

OCTOBER IV.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISIUM, C.,

FOUNDER OF THE FRIAR MINORS.

[From his life wrote by St. Bonaventure, with the notes of Sedulius, and F. Wadding, a learned Irish Franciscan, who flourished in Spain and Italy. See also F. Helyot, *Hist. des Ordres Relig.* t. vii. p. 1, and the life of this saint very well compiled, and illustrated with accurate Dissertations, by F. Candidus Chalippe, a French Recollect, in two volumes, 12mo., 1736. Suyken the Bollandist gives us a life of St. Francis never before published, written in a great detail of circumstances by his disciple, Thomas de Celano, whom he had received into his Order. This life was compiled before that by St. Bonaventure, and before the translation of the saint's body in 1230.]

A.D. 1226.

THE blessed St. Francis was one of those happy little ones whom God chose to enrich with spiritual knowledge and heavenly gifts of virtue. He was born at Assisium, in Umbria, in the Ecclesiastical State, in 1182. His father, Peter Bernardon, was descended of a gentleman's family originally settled at Florence, but was himself a merchant, and lived at Assisium, a town situated on the brow of a hill called Assi. The saint's mother was called Pica. Both his parents were persons of great probity. They were in good circumstances, but so taken up with their business as to neglect giving their son any tincture of learning. Their trade lying in part with the French, they made him learn that language; and from the readiness with which he acquired and spoke it, he was called Francis, though the name of John had been given him at his baptism. In his youth he was too much led away with vain amusements, and was very intent on temporal gain; but he never let loose the reins of his sensual appetites, nor placed his confidence in worldly riches; and it was his custom never to refuse an alms to any poor man who asked it of him for the love of God. One day, being very busy about his affairs, he let a beggar go away without an alms; but, immediately reproaching himself with want of charity, ran after the poor man, gave him an

alms, and bound himself by a vow never to refuse it to any poor man that should ask it for the love of God: this vow he kept to his death. Francis, whilst he yet lived in the world, was meek, patient, very tractable, and liberal to the poor beyond what his circumstances seemed to allow of. Whenever he heard the love of God named, he felt in his soul an interior spiritual jubilation. His patience under two accidents which befell him, contributed greatly to the improvement of his virtue. The one was, that in a war between the cities of Perugia and Assisium, he, with several others, was carried away prisoner by the Perugians. This affliction he suffered a whole year with great alacrity, and comforted his companions. The second was a long and dangerous sickness, which he suffered with so great patience and piety, that by the weakness of his body his spirit gathered greater strength, and improved in the unction of the Holy Ghost and the divine gift of prayer. After his recovery, as he rode out one day in a new suit of clothes, meeting on the road a decayed gentleman then reduced to poverty, and very ill clad, he was touched with compassion to the quick, and changed clothes with him. The night following, he seemed to see in his sleep a magnificent palace, filled with rich arms, all marked with the sign of the cross; and he thought he heard one tell him that these arms belonged to him and his soldiers, if they would take up the cross and fight courageously under its banner. He knew not yet how he should best do this, but he felt certain strong inspirations by which our Lord gave him to understand that the spiritual warfare of Christ is begun by mortification and the victory over one's self. These interior motions awakened him, and inflamed him every day more and more to desire to attain to the perfect mortification of his senses, and contempt of himself. Riding one day in the plains of Assisium he met a leper whose sores

were so loathsome, that at the sight of them he was struck with horror, and suddenly recoiled; but overcoming himself he alighted, and as the leper stretched forth his hand to receive an alms, Francis, whilst he bestowed it, kissed his sores with great tenderness.

Resolving with fresh ardour to aim at Christian perfection, he had no relish but for solitude and prayer, and besought our Lord with great fervour to reveal to him his will. Being one day wholly absorbed in God, he seemed to behold Christ hanging upon his cross; from which vision he was so tenderly affected, that he was never afterwards able to remember the sufferings of Christ without shedding many tears, and, from that time, he was animated with an extraordinary spirit of poverty, charity, and piety. He often visited the hospitals, served the sick, as if in them he had served Christ himself, and kissed the ulcers of the lepers with great affection and humility. He gave to the poor sometimes part of his clothes, and sometimes money. He took a journey to Rome to visit the tombs of the apostles, and finding a multitude of poor before the door of St. Peter's Church, he gave his clothes to one whom he thought to be most in need amongst them; and clothing himself with the rags of that poor man, he remained all that day in the company of those beggars, feeling an extraordinary comfort and joy in his soul. Having interiorly the cross of Christ imprinted on his heart, he endeavoured earnestly to mortify and crucify his flesh. One day, as he was praying in the Church of St. Damian, without the walls of Assisium, before a crucifix, he seemed to hear a voice coming from it, which said to him three times: "Francis, go and repair my house, which thou seest falling." The saint seeing that church was old, and ready to fall to the ground, thought our Lord commanded him to repair it. He therefore went home, and by an action which was only justifiable by the simplicity of his heart,

and the right of a partnership with his father in trade (for he was then twenty-five years old), took a horse-load of cloth out of his father's warehouse, and sold it, with the horse, at Foligni, a town twelve miles from Assisium. The price he brought to the old poor priest of St. Damian's, desiring to stay with him. The priest consented to his staying, but would not take the money, which Francis therefore laid in a window. His father hearing what had been done, came in a rage to St. Damian's, but was somewhat pacified upon recovering his money, which he found in the window. Francis, to shun his anger, had hid himself; but, after some days spent in prayer and fasting, appeared again in the streets, though so disfigured and ill clad, that the people pelted him, and called him madman; all which he bore with joy. Bernardon, more incensed than ever, carried him home, beat him unmercifully, put fetters on his feet, and locked him up in a chamber till his mother set him at liberty while his father was gone out. Francis returned to St. Damian's, and his father following him thither, insisted that he should either return home, or renounce before the bishop all his share in his inheritance, and all manner of expectations from his family. The son accepted the latter condition with joy, gave his father whatever he had in his pockets, told him he was ready to undergo more blows and chains for the love of Jesus Christ, whose disciple he desired to be, and cheerfully went with his father before the Bishop of Assisium, to make a legal renunciation to his inheritance in form. Being come into his presence, Francis, impatient of delays, while the instrument was drawing up, made the renunciation by the following action, carrying it in his fervour further than was required. He stripped himself of his clothes, and gave them to his father, saying cheerfully, and meekly, "Hitherto I have called you father on earth; but now I say with more confi-

dence, Our Father, who art in heaven, in whom I place all my hope and treasure." He renounced the world with greater pleasure than others can receive its favours, hoping now to be freed from all that which is most apt to make a division in our hearts with God, or even to drive him quite out. The bishop admired his fervour, covered him with his cloak, and shedding many tears, ordered some garment or other to be brought in for him. The cloak of a country labourer, a servant of the bishop, was found next at hand. The saint received this first alms with many thanks, made a cross on the garment with chalk or mortar, and put it on. This happened in the twenty-fifth year of his age, in 1206.

