The catechism in examples (Vol 2)

by

Chisholm, D

Originally published in 1908 by:
London : Burns Oates & Washbourne ltd

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+ EPISCOPI ARINDELENSIS,
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WESTMONASTERII,
Die 16 Decem. 1908.
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XIII

THE VIRTUE OF HOPE

I. What is Meant by Hope.

God has promised to give you, my child, the Kingdom of Heaven when you die, if you love and serve Him faithfully here on earth to the end of your life. He will keep His promise, because He is your Father, and because He is so good. This is why you say to Him in your prayers: "O my God, I hope in Thee."

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES' WORDS OF CONSOLATION.

One day a pious woman went to St. Francis of Sales, and told him she had suffered so much that she was almost losing courage, and was very miserable.

"I was once rich," she said, "but I lost all I possessed. Moreover, I am suffering much from a severe illness, and I have no one to feel pity for me or to say a kind word to me."

The Saint answered: "Your condition, my child, is one not to be pitied, but rather to be envied. Vol. II."
You are, in this world, the spouse of Jesus Crucified, and you know that those who are honoured in this way on earth are chosen to be the eternal spouses of Jesus Glorified in Heaven.

"You are at present wearing the livery of your Royal Master, the cross, and the nails, and the thorns, and sharing with Him the gall and the vinegar; but have a little patience, and your Heavenly Father will exchange them, and give you in their place the white robe of glory, and a crown of everlasting splendour."

"O my Father," she replied, "your words console me. When shall that happy day come? When shall I hear His beloved voice calling me to enter His kingdom above?"

The desire of Heaven, and the remembrance of the reward to be given us there, make the few short hours of pain in this world pass quickly.

_Catéch. Historique_, i. 493.

**HOME, SWEET HOME.**

During an epidemic of scarlet fever in the city of Paris, a priest was summoned to attend a man who was dying in one of the poorest localities of the city.

When he went into the hovel, he saw the man lying on some straw in a corner of the room, covered with a few rags and in the greatest poverty. There was no furniture in the room, not even a chair nor a table; everything had been sold at the beginning of his sickness to buy him some food. The only things the priest saw were a hatchet and two saws hanging on the wall.

"My child," said the priest to him, "take courage
now: God has sent you this sickness as a great favour, for He is going to take you soon out of this weary world, where you are suffering so much from poverty and sickness, and will take you to Himself in Heaven, where you shall have no more sorrow."

"Sorrow, Father?" the dying man said, in a voice that could scarcely be heard; "I have no sorrow; I never had any. I have always lived in happiness and contentedness. I never knew what it was to hate anyone, nor to have envy; I always slept at night a calm, undisturbed sleep, because I laboured hard all day. The tools you see there on the wall procured for me my daily bread, with which I was always perfectly contented; and I never envied the dainties I have seen others enjoy. I have been a poor man all my lifetime, but till now I have always enjoyed good health. If I get better, although I think that I may not, I will just resume my labour as before, till God's time comes, and I know that if I please Him now, He will take care of me during life—hasn't He promised that, Father?—and when the time comes for me to die, He will make me happy in Heaven. This has always been my hope."

"My child," said the priest, "you are indeed happy in having lived so much united to God. The happiness of Heaven will be a sufficient recompense for all you have done and suffered here below. Are you quite prepared to die, my child?"

"Yes, Father, I have been preparing since my childhood for the hour of my death; and now that it is near I feel happy, because I am confident in
the mercy of God, that I am going home to my Father in Heaven.” He died in these holy dispositions.

ST. AUGUSTINE’S QUESTION.

St. Augustine, who often spoke to the faithful under his charge of the joys of Heaven, one day said to them: “My brethren, if God came down here amongst us, and told us that He would grant each of us a hundred years more to live, or even a thousand, and that during these years we should have whatever our hearts could desire, but on condition that we should never see Him, or be with Him in Heaven, would any of you accept that offer?”

But the whole multitude with one voice cried out: “Never! May all earthly things perish; we desire God alone and Heaven.”

O my child, let that also be your answer when Satan asks you to offend God. Think of Heaven, and you shall be able to persevere, and this will be your consolation and will confirm you in hope.

ST. JANE CHANTAL AT DEATH.

When her end seemed to be near, St. Jane Chantal asked her confessor to read to her the prayers for the departing soul. “O my God,” she said from time to time, “how beautiful are these prayers!”

