

Consoling the Heart of Jesus

A “Do-It-Yourself” Retreat Inspired by the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius

Thanks to all those who, in various ways, helped in the writing of this retreat...
especially Therese, Faustina, Philomena, and The *Theotokos*

PREFACE

This retreat puts forth a nearly unbelievable claim: *prayerfully read it, try to live it, and you will quickly become a saint. Yes you. You really can.* No, this doesn't mean all your faults and weaknesses will disappear overnight. By "saint" we mean that, if you live this retreat, you will become a *great consolation to the Lord Jesus*, a great and constant delight to Him. You will be a place where he can rest and find joy in the midst of his deep sorrow. You will "distract" him from all the abuse, coldness, and indifference shown to him in the modern world, and the knowledge of this will be *your* greatest delight.

We can make this claim with great confidence, not only because of the testimony of the saints (upon which this retreat is based) but also because of the feedback we have received from those who have already made it. Much of this feedback contains examples of tremendous growth in loving Jesus. We'd like to share some of this feedback with you. But, instead of quoting all of the comments, we will limit ourselves to speaking of just one case. The testimony of this particular woman happens to be one whose experiences have helped form this retreat and who was one of the first to make it. Her story provides a good summary of who this retreat is for and what it can do.

On meeting Janeise, we were struck by her beauty--despite the emaciation caused by her cancer (she weighed less than 70 lbs). On seeing her radiant face, we almost forgot that she was not expected to live much longer. As she propped herself up in her bed, her slow and deliberate movements made us think that she must have been in great pain. As if reading our mind she said, "don't worry, there's no pain. In fact, I've had none...physical pain that is." She proceeded to tell us the remarkable story of how she had made a special "deal" with Jesus. She said that before she was diagnosed with cancer, she "knew" it was coming and so she said to Jesus, "Alright, I'll accept this cancer Lord, but on two conditions: let me stick around long enough to see my children get married and...let there be no pain."

Well, at this time of our first meeting, Janeise had had cancer for over ten years and she said that, amazingly, that there had been no physical pain from it! She said that other people with her kind of cancer experience a lot of physical suffering; "but for me there's been none." Sure, there were other sufferings—struggles with impatience and discouragement—but none of the physical sufferings about which she said she had been so frightened before. As she spoke about this, she added that she felt ashamed of not being able to suffer as others who had cancer do and she felt ashamed for having told Jesus to keep it away.

In seeing her shame and sadness about this, we realized that the retreat you are about to read (then just only in our mind) was meant for her! We told her to not be sad for Jesus had spared her the physical pain of her illness in order to give her another gift. We explained to her that Jesus was now giving her a way in which she could still please him! We told her that we understood her fears about suffering, but that Jesus could still lead her, in his gentle way, to please him immensely. Her eyes lit up and their brightness grew as we spoke of this way of consoling Jesus and becoming a saint, despite her littleness.

It's been seven months since this first meeting with Janeise. Last night we spoke with her on the phone. Though she is getting very close to passing, she said that she is so grateful for what we told her. She said that she lives the spirituality of consoling Jesus constantly and is certain of this: it is so simple and easy to console the Lord! She spends all her time smiling at him and telling him that she loves him. From her bed, she knows that she offers to Jesus a "face" that consoles him. She offers Jesus her heart as a place where he can come and take his rest and gives him the little crosses that come from other aspects of her illness. She said that she had known the Lord before, but never as deeply as she knew him now. Indeed he is all mercy, gentleness, and love and that all he desires is a return of his love...as best as we can. She said she wishes that everyone could hear about this spirituality and granted permission to use her story here, "anything that will help people to understand this better"--how easy and important it is to console Jesus.

And so, we tell the story of Janeise for it illustrates well just who this retreat is for; it is written for those "little souls"—to use the terminology of St. Therese of Lisieux—who want to become saints despite their weakness. The retreat offers "good news" to these as it reveals a way in which they *really can become saints, and very quickly*. These are saints in the sense that they continually are a delight to the Lord's aching heart and know and love him—as many have said—"more than we ever have before."

May this retreat help you also to become a great and constant consolation to the Heart of Jesus.

CONTENTS

PART ONE: Laying the Foundation

I. Introduction	7
--A retreat with a bold claim	
II. Preliminary Points: Desire and Trust	9
--Ignatius’ path to success...Therese’s help in getting there	
III. The Great Principle of <i>The Spiritual Exercises</i>	11
--The Power of the “First Principle and Foundation”	
IV. The God-Given Principle and Foundation: The Sacred/Eucharistic Heart	14
--A 30-Day-Retreat-sized Principle and Foundation (in one shot)	

PART TWO: Living the Foundation

I. Removing the Obstacles to Consoling the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus	19
--Becoming disposed to <i>always</i> confidently come to His Eucharistic Heart	
-- Obstacle #1: Fear of Suffering —If we’re to console Jesus we may be afraid that it will cost too much, that the Lord’s demands will be too great.	
--Becoming convinced of the Lord’s gentleness and a note on suffering	
-- Obstacle #2: Our Weakness, Sinfulness, and Attachments	
--St. Therese’s “Little Way”	
-- Obstacle #3: Fear of Suffering Again —Hesitation at consoling him in the <i>best</i> possible way	
--The best, most powerful way to console him can also be the easiest and most simple!	
-- Obstacle #4: The Sensitivity of His Heart —It is so easy for those who are close to Jesus to hurt him, maybe we should keep a distance so as not to hurt him.	
--It is indeed easy for those that are closest to him to hurt him, but there is something that guarantees you will always be a consolation to him	
-- Obstacle #5: Being Too Busy	
--Getting recollected with the “Two Movements” of the Divine Mercy Image	
-- Obstacle #6: The All out Attack on Trust	
--Assessing the attack and laying our line of defense	
-- Obstacle #7: “This is it too good to be true.” (After our summary)	
--It is true.	
CONCLUSION	57
APPENDIX	65

PART ONE: Laying the Foundation

I. Introduction

--A retreat with a bold claim

The following retreat is inspired by St. Ignatius of Loyola's "Spiritual Exercises." Though it does not actually follow the usual format of an Ignatian retreat—it isn't divided into four weeks nor does it include the Ignatian contemplations—it *does* attempt to capture the essential principles which have made this retreat form so extremely successful over the past five-hundred years.

The format here has been modified from the usual Ignatian retreat so as to make it more accessible. Most people don't have 30 or even 8 days to make a full Ignatian retreat (the amount of time needed to fully experience its fruits), nor are there many Ignatian retreat directors available today. The following retreat then is meant to help those who don't have the time or resources to make a good Ignatian retreat. For those pressed for time, this retreat is to last simply as long as it takes for you to read!¹ And those lacking a director will be pleased to learn that this retreat doesn't require one. All that is needed is simply the desire to grow and the effort needed to make a prayerful reading of the text.² Although this retreat is not able to give the full experience of a truly Ignatian retreat (for this there is no replacement), nevertheless, it does claim to give one all he needs to become "a saint, a great saint, and quickly."³ Sound impossible? Too good to be true? Let me explain.

To understand how a brief and undirected retreat can make such a bold claim, one has to understand something of the spirit in which it is written. This retreat is given under the inspiration of Venerable Fr. Pio Bruno Lanteri, the Founder of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary; therefore it is written in a *Lanterian Spirit*.

Fr. Lanteri, a man on fire with Love of God and with a great desire to save souls, always wanted to find the *best* means to holiness. Like St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Louis De Montfort, he sought the *quickest, easiest, most sure* way to become a saint and to lead others to sanctity. In the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Fr. Lanteri believed he found one of the most effective ways to become a saint. He was convinced that these retreats provided one with everything needed to become, "a saint, a great saint, and quickly." Fr. Lanteri further believed that a person could be given all that is needed to

¹ Before you panic in seeing the length of this text, realize that it is really only *half* as long as it looks. The bottom half of the pages you hold in your hands are an appendix of references for the top half. This appendix doesn't all have to be read; it is simply available for reference. The appendix contains extra quotes and explanations that go with each section of the retreat which can be used for further study and/or as extra "meditation" material. See introductory note of appendix (pg. 65)

² *Prayerful reading*: During Ignatian meditation, when one experiences either consolation (increase in peace, joy, love of God) or desolation (resistance, turmoil of spirit, spiritual sloth) remaining with such movements of spirit is highly recommended by St. Ignatius. In the same way, the one making this retreat should pay attention to the "movements of spirit" that arise in the readings. One should frequently speak to the Lord about such movements: "Lord I don't understand..." "Lord, thank you for..." "Lord, I resolve to..."etc. Also, it would be helpful to have a notepad to record more significant movements and insights and to begin each reading with a prayer for inspiration and assistance. Also, we recommend, if it is possible, to do this reading before the Blessed Sacrament.

³ No, by "saint" we don't mean that a halo will begin to hover over your head and that all your weakness will disappear. What we mean by saint is...(See appendix I, #1 & # 5; pg. 65)

become thus transformed, not in 30 days (the “long” retreat), but *in only 8 days!* He had such confidence in his Ignatian retreats because he incorporated into them what one might call his “secret weapons,” the very things De Montfort and St. Therese emphasized in their “new,” “quick,” and “easy” ways; namely: *Divine Mercy* and *Mary*.

This retreat is written in the spirit of Fr. Lanteri *today*. Since Fr. Lanteri’s death, over one hundred and fifty years ago, there has been more insight into the inestimable treasures of Divine Mercy and Marian Consecration. We are thinking of the work of such Saints as Margaret Mary Alacoque, Maximillian Kolbe, Therese of Lisieux, and Faustina Kowalska as well as the personal witness and teaching of Pope John Paul II. With all these “experts” behind us, we are able to draw more “spiritual ammunition” for Lanteri’s “secret weapons” of Mercy and Mary, thereby making his retreats even better. Divine Mercy and Marian Consecration *today* are indeed special means for all to grow in holiness.

Having looked at Fr. Lanteri's threefold strategy for holiness: Divine Mercy and Marian Consecration within the context of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, and having further seen that there has been even deeper insight into these powerful weapons, we can now repeat our claim for this retreat without sounding too crazy. We claim, in light of further insights into the aforementioned 3 weapons, and even going beyond Fr. Lanteri’s original claim, that *not in 8 days but in just this one brief written retreat, you can be given all you need to become a great saint*. And furthermore, *the means proposed in what follows promise to be, not the only way to holiness, but indeed the most effective, quickest, and easiest!* In a time of unprecedented evil, we find unprecedented grace. This retreat is designed to tap into that river of grace which flows from the wide-open floodgates of heaven.

Two final considerations in light of the above claim: (1) St. Louis De Montfort prophesied before his death that his way of Marian Consecration would, after being hidden for one hundred years, become the means for forming *the greatest saints in the history of the Church!*—a truly amazing claim. We may think that there is *no way* that *we* could become such saints, especially when our weakness and littleness come to mind—but let us read the second consideration...(2) According to St. Therese, it is the “little souls” (souls like us) that will most easily become these saints! In other words, Jesus wants *us* to become these saints, impossible as it may seem to us. On this topic we will hear more from St. Therese as we continue, but following on her theme, let us close here with a quote that expresses well the kind of thoughts which inspired this retreat:

...All the means of sanctification which the preacher proposes and develops requires a strong soul...I will not profit from exercises designed for strong souls. O my God, show me the exercises designed for feeble souls [here you go!]. Would the saints have forgotten or disdained them? Yet even if the saints did not think of these poor souls, who are nevertheless most numerous, you, Lord, my mercy, have not abandoned them. You yourself, Good Master, have burdened yourself with them. I know that better than anyone. I am one of those souls and I bless you for having revealed to the weak and the little ones what you do not always accord to the valiant and the strong.” (quoted in *I Believe in Love*, 172)⁴

⁴ From now on this work will be cited as “IBL.”

This retreat is “designed” for these “feeble” and “poor” and “little ones.” Relying on the “little” giants of the spiritual life (St. Therese, St. Faustina, Fr. Lanteri, etc.) we propose an easy way for such souls to become saints. If you are one of these little ones and if you want to become a saint, then enjoy a retreat made just for you.

II. Preliminary Points: Desire and Trust

--St. Ignatius’ path to success...Therese’s help in getting there

In order to make an Ignatian retreat, a necessary precondition is having a serious *desire* to hear God and to become a saint as well as a certain openness and trust. But, in most of us, what prevents this *desire* for sanctity and the *trust* in God to “let him do it” is often a painful awareness of our weaknesses and sinfulness. We may know that the goal of our life is to become a saint, and we may understand well that “at the twilight of life there is only one tragedy, not to have been a saint” yet, because we also know our weaknesses, we feel stuck in the mud. Heroic sanctity often seems too far off and unrealistic. St. Therese of Lisieux, however, has a different look at this.

Like us, St. Therese was painfully aware of her littleness and weakness. Unlike most of us, however, she didn’t let this squelch her desires for sanctity. As we look at the lives of great Saints, we can hear ourselves saying in words similar to those of St. Therese: “Oh, my gosh! they soar like eagles, their lives are so full of heroic deeds and sacrifices! How can *I*, weak as a little bird with broken wings, attain to such heights?” But, where we might become discouraged at this situation, St. Therese found a source for courage.

Therese allowed a deep desire for holiness to well up in her heart. When she confronted the huge gap that yawned between her and the saints, rather than give up that great desire, she pressed on with boldness and found *a new way to holiness*, a way for the little and weak ones. St. Therese's discovery *changed the world* for she has made great sanctity a *realistic* goal. She opened up a new way, a “little way” for all of us. This crucial moment is recorded in her diary:

The good God would not inspire unattainable desires; I can then, in spite of my littleness, aspire to sanctity. For me to become greater is impossible; I must put up with myself just as I am with all my imperfections. But I wish to find the way to go to heaven by a very straight, short, completely new little way. We are in a century of inventions: now one does not even have to take the trouble to climb the steps of a stairway; in the homes of the rich an elevator replaces them nicely. I too would like to find an elevator to lift me up to Jesus, for I am too little to climb the rough stairway of perfection. So I have looked in the books of the saints for a sign of the elevator I long for, and I have read these words proceeding from the mouth of eternal wisdom: ‘he that is a little one, let him turn to me’ (*Prv* 9:16). So I came, knowing that I had found what I was seeking, and wanting to know, O my God, what you would do with the little one who would answer your call, and this is what I found: ‘As one whom the mother caresses, so will I comfort you. You shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees they shall caress you’ (*Is*

66:12-13). Never have more tender words come to make my soul rejoice. The elevator which must raise me to the heavens is your arms, O Jesus! For that I do not need to grow; on the contrary, I must necessarily remain small, become smaller and smaller. O my God, you have surpassed what I expected and I want to sing your mercies. (*IBL*, 16)

This summarizes St. Therese's "little way," a path which we shall travel further as we progress in this retreat. We only mention it here as a help for us to remove the obstacle which often prevents our desires for holiness and our trust from growing. This obstacle is the recognition of our weakness. Hopefully, after having reflected on the words of St. Therese, this obstacle is being removed—or rather, we're showing that it is not an obstacle at all! Hopefully, like St. Therese, we will trust Jesus to take us into his arms and carry us to holiness; then, hopefully, the flame of desire for sanctity will be able to grow within us. Let us now go with confidence to the Lord of all, the Alpha and Omega, the great I AM, and let us ask Him, let us beg Him, to make this desire explode into flame in us...

"Meditation":

Behold Jesus in front of you on the Cross. See the gentleness of his face and how he longs for you. He thirsts for you. This thirst of his is a burning ache because you do not thirst for him as he thirsts for you. Look at his face, so gentle, so loving, yet so hurting! He comes to you and thirsts that you may thirst for him. Tell him that you thirst for him, ask him to help you thirst for him more; beg him.

Jesus needs your love and he needs your help. He needs *you*. Look how much he has given to you. If you do not help him, who will? He needs YOU. He has a mission for you to help him, he'll tell you more about this, but right now just look at him and see how he thirsts for you. He specifically burns for *your* love. Please do not let him down. So many let him down. Ask him to help you to make a good retreat. Ask your Mother in heaven, "Please Mary be with me in this retreat, help me to not let Jesus down. Help me to have courage, to let go of all and to desire him." Ask the saints, ask the angels, beg the Holy Spirit and the Father to give you that thirst for Jesus, to help you burn for him who burns with love for you.

Jesus needs you to become a saint. In times past this may have seemed too difficult. But right now, Jesus is desperately needs you. He says to you, as he said to St. Therese, "I see your weakness, but be not afraid. Just trust me. I will do it. Let me do it. If you will only trust me and let me do it, *I* will make you into my little saint." Indeed, Jesus' thirst for love has become so painful today that he makes it easier than ever before for us to become saints. He gives us unprecedented graces: he himself will make us holy, all we have to do is let him. It won't be too difficult. We just need to trust him. He said to St. Faustina, "Be not afraid of your Savior, O sinful soul. I make the first move to come to you, for I know by yourself you are unable to lift yourself to Me." (*Diary*, 1485) Similarly, St. Margaret Mary writes, "His Sacred Heart will do everything for me if I let him. He shall will, he shall love, he shall desire for me and make up for all my faults." Jesus, make it happen in me. Use me Jesus, form me into a saint, and make up for all my faults. I trust in you.

So, let us hear Jesus say to us, “let me do it.” And let us behold the beautiful and simple means by which he will form us into the saints he longs for, the means which are Divine Mercy and Mary. Yes, these are the wonderful tools which he will apply to us in the context of this retreat. Before attending to the great gifts of Divine Mercy and Mary, however, it will be helpful for us to learn something about this retreat form which allows for the most beneficial use of these gifts. We will see, as did Fr. Lanteri, that some principles of the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* provide the best opportunity to “give in” to the Lord and to “let him do it,” to let him carry us to sanctity. He needs us, we need him, so let’s let him do it.

III. The Great Principle of The Spiritual Exercises

--The Power of the “First Principle and Foundation”

St. Ignatius was a spiritual genius. His genius was being able to focus in on and to communicate the essential principles of the spiritual life. I will speak of perhaps the most important of all of Ignatius’ principles, a principle that was so important to him he titled it, “The First Principle and Foundation.” Before speaking of this, however, knowing a little bit of the early history of the Society St. Ignatius started, *The Jesuits*, will help us to better appreciate “The First Principle and Foundation.”

The Early Jesuits. Anyone who knows anything about Church History during the period of the Reformation and the so-called “Enlightenment,” will have heard of the early *Jesuits*. As one examines this difficult period in the life of the Church, one can’t help but think that God needed to do something drastic in order to prevent the “gates of hell” from prevailing. God’s drastic move was to inspire St. Ignatius of Loyola to begin *The Society of Jesus*, a group of men with a corporate zeal rarely seen in the history of the world. This new religious order spearheaded the Counter-Reformation and helped save the Church. Their reputation for fervor was so great that even Lenin was moved. This founder of Communism was reported to have exclaimed, “Give me ten men like those early Jesuits and I will conquer the world!”

Indeed, the zeal of the early Jesuits was amazing, especially if one considers that they were one of the first religious orders who left the protection of the monastery and much of the support of a traditional religious community. The walls of the monastery kept the world out and the support of one’s religious family kept one’s faith intact. But a missionary Jesuit such as St. Francis Xavier left all of this behind as he ventured into the unfamiliar, unchristianized lands of Asia...alone. One would think that leaving the traditional supports of religious life for a hostile pagan world would have conquered poor Francis. But on the contrary, Francis, like many other early Jesuits, conquered the world! Francis single-handedly baptized over 100,000 people (his “baptizing arm” is still preserved for veneration in Rome) and he was eventually declared Patron of the Missions for the Universal Church. Yes, he and the other early missionary Jesuits truly set the world ablaze for Jesus Christ in a way never before seen since St. Paul. However, the question that remains concerning this amazing phenomenon is “How did they do it? What was their secret?”

The Secret of the Early Jesuits: The Principle and Foundation. The secret of those early Jesuits was the Principle and Foundation I mentioned above. This Principle and Foundation is basically a summary statement of the whole Christian Life.⁵ A few simple paragraphs present the whole of reality as well as one's origin, mission, and destiny. In short, the Principle and Foundation gives one the *goal* of his life and the *means* to attain it. It is possible, if one reads the Principle and Foundation without having been formed in the tradition of St. Ignatius, to find the Principle and Foundation dry and uninspiring. If you approach it, however, as one of the initiated, that is, as one who, for instance, has made the 30 day retreat, this Principle and Foundation leaps off the page and sets the heart pulsing with adrenaline...at least this was the case for someone like St. Francis Xavier. What got him so excited about a few paragraphs?

Two Points of the Principle and Foundation. In order to understand the Principle and Foundation, we should speak of two things: the 30 day retreat and the idea of "first things first."

(1) *The 30 Day Retreat.* A 30 day Ignatian retreat is an intense prayer experience in which one literally *experiences* the Principle and Foundation as it unfolds and is expressed in the life of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. During the course of the 30 day retreat one meditates for many hours each day, striving and begging for the grace "to know the Lord more intimately, love him more deeply, and desire to follow him more closely."⁶ During the course of the retreat, if made well, this request is granted and one "tastes the sweetness" and beholds the goodness, beauty, and glory of Jesus. So one of the main effects of the 30 Day Retreat is that it makes *the goal of one's life*, as expressed in the Principle and Foundation, *become more and more vivid and clear.*

This goal then, in the course of the 30 day retreat, becomes engrained in the retreatant. One develops a deepening intimacy with Jesus and a desire to follow his path above all others. It is this clear goal that set men like St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier on fire for God; for them, bringing the Principle and Foundation to mind was like pouring gasoline on the flames that burned in their hearts. The Principle and Foundation recalled to mind the experience in which they had so deeply encountered their Beloved.

One might think of the Principle and Foundation as a picture a soldier carries along with him into battle. When he looks at this picture of his wife and children he remembers where he has come from, what he is fighting for, and the importance of his mission. This little picture may not mean much to others, but to him, it is everything.

All of these aspects of the Principle and Foundation and the 30 Day Retreat led one of the early secretaries of the Jesuits to summarize their whole spirituality as "*a clarity that grips one and leads him on.*" In the Principle and Foundation and 30 day retreat, the goal of life is indeed made vividly clear and therefore one can follow it with enthusiasm.

(2) "*First Things First.*" This brings us to our second point, "*first things first.*" We've spoken of how the Principle and Foundation—which comes alive after a 30 Day Retreat—gives one a clear and desirable goal. Now, the principle "first things first" basically means that when one keeps his eyes on this vivid goal, the "first thing," then all else falls into place. When one chases after a "second thing" first, however, he loses not

⁵ See Appendix to read the "First Principle and Foundation" of St. Ignatius (pg. 66-67)

⁶ *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #104 (trans. Louis J. Puhl, S.J.)

only the second thing but the first as well. Jesus explained this principle in his most important sermon, “Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be given you as well.” (*Mt. 6:33*) Let’s now seek how the Principle and Foundation utilizes this...

The Principle and Foundation states “Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God and by this means to save his soul [first thing]. All other things on the face of the earth [second things] are to therefore be used insofar as they lead to this end and rejected insofar as they lead us away from it. Therefore, we should take an attitude of indifference before all created things.” Now, as you read that, what sticks out? For most of us it is the last line, “*attitude of indifference.*” Why? Probably because, for many, indifference before such good things as chocolate, race cars, and bubble gum seems unrealistic. But for those of us who don’t give up and say “impossible,” we may say, “well, if this attitude of indifference (detachment) is the means for getting to heaven, I’d better get to work.” And so we begin a grand project of trying to detach ourselves from our attachments so as to attain “indifference.” But this misses the point; yes we need detachment, but in focusing so much on detachment we’ve put the second things first (and that spells trouble). An example may help us understand this better.

Let’s say we begin our project of detachment by focusing in on an attachment. Let’s say we’re really attached to *doughnuts*...yummm. But, because we want to have Ignatian indifference, we force ourselves to let them go. Ugh! There, we’re free! But, this freedom lasts only a time. The hand which once held the doughnut begins to shake and suddenly shoots for something else: ice-cream! Or, perhaps as we begin to relax the doughnuts come back with a vengeance, wrapping themselves around our necks...Hmm. This isn’t the way to get indifference.

In striving for indifference, a sheer act of the will won’t work, at least not for any good amount of time. So, what is the “secret” Ignatius has for us here? It is that principle I’ve already mentioned: first things first, or *keeping our eyes fixed on the goal*, the first thing. It’s the principle St. Peter discovered the hard way when he began to sink into the water after he took his eyes off of Jesus; it’s the principle which can also be called the “primacy of contemplation”—the primacy of keeping our hearts lovingly on the Lord. If we stay fixed on the beauty and glory of the Lord Jesus, if we taste *his* wonderful sweetness, we’ll see he’s much better than any maple bar! If we truly behold his glory, then we’ll say with Saint Paul, “all else is dung!”; if we keep our eyes on the Principle and Foundation then, we’ll exclaim—like those early Jesuits—“all for the greater glory of God!” And well charge to our goal past dozens of doughnuts...with ease.⁷

“Uh, that’s great” you may say, “but getting such a vivid goal, such a clear insight into the Principle and Foundation supposedly takes a whole 30 day retreat! Who’s got 30 days to spend on a retreat?!” *Relaaaax*, have a doughnut, and realize that the Lord will help you.

⁷ We see this principle in everyday life. For instance, people who have a vivid and clear career goal have the strength to sacrifice all kinds of comforts to attain their goal (ever hear of medical or law school?). Well, why are we so sheepish when it comes to sacrificing for God...the *highest goal*? It may be because this goal doesn’t seem as real or exciting. The goal of this retreat is to make it very real and vivid.

The Lord understands that most of us don't have the luxury of time (nor the touch of insanity of the mind)⁸ that would enable one to make a 30 day Ignatian retreat. But, as the Church herself says, this is one of the *best* means to become a saint. Furthermore, as we saw in the beginning of this retreat, Jesus *needs* saints. We live in a time where countless souls are getting churned through the grinder of the Culture of Death, which thus makes Jesus weep ever more bitterly. Part of the poverty of the Incarnation was that since Jesus was true man, he could become man only once at one specific time and place. So, in a sense, he is helpless and relies on us; and now, more than ever, he relies on us, he needs us to become saints, he needs us to become his helpers.

So, here's a "divine dilemma": God wants us to become saints, but one of the best means, the 30 day retreat, may not be available to us. What is poor God to do? Don't worry! God is infinite Wisdom and Power, he can make things happen. He's already made the grace of a whole 30 day retreat available to us little ones in just one shot. Sound good? Read on.

IV. The God-Given Principle and Foundation: His Eucharistic Heart

--A 30-day-retreat-sized Principle and Foundation (in one shot)

It seems too good to be true...but it is. God has given us a 30 day retreat sized Principle and Foundation in one shot! That is, he will make the goal of our lives vivid and clear, which, if we keep our eyes on it, will make detachment easy. Unfortunately for you, however, I'm not going to tell you what it is in one shot. You'll have to put up with one more history lesson.

The Jansenist Heresy. Anyone who knows the history of heresy has heard of Jansenism. This was a heresy that hurt the Lord's heart more than any other and yet, sadly, it has been one of the most influential. We mentioned Fr. Lanteri in our introduction. Much of Fr. Lanteri's apostolic work was directed towards fighting Jansenism. Nobody liked Jansenism, not Jesus, not Fr. Lanteri, and I think even most Jansenists themselves didn't like it. For deep in their hearts, though they thought it true, they wished it wasn't. The devil was about the only one who loved it, after all, it hurt the Lord most.

To get a good look at Jansenism, without going through its whole history, let's go to a time and place where it was thriving: 17th Century Europe. During this time very few people received the Eucharist or were given absolution. Jansenism said that one must be perfect to go to God and so, since nobody was perfect, very few went to Jesus. So bad was this situation that in France during this time, one Jansenist-influenced Bishop boasted that not one person in his whole diocese received communion during the entire year! (and very few were given absolution). No wonder this hurt the Lord so much, he had come in the Eucharist in order that people might receive him but nobody went to receive him. Let's go into one of the Churches during this time and see what was happening.

⁸ We don't really mean insanity of the mind. © In fact, if you ever *do* get the opportunity to make a 30 day retreat, do so! As we said in the beginning, *nothing* substitutes for the full 30 or 8 day experience of the Spiritual Exercises. (Contact the *Oblates of the Virgin Mary* for more information—they "specialize" in giving these retreats.)

As we go into this particular Catholic Church we make our genuflection before the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. We look around, it all seems normal...no, wait...what's that in front of the tabernacle? What the heck?! Somebody has placed a big painted sheet in front of it. What's that image on the sheet? Yikes! It's a pretty scary face of a bearded man. He looks angry and about ready to smack us! Hey, that's supposed to be Jesus! Yep, those Jansenists have been at it again, they go around painting these ugly pictures before the tabernacles, making everyone believe that Jesus is just out to ruin all our fun and make us unhappy. See how the people come into church and cower and even secretly despise the Lord in their hearts? This must be tearing Jesus apart in the tabernacle. How can he bear it? He can't.

Jesus "Snaps." While Jansenism was scaring everyone away from the sacraments and poisoning people's image of Jesus, there came a time when even Jesus—capable of bearing seemingly infinite suffering—couldn't take it anymore. He was overwhelmed. Have you or your brothers and sisters ever neglected your mother, forgetting to show her gratitude for all she does for you? Have you ever seen your mom snap? Sure you have. Do you remember how horrible you felt, how you wanted to get her flowers and make it up to her? Well, Jesus who had been so neglected by his children, like a forgotten mother, snapped. Yes, overwhelmed with sorrow, in his meek, humble, and gentle way, the Lord snapped. Here's how...

In his deep sorrow at being so neglected, Jesus looked for someone who would take pity on his aching heart. From the tabernacles, Jesus cast his sorrowful gaze out on all of Europe seeking to find a true friend. Eventually, he found one—a poor little nun named Sr. Margaret Mary. To this blessed soul, Jesus released an ocean of anguish as he disclosed his Divine Heart. Appearing on the Cross he said to her in a voice full of sadness and grief:

There it is, that Heart so deeply in love with men, it spared no means of proof—wearing itself out until it was utterly spent! This meets with scant appreciation from most of them; all I get back is ingratitude—witness their irreverence, their sacrileges, their coldness and contempt for me in this Sacrament of Love.

And on another occasion, the Lord appeared from out of the exposed Blessed Sacrament with a similar message. Sr. Margaret Mary described the encounter:

Jesus Christ, my kind Master, appeared to me. He was a blaze of glory—his five wounds shining like five suns, flames issuing from all parts of his human form, especially from his divine breast which was like a furnace, and which he opened to disclose his utterly affectionate and loveable heart, the living source of all those flames. It was at this moment that he revealed to me the indescribable wonders of his pure love for mankind: the extravagance to which he'd been led for those who had nothing for him but ingratitude and indifference. "This hurts me more," he told me, "than everything I suffered in my passion. Even a little love from them in return—and I should regard all that I have done for them as next to nothing, and look for a way of doing still more. But no; all my eager efforts for their welfare meet with nothing but coldness and dislike. Do me the kindness, then—you, at least—of making up for all their ingratitude, as far as you can."

Here it is. In these revelations, the Lord Jesus gives us a power-packed Principle and Foundation in one shot: His Sacred Heart.⁹ He says to us, “Behold this heart which loves so much, yet which is so little loved...do me the kindness, you at least, of making up for all their ingratitude.” Yes *you*. At least, you. Let’s look and see how and why this can be the foundation of our whole life so that we, like those early Jesuits, can be set ablaze with love.

According to Holy Mother Church, the center of the universe and the center of our lives ought to be the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, “the source and summit of our Faith.” She goes on to teach us that this Sacred and Eucharistic Heart contains all the mysteries of the Faith in summary and adds that devotion to the Sacred Heart is not optional but *mandatory* for all Catholics.¹⁰ Then, when we realize that the Sacred Heart and the Eucharist are one and the same, it becomes clear why the Eucharistic Heart is a fitting Principle and Foundation indeed.¹¹ If you want to discover yourself, to know who you are, where you’ve come from, where you are going, and what your mission is, look at that Eucharistic Heart—see it *as it truly is*.¹² Let us explain this point further.

Jesus as he truly is in the Blessed Sacrament. Remember what the secret of the early Jesuits was? They always kept their eyes fixed on the Principle and Foundation as their vivid goal which gripped them and drove them forward. Well, now if we look at the Eucharistic heart, not as the Jansenists saw it—with a picture of a mean face in front—but as it truly is, then we will be filled with zeal like those men who set the world on fire. Simply a glance at this heart can release in us a huge torrent of love and strength.¹³ But, we’ve got to see him as he truly is! It’s not just a piece of bread there, it’s the Lord making an urgent plea for help. Let’s see how the Eucharist can unleash the torrent of love in us by starting with an example.

Imagine your best friend is sitting in a chair before you. Picture him there, overcome with grief. He is so distraught he sways back and forth and looks as if he will collapse to the floor. What is your response? Do you say, “oops, sorry to interrupt, I’ll see you when you feel better (so you don’t bring me down with you).” No, hopefully none of us have such cold hearts. Instead we probably would not even have to think about what to do, we would *automatically* fly to our friend. We would embrace them, hold them, and console them. Something clicks in us—it becomes a matter of not what

⁹ See Appendix IV for more info on the Sacred Heart (pg. 67 and following).

¹⁰ Specifically see Appendix IV, #4 (pg. 76).

¹¹ That the Devotion to the Sacred Heart and Ignatian spirituality go together was pointed out by the Blessed Mother herself when, on the Feast of the Visitation in 1688, she entrusted its propagation to the Jesuits. She said to St. Margaret Mary, “If it is given to the Daughters of the Visitation to know and distribute it (the devotion), it is reserved to the Fathers of the Society (of Jesus) to show and make known its utility and value so that people may profit from it by receiving it with the respect and gratitude due to so great a benefit.” Later many popes have highlighted this role of the Jesuits. And also, because Fr. Lanteri and his Oblates of the Virgin Mary adopted St. Ignatius’ spirituality, Fr. Lanteri, in whose spirit this is retreat is written, would have accepted this role as well.

¹² As it truly is means to hear Jesus reveal his heart, a heart full of love yet also sorrow: “Behold this heart which loves so much, yet which is so little loved.” See Appendix IV, #7: “On the Sacred Heart as containing the Revelation of Jesus as he truly is” (pg. 79). See also the three aspects of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament (pg. 48).

¹³ See Appendix IV, #6: “On staying ‘fixed’ on the Sacred Heart” (pg. 78).

we should do but what we *must* do. When we see our friends in such a state, if they really are our friends, our instant response is to hold them and console them.

Well, if this is the response we would make to our best earthly friend, what response should we give to our *greatest* friend, to the one who loves us more than any other can, to the one who has given us every good gift, to the one who we now realize suffers *right now* in the Blessed Sacrament with the most painful sorrow of all?¹⁴ What is our response when we hear him say, “Behold this heart which loves so much and yet which is so little loved”?¹⁵ Once again, if we really see the situation, our friend overwhelmed with sorrow, then our response should be automatic...“Jesus, I *must* help you!” That’s how we should respond to being before his Eucharistic presence.

There is Jesus in the Monstrance, a “prisoner” there for us. See how people come and go. Many ask for something, “Jesus give me this, help this situation, remove this cross, etc.” and then they leave. The Lord Jesus who is so good and kind, readily and happily gives and gives to them. But then someone like St. Therese the Little flower comes and looks deeply into the face of Jesus as he is present in the Blessed Sacrament. Let’s see what the response of a Saint is before Jesus’ Eucharistic Heart.

As St. Therese comes before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament she looks deeply into his Eucharistic Heart. She sees that this man who gives and gives and gives is tired, sorrowful, and is himself in need of help and consolation. She doesn’t first ask him to give to *her*, she asks him what she can do for *him*. An amazing turn!

As little Therese gazes on the Eucharistic face of the Lord, she sees that Jesus is not like a machine where one puts in a coin and automatically gets graces; Jesus is a person. Jesus is a man who has feelings and a very sensitive human heart. She sees that it hurts Jesus when we are cold, ungrateful, and afraid of him. Little Therese decides that she wants to console Jesus’ aching heart which is so neglected.¹⁶ Like Therese, why don’t we—we who have been given so much by this good and gentle Savior—yes, why don’t we look more closely at him.

Our visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Behold Jesus in the Monstrance again, see him as he truly is, that is, see him as he reveals himself: “Behold this heart which loves so much...” Yes, look at that heart. See this first movement of the revelation, of how much Jesus has given to *you*. See how he has created you, saved you from death, given you your family and friends, and every good thing. Look at your life

¹⁴ See Appendix IV, # 3: “Regarding the Questions, ‘How can Jesus still be suffering? Isn’t he happy in heaven?’ (pg. 68) **This is probably the most important part of the appendix. At some point everyone making this retreat should read and meditate on at least the part of this section that deals with the words of the mystics. Understanding this point, that Jesus is sorrowful and in need of consolation, is fundamental for the spirituality of this whole retreat.**

¹⁵ Looking at the Eucharist and hearing these words is the springboard to our Principle and Foundation which is consoling the heart of Jesus. With regard to these words, Pope Pius XI says that they “should be graven on the hearts of all pious souls so as to never be forgotten.” (*Miserentissimus Redemptor*)

¹⁶ It is significant to see here St. Therese’s “personalism” and its link to the “revolutionary” part of her doctrine. For instance, the discovery of her little way came from realizing that because Jesus has a *human heart* and, like all human hearts, there must be *secret ways* to it (she found one of these secret ways: being childlike and little). Here we find that it is in Therese’s contemplation of Jesus’ humanity that she discovers that he is hurting and she is bold enough (and loving enough) to see that Jesus needs someone to console him. Later we shall see just how easy this is to do.

and see how much he has given *you*. “Behold this heart which loves *you* so much.” What a tremendous friend!