Francis went out of the bishop's palace in search of some convenient retirement, singing the divine praises along the highways. He passed by a monastery, and there received an alms as an unknown poor man. In the city of Gubbio, one who knew him took him into his house, and gave him an entire suit of clothes, which were decent though poor and mean. These he wore two years, with a girdle and shoes, and he walked with a staff in his hand, like a hermit. At Gubbio he visited the hospital of lepers, and served them, washing their feet, and wiping and kissing their ulcers. For the repairs of the church of St. Damian he gathered alms and begged in the city of Assisium, where all had known him rich. He bore with joy the railleries and contempt with which he was treated by his father, brother, and all his acquaintance; and if he found himself to blush upon receiving any confusion, he endeavoured to court and increase his disgrace, in order to humble himself the more, and to overcome all inclinations of pride in his heart. For the building of St. Damian's he himself carried stones, and served the masons, and saw that church put in good repair. After this, he retired to a little church, called

Portiuncula, belonging to the abbey of Benedictin of monks Subiaco, who gave it that name, because it was built on a small estate or parcel of land which belonged to them. It stands in a spacious open plain, almost a mile from Assisium, and was at that time forsaken, and in a very ruinous condition. The retiredness of this place was very agreeable to St. Francis, and he was much delighted with the title which this church bore, it being dedicated in honour of our Lady of Angels; a circumstance very pleasing to him for his singular devotion to the holy angels, and to the queen of angels. Francis repaired this church in 1207, in the same manner he had done the two others; he fixed his abode by it, made it the usual place of his devotions, and received in it many heavenly favours. He had spent here two years in sighs and tears, when hearing one day those words of Christ, "Do not carry gold, or silver, or a scrip for your journey, or two coats, or a staff,"¹ read in the gospel at mass, he desired of the priest after mass an exposition of them; and applying them literally to himself, he gave away his money, and leaving off his shoes, staff, and leathern girdle, contented himself with one poor coat, which he girt about him with a cord. This was the habit which he gave to his friars the year following. It was the dress of the poor shepherds and country peasants in those parts. The saint added a short cloak over the shoulders, and a capuche to cover the head. St. Bonaventure, in 1260, made this capuche, or mozetta, a little longer, to cover the breast and shoulders. Some of the very habits which the saint wore are still shown at Assisium, Florence, and other places. In this attire he exhorted the people to penance with such energy that his words pierced the hearts of his hearers. Before his discourses he saluted the people with these words, "Our Lord give you peace;" which he somestimes said he had learned by divine revelation. They

(1) Matt. ix. 10.

express the salutation which Christ and St. Paul used. God had already favoured the saint with the gifts of prophecy and miracles. When he was begging alms to repair the church of St. Damian, he used to say, "Assist me to finish this building. Here will one day be a monastery of holy virgins, by whose good fame our Lord will be glorified over the whole church." This was verified in St. Clare five years after, who inserted this prophecy in her last will and testament.¹ Before this, a man in the duchy of Spoleto was afflicted with a horrible running cancer, which had gnawn both his mouth and cheeks in a hideous manner. Having, without receiving any benefit, had recourse to all remedies that could be suggested, and made several pilgrimages to Rome for the recovery of his health, he came to St. Francis, and would have thrown himself at his feet; but the saint prevented him, and kissed his ulcerous sore, which was instantly healed. "I know not," says St. Bonaventure, "which I ought most to admire, such a kiss or such a cure." The sufferings of our Divine Redeemer were a principal object of our saint's devotions, and in his assiduous meditation on them, he was not able to contain the torrents of his tears. A stranger passing by the Portiuncula heard his sighs, and stepping in, was astonished to see the abundance of tears in which he found him bathed, for which he reproached him as for a silly weakness. The saint answered, "I weep for the sufferings of my Lord Jesus Christ. I ought not to blush to weep publicly over the whole earth at the remembrance of this wonderful mystery."

Many began to admire the heroic and uniform virtue of this great servant of God, and some desired to be his companions and disciples. The first of these was Bernard of Quintaval, rich tradesman of Assisium, a person of singular prudence, and of great authority in that city, which had been long directed by his counsels.

(1) Extant in Wadding, ad an. 1253.

Seeing the extraordinary conduct of St. Francis, he invited him to sup at his house, and had a good bed made ready for him near his own. When Bernard seemed to be fallen asleep, the servant of God arose, and falling on his knees, with his eyes lifted up and his arms across, repeated very slow, with abundance of tears, the whole night, *Deus meus et Omnia*, "My God and my All." The ardour with which he poured forth his soul in these words, by most fervent acts of adoration, love, praise, thanksgiving, and compunction, was admirable, and the tender and vehement manner of his prayer, expressed strongly how much the divine love filled the whole capacity of his heart. Bernard secretly watched the saint all night by the light of a lamp, saying to himself, "This man is truly a servant of God;" and admiring the happiness of such a one, whose heart is entirely filled with God, and to whom the whole world is nothing. After many other proofs of the sincere and admirable sanctity of Francis, being charmed and vanquished by his example, he begged the saint to make him his companion. Francis recommended the matter to God for some time; they both heard mass together, and took advice that they might learn the will of God. The design being approved, Bernard sold all his effects, and divided the sum among the poor in one day. Peter of Catana, a canon of the cathedral of Assisium, desired to be admitted with him. The saint gave his habit to them both together on the 16th of August, 1209, which is called the foundation of this Order, though some date it a year sooner, when the saint himself, upon hearing the gospel read, embraced this manner of life. The third person who joined them was Giles, a person of great simplicity and virtue. They first joined St. Francis in his cell at the Portiuncula; the two first soon after he had changed his habit; upon which he went to Rome, and obtained a verbal approbation of his Order from Innocent IV. in the same

year, 1209, a little before Otho IV. was crowned emperor at Rome, about the close of September. The saint at his return settled at Rivo-Torto, near Assisium, where he inhabited, with his disciples, an abandoned cottage. After an excursion into the marquisate of Ancona, to preach penance, he brought back his disciples to the Portiuncula. When their number was augmented to one hundred and twenty-seven, St. Francis, assembling them together, spoke to them in a most pathetic manner of the kingdom of God, the contempt of the world, the renouncing their own will, and the mortification of their senses.