Suddenly she exclaimed: “O my Father, how terrible are the judgments of God!”

He asked her if she were afraid of her own judgment, which was so near.

“No, my Father,” she replied, “I do not fear to
meet Him Whom I have loved all my lifetime; but I assure you that I see now how terrible His judgments are, and how different from those of men."

Then her agony began. A crucifix was placed in one hand, and a lighted candle in the other. The Sisters were on their knees weeping and praying. Suddenly they heard her speak: "I must go now; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus."

Saying these words, she gently breathed her last, and went to meet her beloved Spouse in His heavenly kingdom.

II. THE GRACE OF GOD THE CHIEF OBJECT OF OUR HOPE.

You cannot do any good towards your salvation without the help of God's grace. But with His grace you can do all things. He has promised to help you whenever you ask Him. This grace is the chief object of our hope.

"GIVE ME BACK MY SON."

In the city of Carthage there lived a young nobleman named Fulgentius. His learning and his great abilities raised him to the highest honours in the State, and everyone, from the Emperor to the humblest citizen, loved and esteemed him.

One day he took up a pious book to read. It was a sermon of St. Augustine on the vanities of the world and the shortness of life. When he had finished reading it, he began to think on what he had read.

"I have reached the highest honours that the
world can give me." This is what he said to himself. "Everyone praises me and honours me, and, after all, of what use is it to me? I was not made for this. God sent me into this world to gain Heaven."

He at once took the resolution to throw at his feet all the honours and riches which he possessed, and go to some place where he would not be known, that he might, for the rest of his life, think only of "the one thing necessary."

So one morning he quietly left his home, and went to the monastery of which the great Faustus was Superior.

"I have come," said Fulgentius, "to ask you to admit me into your monastery, for now I want to live only for the salvation of my soul and to obtain a happy eternity."

Faustus, who knew him, answered: "Sir, the life we lead in this house is too severe for one who has been accustomed to the comforts of this world as you have been."

But Fulgentius was not to be repulsed; he asked the Superior to give him a short trial.

"Go away," said Faustus, in a voice which appeared harsh and repulsive. "Go and learn first to live in the world a life detached from its pleasures. How could it be possible for one who has been brought up in the midst of luxuries, and all kinds of comforts, to be able, all at once, to submit to the poverty we practise, to the coarse dress we wear, and to our fastings and watchings?"

Fulgentius, modestly casting his eyes upon the ground, answered: "My Father, He Who put into
my heart the desire of serving Him can easily give me the help I stand in need of to overcome my natural weakness.”

Faustus was touched by this beautiful answer, and admitted him on trial.

When the mother of Fulgentius heard of what her son had done, she ran to the monastery. “Give me back my son!” she cried out in tears—“give me back my son!”

Faustus tried to calm her, but in vain. For three days did that sorrowful mother stand at the gate of the monastery, weeping and calling on her son to return to her.

Fulgentius heard her. During the years he had lived in the world he had never before been separated from her. He loved her with an intense affection, and had never been known to disobey her. But he had not counted upon this trial; and as he heard the voice of her whom he so tenderly loved, and knew that her heart was bursting with grief, his own soul was plunged in the deepest sorrow.

Who can tell the conflict he had to sustain during these three days? Was ever a trial equal to his? But raising his eyes and hands to Heaven, he prayed for help. “O my God, help me to persevere.”

God heard his prayer, and after the three days were ended a sweet peace filled his soul. His mother, seeing that her cries and prayers were unheeded, returned to her home, and Fulgentius remained faithful.

He afterwards became Bishop of Carthage, and was one of the greatest lights in the Church of God in the sixth century.

*Grande Vies des Saints, Jan. I.*
III. THE PARDON OF OUR SINS ANOTHER OBJECT OF OUR HOPE.

God has promised to forgive us our sins if we be sorry for them. This, therefore, is another thing we "hope" for—pardon for our past sins.

THE WIDOW'S CHILD.

Some years ago, there was a poor widow who had an only son. She loved this son dearly, and spared no pains to instil into his heart the principles of virtue.

But when he grew up he began to go with wicked companions, and soon became the scandal of the neighbourhood. He even sometimes struck his mother, and threatened to kill her.

This unhappy young man soon gave himself up to every crime, but the day of retribution came at last; he was arrested and cast into prison.