But now feel the second movement. Let him whisper to you, “Behold this heart which loves so much...*but which is so little loved.*” See the pain the Lord suffers in the Blessed Sacrament. See how so few come to him, love him, and want to be his friend. Do you see the Lord? Do you see how very *simple* he is?

A person is complex and complicated if he has all kinds of desires. A person is very simple if he has but *one* desire. Jesus is so simple, he has only *one* desire and it is a desire that can only be properly described as a *thirst*. He thirsts for love. He thirsts for *your* love. But, because this one desire of the Lord is not satisfied, because his love is rejected, a second aspect of Jesus is very easy to understand: he is a man of sorrow. Yes, Jesus is both so very *simple* and so very *sorrowful*. The words of the Psalmist apply to him: “Reproach has broken my heart and I am cast down. I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none.” (Ps. 69:21) Who are we, what are we, if we do not have compassion on such a tormented, childlike, innocent heart which looks for us to comfort him?

Yes, let *us* at least respond to him. Let us lend an ear to his sorrow and give him rest. Let us listen to his sad and soft complaint: “Behold this heart which loves so much yet which is so little loved.” Let us hear him cry out as he hangs on the cross, “*is there anyone who will console this heart? Is there anyone who will have pity, is there anyone who will be my friend?*”

What is our response to this? What do we say when we see his sorrow and he asks if there is anyone who will console him and be his friend? Well? What is *your* answer? *Say it*. Yes, let us be his friends. Let us decide right now that we will console our friend. What are we if we don’t respond? Let us respond with a strong *yes*, “*yes I will console you Lord, I will be your friend.*” Decide it. Tell him your answer. Like St. Francis of Assisi we should be weeping because, “Love is not loved!” Let us be his friends, let us console him. Is this your decision? Do you decide that you will be his friend, that you will console him? If so, then your Principle and Foundation has become to look at his Sorrowful Eucharistic Heart and say “Here I am Lord! I come to console you!” In short, **your Principle and Foundation is to Console the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus which is so sorrowful.**¹⁷ If this is your decision, to console Jesus, then let us continue to the second part of this retreat which will explain to us *how* this can be done, *how we can console Jesus*.

¹⁷ The Principle and Foundation of this retreat has two parts the *goal* (which is what we have highlighted in bold-type above) and the *means* to that goal or the *how* of consoling Jesus—treated in Part II of this retreat. To read the full Principle and Foundation of this retreat (both goal and means) see pgs. 66-67. Now, don’t forget the Principle and Foundation above! We’ll be quizzing you on it soon!

PART TWO: Living the Foundation¹⁸

I. Removing the Obstacles to Consoling the Heart of Jesus

--Becoming disposed to *always* confidently come to His Eucharistic Heart

So, our Principle and Foundation arises as we 1) Look at the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, *as it truly is*, and hear him say, “Behold this Heart which loves so much, yet which is so little loved...Is there anyone who will console me?” 2) Our automatic response to this should be, “*I will console you Jesus.*” This is our response, right? Right. O.K., so we tell Jesus that we want to console him, and then he says, “Oh, thank you...then that means you will perform acts of REPARATION, right?”

Screeeeeeech! Perhaps that’s where the brakes go on. “Uh, Lord I’d love to help you and be your friend and all buuuut, uh, I don’t know about this reparation stuff. It sounds like there is a lot of suffering and sacrifices and all and, as you remember from the beginning of this retreat, I told you I’m one of the weak ones.” Perhaps this is what part of us is saying...and so we come to the first obstacle in living our Principle and Foundation of coming to console Jesus: fear of suffering. But, don’t worry, for the Lord says, “Be not afraid. Listen. I am meek and gentle of heart.”

To get past this first obstacle, we must be convinced of the Lord’s gentleness, we must be assured that he is more gentle with us than we are with ourselves. Remember, according to St. Therese, those he is calling to a close friendship and to the mission of consoling his heart will be the weakest ones. He himself will gently lead them. So, let’s address this very important point of learning to trust the Lord. Perhaps we do not trust him because of a fear of suffering.

Obstacle #1: Fear of Suffering

—If we’re to console Jesus we may be afraid that it will cost too much, that the Lord’s demands will be too great.

--Be convinced of the Lord’s gentleness and a note on suffering.

1. The Lord’s Gentleness

Joe’s Story. To illustrate this point of the Lord’s gentleness, We’d like to recount the experience of a young man during his 30 day retreat—we’ll call him “Joe.”¹⁹ Joe had begun his 30 day retreat with a lot of enthusiasm and zeal to become a saint (an important disposition for beginning an Ignatian retreat, as we’ve seen). However, for all his zeal and desire, he did not have that second important disposition we mentioned above—namely, trust.

Joe was like those who look at the Principle and Foundation and put all their emphasis on the attitude of indifference (letting go of the doughnuts). In doing this, he put his eyes not on the goal, but mostly on the means, and tried to attain this means

¹⁸ As we said, “Part Two” of this retreat focuses on the second half of the “Principle and Foundation.” The Principle and Foundation has two parts: the goal and the means to the goal (once again the summary of the Principle and Foundation is on pages 66-67 of the appendix). In Part One of this retreat, we looked at the goal. Now we shall look at the means to this goal within the context of dealing with obstacles to the goal.

¹⁹ Yes, “Joe” is a real person and the experiences which are related really happened.

(indifference before all created things) by his own will-power. Now, remember what we said: If all the focus is on the will, it will not work. For this reason, Joe had a difficult time during much of his retreat, despite the Lord's entreaties to trust. He himself recounted, "yeah, the Lord kept warning me, 'my son do not go ahead of me and do not fall behind, but walk *with* me, let me carry you.'" Joe couldn't trust, he had to do it his way; and so the evil one was able to cause him a lot of trouble. Joe's will power could only take him so far.

In the midst of his struggles, however, Jesus did not abandon Joe. Jesus kept pulling on his heart. Sometimes Joe would listen, sometimes he would not. It was an up and down time for him, yet gradually he began to place himself into the Lord's hands with trust and the retreat worked its wonders. He began to taste the sweetness of the Lord Jesus and his goal became very vivid and clear. However, on the last day of the retreat Joe regressed back to his lack of trust; as usual, the Lord did not abandon him.

Imagine the scene: Joe had just spent 29 days in silence, prayer, and penance. It was a beautiful time with the Lord when he trusted, but a difficult time when he didn't. He had made much progress on the retreat, but as he came to the last day and to what was supposed to be the most transporting, exhilarating, and ecstatic moment of the whole retreat: "The Contemplation to Attain Divine Love"—he struggled again.

The Contemplation to Attain Divine Love begins with two considerations. St. Ignatius writes, "The first is that love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than in words. The second is that love consists in a mutual sharing of goods, for example, the lover gives and shares with the beloved what he possesses...Thus, one always gives to the other." After reading these considerations, already some hesitation began, but Joe continued.

Joe came next to one of the first points of the contemplation, "This is to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the many blessings received, that filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve the Divine Majesty." It was after reading this consideration that Joe put on the brakes. He hesitated and began to be paralyzed with fear. What do you think might have caused this hesitation?

As he read the preliminary point, "...ask for an intimate knowledge of the many blessings received," Joe said that all the many and tremendous blessings the Lord had given him flooded his mind. This terrified him. What would God ask for in return? He realized, as the two considerations had made clear, that "those to whom much is given, much is expected." It seemed that the rest of his life would have to be one big crucifixion in order to appease God and make a return for all the good that God had done for him (it's amazing how the evil one can put such irrational thoughts into our minds). So Joe hesitated and seemed unable to go on. But here the Lord intervened.

In what we are going to recount from Joe's experience, one must understand that if anyone gives God 30 whole days of intense prayer and spiritual exercise, God *will* speak. It was in this last contemplation that Jesus spoke more clearly to Joe than he had in the whole retreat. Jesus had suffered through his hesitation and lack of trust and could not take it no longer. So, as with St. Margaret Mary, he "snapped." Jesus spoke to Joe who was still stuck and full of distress; Jesus spoke in sad but gentle and consoling words:

“Joseph, Joseph, haven’t I shown you how gentle I am with you? Haven’t I only shown you kindness? Why do you fear? Look at your life, have I ever allowed anything that you couldn’t handle?” Joe had to admit, “No Lord, all you have shown me is mercy and love and the tough times were just when I went off on my own.” Jesus continued, *“Joseph, all I want...”* he had all of Joe’s attention, “Yes Lord?” *“All I want is for you to be my friend...All I want is for you to not be afraid of me, to trust me, and to come to me.”* “That’s all Lord?” *“That is all.”*

Joe’s experience here is good for us to remember when we begin to encounter the obstacle of fear, particularly fear of suffering. Let us not hurt the Lord by our lack of trust. Let us realize how simple and gentle he is. He will not give us more than we can take, *“...haven’t I shown you how gentle I am with you?”* Keep in mind that Jesus has been abandoned by so many of his children. In his great thirst for love, he is desperate for friends, he is longing for those who will just come to him and give his heart rest. Remember, we have decided to console Jesus and he is not outdone in generosity, he will help us and in a sense make everything easy. Think of his words, *“...have I ever allowed anything that you couldn’t handle?”* and think also of his words from the Gospel, *“Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart, for my yoke is easy and my burden light.”* What I will continue to explain is just how *easy* and *simple* it is to console the Lord’s heart. There is nothing to fear, keep your eyes fixed on his heart. We will see how easy and simple this task of consoling the Lord’s heart is as we tackle a second obstacle which prevents us from coming to the Lord. But first...

2. A Note on Suffering

Fear of suffering tends to come up a lot for those who strive to console Jesus; after all, those who want to console Jesus commit themselves to making reparation, and reparation often involves suffering. At the risk of focusing too much on this “second thing” we will look at suffering as it really is, a *means* to consoling Jesus, not an end in itself. We deal with it here because our enemy often inflates this “second thing” so much that it becomes “larger than life” and threatens to block our view of the first thing. Our hope in focusing on it here is to deflate it down to its true size so that we will see that there is nothing to fear.

St. Theresa of Avila says that the biggest obstacle to a soul reaching perfection is...*fear of suffering*. Are you afraid of suffering? Do you shy away from the Lord? Do you avoid coming to him? Do you hesitate to draw close to his Eucharistic Heart because you have heard him say, “If you wish to be my disciple, you must take up your cross and come follow me”? As we spoke of the danger of focusing on the words “indifference” in the Principle and Foundation without seeing the goal, so too, we sometimes focus too much on the cross without seeing Jesus. But with the cross always comes Jesus and *with Jesus the yoke of the cross is indeed easy and the burden light*. Let’s get rid of a few misconceptions about suffering.

For those who want to console Jesus, there is no way out of suffering, and without being a friend of the cross, we cannot be a friend of Jesus. Nope, there is no getting around that—the “Little Way” we have spoken of above is *indeed* a “Little Way...of the Cross.” Ah, but don’t get sad about that (perhaps you aren’t...but some are—often the little one’s for whom this retreat is written are tempted in this way), for suffering is the lot of every person, not just Christians. We must be very clear about something: the “Culture of Death” puts up an illusion; it pretends to offer a way of ease, comfort, and

pleasure, as if we can escape suffering. Paradoxically, however, *that life is the much bigger cross*. Just as in the Christian life there is no escaping the cross, so too with life in the Culture of Death. To run away from the cross that Jesus holds out for us is to run into a cross that is overwhelming. We mustn't be fooled by the illusion the Culture of Death puts up—*the human condition is a life of suffering*.

But the “Little Way” is a most beautiful one because it can make this inevitable life of suffering sweet. Literally. Jesus takes what is most bitter in this life and transforms it so that it can become our heart's desire. For as our desire to console Jesus becomes greater and greater, our love for suffering, (yes, a love for suffering!) will also grow—since it is a way of consoling Jesus! But don't worry if this sounds far off, Jesus takes us where we are, he leads us at our own pace in his “school of love.” He knows we are little. He simply needs us to trust him. Still, we might need more convincing...

This idea that suffering can become a joy as we grow in holiness is confirmed by the words and faces of the saints. Look at their faces. Despite their often heavy crosses (and in some ways, because of them!), they have peaceful, joyful faces—compare these faces to the sad faces of those who are having so much “fun” in the Culture of Death. Yes, it is true, suffering can bring joy, even if we ourselves may not understand it yet. We may not be fully convinced in our hearts that suffering brings joy, but we know there is some truth in it. How can we get to that point of total conviction? How can we learn to “love” suffering?

Ah, once again, we must be reminded not to look so much at the means (suffering) but the end (Jesus). If we stay fixed on Jesus, if we live with him in the present moment, *he* will make all a joy. By staying fixed on him, we will find joy in all things, but especially the cross because that is where he is most present. By staying fixed on him, he can bring us to love what we thought unlovable. We won't see the change, it will just happen. Remember, Jesus says, “let me do it.” He will carry us through his school of love if we let him. So, the moral of the story: stay fixed on Jesus, trust him, live the present moment, and he'll carry us along the way of the cross (the “little way” of the cross).

Our Friend Joe again. This is all basic stuff about suffering...but it's amazing how easily we forget! Jesus had to teach our friend Joe this lesson in part of his 30 day retreat.

In what is called the “The Third Week” of the 30 day retreat, Joe was having a really tough time. The Third Week is that part of the 30 day in which one follows the Lord through his passion. Now Joe, full of zeal, had forgotten that he was to follow the Lord through his passion. The Lord had warned him as this week approached, “Joseph, don't run ahead of me, and don't lag behind...walk *with* me.” But, Joe forgot this warning. When the week of the Lord's passion began, he hit a wall as he realized that he couldn't keep up with the Lord's suffering (duh.). The Lord saw him hesitating and said to him, “*Joseph, you must make a decision right now...will you walk with me into the darkness?*” Joe, so afraid of the darkness of the passion—which he had already begun to feel—yet also seeing the beauty of the Lord, mustered up the response, “Yes Lord.” The Lord replied, “*then take my hand and walk with me into the darkness and keep your eyes on me.*” Joe did, and—as with all responses of faith—something amazing happened; the dreaded “Third Week” became the most beautiful part of the whole retreat.

As Joe walked with Jesus through the passion, keeping his eyes on him, he was amazed at just *how much Jesus was suffering*. No wonder all the Lord wanted was for somebody to hold his hand through such darkness (it would have been too much to bear alone!). So, there he was consoling Jesus through the bloody scourging, the mockery, the abuse, and on the way of the cross. All Jesus wanted, as he would remind him at the end of the retreat, was a friend and companion through such darkness; all Jesus wanted was for someone to hold his hand, to love and thank him for what he was suffering for us. Seen in this way, Joe was happy to endure his own little sufferings (the effort it took to meditate, his tiredness, etc.) but these little things were nothing compared to what Jesus suffered. Still, that was not a cause for anxiety, for what Joe couldn't provide in terms of consolation for Jesus, others could.

After one meditation in the middle of the night—where the Lord was in the cold, dark cistern awaiting his trial before Pilate—Jesus told Joe to go to bed. But Joe was afraid that the Lord would be left alone in all that suffering. It was then that Jesus revealed to him that a little Carmelite nun was going to him right then for a Holy Hour somewhere else in the world and that she would now help him to endure his suffering. “*Joseph, you're not strong enough yet to remain so long in this school of love; take your rest my son—look, another one of my friends has come. Thank you for being with me.*”

Therese and Faustina. In Joe's experience, we see that our suffering is *nothing* compared with that of Jesus. Yet, we also saw *how important it is to try and be with the Lord as best we can in his suffering*. St. Therese emphasizes that the Lord doesn't want great suffering from us but great love. He knows we are little, he just wants us to accept the suffering we have, uniting it to *his*. He doesn't ask for much—amazingly it doesn't take much to console him! Even our little sufferings give him tremendous consolation when they are embraced with love for him and united to his sufferings. This is why a part of the Little Flower's spirituality can be described as “doing *little things* with great love.” She didn't feel that she could give Jesus very big sacrifices so she did little ones and by uniting them to *Jesus'* sacrifice, they became infinite. Do you see how this is beginning to deflate the notion of suffering that our enemy often presents? Hopefully this false picture of suffering, and how much we must endure will be deflated more as we look to St. Faustina and the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

Jesus taught St. Faustina a very powerful prayer: the Divine Mercy Chaplet.²⁰ St. Faustina, like Therese, was a “little one,” but in the chaplet Jesus taught her to unite her own *little* sufferings to his infinite sacrifice on the cross, “Eternal Father I offer you the body and blood...of your dearly beloved Son...” When Faustina did this she discovered something amazing: in light of Jesus' passion a tremendous power was available, she could ask the Father for *anything* and with a *bold* confidence. She didn't have to do huge sacrifices herself, she could simply unite her little sufferings to those of Jesus. By uniting her own sufferings with those of Jesus, Faustina could ask for *huge* graces for her country and the whole world; and indeed, the Lord Jesus granted Poland and the whole world immense graces because of these powerful prayers of just *one* trustful soul.

Remember how in the beginning of this retreat we said Jesus would help us, well, he has! Do you see how this concept of relying on Jesus sufferings is so helpful? Look at it this way: sometimes we are not as bold in our prayers as Jesus would like simply

²⁰ For instructions on how to pray the Mercy Chaplet, see page 97.

because we know, for instance, that souls are bought only at the price of suffering. Since our sufferings or willingness to sacrifice may be limited, we don't ask for *huge* graces. Deep down we may be afraid of what it may cost us. But who are we fooling? How much suffering would we have to do to merit the salvation of souls? We are nothing and can merit nothing on our own...but, if we unite our *little* sacrifices to Jesus with confident love, we have infinite merit! So, all Jesus needs from us is confident petition: beg him for conversions, graces, everything! He loves this humble confidence. He longs for souls that will pray like this. Now, we dare you to ask Jesus, with great confidence, to make you and us great saints...rely on *his* merits! That's the secret.

Now, after having dealt with an obstacle to boldness in prayer related to suffering, another difficulty might arise. As we wrote of St. Faustina and St. Therese as being "little" souls capable of making only "little" sacrifices, you may have thought, "wait a minute, they didn't just have nice "little" crosses, heck no! They suffered *a lot*."

Yes indeed, both Faustina and Therese suffered a great deal. But, the Lord himself raised them in their littleness to this great strength, "power reaches perfection in weakness." They were given a particular vocation of suffering that corresponded with their love *and* littleness. The Lord himself helped them advance by their *little* sacrifices made with great love. Eventually, their little sacrifices weren't so little. But it was he who gently led them to *graduate* in his "school of love." Faustina and Therese always remained little through all the grades that Jesus carried them through.

We who may still be in the first grade of the "school of love" (a school of the cross) must not look at graduates like Faustina and Therese and then get discouraged. The Lord knows where we are and what we can take. He is a perfect and gentle schoolmaster and his first advice to his students is to pay attention to the lesson at hand, to not look ahead in the book (of course we can't do the algebra in chapter 20 while were sill struggling with adding and subtracting). Yes, the devil will try and discourage us and get us to look ahead. But, we must stay in the *present moment*, we must keep our eyes on our teacher and do the simple work at hand. And yes, if an advanced problem comes up, (even if we ourselves bring it on) our teacher will himself help us and take the problem on himself. Of course, we can even do calculus with the assistance of such a teacher! So, there is nothing to fear! Have humble confidence (even before differential equations!) That's how little ones progress, by keeping their eyes on the master! He'll have pity and carry us along the way.

As we begin to close this section, let us repeat that suffering is inevitable, yet with Jesus it becomes sweet and takes on great value. This is because offering up our little sufferings (and they are all little compared to the Lord's suffering) console Jesus and when they are united to his they bring tremendous grace and mercy on the world. As St. Paul says, "I make up for what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body the Church." (*Col. 1:24*) That is, our sufferings—when united to the Lord's—are redemptive. We would like to close on this note...

Jesus loves us so much that he allows us to *participate* in his redeeming action in the world. Remember what we said in the beginning, Jesus *needs* us; in a sense he needs our suffering to be united to his in order to win souls. There is a great mystery here for, of course, Jesus' suffering is objectively enough and available to all; but not everyone

accepts the Lord's grace and Mercy. So this is where our suffering and bold prayer mysteriously come in.

There is a mysterious "respect" that the Lord has for human free will; that is, he will not and cannot force us to choose him and love him. Yet, when one of his creatures uses their free will on behalf of another, somehow they can influence the free will of that other. How this happens we do not know, but because of this influence we creatures can have on each other, Jesus and Mary constantly tell us to pray for sinners. Think of Our Lady of Fatima who was so sad because, as she said, many souls go to hell because there is nobody to pray for them. Why is our role so important? We don't know, but it is. Our prayers and little sacrifices really do have a great power to move souls. So, let us go to his Eucharistic Heart with great confidence, let us beg for the conversion of sinners with *boldness* for we have united all of our little sufferings with those of Jesus. Let's go to the Eucharistic heart and *boldly* ask for graces on sinners, praying to the Father in words such as these: "Father, behold the suffering of your Son, I lift him up to you. I may be weak and may not have much to offer myself, but Father, your Son's merits are infinite. So, behold, in light of your Son's sufferings I ask you Father to save all those sinners who have nobody to pray for them. Yes, Father, I believe that your Son's merits can do this."

So, we're on our way to Church to make this bold prayer, we step inside and...shucks, another obstacle arises before us...

Obstacle #2: Our Weakness, Sinfulness, and Attachments

--St. Therese's "Little Way"

Have you ever had the experience where, when it came time to pray—say an hour of Eucharistic Adoration or a Rosary—you found yourself dragging your feet? Perhaps as you went into the church to have this time of prayer you found yourself curiously interested in the many pamphlets or messages on the bulletin board in the vestibule. Perhaps the announcement: "Bingo Thursday Nights" held your attention for the first time. Or maybe as you went into the Church and knelt down to pray you found your mind racing to other plans and activities...to anything but prayer. Of course distractions in prayer are common, but have you ever experienced those times when you were actually seeking those distractions so as to avoid Jesus? Why do we do this? Why do we sometimes avoid the Lord?

These times when we have an impulse to avoid the Lord seem to come most often when we have been unfaithful—perhaps more unfaithful than usual. At these times, we may be ashamed and do not want to come to Jesus; we may be afraid of what he might say, that he will be angry; we may be too full of pride to want to humble ourselves; and so, we'd rather be distracted. For those who want to console the Lord's heart, however, this will not do, for avoiding Jesus deeply pierces his Sacred Heart. *Hasn't he shown us how gentle he is with us? What are we afraid of?* This is an important obstacle which all those who want to console the Lord's Heart must strive to remove. Thankfully, we have a tremendous help in this task in St. Therese the Little Flower.

Weaknesses. Our weaknesses can often prevent us from coming to Jesus. Weaknesses are our imperfections and inability to do things that we would like to do in the spiritual life. For instance, we may desire to be patient, gentle, and kind but—despite

our resolutions and efforts—we may find ourselves not being as loving as we'd like. Month after month we may confess the same venial sins²¹—we can't seem to be able to overcome them! Some begin to get discouraged about this and either give up altogether or let these imperfections get in the way of drawing close to the Lord. Though they still pray, part of them is hiding from the Lord whom they see as looking a bit like the Jansenist portrait. St. Therese is remarkable because rather than get discouraged with her weaknesses, she loved them and tells us to love them too! What?! Is this not the height of spiritual sloth? Nope. Let's see what St. Therese means.

The Little Flower loved her weaknesses because they 1) kept her coming back to Jesus and 2) they drew Jesus to her. St. Therese's weaknesses *made her go to Jesus* because, even though she herself says she was full of weaknesses, nevertheless, she knew that Jesus always had his arms open wide for her when she fell. She had an automatic response of flying into the Lord's arms whenever she stumbled. The Lord loves this not only because he loves when his children throw themselves into his arms, but also because it protects them from that most damaging of vices: pride.

Sometimes the Lord allows us to have certain weaknesses because if we were free of them he knows we would get puffed up which would be something much more dangerous than littler weaknesses. So, like St. Therese, though we should never stop striving for perfection, we must be convinced that the Lord loves us *as we are, weaknesses and all*. We mustn't fall into the Jansenist trap that says we can only come to the Lord when we're perfect. Heck no, St. Therese was just the opposite, the Lord loves us where we are!—which is often in his arms because of our constant falls. The words of our Lord to a famous mystic express this well, “Yes, My beloved, even your falls comfort Me. Do not be discouraged, for this act of humility which your fault drew from you has consoled Me more than if you had not fallen.”²²

So convinced was St. Therese that Jesus loves us *as we are*, that she went so far as to say that our weaknesses are not just reasons for us to fly to Jesus, but they also *attract Jesus to us!* Remember her image of being a little bird on the ground with broken wings? If we look up to the Lord in our helplessness with a humble confidence, he cannot resist reaching down and picking us up! This may not seem *fair* to those strong souls who seem to soar on their own after great effort, but such are they mysterious laws of love. For some reason, Jesus is drawn to humble confidence. For some reason, the younger children in the family naturally get special attention.²³

Now, someone, in looking at St. Therese's teaching that Jesus loves us *as we are* might say, oh, that is easy for St. Therese to say, for she *really* was so holy...I'm not! It

²¹ It is important to know the distinction between mortal and venial sin. Mortal sin is that type of sin which kills the divine life in our souls. Therefore, if we die in mortal sin we die cut off from the Lord and are unable to go to heaven. This type of sin is therefore infinitely more serious than venial sin. Therefore, the Lord's attitude and your own must be different with regards to this most serious type of sin. This sin is a matter of *eternal* life and death. There is no playing around with mortal sin, it must be rooted out of our lives immediately. See the Catechism of the Catholic Church for more on this (#'s 1854-1864).

²² See this quote and others like it for this section (Obstacle #2) on pages 77 and following in the appendix!

²³ We think part of the mystery of this is that love, when it encounters suffering, poverty, and helplessness is called mercy. Since Jesus *is* infinite mercy--God's greatest attribute--we help him to love in the way he loves best when we present to him our weakness and brokenness. As he says to Josefa Menedez, in doing this “you give me the joy of being your savior.” See John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *Rich in Mercy*.

still seems unrealistic that I can have that confidence and love for God. This type of objection Therese actually received from one of her sisters. Here is her response:

“I am not at a loss to answer you...How can you ask me if it is possible for you to love God as I love him? ...Ah, I feel certain that [my desire for holiness] is not that at all which is pleasing to God in my little soul. What pleases him is to see me love my littleness and my poverty. It is the blind hope which I have in his mercy....There is my only treasure. Why should this treasure not be yours?

“Oh, my darling sister, I beg you, understand your little one. Understand that in order to love Jesus, to be his victim of love, the weaker one is, with neither desires nor virtues, the more one is fit for the workings of this consuming and transforming Love. The sole desire to be a victim suffices, but one must consent to remain always poor and utterly weak.” (*IBL*, 42)

Sinfulness. Despite Therese’s answer to the objection, a problem may still remain. One might point out that when we’re talking about “weaknesses,” those things that we don’t have much control over, St. Therese makes perfect sense. But what about our sinfulness, those things we do *voluntarily*? There’s a difference between falling asleep in prayer unintentionally and actually deciding that we’d rather take a nap than attend Sunday Mass. Such sins are another story, right? How can that which by its very nature crucified Jesus be a consolation to him? Sure St. Therese can say “What pleases him is to see me love my littleness and my poverty...” but would she include our sinfulness? In answer to this, not only St. Therese, but many saints and mystics like her tell us that yes, even our sinfulness and our willful attachments can become an occasion to console Jesus. What?! St. Therese begins to tell us how.

St. Therese tells a story to illustrate her little way of humble confidence. She describes two daughters each of whom does something horrible against their loving father. Now, when the father’s footsteps are heard in the hall, one of the daughters runs away and hides. The other one, instead of running away when the father enters the room, leaps up into his arms and confesses all her sins. The father loves both of his daughters, but one has broken his heart while the other has consoled it.

St. Therese resembles this daughter who jumps into her fathers arms when she says, “...even if I had on my conscience all the sins which can be committed, I would go, my heart broken, to repent and throw myself into the arms of Jesus, for I know how much he cherishes the prodigal child who returns to him...” On another occasion, shortly before her death, St. Therese makes a similar astonishing statement, “...if I had committed all possible crimes, I would still have the same confidence, I would feel that this multitude of offenses would be like a drop of water thrown into a flaming furnace.” (quoted in *IBL*, 18)

We will always be stumbling and falling. We must accept that while striving to avoid sin. However, when we do fall, even voluntarily, we must have that attitude of the daughter who jumps into her father’s arms with childlike confidence. We sometimes forget that this is the most pleasing thing to the Lord; when we come to him with confidence despite and even with all our sins, weaknesses, and attachments. But because

this is something we often forget (and may even find hard to believe²⁴), it will be helpful to recount some important words the Lord spoke to various mystics on this point.

To Josefa Menedez, a Mexican mystic of the last century, who's writings were promoted by Mother Theresa, Jesus revealed much about his Sacred Heart. He spoke to Josefa of the flames of love that burn in his Heart. He said that these flames of love burn him because he longs to heal and forgive sinners, but—and this is a big theme in his revelations to St. Margaret Mary, St. Faustina, and the writings of St. Therese—he says that very few people come to him and ask for forgiveness. For this reason, he speaks of how this rejected mercy stays in his heart and burns it, causing him excruciating pain. It is within this context that we can understand his words to Josefa when he asks her to tell sinners “*It gives my heart rest to forgive.*” And for those that come to him and pour out their hearts to him confessing all their sins and weaknesses he says, “*you give me the joy of being your Savior.*” Amazing! So our sinfulness, when we cast it into the flames of his heart, actually gives Jesus *rest* and *joy*! Elsewhere he continues to teach Josefa this important lesson saying,

I am Love! My heart can no longer contain its devouring flames. I love souls so dearly...My Heart is burning with desire to attract souls to itself in order to forgive them. Still, I wait all night and watch in the Tabernacle for that soul...fervently hoping that he/she will come and receive me...That she will converse with Me with all the trust of a bride...telling me of her sorrows, her temptations, her sufferings...asking my advice and begging for the graces she needs for herself or others.

We must be convinced of the fact that when we place our sins in the furnace of Jesus' Sacred Heart, it makes the flames of love there explode into an ever greater conflagration! When we empty our sinful hearts before Jesus, it gives rest, it makes him love us even more, and it gives him the joy of being our Savior! He waits and longs for this in the Tabernacle. Let us realize what a value there can be in this “kindling” which is our sinfulness. When you produce some of this fuel, rather than get discouraged, cast it into the flames of his heart. Never weary of this, for he never wearies of forgiving. Let's remember this as we read a Rosary meditation from *Come to Me in the Blessed Sacrament* which summarizes for this for us:

Like fire that transforms everything into itself, here in the Blessed Sacrament Jesus transforms everything to good in the fire of His Divine Love, drawing good out of evil, drawing a greater good out of a greater evil, consuming even our very faults and failures (like straw thrown into a burning furnace) and using them to make us more human and to bring us even closer to His divine Heart. “In my weakness, I find my strength.”

Attachments. Having spoken of confidence in weakness and even a way to console Jesus with our sins, there is yet another area that falls under the “second obstacle” we have been discussing: attachments. These too can be an area in which we

²⁴ People can get stuck with a subtle pride as they respond to the Lord's invitation to be embraced by his mercy and forgiveness, “no, I can't allow him to do that, I've been too bad, too unfaithful. I've got to be punished more.” This attitude, however, doesn't punish the person so much as it punishes the Lord who has already paid the infinite price for us on the cross so that we can *so easily* leap into his arms. When people say, “its too cheap to just go to confession after what I've done.” It's not cheap, it cost the Lord dearly.

need not be afraid and where we can actually become a consolation to the Lord's heart. To begin treatment of this subject, I ask you to recall what we said earlier about the Principle and Foundation and the notion of putting "first things first."²⁵ Let us briefly review the main point of this aspect of the Principle and Foundation.

The main idea of "first things first" is the "primacy of contemplation," that is, if we stay fixed on the beauty of the Lord, his glory, and his goodness we will automatically and with a certain ease let go of our attachments; we will begin to have that attitude of indifference. Without this "primacy of contemplation," this staying fixed on the Lord, it is difficult to understand the paradoxical statements of Jesus: "If you wish to be my disciple take up your cross and follow me...[but also] my yoke is easy and my burden light." When we keep our eyes fixed on our loving Savior, *the cross can become easy*. When our eyes stay on Jesus and not on ourselves and our attachments, we forget the pain. In a way then, all is easy if we stay fixed on the Lord. The Gospel scene of Peter walking on the water illustrates this. So long as he had his eyes on the Lord, he could walk on water, he could walk above all the trouble; but as soon as he took his eyes off the Lord, he began to sink. So let us remember this primacy of contemplation as we deal specifically with attachments.

Often we do not come to the Lord because we have attachments and are afraid that the Lord will make us get rid of them. We may be clinging to the "doughnuts," clenching them tightly to our breast. Does the Lord say to us, "well, you had better stay away until you are ready to let go of those doughnuts"? No, that's the Jansenist picture, the idea that one has to be perfect to come to the Lord. Contrary to this Jesus says, no he pleads, "Come to me." "But Lord, I'm so attached to this or that..." He beckons, "Come to me." He just wants us to come to him. And when we do come, to our surprise, he may often tell us, "No, you are not ready to let go of those doughnuts, but just come to me and be with me. Console my heart, hold my hand in my sorrow." So there we are, clenching the doughnut with one hand and holding the Lord's hand with the other. No, it's not perfect, but that's the way it often goes with his little ones. This hits upon an important insight of St. Therese.

Come as you are. One way of summarizing St. Therese's whole attitude before the Lord is "childlike confidence." St. Therese came to the Lord *as she was*, weaknesses and all. She came also with a great confidence in his love and in the knowledge of how *easy* it is to console such a simple and gentle Savior.

This is very important to remember as we strive towards holiness. For, sometimes as we look at the lives of the saints, we are confronted with how much more conversion needs to take place in our own lives. This can be discouraging, but not for little Therese. She always kept the ideal before her eyes, nothing less than a total transformation for Jesus and into Jesus, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Mt. 5:48) But she was also honest with where she was and how far she was from the ideal. She looked to Jesus and had confidence that he would scoop her up, weaknesses and all, and carry her to holiness. She kept her eyes on him, told him all her weaknesses and struggles, but then told him in her boldness, "Jesus, you do it. Jesus, if my desires aren't your desires, change my desires into your own. Alas, dear Jesus, I am too weak to

²⁵ See page 12.

even change my desires, but you can make my desires your own! Do it Jesus.” He will. He can’t resist such humble confidence.

When we confidently come to the Lord as we are, attachments and all, it is important to listen, but to listen with a discerning ear. The evil one may try and whisper thoughts that are disturbing, thoughts that ask for a total renunciation of everything all at once. But, the Lord doesn’t speak like this, as St. Ignatius says in his rules for the discernment of spirits, rather, he speaks in *peace* and in a *gentle* voice. He can see the big picture of our life and he knows what steps we must take to get to our goal of being with him in heaven. We are usually in the dark regarding the path he is leading us on. Often what he wants isn’t the huge renunciation but a much smaller step. And in fact, in his wisdom, if we follow this little step, we gain strength to let go of things we would have thought impossible to let go of. Jesus guides his little ones according to “little steps,” but we must come to him, take his hand, and listen to him. We must try and come with peace and confidence so that we can hear his instructions.

Still, there *are* times when the Lord does want his little ones to let go of something that we cling to very tightly.²⁶ But, here again, there is no need to be afraid, this divine physician is very gentle and can make the surgery easy, if we will only trust him. When we are fighting with some attachment that we really must get rid of, as always the Lord beckons, “Come to me.” We come hesitatingly to him clenching the attachment with all our might. Yet, with a glimmer in his eye and a smile, he keeps beckoning, “Come, come, come closer.” We come to him and we look at him, we look at the attachment and we look at him. Slowly he is breaking the strings of the attachment, we may not even realize it. An analogy might help us understand this. If it helps, great! If not, forget about it.

Have you ever played fetch with a dog? You throw a ball and the dog retrieves it. Sometimes when the dog returns, however, he doesn’t drop the ball. “Drop it,” you say, but the dog doesn’t drop it. You then may try and grab the ball from the dog’s mouth but often it doesn’t let go and maybe even growls. If that happens what do you do?

If the dog won’t drop the ball, try getting down there with it, pet it real nicely. Speak to it, “Aw, nice doggie, yes, goood dog.” As the dog begins to wag its tail and relax, grab the ball without him noticing and pull it out with quick and easy jerk. It works like a charm. That’s how the Lord seems to work with us. What?! Well, look at it this way...

When we come to Jesus in the Eucharist he showers us with his love and his peace and all the while, in his great mercy, he secretly works in our hearts. After some time, without us realizing it, he holds what he has just “pulled from our mouth.” There it is, in his beautiful hands, or rather, there it is as it’s burning up in the flames of his Merciful Heart...*that dirty old ball covered with spit!* Weird analogy? Yes. But there’s some truth to it. The moral of course is trust the Lord, come to him and he will help us become detached with a certain ease.