The saint composed a rule for his Order, consisting of the gospel counsels of perfection, to which he added some things necessary for uniformity in their manner of life. He exhorts his brethren to manual labour, but will have them content to receive for it things necessary for life, not money. He bids them not to be ashamed to beg alms, remembering the poverty of Christ; and he forbids them to preach in any place without the bishop's license. He carried his rule to Rome, to obtain the pope's approbation. Innocent III., who then sat in St. Peter's chair, appeared at first averse, and many of the cardinals alleged that the Orders already established ought to be reformed, but their number not multiplied; and that the intended poverty of this new institute was impracticable. Cardinal Colonna, Bishop of Salina, pleaded in its favour that it was no more than the evangelical counsels of perfection. The pope consulted for some time, and had the affair recommended to God. He afterwards told his nephew, from whom St. Bonaventure heard it, that in a dream he saw a palm-tree growing up at his feet; in another vision, some time after, he saw St. Francis propping up the Lateran church, which seemed ready to fall; as he saw St. Dominic, in another vision, five years after. He therefore sent again for St. Francis, and approved his

rule, but only by word of mouth, in 1210, and he ordained him deacon.

St. Francis having obtained of his holiness an oral approbation of his institute, left Rome with his twelve disciples, and returned with them, first to the valley of Spoleto, and thence to Assisium, where they lived together in a little cottage at Rivo-Torto, without the gates of the town; and they sometimes went into the country to preach. Soon after, the Benedictins of Monte Soubazo bestowed on the founder the church of the Portiuncula, upon condition that it should always continue the head church of his Order. The saint refused to accept the property or dominion, but would only have the use of the place; and, in token that he held it of the monks, he sent them every year as an acknowledgment a basket of little fish, called laschi, of which there is great plenty in a neighbouring river. The monks always sent the friars, in return, a barrel of oil. St. Francis would not suffer any dominion or property of temporal goods to be vested even in his Order, or in any community or convent in it (as in other religious Orders), that he might more perfectly and more affectionately say in his heart, that the house in which he lived, the bread which he ate, and the poor clothes which he wore, were none of his; and that he possessed nothing of any earthly goods, being a disciple of Him who, for our sakes, was born a stranger in an open stable, lived without a place of his own wherein to lay his head, subsisting by the charity of good people, and died naked on a cross in the close embraces of holy poverty, in order to expiate our sins, and to cure our passions of covetousness, sensuality, pride, and ambition. This spirit and love of holy poverty our saint learned by assiduous humble meditation on the life and passion of Christ, the great book of a spiritual life; and this is the poverty which he assiduously and most earnestly recommended to his followers. When they one day asked him which of all virtues is the most agreeable

to God he answered, "Poverty is the way to salvation, the nurse of humility, and the root of perfection. Its fruits are hidden, but they multiply themselves infinite ways." He speaks of the spirit of poverty as the root of humility and divine charity, in the same sense that some others speak of humble obedience, inasmuch as both spring from and reciprocally entertain a sincere and cordial affection of humility. St. Francis called the spirit of holy poverty the foundation of his Order, and in his habit, in every thing that he used, and in all his actions, he carried his affection for it to the greatest nicety. He sometimes ordered houses already built for his religious to be pulled down, because he thought them too large and sumptuous for their state of the most severe evangelical poverty. Returning once from a journey to the Portiuncula, he found a new building made there, which he judged to be too neat and commodious. He therefore insisted that it should be demolished; till the citizens of Assisium declared that they had built it for the lodgings of strangers, who must otherwise lie in the fields, and that it was no way intended for his Order. In his rule he prescribed that the churches of his religious should be low and small, and all their other buildings of wood; but some persons representing to him that in certain countries wood is dearer than stone, he struck out this last condition, requiring only that all their buildings should be suitable to that strict poverty which they professed. God is glorified by every spirit that is founded upon sincere motives of humility, penance, and charity; and this saint's admirable love of holy poverty, which confounds the sensuality, pride, and avarice which reign so much among men, derogates not from the merit of their virtue, who make a just and holy use of the things of this world to the glory of God, so as still to maintain a disengagement of heart, and a true spirit of poverty, compunction, penance, humility, and all other virtues, which are never perfect if

any one in the whole train be wanting or imperfect.

Holy poverty was dearer to St. Francis through his extraordinary love of penance. He scarce allowed his body what was necessary to sustain life, and found out every day new ways of afflicting and mortifying it. If any part of his rough habit seemed too soft, he sewed it with pack-thread, and was wont to say to his brethren, that the devil easily tempted those that wore soft garments. His bed was ordinarily the ground, or he slept sitting, and used for his bolster a piece of wood or a stone. Unless he was sick, he very rarely ate any thing that was dressed with fire; and when he did, he usually put ashes or water upon it. Often his nourishment was only a little coarse bread, on which he sometimes strewed ashes. He drank clear water, and that very moderately, how great thirst or heat soever he suffered. He fasted rigorously eight lents in the year. Seculars were much edified that, to conform himself to them, he allowed his religious to eat flesh meat, which the end of his institute made necessary. He called his body, brother Ass, because it was to carry burdens, to be beaten, and to eat little and coarsely. When he saw any one idle, eating of other men's labours, he called him brother Fly, because he did no good, but spoiled the good which others did, and was troublesome to them. As a man owes a discreet charity to his own body, the saint, a few days before he died, asked pardon of his, for having treated it perhaps with too great rigour, excusing himself that he had done it the better to secure and guard the purity of his soul, and for the greater service of God. Indiscreet or excessive austerities always displeased him. When a brother, by immoderate abstinence, was not able to sleep, the saint brought him some bread, and, that he might eat it with less confusion, began himself to eat with him.

The care with which he watched over

himself to preserve the virtue of purity, ought not to be passed over. In the beginning of his conversion, finding himself assailed with violent temptations of concupiscence, he often cast himself into ditches full of snow. Once, under a more grievous assault than ordinary, he presently began to discipline himself sharply; then, with great fervour of spirit, he went out of his cell, and rolled himself in the snow; after this, having made seven great heaps of snow, he said to himself, "Imagine these were thy wife and children ready to die of cold, thou must then take great pains to maintain them." Whereupon he set himself again to labour in the cold; by the vigour and fervour with which he on that occasion subdued his domestic enemy, he obtained so complete a victory, that he never felt any more assaults.

