom in His Actions**

Gentle in his actions

The crowds said, “He did everything well” (Mk.7:37) meaning that his actions had such a holiness and gentleness that no fault could be found. Let us consider our Savior’s gentleness in his conduct.

The Poor and the Children

Poor people and children followed Jesus. The Savior’s kindness made them press close to him. One day the children pressed close to him and the apostles pushed them back. Jesus said, “Do not keep the children away from me” (Mt.19:14). Then he embraced them with gentleness.

The poor (seeing Jesus poorly dressed) felt at ease with him. They defended him against the proud and Jesus praised them on every occasion.

Sinners

Look at Jesus’ gentleness with Mary Magdalene, his solicitude toward the Samaritan woman and his compassion to the woman taken in adultery. Did he not sit with sinners to win them over? Did not his enemies claim that Jesus’ gentleness led people to break the Mosaic law? How kind Jesus was to Judas, even washing his feet and calling him friend. He asked his Father to pardon the executioners and pleaded their ignorance.

How beautiful and meek is Jesus, the splendor of the Father and image of his goodness. He is more beautiful than the sun because the Holy Spirit formed him as fair and immaculate.

On earth, he charmed men. In heaven, he is the glory of the angels. He was gentle toward men, especially poor sinners. He sought them out in a visible manner and now he seeks them in an invisible way.

Gentle in Heaven

Do you think the glorious, triumphant Jesus is less loving now? On the contrary, his glory perfects his kindness. He desires more to show the riches of His mercy rather than the gold of His glory.

Look at his apparitions. He doesn’t come to his friends in thunder and lightning. He appears in a kindly manner. He assumes the tenderness of the spouse and the kindness of a friend. Whenever he showed himself in the Blessed Sacrament, He was in the gentle form of a child (as to Hugh of St. Victor).

An Example

Bishop Carpas had (with much trouble) converted a pagan. However, another pagan made him abjure his new faith. Bishop Carpas prayed all night for God's punishment upon the guilty one. He saw the apostate and the pagan on the brink of hell dragged down by the devils. Then God spoke, "Carpas, you do not realize what sinners have cost me. Do you want me to condemn them when I am ready to die again for each one?" Then Jesus approached Carpas and uncovered his shoulders saying, "Strike me if you want vengeance" (This story was told by St. Denis the Areopagite). Knowing this about Eternal Wisdom shall we not love him whose meekness surpasses all that is most attractive in heaven and earth?

Another Example

Blessed Henry Suso sought Wisdom ardently. One day Eternal Wisdom appeared to him in human form seated on a throne. Brightness as from the noonday sun shone from his eyes. His crown signified eternity; his robes, blessedness; his words, meekness.

Henry was surprised to see Jesus at one moment a beautiful young maiden and the next moment a young man whose face seemed to have all creation's beauty. Sometimes he looked majestic and at other times meek and full of tenderness. Jesus said to Henry "My son, give me your heart" (Prov.23:26). Henry gave Jesus the gift of his heart for all time. Let us offer our heart to Eternal Wisdom. That is all He asks for.

Chapter 12

The Principal Sayings of Eternal Wisdom Which We Must Believe and Practice to be Saved

The following are sayings of Jesus (recorded in the gospels) gathered into categories.

The Obedience Needed of a Disciple

1. If anyone loves me, he will keep my commandments (Jn. 14:23).
2. Only he who obeys the will of my heavenly Father will enter there" (Mt.7:21)
3. Whoever hears my words and obeys them is like a wise man who builds upon solid rock. (Mt.7:24).
4. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than the smallest part of the law to pass away (Lk.16:17).

The Qualities Demanded of a Disciple

1. If, after putting his hand to the plough, a man looks behind him, he is not worthy of the kingdom of God. (Lk.9:62)
2. Whoever is faithful in small things will be faithful in greater. (Lk.16:10)
3. Your light must shine before men so that they will see your good works and will glorify your heavenly Father (Mt.5:16)
4. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and only the violent can take it by force (Mt.11:12).
5. If someone comes to me and does not hate his father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Duties of a Disciple

1. If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other. If anyone takes you to court for your tunic, give him your cloak as well. (Mt.39, 40)

2. Be on watch for you do not know the day or the hour when the Lord will come. (Mt.25:13).
3. Whoever wishes to be great among you must be a servant of all. Whoever wishes to be first must be your slave (Mt.20:26-27).
4. If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me (Lk.9:23).
5. Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who persecute and calumniate you (Mt.5:24).
6. If your virtue is not better than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Riches and the Kingdom

1. How difficult it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of heaven (Mk.10:23).
2. It is easier for a camel to pass through an eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Lk.18:25).
3. Woe to you who are rich, for you have your consolation in this world (Lk.6:24).
4. Give alms and everything will be clean for you (Lk.11:4).

