

TO HEAVEN WITH DIANA!

by Gerald Vann, O.P.

The light and the power necessary to supplement their own attempts--perhaps even, when necessary, to make good their failure--to be men of prayer, should be provided for them by their religious sisters. p. 12

This essential necessity of contemplation for the life of action, for the life of society as a whole, is often not understood nowadays. Goodwill, zeal, energy are not enough; misguided benevolence may do as much harm in the long run as sheer wickedness. Action without contemplation is blind.

Those whose life is prayer find their prayer expressed and fulfilled in the labours of the vineyard, and those who labour draw on the power generated by the hidden life of prayer. p. 14

Jordan tried to correct faults more by winning gentleness and trusting his subjects than by harsh discipline, although he knew how to use this means as well but always having regard to time and place and persons. p. 15

He was to lead her to perfect love and to the peace of soul and the joy that come of perfect love: but this is the only way, to keep one's eye on the Lord and not on oneself. He was to help her to meet misfortune without dismay, to be temperate in her austerities, to be fearless, to love humility and poverty: always it was the same essential lesson, 'My eyes are ever towards the Lord.'

There were to be many trials and many sorrows. But she could never be alone in them: always Jordan was at hand to comfort and strengthen her. p. 21

Jordan's health was delicate and his labours and journeyings were immense: always so gentle with others, he was ruthless to himself, and during his long absences Diana was always anxious. p. 22

They were forced to say on paper what they would have wished to say face to face...How constantly there were in each other's minds, so that the small events of every day, just as much as the major occurrences, are things about which they must tell each other.

The image of his beloved daughter follows him, haunts him, stirs him. If his efforts meet with success, he writes to tell Diana. He tells her all: his joys and triumphs, his sorrows and disappointments; for he knows how keenly it will all interest her. Nor is it only of the things of the spirit that he tells her. This great man, so full of goodness of heart, descends to the minutest details of his life. He knows well enough how a woman's heart, however unworldly she may be, is made anxious by any suffering, physical or mental: it longs to know all that it may share all. If Jordan delays his letters Diana is sad or indeed impatient, and often he has to restore her serenity and peace of soul by tender reproaches. His long, perilous journeys, his delicate health make Diana always frightened for him; at the least onslaught of fever her whole soul is troubled. She knows the Master's austerity with himself; she knows that fatigue never stops him; and all the time she is frightened for his life. So these letters, these wonderful letters that one cannot read without deep emotion, follow one another at every halting place, to re-assure her and console her. p. 31, 32

The troubles that surrounded her were many and hard to bear; but above them and through them all there was the constant sorrow of her separation from him, the keener pain of their partings. p. 33

Happy are the poor in spirit, he said: he was stating a fact. p. 42

If we are poor, humble and obedient we can accept our creatureliness fully in our hearts and act accordingly, can accept the will of God in everything because it is God that we love in everything--and this is the highest form of freedom, the freedom demanded by love that it may be able to serve what it loves. p. 43

Her love had given Jordan strength, comfort, joy through his many cares and troubles. It had done more: it had called forth from his own heart a flowering, a fullness of life, which helped to make his greatness, helped to make him what he was...and God wanted him to be. Now not only he but she too would soon be going, though by different ways, to the ends of the earth and beyond; but still even there, as all through their long separations, they would be hand in hand because by God's grace they had seen to it that their hands, like those same ends of the earth, were in this life and for ever in his. p.

Terrible things can happen to a man with an empty heart. That is one reason why it can be more difficult for a priest or religious to be a good christian, living a really vital christian life, than for happily married lay people. p. 49

The love of God comes first for both of them, though it brings them the sorrow of separation and of constant anxiety for each other. But at the same time it is precisely their shared love of God which binds them so closely together. p. 53

The more he realizes how truly and wholly she loves him, the more incapable he is of forgetting her, the more often she is in his thoughts, for her love of him deepens and strengthens his love of her. p. 54

The love of Jordan led Diana on and on towards the 'strong city' where love is perfect in God; but also the love of Diana led Jordan on, called forth from his own heart a flowering, an extra fullness of life, which helped to make his greatness, helped to make him what he was. p. 54

A love such as this does not merely give a man more to give to men: it gives him more to give to God. p. 55

When God brings a human love to a soul who before loved only himself it is not a rejection of her love but the exact contrary: he is giving her more to love him with.

Every love is a new joy but implies also a new sorrow.

'The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' p. 57

'Let all your longing be fixed on heaven. He who would not be bound in hell must bind himself to heavenly things: he who dwells in the plains knows no safety for he is exposed to the attacks of every enemy, but he who is encamped behind the walls and towers of a fortified city, he is secure.