With extreme austerity, St. Francis joined the most profound humility of heart. He was in his own eyes the basest and most despicable of all men, and desired to be reputed such by all; he loved contempt, and sincerely shunned honour and praise. If others commended him, and showed any esteem of his virtue, he often said to himself, "What every one is in the eyes of God, that he is, and no more." He frequently commanded some friar to revile him with reproachful language. Thus he once repeated, "O brother Francis, for thy sins thou hast deserved to be plunged into hell;" and ordered brother Leo as often to reply, "It is true, you have deserved to be buried in the very bottom of hell." When he was not able to avoid the esteem of others, he was overwhelmed with secret confusion. "I refer honours and praises," said he once to another, "entirely to God, to whom they are due. I take no share in them, but behold myself in the filth of my own baseness and nothingness, and sink lower and lower in it. Statues of wood or stone take nothing to themselves, and are insensible to the respect and

honour which is given them, not at all on their own account, but for the sake of those whom they represent. And if men honour God in his creatures, even in me, the last and vilest among them, I consider him alone." A certain holy friar and companion of St. Francis was favoured with a vision at prayer, in which he saw a bright throne prepared in heaven, and heard a voice telling him that it was for the humble Francis. After having received this vision, he asked the saint how he could with truth think and call himself the greatest sinner in the world? To which the saint answered, "If God had bestowed on the greatest sinner the favours he has done me, he would have been more grateful than I am; and if he had left me to myself, I should have committed greater wickedness than all other sinners." From this humility it was that he would not be ordained priest, but always remained in the degree of deacon; he bore the greatest reverence to all priests. An effect of the same humility was his extreme love of obedience, and his often asking counsel of his lowest subjects, though he had the gift of prophecy, and was endued with an extraordinary heavenly discretion and light. In his journeys from place to place, he used to promise obedience to the brother whom he took with him for his companion. He said once, that among the many favours God had done him, one was, that he would as willingly and as diligently obey a novice who had lived but one hour in a religious state (if he was set over him by his warden or guardian), as he would the most ancient and discreet among the fathers, because a subject is not to regard the person whom he obeys, but God, whose place every superior holds with regard to us. Being asked how one that is truly obedient ought to behave, he said, he ought to be like a dead body. He was a great enemy to all singularity. In a certain convent of his Order, he was told that one of the friars was a man of admi-

nable virtue, and so great a lover of silence, that he would only confess his faults by signs. The saint did not like it, and said, "This is not the spirit of God, but of the devil; a foul temptation, not a divine virtue." It afterwards appeared, by the misconduct of this poor religious man, by how deceitful a singularity he separated himself from the conversation of his brethren. Like instances happened on other occasions. The saint's extreme aversion to the least shadow of dissimulation or hypocrisy appeared in his whole conduct. In the greatest sicknesses he would not allow himself the least indulgence which was not made public, and refused to wear any clothing to cover his breast in a dangerous cold, unless it was visible to others.

This saint, who by humility and self-denial was perfectly crucified and dead to himself, seemed by the ardour of his charity to be rather a seraph incarnate than a frail man in a mortal state. Hence he seemed to live by prayer, and was assiduously employed in holy contemplation; for he that loves much, desires to converse with the person whom he loves; in this he places his treasure and his happiness; and finds no entertainment or delight like that of dwelling upon his excellences and greatness. St. Francis retired every year, after the feast of the Epiphany, in honour of the forty days which Christ spent in the desert, and shutting himself up in his cell, he spent all that time in rigorous fasting and devout prayer. He communicated very often, and ordinarily with ecstasies, in which his soul was wrapt and suspended in God. He recited the canonical hours with great devotion and reverence, always standing with his head bare, and usually with his eyes bathed in tears, never leaning upon any thing, even when he was very weak and sick. When he travelled he always stopped at the canonical hours of prayer, for the sake of greater recollection and attention; and he used to say, that if the body, when it eats corruptible food,

desires to be at rest, why should not this be granted the soul when it takes heavenly sustenance. Out of tender devotion and reverence to the names of God and of Jesus Christ, if he found them written in any paper thrown on the ground, he took it up, and put it in some decent place. For his trial God once abandoned him to a violent desolation of soul and spiritual dryness during two months, till, by assiduous prayer, he suddenly found himself again replenished with the delights of the Holy Ghost, and his sensible presence. Though he felt a wonderful tenderness of devotion to all the mysteries of the life of our Saviour, yet he was most affected next to those of his sacred passion, with that of his holy nativity, by reason of the poverty, cold, and nakedness in which the divine infant made his appearance in the stable and crib at Bethlehem. One Christmas night the saint having sung the gospel at mass, preaching to the people on the nativity of the poor King, he was not able to satiate the tender affection of his heart by repeating often, with incredible sweetness, his holy name under the appellation of the Little Babe of Bethlehem. He never spoke, or heard mention made of the holy mystery of the Incarnation, without feeling the most tender affection of devotion. He was particularly affected with those words, "The Word was made flesh." He had a singular devotion to the Mother of God (whom he chose for the special patroness of his Order), and in her honour he fasted from the feast of SS. Peter and Paul to that of her Assumption. After this festival he fasted forty days, and prayed much, out of devotion to the angels, especially the archangel Michael; and at All Saints he fasted other forty days. According to the measure of his great affection and tenderness for God, he was favoured by him with the abundance of his spiritual comforts and graces. Many times being in prayer he fell into raptures; often on the road as he travelled, he was visited by our Lord with a ravishing inexpressible sweetness with

which his soul was quite overwhelmed; and he usually made those that went with him to go before, both for the sake of closer recollection, and to conceal the visits and favours of the Lord. He moreover gave him the spirit of prophecy; for St. Francis foretold many things which happened a long time after. He was endowed with an extraordinary gift of tears. His eyes seemed two fountains of tears, which were almost continually falling from them, insomuch that at length he almost lost his sight. When physicians advised him to repress his tears, for otherwise he would be quite blind, the saint answered, "Brother physician, the spirit has not received the benefit of light for the flesh, but the flesh for the spirit; we ought not, for the love of that sight which is common to us and flies, to put an impediment to spiritual sight and celestial comfort." When the physician prescribed that, in order to drain off the humours by an issue, he should be burnt with a hot iron, the saint was very well pleased, because it was a painful operation, and a wholesome remedy. When the surgeon was about to apply the searing-iron, the saint spoke to the fire, saying, "Brother Fire, I beseech thee to burn me gently, that I may be able to endure thee." He was seared very deep, from the ear to the eye-brow, but seemed to feel no pain at all.

