

The
Imitation of Christ

by
Thomas à Kempis

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**Sampled
Thoughts**

Thomas à Kempis
“The Imitation of Christ”
Book One. Thoughts Helpful in the Life of the Soul

The teaching of Christ is more excellent than all the advice of the saints, and he who has His spirit will find in it a hidden manna.

This is the greatest wisdom — to seek the kingdom of heaven through contempt of the world.

The more you know and the better you understand, the more severely will you be judged, unless your life is also the more holy.

The more recollected a man is, and the more simple of heart he becomes, the easier he understands sublime things, for he receives the light of knowledge from above.

Every perfection in this life has some imperfection mixed with it and no learning of ours is without some darkness.

Do not yield to every impulse and suggestion but consider things carefully and patiently in the light of God’s will.

If you would profit from it, therefore, read with humility, simplicity, and faith, and never seek a reputation for being learned.

A good and devout man arranges in his mind the things he has to do, not according to the whims of evil inclination but according to the dictates of right reason.

A good life makes a man wise according to God and gives him experience in many things, for the more humble he is and the more subject to God, the wiser and the more at peace he will be in all things.

Put no trust in your own learning nor in the cunning of any man, but rather in the grace of God Who helps the humble and humbles the proud.

The humble live in continuous peace, while in the hearts of the proud are envy and frequent anger.

Associate with the humble and the simple, with the devout and virtuous, and with them speak of edifying things.

Do not trust too much in your own opinions, but be willing to listen to those of others.

Devout conversation on spiritual matters, on the contrary, is a great aid to spiritual progress, especially when persons of the same mind and spirit associate together in God.

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Everyone, it is true, wishes to do as he pleases and is attracted to those who agree with him. But if God be among us, we must at times give up our opinions for the blessings of peace.

Blessed are the simple of heart for they shall enjoy peace in abundance.

If we mortified our bodies perfectly and allowed no distractions to enter our minds, we could appreciate divine things and experience something of heavenly contemplation.

When a man of good will is afflicted, tempted, and tormented by evil thoughts, he realizes clearly that his greatest need is God, without Whom he can do no good.

Yet temptations, though troublesome and severe, are often useful to a man, for in them he is humbled, purified, and instructed.

Little by little, in patience and long-suffering you will overcome them, by the help of God rather than by severity and your own rash ways.

Let us humble our souls under the hand of God in every trial and temptation for He will save and exalt the humble in spirit.

In temptations and trials the progress of a man is measured; in them opportunity for merit and virtue is made more manifest.

Turn your attention upon yourself and beware of judging the deeds of other men, for in judging others a man labours vainly, often makes mistakes, and easily sins; whereas, in judging and taking stock of himself he does something that is always profitable.

If you rely more upon your intelligence or industry than upon the virtue of submission to Jesus Christ, you will hardly, and in any case slowly, become an enlightened man. God wants us to be completely subject to Him and, through ardent love, to rise above all human wisdom.

Without charity external work is of no value, but anything done in charity, be it ever so small and trivial, is entirely fruitful inasmuch as God weighs the love with which a man acts rather than the deed itself.

He who has true and perfect charity seeks self in nothing, but searches all things for the glory of God.

He (who has true and perfect charity) ascribes to man nothing that is good but attributes it wholly to God from Whom all things proceed as from a fountain, and in Whom all the blessed shall rest as their last end and fruition.

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Until God ordains otherwise, a man ought to bear patiently whatever he cannot correct in himself and in others.

Try to bear patiently with the defects and infirmities of others, whatever they may be, because you also have many a fault which others must endure.

Hence we must support one another, console one another, mutually help, counsel, and advise, for the measure of every man’s virtue is best revealed in time of adversity—adversity that does not weaken a man but rather shows what he is.

He who seeks anything but God alone and the salvation of his soul will find only trouble and grief, and he who does not try to become the least, the servant of all, cannot remain at peace for long.

The saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in work and fatigue, in vigils and fasts, in prayers and holy meditations, in persecutions and many afflictions.

They (those who follow in the footsteps of Christ) lived in true humility and simple obedience; they walked in charity and patience, making progress daily on the pathway of spiritual life and obtaining great favour with God.

Help me, O Lord God, in my good resolution and in Your holy service. Grant me now, this very day, to begin perfectly, for thus far I have done nothing.

If you cannot recollect yourself continuously, do so once a day at least, in the morning or in the evening.

Never be completely unoccupied, but read or write or pray or meditate or do something for the common good.

Devotions not common to all are not to be displayed in public, for such personal things are better performed in private. Furthermore, beware of indifference to community prayer through love of your own devotions.

Anyone, then, who aims to live the inner and spiritual life must go apart, with Jesus, from the crowd.

More than this, the security of the saints was always enveloped in the fear of God, nor were they less cautious and humble because they were conspicuous for great virtues and graces. The security of the wicked, on the contrary, springs from pride and presumption, and will end in their own deception.

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What great peace and tranquillity would be his, if he cut himself off from all empty care and thought only of things divine, things helpful to his soul, and put all his trust in God.