Rewards of Discipleship

1. Whoever has left his house, or brothers, or sisters, or children, or inheritance, out of love for me will receive a hundredfold reward, and will possess eternal life (Mt.19:29).
2. If you wish to be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven (Mt. 19:21).
3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs (Mt.5:3).
4. Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God (Mt.5:7).
5. Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs (Mt.5:9).

Childlike Spirit

1. Everyone who humbles himself will be exalted (Lk.14:11).
2. I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth for revealing these things to the humble and little ones. Yes, Father, for that is what it has pleased you to do (Mt.11:25).
3. I tell you solemnly, unless you change and become like children you will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt.18:3)
4. Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls (Mt.11:29).
5. Beware of showing contempt for any of my little ones. Their angels see the face of Father in heaven (Mt.18:10).
6. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God (Mt.5:8).
7. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (Mt.5:4).

Prayer

1. Keep watch and pray so you do not fall into temptation (Mt.26:41).
2. When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites who love to stand and pray in their synagogue so men might see them (Mt.6:5).
3. In praying, do not use many words, since your heavenly Father already knows your needs before you ask him (Mt.6:7).
4. As you prepare to pray, forgive your neighbor the wrongs he may have committed against you so that your heavenly Father may show mercy to you (Mk.11:25).

5. You must pray always and never grow discouraged (Lk.18:1).

The Call to Redemption

1. There will be greater joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just people who have no need of repentance (Lk.15:7).
2. I have not come to call the just, but to call sinners to repentance.

Suffering Persecution

1. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Mt.5:10).
2. Blessed are you when men hate you. because of the Son of Man. Rejoice, for your reward in heaven is great (Lk.6:22).
3. If the world hates you and persecutes you, recall that it hated me before you (Jn.15:18).
4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (Mt.5:6).
- 5.

Encouraging Words of Jesus

1. Come to me all you who are afflicted and heavily-burdened, and I will refresh you (Mt.11:28).
2. You will be hated by all men because of me, but I promise you, not a single hair of our head will be lost. (Lk.21:7-8).
3. Do not be afraid of those who can kill the body (Lk.12:4).
4. Do not worry about what you are to eat or how you are to clothe the body. Your heavenly Father is aware of your needs (Lk.12:22,30).
5. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own; but because I have chosen you the world will hate you (Jn.15:18).
6. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall find consolation (Mt.5:5).
7. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (Mt.5:6).

Jesus' Gift of the Eucharist

1. I am the bread of life come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he will live forever, and the bread that I give is my flesh (Jn.6:51).
2. My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. (Jn.6:55,56).

Jesus Warnings

1. Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled (Lk.11:14).
2. All that is hidden will be made known and all that is concealed will be revealed (Lk.8:17).
3. Enter by the narrow gate, for the road that leads to perdition is broad and spacious and many walk that way (Mt.7:13).
4. No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate one and love the other, or he will uphold one and despise the other (Mt.6:24).
5. Every man who does evil deeds avoids the light; he is afraid his evil deeds will be exposed (Jn.3:20).
6. Do not store up a treasure on earth to be destroyed by moths and rust or stolen by thieves (Mt.6:19).
7. Do not judge and you will not be judged; for God will judge you in the same way you judge others (Mt.7:1).
8. Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but in their hearts they are ravenous wolves (Mt.7:15).

9. If you present your gift at the altar and you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and make peace with your brother (Mt.23:24).
10. When you are fasting, do not imitate those gloomy hypocrites who go about looking worn out to show others they are fasting (Mt.6:16).
11. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own; but because I have chosen you, it will hate you (Jn.15:18).

Our Inner Thoughts

1. Evil thoughts which come from the heart make a person unclean but eating with unwashed hands does not make a person unclean (Mt.15:14).
2. A good man draws only what is good from his store of goodness but the wicked man can draw only what is evil from his store (Mt.12:35).

Avoiding Sin

1. Whoever commits sin becomes the servant and slave of sin. (Jn.8:34).
2. Whoever is dishonest in small things will be dishonest in greater things (Lk.16:10).
3. If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; for it is better to lose one part of your body than to have your whole body thrown into hell (Lk.45).
4. Fear those who can kill the body and cast the soul into hell (Lk.4:5).
5. If your hand or your foot becomes a cause of sin for you cut it off and cast it from you. If your eye is a cause of sin pluck it out and cast it from you (Mt.18:8).

Kingdom of Heaven

1. If your virtue is no better than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt.5:20).
2. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and only the violent can take it by force (Mt.11:12).
3. Store up treasure in heaven which no one can steal from you (Mt.6:19).
4. The gate and the road that leads to eternal life are narrow and only a few find them (Mt.7:14).
5. It is better for you to enter heaven with only one hand or foot or eye than to enter hell with two hands, two feet and two eyes (Mt.18:9).
6. Not everyone who cries out to me "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt.7:21).
7. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs (Mt.5:3).
8. Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs (Mt.5:9).
9. Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God (Mt.5:7).