Whatever he did, or wherever he was, his soul was always raised to heaven, and he seemed continually to dwell with the angels. He consulted God before every thing he did, and he taught his brethren to set a high value upon, and by humility, self-denial, and assiduous recollection, to endeavour to obtain the most perfect spirit of prayer, which is the source of all spiritual blessings, and without which a soul can do very little good. The practice of mental prayer was the favourite exercise which he strongly recommended. Persons who laboured under any interior weight of sadness, or spiritual dryness, he vehemently exhorted to have recourse to fervent prayer,

and to keep themselves as much as possible in the presence of their heavenly Father, till he should restore to them the joy of salvation. Otherwise, said he, a disposition of sadness, which comes from Babylon, that is, from the world, will gain ground, and produce a great rust in the affections of the soul, whilst she neglects to cleanse them by tears, or a spiritual desire of them. After extraordinary visits of the Holy Ghost, the saint taught men to say, "It is you, O Lord, who by your gracious goodness have vouchsafed to give this consolation to me, a sinner, most unworthy of your mercy. To you I commend this favour, that you preserve its fruit in my heart; for I tremble lest, by my wretchedness, I should rob you of your own gift and treasure." He was accustomed to recite our Lord's prayer very slowly, with singular gust in each petition and in every word. The doxology, "Glory be to the Father," &c., was a beloved aspiration of this saint, who would repeat it often together at work, and at other times, with extraordinary devotion, and he advised others to use the same. A certain lay-brother once asking leave to study, the saint said to him, "Repeat assiduously the doxology, 'Glory be to the Father, &c.' and you will become very learned in the eyes of God." The brother readily obeyed, and became a very spiritual man. St. Francis sometimes cried out in the fervour of his love, "Grant, O Lord, that the sweet violence of thy most ardent love may disengage and separate me from every thing that is under heaven, and entirely consume me, that I may die for the love of thy infinite love. This I beg by thyself, O Son of God, who diedst for love of me. My God, and my All! who art thou, O sweetest Lord? and who am I? thy servant, and a base worm. I desire to love thee, most holy Lord. I have consecrated to thee my soul and my body, with all that I am. Did I know what to do more perfectly to glorify Thee, this I would most ardently do. Yes: this I

most ardently desire to accomplish, O my God." St. Francis sometimes expressed his pious breathings in canticles. Two such canticles composed by him are still extant, and express, with wonderful strength and sublimity of thought, the vehemence and tenderness of divine love in his breast, in which he found no other comfort than, could it be gratified, to die of love, that he might be for ever united to the great object of his love. His thirst of the conversion of souls was most ardent. He prayed and wept continually for the conversion of sinners, with extraordinary fervour, and recommended to his religious to do the same, saying that many sinners are converted and saved by the prayers and tears of others; and that even simple laymen, who do not preach, ought not to neglect employing this means of obtaining the divine mercy in favour of infidels and sinners. So great was the compassion and charity of this holy man for all such, that, not contenting himself with all that he did and suffered for that end in Italy, he resolved to go to preach to the Mahometans and other infidels, with an extreme desire of laying down his life for our Lord. With this view he embarked, in the sixth year after his conversion, for Syria, but straight there arose a tempest, which drove him upon the coast of Dalmatia; and finding no convenience to pass on further, he was forced to return back again to Ancona. Afterwards, in 1214, he set out for Morocco, to preach to the famous Mahometan king Miramolin, and went on his way with so great fervour and desire of martyrdom, that though he was very weak and much spent, his companion was not able to hold pace with him. But it pleased God that in Spain he was detained by a grievous fit of sickness, and afterwards by important business of his Order, and various accidents, so that he could not possibly go into Mauritania. But he wrought several miracles in Spain, and founded there some convents; after which he returned through Languedoc into Italy.

It will be related below how, in the thirteenth year after his conversion, he passed into Syria and Egypt. In the mean time, upon motives of the same zeal, he laboured strenuously to advance the glory of God among Christians, especially in his own Order. St. Francis, preaching penance to all the world, used often to repeat the following words with inimitable fervour and energy: "My love is crucified," meaning that Christ is crucified, and we ought to crucify our flesh. The holy founder out of humility gave to his Order the name of Friars Minors, desiring that his brethren should be disposed, in the affection of sincere humility, to strive, not for the first, but for the last and lowest places. Many cities became suitors that they might be so happy as to possess some of his disciples animated with his spirit, and St. Francis founded convents at Cortona, Arezzo, Vergoreta, Pisa, Bologna, Florence, and other places; and in less than three years his Order was multiplied to sixty monasteries. In 1212 he gave his habit to St. Clare, who, under his direction, founded the instituto of holy virgins, which was called the second Order of St. Francis. He took upon himself the care of her monastery at St. Damian's, in Assisium, but would never consent that his friars should serve any other nunnery of this or any other Order, in which resolution he persisted to his death; though Cardinal Hugolin, the protector of his Order, was not so scrupulous in that particular. The founder carried his precaution and severity so far, in imitation of many ancient saints, the better to secure in his religious a perfect purity of heart, which a defect in any small circumstance may sometimes tarnish. All familiar or unnecessary conversation is certainly to be cut off in such stations, and by the strictest watchfulness all dangerous sparks are to be prevented. To give his brethren to understand this, when, by the authority of the protector, one of them had visited a nunnery, St.

Francis ordered him to plunge into the river, and afterwards to walk two miles in his wet clothes. Notwithstanding the reluctance of the holy founder, several houses of the Poor Clares found means to procure, through powerful mediations, directors out of this Order, to be allowed them, especially after the death of St. Francis. St. Dominic being at Rome in 1215, met there St. Francis, and these two eminent servants of God honoured each other, had frequent spiritual conferences together, and cemented a close friendship between their Orders, which they desired to render perpetual, as we are informed by contemporary writers of the life of St. Dominic. Some say that St. Dominic assisted at St. Francis's chapter of Matts, and some others; but this is not supported by ancient vouchers, and is denied by the most judicious Dominican historians.