If you desire true sorrow of heart, seek the privacy of your cell and shut out the uproar of the world, as it is written: “In your chamber bewail your sins.”

What can you find elsewhere that you cannot find here in your cell? Behold heaven and earth and all the elements, for of these all things are made.

Raise your eyes to God in heaven and pray because of your sins and shortcomings.

Consider yourself unworthy of divine solace and deserving rather of much tribulation.

The sins and vices in which we are so entangled that we can rarely apply ourselves to the contemplation of heaven are matters for just sorrow and inner remorse.

Happy is the man who can throw off the weight of every care and recollect himself in holy contrition. Happy is the man who casts from him all that can stain or burden his conscience.

The more a man desires spiritual life, the more bitter the present becomes to him, because he understands better and sees more clearly the defects, the corruption of human nature.

The sins and vices in which we are so entangled that we can rarely apply ourselves to the contemplation of heaven are matters for just sorrow and inner remorse.

I do not doubt that you would correct yourself more earnestly if you would think more of an early death than of a long life. And if you pondered in your heart the future pains of hell or of purgatory, I believe you would willingly endure labour and trouble and would fear no hardship.

We have cause, therefore, because of our frailty and feebleness, to humble ourselves and never think anything great of ourselves. Through neglect we may quickly lose that which by God’s grace we have acquired only through long, hard labor.

Therefore, in every deed and every thought, act as though you were to die this very day. If you had a good conscience you would not fear death very much. It is better to avoid sin than to fear death.

Blessed is he who keeps the moment of death ever before his eyes and prepares for it every day.

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The time will come when you will want just one day, just one hour in which to make amends, and do you know whether you will obtain it?

Make friends for yourself now by honoring the saints of God, by imitating their actions, so that when you depart this life they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.

Keep your heart free and raise it up to God, for you have not here a lasting home. To Him direct your daily prayers, your sighs and tears, that your soul may merit after death to pass in happiness to the Lord.

In all things consider the end; how you shall stand before the strict Judge from Whom nothing is hidden and Who will pronounce judgment in all justice, accepting neither bribes nor excuses.

The patient man goes through a great and salutary purgatory when he grieves more over the malice of one who harms him than for his own injury; when he prays readily for his enemies and forgives offenses from his heart; when he does not hesitate to ask pardon of others; when he is more easily moved to pity than to anger; when he does frequent violence to himself and tries to bring the body into complete subjection to the spirit.

In that day persevering patience will count more than all the power in this world; simple obedience will be exalted above all worldly cleverness; a good and clean conscience will gladden the heart of man far more than the philosophy of the learned; and contempt for riches will be of more weight than every treasure on earth.

If a little suffering makes you impatient now, what will hell fire do? In truth, you cannot have two joys: you cannot taste the pleasures of this world and afterward reign with Christ.

All is vanity, therefore, except to love God and to serve Him alone.

He who loves God with all his heart does not fear death or punishment or judgment or hell, because perfect love assures access to God.

Strive earnestly for perfection, then, because in a short time you will receive the reward of your labor, and neither fear nor sorrow shall come upon you at the hour of death.

True, each one has his own difficulties to meet and conquer, but a diligent and sincere man will make greater progress even though he have more passions than one who is more even-tempered but less concerned about virtue.

Take care lest you be guilty of those things which you consider reprehensible, or if you have ever been guilty of them, try to correct yourself as soon as possible. As you see others, so they see you.

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Even though you may have walked for many years on the pathway to God, you may well be ashamed if, with the image of Christ before you, you do not try to make yourself still more like Him.

How do so many other religious who are confined in cloistered discipline get along? They seldom go out, they live in contemplation, their food is poor, their clothing coarse, they work hard, they speak but little, keep long vigils, rise early, pray much, read frequently, and subject themselves to all sorts of discipline.

He will neither rejoice over great things nor grieve over small ones, but will place himself entirely and confidently in the hands of God, Who for him is all in all, to Whom nothing ever perishes or dies, for Whom all things live, and Whom they serve as He desires.

A fervent and diligent man is ready for all things. It is greater work to resist vices and passions than to sweat in physical toil. He who does not overcome small faults, shall fall little by little into greater ones.

“The Imitation of Christ”

Book Two. The Interior Life

MEDITATION

The kingdom of God is within you,” says the Lord. (Luke 17:21)

Learn to despise external things, to devote yourself to those that are within, and you will see the kingdom of God come unto you, that kingdom which is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, gifts not given to the impious.

Jesus Himself says: “If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him.” (John 14:23)

Christ will come to you offering His consolation, if you prepare a fit dwelling for Him in your heart, whose beauty and glory, wherein He takes delight, are all from within. His visits with the inward man are frequent, His communion sweet and full of consolation, His peace great, and His intimacy wonderful indeed.

Place all your trust in God; let Him be your fear and your love. He will answer for you; He will do what is best for you.

Fix your mind on the Most High, and pray unceasingly to Christ.