Chapter 13

The Unbelievable Sorrows Which Incarnate Wisdom Chose to Endure for Us

The Strongest Motive

The strongest motive to love Jesus Christ is the suffering he chose to endure. "Dear Jesus, one motive excels all others. You chose to drink the bitter chalice. This great work of our redemption makes you so loveable and makes us want to return your love. This motive attracts us and makes us move forcibly).

The Circumstances of His Passion

His infinite love is shown in the circumstances of the Passion. The perfection of his person gave infinite value to these sufferings. Consider the following:

1. If God had sent the lowest angel to become a man and die for us, this would be worthy of our eternal gratitude. We cannot conceive that Eternal Wisdom himself (of infinitely greater value than all angels men and creatures) should offer up his life. We are shown this mystery so that our gratitude would be great.
2. He suffered for unworthy human beings and his enemies from whom he had nothing to gain. People sometimes die for their friends but the Son of God died for his enemies. "But God proves his love for us that while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Rom.5:8).
3. He endured the greatest sufferings. He was a "man of sorrows" in whom there was no soundness from his foot to his head. He suffered in body and soul (Is.53:3). He was born in poverty and lived in poverty his entire life. He was stripped of his garments and nailed naked to the cross.
4. He suffered in reputation. He was called a blasphemer and a possessed person. He was treated as a fool and a madman. His enemies said he worked false miracles in compact with the devil. One disciple betrayed him and another denied him.
5. He suffered from all kinds of people, from kings, soldiers, Jews and Gentiles. Even his Blessed Mother's presence added to his sorrows for he saw her at the foot of the cross engulfed in anguish.
6. Every part of his body suffered. His head suffered with thorns, his face with spittle, his shoulders with the cross, his hands and feet with nails and his heart with a lance.
His almost fleshless bones became visible. His eyes saw his enemies faces and his friends' grief. His ears heard insults and false testimonies. His nose smelled the foulness of the spittle. His taste suffered thirst. His sense of touch suffered lashes, thorns and nails.
7. His soul suffered the torment of every sin ever committed. These were outrages against His Father whom he loved infinitely. He suffered because sin would condemn souls to hell in spite of his passion and death. His compassion was not just to all men but to each person individually.
8. These sufferings increased with the passing of time (from his conception until his death). Because of his wisdom, these sufferings were always in his mind. To these, we add the most fearful suffering, his abandonment on the cross. Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt.27:46)

The great love with which he suffered

1. From all this we conclude (with Thomas Aquinas) that Jesus suffered more than all the martyrs have suffered and will suffer (until the end of time). If the smallest pain of God's Son is more precious than all the pain and loss of all angels and men, how deep should be our grief that he suffered more than all put together.
2. "For the joy set before him, he endured the cross (Heb.12:2). The Church Fathers say that these words mean that Jesus could have remained in a heavenly glory which was infinitely distant from the cross. Instead, he chose to come to earth and suffer death. He could have given his body the same immortality it now enjoys in glory. Instead, he freely chose to have his body suffer.

The Father gave Jesus the choice to save the world either by acquiring honors or by accepting suffering. He could have redeemed us while remaining in glory. He chose to endure the cross for two reasons, to give God greater glory and to prove his love to mankind.

Instead of shortening his sufferings, he actually lengthened them. As if not suffering enough, he cried out, "I thirst" (Jn.19:28). "His thirst came from the abundance of his love. He was thirsting to give himself and to suffer for us" (St. Lawrence Justinian).

Conclusion

With the saints we exclaim, "O God, what an excess of love you show us" (St. Francis of Paula). "O Love, how little you are known" (St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi). "Jesus, my crucified Lord, is not loved" (St. Francis of Assisi). "The world did not know him" (Jn.1:10). To know what Jesus suffered and not to love him is morally impossible.

Chapter 14 **The Triumph of Eternal Wisdom**

The cross (according to my belief) is the greatest mystery of Eternal Wisdom.

How different are His thoughts from man's thoughts. Jesus wanted to redeem the world, seal the gates of hell, open the gates of heaven and give glory to the Father. This was his undertaking. What means did Wisdom (who orders all things well) choose? He is almighty and can do whatever he wills. By a single word he can annihilate and create.

Because his power is regulated by love, He became man to convince us of his friendship. He could appear in glory with millions of chosen men and women. With majestic armies (untouched by poverty and weakness) he could crush his enemies and win men's hearts by his power and his riches.