"Those who are of this world speak only the language of this world, for he that is of the earth, of the earth he speaketh. You then, beloved, if you would learn the language of heaven must dwell in heaven by desire: then, when you come back, and read in books or hear from preachers about the things of the spirit, you will understand what they say: for to understand the tongue of the angels you must live in the land of the angels. p. 63, 64

"Beloved, when all these desires are fulfilled in you, do not forget the poor man who writes you this letter. p. 64

"For the moment then find all your support in him; and in him wait patiently for the time of my return: to his care I commend you. p. 66

"I beg you, of your charity in the Lord, let not your heart be troubled nor let it be afraid if you must suffer tribulation for Christ's sake; for if we are partakers of his sufferings, so shall we also of his consolations. But let your service of God be a reasonable service, that you may please your invisible Bridegroom. Be strengthened in the Lord: whatever burden he may lay upon you, accept it, and in sorrow be strong to endure, and find patience in your own lowliness. The Lord be with you. p. 68

"Be consoled therefore in the Lord, that I thereby may be consoled also, for your consolation is a joy and gladness to me before God. p. 69

"Is it really poverty that you have chosen? Rather it is poverty that you have thrown aside and riches that you have chosen...you, who have the kingdom of heaven are not a poor little woman but a queen, the queen of a realm. p. 70

"Greater love no man hath than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. p. 71

"It is to the little ones that the Lord gives understanding. p. 72

"Apply yourselves with all your might, not so much to bodily penances, in which the measure of wisdom and prudence can easily be exceeded, as to the life of virtue and the practice of that godliness which according to the apostle is profitable to all things...Let the loving thought of the Bridegroom be constantly in your minds; and as his eyes are upon you, do all you can to, make your beauty perfect before him. p. 73

"While your souls find deep and lasting delight in the life of holiness, they may themselves be a source of delight to the Son of God. p. 74

"See to it that you are firm in patience, rooted in humility, enlarged in love, and strive always to grow in every virtue that you may go from strength to strength until the Lord of Lords is revealed to you in Sion, in that eternal and abiding Jerusalem where we shall see him as he is, and seeing be filled with unutterable joy, a joy no man can take from us. p. 75

"Beg him to give me his good grace, un happy sinner that I am, that in the might of that grace prevenient and supporting I may be able to carry out all his will in the ministry he has entrusted to me. For I have great trust in your prayers.



"You will fight with prudence if you set out to subdue your carnal nature not precipitately but little by little, advancing by measured steps in the way of the virtues, not trying to fly but climbing cautiously up the scale of perfection till at length you come to the summit of all perfection. p 78, 79

"Act always with moderation; for only the love of God knows neither measure nor moderation. And that love is nourished not by the afflicting of the flesh but by holy desires and loving contemplation and through the cherishing of that sisterly love whereby each of you loves the others as herself.

"Weep not for yourselves because in the body I am far from you, but rejoice in the presence of your Bridegroom who is in the midst of you. And indeed I too am present to you in spirit, happy in the thought that yet a little while and my daughters shall be brought to the King our Lord, shall be brought to him with gladness and rejoicing. They shall be brought after her who is the queen, after Mary, the chosen one, his Maiden-Mother, she alone his dove, his beautiful one, she who is all fair and there is no blemish in her. This is she that never knew bed of shame, she that is full of charity and love, full of grace, she that is blessed among women and the Lord is with her. After her shall the brides of Christ be brought into the temple of the King, that temple which is not made with hands; and there, as Isaiah said, the bridegroom shall rejoice over the bride and your God shall rejoice over you. p. 79, 80

"You shall come into Sion with praise, and everlasting joy shall be upon your heads--that everlasting crown which is called joy because it is the fullness of all bliss. You shall receive a kingdom of glory and a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord, for it is then that he will say to his faithful servant, Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord--the joy of that lord to whom in particular you have sworn fealty. p. 80

"I feel that you are very sad; but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, for according to the multitude of the sorrows in your heart the consolations of the Lord will give joy to you, and the Paraclete, whom the Father will send to you, will console you.

"We must for a little time be made sorrowful that in somewhat we may be made like to him who said, My soul is sorrowful even unto death. But after death we are to rejoice and make merry...If you feel that your sorrow is perhaps a little excessive, then must you cry with the psalmist: Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me? hope in God... Do not then let your sadness be excessive, my dearest ones, like those others who have no hope: your hope should be filled full of the immortality which is in you, and so you should beg the Lord to grant you joy of heart. p. 81

"The Lord, who brings the calm after the storm, will give serenity back to your souls, will turn the storm into a gentle breeze and bring you to the haven of perfect tranquillity of will.