If you turn devoutly to the wounds and precious stigmata of Christ, you will find great comfort in suffering, you will mind but little the scorn of men, and you will easily bear their slanderous talk.

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MEDITATION

(Continued...)

Suffer with Christ and for Christ if you wish to reign with Him.

A man who is a lover of Jesus and of truth, a truly interior man who is free from uncontrolled affections, can turn to God at will and rise above himself to enjoy spiritual peace.

A spiritual man quickly recollects himself because he has never wasted his attention upon externals.

But if you refuse external consolation, you will be able to contemplate heavenly things and often to experience interior joy.

HUMILITY

If you know how to suffer in silence, you will undoubtedly experience God’s help. He knows when and how to deliver you; therefore, place yourself in His hands, for it is a divine prerogative to help men and free them from all distress.

To the humble He turns and upon them bestows great grace, that after their humiliation He may raise them up to glory. He reveals His secrets to the humble, and with kind invitation bids them come to Him.

GOODNESS AND PEACE IN MAN

First keep peace with yourself; then you will be able to bring peace to others.

The man who is at perfect ease is never suspicious.

Behold, how far you are from true charity and humility which does not know how to be angry with anyone, or to be indignant save only against self!

He who knows best how to suffer will enjoy the greater peace, because he is the conqueror of himself, the master of the world, a friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven.

PURITY OF MIND AND UNITY OF PURPOSE

There must be simplicity in his intention and purity in his desires. Simplicity leads to God, purity embraces and enjoys Him.

If you aim at and seek after nothing but the pleasure of God and the welfare of your neighbor, you will enjoy freedom within.

When he begins perfectly to conquer himself and to walk bravely in the ways of God, then he thinks those things less difficult which he thought so hard before.

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OURSELVES

We must not rely too much upon ourselves, for grace and understanding are often lacking in us. We have but little inborn light, and this we quickly lose through negligence. Often we are not aware that we are so blind in heart

If you attend wholly to God and yourself, you will be little disturbed by what you see about you.

Consider the consolations of creatures as vanity, for the soul that loves God scorns all things that are inferior to Him. God alone, the eternal and infinite, satisfies all, bringing comfort to the soul and true joy to the body.

THE JOY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

To glory in adversity is not hard for the man who loves, for this is to glory in the cross of the Lord.

The glory of the good is in their conscience and not in the lips of men, for the joy of the just is from God and in God, and their gladness is founded on truth.

He who minds neither praise nor blame possesses great peace of heart and, if his conscience is good, he will easily be contented and at peace.

Praise adds nothing to your holiness, nor does blame take anything from it. You are what you are, and you cannot be said to be better than you are in God's sight.

The man who desires no justification from without has clearly entrusted himself to God:

LOVING JESUS ABOVE ALL THINGS

Love Him, then; keep Him as a friend. He will not leave you as others do, or let you suffer lasting death.

Cling to Jesus in life and death; trust yourself to the glory of Him who alone can help you when all others fail.

If you but knew how to free yourself entirely from all creatures, Jesus would gladly dwell within you.

If you seek Jesus in all things, you will surely find Him.

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THE INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP OF JESUS

When Jesus is near, all is well and nothing seems difficult.

He who finds Jesus finds a rare treasure, indeed, a good above every good, whereas he who loses Him loses more than the whole world.

It is a great art to know how to converse with Jesus, and great wisdom to know how to keep Him. Be humble and peaceful, and Jesus will be with you. Be devout and calm, and He will remain with you.

Of all those who are dear to you, let Him be your special love. Let all things be loved for the sake of Jesus, but Jesus for His own sake.

Jesus Christ must be loved alone with a special love for He alone, of all friends, is good and faithful. For Him and in Him you must love friends and foes alike, and pray to Him that all may know and love Him.

You must bring to God a clean and open heart if you wish to attend and see how sweet the Lord is. Truly you will never attain this happiness unless His grace prepares you and draws you on so that you may forsake all things to be united with Him alone.

WANTING NO SHARE IN COMFORT

The true lover of Christ, however, who sincerely pursues virtue, does not fall back upon consolations nor seek such pleasures of sense, but prefers severe trials and hard labors for the sake of Christ.

When, therefore, spiritual consolation is given by God, receive it gratefully, but understand that it is His gift and not your meriting.

When consolation is taken away, do not at once despair but wait humbly and patiently for the heavenly visit, since God can restore to you more abundant solace.

If this is the case with great saints, we who are weak and poor ought not to despair because we are fervent at times and at other times cold, for the spirit comes and goes according to His will.

He, indeed, is not worthy of the sublime contemplation of God who has not been tried by some tribulation for the sake of God. For temptation is usually the sign preceding the consolation that is to follow, and heavenly consolation is promised to all those proved by temptation. Divine consolation, then, is given in order to make a man braver in enduring adversity, and temptation follows in order that he may not pride himself on the good he has done.

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APPRECIATING GOD’S GRACE

Resign yourself to patience rather than to comfort, to carrying your cross rather than to enjoyment.