Trust the Lord. Come to him as you are, presenting all your weaknesses and attachments and don’t worry. With some things he’ll say, “nope, you’re not ready to get rid of that” but please, just sit here with me and console my heart which hurts so much.

²⁶ He will *always* want us to let go of something that is grave matter (grounds for mortal sin). If some attachment involves mortal sin, Jesus will want it out *immediately*. What we’re talking about here are attachments to that which is not grave matter. (see footnote #21)

At other times, as we present that which we don't want to let go of he might begin by saying, "aww, nice doggie..." But again, don't worry! With regard to these things be honest with him, you can even say, "Heck Lord, I *know* I'm not ready to let go of this...but if you want you can change my desires for it." Don't worry, that's not a "cop out," in fact, Jesus made a somewhat similar prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Father let this cup pass from me, but not my will but Thy will be done." So, trust him, put it all before him.

Now, hopefully many of the obstacles that prevent us from coming to Jesus and therefore prevent us from consoling his heart are getting removed. So, let's use this time to come to him once again and renew our commitment: 1) Look at his heart as it is—"Behold this heart which loves so much, yet which is so little loved." See his sorrow. And then 2) Let's decide again, "We *must* console that Heart!"

Now, go back to the first movement of (1), see how much the Lord has given you. I suspect that you making this retreat are one who has been given much more than most (I know that most people don't make retreats and, unlike you, most people don't have such a solid Principle and Foundation--if they have one at all.) So, all of us have been given a superabundance of graces just from the fact that we're making a retreat. In looking at 1 and 2 of our Principle and Foundation then, and in light of the superabundant goodness the Lord has shown us, we should not just want to console Jesus partly, but *completely!* He's given us so much, let's be generous with him! What do you say?!

Let's give an enthusiastic response to Jesus. Look at him there in the Blessed Sacrament; he's so hurting, if we don't become his friends, who will? Let us decide, "Jesus I want to be a great consolation to your heart, I want to console your heart in the *best possible way.*" How about it? We know we can trust him, we know he is gentle with us and that *he* will do it in us, so why hold back? Let's seek to give him *the best* consolation possible! Are you with me?! Good...Then let's get started...yep, time for some good 'ol REPARATION. Oooo, there's that word again. Maybe we *don't* want to console him in the *best possible way*, maybe we can just be content with consoling him in a mediocre way. No! that may do more harm than good. No, let's remember again the maxim of the Lord's gentleness (see section 1 of Obstacle #1 again if you forgot), and let's inquire into the *best* way to console Jesus, our best friend. If we're generous with him, he'll be generous with us. He's not outdone in generosity!

Obstacle #3: Fear of Suffering Again

—Hesitation at wanting to console him in the *best possible way*

--The best, most powerful way to console him can also be the easiest and most simple!

It will be helpful to deal with this obstacle in two parts. In the first part, we'll see how this best possible way to console Jesus is so simple and easy. In the second part, we'll become amazed at just how powerful it really is. In looking at the first part, which we shall now begin, St. Faustina will be a big help to us.

1. The "Best" Way is the Simplest and Easiest

If we want to console the Lord's heart in the best possible way we should first ask, "well, what is hurting his heart the most?" If we can remove or counter that thorn

which pierces his heart most deeply we will thereby console his heart most deeply. So, what hurts the Lord Jesus' heart most? Was it the nails that were driven through his wrists on Calvary? Or is it perhaps all the many sins that are committed today in the Culture of Death: abortion, child abuse, etc.? Indeed all of these sins tear and pierce Jesus' heart. But, to St. Margaret Mary and more particularly with St. Faustina, Jesus reveals a deeper pain: *lack of trust*. What hurts Jesus most is a lack of trust in his Merciful love *and this most especially when those closest to him do not trust*. As with the the revelation of the Sacred Heart, this revelation of what hurts him most gives us a glimpse into the deep sensitivity of the Lord. We may begin to understand this sensitivity if we reflect on a particular scene from our Lord's passion.

Picture the Lord in chains as he is brought from the Garden of Gethsemane and led to the house of the High Priest. He is treated roughly and led into a dark and stuffy room, the room of his trial. The priests and elders, all of whom the Lord loves and is praying for, condemn Jesus, mock him, beat him, pull his beard, and spit in his face. Yet even with all this abuse, the greatest pain for the Lord in this trial is that his love is being rejected.

Briefly, the violence pauses. In the flicking light of the torches, you can see the deep sadness in the Lord's sullied face. Then, as you gaze on him, the Lord's downcast eyes close in pain and you hear a faint groan issue from his mouth: once, twice, a third time. Jesus is so overcome with agony, he almost falls over. You ask him with surprise, "What's the matter Lord, what has just caused you so much pain?" He replies with deep sorrow, "My friend Peter just rejected me three times."

Indeed, what hurts the Lord's sensitive heart most deeply is when those that are closest to him reject him and do not trust him. This is why Peter's denials—our denials—hurt him so much; this is why, when Judas came to betray Jesus with a kiss nearly an hour before, that kiss so blistered Jesus' cheek. The Lord can hardly bear it when any of his creatures do not believe in his love, but when his friends doubt his love...that is too much.

To St. Faustina, a true friend, Jesus tried to present at least a faint glimmer of the pain he suffers when a soul that is supposed to be his friend doesn't trust him. It is as if a mother had seven children, all of whom didn't trust her, rejected her, and ran away. Try and comprehend her suffering; this would not be even close to the pain Jesus suffers when we don't trust him. In all of this we can perceive some of the deep sensitivity of the Lord. It is so easy to hurt him.

The good news here, however, is that if it is so easy to hurt the Lord in the greatest possible way, it is also so easy to console him in the best way. It is easy to see why; for if what hurts him most is a lack of trust, what do you think consoles him most? That's right! Trust. But, it gets a bit more complicated than this, for what does this trust mean? An answer to this come from an expert on Divine Mercy, Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, who lives and works at the National Shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

On a visit to the National Shrine, one young man explained much from this retreat to Fr. Michalenko. What follows is his account of this conversation with Fr. Michalenko:

I asked him, "Father, it's all about consoling the Heart of Jesus, isn't it?" "Yes," he said. I continued, "And we want to console that heart in the best possible way, right?" "Yes." "And the best way to console him is to remove the thorn which hurts him most, that thorn

which is a lack of trust in his Merciful Love.” “Yes!” “And so the best way to remove that thorn and to console him is to trust him, right?” “That’s right,” he said. “Great,” I thought, “it’s all about trusting Jesus.” But then he said, “And how do you *live* that trust? What is its *concrete* manifestation in your daily living?” I was stumped. “I don’t know,” I said. His reply changed my life. He said, “the way you live that trust is by *praise and thanksgiving*. In all things to praise and thank God, that is what the Lord said to St. Faustina.” Wow, I saw that this was true, for I remembered how Mother Theresa would always speak about the importance of *accepting*: accepting everything with a smile, with praise and thanksgiving. This is the way of *abandonment, acceptance, and childlike trust*. This is St. Therese’s “Little Way.”

So the best way to console Jesus’ heart is with trust. And, according to the expert, the *best* way to live this trust is with an attitude of praise and thanksgiving—the way of acceptance and abandonment. Given the great value of this aspect of the “Little Way” for consoling Jesus’ heart, it will be useful to examine it more closely (especially for we who have consoling Jesus as our Principle and Foundation).

This “Best Way” is that of TRUSTFUL SURRENDER²⁷

The way of trustful surrender is quite simple: 1) one daily offers himself with confidence to God and 2) he then accepts everything as coming from God’s fatherly hands. After making this offering, one is then free both to understand and live St. Theresa of Avila’s famous prayer, a summary of the Little Way: “Let nothing disturb you...”

This way of trustful surrender in its concrete details means that we let nothing disturb us and that we continually praise and thank God for everything. When “good” things come (by good things, I mean those things that make it easy to praise and thank God), praise and thank God for them. For instance, for a good meal with the family, for beautiful music, for a wonderful scene of nature...praise and thank God! But then, when God sends the cross, praise and thank him! See the cross for what it is, a loving gift sent from your heavenly Father meant to draw you closer to him. The beauty of this abandonment regarding the cross is that as a “little ones,” we are too weak to choose our own crosses and so God himself picks them for us. And he picks just the right ones for us, not too heavy, not too light. Knowing this, it is easier to accept them and to praise and thank God for them.

It becomes easier to praise and thank God for crosses when we realize, as we said, that God has hand picked them for us, for our growth in holiness. Something else that St. Therese pointed out also makes it easier to accept our crosses. She saw that the whole business of sending crosses is “difficult” for God. He is like a mother who takes her child to the doctor to get a shot. The mom doesn’t want her child to have to go through the suffering, but it is for his own good. It hurts her more than it hurts her child—it is something like this for God.

St. Therese described God as “covering his eyes” when he hands us the cross. It is painful for him. But we can help console God if we accept it as it truly is, a gift that emerges from the depths of His love for us. St. Therese went so far in wanting to console God as he distributed these crosses that when God sent her a cross, she tried to hide from him the fact that she suffered!

²⁷ Also called the “Way of Abandonment,” “Childlike Confidence,” and “Humble Confidence.”

Realize the value of this way of trustful surrender. In all that has been said about praise and thanksgiving (consoling the Lord with our trust), we are speaking of the greatest possible way to console Jesus! This is amazing if you think about it. It is so easy compared to what we might have thought it would have entailed. We see how REPARATION isn't so scary...even this, the *best* form of reparation! See how easy Jesus has made it for us to please him! An event in the life of St. Faustina, recounted by her biographer, sheds more light on all of this:

Before she was to begin her annual retreat, Sister Faustina went to ask her spiritual director if she could practice certain mortifications during that time. To her disappointment, Fr. Sopocko gave his consent only to some of her requests.

When she returned home, she went to the chapel for a moment and there she heard in her soul:

There is more merit to one hour of meditation on My sorrowful Passion than there is to a whole year of bloody scourging; the contemplation of My painful wounds is of great profit to you, and it brings me great joy. I am surprised that you still have not completely renounced your self-will, but I rejoice exceedingly that this change will be accomplished during the retreat.

In this quote, Jesus shows us that what gives him the greatest joy is simply when we are *with him* in his passion. This doesn't mean that we ourselves have to endure the passion as he did, but simply that we be with him, that we meditate on his love. This is worth more than a whole year of "bloody scourging." Jesus himself highlights that there is a primacy to just being with him in his passion.

On this point of how easy it is to console Jesus, it is further interesting and illuminating to ask, "What is the one *concrete, daily* practice which Jesus asked of us through his revelations to St. Faustina?" Guess. What do you think it might be? Most people don't get this...it is the 3:00 hour. Jesus asked that our lives *always* be marked with deeds of Mercy, but *specifically* he asked for something special during the "3:00 hour." Did he ask that at this time we grab a scourge and whip ourselves? No, he didn't ask that we endure his passion, but that we be with him during his passion, that we hold his hand and keep him company in his sorrow. This is very simple. All we need to do is come to him, be with him in his passion, and joyfully accept the little sufferings he gives us as gifts. He wants our trustful smile at the foot of the cross.

In order to make this point of how best to console him even clearer, Jesus requested something else of Faustina. Along with the 3:00 hour devotion, he also asked that a painting be made: The Divine Mercy Image. This painting is a stark contrast to the Jansenist painting we ran into before. In the Divine Mercy Image, Jesus comes toward us with rays of love and mercy issuing from his heart. On the bottom of this image, Jesus asked that a simple prayer be attached: "Jesus I trust in you." Can you guess why he would have wanted this particular prayer? It is easy to answer this when we remember that Jesus' heart had been hurting him so very much because of a lack of trust. Jesus asked for this prayer because this is what gives his heart the most relief. It is as if Jesus were deathly ill with a painful heart condition and he gives us, his friends, a prescription which will relieve him of his agony. The prescription is the Divine Mercy Image with the prayer "Jesus I Trust in You." Will we have mercy on him and fill that prescription? Will we give him our trust, our praise and thanksgiving, a smile in all circumstances? This is what consoles him best in his suffering. "Jesus I trust in you."

Now, since we have hit upon that which consoles Jesus best, and since this is our Principle and Foundation, it will be profitable if we do a short meditation which will help us begin to put this attitude of trust into practice. Just as Jesus offered us the Divine Mercy Image, we offer another image: Jesus on the cross—the traditional image that can bring the idea of trust and coming to the Lord with confidence in his passion to a more concrete level. After presenting this image and meditation, we will investigate the tremendous power that comes from this “little” and “simple” action of consoling Jesus.

A Summarizing Image for Consoling Jesus with Trustful Surrender: The Crucifixion

We are at the bottom of Calvary, also known as the hill of Golgotha. Look up the hill, see the Lord at the top hanging from the cross. He doesn't see us yet since he is surrounded by a huge crowd of people.

The great multitude who surround the cross are laughing at Jesus. They are mocking him and performing all sorts of unmentionable sins right before his face. They aren't afraid to come to him; no they come right before him, spit on him, and pull his beard. The Lord loves them but his heart is being torn to pieces because they reject his love. He feels totally forsaken.

There are many dark shadows going in and out of the crowd. These are demons. They are enjoying stirring up the crowd to mock and torture Jesus more. Now, seeing us at the bottom of the hill, some of them begin to slither right up to us. One of them postures before you trying to intimidate you. He hisses at you, “You jussst ssstay right where you are and everything will be jussst fine.” Another dark shadow gently nestles on your shoulder and whispers in your ear:

“You don't belong here, don't you have other things to do? You don't need to see this, this is too painful, after all, you are the reason for this. Don't you have some important business to take care of, isn't that Television show you like so much going to start soon? Go ahead, take your mind off this, there's nothing you can do. Look at the multitudes. What difference is your being here going to make?”

Thoughts begin to go through your mind, “Really, that little shadow may be right. What am I among so many? Jesus won't notice if I go home. He will never know I was here. Besides, it's cold and he'll probably be dead soon anyway.

And so you stand at the bottom of the hill. The crowd is fearsome, this demon is frightening. Do your sins discourage you? Perhaps you have lost your “right” to be here since you have sinned so much; and really, what can one person do amid the multitude? And so you hesitate, stuck at the bottom of the hill, while Jesus suffers alone.

What was that? Did you hear it? What is such a beautiful voice doing amid so much blasphemy and devilish laughter? Who is that? A woman whispers in your soul:

Listen, put it into your heart, my dear little child, that the thing that frightens you, the thing that afflicts you, is nothing: do not let it disturb you...Am I not here who am your Mother? Are you not under my care and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms. Do you need something more? Let nothing else worry you or disturb you...²⁸

²⁸ Our Lady of Guadalupe's words to Juan Diego.

Mary is with us. Let us go with confidence to the foot of the cross. Let's run there, nothing can harm us, *Mary is with us!* She will teach us what to do. Let's go and console Jesus with the heart of Mary.

With this new courage, we run up the hill. Demons are cast aside as if by some invisible force as they scream in horror. One cries out, "Noooo, don't let them! Everything will be ruined!" The ugly mob parts like the Red Sea and some are silenced. We run to the foot of the cross. Look up. Behold that heart which loves so much, yet which is so little loved. Jesus still doesn't see us yet. His sorrowful gaze still falls on the crowd. His soft groans continue.

We turn to Mary, "Mary, what do we do? We are so weak, we too have hurt Jesus and have caused this. What can we do?" We look at this beautiful woman who smiles at us through her tears. In her gentle and sweet voice she instructs us, "Just tell him, tell my Son that you love him. Thank him for what he is suffering for you right now. Smile at him, give him what you can, I will help you, I will hold you up to him."

Mary takes you into her arms and lifts you close to the beautiful, broken face of the Savior. He is in a daze and still does not see you; he just sees the abuse. You take his gentle face into your hands and direct it to your own. Finally, his eyes meet yours. You smile at him and tell him, "Jesus look at my face, look into my heart...I love you. Jesus I praise you. Look at me, look at my life, see what your passion has done for me. You are saving me Jesus! I love you. Thank you Jesus, thank you for what you are suffering right now. Thank you for my little crosses. Jesus, there is nowhere else I'd rather be right now than gazing on you and thanking you." As you speak, kiss, embrace, and sing praise to the Lord, Mary joins in with you.

These acts of love take the Lord by surprise. He was longing for love and he has found a return. The demons are howling and grinding their teeth, but they are a million miles away. In this one moment, as you come to Jesus as you are, you *distract* him from all the abuse, rejection, and sin which his Eucharistic Heart is enduring.

Of course, Jesus still feels the pain of rejection and sin, but as he looks from the cross and sees your confident love, as this love pulls him away from the circus of abuse which surrounds him, he says to you what he said to St. Faustina while she consoled him in his agony...*"I wish I could suffer more."* Yes, as he sees you there, it is all worth it to him. This is what he has been waiting and hoping for, now his suffering is mysteriously relieved as he continues, "...*you are a delight to my heart...at last I have found some rest. My child, I have found rest in your heart. Thank you for being with me at this hour.*"

These words are the greatest consolation that those who dedicate themselves to consoling the Lord can ever hear; and we can be assured that Jesus always says words like this when we come to him with confidence. *We must be convinced that our little acts of love and trust give delight to Jesus.* We may not always be able to hear him saying this, but we must believe he does—if we do believe this, coming to the Lord is our constant joy. May you find that joy always as you visit him and carry this crucified one in your heart. May you also realize just how powerful your consoling smiles are for the whole world...They may seem little, but they amount to *a lot*.

2. This Simple and Easy Way is VERY POWERFUL

It is helpful at this point in our retreat to realize just how important the mission of consoling the heart of Jesus really is. In many ways, this is the most important work we

can do in this life. And yet, this work is not very complicated—it doesn't take a whole involved apostolic project—it begins when just one person makes a decision that they want the goal of their life to be being a friend to Jesus by seeking to console his heart. This is an earth shaking event for it brings momentous effects. To show this, let's look to the example of St. Faustina.

Faustina was a rather normal woman. Actually, she—like St. Therese before her—could more properly be considered a *little* one. She came from a poor family, had little formal education, and a number of weaknesses. Yet, God “who lifts up the lowly” chose her to show what he can do and what he wants to do with all of us little ones, if we will only let him. Jesus once said to her,

“You see what you are of yourself, but do not be frightened at this. If I were to reveal to you the whole misery that you are, you would die of terror. However, be aware of what you are. Because you are such great misery, I have revealed to you the whole ocean of My mercy. I seek and desire souls like you, but they are few. Your great trust in Me forces Me to continuously grant you graces. You have great and incomprehensible rights over My Heart, for you are a daughter of complete trust.”

We too must have this trust, this *bold* trust. Jesus seeks and desires souls like this, but they are few. Why are they few? It can't be because only a few are strong, for Faustina herself was weak and full of “great misery.” So why are they few? They are few because few give Jesus their complete trust. That is what he needs, that is what he wants. And why does he so desire trusting souls? One reason is because a trusting soul is one that doesn't often hurt him with lack of trust. But, more importantly, a trusting soul can console Jesus for many, many others who do hurt him with lack of trust.

As we saw in the image of Jesus on the cross above, just *one* person full of trust can make Jesus forget about *all* the abuse he receives at that time. As St. Faustina put it, this is to become “a mist before the eyes of Jesus” so that he does not see the terrible crimes of world. Do we realize the power of this?! If you come to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament full of trust *you* can make him forget the abuse he receives! Yes, he will still feel the rejection and abuse he daily receives, but it will be like nothing to him as he says to you what he said to Faustina when he saw her confident love, “*I wish I could suffer more.*” He does say this, he will say this to you...listen.

So let us come frequently to distract Jesus, and *not* make him have to constantly distract *us*. Too often Jesus has to distract *us* from the horrible abuses which bring us to discouragement. How often do we watch the news or hear of so much tragedy and sorrow and become dejected. How often do people get frustrated, bitter, and angry over problems in the Church? This attitude won't cut it, however, if we wish to live up to our decision to console the Heart of Jesus. We need to decide to strive to distract *him*. He's tired enough to have to continually pull our gaze back towards him. Let's give him a break. Let's distract *him*.

And as for getting discouraged about the situation of the world today, one priest gives us the proper perspective:

Some are astonished when they see the number of unbelievers, the number of pagans, of impious and impenitent sinners in the world, compared to that of the faithful. There is a surprising disproportion there which is hard to explain. One might wonder whether the Redemption has not failed after all.

I think Divine Providence has permitted this (I purposely say permitted and not willed) in order that fervent souls may live the apostolic spirit in a better way, with a greater desire to save unfaithful souls, seeing how many there are, and that they may share even more the thirst of Jesus on the Cross and his heart which goes out to the multitude. And then because his chosen souls, his privileged, his elect, will love him with a greater love, Jesus himself will have mercy on others. You see your responsibility! (*IBL*, 107)

So, you making this retreat, you are among these chosen ones—“see your responsibility!” Always look at Jesus, see the abuse he endures (“Behold this heart which loves so much yet which is so little loved”) and be enkindled with the fire to console that heart! By doing this you will *distract* Jesus and thereby make up for so much of the abuse he receives! By doing this *a whole ocean of mercy will open up on the world* and on your loved ones. Remember, Jesus is not outdone in generosity. If you spend your time consoling Jesus, he will reward those you love. The love and grace will multiply as you stay with him in his passion. So what’s stopping us from doing this most important work? It truly can change the world! *You* can indeed make a world of difference.²⁹ So, let us fly past the demons and the crowd and go right to the foot of the cross to console our Lord.³⁰ Darn, one of those little devils have put up yet another obstacle to trip us on our way...

Obstacle #4: The Sensitivity of His Heart—It is so easy for those that are close to Jesus to hurt him, maybe we should keep our distance so as not to hurt him.

—It *is* easy for those that are closest to hurt him, but there is something that guarantees you will be a consolation to him: Mercy & Mary

Recall what was written above about how easy it is to console the Lord’s heart with our trust, our smiles, and our words of love. Hopefully this inspired us to draw close to the Lord and to seek to console his heart. But, perhaps something else came to mind as we pondered the Lord’s deep sensitivity. Perhaps the thought came to us, “well if it is so easy to hurt the Lord, especially for those that are closest to him, maybe I should keep my distance so as to avoid hurting him. After all, I am weak, I may begin to not trust. I don’t want to hurt him like that, like Peter did during his trial.” This thought also came to our friend Joe. We hope more of his story will be helpful in overcoming the present obstacle.

Remember our friend Joe? Recall how at the end of his 30 day retreat the Lord told him, “All I want is for you to be my friend.” Well, Joe took those words to heart. After the retreat he tried to just be the Lord’s friend by trusting him and consoling him in prayer. He remembered how much he had hurt the Lord during his 30 day retreat because of his lack of trust. And so, when it came time for him to make an 8 day retreat later in the year, and after he had had a lot of practice in being friends with Jesus, Joe decided he would “make it up to the Lord” in his 8 day retreat by giving Jesus his complete trust.

²⁹ See section in appendix for this section, pg. 87, #3.

³⁰ And by “flying to the foot of the cross” we mean that you can give Jesus this consolation at Mass (which truly *is* being at Calvary), before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and if you can’t make it to a Church you can even come to Jesus in the “tabernacle of your heart” (for more on this see pg. 44, #4)

Joe went into the retreat with one goal: simply to console his friend Jesus. He decided that no matter what happened he would keep his peace and just enjoy this time with his friend. Because of this resolution, he by had an *amazing* retreat. He enjoyed every moment of it because he was with his friend. Even in the times of dryness he was not disturbed because he realized that perhaps his friend Jesus was too tired to give him consolation and that Jesus just needed him to be there with him. Joe knew that he was pleasing the Lord by just being there in the meditations and that was enough for him. And so the whole retreat had a tone of peace and joy because Joe had centered on the heart of everything: being a friend to Jesus by consoling him.

There was, however, in the midst of this beautiful retreat, one part which threatened to take away Joe's peace. In one of his meditations, Joe had a deep realization of the sensitivity of the Lord, about which we spoke above. He realized that he was becoming the Lord's friend more and more. However, he also saw that his own sins of distrust and indifference hurt the Lord's heart much more than the sins of those who were not as close to the Lord. So here too, just as in the last meditation of the 30 day retreat, Joe hesitated.

Joe hesitated because he didn't want to hurt Jesus, but he knew his own weakness, he knew that he often did not trust; furthermore, he knew this hurt the Lord immensely. Joe was stuck. Just as in the 30 day retreat, however, the Lord broke through to him in a beautiful way. Jesus said to him, "*Joseph, I am going to give you a way in which, so long as you live it, you can be assured that you will always be a delight to my heart.*" Joe was overjoyed. This is what the Lord told him to do:

1. Marian Consecration

First, he was told to renew his Marian Consecration, but with a *particular emphasis*.³¹ So, Joe was moved to say before all the angels and saints,

"This day I renew my Consecration to you my Queen and my Mother. I give you my whole being so that you may lead me to console your son with the perfect consolation that you give to him. From this day forward dear Jesus, every time I kiss you may it be with the lips of Mary, every time I embrace you, may it be with the arms of Mary, every time I sing to you, praise you, and thank you may it be with the voice of Mary. Jesus, in short, every time I love you may it be with the Heart of Mary."

Of course, Joe's prayer is part of every total consecration to Jesus through Mary, but here the Lord wanted to highlight something. Sometimes we, like Joe, lose sight of certain aspects of what Marian Consecration means. Jesus seemed to be telling Joe not to forget the immense consolation that comes from *loving him with the Immaculate Heart of Mary*.³² This magnifies our little acts of love to infinity! Think of it, if one lives his Marian Consecration in this way, then all his little words or acts of love go straight to Jesus through the heart of Mary herself! So, even if we feel dry when we say, "Jesus I

³¹ If you do not know what Consecration to Mary is, you might want to read that section of the appendix which gives a short essay on Marian Consecration (Obstacle #4, point 1, page 89). If you already know what Marian consecration is, perhaps now would be a good time to consider making this consecration or renewing it (the Consecration formulas are found in the appendix, pg. 92).

³² This corresponds to benefit #2 in essay on Marian Consecration (mentioned in previous footnote).

love you” it will have an infinite “consoling-value” because it will come from the immaculate lips of Mary. Only in heaven will we realize the power these little words have; only in heaven will we see the consolation they gave to Jesus in his agony; only in heaven will we see how many souls were saved through these little acts. Let us then always love Jesus with the Heart of Mary and thereby give Jesus perfect consolation!

Before moving to the “second way” in which Joe was assured he could always be a consolation to the heart of Jesus, we will mention one other important aspect of Marian Consecration (this aspect will also tie into the “second way” we shall present next). In Marian Consecration, one gives over to Mary the right to all his good actions, past, present, and future; one gives her the right to dispose of his whole self and everything else, including graces. In short, when one lives Marian Consecration, they realize that they get credit for *nothing*! Nothing? Nothing. What does this mean, this not getting credit for anything, and why would one want to make such a gift?

When a person who lives their Marian Consecration dies and appears before the throne of God, he goes empty handed. Yikes, right? Wrong. For as he stands there with nothing to offer, Mary steps in and whispers to the Lord of Majesty, “this one is mine.” At that point, the King and Judge—with a smile—allows his Queen and Mother, to take that soul into her arms and under her mantle where it will praise God for all eternity, mixing its voice with hers. Just as in this life that person gave Mary all their merits, so in the next life, because Mary is not outdone in generosity, he will share in all of *her* merits.

So, getting back to our friend Joe: if he lives his Marian Consecration, if he does what was offered to him in his retreat—to love Jesus always with the heart of Mary—then in heaven if one were to look for him, he couldn’t be found. For, to see Joe would mean to see past the blaze of glory that surrounds him as he is engulfed in the heart of Mary. What a joy! If Joe could be seen, however, all the others would praise God that he granted such amazing graces to such lowly ones. This also has ramifications for more than just the next life.

If one is conscious that they get credit for *nothing*, that all their merits go to Mary (but also knowing that they will have a share in Mary’s merits in heaven), then this is a huge help for that all important virtue: humility. Such humility then bears tremendous fruit for the apostolate as can be seen in the example of the life of Fr. Lanteri.

Fr. Lanteri seems to have made a special “deal” with Mary. From Mary, Fr. Lanteri wanted 1) to be with God and the angels and saints in heaven (especially from the “Marian” vantage point we’ve mentioned above) and 2) to win many, many souls for heaven. In return, he would give up credit for everything realizing that all the fruit of his apostolate came from Mary (this would explain why--though he was arguably one of the most influential Saints in the Church³³, he is so little known—this would also explain why he insists that the true founder of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary was Mary).

Fr. Lanteri acknowledged that everything he did was the result of Mary using him as an instrument, weak as he was. Therefore, he preferred to remain hidden for not only was he conscious that all the fruits of his apostolate came from being an instrument of Mary, but he also saw that in remaining hidden he all the more resembled his “Absolute

³³ For example, we can thank Fr. Lanteri for many famous Piedmont Saints and Blessed’s such as St. John Bosco, St. Joseph Caffasso, and St. Cottelengo. He truly lived the prayer he made to Mary, “I desire to use forever all that I have and possess, all that I am, entirely in your service and that of your divine Son. I ask you, therefore, to dispose of me according to your desire as my true and absolute Lady.”

Lady” (who prefers to be hidden). His consolation came not from human praise, but from the thought of being hidden in heaven with Jesus and Mary. Confident that his Mother would take care of his immortal soul, his time in this life became the “time of opportunity” to labor for Jesus and Mary and to show his gratitude for what he would enjoy in heaven. It was not a bad deal, Fr. Lanteri gave up rights to the little merits he could gain in his short life on his own (and much of the earthly praise that goes with it) and instead gained the infinite merits of Mary in Heaven! I mention this last point of Marian Consecration because it goes hand in hand with the second way of being assured of being a delight to Jesus which we shall now explore.

2. *Sacrificial Offering to Merciful Love*

After Joe was moved to renew his Marian Consecration with its particular emphasis, he then felt the Lord wanted him to make St. Therese the Little Flower’s “Sacrificial Offering to Merciful Love.”³⁴ Joe was to be a *victim soul*. “Victim soul?! That doesn’t sound very gentle!” Indeed, there are victims souls to God’s justice, strong souls with a particular vocation of suffering. But for little souls, souls that are too weak to be victims of God’s justice, Jesus gave the *sacrificial offering to Merciful Love*. This offering gets to the core of the mission we have been talking about; it is a way for even little ones to give immense consolation to the heart of Jesus. We present the following rather lengthy quotation because we think it describes well what this being a sacrificial victim to Merciful Love means while at the same time giving a summary of much of what we have already said regarding the mission to console the heart of Jesus.

We can distinguish two kinds of victims: those who offer themselves to Justice and those who offer themselves to Love. The first desire to satisfy the justice of God by paying for sinners. They are characterized by a call to suffering. Like St. Margaret Mary, they see themselves with all sinners as criminals and deliver themselves to all kinds of anguish in order to appease divine justice. “I do not wish to live any longer,” says the saint, “except to have the happiness of suffering. My lot will therefore be to remain on Calvary until the last breath, desiring to be immolated on the altar of the Heart of Jesus, purified, consumed in the ardor of his flames.”

Needless to say, this offering presupposes a tremendous love. I think that until little Therese, the offering as victim was always made, with varying nuances, in this same spirit.

But Saint Therese found another way to offer herself, another way to immolate herself and die a victim. This “discovery of love” is something divinely beautiful. She sees the heart of Jesus overflowing with tenderness and mercy for poor sinners, for all men; from this heart escape floods of love which Jesus the Savior cannot contain any longer. But men in their ingratitude do not want this divine love. They reject it; they raise the rampart of their indifference, of their contempt, and even of their hatred, so that the saving flood will not reach them.

What a disappointment this is for Jesus, who is burning to pour out his love and cannot do it; there is the King, begging for love, begging for hearts which he can fill with his merciful tenderness, and finding none—having a heart overflowing with loving goodness, a longing to share it, and finding no one who wants to receive it. Love came to his own and his own did not want to have anything to do with him. His heart was crushed from the inside, so to speak, by the love which he could not pour out. So his little victim presented herself. I want this love which men reject. I open my heart wide

³⁴ See appendix for this section (pg. 94).

to this divine love; let it invade me, let it burn me, let it consume my heart completely. Thus I shall console my divine Savior. Thus I shall die a victim of love, immolated in this ocean of flames.

“Oh, my God,” cries little Therese, “will there be nothing but your justice to receive sacrificial victims from the holocaust? Does not your merciful Love need them also? On all sides that Love is misunderstood, rejected; the hearts on which you desire to lavish it turn instead toward creatures, seeking happiness among them instead of throwing themselves into your arms and accepting your infinite love.

“Oh, my God! Will your rejected love remain within your heart? It seems to me that if you found souls offering themselves as sacrificial victims to your love, you would consume them rapidly, you would be happy not to restrain at all the floods of infinite tenderness that are in you. If your justice desires to be satisfied, though it is extended only on earth, how much more does your merciful Love desire to enkindle souls, since your mercy is extended even unto the heavens! Oh, my Jesus, let me be this happy victim, consume your victim in the fire of your divine love!”

Then a marvelous thing happens: when this love which men refuse has passed through the heart of little Therese and other victims like her, consuming them, men are no longer able to refuse it! By being a victim of love, she becomes an apostle of Love...

See what perfect reparation such an offering brings about! I have mentioned that the great sin of which our Lord complained more than any other to St. Margaret Mary was ingratitude, lack of love. The great reparation therefore is love—confident love, since the most cruel ingratitude is distrust.

How are we to make this offering real, and live it practically! The most perfect victims are those who let themselves be immolated by Jesus the High Priest in perfect abandonment, letting him choose the tests, the crosses, the trials, and also the consolations and joys. It is by all the things he chooses for them that his love burns and consumes the hearts which have given themselves to him. Let him be sure of your smile. To be a victim is to smile. Total abandonment—“O Jesus, I thank you for everything”—that is enough. Jesus will immolate you in his own way. He will be the Priest of the host which you will have willed to be in his hands. I emphasize this point because often I have been told, “I offered myself, but what must I do now?” Let him do it! All your life then becomes a Mass in which you are the host and Jesus the Priest. You have thrown yourself into the fire, and the fire consumes you continually: yourself and your miseries.

We must “make a deal” with him, give him *carte blanche*. In heaven he will recall to us the details of our life of love with him, forgotten by us, but engraved in his heart; our small and great pacts with him—especially the great pact of perfect abandonment.

Sister Genevieve (Celine) writes, “The soul which offers itself to love does not ask for suffering, but, in delivering itself up entirely to the designs of love, it accepts all that Providence permits for it of joys, labor, trials, and it counts on infinite mercy for everything.”

Finally one last thought: what should you do in your incapacity, your powerlessness to make reparation, from which you suffer like all the saints? Offer him his own heart, his own love, the only means by which you can realize your immense desire to love him.

When St. Margaret Mary found herself at a loss as to what more to do to give him reparation which would be worthy of him, to thank him, she offered him his own heart, his own love.

It is always great wisdom to substitute Jesus for ourselves. He desires only that. He came to earth for that.

We can offer something infinite to an infinite Love: the very heart of infinite Love. Make reparation with the heart of Jesus—he is yours—and always with and through the heart of Mary, who makes perfect reparation through her pierced Immaculate Heart. Jesus gave us his heart and the heart of his Mother: they are our divine treasure. “Jesus, I have much to give you, I have everything to give you, I have something infinite to give you: your own love, your heart and the heart of your Mother which is also mine.”

As you can tell, this summarizes much of what we have already covered. In short, if we want to console the heart of Jesus, this offering to Merciful Love is an easy and perfect means. In its essentials this offering begins first with simply realizing that Jesus' heart is burning because people will not accept his Mercy. Second, it then asks Jesus to flood us with that rejected, excess mercy which burns his heart. He gladly does it. These "flames of Mercy" will indeed burn us, but it will be such a sweet burning. It will be the same burning that caused St. Francis to cry out, "Love is not loved!" Truly, if you make this offering, a change will happen in you, you will desire more and more to love Jesus and make him loved. There will be a deep burning in your heart to console Jesus and bring others to console him; you will have a deepening insight into the Lord's profound sadness; you will come to the sobering realization that says, "oh my gosh! If I don't console him who will?" These are all tremendous gifts...but be ready for the burning!

Also, a nice benefit of such an offering (which is clearer when you read St. Therese' actual words of the offering) is the idea of going to heaven with "empty hands" (we spoke about this concept above in describing the special "deal" Fr. Lanteri made with Mary). Furthermore, there is also an emphasis, in Therese's prayer, which says that the being consumed by the sweet flames of Merciful Love in this life will be purgative. The idea is that when you die, because you have lived and made this offering, you will be cleansed in an instant. Read the offering and see for yourself. Read the Lord's words to St. Faustina that trust is purgative. Basically, Jesus is saying to us, "Look, you concern yourself with consoling me and don't worry, I'll take care of the rest: your salvation, your purification, etc." Could a more merciful gift be given to us "consolers"? Can you think of "sweeter deals" Jesus and Mary could make with us their friends? There is nothing to fear; there is only one thing to do; let us begin to live this now by consoling Jesus with our praise and thanksgiving.

3. Spiritual Communion as ways to renew The Offering to Merciful Love

Now we return to Joe and the sure means Jesus gives him to ensure he will always be a consolation the Sacred Heart. After requesting the special consecration to Mary, and then the offering to his Merciful Love, Jesus next revealed to Joe a good way to renew this sacrificial offering: frequent spiritual communions.³⁵ Holy Communion is a vehicle by which the Lord can expend his "excess" mercy which souls reject (a sort of "relief valve"). The Lord's heart is so full of rejected graces that when you receive Holy Communion (spiritual and in the usual way) he is able to put all this excess mercy into the host that you receive—and so you give him relief.