Instead, he chooses a way that is a scandal to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (Cor.1:23). He sees some wood called a cross. He takes delight in this cross. He cherishes it and decides to use the cross as his instrument of victory. The cross will be the wealth of his empire and the spouse of his heart.

How incomprehensible are his ways (Rom.11:33) and how insuppressible his love for the Cross. From his infancy, he loved the cross. He received the cross from his Father while still in Mary's womb. He placed the cross deep into his heart so it could become his spouse and mistress.

Always Seeking the Cross

He was always like a thirsting deer in seeking the cross. He hastened from village to village to make his way to Calvary. He spoke of this to his disciples and to Moses and Elijah at his Transfiguration (Lk.9:31). He said "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer (Lk.22:15) because all his desires were for the cross. To die in its embrace was for him the height of glory (Lk.12:50).

He espoused the cross when he became a man and carried it with joy throughout his life. He even exclaimed "There is a baptism with which I must be baptized and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished" (Lk,12:50).

United With the Cross Forever

Finally, his wishes were fulfilled. He was indissolubly attached to the cross and died upon it as if he were in the arms of a friend.

He did not reject the cross, even after his death. In fact, neither angel, nor man nor any creature could separate him from the cross. The bond is indissoluble. Never the cross without Jesus. Never Jesus without the cross.

The Cross is Transformed

By Jesus' dying, the cross of ignominy, poverty and sorrow became glorious, enriching and attractive. It was deified, adored by angels and men. All his subjects must adore the cross as they adore him. Such adoration is not given even to his Blessed Mother.

At the end of the world the veneration of saints relics will cease but not the veneration of the cross. He will command his angels to gather up all the particles and the whole cross will be re-formed. Angels will carry the cross in triumph. It will go before Jesus and by the cross, he will judge the world (St. John Chrysostom).

Great will be the joy of the friends of the cross. Deep will be the despair of its opponents, unable to bear its fiery sight.

The Cross and Ourselves

Until the day of judgment, Wisdom has decreed that the cross is the sign and weapon of his faithful people. He recognizes no disciple who does not accept the cross, or who drags it reluctantly or rejects it outright. "If anyone wishes to come after me ... let him take up his cross and follow me" (Mt. 16:24).

He only enlists soldiers who use the cross as their weapon, both to defend themselves and to destroy the enemy. "In this sign I have conquered and by it you also will be victorious." Says Jesus, "Take courage, I have overcome the world" (Jn.16:33).

Revealed to His Special Friends

He has enclosed such grace and happiness in the cross that only his special friends know about them. He reveals many secrets to his friends but he reveals the secrets of the cross only to those made worthy by their great labors and fidelity.

One must be humble and despised by the world to learn the mystery of the cross, because this is a scandal not only to Jews, pagans and worldly Catholics but even to seemingly devout people. The cross is not an object of scandal because so much has been written about its beauty. However, it is still a scandal in practice, because people lose courage, excuse themselves and run away when suffering arises.

Revealed to the Little Ones

While seeing the cross in joyful rapture, Jesus said, "Father I thank you for having hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to the little ones" (Lk.10:21).

A Greater Gift

If knowing about the cross is a special grace, how great is the enjoyment to possess it? Wisdom bestows this only on his favorite friends after they have pleaded for it. Certainly that faith by which we come close to God and without which we would be lost is a gift. However, the cross is an even greater gift.

"It was a greater happiness for Peter to be imprisoned for Christ than to see Jesus in glory in the Transfiguration. He was more glorious in chains than with heaven's keys in his hands" (St. John

Chrysostom). Paul felt it was a greater glory to be in chains than to be raised to the third heaven. God gave greater favors to the apostles by allowing them to be tortured than by the gift of working miracles or converting the world. Whoever received Eternal Wisdom sought after the cross, exclaiming like St. Andrew, “O Cross, long have I yearned for you” (cf. St. Bernard).

The Preciousness of the Cross

The cross is precious because:

1. It makes us resemble Jesus Christ.
2. It makes us worthy children of the Father who chastises his children, worthy members of Christ who accepts only those who carry the cross and worthy temples of the Spirit who always polishes the stones of the New Jerusalem.
3. It enlightens the mind as no book can. “A man of experience speaks sense” (Sir.34:9).
4. It enkindles divine love by detaching the heart from creatures.
5. It is the food of love (like wood for the fire).
6. It is the proof of God’s love for us and of our love for God.
7. It is the abundant source of every consolation.
8. It brings the one who carries it to everlasting glory. “This momentary affliction is bringing us an eternal weight of glory” (2Cor.4:17).

Peter of Alcantra made novenas to acquire this morsel of paradise. St. Theresa said, “Either to suffer or to die”. Like St. John of the Cross), we should seek only the grace to suffer and be despised.