Thus, the gifts of grace cannot flow in us when we are ungrateful to the Giver, when we do not return them to the Fountainhead. Grace is always given to him who is duly grateful, and what is wont to be given the humble will be taken away from the proud.

I accept willingly the grace whereby I become more humble and contrite, more willing to renounce self.

The man who has been taught by the gift of grace, and who learns by the lash of its withdrawal, will never dare to attribute any good to himself, but will rather admit his poverty and emptiness.

Give Him thanks, then, for His grace, but place upon yourself alone the blame and the punishment your fault deserves.

The saints who are greatest before God are those who consider themselves the least, and the more humble they are within themselves, so much the more glorious they are.

They attribute to God whatever good they have received; they seek no glory from one another but only that which comes from God alone. They desire above all things that He be praised in themselves and in all His saints — this is their constant purpose.

Even though He give punishments and scourges, accept them, because He acts for our welfare in whatever He allows to befall us.

FEW LOVE THE CROSS OF JESUS

Those, on the contrary, who love Him for His own sake and not for any comfort of their own, bless Him in all trial and anguish of heart as well as in the bliss of consolation.

What power there is in pure love for Jesus — love that is free from all self-interest and self-love!

Then, when he has done all that he knows ought to be done, let him consider it as nothing, let him make little of what may be considered great; let him in all honesty call himself an unprofitable servant.

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THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS

To many the saying, “Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow Me,” seems hard, but it will be much harder to hear that final word: “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.”

This sign of the cross will be in the heavens when the Lord comes to judge. Then all the servants of the cross, who during life made themselves one with the Crucified, will draw near with great trust to Christ, the judge.

There is no salvation of soul nor hope of everlasting life but in the cross.

Take up your cross, therefore, and follow Jesus, and you shall enter eternal life. He Himself opened the way before you in carrying His cross, and upon it He died for you, that you, too, might take up your cross and long to die upon it. If you die with Him, you shall also live with Him, and if you share His suffering, you shall also share His glory.

For He wishes you to learn to bear trial without consolation, to submit yourself wholly to Him that you may become more humble through suffering.

Indeed, the more spiritual progress a person makes, so much heavier will he frequently find the cross, because as his love increases, the pain of his exile also increases.

Indeed, the more spiritual progress a person makes, so much heavier will he frequently find the cross, because as his love increases, the pain of his exile also increases.

It is the grace of Christ, and not the virtue of man, which can and does bring it about that through fervor of spirit frail flesh learns to love and to gain what it naturally hates and shuns.

On your part, be ready to bear sufferings and consider them the greatest consolation, for even though you alone were to undergo them all, the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come.

Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more helpful for you on this earth than to suffer willingly for Christ.

Our merit and progress consist not in many pleasures and comforts but rather in enduring great afflictions and sufferings.

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” (Luke 9:23) Let this be the final conclusion — that through much suffering we must enter into the kingdom of God.

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Book Three: Internal Consolation

1 THE INWARD CONVERSATION OF CHRIST WITH THE FAITHFUL SOUL

Blessed is the soul who hears the Lord speaking within her, who receives the word of consolation from His lips. Blessed are the ears that catch the accents of divine whispering, and pay no heed to the murmurings of this world. Blessed indeed are the ears that listen, not to the voice which sounds without, but to the truth which teaches within. Blessed are the eyes which are closed to exterior things and are fixed upon those which are interior. Blessed are they who penetrate inwardly, who try daily to prepare themselves more and more to understand mysteries. Blessed are they who long to give their time to God, and who cut themselves off from the hindrances of the world.

2 TRUTH SPEAKS INWARDLY WITHOUT THE SOUND OF WORDS
THE DISCIPLE

Speak, Lord, for Your servant listens. “Thou hast the words of eternal life.” Speak to me for the comfort of my soul and for the amendment of my life, for Your praise, Your glory, and Your everlasting honour.

You instruct and enlighten our hearts.

3 LISTEN HUMBLY TO THE WORDS OF GOD. MANY DO NOT HEED THEM
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My words are spirit and life, and they are not to be weighed by man’s understanding. They are not to be invoked in vanity but are to be heard in silence, and accepted with all humility and with great affection.

To them I read two lessons daily — one reproving their vices, the other exhorting them to progress in virtue. He who has My words and despises them has that which shall condemn him on the last day.

Teach me, Lord, to do Your will. Teach me to live worthily and humbly in Your sight, for You are my wisdom Who know me truly, and Who knew me even before the world was made and before I was born into it.

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4 WE MUST WALK BEFORE GOD IN HUMILITY AND TRUTH THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, walk before Me in truth, and seek Me always in the simplicity of your heart. He who walks before Me in truth shall be defended from the attacks of evil, and the truth shall free him from seducers and from the slanders of wicked men. For if the truth has made you free, then you shall be free indeed, and you shall not care for the vain words of men.

Some men walk before Me without sincerity. Led on by a certain curiosity and arrogance, they wish to know My secrets and to understand the high things of God, to the neglect of themselves and their own salvation. Through their own pride and curiosity, and because I am against them, such men often fall into great temptations and sins.