Also, remember that nothing gives Jesus more consolation than a heart where he can rest in his Eucharistic Presence. Mary best prepares our hearts for these meetings. Let us no longer approach Holy Communion with anxiety; instead, let us ask Mary to come into our hearts and together with her let us love Jesus, hold him, and give him consolation. Let us imagine him as he was in the agony of the garden. Let us come to him, hold him, and heap simple words of love, smiles, and embraces remembering that

³⁵ A Spiritual Communion is simply expressing to Jesus the desire to receive him Sacramentally. He then spiritually comes into our hearts in a very real way—just as if you had received him in an actual Sacramental Communion. When we aren't able to be at Mass, this is a beautiful way to unite with Jesus and to give him consolation and relief from his pain. See appendix on how to make one (pg. 95)

this gives him tremendous consolation. Let us pray before every communion, “Mary come into my heart and make it a heaven for Jesus.” She will. And you will be a delight to his heart. It doesn’t take much, just simple words of love, silent peace, a smile, all through and with Mary.

4. Visiting Jesus in the Tabernacle of Our Hearts

We’ve mentioned “spiritual communions,” we should now like to say something about making “spiritual visits” to Jesus in the tabernacle. To do this, however, let us first recall our Principle and Foundation...you haven’t forgotten it already have you?!? Remember, part of the value of the Principle and Foundation is that it is there for us to always have in our “back pocket” for those times when we are confused and find ourselves grasping for the essentials. If our Principle and Foundation is burned into our mind and memory, we have a sure anchor in any distress or time of darkness and confusion. This was what made those early Jesuits so unstoppable. So, what is the *first* thing we look to when we want to recall “what it’s all about?” Let’s summarize the Principle and Foundation, this will help us to understand spiritual visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

The first thing, in recalling our Principle and Foundation, is to turn to Jesus’ Eucharistic Heart. Look at it. What do you see? That’s right, see him as he is: “Behold this heart which loves so much yet which is so little loved.” The second movement is our automatic response, “I must console him.” See your friend in his distress and fly to him to console him. A question may arise in all this however: “How do I “look” at the Eucharistic heart if I am not at Church?” You can make a spiritual visit. Go to the tabernacle of your local church “in spirit” or, even better, visit him, as St. Theresa of Avila says, “in the tabernacle of your heart.”

Jesus’ presence in the tabernacle of your heart is very real. The doctrine of sanctifying grace says that in the hearts of those who are in the state of grace (i.e., those who have been baptized and haven’t committed a mortal sin, or who have gone to confession after committing a mortal sin) Jesus is truly present. This is a real presence which some theologians explain as being as real as the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! So, if you are in a state of grace, *Jesus is truly in your heart!* (Why aren’t we reminded of this more?! It is such a beautiful reality!) So, visit Jesus as he is truly present in your heart. Both visits are important: actually going to the Church and visiting Jesus in your heart. Both visits are important just as both types of communion are important: spiritual and actual. So let us often make “spiritual” communions and frequently go to Mass to receive “sacramental” communions.

We should also realize that receiving Jesus in Holy Communion, along with our praise and thanksgiving is the best way to console Jesus’ heart. Very often we go to Holy Communion because we need strength—yes indeed, this is a good reason to go!—but let us also go with the desire to console Jesus’ heart, to give him the love in our heart, united to Mary’s heart—that love which he doesn’t receive in so many other hearts. Let our communions “distract” him from cold and indifferent communions.

Obstacle #5: Being Too Busy

—Getting recollected with “The Two Movements” of the Divine Mercy Image.

We're too busy

Now that we have a whole arsenal of ways to demolish the obstacles that prevent us from going to Jesus, now that we understand how easy it is to console that heart, and now that we know the means by which we can always be a delight to the heart of Jesus, is there anything left? Yes indeed. The devil won't give up so easily. The remaining obstacles are those that are often the most nagging and so they involve a constant effort. As usual we give sure means to overcome even these more stubborn obstacles. The first obstacle, one which is very prevalent in our culture today, is the obstacle of our *busyness*.

In our society many people are so incredibly busy! There are so many things to keep us distracted. How many days have you gotten ready for bed or sat down for supper and realized, “Gosh, this is the first time all day I can finally rest!” Sometimes we are lost to ourselves all day and only come to recollection for a brief moment before bed. Not only is this dangerous for our spiritual welfare, but it also makes it impossible to console the heart of Jesus, our Principle and Foundation.

In the midst of our busyness, Jesus is at our shoulder constantly whispering: “Uh, do you think you might pencil me in for 5? Hello?” Jesus patiently waits and waits and *waits* for us to finally take a breather so that he can just tell us that he loves us, guide us, and hear those words he always longs to hear: I love you Jesus. But because Jesus knows how easy it is to get too busy, he has given us yet another weapon, one which can help us all *anytime*, whenever we want to come back to ourselves and console him. This weapon we call “The Two Movements of the Divine Mercy Image.”

Do you have a Divine Mercy Image? Go get it. If you don't have one, get one soon! This image was requested by Jesus himself to St. Faustina. It is meant to be a source of inestimable graces for people in our busy modern world. One of its many benefits is that it helps those who are unrecollected to become recollected...*and fast*. So, after all this talk of busyness, let's get recollected.

Getting Recollected With the “Two Movements” of the Divine Mercy Image

The First Movement. Look at the Divine Mercy Image. See Jesus walking towards you. Do you know what Gospel scene this depicts? It is John 20:19-23, the reading the Church uses for Divine Mercy Sunday. The setting is the upper room where the Lord Jesus first appeared to the Apostles after his passion and death.

Imagine the scene: the Apostles are all huddled up in the upper room where they have locked the door “for fear of the Jews.” It seems they really do have something to be afraid of, for their teacher has just been killed...might they be next? Imagine their sadness, fear, and confusion. Each one of them betrayed that man who had called them “friends;” each one probably thought all their hopes were lost. They must have been feeling horrible and were perhaps even despairing. See the darkness in that room. Feel the cold of that sadness and fear.

In the midst of the apostle's darkness, Jesus himself appears clothed in radiant white. He has walked right through the locked door! Imagine the emotion in the room: joy, fear, confusion...they may be thinking, “if it really is Jesus, perhaps he has come to punish us for abandoning him.” With one gesture and one word of power, Jesus clears all

the darkness of fear, sadness, and confusion; he lifts his hand in blessing and says “PEACE.”

Imagine those words rolling off the Lord’s lips: “PEACE.” Feel their power. Here is the Word himself proclaiming the word “Peace” with power. The same voice which calmed the seas, the same voice that sent the soldiers sprawling to the ground... Do you remember that? Remember how just a few nights before the crowd of soldiers—complete with clubs, swords, and lanterns—were no match for the simple words of the gentle Jesus? Let’s take a brief side trip to that scene...

Look at John 18:1-6. See and hear how the soldiers walk right into the garden of Gethsemane with all their ruckus: shouts, clanging swords, curses. Watch as the Lord comes forward and asks them, “whom do you seek?” Instead of seeking the Son of God come down from heaven, they say “Jesus the Nazorean,” the earthly man. The Lord responds to this earthly name, however, with his divine name, “I AM.” This divine name, so full of might and spoken by the Word himself, sends the soldiers collapsing to the ground.

Now back to the upper room. In this scene on Easter Sunday, Jesus speaks with the same power as in the garden but with different words: “PEACE be with you.” These words send our fears and worries falling to the ground, just as they knocked the soldiers down earlier. Here, in this room as Jesus appears, he gives us his peace.

Now, look at Jesus in the Divine Mercy Image; hear him say to you “PEACE.” Hear your name following this word, “PEACE...” Do you feel the pulse of power?

Now go to the shore of the ocean. You are alone on a beach facing the open sea. Watch the swells rolling in toward you. These swells, though still far out, gather as they approach you on the shore. Walk out into the water to meet them. Stand in that warm, refreshing water. You are in up to your waste. The swells are now building and come nearer to you. They come closer and closer, 50 yards, 40, 30...the lead swell forms into a wave, and finally crashes down on you and pulls on you; but you remain standing in the bubbling white water. Wave after wave washes on you. These are the waves of his peace as he says over and over, “peace, peace, peace.”

Now look at the Divine Mercy Image. See the ocean of Mercy before you, Mercy Incarnate. Hear him say “peace” and let those waves of peace wash over you and all your attachments and worries. These waves of mercy and peace are relaxing you and allowing you to let go of those worries and anxieties you were clinging to so tightly before. “Peace, peace, peace.” The peace comes through those pale and red rays. You let go of more and more until finally you are let loose.

This is the first movement of the Divine Mercy Image, the waves of Peace. Your job is to let go in trust, that’s what he puts into your mouth as you read his signature, “Jesus I Trust in You.” When you let go in trust, that is when you experience the fruit of this first movement: peace. The fruit of trust is peace. *Let go in trust and experience the peace.* Now the second movement...

The Second Movement. What happens when a wave crashes on the shore? It washes up on the shore. Then what? It pulls back into the ocean. If you stand in the this wash which pulls back into the ocean what do you feel? You can feel it pulling the sand up from around your toes. This is like the second movement of the Divine Mercy image.

After you let go in trust and experience the peace of the first movement, then you are carried out into the ocean of Mercy. Those rays which issue forth from Jesus' heart also pull back in when you let go and let them. This second movement is *to fix on the Lord in love*. This is taking your eyes off your fears, problems, distractions, and fixing them on the Lord, on his heart (remember "first things first" and the "primacy of contemplation"?) When you fix on the Lord in Love, this One who is the Center of All, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Great I AM, you experience the fruit of love: joy. When you let go of all else and center on "He Who Is," he who is your true treasure, then you have joy. *Fix on the Lord in love, experience the joy*. Living these two movements it is just you and Jesus, it is Trust and Love, Peace and Joy.

Spend time with the Divine Mercy Image and feel these two movements. This image can become a refuge for those times of busyness—hear him say "PEACE." Let go. Feel the peace. Let the rays draw you in. Fix on him in love, experience that joy. Enter into your meditation recollected, go back to your work refreshed. You won't exhaust the richness of this image. Live the rhythm of these two movements, out and in like breathing.

Obstacle #6: The All out Attack on Trust

--Assessing the attack and laying our line of defense

1. The Attack

It should be clear that what hurts the Lord's heart most is a lack of trust, especially the lack of trust of those that call Jesus their friends. With this in mind, what do you think the devil is going to try and tempt us with most, we who have decided to be Jesus' friends and console his heart? Put another way, "how can the devil hurt Jesus most through us?" That's right, *the devil can win a huge victory and hurt Jesus most if he succeeds in tempting us to distrust, to be discouraged and sad*. If the devil can take away our trust (the peace and joy, praise and thanksgiving) which ought to be our primary attitude as "consolers," then he succeeds in piercing Jesus' heart with the sharpest sword.³⁶ It is no surprise then that the devil will launch an all out attack on our *trust*.

Thus far in the retreat we have been on the offensive (recall that our strategy is to boldly run right up Calvary to the foot of the cross where we can console Jesus). This being on the offensive is good. However, it will also be helpful to spend some time working on a defense in order to get ourselves ready for the counter attack on trust. Before looking at some very effective ways of combating these temptations, it will be helpful to examine a few pertinent points from St. Ignatius' famous "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits"³⁷.

³⁶ Not only does this lack of peace hurt Jesus, but it makes it impossible for us to hear the quiet inspirations of the Holy Spirit that are always trying to speak with us. When our soul is at peace we can easily sense what he wants. When the waters are turbulent, however, all is confusion...yet hearing and doing the will of God is the foundation of the whole spiritual life! So, let's stay at peace not only in order to console him but so that we can discern God's will.

³⁷ It would be nice to go through all of these famous rules and speak about all the various ways we can combat temptation, but remember, this retreat is meant just to give us just *the essentials*. Hopefully, through further study and prayer you can add more "Ignatian meat" to the "skeleton" being presented here.

St. Ignatius' "first rule" deals with those who do not want to console the heart of Jesus and who "go from one mortal sin to another." For those who do fall into this category St. Ignatius explains the devil's strategy:

...the enemy is ordinarily accustomed to propose apparent pleasures. He fills their imagination with sensual delights and gratifications, the more readily to keep them in their vices and increase the number of their sins.

With such persons the good spirit uses a method which is the reverse of the above. Making use of the light of reason, he will rouse the sting of conscience and fill them with remorse.

But for those who, like us, have decided to make their Principle and Foundation consoling the heart of Jesus, St. Ignatius has this to say (in his "second rule" for the discernment of spirits):

In the case of those who go on earnestly striving to cleanse their souls from sin and who seek to rise in the service of God our Lord to greater perfection [and those who want to focus on consoling the heart of Jesus], the method pursued is the opposite of that mentioned in the first rule.

Then it is characteristic of the evil spirit to harass with anxiety, to afflict with sadness, to raise obstacles backed by fallacious reasonings that disturb the soul. Thus he seeks to prevent the soul from advancing.

It is characteristic of the good spirit, however, to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and peace. This He does by making all easy, by removing all obstacles so that the soul goes forward in doing good.

The "characteristic ways" in which the evil spirit will tempt us then are with feelings of "anxiety," "sadness," and disturbances of soul; but we must strive to remain in a state of peace. Don't forget that we have abandoned ourselves totally to God with trust (something to renew daily). This is a *key* element. For once we have done this then we know we can simply trust that God will send us what is best for us. With this in mind, we can more easily accept all with trust. So, the key to this peace is trustful surrender. We are in the Lord's hands, whatever happens is what he sends for our good and so we accept it with a smile as we pray, "Jesus I thank you for everything." We have every reason to stay at peace no matter what the enemy may tempt us with.

The enemy, however, is going to labor to prevent us from keeping this peace and joy (trust). As St. Ignatius said above, he will try and tempt us to discouragement, anxiety, and sadness. We must combat these things but to do so we "little ones" need powerful weapons. What follows is a list of important helps to keep us on the path of consoling our Friend with trust (we hope you already have been making such a list in your notebook!)

2. *Defense list*

A. Come to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament—*See him as he truly is*

By going to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to console him, you are living the principle and foundation. When you go, however, make sure you see him as he really is! He longs to tell you of his thirst for you. Hear him say these words and tell him that you

thirst for him, ask him to help you thirst for him as he thirsts for you. As you spend time with him, he will reveal to you his heart. When there think of his words to St. Margaret Mary “Behold this heart which loves so much, yet which is so little loved.” Also, think of these three points which St. Ignatius gives in his famous “2 Standards”³⁸ meditation which describe well who Jesus is, particularly in the Blessed Sacrament—then seek to imitate them yourself for they unite you to Our Eucharistic Lord. So, here’s Jesus in the Eucharist as he truly is:

a) *Jesus Poor*—In the Eucharist, Jesus reveals a deep poverty of spirit because he desires only one thing: you, your confidence and love. He thirsts for confidence and love; he thirsts for *your* confidence and love. Ask him to share with you his poverty of spirit so that you may desire him above all things and ask him to help you to accept actual poverty if he sends it.

b) *Jesus Insulted and Wronged*—Think of how much abuse Jesus receives in the Blessed Sacrament. Think of the long lonely hours in the tabernacle, the rejection, the coldness. Because his only desire is a thirst for love and because this desire is so little satisfied, Jesus is a *man of sorrow*. If we see him there in the Blessed Sacrament, so wronged and abused, we will see his love and be filled with the desire to console him. The amazing effects of loving Jesus who is so hurting there in the Blessed Sacrament will be that when you are abused, ignored, slighted, wronged, you will begin to automatically think of your Eucharistic Love. By his grace you may even begin to welcome these abuses since you see that they bring you into a profound union with the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus which is so insulted and wronged.

c) *Jesus Humble, Hidden, Meek, Gentle*—Think of Jesus there so meek, gentle and hidden in the Blessed Sacrament. He came once as a little baby so that we wouldn’t fear him, but here he goes even further; the God of the universe condescends to become a little piece of bread. Here is total humility and that trustful surrender we have spoken of above. Jesus trustingly gives himself over to our hands, he comes in obedience at the priest’s words, and goes wherever he is placed, even into souls in mortal sin where he consents to be crucified. So much does he want to show us humility, he allows such abuses with the hope that “at least you” will give him what he desires so much: the return of love. As you consume this humble host and think of Jesus’ meekness, you will have the grace to become more meek and to love the humility which you consume.

B. Good Books

Spiritual reading is so very helpful for enkindling in us the fire of love. (Hopefully you’ve experienced this in this retreat!) St. Theresa of Avila used to say that she could not meditate without a book. There are two books which remind us and help us to live that trustful surrender we have spoken of in this retreat: *Come to Me in the Blessed Sacrament* and *I Believe in Love*. You really should get both of these books and read them if you are serious about consoling the Lord’s heart (info on how to obtain them can be found in the appendix). These books help preserve the fruits of this retreat. *Come to*

³⁸ #136-147 in Puhl’s translation.

Me in the Blessed Sacrament actually contains a number of Holy Hours for those who have a difficult time making one. *I Believe in Love* is good to read anytime and it expresses much of what we have said in this retreat. We would also recommend a number of other books found in the appendix for this section.

Regarding the book *Come to Me in the Blessed Sacrament*, Mother Theresa of Calcutta wrote a remarkable endorsement:

“Wherever I travel and wherever I go, I carry this prayer and meditation book with me because it is a constant source of light and inspiration for me. It has become my daily companion. [this book] is my daily prayer and meditation book. It is a most beautiful book because each page helps us to see ever more clearly how much Jesus loves us in the Blessed Sacrament. I recommend [this book] to everyone I meet. I would like the whole world to read this book to help everyone realize that Jesus wants all of us to come to Him in the Blessed Sacrament. He is really there in Person waiting just for you.”

C. The Divine Mercy Image

The Divine Mercy Image is a gift from the Lord Jesus himself as a means for souls to grow in *confidence* in his Mercy. We’ve already spoken of how this image can help us live recollected in trustful surrender. In this image Jesus appears blessing us as Merciful Savior and in such a way that we can be convinced of his goodness. This image supplants the Jansenist image the devil tries so often to paint in our minds of a God that is too frightening to approach. Contrary to this Jansenist image, Jesus *always* wants us to come to him, he *longs* that we come to him. In fact, we see in the Divine Mercy Image that Jesus actually is coming to us! He takes a step forward because, as we said in the beginning, he *needs* saints and so *he* is going to do it—if we just trust him, come to him, and let him. The signature on the bottom of the image is a reminder to us of what consoles his heart most: our trust and the prayer “Jesus I Trust in You.” Finally, the image has those amazing rays which help us, in their two movements, to let go in trust and fix on the Lord in love, the fruits of which are, respectively, peace and joy.³⁹ Every “consoler” *must* have this image in their home! The Lord said to St. Faustina that he would give many graces to people through this image.

D. Some Important Principles to Keep in Mind to Maintain Trust (and other graces):

--*Ask, Ask, Ask (Beg)* for graces (“*Fiat*”):

“Jesus, if I desire something that you don’t want me to, *you* change my desire. Make me desire what you want me to desire.” Ask with *bold* confidence. He will change your desire if he wants it. For you will want to do what he wants. Ask him to make you a great consolation to him, i.e. to give you the grace to trust.

Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of My graces into them. I rejoice that they ask for much, because it is My desire to give much, very much. (*Diary*, #1578)

--An important prayer for times when it seems you have ruined everything:

³⁹ See “Two Movements” of the Divine Mercy Image section of Obstacle #5 (pg. 45)

“Lord Jesus, I trust that you can bring an even greater good than if I had not fallen.” This is tremendously powerful when said with contrition and confidence.

--St. Ignatius' principle “*agere contra*” (“to act against”):

When tempted by the evil one, St. Ignatius says that a show of weakness will invite him to hound and antagonize you. But, if you give a show of force, he flees away. (You can be little before the Lord, but before the enemy be big!) So, in striving to do God's will, act with a certain confidence. You have asked God to use you, he will!

Too often the evil one puts up a barrier between us and the work Jesus has for us to do. There are Jesus and Mary on the other side of the barrier weeping because so many souls are being destroyed. “Where are our helpers?” There we are, stopped at the imaginary barrier. But when we take a step forward, when “act against” the temptation, we realize that the barrier was just a weak spider web. Let's not let these imaginary things stop us from coming to Jesus and helping him. As we said, *he needs you*. He will give you the grace, he's desperate for helpers, for consolers—be confident and take the first step, he will be with you. We're too shy. Be not afraid! Act against those inclinations to laziness, for instance, when it's time to pray. Instead say, yes Jesus, I love you and I am happy to go to you my friend. These “little things” console Jesus very much.

--“Enjoy Him”

This attitude is a manifestation of the trust we have been speaking of. When you go to pray, realize it pleases him if you enjoy him. He wants you to delight in his presence. Even if you feel dry, be assured, at least in your mind that you are a delight to him. And when you have difficult things to do, make a decision: “I will enjoy this because I know Jesus is here.” Then be not afraid. Go into all with confidence and joy: “Thank you Jesus for everything.” To enjoy him in this way does not necessarily mean an emotional rush; it is more an act of the will—a decision to say with your attitude, “Jesus I am so happy for what you have done for me, I am happy to be here because you are my true joy and I know you are here” (even if your mood is not one of great joy).

--Live the Present Moment

This principle and “enjoy him” go together. Practice the present moment and find Jesus there, enjoy him in it. That consoles him. (Also, it is good to remember the “two movements” of the Divine Mercy Image when you are distracted from living the present moment. The present moment = movement #2)

--“Come as You Are” (*Ecce*)

Be honest with the Lord. Put everything on the table. Tell him how you are feeling, what you desire, what you are worried about, etc. Don't hide anything from him. This honesty and openness consoles him and teaches you trust.

--Examination of Conscience EVERY NIGHT!

By going over your day, look for the blessings first, thank God for them. Then go over where you have let the Lord down; but begin by seeing all the blessings. Praise and thank him for them! This practice will foster in you that attitude of praise and thanksgiving. It will teach you to recognize the benefits the Lord gives you. St. Ignatius said that after the Liturgy, this is the *most important* spiritual

practice of his Jesuits and is not to be neglected. See appendix on how to make an examination of Conscience (pg. 96).

--Keep a Journal

This is a way to keep track of the real “times of grace” in your life. Don’t write down what you had for breakfast, but the major blessings God gives you. This is very helpful not only to discern what God wants from you (a pattern often begins to emerge in the graces God gives) but also to help you hold on to the blessings God gives you. This is very important in maintaining the attitude of praise and thanksgiving (trust) because you can go back to the times of grace in times of “desolation” (i.e. times of difficulty and dryness) and draw from them the material with which you can be inspired to continue consoling the Lord’s heart with praise. This also can help you to prepare for confession (which is beneficial to receive about once a month...at least).

--Pray the Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet Daily⁴⁰

--Make a list of resolutions from this retreat of how you will incorporate the principle and foundation (the end and means).

E. Join Groups/Associations inspired by this spirituality or start one in your parish!

a) Adoration Society

--dedicated to promoting adoration and to adoring Jesus in the Eucharist

b) Family Offering to Merciful Love

--see appendix for the formula

c) A “Consoling the Heart of Jesus Group”

--see “R.C., a group for young men” in Appendix as an example

F. ***THREE MOST IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THOSE TRYING TO LIVE THIS RETREAT*******

1. CONSOLER’S EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Among the many spiritual practices which St. Ignatius recommended to his Jesuits, there is one in particular that was NEVER to be neglected: the Examination of Conscience. Following St. Ignatius’ lead, we also say that among all the practices which we recommend in this retreat, this is the ONE that we hope you will never neglect. We put a particular emphasis on *this form* of the examination of conscience since it gives you *a way of renewing this whole retreat every day!*⁴¹

Before you begin: Renew your Principle and Foundation:

--Hear him say, “Behold this heart which loves so much and yet which is so little loved.” Respond, “Dear Jesus, I choose to console you.”

--Realize that whenever you make the Consoler’s Examination of Conscience you are doing just that: Consoling the Lord in the way he loves best...as you will see. So, since consoling Jesus should be your main desire (after this retreat), you can always go to make your Examination of

⁴⁰ See page 97 for instructions on how to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

⁴¹ The following retreat closely follows the adapted points of St. Ignatius’ Examination of Conscience listed on page 97. The only difference is that they also follow the main points of this retreat. Once you get used to how these points embody the main points of the retreat you may just go to St. Ignatius’ points so as to remember them better.

Conscience with joy since you know that it delights the Lord's heart. It is especially consoling to the Lord if you are tired and you make it.

--You don't have to explicitly renew your Principle and Foundation (to console Jesus who is so sorrowful) every time you do your Examination of Conscience, but it is good to have it in mind. If you find yourself *not* going to your Examination of Conscience with zeal to console the Lord, then renew this part.

1. Against Obstacle #1: The Lord's Gentleness
--Recall that the Lord is very gentle with you (if you need to, look to that portion of the retreat), ask the Holy Spirit to inspire you to make a good Examination of Conscience.
2. Against Obstacle #3: The Easy (and Best) Way to Console Jesus
--Look at all the blessings of the day and the times in the day when the Lord was particularly close. Praise and thank Jesus for all of them, even the crosses.
--As you remember, this is the best way to console Jesus...St. Ignatius says you should spend most of your time on this point.
3. Obstacle #2: Weaknesses, sinfulness, attachments
--Look at all the times you rejected Jesus and chose other things over him.
--Present all of this with sorrow into the furnace of the Lord's burning heart. Then take joy in the knowledge that this consoles him immensely!
4. Against Obstacle #4: The Offering to Merciful Love and Consecration to Mary
--Allow Jesus and Mary to embrace you with all the Mercy which other souls reject.
5. Against Obstacle #5: Getting Recollected
--Think ahead to the next day and think of how you can avoid sin and console Jesus instead (this is a way of recollecting yourself for the next day.
--end with an "Our Father" and "Hail Mary"⁴²

2. DAILY RENEW YOUR MARIAN CONSECRATION

After you have made your Marian Consecration (see page 92), you can renew it daily (we suggest every morning), either by praying again the prayer of consecration, or with a simple act of consecration which you may compose yourself. We suggest something along the lines of:

Dear Mary, my Queen and my Mother, joyfully I declare before the all the heavenly court: "I am totally yours and all that I have is yours!" From you, all that I ask is that you give me your Immaculate Heart, that I may console the Sacred and Eucharistic Heart of your Son with that perfect love and adoration, praise and thanksgiving which you continually offer to him. I ask that I may remain hidden in your heart as much as possible. Please use me to set the world on fire with love for your son.

3. DAILY RENEW YOUR SACRIFICIAL OFFERING TO MERCIFUL LOVE

After you have made this offering, you can renew it daily (again we suggest in the morning along with the renewal of your Marian Consecration), either by praying again the long prayer of offering or with a simple act of offering in conjunction with a spiritual communion (which, remember, is a way of continually renewing this offering). We suggest something along the lines of:

Dear Jesus, Mary is in my heart and has prepared it for you, I thirst for you to come into my heart in a spiritual communion and to thereby fill me with all the rejected mercy which burns your heart [pause and console him there in your heart with praise and

⁴² "But where are points 6 and 7 for those obstacles of this retreat?!" Well, by making the Examination of Conscience you live point 6 (this is the point we are on in the retreat) and, as you will see as we move to Obstacle 7, this is simply a summary of the retreat...which we are also doing here. So, there you have it, an easy way to review the whole retreat everyday! See the Table of Contents and see that it all follows!

thanksgiving or some simple words of love...then with Jesus spiritually present in your heart pray the following prayer (a prayer composed by St. Therese)]

“Merciful Father, in the name of our loveable Jesus, of the Virgin Mary and of the Saints, I ask You to set me on fire with Your Spirit of Love, and to grant me the grace of making you deeply loved.”

So: By starting and ending your day with these three “spiritual exercises” (#2 &3 at the beginning of the day and #1 at the end), by fulfilling your duties as a Catholic, and by trying to live the attitude of trustful surrender for the purpose of pleasing Jesus in between, you can be assured that you are a “delight” to Jesus amid so much of his sorrow. So rejoice! There is the cause of your joy! For you are that “face in the crowd” that Jesus can turn to for courage and consolation while he is surrounded by a sea of indifference and ingratitude. You are a heart where he can find rest...and you will find rest in him.

Obstacle #7: “This is it too good to be true.” (after our summary)

--It is true

1. Summary:

What we have been describing in this retreat is a simple and easy way to become a saint, a great saint, and quickly. We showed how Jesus needs us and longs for us to become saints. We also desire to become saints, but we are so weak. Jesus says, “Don’t worry, I will do it. Just trust me. Come to me. Let me do it.” What we have laid out is the way that Jesus makes it easier than ever before to become a saint using the three weapons we mentioned in the beginning: The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Divine Mercy, and Mary.

a) The Spiritual Exercises. With regard to the Spiritual Exercises, we showed how Jesus gives a Principle and Foundation with all the power that comes in making a 30 day retreat, but *in just one shot*: the revelation of his Eucharistic Heart. We also followed that Ignatian principle which says, “put first things first,” that is, stay fixed on the Principle and Foundation and you will be given the strength you need to be on fire for love of Jesus above all things.

So, let’s raise our eyes to that Eucharistic Heart, and see him *as he really is*. Hear your friend tell you his love, “Behold this heart which loves you so much, which has given you everything.” But then, listen to his plea for help, “Yet see how my heart is broken because I am so little loved, because all that I receive from so many of my creatures is indifference, ingratitude, and a lack of love...will anyone be my friend, will anyone console this heart?” Unless we are frozen to the core, or unless we are not really hearing him or seeing him as he is, we cannot but respond, “I must!—I must help you Jesus, so poor and helpless! I will be your friend, I will console you.” However, in order to come to Jesus to console him we must pass through a whole gauntlet of obstacles. Divine Mercy and Mary help us to hurdle these obstacles and to rush to Jesus full of consoling love. (Thus began part two of the retreat.)

b) Divine Mercy. St. Therese and St. Faustina revealed Jesus’ Mercy in a special way. The “Little Flower” showed us her “little way” of humble confidence, of loving our

weakness insofar as our humbly confessing our sins and coming to Jesus as we are gives his heart consolation. She taught us boundless confidence in his mercy not in spite of our weakness but even *because* of them!

Then there was St. Faustina who showed us how God in his Mercy makes it so *easy* for us to console his heart. Following the theme of St. Therese, we saw with St. Faustina that what consoles Jesus' heart best is *trust*! But this is a trust that praises and thanks God for all things: the "blessings" and the crosses. This is a way of a child, a way of total abandonment and trustful surrender into our Father's loving hands as we are. Faustina and Therese, two "sister saints," did indeed discover a new, straight, and "little" way to holiness, for they came to behold the heart of Jesus as it is. And how did they discover this mystery?

St. Therese and St. Faustina saw that Jesus has a *human* heart, and that, like all human hearts, there are secret ways which win a heart's affection immediately and with ease. Such is the mystery of love, it has favorites, it has special likings; such is the mystery these saints unlocked, they found a "secret" way to Jesus' heart, a way that is full of humble, childlike confidence and childlike love that instinctively flies to a friend in pain. This "little way" is not the only way, but it is by far the easiest and the most perfect for us "little souls." It is a way that can be summarized as follows: "Please Jesus by letting nothing disturb you and by your praise and thanksgiving."

c) *Mary*. Yet, as if these helps of Divine Mercy were not enough, Jesus makes the path to holiness even easier. From the cross, not only did the fount of Mercy open up from the pierced side of Jesus, but before he expired he gave us another gift: his mother. Yes, if we live our consecration (that is if we always seek to console Jesus with the heart of Mary), Jesus will give us the assurance (along with the sacrificial offering to Merciful Love) of *always being a delight to his heart*. But, is this all too good to be true? Is it really this easy?

2. *Too good to be true?*

'It seems that this all is a bit *too easy, too good to be true*. After all, the message of this retreat is that *all* we need to do is *be at peace?! But*, there are many people who could be on the road to perdition and this advice to "be at peace" could be a death warrant." Yes, for the person who, as St. Ignatius says, goes from mortal sin to mortal sin or for one who does not wish to love (console) Jesus as his principle and foundation, this would be true, but not for those living the spiritual childhood we have described.

The spiritual child, as we have described, abandons himself/herself to a single goal: consoling the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. Though advocated by "The Little Flower," this is no "flowery" spirituality. The "being at peace," which is at the core of this spirituality, is not a "happy go lucky" peace, not a "hippy" peace, nor the natural peace of one with a tranquil personality. No, it is a peace that is an act of the will (aided by grace) made before the saddest, most horrible reality in this world: The suffering of Jesus. But his pain is no simple tooth-ache or ear-ache; his pain is an infinitely profound *heart ache*. If we only begin to contemplate the pain he receives in his Eucharistic heart as he is neglected and lonely in so many tabernacles, as he is slapped by so much sin, spat upon through so much coldness, and crucified in so many hearts, we see a horror unlike

any other in this world. It is in the face of this *greatest of tragedies*—that love is not loved, that love is despised—that the peace we are speaking about must be understood.

We strive for peace because it is trust that consoles our friend most. It is trust which best answers the horror that the Lord's heart-ache presents. So, we hold back the tears (but sometimes he does want us to grieve with him too) and give him a smile and know that it distracts him from his pain and consoles him best. The hard part is to know that he is always hurting; the wonderful news is that it is so easy to do something about this—it is so easy to console him! We must keep these two together: smiling before the horror; being a little child before the weighty cross; being at peace amid turmoil. Our peace then is a response to the horror; it is the way of consoling him. If we keep this in mind, then we can have no fear that our peace is too easy or superficial, for it will be rooted in the starkest existential reality: Jesus' seemingly infinite suffering.

“But how can one fear nothing? What about when he finds himself not trusting, being lazy, or lax? This is surely reason to fear, right?” Wrong. For this is the time when one can offer his weaknesses to God and place them into the furnace of his heart which makes the flames of his love leap up. “Offer him with confidence, as little Therese did, our lack of confidence, and offer him with peace our lack of peace. Nothing is irreparable with Jesus” (*IBL*, 63). In fact, one's dryness and weakness becomes a consolation to Jesus and to himself! “What?!?”

Yes, its true, even dryness can be consolation when we live this spirituality. It is easy to understand, for if we make consoling the heart of Jesus our main goal, then even our dryness can be occasion for consolation for him. We know by faith and from the testimony of the saints that the most pleasing acts of love are those made in dryness. We can be assured then that our attempts to console Jesus by simply remaining with him in dryness really do console him. Perhaps we are dry because he is too tired to give us consolation, perhaps he just needs us to be with him (believe that just being there consoles him...even if you don't feel like it is).

“O.K., but what about when we *really* mess up. What about when we sin and hurt people and ruin God's plans? Surely *that* is something to fear.” Well, yes we should always have a horror for sin, but when we do sin, in our contrition peace isn't far away. The type of childlike trust that St. Faustina advocates is that which has the boldness to pray, “Jesus I am so weak and it seems I have ruined everything because of my sins, but Jesus I trust in you so much that *you can bring an even greater good out of this than if I had never sinned in the first place.*” This is one of the most powerful prayers for the spiritual child and should help us to fear nothing.

“But how can one fear nothing? What about when you find yourself not desiring to console the heart of Jesus, but other things?” Even here we can remain at peace if only we will be true to our commitment and pray, “Jesus I am so weak I can't let go of these desires, if you want me to choose something, to do something, to love you, *you must change my desire to desire you and your will.*” We must have the humble confidence to ask for this. We must ask, ask, ask, “Jesus *you must do it.*” And he will. The infinitely Merciful Lord will have pity on you in your weakness when you ask for help. And while we're on the subject of bold confidence, ask the Lord to use you, weak as you are, to save many, many souls. “*Jesus you can do it...please use me, weak as I am, to save many souls.*” He will. Just ask, ask, ask.

“O.K., but what about the flames of hell? Surely those are something to fear.” If we are committed to staying fixed on his heart and therefore to consoling him, Jesus and Mary will take care of us.

“But how can one fear nothing? What about the flames of purgatory?” Trust is purgative. Look at Therese’s Offering to Merciful love in the appendix. Here again, remember that Jesus tells us that if we concern ourselves with consoling him, he will take care of the rest...in other words, leave purgation up to his Merciful Love and fear nothing.

“O.K., but what about fearing for our loved ones? While we’re consoling Jesus with the heart of Mary, what are we to think of all those that might be perishing.” Remember, though you can and should pray for others, the focus here is in giving everything to Jesus through Mary and to console Jesus. If we do this, he is not outdone in generosity and he’ll say as he said to St. Margaret Mary, “Take care of my interests and I shall take care of yours.” He will take care of those we love better than we ourselves can! And don’t forget, consoling him releases a whole ocean of mercy on the whole world.

Be at peace. He needs you. Look at him in his love and in his pain. Put your life into his hands and be at peace for him, come to him, console your friend. And do it all while united to the heart of Mary.