"You must know, beloved, that as the scripture says, through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God but when we have reached the kingdom we shall know sorrow no more; meanwhile your Bridegroom Christ Jesus will never desert you, for he hath said, I will not leave thee neither will I forsake thee; and this is true even though sometimes he may seem to be gone far from you so that you cry, Why, O Lord, hast thou retired afar off? why dost thou slight me in opportunitatibus, in times of want and weakness when help is needed and opportunity? And when do we most need help if not, as the psalmist goes on to say, in time of trouble? But certainly he will not then forsake you, he will draw nearer to you, for the Lord is nigh unto them that are troubled in heart. If then sometimes you are sad and go sorrowful whilst the enemy afflicteth you, think of the words of your Bridegroom who is the joy of angels, My soul is sorrowful even unto death; if pain afflict you, remember those other words, Attend and see if there be any pain like to my pain; for indeed he alone hath eyes for misery and sorrow. p. 82, 83

"After labour there is rest for us; after suffering, everlasting consolation: according to the great multitude of our sorrows his comfort will rejoice our souls by his own gift who is your Bridegroom, who with his Father is blessed for ever, Amen.

"Do not abstain too much from food and drink and sleep; but in all things be moderate and patient.

"Proceed in all things with due order. p. 83

"I do not requite your love fully; of that I am deeply convinced: you love me more than I love you. But I cannot bear you to be so afflicted in body and distressed in mind by reason of this love of yours which is so precious to me: and I have indeed heard that you are too oppressed and troubled because of my illness. p. 84

"I am anxious about you and about your sisters... Be constant and trust in the Lord: no matter what trials vex you, what difficulties beset you on every side, God is in the midst of you all and therefore you must not be disquieted. p. 84, 85

"Give thanks then to God, whose mercy looks so kindly upon us in all things. p. 85

"Your treasure-chest must not be so filled with myrrh as to leave no room for the gold of wisdom and discretion... You must go forward on your way with such prudence as to be able to climb up, without stumbling, to your goal which is the land of heaven.

"May the Spirit of truth be with you in all things. p. 86

"Remember that you are not to be too hasty, for you have yet a great way to go. If you become weary, remember how Jesus your Lord was wearied with his journey and so, being weary, sat down by the well. If you feel heavy of heart, listless, weak, cry to him who exults as a giant to run his course: Draw me after thee, we will run to follow thee; drawn by the fragrance of thy ointments. But in all things be humble and patient, as he looks to you to be: behold, patiently the husbandman brings forth the precious fruit of the earth, and in like manner you, not laying waste your flesh but tilling and tending your hearts, must wait patiently for the precious and blessed fruit of the glorious Virgin Mary's womb. p. 88

"Find comfort in the only begotten Son of God, your Bridegroom, in whose presence we shall again see your friends, and in whom and before whom we shall rejoice, as they that rejoice in the harvest. p. 89

"You have a Bridegroom tried and tempered by all sorrows, so that he knows how to compassionate with all sorrows...He is a God jealous in his love, and he will send his angel to you who with jealous care will guard your body from harm, and still more your spirit.

"Be nothing solicitous, therefore, my daughter, but take courage and be valiant; for your Bridegroom is Emmanuel, God-with-us, who does not forsake those who trust in him but is with them as he promised even to the consummation of the world. Be tranquil then, casting all your care upon him whose power never can be vanquished, whose wisdom is never at fault, whose loving-kindness never wearies. Such is your beloved, who has the power and wisdom and will to set you free from all troubles and distresses. Think then, in the meantime, upon him, who gave himself, not his brothers and sisters. p. 91, 92

"In this present life joy and sorrow succeed one another; but yet a little while and the hour will come when our joy will be full and it shall never be taken from us. p. 92

"O city of God, glorious things are said of thee, whose people live without murmuring, tranquil and content, wanting for nothing...Let us go forward not with unwise impetuosity but with prudence.

"Beloved daughters, if any trouble or sorrow come upon you, bear all with patience and evenness of temper.

"Pray for me even as I have you daily in my prayers, begging the Father of mercies and God of all consolation that he will give you all a heart to worship him and to do his will. p. 94

"How he is wont to kindle the love of his brides: how for a time he will draw away from you that you may seek him with greater ardour, and having sought may find him with greater joy, and having found may hold him with greater love, and laying hold may never let him go. p. 95

"I will not forget thee; for behold, I have graven thy image in the palms of my hands.