One day a stranger knocked at the prison door. The jailer came to see who it was, and learned to his surprise that it was the mother of this wicked young man.

"Ah! I know it well," replied the widow, "but he is my son."

"Why!" cried the jailer, "he has robbed you of every penny you had."

"I know it," she replied; "but he is still my son."

"But has he not struck you and abused you, and even threatened to kill you?" said the jailer.
“That is quite true,” was the answer; “but I am still his mother, and he is my son.”

“But,” again cried the jailer, “he has not only abused you and robbed you, but he has even shamefully abandoned you; such an unnatural son is not fit to live.”

“Ah! but he is my child, and I am his mother.”

And the poor widow sobbed and wept, till at last the jailer was touched, and permitted her to enter the prison; and the fond mother threw her arms round the neck of that unnatural, ungrateful son, and pressed him again and again to her breaking heart.


God loves us poor sinners even more than a mother loves her child. With what confidence, then, ought you to hope for pardon when you are sorry for offending Him!

**ST. BERNARD’S HOPE IN GOD.**

The great St. Bernard was lying on his bed sick. It seemed that already the hand of death was upon him. Satan, who had often tried to make him yield to sin, but in vain, tried now to make him fall into despair.

“You have never done any good,” he whispered in his heart, “and you have offended God so much! How can you expect to obtain Heaven? Heaven is only for those who have served God faithfully, which you have not done.”

St. Bernard knew that this was a temptation of the Evil One, and with his usual confidence in God he overcame it.
"I know," he said, "that I am most unworthy of God's grace, that I have sinned, and that I cannot of myself obtain the Kingdom of God. But Jesus Christ my Saviour, by the merits of His sufferings and death, has purchased it for me, and has made over to me the right of obtaining it. It is a pure gift of God's liberality to me, and although I had no right to it, I now have full confidence of possessing it, for I am God's child, and Jesus died for me. So, begone, Satan!"

After this a holy calm filled his soul, and Satan tempted him no more. Life of St. Bernard.

IV. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN THE FINAL OBJECT OF OUR HOPE.

Jesus Christ tells His disciples that they must take up their cross if they desire to follow Him. What is it that gives the Christian courage to do this? It is the thought of the reward God has promised to give him in Heaven. It is this hope of Heaven, then, that gives you, my child, strength to bear your trials patiently.

"LOOK UP TO HEAVEN, MY CHILD."

Symphronian was the son of parents who were as illustrious for their piety as for their noble ancestry. Under their care he passed his youth in the practice of virtue, and everyone who saw him felt in his presence a supernatural awe, as if he were an angel of God.

He lived in the days of persecution, when so many martyrs shed their blood in testimony of their Faith.
He was seized, brought before the tribunal of the Judge Heraclius, and commanded to adore the statues of the heathen gods. The judge as usual promised him great rewards and honours if he would obey, and threatened to put him to death, under the most awful torments, if he refused.

Symphronian answered that he was a Christian, and that the Christian's hopes were not in this world, but in Heaven. "I do not fear your torments, neither do I esteem your honours. Our God has in Heaven greater and higher honours for those who are faithful to Him, as well as the most terrible punishments for those who disobey Him. Therefore, it is better for me to suffer now at your hands, and so come to my eternal King in Heaven, than to give my soul to Satan by obeying you."

The judge was surprised at these bold words of the young martyr, and again entreated him to obey him, promising at the same time to give him still greater honours.

"Do not imagine," said the holy martyr, "that any words of yours can force me to change my mind. The presents which you offer me are poison hid in honey, and your honours are as brittle as glass. Our riches are in Jesus Christ, and they shall endure for ever; and the honours He confers on us are everlasting. This is the Christian's hope."

The judge, seeing that he was losing time, condemned him to be beheaded.

On his way to martyrdom he met his mother. She had heard of his being condemned to die, and she hastened to see him, and speak to him for the last time on earth.
As she saw the crowd coming along, and heard their shouts, and saw the axes that were so soon to immolate her beloved child, her motherly heart was pierced with grief.

But fearing lest the sight of her sorrow might influence him, she asked from God strength to bear the trial courageously. When the crowd drew near, and her eyes met those of her son, she cried out: "O Symphronian, my child, my dearest boy, look up to Heaven! think of God Who reigns there. Courage, then; do not be afraid to die, because your death will bring you to eternal life. The tyrant cannot take life from you; he will only give you one infinitely more happy in exchange for the short and weary life of this world. The way is indeed narrow and difficult, but it is short."