Heaven esteems only the cross. Jesus revealed to his servant, “My mother, powerful as she is, can procure nothing more precious than the cross for the saints”.

O wise people in the world, you are too fond of pleasures and seek your own comforts. You regard this world too highly and fear to be looked down on. You speak highly of the cross but shun it or dray it along reluctantly, like the oxen who unwillingly drew the Ark of the Covenant unaware that they were drawing earth’s most precious treasure (1Kg.6:12).

The number of fools unaware of the value of the cross is infinite. You, true disciples, rejoice in trials because the cross you carry is precious and arouses the envy of the saints in heaven. All that is glorious in God is vested in the cross. The reward that it obtains in heaven and on earth is great.

Practical Conclusions

1. Drink this bitter cup and your friendship with Jesus Christ will increase. Suffer with him and you will be glorified. What is momentary will become eternal happiness.
2. Since the Incarnate Word had to enter heaven by the cross, so do you. No matter where you turn, you will find the cross says *The Imitation of Christ*. You can take up the cross cheerfully (like the elect) or impatiently and unwillingly (like the damned in hell).
3. Wisdom cannot be found in comfort in this world’s things. His abode is firmly fixed on the cross and that is the only place you can find him. He is totally united to the cross. “Wisdom is the cross and the cross is Wisdom”.

Chapter 15

Means to Acquire Divine Wisdom

First Means – An Ardent Desire

Children of men, how long will you continue to love what is vain and seek what is false? (Ps.4:3). Why not turn your eyes to Divine Wisdom who reveals his origin, displays his riches and tells us in a thousand ways how eager he is that we should seek him? “She is readily found by those who seek her” (Wis.6:12). This seeking leads to eternal life. “Honor wisdom and you will reign forever” (Wis.6:21).

To desire wisdom is a great grace. “If you want wisdom,, observe justice and God will give it to you. Meditate continually on his commandments and your desire for wisdom will be granted” (Sir.1:26;6:27) for “Wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul” (Wis.1:4)

This desire for wisdom must be fostered by adhering to God’s commandments. Many are moved by would-be desires which do not lead them to renounce sin and avoid damnation. The Spirit withdraws himself when iniquity banishes him from the soul. Solomon only received the gift after he sought it and prayed for a long time. “I desired Wisdom and it was given to me” (Wis.7:7). I have loved and sought Wisdom from my youth” (Wis.8:12). We must be men of desire to acquire this great treasure.

Second Means: Continuous Prayer

Much prayer is required because Wisdom is God’s greatest gift. Jesus said, “Seek and you shall find, ask and it will be given to you” (Mt.7:7). In effect, He says “Nobody finds me without searching. Nobody possesses me without asking” We can do this only by prayer. Prayer is God’s usual channel to give gifts. The world sought the Messiah for 4000 years. Mary spent fourteen years of prayer in preparing to receive Eternal Wisdom.

“I said with all my heart ... Give me that Wisdom that sits by your throne” (Wis.8:21; 9:4). If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God and it shall be given” (Jas.1:15). St. James speaks specifically of asking for Wisdom not charity or patience, etc. By seeking wisdom we seek all the virtues.

Qualities of Prayer

We must pray:

1. With a strong faith that does not waver. “One who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed about by the wind. That person will not receive anything from the Lord” (Jas.1:6-7).
2. With a pure faith, not relying upon visions or revelations. The more our faith depends on these extraordinary graces, the less pure and meritorious it is. The Spirit has already told us that God wants to give us wisdom and that we need this gift. That is enough.

Faith and Wisdom

Simple faith is a cause and an effect of wisdom. The more faith we have, the more we will possess. The wise man acts on the words “God has said it or promised it” even when God seems blind to his problems and powerless to help.

The wise man believes even when there is darkness, distractions, illusions, weariness, sadness or anguish. He does not seek extraordinary favors or consolation. He seeks faith in wisdom. He believes because Jesus said, “how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit of Wisdom to those who ask? (Lk.11:13).

Needed Perseverance

This pearl and infinite treasure is gained only by praying with “holy importunity”. Some people, after many years, give up prayer. They grow discouraged and think that God will not answer. They deprive themselves and offend God who always answers prayers that are well said.

To obtain wisdom we must pray every day without wearying. Great blessings will come, even if we wait for years or only receive wisdom right before death. Anyone who receives wisdom after years of asking must remember that it is still a gift, not given in justice but a charitable alms given in mercy.

The Parable

Wisdom is not given to people who pray inconsistently. We must imitate the man in the parable who needed loaves of bread (Lk,11:5). Wisdom gave us this model of a man who knocked many times with increased force until midnight with his friend already in bed. He was told not to make a nuisance of himself. Yet, the man got out of bed to grant his request (Lk.11:5-8).