"Thus says the blessed Bernard: No matter how cruelly you be afflicted, think not that you are forsaken. p. 96

"We should rejoice with the servants of the Lord Jesus, and particularly in their own consolation and joy.

"Lest I seem ungrateful, I would have you know of the wonderful mercies which our Saviour has shown forth to me. p. 97

"Take care not to run with so much haste that you grow faint in the way: as the apostle says, you must so run, in so well ordered a manner, that you may obtain the prize. p. 98



"Take prudent care of yourself, lest through weariness of spirit or weakness of body you should deprive your body of the fruit of its good works, your soul of its devotion, your neighbor of a good example, and God of his honour, not to speak of other evils which are wont to spring from the vice of imprudence.

"Virtue--humility and patience, kindness and obedience, charity also and sobriety--can never grow to excess...All sufficiency will be from God and, most abundantly of all, will be God himself. p. 103

"You are so deeply engraven on my heart that the more I realize how truly you love me from the depths of your soul, the more incapable I am of forgetting you and the more constantly you are in my thoughts; for your love of me moves me deeply and makes my love for you burn more strongly.

"May he who is the supreme Consoler and Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, possess and comfort your heart; and may he grant us to be with one another for ever in the heavenly Jerusalem.

"I am much in need of prayer because of my many faults, and I pray but seldom myself. p. 104

"You are long since dead with Christ if your life is hid with him in glory...~~But think with a wonder of the gentleness of God,~~ how he takes from you your parents according to the flesh, in this transitory life, only that he himself may be your friend according to the spirit, through life everlasting; he takes from you what you could not hope to cling to for ever, only to give you what is eternal and shall never be taken from you for ever. p. 105

"Him you possess more completely, the more completely you give yourselves to him...~~be~~; as the apostle says, holy both in body and in spirit. And indeed it is quite certain that God gives himself to us the more abundantly in so far as we are the more generous in giving ourselves to him. p. 106

"He who walks goes forward with moderation: he does not wander aimlessly, through negligence; nor does he rush on headlong with imprudent rashness and impetuosity...Be very cautious therefore in this matter. p. 107

"I know that you are anxious about me, as I am about you, in the Lord.

"Let it not be a heavy burden on you, beloved, that I cannot all the time be with you in the flesh, for in spirit I am always with you in love unalloyed. Yet I cannot wonder that you are sad when I am far from you since, do what I may, I myself cannot but be sad ~~that you are~~ far from me; but I console myself with the thought that this separation will not last forever: soon it will be over, soon we shall be able to see one another, endlessly, in the presence of God's Son Jesus Christ who is blessed for ever, Amen. p. 108

"Be in all things confident and gay; and what is lacking to you because I cannot be with you, make up for in the company of a better friend, your Bridegroom Jesus Christ whom you may have more constantly with you in spirit and in truth, and who speaks to you more sweetly and to better purpose, than Jordan. And if sometimes he seems to turn his face away from you and become a stranger to you, you must see this not as a punishment but as a grace. He is the bond whereby we are bound together; in him my spirit is fast knit with your spirit; in him you are always without ceasing present to me wherever I may wander: he who is your Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. p. 109, 110

"Throughout the world wars and seditions rage, putting many souls in peril of eternal damnation; and do you, dear daughters, knowing this, burn the more ardently with love of your Bridegroom who has snatched you from the turmoil of the world and established you in his peace, established you so firmly that even though trouble or disease come upon you from without, the peace within you should rather be increased than diminished, so long as you are patient in all things. p. 111

"Indeed there is nothing that can come upon you whether good or adverse fortune that you should not learn to accept with tranquil mind, fixing your hearts on the Lord by whose unfailing help we can make light of prosperity and be fearless in face of adversity. p. 111

"I cannot find the time to write you the long letter your love would wish for and I would so gladly send; none the less I do write, I send you a very little word, the Word made little in the crib, the Word who was made flesh for us, the Word of salvation and grace, of sweetness and glory, the Word who is good and gentle, Jesus Christ, and him crucified, Christ raised up on the cross, raised in praise to the Father's right hand: to whom and in whom do you raise up your soul and find there your rest unending for ever and ever. Read over this Word in your heart, turn it over in your mind, let it be sweet as honey on your lips; ponder it, dwell on it, that it may dwell with you and in you for ever.

"There is another word that I send you, small and Brief: my love, which will speak for me to your love in your heart and will content it. May this word too be yours, and likewise dwell with you for ever. p. 112

"Short is our way, small our task, but infinite the repose to which, my daughters, dearest of all to me, we hasten; let us then rejoice and exult to run our course, that we may make the Lord's covenants the subject of our song while we are yet in the body, exiled from the Lord's presence in the place of our pilgrimage.