Fear the judgments of God! Dread the wrath of the Almighty! Do not discuss the works of the Most High, but examine your sins — in what serious things you have offended and how many good things you have neglected.

Others, indeed, with enlightened understanding and purified affections, constantly long for everlasting things; they are unwilling to hear of earthly affairs and only with reluctance do they serve the necessities of nature. These sense what the Spirit of truth speaks within them: for He teaches them to despise earthly things and to love those of heaven, to neglect the world, and each day and night to desire heaven.

5 THE WONDERFUL EFFECT OF DIVINE LOVE

Free me from evil passions and cleanse my heart of all disorderly affection so that, healed and purified within, I may be fit to love, strong to suffer, and firm to persevere.

May my soul say: “My God, my love, You are all mine and I am all Yours. Give me an increase of love, that I may learn to taste with the inward lips of my heart how sweet it is to love, how sweet to be dissolved in love and bathe in it. Let me be rapt in love. Let me rise above self in great fervor and wonder. Let me sing the hymn of love, and let me follow You, my Love, to the heights. Let my soul exhaust itself in praising You, rejoicing out of love. Let me love You more than myself, and let me not love myself except for Your sake. In You let me love all those who truly love You, as the law of love, which shines forth from You, commands.”

Love is swift, sincere, kind, pleasant, and delightful. Love is strong, patient and faithful, prudent, long-suffering, and manly. Love is never self-seeking, for in whatever a person seeks himself there he falls from love. Love is circumspect, humble, and upright.

A lover must embrace willingly all that is difficult and bitter for the sake of the Beloved, and he should not turn away from Him because of adversities.

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6 THE PROVING OF A TRUE LOVER
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

The wise lover regards not so much the gift of Him Who loves as the love of Him Who gives.

But to fight against evil thoughts which attack you is a sign of virtue and great merit. Do not, therefore, let strange fantasies disturb you, no matter what they concern. Hold strongly to your resolution and keep a right intention toward God.

7 GRACE MUST BE HIDDEN UNDER THE MANTLE OF HUMILITY
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

When you are in grace, think how miserable and needy you are without it. Your progress in spiritual life does not consist in having the grace of consolation, but in enduring its withdrawal with humility, resignation, and patience, so that you neither become listless in prayer nor neglect your other duties in the least; but on the contrary do what you can do as well as you know how, and do not neglect yourself completely because of your dryness or anxiety of mind.

Yet a little knowledge humbly and meekly pursued is better than great treasures of learning sought in vain complacency. It is better for you to have little than to have much which may become the source of pride.

For a man’s merits are not measured by many visions or consolations, or by knowledge of the Scriptures, or by his being in a higher position than others, but by the truth of his humility, by his capacity for divine charity, by his constancy in seeking purely and entirely the honour of God, by his disregard and positive contempt of self, and more, by preferring to be despised and humiliated rather than honoured by others.

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8 SELF-ABASEMENT IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

I will speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.

If I abase myself, however, if I humble myself to nothingness, if I shrink from all self-esteem and account myself as the dust which I am, Your grace will favour me, Your light will enshroud my heart, and all self-esteem, no matter how little, will sink in the depths of my nothingness to perish forever.

Left to myself, I am nothing but total weakness. But if You look upon me for an instant, I am at once made strong and filled with new joy.

Convert us to You, that we may be thankful, humble, and devout, for You are our salvation, our courage, and our strength.

**9 ALL THINGS SHOULD BE REFERRED TO GOD AS THEIR LAST END
THE VOICE OF CHRIST**

Refer all things principally to Me, therefore, for it is I Who have given them all. Consider each thing as flowing from the highest good, and therefore to Me, as to their highest source, must all things be brought back.

From Me the small and the great, the poor and the rich draw the water of life as from a living fountain, and they who serve Me willingly and freely shall receive grace upon grace.

I have given all things. I will that all be returned to Me again, and I exact most strictly a return of thanks.

Divine love conquers all and enlarges the powers of the soul.

If you are truly wise, you will rejoice only in Me, because no one is good except God alone, Who is to be praised above all things and above all to be blessed

10 TO DESPISE THE WORLD AND SERVE GOD IS SWEET

Behold, all things are Yours, even those which I have and by which I serve You.

Would that I could serve You all the days of my life! Would that for but one day I could serve You worthily! Truly You are worthy of all service, all honor, and everlasting praise. Truly You are my Lord, and I am Your poor servant, bound to serve You with all my powers, praising You without ever becoming weary. I wish to do this — this is my desire. Please supply whatever is wanting in me.

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11 THE LONGINGS OF OUR HEARTS MUST BE EXAMINED AND MODERATED

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

Not every desire which seems good should be followed immediately, nor, on the other hand, should every contrary affection be at once rejected.

You must pay no attention to what the flesh does or does not desire, taking pains that it be subjected, even by force, to the spirit. And it should be chastised and forced to remain in subjection until it is prepared for anything and is taught to be satisfied with little, to take pleasure in simple things, and not to murmur against inconveniences.