Wisdom teaches us to pray this way. God wants to be opportuned. If we pray constantly He will give us the three loaves of Wisdom – the bread of life, of understanding and of the angels.

Solomon’s Prayer

“God by your wisdom you formed man to have dominion over all creatures and to govern the world in fairness. Give me this wisdom. Do not exclude me (who am weak, short-lived, and with little understanding) from the number of your children for a man is worthless if wisdom does not dwell within him.

“Your wisdom was with you in the beginning and knows what is pleasing in your sight. Send him from heaven to be with me and work in me so I might also be pleasing in your sight. He will lead me in all my works and guard me. Then I will lead your people and be worthy of my Father’s throne. For who can know God’s plan or discover his will.

“Man’s thoughts are unsure because the body weighs down the soul and the spirit is disturbed by many cares. We only understand what happens on earth with great difficulty. How can we know what is happening in heaven? How can we know your thoughts without wisdom? Send your Spirit to teach us what is pleasing to you. Through wisdom, since time’s beginning, all those have been saved who are pleasing to you” (Wis.9:1-6; 9-19).

Mental Prayer

Add also mental prayer which will inflame the heart and dispose the soul to listen to and to possess wisdom. The best way of establishing the kingdom of wisdom is to unite vocal and mental prayer in the twenty decades of the Rosary.

Chapter 16 **Third Means – Universal Mortification**

Scriptural Quotes

Wisdom is not found in the hearts of those who live in comfort and gratify their passions. Scripture says, “They who are of the flesh cannot please God” (Rom.8:8). All who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh” (Gal.5:24). They bear the dying of Jesus in their bodies (2Cor.4:10). They are

dead and buried with Christ (Rom.6:4). These inspired words show that we must practice self-denial and renounce the world to possess Eternal Incarnate Wisdom.

Wisdom is purer than the sun's rays and will not enter someone soiled by the pleasures of the senses. Wisdom will not grant rest and peace to those who love worldly company. "To him who overcomes the world, I will give hidden manna" (Rev.2:17).

The lovable prince looks for those who are worthy. He has to search because so few are worthy of him, of his treasures and of union with him.

Qualities Required for Mortification

Wisdom is not satisfied with half-hearted mortification or mortification for a few days. Our mortification must be total, continuous, courageous and prudent.

1. We must give up our possessions – as did the Apostles and religious. This is the best and the surest method. We must detach our hearts, "using the world as if not using it" (1Cor.7:30), not anxious to acquire or retain and not complaining when lost. This is difficult.
2. We must avoid showy fashions in dress, furniture and home. We must not indulge in sumptuous meals.
3. "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom.12:2). This is more necessary than many think.
4. We must not follow the world's false maxims or think like people of the world. These oppose wisdom like darkness opposes light. They speak disparagingly of religion while giving the appearance of truth. They do not openly teach sin but speak of it as if it were blameless or a matter of indifference. The devil has taught the world to hide sin. "The whole world lies in the power of evil" (Jn.5:19).
5. We must flee the company of worldly people, and even of religious people when it would be a waste of time. Wisdom told St. Arsenius "Flee, hide, be silent". Flee the company of men. Hide your life in Christ. Be silent so you can talk with Wisdom.
6. We must mortify the body. We must not only accept sicknesses or difficulties caused by others, we must deliberately undertake penances, such as fasts, vigils and austerities. This requires courage because the body idolizes itself and the world discourages anyone from practicing austerities. Every saint "has brought his body into subjection by fasts, vigils and disciplines, by enduring the cold and every kind of austerity. "He will not give the body any rest in the world". (St. Peter of Alcantra)

Needed Obedience

Voluntary, exterior mortification is only profitable through holy obedience which mortifies the judgment and will. Without obedience, mortification is often pleasing to the devil more than God.

Do not undertake any exceptional mortification without seeking counsel. "The prudent man does all things with counsel" (Prov.13:16). "Do nothing without counsel and you shall have nothing to regret afterwards" (Sir.32:24).

Holy obedience does away with self-love, protects us from illusions and bring us, as if sleeping, into the harbor of salvation. (St. John Climacus) All is contained is the saying "Leave all things and you will find all things by finding Jesus" (Imitation of Christ).

Chapter 17

Fourth Means – A Loving and Genuine Devotion to the Blessed Virgin

The Necessity of Genuine Devotion to Mary

Only Mary found favor with God, both for herself and all mankind. Only she had the power to conceive and give birth to Eternal Wisdom. No one else had the power to incarnate Jesus in the predestined soul by the Spirit's power.

All the great figures in the Old Testament prayed for the Incarnation but none could merit it. Only Mary could reach God's throne and merit this gift of infinite value. (St. Gregory the Great) She became the mother, mistress and throne of Divine Wisdom.