These words of his mother, spoken so earnestly, gave him new courage. He raised his eyes towards Heaven, to which she was pointing, and he seemed to see holy angels coming down to meet him with palms in their hands—the sign of victory.

When they came to the place of execution, they bound the martyr to the stake, and with one stroke of the sword severed his head from his body. His holy soul at the same instant joined the company of the angels who were witnesses of his martyrdom, and was led by them into the abode of everlasting joy.

Lives of the Saints, August 22.

ST. LIDVINA'S CROWN.

St. Lidvina was born in Holland about the end of the fourteenth century. When she was a little girl she was very beautiful. But God, Who foresaw that
her beauty might be dangerous to her, took it from her, by permitting an accident to happen to her.

One day, when she was fifteen years old, she was walking on the ice which covered a pond not far from her father's house. Someone who was amusing himself by sliding, came against her with great force, and she fell heavily on the ice. When they took her home they discovered that some of her bones were broken, and that she had suffered other injuries. Remedies were applied, but without effect; from that day till the end of her life she was never able to stand upright, and could scarcely walk. The fresh colour left her cheeks, and she became pale and thin.

When people saw the sad state to which she was now reduced, they said it was a great misfortune; but her Father in Heaven, Who loved her dearly, knew that this was one of the richest graces He could have given His beloved child.

Lidvina loved God. She had loved Him when she was in health, and now, when He had sent her this terrible affliction, she loved Him even more. She could not have had the courage to have asked Him to send her these sufferings, but since He had done so, she said from the bottom of her heart: "O my God, Thy holy will be done."

It would take a long time to tell all the consolation God gave her because she was so humble and resigned. Whenever God sends us a cross, He sends us also the grace to carry it. So Lidvina was very happy under her heavy cross.

One day she was brought by her angel guardian in spirit into Paradise. God wanted to show her what
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He would one day give her there if she would suffer her trials on earth patiently to the end.

She saw the Saints there in all their glory, each one according to the good works he had done on earth, and she heard the ravishing music of their canticles.

Some of the holy martyrs who had suffered the most terrible torments for the love of God spoke to her, and pointed out to her the bright crown of glory God had given them as their reward.

"Let our example," they said, "encourage you to suffer as we did, and be faithful unto death as we were. You have to suffer much from the afflictions with which God has visited you, but courage! they will soon be at an end, and then the crown of glory will be given you. Look at us now, how happy we are! where are now those sufferings we endured for the love of Jesus Christ? They are all past: they lasted only a few moments, then were over, and what did God give us in return for them? Look and see; behold the perfect happiness we enjoy in the Kingdom of our God, which will never be taken from us."

When the Saint returned to herself, the thought of this beautiful vision filled her with greater courage; she even desired Our Lord to send her greater afflictions on earth, that her glory might be greater in Heaven.

From the time she had that vision, everything in this world had no pleasure for her. "O my dear Father," she used to pray, "when will You come and take me home to Heaven?"

God was pleased to grant her another vision. She seemed to see one of the heavenly spirits at her side, with a beautiful crown of roses in his hand. But
it did not seem quite finished: here and there there seemed to be a few roses wanting to make it complete.

The angel said to her: "This crown is for you, but I cannot give it to you till it is completed; you have yet to suffer a few things for the love of God, and when you have accomplished this it will be ready, and I will come again and give it to you."

She then earnestly prayed to God not to delay long, but to send her at once the trials He had ordained for her to suffer, that she might the sooner obtain her crown.

God heard her prayer. For some little time she had to endure most acute pains, which were augmented by the cruel treatment of some of those who attended her; but the thought that every moment was bringing her nearer to the glory she so much desired gave her courage.

At length the angel returned, according to his promise. In his hands he held the same crown, but this time it was finished. Not long after this she died, and her pure soul ascended at once to Heaven, where it was crowned with glory, in recompense for the trials and sufferings of this life borne so patiently for the love of God.

God is preparing a crown of glory for us also; but we cannot get it till we have won it by fulfilling our duty to God during our short time of trial on earth.

Life of St. Lidwina, April 16.