"It is through tribulations that we lay up to ourselves treasures in heaven...if tribulation is bitter it is none the less good and desirable, for it produces patience, it tests and proves the mind, it gives understanding to those whom it tries, it brings an increase of spiritual solace and lays up a copious treasure of heavenly joy for the future; whence the Lord says to those who suffer affliction, be glad in that day and rejoice, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. p. 113, 114



9.

"You must labour diligently to keep to the middle of your way and beware lest in anything you exceed, having always in mind the warning of the sage that he that is hasty, his feet shall stumble.

"I have hope that by the grace of Christ Jesus you walk always in holiness: instant in prayer, assiduous in contemplation, prompt to obey, eager to labour, slow to speak, constant in keeping silence, clothing yourselves in tender compassion, kindness, humility, patience, gentleness, charity. p. 114

"The words spoken by the friend of the Bridegroom are very different from those of the Bridegroom himself...what I write to you must be of little moment, I who, though I seem to be the Bridegroom's friend, am less even than that. p. 114

"Still, as I do fulfill that office, since he has charged me to be your bridesman; as I am jealous on your behalf with the jealousy of God himself; as I have betrothed you to Christ that no other but he should claim you; so I charge you to show yourselves worthy of his embrace, adorning the bridal chamber of your hearts to receive Christ the King who greatly desires your beauty and strewing his nuptial bed with flowers in purity of heart and goodness of conscience and faith unfeigned. p. 115

"Now these flowers are the virtues: humility is a goodly flower, patience is good, obedience is good, kindness is good, gentleness is good, all other such virtues are good: but greater than these is charity. Often and gladly will the Bridegroom come to the bridal chamber of the heart which he finds strewn with these flowers and bedecked with these ornaments. p. 115, 116

"Virtue can never grow to excess...For there is nothing in this life so perfect that it cannot be made more perfect, until we come to that place where nothing defective can find entry, where each of us will be filled with a perfection so great that he can want for nothing further, where no indigence will find room, for God himself will be superabundant plentitude to all things. p. 116

"Your petitions and those of your sisters have been made known to God to no small purpose.

"Mark well how in the gospel, when the Lord promised that he would render a hundredfold, he added, But with tribulations; wherefore we must never for a moment allow ourselves to forget that if we would receive a hundredfold we must be prepared equally to suffer tribulation. Yet shall the time come when the Lord shall repay us no longer an hundredfold but with infinitude, when no tribulation shall any longer come to you, but together we shall drink of the pure and unmixed chalice of everlasting joy. Meanwhile we must wait patiently, accepting comfort with humility and tribulation with courage, and finding both the comfort and the strength in God's Son Jesus Christ. p. 117, 118

"Soon, if the Lord grant it, we shall be able to console one another. p. 118.

Diana preceded him...They had reached, almost together, those 'shining mansions' of which they had so often thought, and for which they had so greatly longed. p. 120

"When I have to part from you I do so with heavy heart; yet you add ~~sorrow to my~~ sorrow since I see you then so inconsolably weighed down that I cannot but be saddened not only by our separation which afflicts us both but also by your own desolation as well. Why are you thus anguished? Am I not yours, am I not with you: yours in labours, yours in rest; yours when I am with you, yours when I am far away; yours in prayer, yours in merit, yours too, as I hope, in the eternal reward? What would you do if I were to die? Certainly not even for my death should you weep so inconsolably. For were I to die you would not be losing me: you would be sending me before you to those shining dwellings, that I abiding there might pray for you to the Father and so be of much greater use to you there, living with the Lord, than here in this world where I die all the day long. Be comforted then, and so act the more manfully, and be refreshed in the mercy and grace of your Lord Christ Jesus, who is blessed for ever, Amen. p. 121.

"I beg of you, as you love me, that you be not sorrowful, so that I too may be of good heart; rather rejoice in your Bridegroom Jesus Christ who is in your midst: he will console you, through his holy Spirit who is called the Paraclete or Comforter; so that, according to the multitude of the sorrows of your hearts--which now for a little time you must bear because of the divers temptations and tribulations of this present life--his consolations may rejoice your souls, till being strengthened by them and as it were drawn on by the fragrance of his ointments you come to him your Saviour in whom you shall obtain joy and gladness, and all sorrows and mourning shall flee away. So shall we be filled with the good things of his house, and dwelling therein with his blessed, his chosen ones, shall praise him for ever. p. 122, 123

"Cast your care upon the Lord; find comfort always in him, and in him learn how to triumph over whatever adversities this mutable life may bring you. Do not be anxious about me...He is our sole end: he who both guides us in our present exile and will be our reward in heaven. p. 123.