Ten years after the first institution of his Order, in 1219, St. Francis held near Portiuncula, the famous general chapter called of Matts, because it was assembled in booths in the fields, being too numerous to be received in any building of the country. We are assured by four companions of St. Francis, and by St. Bonaventure, that five thousand friars met there, though some remained at home who could not leave their convents. In this chapter several of the brethren prayed St. Francis to obtain for them of the pope a licence to preach everywhere without the leave of the bishops of each diocess. The saint, shocked at the proposal, answered, "What, my brethren! do not you know the will of God? It is that by our humility and respect we gain the superiors, that we may by words and example draw the people to God. When the bishops see that you live holily, and attempt nothing against their authority, they will themselves entreat you to labour for the salvation of the souls committed to their charge. Let it be your singular privilege to have no privilege which may

puff up the hearts of any with pride, or raise contests and quarrels."

The Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic had been approved by word of mouth by Innocent III., who died in 1219, having sat eighteen years. Honorius III., who succeeded him, confirmed that of St. Dominic by two bulls, dated the 22nd of December, 1216. St. Francis obtained of this pope an approbation of his missions; and in 1219 set sail with B. Illuminatus, of Reate, and other companions, from Ancona, and having touched at Cyprus, landed at Acon or Ptolemais, in Palestine. The Christian army in the sixth crusade lay at that time before Damietta, in Egypt, and the Soldan of Damascus, or Syria, led a numerous army to the assistance of Meledin, Soldan of Egypt, or Babylon; for so he was more commonly called, because he resided at Babylon, in Egypt, a city on the Nile, opposite to the ruins of Memphis: Grand Cairo rose out of the ashes of this Babylon. St. Francis, with brother Illuminatus, hastened to the Christian army, and upon his arrival endeavoured to dissuade them from giving the enemy battle, foretelling their defeat, as we are assured by three of his companions; also by St. Bonaventure,¹ Cardinal James, of Vitri, who was then present in the army,² and Marin Sannt.³ He was not heard, and the Christians were drove back into their trenches with the loss of six thousand men. However, they continued the siege, and took the city on the 5th of November the same year. In the mean time St. Francis, burning with zeal for the conversion of the Saracens, desired to pass to their camp, fearing no dangers for Christ. He was seized by the scouts of the infidels, to whom he cried out, "I am a Christian; conduct me to your master." Being brought before the sol-

dan, and asked by him his errand, he said with wonderful intrepidity and fervour, "I am sent, not by men, but the most high God, to show you and your people the way of salvation, by announcing to you the truth of the gospel." The soldan appeared to be moved, and invited him to stay with him. The man of God replied, "If you and your people will listen to the word of God, I will with joy stay with you. If yet you waver between Christ and Mahomet, cause a great fire to be kindled, and I will go into it with your Imams (or priests) that you may see which is the true faith." The soldan answered, that he did not believe any of their priests would be willing to go into the fire, or to suffer torments for their religion, and that he could not accept his condition for fear of a sedition. He offered him many presents, which the saint refused. After some days, the soldan, apprehending lest some should be converted by his discourse, and desert to the Christians, sent him, escorted by a strong guard, to their camp before Damietta, saying to him privately, "Pray for me, that God may make known to me the true religion, and conduct me to it."

St. Francis returned by Palestine into Italy, where he heard with joy that the five missionaries, whom he had sent to preach to the Moors, had been crowned with martyrdom in Morocco.¹ But he had the affliction to find that Elias, whom he had left vicar-general of his Order, had introduced several novelties and mitigations, and wore himself a habit of finer stuff than the rest, with a longer capuche, or hood, and longer sleeves. St. Francis called such innovators bastard children of his Order, and deposed Elias from his office. Resigning the generalship that year, 1220, he caused the virtuous Peter of Cortona to be chosen minister-general, and after his death, in 1221, Elias to be restored. But Peter, and after him Elias,

(1) St. Bonav. Vit. St. Fra. c. 9.

(2) Jac. Vit. Hist. Occid. c. 37, et Ep. ad Lothar.

(3) Mar. Sanut, Secret. fidel. Cruc. lib. iii. par. 1, c. 7, 8.

(1) See January 16.

out of respect for the saint, were only styled vicars-general till his death, who by the sole weight of his authority, continued always to direct the government of his Order so long as he lived. In 1223, he obtained of Pope Honorius III. the confirmation of the famous indulgence granted a little time before to the church Portiuncula. His Order, as has been mentioned, was verbally approved by Innocent III. in 1210; a like approbation was given it in 1215, by the fourth Lateran council, to which St. Francis repaired for that purpose. The founder, therefore, revised his rule, which breathed throughout the most profound humility, and an entire renunciation of the world, and presented it to Pope Honorius III., who confirmed it by a bull, dated the 29th of November, 1223.

When St. Francis returned from Spain, and laid aside the thoughts of his intended mission to Morocco in 1215, Count Orlando, of Catona, bestowed on him a close agreeable solitude on Mount Alverno, a part of the Apennines not very far from Camaldoli and Vale Umbrosa. This virtuous count built there a convent and a church for the Friar Minors, and St. Francis was much delighted with the retirement of that high mountain. The solitude of the valley of Fabriano also pleased him much, and he frequently hid himself there. The raptures and other extraordinary favours which he received from God in contemplation, he was careful to conceal from men. St. Bonaventure and other writers of his life assure us, that he was frequently raised from the ground at prayer. F. Leo, his secretary and confessor, testified that he had seen him in prayer sometimes raised above the ground so high that this disciple could only touch his feet, which he held and watered with his tears; and that sometimes he saw him raised much higher. Towards the festival of the Assumption

of the Blessed Virgin, 1224, St. Francis retired into a most secret place in Mount Alverno, where his companions made him a little cell. He kept Leo with him, but forbade any other person to come to him before the feast of St. Michael; it was then the Lent which he kept before the feast of that archangel, and he desired to devote himself in it entirely to the delights of heavenly contemplation. Heavenly visions and communications of the Holy Ghost were familiar to our saint; but in this retreat on Mount Alverno, in 1224, he was favoured with extraordinary raptures, and inflamed with burning desires of heaven in a new and unusual manner. Then it was that this saint deserved, by his humility, and his ardent love of his crucified Saviour, to be honoured with the extraordinary favour of the marks of his five wounds imprinted on his body by the vision of a seraph.