V. ON PRESUMPTION.

Since we cannot do any good of ourselves towards our salvation, we must be sure not to trust to our own strength in our temptations, because if we do
so, we are certain to fail. Not to put our trust in God, but to rely on our own strength, is called "presumption." It is one of the greatest sins against hope.

QUINTUS DENIES HIS FAITH.

About the beginning of the second century there came to Smyrna from Phrygia a man called Quintus. At that time there was a persecution of the Christians at Smyrna, and many of them were put to death by horrible tortures, because they would not deny their holy Faith.

When Quintus saw this, he thought he would like to be a martyr also, and so get to Heaven. He went, therefore, boldly to the judge, and said to him: "I am a Christian; put me to death."

The judge was astonished at his strange request, and thought he was a fool. "Let this foolish man," he said, "get what he wants. Take him, and throw him amongst the wild beasts, that they may devour him."

Quintus was very glad when he heard his sentence, and went joyfully along with the soldiers towards the place where the wild beasts were kept.

But the poor man forgot to ask God to help him. No doubt if he had done so, God would have given him the martyr's crown, but because he trusted to himself, he came to a miserable end. For when he drew near the place, and saw the beasts, with their mouths wide open ready to devour him, and heard them roar so terribly, he began to tremble, and said to those who were leading him: "Stop! do not throw me in there!"
"We will throw you in at once," they said, "unless you promise to sacrifice to the gods."
"Then I promise, if you only take me back again and spare my life."

They took him back to the judge; and when the judge ordered him to offer incense to the gods, he did it.

So Quintus denied his Faith because of his presumption, by trusting to himself rather than to God. *Vies des Saints Pet. Bolland*, i. 618

**PRINCE EUGENE AND THE AUSTRIAN GENERAL.**

An Austrian General, who was as much renowned for his piety as for his bravery, had occasion one day to speak to a young nobleman called Eugene, who was living a gay, worldly life, neglecting prayer and the Sacraments, and yet was accustomed to say that he hoped to reach the Kingdom of Heaven when he died.

"My dear young Prince," he said to him with a fatherly tenderness, "you are trying to do what is altogether impossible. To think that you could reach Heaven without going to the Sacraments is a suggestion of the Evil One, that has already brought innumerable souls to ruin. To imagine that you could reach Heaven in this way is to believe that you could possess God in eternity without loving Him on earth. By refusing to do His holy will on earth, to pray to Him, to unite yourself to Him by receiving the holy Sacraments, and to love those things which He hates, is a certain sign of losing Him in eternity; it is to be guilty of one of the greatest sins that you could commit—that of presumption."
Eugene did not at first care for this rebuke, but as he reflected on it he saw that it was indeed the truth. He changed his life, became a fervent Christian, and, by his example, led many others to do the same.

If anything should convince you of the great evil of this sin, it is the following example, which is only one out of many thousands that could be brought before you:

**DELAY OF CONFESSION.**

There was a young man who at first was very pious, but as he grew up and mingled with the world, fell away from this piety, and even committed great sins. In the midst of his evil life, he was continually heard to say: "I would not for all the world die without the Sacraments. Oh, that would be a terrible misfortune! But I am young yet, and I cannot, at present, make up my mind to go to Confession. There is plenty of time; God is good and merciful, and He will not permit me to die without being reconciled to Him."

But God is just as well as merciful. This young man became very ill. His mother, who had often spoken to him of making up his peace with God, now earnestly exhorted him to do so, as he was in very great danger of death.

He answered: "Yes, I must indeed change my life, but I will wait until I am well again."

"But you are in great danger of death," she said to him; "you must at once make up your peace with God, because you may never get better."

At last he allowed her to send for the priest;
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but it happened that he was absent at another sick-call when the messenger reached his house, so he had to wait till he returned. The priest then hastened to the house of the dying man. But it was too late; he had fallen into his agony, and died in despair, without making his confession, with the priest at his side.

Here is another terrible example of a great fall because of trusting in one's own strength instead of the grace of God.

THE PRESUMPTUOUS MONK.

There was a monk who lived in the desert in the days of St. Pachomius, the Abbot. This monk had a great desire to go forth into the world and publicly declare his faith, that he might die a martyr.

But before doing this he went to the Saint, to ask his prayers and to obtain his blessing.

"Do not go," said the Saint, "but return to your cell in the desert, for to do what you propose would be to tempt God, and, instead of dying for your faith, you would only deny it."