Always the Fruit of Mary

She brought him forth. "Blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus" (Lk.1:42). Wherever Jesus is present (in heaven, in our tabernacles, in our hearts) He is the fruit of Mary who alone is the tree of life. Whoever wishes to possess the fruit, must possess the tree. To possess Jesus, you must possess Mary.

Even though Mary is not above God or equal to him, she is the mistress of wisdom. Eternal Wisdom made himself subject to her as his mother. She has maternal and natural authority over him in heaven as she did on earth (for glory makes nature more perfect). Even in heaven Jesus is Mary's son and Mary is Jesus' mother.

Authority Over Jesus

Jesus wills that Mary have authority over him. He, in a sense, is subject to her. Mary, as Mother of God, obtains all she wishes from Jesus. Every day she produces Jesus in the souls whom she chooses. Those who have won Mary's favor are assured that they will possess Divine Wisdom, for she generously shares even that infinite treasure.

What control Mary has over all God's graces! What freedom she enjoys in giving them to whom she chooses! Mary is an immense ocean, a great storehouse, an inexhaustible treasury and dispenser of God's gifts. Because God gave us his Son through Mary, every heavenly gift to earth comes through her hands.

All Come Through Mary

Of her fullness we have all received. We possess every gift of God through Mary. The Church Fathers taught that all God's graces, all Christ's virtues and all the Spirit's gifts (every gift of nature, grace and glory) come through Mary. Yet, Mary is not satisfied until she has given us Incarnate Wisdom. She always wants to see who is worthy so she might give her Son to that person.

Because Mary is Wisdom's royal throne, God shows his treasures and takes delight in her. Nowhere does Wisdom show such magnificence as in Mary. The Church Fathers call her the tabernacle of the divinity, the place of the Trinity, the city of God, the temple and the paradise of God. All these titles concern the many wonders God has worked in Mary.

Where Can We Put Wisdom?

If we receive Wisdom through Mary, where do we put him? What dwelling can we offer to this Prince? He has asked for our heart and in our heart we must lodge him. However, our heart is tainted

and carnal, unfit for such a holy Guest. If we had a thousand hearts and gave wisdom a choice, he would reject our offer and accuse us of boldness in wanting to house him in such an unclean and unworthy place.

The Secret of Mary

What can we do? Here is the wonderful secret. Bring Mary into our heart by an unreserved consecration to her as servants and slaves. Let us surrender everything. Surrender is valued most highly, keeping nothing for ourselves. Mary will give herself in a real but indefinable way. In her, Wisdom will come and settle.

Mary is like a magnet, attracting Wisdom with irresistible power. This magnet drew him to earth and continues to draw him to everyone who possesses Mary. Once we possess Mary we will possess Divine Wisdom quickly and easily.

The Surest Means

Mary is the surest, easiest and shortest means of possessing Jesus Christ. Our most frightful penances, painful journeys, fatiguing labors and even the shedding of our blood cannot acquire Wisdom without Mary's intercession. If Mary speaks in our favor, if we love her and if we become her faithful servants, we will quickly (at little cost) possess Divine Wisdom.

Besides being Mother of Jesus (the Head of the Body) Mary is also mother of the body's members. She conceives them in her womb and gives them birth through the graces which she gives to them. The elect are in Mary's womb until she brings them forth in heaven's glory (St. Augustine). God wants Mary to make Israel her inheritance by placing her roots in the elect and the predestined soul.

Conclusion

Therefore we must conclude:

1. We cannot be children of God or disciples of Wisdom unless we are Mary's children.
2. To be numbered among the elect we must have a loving, sincere devotion to Mary.
3. Mary must beget Jesus Christ in us and nurture us to the fullness of his age (Eph.4:13).

Even more than St. Paul, Mary says "I am in travail until Jesus Christ is perfectly formed in you" (Gal.4:19).

Genuine Devotion

To have genuine devotion we must:

1. Appreciate fully her privileges
2. Thank her for her goodness
3. Promote devotion to her
4. Appeal to her for help
5. Place all our confidence in her

True devotion is:

1. sincere – with no hypocrisy
2. loving – not lukewarm
3. constant – not fickle or unfaithful
4. holy – without presumption

We must avoid being:

1. hypocritical – having devotion only on our lips
2. critical – being afraid of honoring Mary too much
3. lukewarm – praying only to gain temporal benefits
4. inconstant – serving her for a short time and then falling away in temptation
5. presumptuous – having a devotion which conceals a heart corrupted by sin, falsely imaging that our devotion will get us to heaven no matter what sins we commit.

We must join our Lady's confraternities, especially of the Holy Rosary.

Perfect Devotion

However, the most perfect devotion is to consecrate ourselves entirely to her and through her to Jesus as their slaves. This complete consecration is of body and soul and for all eternity. It includes our material and spiritual possessions, the value of all our good actions and the right to dispose of them. We offer to Mary all we have acquired and all we will acquire.