"I am not happy about what I hear of you, that you are so troubled and anxious about my illness. Would you have me taken from the number of the sons of God and be in no wise a sharer in the passion of our Redeemer Christ Jesus? Do you not know that the Lord scourgeth every son whom he receiveth? And would you not have me received among his sons? Is your zealous concern for me truly worthy? If you would have me enter the kingdom you must suffer me to travel the road that leads to the kingdom, for through many tribulations we must enter there. If this illness were to be to my hurt in any way then indeed I should be glad that you are distressed by it; but if it is good and fruitful for me, how could I want you, beloved, to be distressed by that good?

"Wherefore if you wish me to be consoled, if you wish to remove the cause of my anxiety concerning you, cast out sadness from your own heart and be more readily consolable; simply commend me to the Lord and beg him that whatever pain the future may hold for me it may be turned into a means of my correction. The good and gentle Craftsman knows how greatly the clay for his handiwork stands in need of refining: it is for us to submit ourselves in all things to his will, and leave all our ways in his hands. p. 126

"I am ready, then, for scourges, if only I may thereby reach that resting-place which is God and to which no scourge can draw near, for no evil of sin can enter there, can enter those serene and shining dwellings into which may you and I together be gathered through the loving-kindness of him who is gentle and good, God's Son Jesus Christ. p. 127

"Though I do not at the present time come in the flesh to visit you, still I am with you in spirit; for wheresoever I go I yet remain with you, and though in the flesh you remain behind, in the spirit I carry you with me.

"Bear all with patience, commending your cause to the Lord that he may vouchsafe to dispose and order this and all your affairs according to his good pleasure. Only for the danger of losing God's grace should the souls of the saints lament and be troubled; and even if the Lord were to permit this, still I would hope in his mercy that he would in other ways bestow on you yet greater abundance of his consolations; for we believe that no desolation is allowed to afflict the souls of the just in this life except for their good, so that, as the apostle says, to them that love God all things work together unto good, to such as according to his purpose are called to be saints.

"May the grace and bondage of Christ Jesus be with your spirit, beloved to me forever. p. 128

"Though the Lord has sometimes allowed you to be afflicted for a space, yet has he always in his mercy delivered you, and will do so again and will help you to the end. Only cast your care upon him, and put your affairs and those of the sisters in his hands, for he has care of you; if sometimes he puts you to the test in this way it is that he may see how much thus far you have increased in strength and how much now you are able to bear for his sake. p. 129

"As I wish for strength and good health for myself, so do I for you too, my beloved daughter, for my heart is one with your heart in the Lord; rather, that part of myself which is yourself is by so much the better part that I would much prefer to suffer anything burdensome myself than allow it to fall upon you. p. 130

"Why, beloved daughter, do I write these poor little letters to you to comfort your heart when you can find a far sweeter and more precious consolation simply by taking up and reading that book which you have daily before the eyes of your mind, the book of life, the book of the Lord's perfect law which brings life back to souls? This law, which is called immaculate because it takes away all stains, is charity: you see it writ with wonderful beauty when you gaze on your Saviour Jesus stretched out on the cross, as though a parchment, his wounds the writing, his blood the illuminations. Where, I ask you, my beloved, could the lesson of love be learnt as it is learnt here? You know very well that no letter can move the reader so vehemently to love as this.

"On this then fix the keen gaze of your soul; hide yourself in the clefts of this rock; hide yourself away from the clamour of those who speak wicked things. Take up this book, open it and read, and you shall see how the prophet finds in it lamentations and canticles and woe: lamentations for thy sorrows which he bore; canticles for the joys which he won for you by his sorrows; woe to eternal death from which by his death he redeemed you. p. 132, 133



"From his lamentations learn to have patience within yourself; in his canticles learn charity, for certainly you must love above all else him who willed that you should be a partaker in joys so great; finally, when you think that it is he who has snatched you from eternal woe, what can you do but offer him thanksgiving and a song of praise? p. 133

"See how I send you only this word writ very small; yet to a loving heart it will be long and deep enough. Do you then, my daughter, dwell on it constantly and learn from it the wisdom of the saints. p. 133

"Beloved, you know well in your wisdom how far as long as we are detained in the exile of this world we are all burdened by innumerable defects and cannot arrive at that stability which will be given us in the world to come, so that we fail to accept with equal mind all that befalls us, being sometimes too elated by good fortune, sometimes too much cast down by bad. It should not be so: since our desire is to attain to immortal life in the future we ought even now to conform ourselves in some measure to that future life, establishing our hearts in the strength of God and striving with all our might to fix on him all hope, all trust, all stability of purpose, so as to become like to him, who remains always firm and unmoved in himself. He is that secure refuge, never failing, always abiding, whereto the more we flee, the more steadfast we become in ourselves; whence it is that the saints, who had so great a trust in the Lord, were able so easily to make light of whatever misfortunes befell them.