About the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, on the 15th day of September, Francis being in prayer on the side of the mountain, raised himself towards God with the seraphic ardour of his desires, and was transported by a tender and affectionate compassion of charity into Him, who, out of love, was crucified for us. In this state he saw, as it were, a seraph, with six shining wings blazing with fire, bearing down from the highest part of the heavens towards him with a most rapid flight, and placing himself in the air near the saint. There appeared between his wings the figure of a man crucified, with his hands and feet stretched out, and fastened to the cross. The wings of the seraph were so placed, that two he stretched above his head, two others he extended to fly, and with the other two he covered his whole body. At this sight, Francis was extremely surprised; a sudden joy, mingled with sorrow, filled his heart. The familiar presence of his Lord under the figure of a seraph, who fixed on him his eyes in the most gracious and tender manner, gave him an excessive joy; but

(1) See the lives of St. Phillip Neri, St. Teresa, &c.; also Chalippe in that of St. Francis.

the sorrowful sight of his crucifixion pierced his soul with a sword of compassion. At the same time he understood by an interior light, that though the state of crucifixion no way agreed with that of the immortality of the seraph, this wonderful vision was manifested to him that he might understand he was not to be transformed into a resemblance with Jesus Christ crucified by the martyrdom of the flesh, but in his heart, and by the fire of his love. After a secret and intimate conversation, the vision disappearing, his soul remained interiorly inflamed with a seraphic ardour, and his body appeared exteriorly to have received the image of the crucifix, as if his flesh, like soft wax, had received the mark of a seal impressed upon it. For the marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet, resembling those he had seen in the vision of the man crucified. His hands and feet seemed bored through in the middle with four wounds, and these heels appeared to be pierced with nails of hard flesh; the heads were round and black, and were seen in the palms of his hands, and in his feet in the upper part of the instep. The points were long, and appeared beyond the skin on the other side, and were turned back as if they had been clenched with a hammer. There was also in his right side a red wound, as if made by the piercing of a lance; and this often threw out blood, which stained the tunic and drawers of the saint. This relation is taken from St. Bonaventure, who calls the wound of the side a scar; but means not a scar covered, but a wound left visible and open; for he calls it a wound, and a hole in his side; and such he again describes it as seen after the saint's death. The circumstance of its often bleeding confirms the same; which does not agree to a wound that is healed and covered, or to a callous scar raised after the healing of a wound, as Baillet, with many other mistakes, pretends this to have been.¹

(1) See F. Chalippe, t. ii. p. 351.

This wonderful miracle was performed whilst the saint's understanding was filled with the strongest ideas of Christ crucified, and his love employed in the utmost strength of his will in entertaining its affections on that great object, and assimilating them to his beloved in that suffering state; so that in the imaginative faculty of his soul he seemed to form a second crucifix, with which impression it acted upon, and strongly affected the body. To produce the exterior marks of the wounds in the flesh, which the interior love of his burning heart was not able to do, the fiery seraph, or rather Christ himself, in that vision (by darting bright piercing rays from his wounds represented in the vision) really formed them exteriorly in him, which love had interiorly imprinted in his soul, as St. Francis of Sales explains it.¹

St. Francis endeavoured nothing more than to conceal this singular favour of heaven from the eyes of men; and for this purpose he ever after covered his hands with his habit, and wore shoes and the feet of stockings on his feet; yet, having first asked the advice of brother Illuminatus and others, by their counsel, he, with fear, disclosed to them this wonderful vision, but added, that several things had been manifested to him in it which he never would discover to any one—secrets, says St. Bonaventure, which, perhaps, could not be expressed by words, or which men, who are not supernaturally enlightened, are not capable of understanding. Notwithstanding the precautions of the saint, these miraculous wounds were seen by several during the two years which he survived, from 1224 to 1226, and by great multitudes after his death. The account of them the vicar-general of his Order published in a circular letter, addressed to all his brethren immediately after St. Francis's death, the original copy of which was seen by Wadding. Luke of Tuy, bishop of that city in Spain, pub-

(1) St. Francis of Sales on the love of God.

lished his work against the Albigenses in 1231, in which¹ he tells us, that he went to Assisium the year after the saint's death, and that this vision was attested to him by many religious men and seculars, clergymen and laymen, who had seen these nails of flesh in the saint's hands and feet, and the wound in his side, and with their hands had felt them; he infers from them that Christ was fastened on the cross with four nails, and that it was his right side which was opened with the lance. He confirms this wonderful miracle from the life of the saint, written by F. Thomas de Celano, a disciple and companion of the saint, by the order of Pope Gregory IX.,² from which work St. Bonaventure took his relation. Pope Alexander IV., in a sermon to the people in 1254, declared that he had been himself an eye-witness of those wounds in the body of the saint whilst he was yet living. St. Bonaventure, who, with other friars was present at this discourse, heard this authentic declaration made by his holiness. That pope assures the same in a bull in 1255, addressed to the whole church.³ St. Bonaventure, who wrote his life in 1261, and who had lived long with the most familiar disciples of the servant of God, says, that whilst the saint was alive, many of his brethren, and several cardinals, saw the marks of the nails in his hands and feet; some also by secret artifices, found the means to see and feel the wound in his side. After his death, every one openly saw it and the other four wounds. Fifty friars, St. Clare, and all her sisters, and an innumerable multitude of seculars, saw and kissed them; and some, for greater certainty, touched them with their hands.

It appears manifest that this wonderful favour was in part a recompense of the great love which St. Francis bore to the

cross of Christ. From the beginning of his conversion his heart was so inflamed with this divine love, that the sufferings of his Saviour almost continually filled his thoughts, in which meditation, sighs and tears frequently expressed the sentiments of his soul. It was to render himself more perfectly conformed to his crucified Jesus, that he with great fervour stripped himself of every thing, made of his body a victim of penance, and thrice sought an opportunity of giving his life for Christ by martyrdom. This adorable object was all his science, all his glory, all his joy, all his comfort in this world. To soothe the sharp pangs of a violent distemper, he was one day desired to let some one read a book to him; but he answered, "Nothing gives me so much delight as to think on the life and passion of our Lord; I continually employ my mind on this object, and were I to live to the end of the world, I should stand in need of no other books." In the school of his crucified Lord he learned so vehement a love of holy poverty, that meeting one day a beggar almost naked, he with sighs said to his companion, "Here is a poor man, whose condition is a reproach to us. We have chosen poverty to be our riches; yet in it he outdoes us." He called poverty his lady, his queen, his mother, and his spouse, and earnestly begged it of God as his portion and privilege. "O Jesus," said he, "who was pleased to embrace extreme poverty, the grace I beg of you is, that you bestow on me the privilege of poverty. It is my most ardent desire to be enriched with this treasure. This I ask for me and mine, that for the glory of thy holy name we never possess any thing under heaven, and receive our subsistence itself from the charity of others, and be it this also very sparing and moderate." He extended his rule of poverty to what is interior and spiritual, fearing lest any one among his friars should regard his science as his own property and fund,