CONCLUSION: The Goal and How to Get There...Again⁴³

To conclude this retreat, we would like to leave you with three responses to the “How” question that comes up when you think of the Principal and Foundation. This is important because the Principal and Foundation itself is really two parts: the goal (or end) and the means (*how* to get to the goal). The end or goal of our Principal and Foundation is clear...right?! One last time, what is the goal of the Principal and Foundation (you should know this in your sleep by now)? That’s right! *To console the Sacred and Eucharistic Heart of Jesus* (you could add: which is so sorrowful on account of the lack of love shown to it--“Behold this heart which loves so much, yet which is so little loved”). The means (how to get to this goal), however, may not be as honed down and clear to you. So, how do you answer the second part of the Principle and Foundation: “*how do I best console the heart of Jesus?*”

In this retreat we’ve explained, in various ways and words, *how* to best console the heart of Jesus: abandonment, spiritual childhood, trust = praise and thanksgiving, etc. But, how can we put all of this together in a clear and concise picture so that, like with the goal of the Principal and Foundation, you can always have it ready “in your back pocket”? In conclusion to this retreat, we now present this “how” of consoling the heart of Jesus, hopefully, in a clear and concise way according to three themes which

⁴³ Repetition is very Ignatian (In the 30 Day Retreat, St. Ignatius has the retreatant repeat certain meditations over and over). We warned you of this in the beginning...but there is much wisdom in it! Remember, an Ignatian retreat is special because it is also a formation program. One of the tools it uses for this formation is its repetition of essential points.

correspond to Fr. Lanteri's "three weapons:" Mary, Mercy, and The Spiritual Exercises (of course, each one of these three themes should include elements from the other two "weapons"). Choose the one that suits you best, or formulate it in your own words; do whatever helps you to easily remember "how" (the means) to best console the heart of Jesus (the goal). So, here are three ways for you to remember *how* to console Jesus best...

1. Marian Theme: The Three Words Of Mary

Principle and Foundation:

As you look at the Eucharistic heart and see the Lord's sadness, you desire to console him (goal). Here's how to console him (means), using the words of Mary at the Annunciation and Visitation (Luke 1:26-28; 38; 45-47)

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Hail full of grace, the Lord is with you!'...

And Mary said, '**Behold (*Ecce*) I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me (*fiat*) according to your word.'**...

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and said... 'blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.' And Mary said, '**My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior... (*Magnificat*)'**

a) "**Ecce**"

--"*Behold the Handmaid of the Lord*"

--Behold, *here I am Lord*, I come with confidence as I am, weaknesses and all.

--"Don't be sad Jesus, look at me! You are saving me! I am here for you Jesus.

b) "**Fiat**"

--"*Let it be done unto me according to your word.*"

--I abandon myself into your hands Lord. I accept what you send. Use me. Lord,

let's see what you can do with me, weak as I am! I am your instrument. Make it happen Lord. Do it! Use me to make you more loved. I trust in you to do it.

c) "**Magnificat**"

--"*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*"

--I accept whatever you send with praise and thanks Lord. All is your love, I thank you for everything, blessings and crosses, and all with the heart and voice of Mary!

--Smile at Jesus, tell him you are so happy to be with him. If you don't feel particularly happy, tell him that, but that you still love him. Tell him not to be sad, "Look Jesus, look what your suffering has done!"

--As he sees you there returning love for love, he will say what he said to Faustina, "I wish I could suffer more...you've made it all worth it my child."

--Hearing such words from the Lord indeed makes it easy to say "Magnificat!"

So, this whole retreat in ONE WORD: "**MAGNIFICAT**"

For, if you live with eyes fixed on the Lord and you pray a) and b) above, then an attitude of trust, that is, praise and thanksgiving like Mary can be your characteristic attitude. This consoles the Heart of Jesus best.

2. Mercy Theme: The Two Movements of the Divine Mercy Image

We have already covered this image in dealing with Obstacle # 5 above. We mention it again here because it summarizes the basic attitude for consoling the heart of Jesus.

There isn't much more to add to the reflection given on page 45. If one were to go by this image, it would simply mean living under the "two movements" of the rays of the image. We summarize those two movements:

1) Letting Go in Trust: Peace

--Let the rays wash over you and let go of anxieties and attachments. Let go and experience the fruit of this trust which is peace.

2) Fixing on the Lord in Love: Joy

--Once you take your mind off the anxieties you are free to look to the Lord as he is, full of love and Mercy. This inspires in us a great love for Jesus. The fruit of this movement is Joy which can be manifested in praise and thanksgiving. And don't forget to do this with the heart of Mary and by making spiritual communions which renew your offering to Merciful Love.

These two movements can be lived at any time of the day. They are great for stopping, recollecting, and finding Jesus in the present moment—and whenever we find Jesus in a situation it leads to praise and thanksgiving since he is our joy.

3. Ignatian Theme: A Closing Contemplation "To Attain Divine Love"

It is fitting that we close this retreat with a contemplation "To Attain Divine Love" for the 30 day retreat also ends with such a contemplation. Here, however, we will not be using the same contemplation St. Ignatius used (we'll save that for when you make an 8 or 30 day retreat).

As a "closing contemplation" and summary of our response to consoling the heart of Jesus we could mention again that image presented when we dealt with Obstacle #3—confidently rushing to foot of the Cross with Mary to distract Jesus from his sorrow. A summarizing image of this can be seen in the picture on the very cover of this retreat. As we close this retreat you could repeat that meditation and constantly live it whenever you visit Jesus in the tabernacle of your heart, in the Most Blessed Sacrament or at Mass—which truly is a re-presentation of the Sacrifice of Calvary. Go to these places often to console Jesus as he suffers his agony.

Now, instead of repeating the earlier summarizing meditation of Jesus on the cross, we thought we'd give you something new: one last meditation, a "Contemplation to Attain Divine Love" that can also be seen as a summary of how we are to console the heart of Jesus. May it set you on fire with Divine Love:

You are the Lord's disciple. You have been following him through the lands of Israel. From that place where you first heard him preach and where he called you, through the deserts, grassy plains, mountains, hills, and that beautiful Sea of Galilee where he walked on the water, you have been with him.

Now it is night and the campfire blazes. Its soft crackling mixes with the gentle hum of snores and the chirping of crickets. A few disciples still linger on mats whispering and occasionally laughing quietly.

There is the Lord. He sits before the fire, gazing beyond its flames and lost in prayer. You feel an urge to go to Him.

Pushing aside the covers, you arise from your mat and approach the Master. Some of the others who are still awake fall silent and watch you. You can feel their eyes following you, but your attention goes back to the Lord as you are drawn closer to him.

The Lord still doesn't see you. You sit next to him. He still gazes beyond the fire, its light dancing on his face; a face in which, sitting here, you can clearly see an expression of profound sorrow. Somehow you know that this sorrow comes from not being understood. So what are you doing approaching him? After all, he's a mystery to you too. He's from somewhere else, how can you relate to him? Perhaps you should go back to bed—he still hasn't seen you. But, you are urged to speak, you want to try and console him even though he seems unreachable.

"Jesus," you begin with a whisper, "I see that you are sorrowful Lord." He still gazes beyond the fire, his eyes glistening. Should you continue? You do. "Lord, here I am. I don't know exactly why you are so full of sorrow, but I am here to console you. Jesus, I am very weak, I don't have much to offer you, in fact, too often I have been distant as I've followed you, but behold, here I am Lord. Take me and use me as you desire. Use me to make you known and loved, weak as I am. Help me to love you. Jesus, I see how gentle you are and I trust you. I know that you know me better than I do myself. You know what I can take. I put myself completely into your hands. Use me to help you, weak as I am. You may not be able to do much with me...then again I've seen you work miracles before. Do with me what you can. Behold, I believe, I trust in you."

As you have been speaking, some of the other's have awoken and are upset with you. As soon as you finish presenting yourself to the Lord, you are distracted by the crowd. You see their frowns and hear some of them whispering, "who does he think he is? Does he think he's better than us? Is he trying to get a special place with the Master?"

These words hurt you and you continue to look at the crowd of disciples, all of whom are awake and staring at you angrily. Finally, you turn back to the Lord, expecting to see him still gazing towards the fire. But now, as you turn back to him, your eyes meet his as he looks on you directly. What is this?! He has a look of profound surprise and joy! His face is all awe and amazement as he gazes on you with wonder. His mouth is open and slightly smiling. You feel embarrassed that he looks at you in this way. "What was it I said? Didn't he hear the part about how I am weak and that I don't have much to offer?" But as these thoughts swarm your mind, he exclaims,

"My child! This is what I've been waiting for! This is the faith I longed for as I sat here. Never mind your weaknesses, I can take care of that! You have given me the freedom to work in your soul, the freedom I've been longing for. Now here, receive my blessing (he reaches over to you and places his hand on your head in blessing and proclaims to the astonishment of all present), "You my child shall be called prophet of the most high, for you will go before me to prepare my way. You will give my people knowledge of my mercy and love. And you shall continually delight my heart."

"But how can this be Lord? I'm so weak." He continues, "Here, behold this. He pulls back his garment at the breast and you see a burning flame there. You can hear his heart crying out in anguish for love, for a return of his love. He puts that into your heart. Your feel in your heart a burning thirst to make him loved, to alleviate his sorrow. You are impelled to speak from a pulsing force within:

"Lord, my one desire is to console you...I trust in you to use me. Mary I put myself into your hands, help me, teach me to console Jesus. Lord, if I desire anything other thing than but to console you change my desire. I go from here Lord with you in my heart, I love you, praise you, and thank you for whatever you do in my life. All is your grace. I love you Lord Jesus, with the heart of your mother, I love you! I praise you! I thank you! I love you!"

Jesus, so pleased with these words of humble confidence and love, cries out to all present but especially to you, “I have come to cast fire on the earth, how I wish it were already burning! Set this fire my child! Set this fire! Console me.”⁴⁴

The retreat is ended, go in peace! But, Just one request...

At the end of this retreat we ask only one thing: ask Jesus and Mary with great confidence to make you into a Saint. Beg them, despite your weakness, to transform you and use you to save countless souls...all the souls in the world! Beg them. Beg them to use you and beg Jesus to make the one desire of your heart to console him and make him happy. Tell him you are too weak to change your own will and that he himself must make you desire what he desires. Be bold in what you ask. Jesus wants it more than you. He just needs you to ask for it. Thank him for hearing your prayer. Renew this prayer daily, then be at peace, for he will use you, and he will use you with all the gentleness and kindness you learned about in this retreat. There’s nothing to fear. Please ask him, and please say a prayer for all those who helped in the writing of this retreat in various ways. Pray that all of us always be a consolation to Jesus’ Sacred and Eucharistic Heart—and *a consolation in the best possible way!* Praise the Lord...oh, and don’t forget to do your “Consolers Examination of Conscience,” Renewal of Consecration to Mary, and Renewal of Offering to Merciful Love (see page 52).

⁴⁴ And so begins the topic of our second retreat: how to bring this fire which the Lord has placed into our hearts to others—in short, how to “Radiate Christ.”

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

This appendix is meant to be used as further reference for the points given in the above retreat. If there is an area of the retreat you would like to read more about, you can read from the relevant passages below. We mentioned above (footnote #2) that it is often fruitful to dig deeper when there is a movement of spirit during a retreat—this appendix is a handy shovel for such digging.

PART ONE: Getting the Foundation

I. Intro: A Retreat With a Bold Claim

Some introductory points:

1. This Retreat is for little souls. There are many ways to grow in holiness, but this retreat offers the quickest, easiest, most sure way to sanctity for “little souls.” The words of someone after another retreat reveal well that “little soul” for whom *this* retreat is intended:

“One thought strikes me. All the means of sanctification which the preacher proposes and develops requires a strong soul...I will not profit from exercises designed for strong souls. O my God, show me the exercises designed for feeble souls. Would the saints have forgotten or disdained them? Yet even if the saints did not think of these poor souls, who are nevertheless most numerous, you, Lord, my mercy, have not abandoned them. You yourself, Good Master, have burdened yourself with them. I know that better than anyone. I am one of those souls and I bless you for having revealed to the weak and the little ones what you do not always accord to the valiant and the strong.” (quoted in *IBL*, 172)

2. This retreat attempts to incorporate the best way for these little souls to become saints: Following the wisdom of St. Therese of Lisieux, we propose that the *best* way for us little ones to love Jesus is to seek to “have mercy” on him, that is, to see the pain of his *Eucharistic Heart* and then to strive to *console him*. This corresponds to advice John Paul II gave to a friend of his before he became Pope:

“After many experiences and a lot of thinking, I am convinced that *the objective starting point of love is the realization that I am needed by another*. The person who *objectively* needs me most is also, for me, *objectively*, the person I most need. This is a fragment of life’s deep logic, and also a fragment of trusting the Creator and in Providence” (quoted in *Witness to Hope*, by George Weigle pg. 102) In this retreat we start from this “objective starting point” of love which is to see that Jesus *needs us*, he needs the consolation we can give to him. (We will also recommend the “best” *means* to this “best” goal of consoling Jesus: the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Divine Mercy, and Marian Consecration...see Principal and Foundation below, pg. 66-67)

In this retreat then, sanctity is about living to console Jesus. The above quote of the Pope ties into our view of Sanctity. Sanctity means “to live with one overriding desire: to console Jesus.” St. Teresa of Avila summarizes for us: “Whoever wants to become a Saint must live with no other desire than that of pleasing God.” This retreat aims to foster this one desire.

4. This retreat is one part of a much larger picture. This retreat is the first and most important of a three-retreat project which corresponds to the “Big Picture” briefly outlined at the end of this appendix (pg. 108). This first retreat lays the foundation for a solid spiritual life, that is, a deep and personal relationship with Jesus. The second retreat goes more into the mission Jesus has for us of bringing others into friendship with him—a mission that will only be effective if the first part is well in place. The third retreat will be more on the final end, that place to which Jesus wants to bring all of us: his Father’s House.

5. Ignatian retreats are unique. Ignatian retreats are unique in that they contain a whole formation program built in. Many retreats, though they are great for “spiritual highs” often don’t focus on practical

tools necessary for ensuring lasting fruit. Ignatian Retreats do focus on these tools and for this reason they are the only retreat form given the Church's official "stamp of approval." Many of these "tools for formation" have been incorporated into this retreat. This is why we can be so bold in our claims, with Fr. Lanteri, that in this retreat one has all he needs to become a great saint quickly. Indeed, these Ignatian retreats are not your usual retreats. This one can bear much fruit if you are willing to put out the necessary effort and to beg the grace from God; as St. Ignatius says, "Work as if all depended on you and pray as if all depended on God." Have a good retreat!

II. Preliminary Points

Annotation #5 of The Spiritual Exercises (St. Ignatius of Loyola)

"It will be very profitable for the one who is to go through the Exercises to enter upon them with magnanimity and generosity toward his Creator and Lord, and to offer Him his entire will and liberty, that His Divine Majesty may dispose of him and all he possesses according to His most Holy will."

III. The Great Principle of the Spiritual Exercises

The Principle and Foundation of this Retreat

The Principle and Foundation of this retreat, like "The First Principle and Foundation" of St. Ignatius, has two parts:

- 1) *the end or goal*
- 2) *the means to the goal (how to get there)*

So, the Principle and Foundation of this retreat is as follows:

1. THE GOAL:

To **Console** the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus—
which loves so much, yet which is so little loved.

2. THE MEANS:

There are many ways to console Jesus' Eucharistic Heart (praying for sinners, keeping him company, making sacrifices, etc.) but in this retreat our focus has been on the *best* means for little souls which are:

1. **MERCY:** The best way to console his heart is by our **trust** in his Merciful Love which means **praise and thanksgiving in all things**. ("Ignatian Indifference")
2. **MARY:** When we live our consecration, Mary makes the consolation we give to Jesus perfect because part of Marian Consecration means to **love Jesus with the Immaculate Heart of Mary**. Mary also teaches us the way of confident

abandonment and rejoicing, mentioned in the previous point above (#1), by urging us to proclaim her own three words of “*Ecce,*” “*Fiat,*” and “*Magnificat*” (see conclusion above).

These two ways are closely related as described above in the Conclusion.

SO, our Principle and Foundation is:

...to console Jesus’ sorrowful, Eucharistic Heart by that joyful, humble, confident, childlike, self-surrendering, love described in this retreat.

The First Principle and Foundation
by St. Ignatius of Loyola

[GOAL]

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.

[MEANS]

The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he is created.

Hence, man is to make use of them in as far as they help him in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him.

Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things.

Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.

IV. God-Given Principle and Foundation:
The Eucharistic/Sacred Heart

1. Definitions of the Devotion:

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, by its very nature is a worship of the love with which God, through Jesus, loved us, and at the same time, an exercise of our love by which we are related to God and to other men. (Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*)

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus appears essentially as a worship of and a response to the Person of Christ as viewed from the perspective of His divine and human love which is manifested through His sacred humanity and is symbolized by His wounded physical Heart...One of the primary characteristics of the devotion to the Sacred Heart is an intense compassion for the broken, human heart of our Lord...The principle object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart is God’s merciful love for man.. (O’Donnell, *Heart of the Redeemer*)

Regarding the devotion, Our Lord said to Josefa Menedez (see #3 below for more on her):

How often in the course of the ages have I, in one way or another, made known My love for men: I have shown them how ardently I desire their salvation. I have revealed My Heart to them. This devotion has been as light cast over the whole earth, and, today by its means, those who labor to gain souls to My service have been enabled to do so...

Then the Lord seemed to highlight the new emphasis of reparation through trust which he gave to St. Faustina (and which has been adopted by this retreat) as he continues, **Now, I want something more, for if I long for love in response to My own, this is not the only return I desire from souls; I want them all to have Confidence in My mercy, to expect all from My mercy, to expect all from My clemency, and never to doubt My readiness to forgive.**

2. Quotations from three popes of the 20th century concerning the importance of devotion to the Sacred Heart in our age (see O'Donnell, Intro.⁴⁵):

[Devotion to the Heart of Jesus] is the extraordinary remedy for the extraordinary needs of our times. (Pius XI, *Caritate Christi Compulsi*, May 3, 1932)

Devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is so important that it may be considered, so far as practice is concerned, the perfect profession of the Christian religion....It is no ordinary form of piety which anyone at his own whim may treat as of little consequence or set aside as inferior to others. (Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*, May 15, 1956)

The cult rendered to the Sacred Heart is the most efficacious means to contribute to that spiritual and moral renewal of the world called for by the Second Vatican Council (Paul VI, *Address to the Thirty-First General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, Nov. 17, 1966)

3. Regarding the Questions, “What does it mean that Jesus still suffers in the Blessed Sacrament? Isn’t he happy in heaven? Isn’t his suffering over?”:⁴⁶

The way the mystics (and the Church) explain the sorrow of Jesus’ Eucharistic heart is by a direct relation to the suffering of our Lord in his passion. When we look at the Eucharist we are, in a sense, looking through a window at the Lord as he actually suffered and *still is suffering* the agony of his passion. *Still suffering the agony of the passion? Wait, didn’t that happen a long time ago...in the past...in other words, isn’t his suffering over?*

The Lord did indeed suffer his passion 2000 years ago...but still, in his Eucharistic heart we can say that he *still does suffer*. We can understand this when we consider that Jesus, because he is true God, and because—as the Church teaches—he is all knowing, when he lived his earthly life, he was able to see all the people of all times: saints and sinners. The Catechism affirms this as it comments on Galatians 2:20: “Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony, and his Passion and gave himself up for each one of us: ‘The Son of God...loved me and gave himself for me.’”(CCC #478) That Jesus knew *you* in his passion is important to keep in mind, specifically, when we think of consoling him in his passion.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ The complete information on his book and the others quoted in this appendix can be found in the section of the appendix which lists the recommended books (pg. 96)

⁴⁶ These questions are crucial because our Principle and Foundation of this retreat is consoling the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. But you can’t give consolation to someone if they aren’t suffering. But for many, this idea that Jesus suffers in the Blessed Sacrament needs explanation.

⁴⁷ See especially the quote below (under section “b”) by Robert Stackpole for it explains well this mystery involving “God’s time” and ours and how they relate to the Eucharistic mystery.

When the Lord Jesus suffered his passion—for instance, when he suffered his agony in the Garden on the night he was betrayed—he was able to see you right now... “back then”! This means that if you tell him that you love him right *now* it actually consoles him in his passion “then;” and when you reject him now, he sees that too and it causes him pain “then.” Do you see how important a Holy Hour can be? In a Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament, you truly are with the Lord as he endures his passion, you truly give him consolation “then.” As we read some of the words of the mystics and then of the theologians this should become clearer. Because we are dealing here with potentially confusing concepts such as time “then” and “now” we will first look at the mystics who explain these truths in rather simple ways, then we shall move on to the theologians who give us more of the details. Before going to the mystics, however, we’d like to offer one Rosary meditation that explains much of this fairly clearly

From *Come to Me in the Blessed Sacrament*⁴⁸: The Agony in the Garden

On this Holy Thursday night Jesus showed us the very ‘depth of his love’ by giving us the complete gift of Himself and His total love in the Holy Eucharist. Then he appealed to his apostles for the first holy hour of prayers and asked them to watch and pray with Him.

As he started to pray, He began to sweat blood. The agony He suffered was the realization that the Holy Eucharist would be rejected by so many and appreciated by so few. To reject the Holy Eucharist is to reject Jesus Himself.

He saw down through the ages how He would be left alone, spurned and avoided by men in so many tabernacles of the world, while He comes to bring so much love and so many blessings. How few would believe in His Real Presence; and fewer still respond to His appeal to be loved in the Blessed Sacrament. And His Heart was “filled with sorrow to the point of death.” The blood He sweated was grief poured out from a broken Heart caused by the sorrow of His Eucharistic love being so rejected.

Then an angel brought Jesus indescribable strength and consolation by showing Him every holy hour that you would ever make. At that moment in the garden, Jesus saw you praying before Him now and He knew that His love would be returned. This is why your visit today is so important to Him. Your holy hour consoles Him for those who do not love Him and wins countless graces for many to be converted to Him.

He sees you before Him now and forgets the rejection of the world. Here we offer to Jesus any rejection we may receive from others that He may be loved by all men in this Most Blessed Sacrament.

a) Saints and Mystics: Sr. Josefa Menedez and St. Faustina

Now let us read how Jesus really is present and waits for us with such painful longing in the Blessed Sacrament where he remains a “prisoner of love.” He really is there and he thirsts for our visits. These words are taken from the private revelations of Jesus to Sr. **Josefa Menedez**. She is called “the modern day St. Margaret Mary Alacoque.” These revelations have been **approved by the Church** through Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who later became Pope Pius XII. Also, Mother Theresa of Calcutta counted these words to Josefa as some of her favorite subjects for meditation before our Eucharistic Lord. **Notice the great pain yet also great love which comes through these words of our Lord.** One can see why Josefa can be called a modern day St. Margaret Mary...for she reminds us of how loving the Lord really is. How easily we forget his true face! (Unless otherwise indicated, the quotes under “Sr. Josefa” come from “Eucharistic Holy Hour Six” from *Come to Me in the Blessed Sacrament*):

--To Sr. Josefa Jesus said:

⁴⁹Write today concerning the pain endured by My Heart, when being constrained by the fire that consumed it, I DEvised THE MARVEL OF LOVE, the Holy Eucharist. And while I looked at those souls that would feed on this heavenly Bread, I could not but see also the indifference by which so many others...consecrated souls...priests...would wound Me in this Sacrament. There were those

⁴⁸ From now on, this work will be cited as “*CMBS*”

⁴⁹ Throughout the rest of the appendix, any words given by the Lord will be given in boldface type. Also, in some sections of this appendix, the more important sections of a passage will also be in boldface.

who would grow cold...gradually yield to routine...to weariness and lassitude, and little by little to tepidity...

Still, I wait all night and watch in the Tabernacle for that soul...fervently hoping that she will come and receive Me...That she will converse with Me with all the trust of a bride...Telling Me of her sorrows, her temptations her sufferings...asking My advice and begging for the graces she needs for herself or others...Then see if My Heart is not asking something of you to comfort it.

It is love for souls that keeps Me a Prisoner in the Blessed Sacrament. I stay there that all may come and find the comfort they need **IN THE TENDEREST OF HEARTS**, the best of Fathers, the most faithful of Friends who will never abandon them.

I want to tell you of the poignant sorrows which filled My Heart at the Last Supper. If it was bliss for Me to think of all those to whom I should be both Companion and Heavenly Food, of all those who would surround me to the end of time with adoration, reparation, and love...This in no way diminished My grief at the many who would leave me deserted in My Tabernacle and who would not even believe in My real presence.

Sacrileges and outrages, and all the nameless abominations to be committed against Me passed before My eyes...The long, lonely hours of the day and of the night in which I would remain alone on the altars...and the multitudes who would not heed the appeals of My Heart...

I desire that My love in the Blessed Sacrament should be the sun to enlighten every heart and the heat to reanimate every soul. This is why My words must reach them. I want all the world to recognize in the Blessed Sacrament a God of mercy and love. I wish that everywhere My desire to forgive and save souls should be read, and that not even the most wretched be kept back by fear...nor the most guilty fly from Me...**LET THEM ALL COME TO ME IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT**. I await them with open arms like the most affectionate of fathers in order to impart life and true happiness to them.

I am Love! My Heart can no longer contain its devouring flames. I love souls so dearly, that I have sacrificed My life for them.

It is this love that keeps me a prisoner in the Tabernacle. For nearly twenty centuries I have dwelt there, night and day, **VEILED UNDER THE SPECIES OF BREAD** and concealed in the small white Host, bearing through love, neglect, solitude, contempt, blasphemies, outrages, sacrileges...

Contemplate Me in the prison where I spent the greater part of the night. The soldiers came and, adding words to injuries, insulted Me, mocked Me, outraged Me, and gave Me blows on My face and on My whole body.

Tired of their sport, at length they left me bound and alone in the dark and noisome place, where, seated on a stone, My aching body was cramped with cold.

Compare the prison with the Tabernacle...and especially with the hearts that receive Me. In the prison I spent only part of one night...but in the Tabernacle, how many days and nights? In the prison I was insulted and ill-treated by soldiers who were My enemies. In the Tabernacle most often it is they who call Me their Father who treat Me thus, but how unlike that of children is the treatment!...

In the prison I endured cold, sleeplessness, hunger and thirst, pain, shame, solitude, and desertion. And there passed before My mind's eye all the tabernacles where in the course of ages I should lack the shelter of love...the icy-cold hearts that would be as hard and unfeeling as the stones of the prison floor were to My numbed and wounded body.

And how often should I wait for this or that other soul to visit Me in the Blessed Sacrament and receive Me into his heart...how many nights should I spend longing for his coming...but he would let business or carelessness or anxiety for his health get the better of him...and he would not come!

How often should I hunger for souls...for their fidelity...for their generosity...would they satisfy that eager hunger by a little victory over self or by a slight mortification?...Would they comfort Me in My sorrow by their tenderness and compassion?...In some hard moment would they endure the pain...neglect...scorn...opposition...grief of soul or family...would they come to Me and

say: 'This I offer Thee to console Thy sadness, to keep Thee company in Thy solitude.' O! if they would thus unite themselves to Me, with what peace would they face difficulties...how much fortitude they would win and how they would gladden My Heart!

O you who are consecrated to Me, draw near to the Bridegroom of your souls in His prison. Gaze steadfastly upon Him during that night of pain and see that sorrow continued in the loneliness of countless tabernacles and the coldness of many hearts.

If you are desirous of providing sympathy, open your hearts and let Me find a prison therein...there bind Me with chains of love...there clothe Me with loving attentions...Appease My hunger by your generosity...Assuage My thirst by your zeal...Comfort Me in My sorrow by keeping Me faithful company and wiping away My shame by your purity and uprightness of intention.

Today you are My repose, but for all eternity I shall be your rest...Tenderly and with love you have harbored Me in the prison of your heart. I shall be your reward exceedingly great and you will never regret any sacrifice you have made for me during your life! (*I Wait For You*, 22-23)

--To St. Faustina Jesus said:

(There are many passages we could quote from the Diary of St. Faustina that would illustrate this point of the Lord's great suffering and how we can console him *today*. In the following we give the passages from *The Divine Mercy Novena (Diary, #1209-1229⁵⁰)* which the Lord asked for from St. Faustina. These petitions given by the Lord express his desire to be consoled and how sins today hurt him in his passion).

[First Day] Today bring to Me all mankind, especially sinners, and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. In this way you will console Me in the bitter grief into which the loss of souls plunges Me.

[Second Day] Today bring to Me the souls of priests and religious, and immerse them in My unfathomable mercy. It was they who gave Me strength to endure My bitter Passion. Through them as through channels My mercy flows out upon mankind.

[Third Day] Today bring to Me all devout and faithful souls and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. These souls brought Me consolation on the Way of the Cross. They were that drop of consolation in the midst of an ocean of bitterness.

[Fourth Day] Today bring to Me those who do not believe in God and those who do not yet know Me. I was thinking of them during my bitter Passion, and their future zeal comforted My Heart. Immerse them in the ocean of My mercy.

[Fifth Day] Today bring to Me the souls of those who have separated themselves from My Church, and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. During My bitter Passion they tore at My Body and Heart, that is, My Church. As they return to unity with the Church My wounds heal and in this way they alleviate My Passion.

[Sixth Day] Today bring to Me the meek and humble souls and the souls of little children, and immerse them in My mercy. These souls most closely resemble My Heart. They strengthened Me during My bitter agony. I saw them as earthly Angels, who will keep vigil at my altars. I pour out upon them whole torrents of grace. Only the humble soul is capable of receiving My grace. I favor humble souls with My confidence.

[Seventh Day] Today bring to Me the souls who especially venerate and glorify My mercy, and immerse them in My mercy. These souls sorrowed most over my Passion and entered most deeply into My spirit. They are living images of My Compassionate Heart. These souls will shine with a special brightness in the next life. Not one of them will go into the fire of hell. I shall particularly defend each one of them at the hour of death.

⁵⁰ *Divine Mercy in My Soul: The Diary of Sr. M. Faustina Kowalska*. From now on, this will be cited as "Diary"

[Eighth Day] Today bring to Me the souls who are detained in purgatory, and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy. Let the torrents of My Blood cool down their scorching flames. All these souls are greatly loved by Me. They are making retribution to My justice. It is in your power to bring them relief. Draw all the indulgences from the treasury of My Church and offer them on their behalf. Oh, if you only knew the torments they suffer, you would continually offer for them the alms of the spirit and pay off their debt to My justice.

[Ninth Day] Today bring to Me souls who have become lukewarm, and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy. These souls wound My Heart most painfully. My soul suffered the most dreadful loathing in the Garden of Olives because of lukewarm souls. They were the reason I cried out: ‘Father, take this cup away from Me, if it be your will.’ For them the last hope of salvation is to run to My mercy.

b) Popes and Theologians

Pius XI:

Every soul which burns with true love of God, if it but turns its thoughts to the past, sees in meditation and can contemplate Jesus suffering for mankind, afflicted by grief in the midst of sorrows suffered “for us men and for our salvation,” weighed down by agony and reproaches, “bruised for our sins,” in the very act of healing us by His bruises. With so much the more understanding can pious souls meditate upon these mysteries if they appreciate that the sins and crimes of men, no matter when committed, were the real reason why the Son of God was condemned to death and that even sins committed now would be able of themselves to cause Christ to die a death accompanied by the same sufferings and agonies as His death on the cross, since every sin must be said to renew in a certain way the Passion of our Lord, “crucifying again to themselves the Son of God and making Him a mockery.” And if, in view of our own future sins, foreseen by Him, the soul of Jesus became sad even unto death, there can be no doubt that by his prevision at the same time our acts of reparation He was in some way comforted when “there appeared an angel from heaven” to console that Heart of His bowed down with sorrow and anguish.

At the present time, we too, in a marvelous but no less true manner, may and ought to console that Sacred Heart which is being wounded continually by the sins of thoughtless men, since—and we read this also in the sacred liturgy—Christ Himself grieved over the fact that He was abandoned by His friends. For He said, in the words of the Psalmist, “My heart hath expected reproach and misery. And I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, and I found none.” (Pius XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*).

Berrand De Margerie, S.J.:

Referring to the above Encyclical of Pope Pius XI, De Margerie writes: “The classical objection is well known: how could we today console Christ, now perfectly happy and glorious, in His Passion now forever past? Pius XI already in 1928 gave the decisive answer: if we cannot console Him, we cannot offend Him either; if we could offend Him by our sins, and by our present sins, we can also today console Him and affect Him, our Creator, by the good works undertaken with the inspiration of His Spirit. We have, therefore, *the duty to comfort the suffering Christ*, since we are able to do so.” (*The Human Knowledge of Christ* Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1980)

Dr. O’Donnell:

Commenting on the above quote, Dr. Timothy O’Donnell says, “This form of consolation of which the Pope speaks is possible because our Lord’s knowledge and ability to receive consolation transcended the narrow horizons of his historical condition. In his comprehensive knowledge and all encompassing love he experienced all the consolation of the entire human family during his lifetime when he was still capable of suffering and of being consoled. As God, of course, he possessed divine omniscience, knowing all of mankind’s good and evil acts even before creation. In his human soul, which was hypostatically united to his divine Person, he received the irradiation of the beatific vision.

In addition to this, he possessed an infused knowledge which gave him a comprehensive view of the souls of all men past, present and future. Accordingly, just as he allowed himself to be saddened by the

vision of the sins of mankind, so did he also allow himself to be consoled by all the human acts of compassionate consolation throughout history until the end of time. So, despite the fact that the future consolers of our Lord were not *personally* present during the passion, the reparatory value of their foreknown actions did in fact console Christ. This loving consolation was received by our Lord not in an ever-growing sequence, but instantaneously in his *nunc stans*—everlasting now. This is the great truth which many artists have sought to communicate down through the ages by painting various saints from different time periods standing at the foot of the cross. Although separated by time, their great love for Christ did in fact console him in his agony, since our Lord foresaw all their acts of loving consolation.

Although Christ *is* now in glory and incapable of suffering he still is the same divine Person who suffered for us. Through offering a loving consolation to our Lord in appreciation for his past sufferings, we attempt a return of love for his infinite love which he manifested on the cross. If one were to refuse to return to the mortal life of Christ in a loving remembrance of his suffering, it would truly reveal a shocking lack of love. It is this horrible ingratitude and forgetfulness which caused our Lord to complain to various mystics. In seeking to console the Sacred Heart, we are not turning to events which no longer have any effect upon us. The effects of our Lord's passion possess an eternal value which do not diminish with the passage of time; i.e., man's reconciliation with God, the continual application of Christ's sacrifice in Holy Mass, etc. Consoling our Lord for his past suffering leads to an ever more profound understanding of and participation in our Lord's work of redemption. Those who console the Sacred heart of Jesus are returning love for love at their particular time in salvation history, adding to the universal consolation which Christ accepted during his mortal life. This retrospective intention of compassionate love is true consolation. For Christ, now in glory, these acts of consolation become reparation which brings everlasting joyful satisfaction to him as he sees his Father honored by the faithful we appropriate the merits of redemption for their own salvation. (177-179).

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.:

During his earthly life, and particularly while in Gethsemane, Jesus suffered from all future acts of profanation and ingratitude. He knew them in detail with a superior intuition that *governed all times*; He could see them much better than the saints, who sometimes can read the secret plagues of the human heart. Thus, his suffering encompassed the present instant and extended to future centuries. "This drop of my blood, I shed it for you." So, in the Garden of Olives, Jesus suffered for all, and for each of us in particular, because he foresaw our ingratitude; but in that painful hour he was also *consoled* by the sight of those souls, who would take part with Him, for Him, and in Him in the work of redemption. He was consoled by the sight of such as St. Francis of Assisi, St. Benedict Joseph Labre, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Gemma Galgani. (In his essay "Consolare il Cuore di Gesu?" in *Vita Christiana*, no. 16, 1947)

Louis Vereheylezoon, S.J.:

The fruit of this reparation is not lost for Jesus. Our making amends consoled and rejoiced His Heart during His mortal life. That we were able to do so, before we existed, is owing to His prescience, His foreknowledge of the future. Theologians hold for certain that by the infused prescience with which God invested his soul, Jesus knew all that was in any way connected with the work of Redemption. He foresaw, then, all the good and evil which would occur in the course of time, and hence also whatever would be done for or against Him. He knew then, in particular, how men would repay His love. One may even say that this prevision was one of the causes of His deadly sorrow at Gethsemane. But at the same time He foresaw the tokens of love which He would receive from His faithful followers, and particularly the reparation they would make to Him for the ingratitude of others. It cannot but be that this prospect consoled, encouraged, and fortified Him, and helped Him to give Himself up to suffering and death in spite of His prevision of the ingratitude of so many. Whenever, then, we pay to Jesus some homage of reparation, we may cherish the gratifying conviction that, especially during His agony in the Garden, He saw us in the far off distance of time, that He gratefully looked upon us, and that our reparation really soothed His sorrow to some extent, and comforted and strengthened Him in His agony. (in *Devotion to the Sacred Heart*, Rockford, Ill.: TAN, 1978, p.88)

Robert Stackpole:

[Commenting on St. Faustina's remarkable visions of seeing the baby Jesus at Mass in the Eucharist and relating this to other theologians in the Church's Tradition he says...] The Holy Eucharist itself, of course,

is an unfathomable mystery. We know from our Catholic Faith that Jesus Christ is truly present, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, in the miracle of the Mass. The Church teaches us that the Mass is a *re-making-present* of the Sacrifice of Calvary, the Passion and Death of our Lord; it is a breaking down, in a sense, of the barriers of time, such that the People of God can truly come to the foot of the Cross at every Mass, and so that the merits and graces of that one perfect Sacrifice can be applied to our souls today. In fact, *the Mass makes present for us the whole Paschal Mystery*—the Death and Resurrection of our Lord—so that we can be intimately united also with His risen and glorified humanity whenever we receive Holy Communion. This is a stupendous mystery that defies all rationalistic attempts fully to comprehend it.