12 ACQUIRING PATIENCE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CONCUPISCENCE

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My wish is not that you seek that peace which is free from temptations or meets with no opposition, but rather that you consider yourself as having found peace when you have been tormented with many tribulations and tried with many adversities.

Therefore, in order that you may escape the everlasting punishments to come, try to bear present evils patiently for the sake of God.

If you wish to be truly delighted and more abundantly comforted by Me, behold, in contempt of all worldly things and in the cutting off of all base pleasures shall your blessing be, and great consolation shall be given you. Further, the more you withdraw yourself from any solace of creatures, the sweeter and stronger comfort will you find in Me.

At first you will not gain these blessings without sadness and toil and conflict. Habit already formed will resist you, but it shall be overcome by a better habit. The flesh will murmur against you, but it will be bridled by fervor of spirit.

13 THE OBEDIENCE OF ONE HUMBLY SUBJECT TO THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, he who attempts to escape obeying withdraws himself from grace.

There is no more troublesome, no worse enemy of the soul than you yourself, if you are not in harmony with the spirit. It is absolutely necessary that you conceive a true contempt for yourself if you wish to be victorious over flesh and blood.

I became the most humble and the lowest of all men that you might overcome your pride with My humility.

Allow no pride to dwell in you, but prove yourself so humble and lowly that all may walk over you and trample upon you as dust in the streets!

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13 THE OBEDIENCE OF ONE HUMBLY SUBJECT TO THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST (Continued...)

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

What have you, vain man, to complain of? What answer can you make, vile sinner, to those who accuse you, you who have so often offended God and so many times deserved hell? But My eye has spared you because your soul was precious in My sight, so that you might know My love and always be thankful for My benefits, so that you might give yourself continually to true subjection and humility, and might patiently endure contempt.

14 CONSIDER THE HIDDEN JUDGMENTS OF GOD LEST YOU BECOME PROUD OF YOUR OWN GOOD DEEDS

We grow lukewarm, but You inflame us. Oh, how humbly and lowly should I consider myself! How very little should I esteem anything that seems good in me! How profoundly should I submit to Your unfathomable judgments,

Lord, where I find myself to be but nothing! All vainglory is swallowed up in the depths of Your judgments upon me.

15 HOW ONE SHOULD FEEL AND SPEAK ON EVERY DESIRABLE THING

Lord, if it be pleasing to You, so be it. If it be to Your honour, Lord, be it done in Your name. Lord, if You see that it is expedient and profitable for me, then grant that I may use it to Your honor. But if You know that it will be harmful to me, and of no good benefit to the welfare of my soul, then take this desire away from me.

Lord, You know what is better for me; let this be done or that be done as You please. Grant what You will, as much as You will, when You will. Do with me as You know best, as will most please You, and will be for Your greater honor. Place me where You will and deal with me freely in all things. I am in Your hand; turn me about whichever way You will. Behold, I am Your servant, ready to obey in all things. Not for myself do I desire to live, but for You — would that I could do this worthily and perfectly!

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A PRAYER THAT THE WILL OF GOD BE DONE

Grant me Your grace, O most merciful Jesus, that it may be with me, and work with me, and remain with me to the very end. Grant that I may always desire and will that which is most acceptable and pleasing to You. Let Your will be mine. Let my will always follow Yours and agree perfectly with it. Let my will be one with Yours in willing and in not willing, and let me be unable to will or not will anything but what You will or do not will. Grant that I may die to all things in this world, and for Your sake love to be despised and unknown in this life. Give me above all desires the desire to rest in You, and in You let my heart have peace. You are true peace of heart. You alone are its rest. Without You all things are difficult and troubled. In this peace, the selfsame that is in You, the Most High, the everlasting Good, I will sleep and take my rest. Amen.

16 TRUE COMFORT IS TO BE SOUGHT IN GOD ALONE

Therefore, my soul, you cannot enjoy full consolation or perfect delight except in God, the Consoler of the poor and the Helper of the humble.

The devout man carries his Consoler, Jesus, everywhere with him, and he says to Him: “Be with me, Lord Jesus, in every place and at all times. Let this be my consolation, to be willing to forego all human comforting.

17 ALL OUR CARE IS TO BE PLACED IN GOD

Lord, do with me whatever pleases You. For whatever You shall do with me can only be good.

If You wish me to be in darkness, I shall bless You. And if You wish me to be in light, again I shall bless You. If You stoop down to comfort me, I shall bless You, and if You wish me to be afflicted, I shall bless You forever.

18 TEMPORAL SUFFERINGS SHOULD BE BORNE PATIENTLY, AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, I came down from heaven for your salvation and took upon Myself your miseries, not out of necessity but out of love, that you might learn to be patient and bear the sufferings of this life without repining. From the moment of My birth to My death on the cross, suffering did not leave Me. I suffered great want of temporal goods. Often I heard many complaints against Me. Disgrace and reviling I bore with patience. For My blessings I received ingratitude, for My miracles blasphemies, and for My teaching scorn.