But the monk did not listen to these words, and left him, being determined to have his own way.

The following day, as he was passing through a forest, he met a band of barbarians, who seized him and brought him before their chief. When they saw that he was a Christian, they raised their swords to kill him, saying: "Renounce your Faith, else you are a dead man."

At first the young man showed some courage, but when he saw the sword about to fall on him, he
cried out: "Spare me! I will renounce it." Then they allowed him to depart.

When he recovered from his fright and saw what he had done, he was filled with remorse and sorrow. He returned at once to the holy Abbot, and, with tears in his eyes, told him all.

"O my Father, what can I do now to repair the evil I have done? Can God ever pardon me?"

"Yes, my child," said the Abbot, in a kindly voice; "take courage, and humbly ask Him to forgive you, and most certainly He will do it. But let this be a lesson to you, for all time to come, never to rush into danger, for that is to be guilty of the sin of presumption."

VI. ON DIFFIDENCE IN Ourselves.

My child, to escape the danger of falling into presumption we must have a great diffidence in ourselves; that means that of ourselves we cannot avoid evil or do good for Heaven without the help of God's grace.

PACCUS TEMPTED IN THE WILDERNESS.

Father Segneri relates that a young man named Paccus went into a wilderness to do penance for his sins.

After some years he was assaulted by great temptations. They were so great in the end that he thought it impossible to resist them any longer. And as he was often overcome by them, he began to despair of his salvation; he even thought of taking away his life.
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He said to himself one day in his despair: "If I must in the end go to hell, it is better for me to go there now than to live on thus in sin, and so only increase my torments."

Another day he took a poisonous viper into his hands, and tried in every way he could to make it bite him. But the reptile did not hurt him in the least.

"O my God!" he cried, "there are so many people who do not wish to die, yet die, and I who wish for death so much, cannot die."

At that moment he heard a voice saying to him: "O foolish man, do you suppose that you can overcome temptations by your own strength? Pray to God for help, and He will give you grace to overcome them; but do not trust in your own strength."

These words gave him new courage. He began at once to pray most fervently, and soon lost all his fear. He ever afterwards led a very edifying life.

MÜLLER.

Do not imagine that because you are so little and so weak, Jesus, Who is so great, will not come to help you. No; He is your Father in Heaven, and you are His child, and He dearly loves you, so be not afraid.

"BECAUSE I AM SO WEAK."

We read of a pious woman who was so very poor that she used often to think how useless she was in the world, and used to wonder how the great God of Heaven could think of her, much less love her.

One day when these thoughts were in her mind, she heard near her a sweet voice which filled her
heart with joy; it was the voice of Jesus Himself. "My child," He said, "I chose you to serve Me just because you are so weak; for knowing how worthless you are, you will take no glory to yourself, but will give it all to Me."

ST. MARGARET IN PRISON.

When St. Margaret, virgin and martyr, was in prison, having already suffered many cruel tortures for the Faith, she fervently besought Our Lord that He would be pleased to give her the grace of persevering to the end. While she was thus praying, she was seized with a trembling from head to foot, for the Devil appeared to her under the form of a terrible dragon, which rushed towards her as if about to devour her.

But the Saint, who had from her childhood given herself to God, strong in her confidence that He would never forsake her, made upon herself the sign of the cross, and asked Him to help her.

At the same instant the Devil fled in dismay, and the prison was filled with a bright light, and there came a voice out of the brightness which said to her distinctly: "O Margaret, servant of God, be full of joy, since you have overcome your enemies. The tyrant is filled with confusion, and the Devil is vanquished. Do not lose confidence in what you have yet to endure for the love of God, for your torments will soon come to an end, and your everlasting glory will soon begin."

The Saint was consoled by these words, and thanked her Heavenly Master for His infinite good-
ness to her. The next day she was brought forth to martyrdom, and thus entered gloriously into Heaven.

VII. On Despair.

If it is a great sin to trust in ourselves and not in God, it is also a great sin to think that God will not show us mercy, even when we may have grievously sinned. This sin is the sin of despair, another of the sins against hope.

THE TERRIBLE VISION.

Venerable Bede tells us that in his time there was a man who had once been very pious, but who had gradually fallen into a careless worldly life, and ended by being the scandal of the town in which he lived.