Nevertheless, the visions and meditations of St. Faustina shed further light on this mystery. It seems that God was teaching her that just as we are truly united with Christ's Passion and Resurrection at Holy Mass, so, in a mysterious way, we are given access to His Holy Childhood as well. *It is in fact, the whole Christ who is present and available to us in the Eucharist, from His cradle to His cross to Easter morning.* Moreover, this would not appear to be a doctrinal novelty, but an implication of the Church's own faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, coupled with the Church's traditional teaching concerning God's relationship to earthly time.

The Church's pre-eminent theologians, such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, have always taught that time, the course of history, is not the same for God as it is for us. For human beings there is before, during, and after; some things are past, some present, and some yet to be. But for God, it is not so. As St. Thomas Aquinas wrote:

God is wholly outside the order of time, standing as it were in the high citadel of eternity.... The whole course of time is subject to [His] eternity in one simple glance.

In other words, God sees all of time much like someone looking out of a tower might see a line of people passing by down below. Some people in the line come before, and some come after each other. But the person looking down from the tower, while he sees which ones come before and which ones come after, also sees all of them at once, from his all-encompassing perspective.

Theologians in the tradition of St. Thomas call this divine perspective on time God's "eternal now." Simply put, it means that all times and places are present before Him at once. Thus, for God, the Sacrifice on Calvary is not something that happened long, long ago; rather, it is ever present before His eyes. Again, His Holy Infancy in Bethlehem is not something in the distant past: it is always, eternally, present before Him.

What actually happens at Mass is that the participants are, in a sense, taken beyond the dimension of earthly space and time as we know it, and are brought to the border of the *eternal* dimension of time (God's "eternal now" perspective). What is most directly and immediately present to us at the Mass, of course, is Christ's risen and glorified Body. But in some way, He also makes His eternal perspective on His own human birth, life and death available to us at every Eucharist. That is how it is possible also for the Infancy of Christ, and the sacrificial Death of Christ, which are ever present to God, to be made present for us in a mysterious way at Holy Mass.

In short, out of His infinite love for us, and by a miracle we can only begin to fathom, *God makes present and available to us at every Eucharist every aspect of His incarnate Son's life and Death and Resurrection—the whole Christ—so that whatever aspect of Christ's life we need to draw upon is veiled for us under the sacramental Host.* This is one way to understand the meaning of the Church's teaching that through the Mass we can participate in the "mysteries" of Christ.

It follows from all this that when the Child Jesus appeared to St. Faustina at Holy Mass, He was not just *pretending* to make His Infancy present to her. Of course, these visions were filled with profound symbolism as well, but in a mysterious way God incarnate as the Babe of Bethlehem *really was* present to her through God's "eternal now." The visions she had were only a "lifting of the veil," so to speak, which enabled her to perceive this wonder of what the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament really means. (*Jesus Mercy Incarnate*, 31-33)⁵¹

[And from all of the above we would also say that when many Saints and mystics speak of Jesus as being *sorrowful* in the Blessed Sacrament with the sorrow he experienced in his Passion, by appearing in

⁵¹ (from now on this will be cited as "Stackpole")

this way Jesus was, as Dr. Stackpole writes, “not just pretending” and that Jesus in his sorrowful agony “really was present” to these mystics “through God’s ‘eternal now.’”]

To the questions, “**Isn’t Jesus happy in heaven? Why do we need to console him?**” Theologians answer that yes he is, yet he still suffers. In his Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Inuente*, John Paul II uses St. Therese to help us to understand the puzzling idea that Jesus can be experiencing both bliss and sorrow:

John Paul II, St. Theresa of Avila, and St. Therese:

In speaking about Jesus having experienced agony and bliss at the same time (and we’d add, and “continues” to experience this in his Eucharistic Heart,” Pope John Paul II says:

...More than an experience of physical pain, his passion is an agonizing suffering of the soul. Theological tradition has not failed to ask how Jesus could possibly experience at one and the same time his profound unity with the Father, by its very nature a source of joy and happiness, and an agony that goes all the way to his final cry of abandonment. The simultaneous presence of these two seemingly irreconcilable aspects is rooted in the fathomless depths of the hypostatic union.

Faced with this mystery, we are greatly helped not only by theological investigation, but also by that great heritage which is the “*lived theology*” of the saints. The saints offer us precious insights which enable us to understand more easily the intuition of faith, thanks to the special enlightenment which some of them have received from the Holy Spirit, or even through their personal experience of those terrible states of trial which the mystical tradition describes as the “dark night.” Not infrequently the saints have undergone *something akin to Jesus’ experience on the cross* in the paradoxical blending of bliss and pain. In the *Dialogue of Divine Providence*, God the Father shows *Catherine of Siena* how joy and suffering can be present together in holy souls: “Thus the soul is blissful and afflicted: afflicted on account of the sins of its neighbor, blissful on account of the union and the affection of charity which it has inwardly received. These souls imitate the spotless Lamb, my Only—begotten Son, who on the cross was both blissful and afflicted.” In the same way, *Therese of Lisieux* lived her agony in communion with the agony of Jesus, “experiencing” in herself the very paradox of Jesus’ own bliss and anguish: “**In the Garden of Olives our Lord was blessed with all the joys of the Trinity, yet his dying was no less harsh. It is a mystery, but I assure you that, on the basis of what I myself am feeling, I can understand something of it.**”⁵² What an illuminating testimony! Moreover, the accounts given by the evangelists themselves provide a basis for this intuition, on the part of the Church, of Christ’s consciousness when they record that, even in the depths of his pain, he died imploring forgiveness for his executioners (cf. Lk 23:34) and expressing to the Father his ultimate filial abandonment: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46). (Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Inuente*, 35-36)

Other theologians explain other aspects of the mystery of Jesus’ happiness and sorrow:

Gerald Vann, O.P.:

How can there be both longing desire still in Christ, since he is glorified and in the state of beatitude wherein all desires are fulfilled? But the answer is, I think, that Christ longs for the presence with him of His Body which is the Church in the same way that, according to St. Thomas, the soul in glory longs for the resurrection of the flesh; a longing, a desire, which is welcomed as part of the total love story, and because—unlike our human desires on earth—it has in it the certainty of fulfillment. (*The Pain of Christ and the Sorrow of God*—New York: Alba house, 1994, pp. 89-90)

Louis Verheylezoon, S.J.:

True, [Christ’s] happiness is complete, nothing is wanting. His essential happiness caused by the intuitive vision of the Divinity, and by His hypostatic union with it, cannot increase. But in addition to that He enjoys an accidental happiness and this is capable of being augmented. It is augmented whenever He is afforded a new joy...Now it is certain that each act of reparation is for Him the source of a new joy...Thus we have the consoling certainty that by our acts of reparation we really rejoice His Heart and increase His happiness. (work cited above, 89)

⁵² No wonder St. Therese so greatly emphasized the spirituality of consoling Jesus...she knew first-hand what he was going through.

4. Popes and others concerning the nature and efficacy of the devotion as well as the obligation of all Catholics to practice it:

Since some Christians, perhaps, are ignorant of, and others are indifferent to, the sorrows which the most loving Jesus revealed to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in His apparitions to her, as well as His wishes and desires which He manifested to mankind, all of which in the last analysis work to man's advantage, it is Our pleasure, Venerable Brothers, to write you at some length of the **obligation which rests upon all** to make amends which we owe to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. (Pius XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*)

...it is **absolutely necessary** that the faithful venerate and honor this Heart... (Paul VI, *Diserti Interpretes*).

How **necessary** this host of watchful hearts is in the Church in order that the love of the divine Heart may not remain isolated and unrequited! (John Paul II, Angelus Message of Jun 24, 1979)

In [the Sacred Heart] we can consider not only the symbol but, in a sense, the **summary of the whole mystery of our redemption**... (Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*).

The Holy Father calls the devotion “**the most effective school of the love of God**” and then urges that the faithful unite to this devotion veneration for the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He also calls it a sort of “mystical ladder by which we mount to the embrace of God our savior.” (Pius XII, *Ibid.*)

...the honor to be paid to the Sacred Heart is such as to raise it to the rank—so far as external practice is concerned—of **the highest expression of Christian piety**. For this is the religion of Jesus which is centered on the Mediator who is man and God, and in such a way that we cannot reach the Heart of God save through the Heart of Christ...(*Ibid.*)

The Holy Father then calls upon all Catholics to **promote the devotion with “vigorous zeal.”** He stresses the vital importance of the devotion, leaving no room for doubt or ambiguity since the devotion is no ordinary form of piety: “In truth, if the arguments brought forward which form the foundation for the devotion to the pierced Heart of Jesus are duly pondered, it is surely clear that there is **no question here of some ordinary form of piety** which anyone at his own whim may treat as of little consequence or set aside as inferior to others, but of a religious practice which helps very much towards the attaining of Christian perfection. **..is it possible that there is any service of God more obligatory and necessary, and at the same time more excellent and attractive,** than the one which is dedicated to love? For what is more pleasing and acceptable to God than service which pays homage to the divine love and is offered for the sake of that love—since any service freely offered is a gift in some sense and love ‘has the position of the first gift, through which all other free gifts are made.’...”

That form of piety, then should be held in the **highest esteem** by means of which man honors and loves God more and dedicates himself with greater ease and promptness to the divine charity; a form which our Redeemer Himself deigned to propose and commend to Christians and which the Supreme Pontiffs in their turn defended and highly praised in memorable published documents. Consequently, **to consider of little worth this signal benefit conferred on the Church by Jesus Christ would be to do something both rash and harmful and also deserving of God's displeasure.**

We therefore **urge all Our children in Christ**, both those who are already accustomed to drink the saving waters flowing from the Heart of the Redeemer and, more especially those who look on from a distance like hesitant spectators, to eagerly embrace this devotion. Let them carefully consider, as We have said, that it is a question of a devotion which has long been powerful in the Church and is solidly founded on the Gospel narrative. It received clear support from tradition and the sacred liturgy and has been frequently and generously praised by the Roman Pontiffs themselves. These were not satisfied with establishing a feast in honor of the most Sacred Heart of the Redeemer and extending it to the Universal Church; they were also responsible for the solemn acts of dedication which consecrated the whole human race to the same Sacred Heart...

When so many evils meet Our gaze—such as cause sharp conflict among individuals, families, nations, and the whole world, particularly today more than at any other time—where are we to seek a remedy, venerable brethren? **Can a form of devotion surpassing that of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus be found, which corresponds better to the essential character of the Catholic faith, which is more capable of assisting the present-day needs of the Church and the human race? What religious practice is more excellent, more attractive, more salutary than this, since the devotion in question is entirely directed towards the love of God itself?** Finally, what more effectively than the love of Christ—which devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus daily increases and fosters more and more—can move the faithful to bring into the activities of life the Law of the Gospel.

And so, following in the footsteps of Our immediate predecessor, We are pleased to address once again to all Our dear sons in Christ those words of exhortation which Leo XIII, of immortal memory, towards the close of the last century addressed to all the faithful and to all who were genuinely anxious about their own salvation and that of civil society: ‘Behold, today, another true sign of God’s favor is presented to our gaze, namely, the Sacred Heart of Jesus...shining forth with a wondrous splendor from amidst flames. In it must all our hopes be placed; from it salvation is to be sought and hoped for.’ (Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*)

If we consider its special nature it is beyond question that **this devotion is an act of religion of high order**; it demands of us a complete and unreserved determination to devote and consecrate ourselves to the love of the divine Redeemer, Whose wounded Heart is its living token and symbol. It is equally clear, but at a higher level, that **this same devotion provides us with a most powerful means** of repaying the divine Lord by our own. (Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*)

Commenting on the above quote, Dr. Timothy O’Donnell writes of how “Despite the fact that the devotion has ‘completely penetrated the Mystical Body’ some person, even within the Church, have little regard for it. The Holy Father rejects those who would brand the devotion as taught by the Church as a kind of ‘sentimentalism’ or ‘naturalism.’ He likewise rejects the criticism that the devotion is ill-adapted or harmful to the modern needs of the Church and humanity. **Pope Pius also speaks of the error of some men who believe that they may accept or reject the devotion according to their own whim. This false belief stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the devotion: ‘There are some who, confusing and confounding the primary nature of this devotion with various individual forms of piety which the Church approves and encourages but does not command, regard this as a kind of additional practice which each one may take up or not according to his own inclination.’** (*Ibid.*)” (O’Donnell)

Regarding the words of Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary, “Behold this heart which loves so much, yet is so little loved,” Pius XI said that they “should be graven on the hearts of all pious souls so as to never be forgotten.” (*Miserentissimus Redemptor*)

John Paul II, in his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, speaks of the communication of God’s merciful love as a *vital necessity* for the Church of our day and the profession of the mercy of God must be the way for the Church if she is to implement the renewal sought by the Vatican Council...How is the Church to implement this teaching which is so central and necessary in her contemporary life? The Holy Father unequivocally states that this is accomplished by turning to the mystery of the Heart of Christ. The Heart of Christ is seen as the focal point which is central to the great revelation of merciful love:

“The Church seems in a particular way to profess the mercy of God and to venerate it when she directs herself to the heart of Christ. In fact, it is precisely this drawing close to Christ in the mystery of his heart which enables us to dwell on this point—a point in a sense central and also most accessible on the human level...” (taken from O’Donnell, 237)

...whatever honor, veneration, and love is given to this divine Heart is really and truly given to Christ Himself. (Leo XIII, *Annum Sacrum*)

5. On the Eucharist Heart and Sacred Heart as one:

[It will not] be easy to understand the strength of the love which moved Christ to give Himself to us as our spiritual food save by fostering in a special way the **devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus**, the purpose of which is—to use the words of our predecessor of happy memory, Leo XIII—to call to mind the act of supreme love whereby our Redeemer, pouring forth all the treasures of His Heart in order to remain with us till the end of time, instituted the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist.” For “**not the least part of the revelation of that Heart is the Eucharist, which He gave to us out of the great charity of His own Heart.**” (Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*)

We are at Montmartre, in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, consecrated to the contemplation of Christ’s love present in the Blessed Sacrament.

We are in the evening of the first of June, the first day of the month particularly dedicated to meditation, to contemplation of Christ’s love manifested by His Sacred Heart.

Here, day and night, Christians gather in succession to seek “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (cf. Eph. 3:8).

We are called not only to meditate on, and contemplate, this mystery of Christ’s love; we are called to take part in it. **It is the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, the center of our faith, the center of our worship of Christ’s merciful love manifested in his Sacred Heart**, a mystery which thereby becomes one of those centers from which the Lord’s love and grace radiated in a mysterious but real way on your city, on your country and on the redeemed world. (John Paul II, *Meditation at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Montmartre, June 1, 1980*)

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus consists essentially in concentrating the Christian life upon the Holy Eucharist:

“The devotion to the Blessed Eucharist and the devotion to the Sacred Heart are two sister devotions. They are so intimately united, they complete each other so perfectly, that the one calls for the other, as if necessarily. Not only can the first of these devotions not prejudice the second; but they augment each other reciprocally, because they complete each other and perfect each other.

The Sacred Heart, the Blessed Eucharist, love are one and the same thing! In the Tabernacle we find the Host; in the heart, Love, Infinite Love, divine Charity, God the Principle of life, living and vivifying. But more still: the ineffable miracle of the Eucharist can be explained only by love; by the love of God, yes, but by the love of Jesus, God and Man. Now the love of Jesus is the love of His Heart: it is **His Heart, to sum up all in one word. Thus, the Blessed Eucharist is explained only by the Sacred Heart.**” (Mother Louise Margaret Claret de la Touche, *The Sacred Heart and the Priesthood*, as cited in O’Donnell, 274)

Also, it is important to remember that all of the revelations granted by our Lord to St. Margaret Mary took place in a Eucharistic setting as the saint prayed before the Blessed Sacrament.

6. On Staying “Fixed” on the Eucharistic Heart as our Principle and Foundation:

If you realized what happiness it is to love the Sacred Heart of Jesus, you would despise all else and love but It alone. –St. Margaret Mary

Jesus said to St. Faustina, “**My daughter, look at My merciful heart.**” Faustina then wrote: “As I fixed my gaze on the Most Sacred Heart, the same rays of light, as are represented in the Image as blood and water, came forth from it, and I understood how great is the Lord’s mercy.” (*The Life of Faustina Kowalska*, Michalenko, 53)⁵³

In our own modern era, every pope from Leo XIII to John Paul II has called upon mankind to turn and fix their gaze upon the Heart of Christ. (O’Donnell, 153.)

⁵³ This work from now on will be cited as “*Bio*”

When the Church, in the days immediately succeeding her institution, was oppressed beneath the yoke of the Caesars, a young emperor saw in the heavens a cross, which became at once the happy omen and cause of the glorious victory that soon followed. And now, today, **behold another blessed and heavenly token is offered to our sight—the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, with a cross rising from it and shining forth with dazzling splendor amidst flames of love. In that Sacred Heart all our hopes should be placed, and from it the salvation of men is to be confidently sought.** (Leo XIII, *Annum Sacrum*)

At every moment, we are enveloped, in the love of this heart “which loves men so much and which is so little loved by them. (John Paul II, *Meditation at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Montmartre, June 1, 1980*)

The Holy Father took several other subsequent occasions to recall his visit to Monmartre in order to **urge the faithful to once again raise their eyes to contemplate the love of Christ revealed in his heart...** (O'Donnell, 234).

Deep within their souls, all men by nature long for and seek happiness. To the extent that a man shall find love in this life he shall be happy. The ultimate satisfaction and completion of this longing is to be found for all men only in the Heart of Christ Jesus. (*Ibid.*)

Let us work to satisfy Jesus. (St. Faustina)

Put your mouth at the heart of the Son of God, since it is a heart that casts the fire of charity and pours out blood to wash away your iniquities. I say that **the soul that rests there and considers with the eye of the intellect the heart that is consumed and opened out of love, that soul receives in itself such conformity within, seeing itself so loved, that it cannot do anything but love.** (Catherine of Sienna, *Letters*, 97.)

7. On the Sacred Heart as containing the Revelation of Jesus as *he truly is* (not as the Jansenists would have us believe):

The devotion to the Heart of Jesus is described by Pius XI as “the very summary of our religion” which if practiced “**will most surely lead us to know intimately Jesus Christ** and will cause our hearts to love more tenderly and to imitate Him more generously.” (*Miserentissimus Redemptor*, emphasis added.)

Along with the study of Scripture and Tradition, if the faithful practice the devotion they will most certainly “attain the sweetest knowledge of the love of Christ which is the perfection of the Christian life.” (Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*)

...**the real reason why Jesus is neglected by so many and but little loved by others is to be found in the fact that He is almost entirely unknown to the former and not known sufficiently by the latter.** [He goes on to point to the Sacred Heart as that which gives this true knowledge] (Benedict XV, *Letter to Fr. Mateo Crawley-Boevey*).

PART TWO: Living the Foundation

I. Removing the Obstacles to Consoling Jesus

Obstacle #1: Fear of Suffering

—If we're to console Jesus we may be afraid that it will cost too much.

--Be convinced of the Lord's gentleness and a note on suffering.

1. The Lord's gentleness:

"Joseph, Joseph...Haven't I shown you how gentle I am with you?...Why are you afraid to come to me?"

We apply to the Heart of Jesus the measure of our own miserable little hearts, so mean, so narrow, so hard, and we do not succeed in comprehending how good, how indulgent, how compassionate, how gentle, how patient is Jesus himself.

We are severe particularly through lack of humility. This lack of humility prevents us from going to Jesus with the childlike confidence which permits him to make our hearts gentle and humble like his, to exchange our hearts for his.

Yes, it is really this which misleads us. We have not experienced a truly merciful, universally merciful heart, always benevolent and understanding, which, attracted by misery, always knows how to bend over it in compassion. Yet that is what the Heart of Jesus is like. (*IBL*, 44).

"I am Love and Mercy itself."

2. A Note on Suffering:

It is not the amount of suffering, but the trust that goes with its being united to Jesus that makes it so powerful. St. Therese refers to this truth when she says, "Do little things with great love."

Jesus said to Faustina from the Cross:

I Thirst. I thirst for the salvation of souls. Help Me, My daughter, to save souls. Join your sufferings to My Passion and offer them to the heavenly Father for sinners. (*Diary*, #1032)

See quotes under point 3, Obstacle #3 below.

From a Rosary Meditation on the Carrying of the Cross:

Jesus kissed and embraced His Cross for love of us because by His holy Cross He would become one with us in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the gift of Our Lord's Passion. With Mary we unite ourselves with Jesus and offer to Him all our sufferings in mind and body, in heart and soul.

We are never give more than we can carry or bear, and as Simeon helped Jesus carry His cross, so Jesus Himself helps us carry ours. "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted." All trials purify us and lead us into a deeper union with Jesus. We offer Jesus all our sufferings for the salvation of souls, even the sufferings we bring upon ourselves.

This is the triumph of the Cross: all suffering has lasting and redeeming value when offered to Jesus Who glorified all human suffering by His holy Cross! Three times He fell on His way to Calvary to teach us never to get discouraged, for here in the Blessed Sacrament He makes a divine success out of all our failures when we humbly surrender them to the redeeming love of His Sacred Heart.

Like fire that transforms everything to itself, here in the Blessed Sacrament Jesus transforms everything to good in the fire of His Divine Love, drawing good out of evil, drawing a greater good out of a greater evil, consuming even our very faults and failures (like straw thrown into a burning furnace) and using them to make us more humble and to bring us even closer to His divine Heart. "In my weakness, I find my strength." (*CMBS*)

Jesus told me that I please Him best by meditating on His sorrowful Passion, and by such meditation much light falls upon my soul. (*Diary*, 267)

Before she was to begin her annual retreat, Sister Faustina went to ask her spiritual director if she could practice certain mortifications during that time. To her disappointment, Father Sopocko gave his consent only to some of her requests.

When she returned home, she went to the chapel for a moment and there she heard in her soul:

There is more merit to one hour of meditation on My sorrowful Passion than there is to a whole year of bloody scourging; the contemplation of My painful wounds is of

great profit to you, and it brings me great joy. I am surprised that you still have not completely renounced your self-will, but I rejoice exceedingly that this change will be accomplished during the retreat. (Diary, 89)

We gain more in one day from the afflictions visited on us by God or our neighbor than from 10 years of self-inflicted suffering. (Teresa of Avila)

Is there anyone who will console my heart?

Prayer of St. Faustina:

Jesus do not leave me alone in suffering. You know, Lord, how weak I am. I am an abyss of wretchedness, I am nothingness itself; so what will be so strange if you leave me alone and I fall? I am an infant, Lord, so I cannot get along by myself. However, beyond all abandonment I trust, and in spite of my own feeling I trust, and I am being completely transformed into trust—often in spite of what I feel. (Stackpole, 78)

Obstacle #2: Our Weakness, Sinfulness, and Attachments

--St. Therese's "Little Way"

Poor pitiable sinners do not turn away from Me...Day and night I am on the watch for you in the Tabernacle. I will not reproach you...I will not cast your sins in your face...But I will wash them in My Blood and in My Wounds. No need to be afraid...Come to Me...IF YOU BUT KNEW HOW DEARLY I LOVE YOU.

I love those who, after a first fall, Come to Me for pardon...I love them still more when they beg for pardon for their second sin, And should this happen again, I do not say a million times, but a million, million times, I still love them and pardon them, and I will wash in My Blood their last as fully as their first sin.

Never shall I weary of repentant sinners, nor cease from hoping for their return, and the greater their distress, the greater My welcome.

...the measure of My love and mercy for fallen souls is limitless. I want to forgive them. IT RESTS ME TO FORGIVE. I am ever there, waiting with boundless love till souls come to Me. Let them come, not be discouraged. Let them fearlessly THROW THEMSELVES INTO MY ARMS! I am their Father...

Come...enter My Heart. How easy it is for a mere nothing to lose itself in the abyss of love. That is how I will consume your littleness and nothingness.

Now, I want something more, for if I long for love in response to My own, this is not the only return I desire from souls; I want them all to have Confidence in My mercy, to expect all from My clemency, and never to doubt My readiness to forgive.

I hope to find in you My comfort, therefore have I chosen you. Open your whole soul to Me, and if you are conscious of having nothing worthy of Me, say with humility and trust: Lord, Thou knowest both the flowers and fruits of my garden...come and teach me how I may grow, what will please Thee most. To one who speaks in this way and has a genuine desire of showing love, I answer: Beloved, if such is your desire, suffer Me to grow them for you...let Me delve and dig in your garden...let Me clear the ground of those sinewy roots that obstruct it and which you have not the strength to pull up...All this I will do for you if you will give Me freedom. Then will blossoms grow quickly in your soul, and you will be the consolation of My Heart. (I Wait For You, 15)

Yes, My beloved, even your falls comfort Me. Do not be discouraged, for this act of humility which your fault drew from you has consoled Me more than if you had not fallen. Take courage, go forward steadily, and let Me train you. (I Wait For You, 15)

All this was present to Me when I instituted the Blessed Sacrament, and My Heart glowed with desire to become the food for just such souls. If I have taken up My abode among men, it is not merely to live among the perfect, but to uphold the weak, and sustain the lowly. I will make them grow and become strong. Their good resolves will be My solace and I will rest in their wretchedness. (*I Wait For You*, 16)

You need not fear, for I am strong and will make you strong; I am Love and will sustain you...I will not abandon you. (*I Wait For You*, 28)

I should have liked to comfort Him, but the consciousness of my unworthiness filled me with confusion as well as with grief. I told Him of my desires, and how I dared not ask pardon for the sins of the world, considering I have committed so many sins myself!...

Suddenly He came, and said compassionately: **‘Why these fears? Have I not told you that My one desire is to forgive? Do you think that I have chosen you because of your virtues? I know well that you have nothing but misery and weakness, but as I am a purifying fire, I will wrap you round in the flame of My Heart...Ah! Josefa, how often I have told you that My one longing is for souls to bring Me their miseries! Come...and let Love consume you.**

Then, as on the preceding day, a flame escaped from His Sacred Heart, and falling on mine, set it all aglow. (*Way of Divine Love*, 346)

See the dwelling that I am preparing for you for ever and ever...and what are you preparing for Me, Josefa? Ah! Lord—my sins...my miseries...my sorrow to have done so little for Thee. Never mind that...Give it all to Me and I will consume everything in the fire of My Heart. (*The Way of Divine Love*, 428)

O soul, steeped in darkness, do not despair. All is not yet lost...My child, all your sins have not wounded My Heart as painfully as your present lack of trust does—that after so many efforts of My love and mercy, you should still doubt my goodness...

You have a special claim on My Mercy. Let it act in your poor soul; let the rays of grace enter your soul; they bring with them light, warmth, and life...

What joy fills My Heart when you return to Me. Because you are weak, I take you in my arms and carry you to the home of My Father. (*Diary*, #1486)

One of her sisters in the convent asked Therese to tell her whether she could love Jesus as Therese did after reading about Therese’s poems of love. She was feeling sad that she could not.

Therese seized her pen: “I am not at a loss to answer you...How can you ask me if it is possible for you to love God as I love him? My desire for martyrdom is nothing. It is not that which gives me the limitless confidence which I feel in my heart. That desire is a consolation which Jesus sometimes grants to weak souls like mine, but when he does not give this consolation, it is a special grace...Ah, I feel certain that it is not that at all which is pleasing to God in my little soul. What pleases him is to see me love my littleness and my poverty. It is the blind hope which I have in his mercy...There is my only treasure. Why should this treasure not be yours?

“Oh, my darling sister, I beg you, understand your little one. Understand that in order to love Jesus, to be his victim of love, the weaker one is, with neither desires nor virtues, the more one is fit for the workings of this consuming and transforming Love. The sole desire to be a victim suffices, but one must consent to remain always poor and utterly weak.

“Ah, let us stay quite far from all that shines; let us love our littleness, let us love to feel nothing, and we shall then be poor in spirit and Jesus will come to look for us, however far away we are. He will transform us into flames of love. Oh, how I would like to be able to make you understand what I feel...It is confidence and nothing but confidence which must lead us to Love. Does not fear lead us to severe justice such as it is represented to sinners? But it is not this justice which Jesus will have for those who love him.” (quoted in *IBL*, 42)

Instead of rejoicing in my dryness, I ought to attribute it to my lack of fervor and fidelity. I ought to be distressed at sleeping during my prayers and acts of thanksgiving. Well, I am not distressed. I think little children please their parents as much when they sleep as when they are awake. (St. Therese)

I have a great love for the great Theresa of Avila, but little Therese brings us safe to shore. We must rely on her. (Bl. John XXIII)

Oh, but that is something easy for someone like St. Therese to say, she was so Holy...but Therese replies: "Oh, Jesus, how much I could say to all little souls about how ineffable your condescension is...I feel that **if (though this would be impossible) you were to find a soul more weak and little than mine, you would be pleased to shower upon it even greater favors, if it abandoned itself to you, with complete confidence in your infinite Mercy.**" (IBL, 18)

My daughter, all your miseries have been consumed in the flame of My love, like a little twig thrown into a roaring fire. By humbling yourself in this way, you draw upon yourself and upon other souls an entire sea of My mercy. She replied, "Jesus, mold my poor heart according to Your divine delight." (Bio, 178)

What a sweet joy to think that God is just, that is to say, that he takes our weaknesses into account, that he knows perfectly the frailty of our nature! Of what, therefore, should I be afraid? (St. Therese)

Therefore, never be discouraged by your faults. Begin by not being astonished at them. A little child who does not know how to walk is not astonished at stumbling and falling with each step he takes. (IBL, 38).

St. Therese says that "Everything is a grace" including "difficulties, contradictions, humiliations...all the souls miseries, its burdens, its needs...everything, because through them one learns humility and realizes one's weakness." Accepting our weakness is the key to humility.

The thought of beginning something new overwhelmed her. All she could think of was her own incompetence and inability to carry out God's intentions. Then she heard the words, "Do not fear; I Myself will make up for everything that is lacking in you." (Bio, 101)

I beg you, Lord, direct my soul yourself and be with me, for of myself, I am nothing. (Bio, 46)

Obstacle #3: Fear of Suffering Again

—Hesitation at wanting to console his heart in the *best* possible way

--The best, most powerful way to console him can also be the easiest and most simple!

To some I went for comfort, to others again for rest...would that all these cherished souls knew how easily they can console Me, harbor Me, or give rest to Me, their God. (CMBS)

Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of My graces into them. I rejoice that they as for much, because it is My desire to give much, very much. (Diary, #1578)

If we want to live in the light of the Cross of Jesus Christ, therefore, *it is not just penitential sorrow that He asks of us.* What He asks of us also is to trust in Him: in other words *just to let Him love us, to let Him transform and sanctify our hearts with all the graces of His Mercy that he merited for us on the Cross.* The miracle He promises is that when we do that, we actually bring "joy" and "delight" to His Sacred Heart, and we give him the "kingdom" He longs for most of all. (Stackpole, 60)

The essence of this Abandonment can be found in Mary's words: Ecce, Fiat, Magnificat! See the "Marian Theme" of the Conclusion above. See also Ch. 4 in IBL.

The next few points all have to do with Abandonment, though under different aspects:

1. “Peaceful” Trust:

“Let nothing disturb you”...lack of trust hurts him, this trust consoles him.

When someone asked little Therese to summarize her little childlike way she answered: “It is to be disturbed by nothing.”...it is really an offense against him when we worry voluntarily about anything. That is what causes him pain. That is what wounds his Heart more than anything else. (*IBL*, 55)

“...we sometimes make a prayer of the words for which he reproached his apostles: ‘Lord save us, we are perishing!’ This is not how we should pray, but rather, ‘With you, Jesus, I cannot perish; you are always in the boat with me; what have I to fear? You may sleep; I shall not awaken you. My poor nature will tremble, oh yes! But with all my will I shall remain in peace in the midst of the storm, confident in you.’” (*IBL*, 24).

St. Faustina will help us to live this: “I feel certain that my mission will not come to an end upon my death, but will begin. O doubting souls, I will draw aside for you the veils of heaven to convince you of God’s goodness, so that you will no longer continue to wound with your distrust the sweetest Heart of Jesus. God is Love and Mercy.” (*Diary*, 281)

Let the sinner not be afraid to approach Me. The flames of Mercy are burning Me—clamoring to be spent; I want to pour them out upon these souls...Distrust on the part of souls is tearing at My insides. The distrust of a chosen soul causes me even greater pain; despite My inexhaustible love for them they do not trust Me. Even My death is not enough for them. (*Bio*, 45)

You comfort me when you entrust yourself entirely to Me. (*I Wait for You*, 16)

The devil fishes in troubled waters. Whoever lets himself be troubled does not see clearly any more, stumbles, falls into panic, ceases to judge rightly. We can be very shaken, very upset, as long as it is only on the surface, but the depths of our souls must remain tranquil as the depths of the ocean, even during the greatest storms. (*IBL*, 81)

With the trust and simplicity of a small child, I give myself to You today, O Lord Jesus, my Master. I leave You complete freedom in directing my soul. Guide me along the paths You wish. I won’t question them. I will follow You trustingly. Your merciful Heart can do all things! (*Diary*, 228)

Again the Lord reassured her, “Do not fear, I will not leave you alone.” (*Diary*, 258)

And Jesus answered her, “I am, and I keep company with you as a child to teach you humility and simplicity.” (*Diary*, 184)

A student had this to say, “Sr. Faustina eclipsed all the other sisters with her peace, humility, and even temper...she was an angel of peace.” (*Bio*, 70)

The advice of Fr. Andrasz to Faustina holds for us if we remain abandoned to God, “Have confidence in God; you are on the right path and in good hands, in God’s hands.” (*Diary*, 257)

Nothing disturbed her. (*Bio*, 53)

Bl. Dina [Belanger] reiterated the teaching of St. Paul as the Christian ideal: ‘It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me’ (Gal. 2:20). She pointed to the radical surrender of self involved here by speaking of it as a kind of mystical “substitution.” In other words, *Christ Jesus loves us so much that He Himself, dwelling within us, is the one who enables us to trust in Him for everything:*

If I gave up all concern about everything to Jesus, what would happen? In return, Jesus would take charge of everything, of thinking, speaking, acting, no longer just with me,

but instead of me. He would substitute Himself for me, and I would let Him do as He pleased. (the intro above and quote are from Stackpole, 75)

The essence of spirituality is contained in the phrase: “complete and utter abandonment to the will of God.” By this I mean we should never think of ourselves, but be continually occupied with loving and obeying him. We must put aside all those fears, those uneasy broodings, those qualms of conscience, and those anxieties...As God wants to look after our affairs, let us leave them all to him so that we can concentrate our whole attention on him...

For example, let's take a piece of stone destined to be carved into a crucifix or a statue. We might ask it: “What do you think is happening to you?” It might answer: “Don't ask me. All I know is that I must stay immovable in the hands of the sculptor, and I must love him and endure all he inflicts on me to produce the figure he has in mind. He knows how to do it. As for me, I have no idea what he is doing, nor do I know what he will make of me. But what I do know is that his work is the best possible. It is perfect. I welcome each blow of his chisel as the best thing that could happen to me, although, if I'm to be truthful, I feel that every one of these blows is ruining me, destroying me and disfiguring me. But I remain unconcerned. I concentrate on the present moment, think only of my duty, and suffer all that this master sculptor inflicts on me without knowing his purpose or fretting about it. (De Caussade as quoted in Stackpole, 74)...this quote leads into the next section...

2. Trust of “Joyful Acceptance”:

Accept the Joys And Crosses With Praise and Thanksgiving, all is God's loving gift

‘I offered myself, but what must I do now?’ Let him do it! (*IBL*, 144) That is, be at peace and accept all he sends with a smile.

Always accept the cross with a smile remembering, “[Jesus] has borne all our sufferings, he has endured them himself at Gethsemane and on Calvary; but he knows that they are necessary to us, so ‘he sends them to us as if with an averted gaze,’ says little Therese, as if he did not have the courage to watch us suffer. But he sees at the same time the happiness it will merit for us, the glory it acquires for his Father, for him, for us, and the graces it merits for souls; so in love, in mercy, in tenderness, he hesitates no longer to lay it upon our poor shoulders, while continuing to sustain it himself, making himself our ‘Simon of Cyrene.’” (*IBL*, 126)

St. Therese, and the Catechism, describes this attitude as the essence of prayer: “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and love, *embracing both trial and joy*.” (*CCC*, #2558)

St. Therese's prayer of acceptance:

“Everything is a grace, everything is the direct effect of our Father's Love...difficulties, contradictions, humiliations, all the soul's miseries, its burdens, its needs...everything, because through them one learns humility, realizes one's weakness. Everything is a grace because everything is God's gift. Whatever be the character of life or its unexpected events, to the heart that Loves, all is well.”