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19 TRUE PATIENCE IN SUFFERING
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

The better you dispose yourself to suffer, the more wisely you act and the greater is the reward promised you.

For the truly patient man does not consider from whom the suffering comes, whether from a superior, an equal, or an inferior, whether from a good and holy person or from a perverse and unworthy one; but no matter how great an adversity befalls him, no matter how often it comes or from whom it comes, he accepts it gratefully from the hand of God, and counts it a great gain.

20 CONFESSING OUR WEAKNESS IN THE MISERIES OF LIFE

I will bring witness against myself to my injustice, and to You, O Lord, I will confess my weakness.

That I am so prone to fall and so weak in resisting my passions oppresses me frequently and confounds me in Your sight.

Strengthen me with heavenly courage lest the outer man, the miserable flesh, against which I shall be obliged to fight so long as I draw a breath in this wretched life and which is not yet subjected to the spirit, prevail and dominate me.

21 ABOVE ALL GOODS AND ALL GIFTS WE MUST REST IN GOD

In You is every perfection that has been or ever will be.

For my heart cannot rest or be fully content until, rising above all gifts and every created thing, it rests in You.

When shall I recollect myself entirely in You, so that because of Your love I may feel, not myself, but You alone above all sense and measure, in a manner known to none?

I will not be silent, I will not cease praying until Your grace returns to me and You speak inwardly to me, saying: “Behold, I am here. Lo, I have come to you because you have called Me. Your tears and the desire of your soul, your humility and contrition of heart have inclined Me and brought Me to you.”

May You be praised and glorified, therefore, O Wisdom of the Father. Let my lips and my soul and all created things unite to praise and bless You.

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22 REMEMBER THE INNUMERABLE GIFTS OF GOD

Let me remember Your blessings — all of them and each single one of them — with great reverence and care so that henceforth I may return worthy thanks for them.

All that we have of soul and body, whatever we possess interiorly or exteriorly, by nature or by grace, are Your gifts and they proclaim Your goodness and mercy from which we have received all good things.

He should prefer Your will and the love of Your honor to all else, and it should comfort him more than all the benefits which have been, or will be, given him.

23 FOUR THINGS WHICH BRING GREAT PEACE
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, I will teach you now the way of peace and true liberty.

Seek, child, to do the will of others rather than your own.

Always choose to have less rather than more.

Look always for the last place and seek to be beneath all others.

Always wish and pray that the will of God be fully carried out in you.

Behold, such will enter into the realm of peace and rest.

THE DISCIPLE

Enlighten me, good Jesus, with the brightness of internal light, and take away all darkness from the habitation of my heart. Restrain my wandering thoughts and suppress the temptations which attack me so violently.

Join me to Yourself in an inseparable bond of love; because You alone can satisfy him who loves You, and without You all things are worthless.

24 AVOIDING CURIOUS INQUIRY ABOUT THE LIVES OF OTHERS
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

Commit all things to Me, therefore, and keep yourself in good peace. Let him who is disturbed be as restless as he will. Whatever he has said or done will fall upon himself, for he cannot deceive Me.

I would willingly speak My word and reveal My secrets to you, if you would watch diligently for My coming and open your heart to Me. Be prudent, then. Watch in prayer, and in all things humble yourself.

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25 THE BASIS OF FIRM PEACE OF HEART AND TRUE PROGRESS
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, I have said: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you.” (John 14:27) All men desire peace but all do not care for the things that go to make true peace. My peace is with the humble and meek of heart: your peace will be in much patience. If you hear Me and follow My voice, you will be able to enjoy much peace.

Do not be rash in judging the deeds and words of others, and do not entangle yourself in affairs that are not your own. Thus, it will come about that you will be disturbed little and seldom.

Do not think that all is perfect if everything happens just as you wish. And do not imagine yourself great or consider yourself especially beloved if you are filled with great devotion and sweetness. For the true lover of virtue is not known by these things, nor do the progress and perfection of a man consist in them.

26 THE EXCELLENCE OF A FREE MIND, GAINED THROUGH PRAYER
RATHER THAN BY STUDY

Give me courage to resist, patience to endure, and constancy to persevere. Give me the soothing unction of Your spirit rather than all the consolations of the world, and in place of carnal love, infuse into me the love of Your name.

27 SELF-LOVE IS THE GREATEST HINDRANCE TO THE HIGHEST GOOD
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

If your love is pure, simple, and well ordered, you will not be a slave to anything. Do not covet what you may not have. Do not possess anything that can hinder you or rob you of freedom.

Be resigned to My will and you will suffer no loss.

A PRAYER FOR CLEANSING THE HEART AND OBTAINING HEAVENLY WISDOM

Strengthen me by the grace of Your holy spirit, O God. Give me the power to be strengthened inwardly and to empty my heart of all vain care and anxiety, so that I may not be drawn away by many desires, whether for precious things or mean ones. Let me look upon everything as passing, and upon myself as soon to pass away with them, because there is nothing lasting under the sun, where all is vanity and affliction of spirit.