This follows Jesus Christ's example of obedience to Mary. In fact, I have never found a devotion that gives more glory to God, more blessings to the soul, or more fear to our enemies. This devotion makes the soul attractive to Eternal Wisdom, Who abides in our soul until our death.

Solomon's Mistake

What good is it to search for the secrets of possessing wisdom, to actually receive Wisdom and then, like Solomon, to lose Wisdom by our unfaithfulness?

Solomon was far wiser than ourselves. Yet he went astray and fell into sin and folly. He left behind a double source of wonderment. First, he who was so enlightened became foolish in his sins. Second, his writings moved many to seek Wisdom, yet, his fall from grace has kept many souls from seeking this priceless treasure because it could easily be lost.

To be wiser than Solomon, we must place this treasure of all treasures (Jesus Christ) in Mary's care. We are too fragile a vessel. We are surrounded by too many experienced enemies. We have had too many sad experiences of our fickleness. We must distrust our own wisdom and fervor.

Mary is wise, and knows how to use all we have for God's greater glory. Mary is charitable and loves her children. By giving her everything, we will lose nothing. She will turn all to gain. Mary is liberal and will return to us far more than she received, giving us a hundredfold.

Mary is powerful and she will lose nothing of what we give her. If we commit ourselves to her care, Mary will triumph over our enemies. Mary is faithful and will not permit anything to be lost. As the most faithful Virgin, she guards all that God has entrusted to her. She keeps watch over all those who seek her protection and guidance.

Let us trust Mary in everything. Let us bind ourselves to her as to an immovable pillar, a trusty anchor, better still – as to Mount Zion that cannot be shaken. Whatever our natural weaknesses and however numerous our enemies, we will never go wrong or astray or lose the infinite treasure of Divine Wisdom.

**CONSECRATION TO JESUS CHRIST,
THE INCARNATE WISDOM,
THROUGH THE HANDS OF MARY**

O eternal, incarnate Wisdom, lovable, adorable Jesus, only begotten Son of the Father and of Mary ever Virgin, I adore you profoundly in the bosom and the splendor of Your Father, in eternity, and in the virgin womb of Mary during the time of Your Incarnation.

I give you thanks for annihilating yourself and taking the form of a slave to set me free from the cruel slavery of the devil. I give you thanks, and I glorify you, because you consented to submit to Mary in all things, in order to make me your faithful slave through her.

Alas, ungrateful and unfaithful, I did not keep the solemn promises of my Baptism. I did not fulfill my obligations. I do not deserve to be called either Your child or Your slave. And since there is nothing in me that does not deserve your hostility and anger, I dare not come alone to Your august and holy presence.

That is why I have recourse to the intercession of your mother, whom you gave me as a mediatrix with you. It is through her I hope to obtain from you contrition for my sins and forgiveness of them; and to be given your wisdom, that I may keep it.

Hail Mary immaculate, living tabernacle of God! Hidden in you, Eternal Wisdom wants to be adored by men and angels.

Hail Queen of heaven and earth. To you all things are subject; all things that are under God.

Hail sure refuge of sinners, whose mercy has failed no one. Grant my desire for divine Wisdom, and receive the vows and offerings my lowliness therefore presents you.

I, a faithless sinner, renew and ratify today in your hands, O immaculate mother, the vows of my Baptism. I renounce forever Satan, his pomps and works; and I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after Him all the days of my life, and to be more faithful to Him than I have ever been before.

In the presence of all the court of heaven, I choose you this day for my mother and mistress. I deliver and consecrate to you, as your slave, my body and soul, my goods, both interior and exterior, and even the value of all my good actions, past, present and future; leaving to you the entire and full right of disposing of me and all that belongs to me, without exception, according to your good pleasure, for the greater glory of God, in time and in eternity.

Receive, O merciful Virgin, this little offering of my slavery. I wish thereby to pay homage to Jesus, and unite myself to Him Who willed to be subjected to your maternity; and to pay homage to the power you both have over this little worm, this miserable sinner, and in thanksgiving for the privileges with which the Holy Trinity has favored thee.

I declare that I want, now, as your slave, to seek your honor and to obey you in all things.

Admirable mother, present me to your Son, as His slave forever, so that, inasmuch as He has redeemed me by you, He may receive me by you.

O mother of mercy, grant me the grace to obtain the true Wisdom of God and to be placed, for that end, among those you love, those you teach, those you direct, those you nourish and protect as your children and slaves.

Faithful Virgin, make me in all things so perfect a disciple, slave, and imitator of Jesus, your Son, Incarnate Wisdom, that I may, through you and after your example, come to the fullness of His age on earth and of His glory in heaven. Amen.