When he gives us something to suffer, said little Therese, it is because he wants a gift from us. What gift? A smile on the cross...(*IBL*, 120)

It is not for us to ask for the cross, but to accept it when the Lord sends one. We should trust that he will send us the cross which is perfect for us, “Oh, I would never wish to ask the good Lord for greater sufferings, for I am too little. They would become my very own sufferings, I would be forced to endure them alone, and I have never been able to do anything all alone.” (St. Therese in *IBL*, 125)

Must we ask for the cross? No. Must we look for it? No again. Live the doctrine of abandonment which I have preached at such great length during this retreat. Accept with thanksgiving everything that happens to

you. Say continually, “O Jesus, I thank you for everything.” That is enough. Do not ask for crosses, but know how to accept with joy those which Jesus has chosen for you. Besides, crosses will not be lacking. Sanctify yourself with the duties of your state in life, your daily life with all its thorns. Accept all the duties, all the responsibility, with a smile on your lips, a willing smile—a smile that is willed. The most beautiful smiles are those which shine through tears, that we give in spite of ourselves. (*IBL*, 127)

What about when we carry the cross badly, frowning, complaining, etc.? “It is here that we turn to the words of little Therese, ‘We would like to suffer generously. We would like never to fall—what an illusion!’ See what a lack of logic this is: to moan about having moaned and then to go on moaning! No! Say to Jesus, ‘Now I accept the cross you have sent me, which I at first rejected, and I accept not having accepted it right away.’ That is the great resource of humble confidence pushed to its extreme.” (*IBL*, 128)

I have heard it put this way: ‘When Jesus gives me a cross, it is his cross which he really puts on my shoulders, and he is relieved of that much of it’

Then too, Jesus distributes sorrows and joys with such great delicacy and tenderness! It has occurred to me to say to him, ‘It seems to me that you must have a problem with each one of us. You who know the reward of suffering, must will not to withhold it from your elect. On the other hand, you do not have the courage to make them suffer too much. What a dilemma for you! But I know how your heart has resolved it. You draw first of all upon your own unspeakable sufferings and attribute them to us as if they were ours. Then, gently, turning away your head, you share them with us, measuring out the sufferings with sweetness, giving us all the graces we need to bear them. Finally you remind us that love is everything.’ (*IBL*, 129)

The abandonment which we learn from Jesus in the Eucharist:

“The model of the abandonment I have preached to you at such length is the Host. The priest puts it on the left, it remains on the left. He places it on the right, it remains on the right! Those who profane it come, they take him from the tabernacle and throw him into the gutter; he lets himself be thrown into the gutter. This is our lesson in perfect abandonment. He is not only the model, but also the source of it.” (*IBL*, 154)

Total abandonment, “O Jesus I thank you for everything!”:

How rich this little prayer is! How it glorifies Jesus and how it pleases him! Each time you say it, it reaffirms your disposition of love for him in total abandonment. It sinks into his Heart, for it sings of his love for you. It is nothing other than “giving thanks always for all things,” of St. Paul (*Eph.* 5:20). What St. Paul asked of the Ephesians, I can certainly ask of you. I have known persons for whom this prayer has become the breathing of their souls, and who have thus climbed very high in love. “O Jesus, I thank you for everything.” If you were to retain nothing but that from this retreat, it would be a great thing. (*IBL*, 66)

I have sometimes been struck by the sight of very good persons, very pious, heroic in mortification, in austerity, in temperance, refusing the true holocaust, the holocaust which is truly an immolation: the sacrifice of their own will. On one point or another they complain, they worry, and ask something other of the Divine Master than what he has given them. In this they are fleeing from real mortification, in the truest sense of the word. (*IBL*, 53)

My desires are mad and unattainable. I wish to conceal from You that I suffer...I want to share compassionately in the sufferings of my neighbors and to conceal my own sufferings, not only from them, but also from You, Jesus. (*Diary*, 57).

Suddenly Sister Faustina heard a voice within her soul: “Do not fear; I am with you.” An unusual light illumined her mind and she understood she should not give in to such sorrow. Filled with strength she left her cell with new courage to accept all suffering. (*Bio*, 46)

The suffering we have will even become a delight if we stay fixed on Jesus: “...suffering will cease to be a suffering for us; it will become a delight!...” (*Diary*, 303)

And yet, we should guard against the danger of sensible love, “Little Therese writes that dryness was her daily bread, but that she was nevertheless the happiest of creatures. She defined sanctity as ‘a disposition

of the heart which makes us humble and small in the arms of God, conscious of our weakness, and confident to the point of audacity in the goodness of our Father.’ Love is uniting our will to the will of God. It is abandoning ourselves totally into his hands, as a habitual disposition, even if we feel nothing.” (IBL, 11). In the midst of this dryness, smile at him, it will be a HUGE consolation to him.

3. This Flying to The Foot of His Cross, Weaknesses and all, Unleashes Amazing Mercy on the Whole World. YOU can make a HUGE difference in the world...

The core reason why this is the case is summarized in the famous passage from the Autobiography of St. Therese. The Catechism says before citing this passage: “Charity is the soul of the holiness to which all are called: it ‘governs, shapes and perfects all the means of sanctification.’ (LG, 11)” (CCC, #826) It is this charity which is the focus of this entire retreat, it is this charity which this retreat hopes to release in each of our hearts:

“If the Church was a body composed of different members, it couldn’t lack the noblest of all; *it must have a Heart, and a Heart BURNING WITH LOVE*. And I realized that *this love alone* was the true motive force which enabled the other member of the Church to act; if it ceased to function, the Apostles would forget to preach the gospel, the Martyrs would refused to shed their blood. LOVE, IN FACT, IS THE VOCATION WHICH INCLUDES ALL OTHERS; IT’S A UNIVERSE OF ITS OWN, COMPRISING ALL TIME AND SPACE—IT’S ETERNAL!” (Cited in CCC, #826)

So, if you practice this love, if you strive to console Jesus, even if you don’t *feel* like you are making a difference, know that it is your little acts of love which are really behind the great and glorious acts of the Apostles and Martyrs. Like Therese, you will be a “little Carmelite” behind the scenes; like Fr. Lanteri, you will be behind the scenes getting great things going.

Another reason why this attitude is so powerful is because you *make up* for the coldness that others give to the Lord. You “distract” him, as some of the quotes below will indicate. To understand what we mean a brief illustration will be helpful before we begin the other quotes:

Imagine you are living in early Christian Rome and you have just been thrown into the arena of the Colosseum to die before the wild animals which fill the ring. Imagine the faceless and heartless thousands who are booing you and anxious to see you torn to pieces. What darkness might envelop even the strongest souls. But then, in the crowd you behold the face of your mother or someone you love very much. There they are, a face in the crowd, smiling at you, loving you, and wearing a look that says, “come on, don’t give into the darkness, I’m here, I love you.” Imagine the joy that would fill your soul, imagine the courage that you might gain from seeing this one face. And so you can be such a “face” for the Lord as he undergoes his agony. There is an amazing consoling and encouraging power that comes when we behold love for us on the face of another. This mysterious principle of love gets to the heart of why this simple spirituality is so powerful. The following quotes help us deepen in this mystery...

This Wound in My Heart is the fiery furnace at which chosen souls must come to enkindle theirs. This Wound is there: It belongs to them with all the graces it contains, that they may distribute them to the world, to the many souls who do not know where to seek them, and to so many others who despise them.

I will give them all the light they need that they will know how to utilize their treasure, and not only to make Me known and loved, but also to repair the outrages with which sinners overwhelm Me. Alas! The world offends Me, but it will be saved by the reparation of My chosen souls...love for love is reparation, and reparation is love...tell Me that you love Me, that is what I like best to hear, for I hunger for love! (CMBS)

If only [mankind] would make Me some return for My love, I should think but little of all I have done for them and would wish, were it possible, to suffer still more... (To St. Margaret Mary)

You see, the world seems to run to its destruction: yet I am not a pessimist. Why? Because I think that today there are more souls than ever in cloisters and also in the world, entirely given to Jesus in complete

confidence and total abandonment, without anything which distinguishes them from others, hidden like the Nazarene.

Evil displays itself; good remains unknown. Believe my experience on this point. There hidden souls console him, they make reparation, they repay him and oblige him, I dare say, to be merciful.

These souls are sometimes called lightning rods, but I do not like the image, for it is not thunder and lightning which Jesus lets fall from his heart onto the world (*Lk 9:54*), but torrents of graces. He needs hearts which will be channels for these rushing waters, to receive them and share them. That is the role of these faithful and generous souls. By their very existence they hold back or destroy the consequences of sin. (*IBL, 108*)...see also the quote from this section in the retreat text above.

I want to tell you this, that My best-loved and specially favored souls, My priests and My consecrated nuns, may learn it through you. If their infidelities wound Me deeply, their love consoles and delights My Heart to such a degree that I, so to speak, forget the sins of many others on their account. (*I Wait For You, 13*)

After Josefa asked Jesus' if her prayers in which she offered his blood would touch certain souls whom Jesus longed for she wrote, "He remained in silence for a few minutes. I repeated the words several times; then He spoke with energy: **Yes, I want them to return to Me. I want them to burn with love, while I am consumed for them with sorrowful love.**

Then he added sadly: **Ah, if souls only understood how ardently I desire to communicate Myself to them! But how few do understand...and how deeply this wounds My Heart.**

Josefa then wrote, "I comforted Him as best I could, and begged Him to forget for a while the souls that grieved Him, and to think rather of those that love and console Him. His Heart seemed to expand at these words. (*The Way of Divine Love, 109*)

On the power that suffering children have (and therefore our spiritual childlikeness and accepting our crosses): "You see, My daughter, what great compassion I have for them. Know that it is they who uphold the world." (*Diary, 286*).

She learned that the sacrifices of the sisters were so pleasing to God that they outweighed the sword of punishment that was ready to fall upon the world...(*Bio, 90*)

You are my dwelling place and My constant repose. For your sake I will withhold the hand which punishes; for your sake I bless the earth. (*Diary, 431*)

On the idea of "distracting" Jesus from the sins of the world: "Sister Faustina desired to become 'a mist before the eyes of Jesus,' so that He could not see the terrible crimes of earth. The indifference of the world toward Jesus continuously brought tears to her eyes, but the frigid souls of religious persons made her heart bleed."

The prayer of a humble and loving souls disarms the anger of My Father and draws down an ocean of blessings. (*Diary, 320*)

Your holy hour consoles Him now and He forgets the rejection of the world. (*CMBS, Rosary Meditation on the Agony in the Garden*)

For your sake I bless the entire country. (*Bio, 41*)

My child, you are My delight. You are the comfort of My Heart. I grant you as many graces as you can hold. As often as you want to make Me happy, speak to the world about My great and unfathomable mercy. (*Bio, 49*)

Sister heard these words from Jesus, "**My daughter, your heart is my heaven.**" That is, we can give him a place of rest from his sufferings. (*Diary, 238*)

We too must realize that when we live this spirituality, we are a delight to the heart of Jesus as Fr. D'Elbe says, "You must believe in mercy to the point of believing that you are a joy for Jesus...it is essential. The life of the Christian is a life of love. Can people love each other without knowing that they are a joy for each other?" (*IBL*, 57)

I desire that you know more profoundly the love that burns in My Heart for souls, and you will understand this when you meditate upon My Passion. Call upon My mercy on behalf of sinners; I desire their salvation. When you say this prayer, with a contrite heart and with faith on behalf of some sinner, I will give him the grace of conversion. This is the prayer:

O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of Mercy for us, I trust in You. (*Diary*, 186-187)

Some of Faustina's resolutions which summarize some of the spirituality described in this retreat: "To suffer without complaining, to bring comfort to others and to drown my own sufferings in the most Sacred Heart of Jesus!

I will spend all my free moments at the feet of [Our Lord in] the Blessed Sacrament. At the feet of Jesus I will seek light, comfort and strength. I will show my gratitude unceasingly to God for His great mercy toward me, never forgetting favors He has bestowed on me..." (*Diary*, 224)

Finally, I insist, hold fast, always with the same tenacity, hold fast to an immense confidence in your apostolate. Often our Lord hides from the apostle the fruit of his work, of his fatigue, in order to keep him humble and to test his faith, by a wholly divine wisdom. Learn how to say, "I do not expect my reward here below." Even if you do not see the result of your prayers, of your supplications, of your efforts, believe, believe, believe! (*IBL*, 116)

Obstacle #4: The Sensitivity of the Lord's Heart

—It is so easy for those that are close to Jesus to hurt him, maybe we should keep my distance since we are so weak and don't want to hurt him.

—It is easy for those that are closest to hurt him, but there is something that guarantees you will be a consolation to him, a delight to his heart: Mary and Mercy.

1. On Marian Consecration:

Marian Consecration: "Yesterday, Today, and Forever"

Introduction:

The greatest teacher on Marian consecration, St. Louis de Montfort, describes consecration as follows: "This devotion consists then in giving ourselves entirely to the Blessed Virgin, in order to belong entirely to Jesus through her. A contemporary theologian elaborates on this in describing the essence of Marian Consecration:

Marian consecration is fundamentally a promise of love and a gift of self that gives all that the Christian is and does completely to Jesus through Mary's motherly intercession. It is to give oneself entirely to Mary in a self-donation of love that enables the Mediatrix of all graces to use her full intercessory power to keep a person faithful to his or her baptismal promises to Jesus Christ. (Mark Miravalle *Introduction to Mary*. Santa Barbara: Queenship Publishing Co., 1993, pg. 107)

So, what we have here is a consecration to Jesus Christ through Mary. But, why not just go straight to Jesus? Though de Montfort elsewhere calls this a "*most perfect means*" to holiness, it might seem to some that we don't really need any means. To explain the importance of having Mary as a "means" to going to Jesus, we could go through the overwhelming endorsement of the Church for Marian

Consecration (and Marian devotion in general); we could discuss the nearly unprecedented support the Church has given to de Montfort's work which explains Marian consecration: *True Devotion to Mary*; or we could wonder at the impressive list of holy men and women who have fervently recommended this way to holiness; instead, we will look at three benefits of Marian consecration which, when properly understood, make Marian consecration nearly impossible to pass up. These three benefits we shall treat under the headings: Marian consecration made yesterday, lived today, and enjoyed forever.

1. Marian consecration made yesterday. In looking at Marian consecration "made yesterday" we mean to answer the question of the person who asks us, "why did you do it? Why did you consecrate yourself to Mary?" We respond, "I did it because *I wanted to give Mary permission to use her full motherly mediation in my life.*" They respond, "What?!" Let us explain motherly mediation which will make this clearer.

Mary's motherly mediation refers to the mission Jesus gave to his mother as a way of honoring her. Jesus, who followed the ten commandments perfectly, not only honored his Father but also his mother Mary. How did he honor Mary? He gave her a "special mission."

John Paul II, in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater*, speaks of this special mission which Jesus gave Mary. Reiterating the teaching of the Church, he says that at the foot of the cross, when Jesus said to Mary, "woman behold your son" (John 19), he gave Mary to us all as our mother. As spiritual mother, this means that Mary has a special role in our growth in holiness. That is, just as Mary gave birth to Jesus, *body and soul*, back in Bethlehem, after the cross she is called to give spiritual birth to the *Mystical Body of Christ* in every person. Let's look more closely at this image of giving birth to the *Mystical Body of Christ*.

Every Christian is part of the "Body of Christ" which has Christ as the head and us as the members. In order for this Body of Christ to "come to full stature" each of us ought to someday be able to say with St. Paul, "it is no longer I that live but Christ who lives in me." That's what the Christian life is all about: dying to self and "putting on Christ," saying "he must increase and I must decrease," allowing Christ to live in us. Well, in a sense, this birth of Christ in us, this *transformation into Christ*, only takes place when we are in the *womb of Mary*. After all, where's the place where the Word became flesh? That's right, in the womb of Mary. So where do we go if we want the Word to become flesh in us? Right again, in the womb of our Spiritual Mother Mary. It's pretty simple: something has to happen to us: our transformation in Christ. There is a place where this happens: the womb of Mary. So, we must go to that place if that thing is to happen, that is, we should place ourselves under Mary's charge.

But, someone may ask, "does God *have* to use Mary in this job?" No, he didn't *have* to by *necessity*, but he did make this "the way things are" now according to his honoring of Mary—his Mother and most perfect creature. That God would give Mary such a role is fitting to His *style*, in that, he wants us all to participate in his work of redemption—and by so doing, we give him greater glory. So, Mary's special mission is a gift for God's glory, Mary's honor, and our benefit. *And*, just as we would prefer that the gifts we give be respected, so perhaps God prefers that this mission he has given to Mary be respected. It may not have to have been this way by necessity, but this is the way God wants it for everybody's good.

So, Mary is our spiritual mother, it's her job to make us holy. But, do we let her do her job? Do we cooperate with her? Not always; and when we don't, that's dangerous. Why? Because, like God, Mary will never force us to cooperate with her. She longs for us to let her do her work, but when we say "get out of my life" (when we sin), to a certain extent she respects that. Dang. Do you wish she could just take over and, no matter how much we squirmed, do her work? Well, in a sense, that is what Marian Consecration is, it is giving Mary permission to always do her work in us. Of course, we can still say "get out of my life" (when we choose sin) but when we make our consecration we say to Mary, "uh, mom, when I act like that, don't listen to me, just keep working on me so I'm like that less and less." So, when we make our Marian consecration we *give Mary permission* to use her full Motherly mediation.

It may seem like a little thing but Mary seems take this *very* seriously. For the rest of your life she will be poking you in the ribs saying "uh, remember how you gave me permission to take over your life? Well, you can't do this now and I've taken the liberty to do such and such." Yeah, imagine giving you earthly mother complete control of your life...well, now multiply that times 10...that gives you a little idea of what you are getting into with Marian consecration!⁵⁴ But, what better person to have control of your

⁵⁴ Because there is such a seriousness about Marian consecration (beautiful as its benefits are) one should prepare himself well so as to make a good consecration. St. Louis de Montfort recommends a 33 day

spiritual growth than the one who taught Jesus how to pray and who was given a special mission by God to do so?

Before closing this section, we should make one last point. In saying all this about giving Mary control of our lives, we don't mean that Marian consecration is some magical prayer that you say once, forget about, and enjoy all the benefits. No, it has to be renewed, even daily. It takes effort, one must strive to live as one who belongs totally to Mary. Yet, even with all that said, there is a mystery here in that Mary has special access and rights over those who make this offering such that even when we do straggle along, she comes and picks us up. What a great mom we have in Mary! May all of us be able to someday speak of having made a Marian consecration "yesterday."

2. *Marian consecration lived today.* There are many ways that we can live our Marian consecration once it has been made. Many of these ways are beautifully explained in the works of St. Louis de Montfort and St. Maximillian Kolbe. As we find from them, volumes can be written on the subject of how to live Marian consecration. For our purpose here—which is to help us better understand and practice our Principle and Foundation: consoling the heart of Jesus—we will speak of *how Marian consecration helps us to console Jesus' heart*. Since we have covered this in the body of the retreat itself, we will offer more of a summary of how Marian consecration is one of the best means to console the heart of Jesus.

One of the most important reasons why we have chosen "consoling the heart of Jesus" as our Principle and Foundation in this retreat is because this focus *purifies our intentions*. Too often we do "good" things in this life, but with impure intentions. These impure intentions therefore ruin our merit as St. Alphonsus Liguori says:

For our works to be good and perfect, they must be done with the sole purpose of pleasing God [that's where our focus of consoling the heart of Jesus comes in]...God rewards our actions according to the weight of their purity...[yet] How many people even in the most sacred occupations—preachers, confessors, missionaries—labor and struggle, but gain little or nothing because they are not focused on God alone, but on worldly glory, or their own interests, or on the vanity of standing in the limelight, or simply on their own inclination! But the saints have a single glance, with which they look only to God's pleasure in all that they do. (*The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, Liguori Publications, 1989, pg 64-65)

When we keep our Principle and Foundation always before our eyes—consoling Jesus' sorrowful heart—then our intentions will be purer. But still, "we are only human" and, what's more, we are "little ones!" So, how can we give Jesus pure consolation, we ask this because, remember from the retreat, we want to console him in the *best* possible way. Our Mother Mary is an awesome help to us in achieving this goal.

Recall that our friend "Bobby" was told to renew his Marian consecration with the emphasis of always loving Jesus with the heart of Mary. Well, herein lies the secret to attaining "pure intentions" with ease. "Pure intentions with ease?! Doesn't St. Alphonsus speak of having to toil and labor in order to get pure intentions?" Yes indeed, St. Alphonsus is right in pointing out the labor involved in purifying intentions...but, as we said in the beginning of this retreat, there has been some "spiritual progress" since St. Alphonsus and it is now easier than ever to become a Saint! Having "pure" intentions is easy for those consecrated to Mary because we simply unite our acts of love, praise, etc. with hers, then, as St. Louis de Montfort says, our Queen "polishes" and "perfects" our tarnished and imperfect acts and presents them to the King (Jesus) with her immaculate hands. Not a bad deal! Thank you Mary!

On this point—and since we are speaking of ways of living our Marian consecration—we should say something about *how* to love Jesus with the heart of Mary *in practice*. Many people ask, if I am to live my Marian consecration, "Who do I pray to? How do I do it? Do I pray to Jesus or Mary, do I begin with Mary and end with Jesus? What about the Father and the Holy Spirit?" These are good questions which

preparation which is included at the back of his book *True Devotion to Mary* and is available in an easy to follow format through the de Montfort Father's press.

inquire into the mystery of the unity of God and distinctions in God (and into the mystery of those who are “transformed” into God—Mary and the saints in heaven⁵⁵).

In our limited space, suffice it to say that a good place to begin with understanding how we can loving Jesus with the heart of Mary is to see Mary as praying *with you* perhaps just *behind* you, holding you up and with her spouse the Spirit helping you to pray. From this perspective, as you tell Jesus that you love him—for instance, when he is before you in the Blessed Sacrament—know that Mary is right there with you in adoration. When you say, “thank you Jesus” she echo’s it! If St. Augustine said “he who sings prays twice,” then it seems we can also say that he who prays according to their Marian consecration prays not just “twice” but also to an “infinite degree” because they are praying with Mary.

See how this would give Jesus perfect consolation? When you pray with Mary like this, it is as if Mary herself were alive offering to Jesus her immaculate love and prayers. This is why St. Louis de Montfort and the Church endorsing him calls this a perfect way. So, let us *live our Marian consecration today* and give Jesus perfect consolation!

3. Marian consecration enjoyed forever. We have spoken on this subject in the body of the retreat so once again we will *try* and be brief and summarize. In the retreat we mentioned the “deal” which Fr. Lanteri made with Mary. This was a pretty “sweet deal” as we saw. For, though one gives to Mary all of his merits, graces, and goods in this life, she gives him all of her merits in the next. Not too bad when you think that Mary is the “Queen of Heaven”! Why not then give her all our shabby little merits? After all, as we learned above (benefit #2), when Mary takes our prayers and merits she augments them and presents them to Jesus. Also, because Mary has a perfect vantage point of the whole Mystical Body of Christ, she can see who needs our graces most and apply them accordingly. So, “Take ‘em away Mary! Augment, distribute, and do with them and me as you please!” All around this is a sweet deal indeed! The only objection someone might raise is to see that when one gives up the right to all merits, he isn’t free to apply his graces to whomever he wishes. This is true, but one should further realize that Mary, who is not outdone in generosity, will take better care of those that we love than we could ever do ourselves. Take care of her business and she will take care of yours. We can still pray for others, but it is always with the knowledge that Mary gets first choice.

As we pointed out with Fr. Lanteri’s deal, there is one further benefit to this “sweet deal” of the exchange of merits between us and Mary, but this one falls more into category #2 above. This benefit is the humility that comes from realizing that because we have consecrated ourselves to Mary as her instruments for the salvation of souls and the consolation of her son, and because we have given her all our merits, we get credit for *nothing*. Our merits won’t increase (we’ve given them all to Mary! Plus, we’ll be sharing hers in heaven) and so we should rightfully say that all the good that we do is thanks to our loving Mother Mary without whom we’d have been able to do nothing. Praise the Lord for giving us such a wonderful mother and for (hopefully) leading us to consecrate ourselves totally to her all for the greater glory of God. May we all experience this joy of belonging totally to Jesus through Mary forever in heaven!

St. Louis de Montfort’s Formula of Consecration to Mary:

I, (name), 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,

⁵⁵ Did he say “transformed into God”?! Sure did. This concept of “deification” is not often talked about, but it has been Christian teaching since the first centuries of the Church. Furthermore, this is a very important truth for better understanding many mysteries of the Faith. Why this subject isn’t spoken of more isn’t exactly clear to us, still the fact remains that the goal of our lives as Christians is to be assumed into the Trinitarian Communion (to become deified). True, this notion of deification isn’t like Buddhism where we become absorbed into the divine substance. No, we maintain our identity, but we do truly become one with God. We can see how this can be an important truth to keep in mind when trying to understand the role of Mary and the saints because, if they have been transformed into Christ, and have a perfect union with him, then there is no question of them leading us away from God. On the contrary, they prepare us for the vocation we too have of being transformed into Christ partaking in the Love of the Trinitarian Family, a union they already enjoy and urge us on to join them in.

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 heavenly court, I choose you this day for my Mother and Mistress [Queen]. 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 eternity. Amen.

St. Maximilian Kolbe's Act of Consecration to Mary:

O Immaculata, Queen of Heaven and earth, refuge of sinners and our most loving Mother, God has willed to entrust the entire order of mercy to you. I, (name), a repentant sinner, cast myself at your feet humbly imploring you to take me with all that I am and have, wholly to yourself as your possession and property. Please make of me, of all my powers of soul and body, of my whole life, death and eternity, whatever most pleases you.

If it pleases you, use all that I am and have without reserve, wholly to accomplish what was said of you: "She will crush your head," and, "You alone have destroyed all heresies in the whole world." Let me be a fit instrument in your immaculate and merciful hands for introducing and increasing your glory to the maximum in all the many strayed and indifferent souls, and thus help extend as far as possible the blessed kingdom of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. For wherever you enter you obtain the grace of holiness, since it is through your hands that all graces come to us from the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

V. Allow me to praise you, O Sacred Virgin.

R. Give me strength against your enemies.

Fr. Lanteri's Act of Consecration/Slavery to Mary:

Let all those know, into whose hands this document may chance to come, that I the undersigned B[runo] sell myself as a perpetual slave of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady, with a pure, free, and perfect gift of my person, and of all my goods, in order that she may dispose of all this according to her good will, as my true and absolute Lady. And since I know myself unworthy of such a grace, I pray of my Holy Guardian Angel, St. Joseph, St. Theresa, St. John, St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, St. Pius, St. Bruno, to obtain for me of Mary Most Holy that she deign to receive me among her slaves. In confirmation of this I have signed myself,

Pio Bruno Lanteri

Pray with all your heart in union with Mary...(Our Lord to St. Faustina)

2. On the Sacrificial Offering to Merciful Love: (and spiritual communion)

You, at least, come to Me as often as possible and take these graces which they do not want to accept. In this way you will console My Heart. Oh, how indifferent are souls to so much goodness, to so many proofs of love! My Heart drinks only of the ingratitude and forgetfulness of souls living in the world. They have time for everything, but they have no time to come to Me for graces. (Diary, 367)

Let the sinner not be afraid to approach Me. The flames of Mercy are burning Me—clamoring to be spent; I want to pour them out upon these souls. (Bio, 45)

And the Lord said to me, **You are the delight of My Heart; from today on, every one of your acts, even the very smallest, will be a delight to My eyes, whatever you do.** At that moment I felt transconsecrated. My earthly body was the same, but my soul was different; God was not living in it with the totality of His delight. This is not a feeling, but a conscious reality that nothing can obscure. A great mystery has been accomplished between God and me. (*Diary*, 136-137) One might say this mystery can be accomplished in us if we make the offering to merciful love.

*****St. Therese's Offering to Merciful Love:*****

“O My God! Most Blessed Trinity, I desire to Love you and make you Loved, to work for the glory of Holy Church by saving souls on earth and liberating those suffering in purgatory. I desire to accomplish your will perfectly and to reach the degree of glory you have prepared for me in your kingdom. I desire, in a word, to be a Saint, but I feel my helplessness and I beg you, O my God! to be yourself my Sanctity!

Since You loved me so much as to give me your only son as my Savior and my Spouse, the infinite treasures of his merits are mine. I offer them to you with gladness, begging you to look on me only through the Face of Jesus and in his Heart burning with Love. I offer you, too, all the merits of the Saints (in heaven and on earth), their acts of Love, and those of the Holy Angels. Finally, I offer you, O Blessed Virgin, my dear Mother. It is to her I abandon my offering, begging her to present it to you. Her Divine Son, my Beloved Spouse, told us in the days of his mortal life: ‘Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name he will give it to you!’ I am certain, then, that you will grant my desires; I know, O my God! That the more you want to give, the more you make us desire. I feel in my heart immense desires and it is with confidence that I ask you to come and take possession of my soul. Ah! I cannot receive Holy Communion as often as I desire, but, Lord, are you not all-powerful? Remain in me as in a tabernacle and never separate yourself from your little host... I want to console you for the ingratitude of the wicked, and I beg of you to take away my freedom to displease you. If through weakness I sometimes fall, may your Divine Glance cleanse my soul immediately, consuming all my imperfections like the fire that transforms everything into itself... I thank you, O my God! for all the graces you have granted me, especially the grace of making me pass through the crucible of suffering. It is with joy I shall contemplate You on the last day carrying the scepter of your Cross. Since you deigned to give me a share in this very precious Cross, I hope in Heaven to resemble you and to see shining in my glorified body the sacred stigmata of Your Passion...

After earth's exile, I hope to go and enjoy you in the Fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for Heaven. I want to work for your Love alone with the one purpose of pleasing you, consoling your Sacred heart, and saving souls who will love you eternally. In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is stained in your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in your eyes. I wish then, to be clothed in your own Justice and to receive from your Love the eternal possession of Yourself. I want no other Throne, no other Crown but You, my Beloved! Time is nothing in your eyes, and as a single day is like a thousand years; you can, then, in one single instant prepare me to appear before you... In order to live in one single act of perfect Love, I offer myself as a victim of holocaust to your merciful love, asking you to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of infinite tenderness shut up within you to overflow into my soul, and that thus I may become a Martyr of your Love, O my God! May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear before you, finally cause me to die and may my soul take its flight without any delay into the eternal embrace of your Merciful Love... I want, O my Beloved, at each beat of my heart to renew this offering to you an infinite number of times, until the shadows having disappeared I may be able to tell you of Love in an Eternal Face to Face!... Marie, Françoise, Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face unworthy Carmelite religious.

I want never to be rewarded for my efforts and my good actions. You Yourself, Jesus, are my only reward; You are enough, O Treasure of my heart! (*Diary, 57*)

“Ah, since this happy day [of my offering] it seems to me that each moment this merciful love renews me, purifies my soul and leaves on it no trace of sin.” (*IBL, 25*)

I want you to burn with desire to see Me loved... (C.M.B.S.)

On Communion (And Spiritual Communions) which renew this offering:

Here is a good thought which is not often mentioned: receive Communion not only for yourself, in order to have this immense grace, but for him, in order to respond to his desire to come down into you, to give him the joy of descending into your heart, which is a heaven for him. Perhaps you will say, ‘What? My poor heart, so miserable, so unworthy, a heaven for Jesus?’ Yes, if you call upon him to make your heart a heaven for himself.

Here we must remember that sensible love is nothing in itself. It could be that before and after Communion you will be cold and distracted. But listen to little Therese: ‘I cannot say that I have often

received consolations during my thanksgivings; that is perhaps the moment when I have had the fewest. I find that completely natural since I have offered myself to Jesus, not as a person who desires to receive his visit for my own consolation, but on the contrary, for the pleasure of him who gives himself to me. It is not in order to remain in the golden ciborium that he comes down each day from heaven, but in order to find another heaven, the heaven of our souls, made in his image, the living temple of the adorable Trinity.' ... At the moment of receiving Communion, say to Jesus, 'Jesus, I come to you because I am weak, because I am miserable, because I am a sinner. I come to you because I am miserable, because I am a sinner. I come to you because I have so much need of you.' What a beautiful preparation for Communion! Do not say to him, 'I come to you because I am well prepared,' but, 'I come to you because I need you so much.' (*IBL*, 148) It would be good to add, given the theme of this retreat, "Jesus, make my heart a heaven for you, Mary come into my heart, prepare it as a heaven for Jesus and help me to love Jesus here with your heart." This loving Jesus with the heart of Mary will give him perfect consolation despite your not feeling it. "Your heart is a heaven for Jesus, and this even more so when Jesus finds Mary there." (*IBL*, 164)

Receiving Communion in this way, with a desire to console his heart which receives so much coldness from so many hearts in communion will lead him to say to you what he said to St. Margaret Mary, "**For you alone I would have instituted the Sacrament of my love.**"

...Yet when she receives Me in Holy Communion, she barely says a word to Me...she is distracted, tired or put out...her whole mind is absorbed by her occupations...her family cares...her acquaintances...or maybe anxiety for her health...she does not know what to say to Me...she is indifferent, bored...wishes it were time to go...Is it thus that you receive Me, O soul whom I have chose and for whom I have watched with all the impatience of love throughout the livelong night...Yes, I yearned for her coming that I might rest in her and share her anxieties...I had prepared fresh graces for her, but she does not want them...she has nothing to ask of Me, neither advice nor strength...she just complains to herself without so much as addressing Me...It seems then that she has come simply out of routine, to go through a customary formality...But it is not love nor a true desire for close union with Me that has impelled her coming. (*I Wait for You*, 17) As we hear these complaints of the Lord, let us resolve to always ask Mary to make our hearts a heaven for Jesus, and let us not forget to open our hearts to the Lord...remember, he is easy to please, if we will only give him our attention. And when we find ourselves distracted, let us stay calm and come back to the Lord offering him our distractions and coldness...this will console him and he will forgive in an instant our indifference.

In speaking of the need to offer a prolonged thanksgiving after receiving Holy Communion, the Holy Father reminds the faithful that "The divine Redeemer loves to listen to our entreaties, to speak with us familiarly, and to give us a refuge in His Heart which burns with love for us." (Pope Pius XII, *Meiator Dei*). Many Saints and other Popes recommend making a long thanksgiving after receiving holy communion.

Regarding spiritual communions, Jesus said to Josefa:

My Heart is consoled each time you tell Me of this longing [to receive communion].

How to Make a Spiritual Communion:

1. Ask Mary to make your heart a heaven for Jesus
2. Tell Jesus that you thirst for him. Ask him to unite himself with you in spiritual communion
3. He is in your heart. Love him, thank him, praise him, smile at him. Be at peace for him. Stay recollected to his presence as long as you are able.

Obstacle #5: The Obstacle of Being Too Busy

—The "two movements" of the Divine Mercy Image.

Sr. Faustina told her confessor that Jesus demanded the painting of an Image that would become a means of grace for an aching world...(*Bio*, 72)

Regarding busyness:

And you, dear souls, why this coldness and indifference on your part? Do I not know that family cares, household concerns, and requirements of your position in life make continual calls upon you? But cannot you spare a few minutes in which to come and prove your affection and your gratitude? Do not allow yourselves to be involved in useless and incessant cares, but spare a few moments to visit and receive this Prisoner of Love! (CMBS).

Obstacle #6: The All out Attack on Trust (and our line of defense)

1) COME TO JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

2) BOOKS:

**These are books which help us to console Jesus' Eucharistic Heart
(In order of importance)**

1. *Come to Me in the Blessed Sacrament*
A collection of Eucharistic Holy Hours
By Fr. Vincent Martin Lucia
Available through: Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament
P.O. Box 1701
Plattsburg, NY 12901
Ph. #: (518) 561-8193
Web: <http://www.ACFP2000.com>
2. *I Believe in Love*
An explanation of St. Therese's spirituality of humble confidence
By: Fr. D'Elbee
Available from Sophia Institute Press or St. Bede's Publications
3. *True Devotion to Mary*
By: St. Louis de Montfort
Available through the Marians of the Immaculate Conception
4. We also recommend:
 - "*I Thirst For You*" (a pamphlet)
This is a small pamphlet but very powerful. It encompasses this spirituality.
Available through Missionaries of Charity Fathers
Tijuana, Mexico
C/O P.O. Box 1959
Chula Vista, CA 92012-1959 USA
 - *Divine Mercy in My Soul: The Diary of Sr. Faustina Kowalska*
--Available through the Marians of the Immaculate Conception.
 - Sr. Josefa Menendez, *The Way of Divine Love*
--Available from TAN Books
--See also the booklet *I Wait For You: Jesus' Lament Over Man's Indifference* (selections from *The Way of Divine Love*)—also available through TAN books
 - Stackpole, Robert *Jesus, Mercy Incarnate* (Stockbridge: Marian Press, 2000)
 - Michaelenko, Sr. Sophia *The Life of Faustina Kowalska* (Ann Arbor: Servant Pub., 1999)
 - St. Therese, *Story of a Soul*
 - Timothy O'Donnell, *Hear of the Redeemer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989)
 - Bl. Dina Belanger, *Autobiography*
 - Anything on Bl. Francisco Marto of Fatima (his main focus was to console Jesus)
 - Mother Theresa (anything by her)
 - Fr. Jean-Pierre De Cassade, S.J. *Abandonment to Divine Providence*
 - Br. Lawrence, *Practice of the Presence of God*
 - St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*

--Contact the Marians of the Immaculate Conception for anything on Divine Mercy. Their number is 1-800-804-3823

3) IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES:

The Divine Mercy Chaplet:

The Divine Mercy Chaplet is a prayer given by our Lord to St. Faustina Kowalsk. It is an extraordinarily powerful prayer particularly because it is an extension of the prayer of the Mass (as is apparent from the words of the prayer). The Lord made the following promises to those who pray it. He said, "Encourage souls to say the Chaplet which I have given you (*Diary*, #1541). Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death (687). When they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the Merciful Savior (1541). Priests will recommend it to sinners as their last hope of salvation. Even if there were a sinner most hardened, if he were to recite this chaplet only once, he would receive grace from My infinite mercy (687). Through the Chaplet you will obtain everything, if what you ask for is compatible with My will (1731).