After a time he became ill. People who went to visit him, and saw how dangerous his illness was, told him it was time to think of preparing himself for the great passage into eternity.

"Oh there will be plenty of time for that afterwards," he said. "I am too sick and weary at present to think of that. I will think about it when I get better."

But he did not get better; every day he became worse.

One day he seemed to see something terrible, for, turning to those who were in the room, he cried out in a voice which froze the blood in their veins: "Alas! I have deceived the world! I have deceived myself! I am lost for ever!"

But they said to him: "Do not say these words;
God is all-merciful, and offers pardon even to the greatest sinner."

"Yes; but it is too late for me. God put me into this world to serve Him, and I did not do it. I have not even one good work to offer Him. So I am lost! I am lost!"

"Oh! ask God for mercy," they cried. "Say, 'O Jesus, have mercy on me!'"

"No! no! it is too late! I have just seen Hell, and in it I saw Cain and Judas, and near them a place prepared for me. It is too late! I am lost!"

They tried again to speak words of comfort to him, and of God's mercy, but all in vain; the poor man died in despair, because he would not ask for mercy.

From Venerable Bede.

My child, this example will show you how terrible is the end of those who have offended God, and who will not return to Him by repentance.

THE TERRIBLE END OF JUDAS.

Judas was one of our Blessed Lord's twelve Apostles. For three years he had been constantly in the company of Jesus Christ, and had, during that time, received from Him many special marks of His favour and love.

But the Devil tempted Judas, and he yielded to the temptation, which in the end led him to betray his loving Master into the hands of His enemies for a few pieces of silver.

When he saw that Jesus was condemned to die he was filled with the deepest remorse, and, running back to the chief priests, threw down at their feet the
money they had given him, saying: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood."

At that moment the grace of God was speaking to his heart, and urging him to repent of his crime. If he had done so he would have been forgiven, and would now be a Saint in Heaven. But he resisted the grace of God, and allowed despair to enter into his heart. He saw the greatness of the crime he had committed, and the sight filled him with so much horror that, forgetting the infinite mercy of God, and, thinking only of the terrible sin he had committed, he fell into despair, and, going out, hanged himself.

SATAN AND THE PIOUS MONK.

The Devil appeared once to Faverius, a disciple of St. Bruno, and monk of singular goodness, who was lying dangerously ill. After terrifying him in other ways, he began to remind him of all the sins he had ever committed, saying: "You committed all these sins."

The servant of God replied that it was quite true, but that he had already confessed them and received absolution from them, and therefore had every reason to trust that God had pardoned him.

"Confessed your sins! Confessed your sins!" replied the fiend. "You have not told all; you have not made a proper confession; you have not explained the circumstances of your sins; your confessions were all bad; they were all good for nothing; they will serve only to make your judgment heavier."

The holy monk, thus reminded of faults, shown to
him by the fiend in that awful light, was greatly alarmed, and began to be filled with fear. He was so horror-stricken and full of dismay that he was on the point of falling headlong into the abyss of despair.

But the Blessed Virgin, ever the true Mother of mercy, who forsakes not such as are really devoted to her, appeared to him most opportunely at this terrible moment with the Divine Infant in her arms, and addressed him as follows: "Favorius, my child, why art thou afraid? Wherefore lose heart? Hope and be of good cheer, thou hast all but reached the port of Heaven. All thy sins have been forgiven thee by my most dear Child. Of this I give thee my assurance."

At these words the great anguish felt by the dying man at the thought of his sins gave place to a humble, confiding, peaceful sorrow, and shortly afterwards he breathed his last in great calm of soul.


**VIII. On Confidence in God.**

God knows what is best for you, my child, for He is your Father. In sorrow and in joy, in sickness and in health, leave yourself in His hands. It is this confidence that is most pleasing to Him, because it is a sign that you hope in Him and love Him.

**RIPE FOR HEAVEN.**

There was once a man whom God visited with many and great trials. Scarcely had one trial passed before another one came upon him. But he was a good Christian, and knew that these suffer-
ings were the gifts his Heavenly Father sent him, that he might gain a bright crown of glory hereafter. He had a wife and one child, a bright and beautiful boy, and in his quiet home, in their company, he found some consolation when the burden was heaviest.

It happened that a war broke out in the country where he dwelt, and he was obliged to take up arms against the enemy.