(1) *Loc. Tud. adv. Albig. lib. ii. c. 11, Bibl. Patr. t. xv.*

(2) *Greg. IX. Constit. 12.*

(3) *Alex. IV. Constit. 4.*

for so it feeds self-love, and produces inordinate complacency in itself, and secret attachments, very contrary to that entire disengagement of the heart which opens it to the divine grace. The saint indeed exhorted those that were best qualified, to apply themselves to sacred studies; but always with this caution, that they still spent more time in prayer, and studied not so much how to speak to others as how to preach to themselves, and how to practise virtue.

St. Francis came down from Mount Alverno, bearing in his flesh the marks of the sacred wounds, and more inflamed than ever with the seraphic ardours of divine charity. The two years that he survived his heavenly vision, seemed a martyrdom of love. He was, moreover, much afflicted in them with sickness, weakness, and pains in his eyes. In this suffering state he used often to repeat, that the most rigorous appointments of Providence are often the most tender effects of the divine mercy in our favour. In 1225, his distemper growing dangerous, Cardinal Hugolin and the Vicar-general Elias obliged him to put himself in the hands of the most able surgeons and physicians of Rieti, wherein he complied with great simplicity. In his sickness he scarce allowed himself any intermission from prayer, and would not check his tears, though the physician thought it necessary for the preservation of his sight, which he entirely lost upon his death-bed. Under violent pains, when another exhorted him to beg of God to mitigate them, notwithstanding his extreme weakness, he arose, and falling on the ground, and kissing it, prayed as follows: "O Lord, I return thee thanks for the pains which I suffer; I pray that thou add to them a hundred times more, if such be thy holy will. I shall rejoice that thou art pleased to afflict me without sparing my carcass here; for what sweeter comfort can I have, than that thy holy will be done!" He foretold his death

long before it happened, beth to several of his brethren, and in a letter which he dictated on Sunday, the 28th of September, to a pious lady of Rome, his great friend. St. Francis, a little before his death, dictated his testament to his religious brethren, in which he recommends to them, that they always honour the priests and pastors of the church as their masters, that they faithfully observe their rule, and that they work with their hands, not out of a desire of gain, but for the sake of good example, and to avoid idleness. "If we receive nothing for our work," says he, "let us have recourse to the table of the Lord, the begging alms from door to door." He orders, that they who do not know how to work, learn some trade. Pope Nicholas III. declared, that this precept of manual labour does not regard those who are in holy orders, and are employed in preaching, and in other spiritual functions, which is clear from the rule itself, the example of St. Francis, and the apology wrote by St. Bonaventure. Having finished his testament, the saint desired a spiritual song of thanksgiving to God for all his creatures, which he had composed, to be sung. Then he insisted upon being laid on the ground, and covered with an old habit, which the guardian gave him. In this posture he exhorted his brethren to the love of God, holy poverty, and patience, and gave his last blessing to all his disciples—the absent as well as those that were present, in the following words: "Farewell, my children; remain always in the fear of the Lord. That temptation and tribulation which is to come, is now at hand; and happy shall they be who shall persevere in the good they have begun. I hasten to go to our Lord, to whose grace I recommend you." He then caused the history of the passion of our Lord in the gospel of St. John to be read; after which he began to recite the hundred and forty-first psalm: "I have cried with my voice to the Lord," &c. Having repeated the last verse: "Bring

my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the just wait for me till thou reward me;" he yielded up his soul on the 4th of October, in the year 1226, the twentieth after his conversion, and the forty-fifth of his age, as De Calano assures us. The next morning, which was Sunday, the saint's body was carried with a numerous and pompous procession from the convent of the Portiuncula to Assisium. The procession stopped at St. Damian's, where St. Clare and her nuns had the comfort of kissing the marks of the wounds in his flesh. St. Clare attempted to take out one of the nails from the flesh, but could not, though the black head was protuberant above the palm of the hand, and she easily thrust it up and down, and dipped a linen cloth in the blood which issued out. The body was carried thence and buried at St. George's. Pope Honorius III. dying in 1227, Cardinal Hugolin was chosen pope the same year, and took the name of Gregory IX. Two years after the saint's death, this pope went to Assisium, and after a rigorous examination and solemn approbation of several miraculous cures wrought through the merits of St. Francis, he performed the ceremony of his canonization, in the Church of St. George, on the 6th of July, 1228, and commanded his office to be kept in 1229. His holiness gave a sum of money for building a new church on the place, which he would have called from that time Colle del Paradiso. Elias, the general, by contributions and exactions, much increased the sum, and raised most magnificent pile, which was finished

1230, and that year the body of the saint was translated thither on the 25th of May. The body of the saint still lies in this church, and, it is said, under a sumptuous, chapel of marble, curiously wrought, standing in the middle of this spacious church, which is dedicated in honour of St. Francis. In the sacristy, among many other relics, was shown, in 1745, some of the writings of St. Francis

and also of St. Bonaventure. Over this church is a second, adorned with rich paintings, dedicated in honour of the twelve apostles. We are told there is a third subterraneous church under it, like that under St. Peter's on the Vatican-hill, made in vaults; but that of St. Francis is not open. The body of St. Francis has never been discovered or visited since the time of Gregory IX., and was concealed in some secret vault, for the better securing so precious a treasure.¹ In this patriarchal convent the general of the Conventual Franciscans resides.

Who can consider the wonderful examples of St. Francis, and not cry out with our divine Redeemer, "I confess to thee, eternal Father, Lord, and King of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones. Thus it is, O Father, because it is pleasing in thy eyes."² Thou resistest the proud, and hast dismissed them empty; but thou givest grace to the humble, taking pleasure to communicate thyself to those that are simple of heart, thy little ones, whose hearts are disengaged from earthly things. Thou art truly a hidden God, who dwellest in inaccessible light, unknown to the world; but thou impartest thyself abundantly and lovingly to those who, having purified their souls from the spots of earthly filth and attachments, express and show forth, in their hearts and bodies, Jesus Christ crucified. Yes, Father, so it hath pleased Thee.