"Do you therefore, beloved, more and more flee to him, then, no matter what hardship or sorrow may befall you, your heart will be established upon so solid and firm a foundation that it will never be moved. Think often of this and impress it deeply upon your heart. p. 134

"Your poor foot, which I hear you have hurt, hurts me too; and makes me the more anxious that you should take more care not only of your foot but of your whole body. p. 135, 136

"Salute your sisters for me. I would have them, according to the exhortation of our holy father Augustine, study tirelessly the commandments of the Lord and love them and effectively fulfil them, correcting through his grace whatever deviations therefrom they may find in themselves: let them hold fast to what is right, put away from them what is ugly, cultivate what is beautiful, preserve what is healthy, strengthen what is weak, and perseveringly keep to what is pleasing to God's Son, your Bridegroom, who is blessed for ever and ever, Amen.

"The longer we are separated from one another, the greater becomes our desire to see one another again. Yet it is only by God's will (as I hope) that so far I have been prevented from coming to you; and if this was his will, it is for us to bend ours to conformity with it. p. 136

"We must bear with patience what our God ordains for us. In every possible way he makes plain to you how in this life we are not to fix our hopes on man nor seek our consolation in mortal things; he it is whom we are to love with our whole heart and our whole soul and our whole strength, since only in him can we and ought we to find our sufficiency, in this life by his grace and in the life to come by his glory. In all things then, dear daughters, be constant and gay and prudent, that you be counted not among the foolish virgins but among the wise. p. 137

"Beloved, since I cannot see you with my bodily eyes not be consoled with your presence as often as you would wish and I would wish, it is at least some refreshment to me, some appeasement of my heart's longing, when I can visit you by means of my letters and tell you how things are with me, just as I long to know how things are with you, for your progress and your gaiety of heart are a sweet nourishment to my soul-- though you for your part do not know to what ends of the earth I may be journeying and even if you knew you would not have messengers to hand by whom you could send something to me. Yet whatever we may write to each other matters little, beloved: within our hearts is the ardour of our love in the Lord whereby you speak to me and I to you continuously in those wordless outpourings of charity which no tongue can express nor letter contain.

"O Diana, how unhappy this present condition of things which we must suffer: that we cannot love each other without pain and anxiety! You weep and are in bitter grief because it is not given you to see me continually; and I equally grieve that it is so rarely given me to be with you. p. 138

"But no: these things we must bear with patience and, so far as our daily work allows, dwell in mind and heart with him who alone can deliver us from our distresses, in whom alone is rest, apart from whom we shall find nothing but misery and abundance of sorrow wheresoever we look. Meanwhile then let us accept with joy whatever sad things may come to us; for with what measure our trials are meted to us, so shall be measured our joy, poured out on us by God's Son Jesus Christ.

"Pray for me, as indeed I know you do. p. 139

(Letters to others)

"Not without reason do I call him an angel, he who lived in this world an angelic life. He was indeed a messenger of the Lord of Hosts, speaking with the tongues of angels rather than of men, not a sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal, but a cymbal of joy, praising and preaching the Lord with his whole spirit. He was beloved by all his brethren, both because he was more beloved of God than all his brethren and because he was himself a lover of the brethren, as also of the people of Israel, which is to say all the faithful who set the Lord always in their sight.

"O my brother Jonathan, so well beloved! You were a gift to me from the glorious dove, the virgin Mary. p. 147

"As on the cross he committed his mother to the care of his disciple, so may he now, in all your sorrow, enfold you in the care of his grace.