When the war was over and he returned to his native place, he found his once happy home in ruins, and learned that his wife and child had been put to death by the enemy.

This was for him the severest of all the trials that he had yet suffered, and his usual confidence in God seemed for a moment to forsake him in his great grief.

"O my God!" he cried out, "why hast Thou taken away from me the only things I prized in this world, my wife and my child? Why did the balls of the enemy spare me, when so many of my comrades were struck down by my side? Oh! why hast Thou preserved me from death to heap on me so great an affliction?"

And in the midst of his grief he besought Our Lord to take him out of this world, that he might not have to suffer more.

God consoled him in his grief. He seemed in his sleep to see a most beautiful angel coming near him, having in his hand three grains of seed. These he sowed in a field. Two of them grew up, and produced flowers of a magnificence and beauty far exceeding what he had ever seen before. But the third grain of seed did not spring up at all.
So he asked the angel: "Why is it that two of the seeds you sowed have produced such beautiful flowers, and the third one has not even sprung up?"

The angel answered: "Because it is not yet ready. Have patience; it will also appear."

Soon afterwards he saw it also coming forth from the ground, and the flowers it produced were still more beautiful.

When he awoke, he began to reflect on what he had seen. "O my God," he said, "it was wrong in me to murmur against Thy holy will as I have done. Pardon me, O my God; Thou art indeed a Father full of wisdom. Thou hast taken to Thyself those whom I loved, because Thou sawest that they were already ripe for Heaven, and Thou hast left me still a little time on earth to purify me, and prepare me for a still greater degree of glory in Paradise."

From that moment he complained no more. Afflictions still continued to come upon him, but he bore them all with an invincible patience, and his constant prayer was those words of the Scripture: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded."  


THE DYING FATHER.

Not long ago a poor man, the father of a large family, was struck down by a dangerous illness. He felt the hand of death upon him, yet he was calm and happy.

His children were standing near his bed weeping, and praying to God that their dear father might not be taken away from them.
THE VIRTUE OF HOPE

"My children," he said, "it is the will of God that I should leave you. With my dying lips I ask you to love and serve Him till He comes to take you to Himself. I have lived a long time in this world, and I can tell you that that alone can make you happy."

These words, spoken at intervals and in a low voice, told the children plainly that the end was indeed near. This made them weep still more. But the good man seemed to smile rather than weep, and to be full of joy rather than of sorrow.

Margaret, his oldest daughter, observed this, and said to him: "Ah! dearest father, how can you be so joyful while we are so sad? You have lived a hard and laborious life, and had many sorrows and trials, and now, even when death is at hand, and you are enduring so much pain, you seem not to feel it."

"My dear child," he answered, "long, long ago, when I was a little boy, my mother used to tell me what I have often told you all—those words of the Scripture: 'Keep the Lord always before thine eyes, and fear His holy name.' These few words gave me courage in my trials, and were my defence in the moment of danger, and now they are my greatest consolation. For they have led me to the gate of my heavenly home, and I die with the firm hope that they will lead me into the presence of Him Whom I have had always present in my heart. It is this that makes me so calm now and so resigned. And if you do as I have done, you also, at the hour of your death, shall be filled with the same blessed hope."
This was the only legacy this poor man had to leave to his little ones, but it was of more value than the richest gift that the world could bestow.

*Schmidt, Rep. du Catéch., iv. 311.*

My child, since God is your Father, and loves you so much, you should with the utmost confidence place yourself in His hands, and say to Him:

"O my Father in Heaven, I am Thy child, do with me what Thou wilt."

**IN THE ARMS OF JESUS.**

In the year 1623, at the beginning of Lent, the Venerable Agnes of Jesus became very ill. She was at that time only twenty-one years old. The physicians who were called in did not seem to understand the nature of her malady, and gave her medicine which, instead of making her better, only made her suffer the more.

But Agnes never uttered one word of complaint; the only words she said were the following, which she repeated often every day: "O my God, O my sweet and amiable Jesus, mayest Thou be blessed a thousand and a thousand times."

When Easter Sunday came, God was pleased to reward the patience with which she had suffered the heavy crosses He had been pleased to send her, by permitting her angel guardian to appear to her.

"My child," said the angel, "are you happy in your sufferings?"

"Yes," she answered, "because it is the holy will of Him Whom I love with all my heart."

"But was it not also your own desire to suffer?