How to Pray the Mercy Chaplet:

On ordinary Rosary beads pray the Our Father, The Hail Mary, and the Apostle's Creed. On the large bead before each decade pray, "Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world." On the ten small beads of each decade pray, "For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world." At the conclusion of the five decades, pray "Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world" three times. The optional concluding prayer is, "Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless and the treasury of compassion inexhaustible, look kindly upon us and increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair nor become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to You holy will, which is Love and Mercy itself (950).

The Examination of Conscience (in five points)—Adapted from St. Ignatius' points (See also the Consoler's Examination of Conscience under this section in the retreat)

- A. **Ask the Holy Spirit** to come and enlighten your mind, memory, and heart
- B. Recall all the **Blessings** of the Day, all the gifts the Lord gave to you
--praise and thank him for them
- C. Recall all the ways that you have let the Lord down: **your sins**.
--Tell him you are sorry
- D. Experience the Lord embracing you with his **Love, Mercy, and forgiveness**.
--Perhaps look at the rays of the Divine Mercy Image flowing on you
- E. Look ahead to the next day, make a **resolution**
--Is there a particular temptation coming? Resolve not to give in.

4) GROUPS YOU CAN BEGIN OR ENTER IN ORDER TO LIVE THIS SPIRITUALITY:

--Adoration at Your Parish

Contact the head of Perpetual Adoration Society...

--Family Offering to Merciful Love

This is an offering any Family can make to live this spirituality and console Jesus' heart...it is similar to a Sacred Heart Enthronement as an expert on Divine Mercy describes: "Fr. Mateo Crawley-Boevey, a priest from Peru, [was inspired by our Lord] to initiate the movement for the solemn enthronement of the image of the Sacred Heart in families. Pope St. Pius X, when asked for his approval of this mission answered Fr. Mateo, 'I not only approve; I command,'" and called his mission the 'work of social salvation.' As a result, the enthronement movement spread rapidly throughout the world. Fr. Mateo described it as follows in his principal work, *Jesus, King of Love*: 'What is the work of enthronement? It can be defined as the official and social acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the Heart of Jesus over the

Christian Family, an acknowledgement made tangible and permanent by the solemn installation of the picture of the Divine Heart in a place of honor, and by an act of consecration...

The family is the source of life, the child's first school. If the source of national life is poisoned, the nation will perish. What we long to do is to plant faith deep in families, and love for the Sacred Heart. If Jesus Christ is in the roots, the whole tree will be Jesus Christ.'

However, there is also a movement now for the solemn enthronement of the Image of The Divine Mercy in every home. It has its roots in Christ's words to St. Faustina, "**I am King of Mercy,**" and in her own poem about the Image, in which she wrote: 'O sweet Jesus, it is here that You established the throne of your mercy.' Although Jesus never explicitly asked for acts of 'consecration' to His Merciful Heart, it seems to be implied in the complete act of 'trust' called for by the signature on the Image—Jesus I trust in You'—and Pope John Paul II himself 'entrusted' his entire Petrine ministry to the merciful Christ before the same Image. This enthronement movement has received ecclesiastical approval from several sources, and the aims of this movement are quite similar to those of the enthronement movement of the Sacred Heart:

'Enthronement (of the Image of Mercy) provides a special welcome for Jesus to come into our hearts and homes to claim them for Himself. He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. When the grace of God reigns in the members of a family, the presence of the Holy Spirit increases the divine life in them, immersing them in the sacraments of His mercy.' (This whole quote is from *Jesus Mercy Incarnate*, by Robert Stackpole)

The following offering to God's Merciful Love is a kind of Divine Mercy Enthronement described above, with a particular emphasis on the spirituality described in the retreat presented earlier, a spirituality on consoling the Heart of Jesus in the best possible way, and this, as a family. It makes use of that means that was also described earlier of the offering to Merciful Love. It gives God permission to make the family into saints, to immerse them in his merciful love. The offering that follows may be altered. It has no form of ecclesiastical approval. If one were to make the offering they should spend some time in preparation and make the offering with a priest, include a Mercy Chaplet, if there isn't already a Divine Mercy Image in the home in a place of Honor, this would be the time to get one and hang it up. Also, the family should commit themselves to some suitable form of prayer which would renew their desire to console the heart of Jesus, etc.

Family Offering to God's Merciful Love (A Divine Mercy Enthronement)

Most Holy Trinity, Father Son and Holy Spirit, Burning Furnace of Love and Mercy and our final home, we love you and long to be fully united with you. We The _____ Family: _____ [list the names of Family Members] come before you this day to praise, adore, love and thank you for who you are and what you have done for us. We recognize in particular the extraordinary graces you have given to our family through your Mercy--how you have laid your beautiful and merciful hands upon us and drawn us more closely to yourself. We are so sorry for the times we have pushed you away and forgotten your love and goodness and this despite the many proofs you have given us of your love. Holy Trinity, we trust in you!

Most Holy Trinity, as we reflect on your gifts we are overwhelmed by the Mercy and Love you have shown us and now we come as we are with all our weaknesses, temptations, and attachments, but with great confidence. We want to make some return for all the good you have done for us. Lord Jesus, we see how sad you are today, how your heart is broken from the many families who do not know you, do not love you, and do not follow you with confidence. Lord Jesus, we see how your heart is burning from the Mercy that you want to shower on families but which so many families are rejecting. Jesus, weak as we are, we wish to console you in this pain. Behold our confidence in your Mercy and hear this bold prayer:

Dear Jesus the “King of Mercy,” on this day _____ [It is good to make the offering on a fitting Feast Day: that of St. Faustina, St. Therese, Divine Mercy Sunday, The Sacred Heart, etc.] before all the Angels and Saints of heaven and the souls in purgatory, we the _____ Family *give you permission to open the floodgates of your Mercy on us. We offer ourselves, as a family, as victims to your Merciful Love. We make this offering so that your aching heart might have relief as it is burned by the Mercy you want to give to so many families but which is rejected. Consume us in the sweet flames of your Mercy. May we be a family perpetually engulfed in this conflagration until we are finally united to the Burning furnace of your Trinitarian Family. We make this offering that the flames of your Mercy might make us a bright beacon to others, a radiance and testimony to your Mercy. May this offering release a greater Mercy in the world. May the flames of your Mercy pierce our often cold hearts, may our hearts burn to love you and make you loved, you who are so little loved! May we live, with your help, a life of Mercy to others and so fulfill the demands of your Mercy. We resolve to do the following, and we pray:*

--That we may *be Merciful* to each other in our home with acts of mercy and then bring this Mercy to those we meet outside. Jesus, help your Mercy to reign in our hearts and in our family.

--That we may *Trust Completely* in your Merciful Love. Jesus help us to never avoid you or lose your gift of Peace, but when we do, help us to fly confidently back into your loving arms.

--That we may always *strive to console your aching heart* with the heart of Mary and by our simple words of trust and love, praise and thanksgiving, spiritual communions, and our family’s joy and prayers. Lord Jesus, may our family be a perpetual delight to your heart! We believe and understand how easy it is to make you smile! We know how easy it is to distract you from all the abuse you receive! We will try to be like children before you, full of praise and thanksgiving, we will not be afraid to hold your hand in your suffering. We know that in our crosses you will be there for us. Mary, always teach us how to best console your Son despite our weaknesses. And with John Paul II our Pope we pray:

Most Holy Virgin, Mother of God and of the Church, to your Immaculate Heart we today consecrate our family. With your help, we entrust and consecrate ourselves to the Divine Heart of Jesus in order to be with you and with Him in the Holy Spirit, completely and always entrusted and consecrated to the will of the heavenly Father. Amen.

Jesus, King of Mercy, Reign in our home and in our lives! Come Lord Jesus! We trust in you!

--Radiating Christ (A Group for Young Men)

The following are the “Constitutions” of the group “Radiating Christ.” This provides an example of the kind of groups that could be formed based on the spirituality of this retreat. These constitutions are still rather rough, but it may be helpful if one was interested in starting such a group. This group highlights much of the spirituality described in the Retreat (and in fact it would be good for its potential members to have made this retreat before entering). Notice especially its Ignatian emphasis on having a clear and vivid goal.

Radiating Christ:
Responding to the Lord's Desire that there be Good Christian Men

I. Introduction: Answering Jesus' Appeal

R.C. (*Radiating Christ*) is a group of young men who commit themselves to living and striving to become the best Christian men possible. They take this as the main goal of their lives, a vibrant goal which is constantly before their eyes and therefore drives them onward. They decide to take up this important calling as they behold their friend, Savior, and King—Jesus Christ—who is so full of sorrow today. They look upon the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus and they see that this heart is broken and bleeding because the devil is able to destroy so many families and lives. They see that Jesus is ready to collapse with pain because so many fathers, mothers, teenagers, and children are filled with pain and do not know the joy of true Christian life and family. Jesus in his sorrow calls out to anyone who will listen, "Is there anyone who will console my aching heart?" The men of R.C. turn to the Lord and hear him say, "I need your help, will you help me?" The men of R.C. cannot but respond to their best friend's appeal for help and so they say, "Yes Lord, we *must* help you!" The following is how they will do it.

II. The Importance of A Goal

First, as we said above, the men of R.C. have a goal. A goal is very important to be successful in anything, but especially with regard to the most important things. When you have a solid goal, it gives you strength and energy. When somebody does not have a goal, they become lazy and easily fall under the influence of evil.

To see somebody who does have a goal, picture a young man who wants with all his heart to be a varsity basketball player. This goal is very clearly before his eyes: he has posters of professional basketball players in his room, he watches his favorite teams daily, he sees how the older guys at school who are on the varsity team get "respect." He feeds the image of his goal with good images that inspire him. Now, because he sees the value of this goal, he works hard at basketball everyday...but he *likes* it! He sacrifices many things so that he can play basketball well, and he doesn't mind the pinch! Why not? Because he is taken, he is absorbed by his goal. And, if his goal is powerful enough, if he keeps it before his eyes, *he becomes a good basketball player*, and he will probably make the varsity team.

Now picture someone who doesn't have a clear and solid goal. This person easily becomes lazy, he often sits around and the only things that motivate him are what makes him feel good that moment. He becomes a slave to the "quick fix" of flipping on the T.V., reaching for junk food, etc. But, even the quick fix gets old for him. Watching T.V. or playing video games give you a headache after a while. He feels a sense of meaninglessness and great boredom. In fact, his boredom is really just the feeling he gets when he looks at his life and realizes it is *pointless*, that is, *goal-less*. So, to escape this feeling of worthlessness, he turns the T.V. on, calls his girlfriend, goes to MacDonald's...anything to make him forget about his feeling of boredom and meaninglessness.

III. The Importance of a Vivid Goal and the Right Goal

We saw in the above the importance of having a goal in order to be successful and not fall into laziness. We saw that the guy who wants to be a good basketball player is *motivated* and not bored. He's always got basketball on his mind and motivating him. Clearly, this is better than the guy who is not motivated and spends all day watching T.V., drinking, or fooling around. Now, I have a question: what if the guy who wants to make varsity loses sight of the excitement, respect, and fun it would be to be on varsity? Or, what if, as he looks at himself, he decides that his goal is *not realistic*. What happens to his habit of practicing and sacrificing in order to be a good basketball player? That's right, he loses the habit. Practice becomes too hard, too much of a sacrifice...he becomes bored with basketball and his life feels meaningless. You see then how important it is to have a *vivid* goal, that is one that is realistic, and can inspire, excite, draw, and motivate you.

O.K., that's the first point, a goal must be vivid and real. But, what about this. What if a guy makes as the goal of his whole life making the varsity basketball team. Is that going to cause problems? Yes, it will. For, if this is really his biggest goal then he might sacrifice his family or his Faith for

basketball. This will not make him happy, obviously. First of all, what happens when he makes the team and he still feels restless and bored at times? Or, what happens when he graduates? Clearly he makes a mistake in having basketball be the main goal of his life. When someone makes such a poor choice with regard to their goal, what do people say? Ever hear the phrase, "Get a life"? Yeah, people say that when somebody makes their main goal something weak or meaningless, like if the most important thing in someone's life is the next party..."get a life!" This is also said when somebody doesn't have a goal at all..."get a life!" people say. But, we might properly say to anyone who does not make the main goal in their life the right goal, "get a life!" Because compared to becoming a saint and going to heaven, everything is small and not worth our time. So, here is the second point to this section: we must have the *right goal* as our main goal.

Well, now you might be saying, "of course, we all know that we should have the right goal...and I have it, it is to go to heaven, be good, etc." Yes, that is true. True wisdom is to have the right goal as your highest goal. True wisdom is to realize with a poet that "as life comes to a close, there is only one tragedy...not to have been a saint." If you believe in God at all, this has to be true, everyone will admit it...this is the most important goal for all of us: sanctity. Then why aren't so many people who profess to be Christians motivated for holiness and striving for heaven?

I think the reason people aren't motivated by the main goal is because this goal of becoming a saint and going to heaven *isn't vivid enough*. People say these things with their lips and know them with their minds, but don't really believe it firmly in their hearts. So, if we are to be successful in life, if we are to really *be somebody* in this world, we must make the *right goal* the *main goal* of our life (to become holy)—and I think most of us know this and accept this—but we must also make this goal *vivid*, that is, like with the guy who wants to play varsity basketball, it must be a *vivid* goal for us, it must drive us on, it must inspire and excite us. Now I ask you, are you on fire to become a saint? Do you literally burn for holiness? No? Well, perhaps we can fix this problem if we can only make this goal, which we all admit as being the most important, more vivid.

IV. Making the Right Goal a Vivid Goal

There are two things that will help us to make the *right goal* a *vivid* goal. First, we must see this goal as concrete and realistic—that is, we must see becoming a saint as applying to *us*! Second, we must have a real understanding of who the goal really is: Jesus Christ, in all his goodness, glory, and splendor. When these things are in order, when our goal becomes vivid, then we can ask the next most important question (after what is our goal), which is: "What are the means to this goal...how do I attain this goal?" Let's begin then with the second point above in making the right goal a vivid goal, let's start with Jesus.

Jesus is a vivid goal:

Look at Jesus. What do you see? Do you see the face of someone who wants to ruin your fun? Do you see someone who has a look of anger and is getting ready to punish you? This is how many see Jesus and perhaps this includes you and I, at least at times. If we do look at Jesus like this or if the thought of him leaves us cold and doesn't stir our hearts, then how *vivid* and *appealing* is the goal of heaven? Heaven will be being with Jesus (and His Father, and the Holy Spirit, and all the angels and saints). But if Jesus is not real to us or worse, if we see him as just somebody standing in the way of our other goals, then heaven will not be a real and vivid goal for us. Jesus realizes this, he is aware that people are afraid of him, or do not really love him. So he did something extraordinary back in the 1600's.

In the 1600's, like today there were many people who did not come to Jesus, who did not trust him and love him. People were afraid of him and avoided him. This broke the Jesus' heart! He was so hurt by this that, as I said above, he did something. What did the Lord Jesus do? He looked around the whole world and chose a little nun in France to appear to. He came to her on the cross, beaten, rejected, and overwhelmed with grief. The nun, whose name was Margaret Mary, saw Jesus so sad and hurting that she was very surprised. As she beheld Jesus there all bloody and with tears in his eyes she heard him begin to softly speak to her as he motioned to his heart, "Behold this heart which loves so much and which has spared nothing to prove it's love. This heart has suffered every pain and abuse for man to show how tender and loving it is. But all I get in return from the majority of people is a lack of love, indifference, coldness, ingratitude." In short, Jesus said to Margaret Mary and to you, "Behold my heart which loves you so much, but is so little loved!" Then he added, "is there anyone who will console this heart? Is there anyone who

will be my friend?" Margaret Mary's response was, "I will Jesus! I will be your friend, and I will help you."

As we look at Jesus' heart as it is truly present in the Eucharist, let us realize how simple Jesus is. He is not complicated with lots of desires. He has only *one* desire and it is a desire that can only be described as a *thirst*...it is a thirst for love. But because he is so much rejected by people, because so many do not believe or don't care about his True Presence in the Eucharist, his Eucharistic heart is hurting so much. Let us look at Jesus not as somebody who wants to ruin our fun, but as he truly is full of love for us and only wants us to love him back. When we see him like this, let us say with St. Margaret Mary, "Jesus, I will be your friend, I will help you!" If you don't respond who else will? Jesus needs *you*. So Jesus' heart which he revealed to St. Margaret Mary makes our goal more vivid. Being a saint means consoling the heart of our friend who is hurting so much, it means answering the mission he has for us.

The mission Jesus has for YOU makes your goal vivid and real:

Indeed, Jesus truly has a specific goal for *you*, the men of R.C.. Jesus looks at you *specifically* and sees that you are in an opportunity to help him more than most people. I ask you to look at your own life and see why Jesus may be calling on you, let's look at what you have to offer to Jesus.

Well, first, let's begin with the culture or environment we live in. Does our environment tell us anything about why Jesus may be hurting so much? Yes it does. One of the things that hurts Jesus more than anything is when he sees children and families suffering. In our society, the family is under attack. This makes Jesus so sad. He wants to form good and holy families. So why does he look to you and ask *you* to help him?

First of all, you are a young man. Part of the reason families are in such trouble today is because the men are acting like little boys. Many never grow up. They do not realize that real men work hard, control their passions and desires, and live for God by serving their families. Many men today have little self-control (which is what it means to be a man), they get addicted to alcohol, they cheat on their wives, and are lazy, selfish, and don't have clear, correct, and vivid goals. But, how can a family succeed if the man of the house is not being a man? Many of the women are looking to the men for support, leadership, and simply, to be men. So, in many ways the problem and solution lies with men. This is why Jesus speaks specifically to you.

Second, you are still young. You haven't made decisions yet where you have thrown away your lives. There is so much hope for you still. Jesus wants you to let him in your life so that he can *form* you into a *good Christian man*. But, in order to become a good Christian man, you must begin training now, while you are still an adolescent or a young man.

Third, you have been given amazing gifts, more than millions of young people your age. By this I refer to your being a member of St. Peter Chanel Parish. I do not have to explain to you too much what a blessing this place is. It not only has amazing priests who are good examples to us of what it means to be real men, but there are many examples of good fathers and husbands in the parish from whom we can learn. I could go on and on about this point. But just realize, if you who have been given such amazing resources to become good, holy men, do not become the men Jesus is looking for...who else will? *You are needed. You must answer the call.* Jesus and the world are looking for the type of men that you can be and R.C. is a way that you can make it happen...one of the only groups of its kind. I ask you to do it and do it like a man: with hard work, self-sacrifice, and zeal.

And now we shall describe the goal of R.C...

THE GOAL OF R.C.:

To be the best Christian men possible, that is, to begin forming ourselves to be the best husbands and fathers or Priests (if God is calling to that) that God is calling us to be. We may not know what career or vocation we have, but we all know that God needs us to be good Christian men. Our reason for striving for is given in the three points above. In order to accomplish our goal, we turn to the following means:

V. The Means To Becoming The Best Christian Men Possible

It is not easy today to be a good Christian man. That is why we propose the following "helps" which will aid us in our formation.

1. *The Spirituality of Radiating Christ.* Since our goal is to become real men, we look to he who is most fully a man, Jesus Christ. If we are in the state of grace, if we have been baptized and have not committed a mortal sin, then Jesus Christ is *truly present* in our hearts. He is so truly present that one could say that we should genuflect before another person because Jesus is truly dwelling within them! To be a real man then is quite simple, it is to let Jesus, the real man, radiate through us.

The way we can live this, like I said, is simple. All it takes is becoming aware of Jesus present in your heart and asking him to work through you and in you. If you do this, if you constantly "tap into" Jesus in your heart, then remarkable things will truly start to happen. You will begin to feel what Jesus feels, you will begin to look at people as Jesus looks at them. People will begin to be curious about the strange presence that you bring, a presence that they will love. You will be a carrier of Jesus.

This spirituality is so important today because so many people avoid Jesus because they think, like people in the time of St. Margaret Mary, that he is only going to ruin their fun, that he is going to be angry with them and punish them. Because people do not know Jesus as he *really* is they avoid him. Jesus tries to come to them, they feel his presence approaching when they are quiet, but as soon as they sense God's presence they flee to distractions, business, and noise...anything to avoid what they think is so bad. As I mentioned earlier in talking about St. Margaret Mary, this hurts Jesus' heart so much. This is why he needs you. He has a "secret weapon," and it is you.

The many people who avoid Jesus (and this may, unfortunately include us at times) will not avoid you. They will see you coming and say, "Hey Joe, Frankie, Jean-Pierre so good to see you!" Ah, but here's where you become Jesus' secret weapon, for within your heart there is Jesus and you have been growing in the ability to let Jesus "radiate" others through you. As you grow in this ability (which is really growing in holiness) people will experience Jesus Christ through you. This is very important because then they will be drawn more to prayer and a union with God. They will see the peace, joy, and love radiating through a real man. Having this ability is what life is all about, may you all grow in it and remind each other to continue radiating Christ. Talk to each other about your experiences, successes and failures in this very important part of your mission for Jesus.

2. *Purity.* One of the main areas the devil attacks guys who are striving to be real men is with impurity. Impurity, which is looking at another person as an object rather than seeing them as a "wonder" and "gift" and having a dignity, is something that quickly destroys your ability to Radiate Christ. That is why Jesus wants us to strive for purity, if we do, we will be able to have the "look" of Jesus that people love and need. If we don't we will have the other "look" that people also recognize, a look that says, "I see you simply as an object for my pleasure, my advancement, etc." Such a look is very ugly and sad. Such a look destroys our joy, peace, and happiness. We become more like animals who can only think of themselves vs. becoming fully alive human persons. Don't let the devil in! Strive! Jesus wants you to be happy and free. But think of a person who is enslaved to lust and impurity, he can't look someone in the eyes, he is tormented by guilt, and he is very depressed. Jesus doesn't want us to be sad like this. So, what do we do when we are surrounded by a culture that throws all kinds of temptations in our way? We have to be real men. We have to fight against the temptation. Here's how:

One of the best ways to fight against the temptation to impurity is to "nip it in the bud." What I mean is that most temptations to impurity start out small like a sapling growing from the earth. It seems harmless at first, but as it grows it becomes unmanageable and impossible to cut down! It grows into a venus fly-trap which won't let go. So, you have to cut off those temptations right as they begin to come to you. The mower that cuts these saplings are the Hail Mary. If you say a Hail Mary right when the temptation comes on, most of the time it will go away. Sometimes you may have to say a few Hail Mary's. But get a *reflex action*, so that whenever you are tempted, you automatically start to pray a Hail Mary. It works wonders if you decide to do it.

One other thing about temptations to impurity is that if you fall...don't get discouraged! Get back up and keep fighting. Never give up. The Lord *always* loves you even and *especially* when we fall. When we fall, he is just sad because he doesn't like to see us hurting ourselves. Make him happy by getting up and asking him to do better in the future. Purity takes a struggle, but it is well worth the fight! May the men of R.C. help support each other in this important area of struggle.

3. *Hard Work.* Part of what it is to be a man is to work hard. It is not easy to work hard if you are not motivated. But the men of R.C. *do* have something to motivate them: their goal of being good Christian

men! I hope this goal is very attractive for all of you for so much joy comes from being a good Christian man. If you strive to become a good Christian man and are called to get married you will be given a wonderful wife and family from the Lord and it will be your joy and gift to Jesus. If you have the unsurpassable gift of a vocation to the priesthood, you will only be able to receive such a gift if you are striving to be a good Christian man. If you are given this gift you will be given a joy greater than any other in this life...and you will help many, many people. But all of this, becoming a good Christian husband and father, or becoming a good Priest, takes hard work now. If you have the goal in mind, however, you will be able to work hard and it won't be so difficult, just as it wasn't difficult for the guy who desired to play varsity basketball to practice. Keep your goal always in mind. (I'd recommend getting a nice state of St. Joseph or a good picture of the Sacred Heart and have it before your desk at home as a constant reminder of your goal.)

In what do we need to work hard? In our *studies*, for this will give the tools to get better jobs, to communicate well, and to be a better instrument for Jesus. Working hard in studies also teaches us self-discipline and makes us confident men. We don't have to be scholars, but just guys who do our *best* in our studies. In our *social life*, for we need to be able to relate to people well and give Jesus and opportunity to radiate others through us. We should strive to be men who can enter into good friendships and know how to listen to others. We must also work to make sure we surround ourselves with people who will build us up into better men, not tear us down. We should also be hard workers in *athletics* and *other work*. We should be well rounded men who give our all in whatever we do, for Jesus needs good examples and that's what we *can* be if we keep our goal in our minds and our hearts.

4. *Never Give Up Attitude*. We must be convinced that we *can* become good Christian men and we must decide that we will, with the help of God's grace. We must decide never to get discouraged with our weaknesses but be convinced that it pleases Jesus most when we fall and get right back and turn to him. It hurts Jesus most when we don't trust him or avoid him. We must have total confidence in the Lord Jesus and never let him down by our being afraid to come to him.

5. *St. Joseph's Promise*. This is the last and one of the most important of our "5 Means." The St. Joseph's Promise is simply committing ourselves to strive for the goal we have mentioned over and over. It is not a formal promise like a vow, but it is still important. It is us telling our best friend, Jesus, that we want to help him and with his grace we will. This prayer-commitment we should pray everyday, along with the other commitments we have as Catholics (Sunday Mass, Confession, etc.--the R.C. prayer is listed below).

Another part of the *St. Joseph's Promise* is to commit, as best as we can, to the monthly meetings of R.C. The purpose of the monthly meetings is to come together as young men/men who are all striving for the same goal. The idea is that in the monthly meetings/fellowship/fraternity we support each other and talk about our common goal--to be the best Christian men possible--and the means we have chosen to get to that goal. These meetings should be an opportunity for friendship and enjoyment, a time that is meant "just for the guys" to recommit and encourage each other. These are guys that you are united with in prayer and commitment--they are your brothers. For this reason, the meetings are very important. We all need support and encouragement in living our goal, especially in our day today. If the men of R.C. decide to have other events, this is good to, but they should always have time for short prayer together and some discussion about the goal of this group and the means we have discussed. All of these commitments are summarized in the following prayer which we should pray everyday.

RADIATING CHRIST PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank you for creating me and drawing me to yourself. I long to be with you. Jesus, thank you for being here with me and in my heart. Jesus I do believe that you are present in my heart and that you love me. I love you. Jesus I see how you are hurting and how you need my help. Though I am a weak man, I want to help you, please help me to help you. I will help you. I give you my life through the hands of Mary. Jesus radiate through me. Jesus let me be your hands, your voice, and your love in the world. This is my goal Lord Jesus, to be a real man, to have you radiate through me. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph help me to live this goal, help me to be pure, hardworking and trusting. Help my brothers to live all of this also. Thank you Jesus for everything. Father, send your Holy Spirit and set me on fire with love, joy, and zeal.

Amen.

--Consoling the Heart of Jesus Groups

Just as I gave the above constitutions for “Radiating Christ” as an example of a group that can be formed based on this spirituality, you can make up a group like this of people in your parish who want to live this spirituality of consoling the heart of Jesus (different from an Adoration Society). Like the R.C. group mentioned above, it can be an opportunity to get together and discuss the books mentioned, etc. The retreat could be a starting point for those who might be interested. One of the activities of such a group could be distributing the books mentioned above.

Obstacle #7: Final Summary and Too Good To Be True?

1. Final summary of this retreat as it relates to the “Preliminary Perspective” of the “Big Picture”:

1. Our Condition

--In this retreat we have emphasized our condition as being weakness and a lack of trust.

2. God Comes to Meet us

--Jesus reveals his heart: “Behold this Heart which loves so much yet which is so little loved.” And then asks, “is there anyone who will be my friend? Anyone who will console my heart?”

3. Our Response

--Hopefully, when we see Jesus’ hurting heart we have responded, “I will console your heart Lord! I will be your friend.” Then, in this retreat we summarized the *best* way to console his heart. Here we relate all that has been said to Mary’s response of faith:

a. Ecce—Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

--Here we come to the Lord with confidence, *as we are*, and present ourselves

b. Fiat—Let it be done unto me...

--Here we ask the Lord to use us as his instruments, *weak as we may be*, we have confidence he can do a marvelous work with us. And we *accept* whatever God sends with...

c. Magnificat—My soul magnifies the Lord

--Here we console the Lord’s heart in the best possible way with our praise and thanksgiving, and that with the voice and heart of Mary.

So—We see how the above incorporates Lanteri’s “3 Weapons”

1. The Exercises

For we see the Principle and foundation (#2)

2. Mercy

For we see the emphasis on responding to the Lord’s appeals with the humble confidence we spoke of in the retreat. Coming as we are, entrusting ourselves into God’s hands, and being filled with praise and thanksgiving.

3. Mary

For we see how our whole response is spoken with the words of Mary and with her heart thereby giving all over to Mary and giving Jesus the greatest consolation

In one word then, we can summarize it all with “MAGNIFICAT”

--We summarize the retreat thus because this one word, after having given ourselves to Jesus and Mary at a time before, summarizes our whole attitude. We live one Magnificat of praise and thanksgiving in all things with Mary, thereby always consoling Jesus.

2. Too Good to Be True?

One reproach sometimes made to this spirituality of confident love is that it would entail the danger of presumption and of letting oneself go...[after saying that abandonment is the key to this spirituality D'Elbee goes on] "if we live this way, united to Jesus by the theological virtues, he himself guards our fidelity and generosity." (*IBL*, 35)

Let me tell you something strange: even the most beautiful souls, who burn to be in the Heart of Jesus, do not want to believe that confidence is the key which will open the door for them, because this door is a wound made by love. They look for other ways, as if this way were too beautiful to be reliable. How many times people have said to me, 'It is too beautiful to be true.' And I answer, 'Jesus bought at a dear enough price, at the price of all his blood, the right to bring to earth something 'too beautiful'.'

So what then? He calls me just as I am? I can go to him with all my miseries, all my weaknesses? He will repair what I have done badly? He will supply for all my indigence? Yes, provided that you go to him, that you count on him, that you expect everything of him, that you say with St. Paul, *Omnia possum* (*Phil. 4:13*): I can do all things in Him who is my only strength and my only virtue. (*IBL*, 35).

A notion which is not widespread and which, nevertheless, is very important is that Jesus, when we ask him with confidence, repairs not only the evil we have done in ourselves, but also the evil we have done around us. Indeed, he has made things right in me, but what about the evil I have done to others? The bad example I have set, the scandal I have given, the good I would have been able to do and did not do, the injustice I committed? I am set aright myself, but what about the others?

Say then, "Jesus, from this evil also which I have wrought around me, draw forth good. Even, I dare to ask you, draw a greater good from it than if I had not done the evil. I ask you this humbly, in my smallness, beating my breast and saying, *Mea culpa*, with a contrite heart, recognizing my fault. I ask it of you with an immense confidence, recognizing your mercy and the limitless price you paid for our Redemption. Make reparation in me and around me." We cannot always repair things ourselves. We cannot always ask pardon of those offended, make excuses, put things aright—at least not immediately—and often the remedy would be worse than the evil. So say, "I would like to do it, I cannot, but you will do it yourself, because of my confidence."

It has been said, "for everything there is a price," and it is true. But Jesus has paid the whole price himself, first of all. He will have me pay the price with him by uniting myself with his redemptive sufferings, with his saving love, but not as a demanding and vindictive creditor. Without him, what can I do? Nothing. With him, everything. "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened: and I will refresh you" (*Mt. 11:28*). I emphasize this because I know that this loving certainty that the Savior makes things right is necessary to you for the peace of your souls. (*IBL*, 93-94)

All My longing is to set hearts on fire...to set the whole world on fire. (Our Lord to Josefa, 12th June 1)

Coming Soon... More retreats based on “The Big Picture.” Here’s a brief explanation of why we might need a “Big Picture” vision followed by a summary of it (it also provides the context for this retreat and others). The next retreat will be on “Radiating Christ.” The present retreat laid the foundation for one’s own personal spirituality and relationship with Jesus, but then we have to bring Jesus to others. This follows the “rhythm” Mother Theresa spoke about when she explained why her Missionaries of Charity start every day with a Holy Hour before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. During this hour of Adoration, the nuns “fill up” with Jesus so as to better bring him to others. The retreat we just concluded was a “filling up” the next retreat focuses on “going out” and Radiating Christ. Also, the retreat Consoling the Heart of Jesus—for those that are interested—falls under point #2 of the Big Picture. The next retreat on “Radiating Christ” will fall under point #3 below.

The Big Picture

I. The Culture of Death, The Culture of Life, and The Person: --The Need for a Big Picture

The Holy Father, in his Encyclical Letter *The Gospel of Life* emphasizes that our present society tends toward “a Culture of Death,” that is, a culture which not only destroys the life of millions of unborn children, but also one which, in more subtle ways, threatens to destroy people *as persons*. He has called “all the sons and daughters of the Church, in the name of God!” to establish a Culture of Life, a culture which defends life and which does not tear down, but raises up men and women as persons.

John Paul II teaches us that the human person is such that his life is both a gift and a task. That is, we have the responsibility, through our own choices and aided by grace, to become transformed into Saints, into “other Christs,” and thereby to make our lives “something beautiful for God.” However, our choices and actions can also lead to our being destroyed as human persons. Weather or not we become “something beautiful for God” or destroyed as persons depends ultimately, says the Pope, on a choice for either: self-giving or selfishness; sanctity or savagery; the Savior or Satan. The Pope highlights the importance not just of our actions as formative, but the ideas and ideals we hold dear.

For John Paul II, ideas and ideals are not just fluff. On the contrary, he says that the whole crisis of the modern world can be considered as *a crisis of ideas*. The culture we live in may consider the truth as relative and a cynicism may often prevail, but the Pope proclaims the truth and never shies from holding up the Christian ideal. This is because the Pope, with his extraordinary grasp of the human person, knows too well that the human person who is formed by his action and choice into either saint or animal, chooses and acts based on the ideas that he holds. If I value pleasure above all else, I will only choose what pleases me, and so I will become like an animal. Therefore, at the front lines of the culture wars is a battle of ideas, ideas that destroy or complete the human person. We need then to have a good grasp of the truth, the true ideas.

Now, here’s the real threat of the Culture of Death—its message rules. Movies, radio, the New York Times et. al., proclaim well the Gospel of selfishness, materialism, and secularism. Of course, this is not to say the whole egg is bad, but the air stinks—unless we’ve gotten used to it. And, if we’ve gotten used to it, the stench begins issue from us, from our actions, then from our person. Is there any fresh air?

You guessed it, the following hopes to provide the fresh air of clarity and the big picture of the Truth. “But I already know the truth. I know its all about loving Jesus, my family, etc.” O.K., you’ve got it, but it is always helpful to streamline your big picture, to know well the essential truths of the faith and how they relate, and to base your spiritual life on what takes you to the goal (heaven) in the best possible way. We give this attention to our golf game, homemaking, and jump shot...why not to our faith. “Well, because everyone is different and has different ideas, its hard to put it all together.”

True, everyone does have their approaches, and it is hard to put it all together, but this approach is based on the sure footing of the Church: it follows the structures of the Catechism, Papal teaching, and draws from the most effective tradition in the Church for giving clarity and Umpf to one’s spiritual life: The Ignatian Vision. Ignatius did put it all together, and with him and the Catechism, we hope to too.

II. The Preliminary Perspective on the Big Picture: The Life of Faith

(Faith and knowing what it is, is foundational for the Christian life. This is where the Catechism starts, and the lens it provides for looking at the “Big Picture”)

1. Our Condition

--We desire total union with God, but we don't have it. Pain.

2. God Comes to Us

--God has pity on us in our condition. He offers his hand, inviting us to the communion we desire.

3. Our Response--Faith

--We can either accept or reject God's invitation to friendship. If we accept, this is called faith.

--Mary is our model for the response which is faith

a) *Ecce*

--“Behold the Handmaid of the Lord”

--Behold, here I am Lord, as I am weaknesses and all, but I come w/ confidence

b) *Fiat*

--“Let it be done unto me according to your word.”

--I abandon myself into your hands Lord. I accept what you send. Use me.

c) *Magnificat*

--“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

--I accept whatever you send with praise and thanks Lord. All is your love.

III. The Big Picture—Here it is! (in Outline)

1. Communion with the Trinity (final end)

The Big Picture Retreat (III)

--*Assumption into Trinitarian Communion* (Burning Furnace of self-giving love)

a) The Trinity is our origin and final home

b) We're separated from the Trinity b/c of The Fall. Restless hearts.

c) The Trinity, in their love sent the Son to bring us back

2. Communion with Jesus (means)

Consoling Heart of Jesus Retreat (I)

--*Transformation into Christ*: we get back to the Trinity by uniting with the Son and as his body ascend back to the Father in the Spirit.

a) Living Self-Giving Love

--our actions transform us as J.P. II says

--the life of faith as self-donation

b) Prayer/Contemplation

c) Sacraments, esp. Eucharist

3 Climaxes of the Mass

3. Bringing others into this Communion (mission)

Radiating Christ Retreat (II)

--Evangelization: We aren't to keep the wonderful communion to ourselves, we labor with Christ to bring others into communion with him.

a) Radiating Christ (effect of ongoing transformation)

b) Also, bring all material creation to Father through praise

c) Discern the specific mission/vocation God has for you