"What shall I say of that very great charity wherewith I greatly love you in Jesus our Mediator, who makes a unity not only in mankind, of those who love one another in Christ, but between mankind and God, since he hath made both one: for at one and the same time he brought it about that God should be man and man should be God, and that man should love God in man and man in God. Beloved and ever to be loved in this love, in which he enfolds not only the angels but also the sons of Abraham. Let us then love one another in him and through him and for him; and in that same love for one another let us so run, led by him who is the way and who is the truth, that in the end we may by his bounty come to him who is also the life, and who lives and reigns in the life and kingdom of glory. p. 148, 149

"I would be instructed, and indeed compelled, by love itself to write more to you of love, but now in truth I cannot, for our beloved has gone from us, has gone far away from us, the blossom has withered and our vines shall yield no longer their sweet smell but now only bitterness; no longer is the voice of the turtle-dove heard in our land: arise then, make haste, and weep for the flower that is withered, the dove that is heard no more. p. 149

"We are not to be sorrowful even as those others who have no hope... Yet I wept gladly; my tears were tears not of desolation but of consolation; the tears not of one bewailing and lamenting the dead but of one praying with devoted mind to the living God. p. 150

"From the day when you proposed in your mind to seek and search out how you should leave wholly behind you not only your kinsfolk and possessions but even your own self you became most lovable to the Lord. Stand therefore, beloved, like an immovable column in the fear of God and in the rule; and school yourself to piety, which is the honouring of God; for piety, as the apostle says, is profitable to all things. Withdraw yourself so far as may be from idle gossipings and confabulations; unite yourself to God in the assiduous intimacy of prayer; may the beloved Jesus be your bridegroom, and the face of your beloved, chosen out of thousands, be your delight: your beloved, white and ruddy, surrounded by the red blossoms of roses and the white lilies of the valleys, the choirs of martyrs and virgins, he himself both virgin and martyr. In him seek and find your true friend; and to him commend me also, a sinner, as I rely upon you to do. Fare you well. p. 152

"The love wherewith according to God's will you sincerely and fervently enfold me in Christ brings to your mind the one thought concerning me: that I love you in return. And so indeed I do; else I would not be an imitator of him who says, I love them that love me. For this even the heathen and the publicans do, so that did I not love you I should be worse than they.

"Yet I know that it is you who love the more; and it grieves me that your love should thus be cheated. I wrong you; for a long time now you have been sowing in my soul's barren soil the seed of your love, and you do not reap what you have sown: you have sowed much and brought in little: the love you reap is much less than that which you have poured out for me in such abundance.

"But suffer it patiently: it is not to you alone that I do this wrong, but to your bridegroom Christ, whose Father the Husbandman has now for a long time been waiting to receive from me precious fruit from his precious seed: for God so loved me as to give his only-begotten Son for me. How true the love, how good the seed, that I have received from him! Yet where is the fruit? Where even a small return for a love so great? For if, Lord, you are Father also, where is the love that is your due? O accursed earth of mine, bringing forth thorns and thistles! p. 153



"This then, if you consider, must surely be enough for the handmaid, that she be as her Lord. I rejoice that I am loved by you; but my joy is less because you are less loved by me. You love fully and utterly because you think that through me you received the gift of conversion and the words of life; but I think that we had not yet come together when you were found to be with child of the holy Spirit; wherefore your love for me is all the more gratuitous, just as the confidence you repose in me in wanting to rely on my counsel is all the more abundant. But may the Angel of Great Counsel bestow on us his good counsel and his good pleasure.

"Remember that for the love of God you are become a stranger and a sojourner upon the earth, and all the more a sojourner in that your friends and neighbours are before your eyes. But the day will come when you shall no longer be a sojourner upon earth but shall have everlasting gladness with the angels in heaven, exulting and rejoicing in the choir of virgins who sing a new song which none but they can sing, being without spot before the throne of God and following the spotless Lamb whithersoever he goeth. p. 154

"The former things which shall have passed away shall no longer be held in your memory for God will wipe away every tear from your eyes.

"I will not forget thee; behold, I have graven thy image in the palms of my hands...If then he should sometimes withdraw himself from you for a little while, yet again a little while and you shall see him again. This little while may indeed seem long to you; if yet he tarry await him, for he that is to come will come and will not delay; and he will console you, he that comforteth the humble. p. 155

"I would not flatter you, now, I hope, does any among you flatter himself, though indeed it is proper for all those to rejoice and to glory in the Lord who are conscious of having trampled under foot the former death of sin and of walking now in newness of life, and who moreover refuse to make a pact with death, rising like Lazarus only to die again, but instead, having within them the seeds of immortal life, labour day by day that the spirit of their minds be again and again renewed.

"You must in no wise understand as children: you must understand the things that are above. p. 156

"It remains, beloved sons, that before all these things you must have a constant mutual charity among yourselves, for it cannot be that Jesus will appear to those who have cut themselves off from the unity of the brotherhood...he can never fully have sight of the Lord unless he is with the disciples gathered together. p. 157.