Give me, Lord, heavenly wisdom to learn above all else to seek and find You, to enjoy and love You more than anything, and to consider other things as they are, as Your wisdom has ordered them.

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28 STRENGTH AGAINST SLANDER
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, do not take it to heart if some people think badly of you and say unpleasant things about you. You ought to think worse things of yourself and to believe that no one is weaker than yourself. Moreover, if you walk in the spirit you will pay little heed to fleeting words. It is no small prudence to remain silent in evil times, to turn inwardly to Me, and not to be disturbed by human opinions. Do not let your peace depend on the words of men.

Where are true peace and glory? Are they not in Me? He who neither cares to please men nor fears to displease them will enjoy great peace, for all unrest and distraction of the senses arise out of disorderly love and vain fear.

29 HOW WE MUST CALL UPON AND BLESS THE LORD WHEN TROUBLE PRESSES

Blessed be Your name forever, O Lord, Who have willed that this temptation and trouble come upon me. I cannot escape it, yet I must fly to You that You may help me and turn it to my good.

Yet Your almighty hand can take this temptation from me, or lighten its attack so that I do not altogether sink beneath it, as You, my God, my Mercy, have very often done for me before.

30 THE QUEST OF DIVINE HELP AND CONFIDENCE IN REGAINING GRACE
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, I am the Lord Who gives strength in the day of trouble. Come to Me when all is not well with you.

But now, after the tempest, take courage, grow strong once more in the light of My mercies; for I am near, says the Lord, to restore all things not only to the full but with abundance and above measure.

Where is your faith? Stand firm and persevere. Be a man of endurance and courage, and consolation will come to you in due time. Wait for Me; wait — and I will come to heal you.

Let not your heart be troubled, therefore, nor let it be afraid. Believe in Me and trust in My mercy. When you think you are far from Me, then often I am very near you. When you judge that almost all is lost, then very often you are in the way of gaining great merit.

For this is the way to the kingdom of heaven, and without doubt it is better for you and the rest of My servants to be tried in adversities than to have all things as you wish.

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31 TO FIND THE CREATOR, FORSAKE ALL CREATURES

Unless a man be elevated in spirit, free from all creatures, and completely united to God, all his knowledge and possessions are of little moment. He who considers anything great except the one, immense, eternal good will long be little and lie groveling on the earth. Whatever is not God is nothing and must be accounted as nothing.

Nature looks to his outward appearance; grace turns to his inward being. The one often errs, the other trusts in God and is not deceived.

32 SELF-DENIAL AND THE RENUNCIATION OF EVIL APPETITES
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, you can never be perfectly free unless you completely renounce self, for all who seek their own interest and who love themselves are bound in fetters.

Hold to this short and perfect advice, therefore: *give up your desires and you will find rest.*

True heavenly wisdom is not to think highly of self and not to seek glory on earth. Yet this heavenly wisdom is a pearl of great price, which is hidden from many.

33 RESTLESSNESS OF SOUL— DIRECTING OUR FINAL INTENTION TOWARD GOD

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, do not trust in your present feeling, for it will soon give way to another.

The eye of your intention, therefore, must be cleansed so that it is single and right. It must be directed toward Me, despite all the objects which may interfere.

34 GOD IS SWEET ABOVE ALL THINGS AND IN ALL THINGS TO THOSE WHO LOVE HIM

My God and my all! These words are enough for him who understands, and for him who loves it is a joy to repeat them often. For when You are present, all things are delightful; when You are absent, all things become loathsome. It is You Who give a heart tranquillity, great peace and festive joy. It is You Who make us think well of all things, and praise You in all things. Without You nothing can give pleasure for very long, for if it is to be pleasing and tasteful, Your grace and the seasoning of Your wisdom must be in it.

O Light eternal, surpassing all created brightness, flash forth the lightning from above and enlighten the inmost recesses of my heart. Cleanse, cheer, enlighten, and vivify my spirit with all its powers, that it may cleave to You in ecstasies of joy.

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35 THERE IS NO SECURITY FROM TEMPTATION IN THIS LIFE
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, in this life you are never safe, and as long as you live the weapons of the spirit will ever be necessary to you.

For love of God you should undergo all things cheerfully, all labors and sorrows, temptations and trials, anxieties, weaknesses, necessities, injuries, slanders, rebukes, humiliations, confusions, corrections, and contempt. For these are helps to virtue. These are the trials of Christ’s recruit. These form the heavenly crown. For a little brief labor I will give an everlasting crown, and for passing confusion, glory that is eternal.

Wait for the Lord, act bravely, and have courage. Do not lose trust. Do not turn back but devote your body and soul constantly to God’s glory. I will reward you most plentifully. I will be with you in every tribulation.

36 THE VAIN JUDGMENTS OF MEN
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, trust firmly in the Lord, and do not fear the judgment of men when conscience tells you that you are upright and innocent.

Keep God before your eyes, therefore, and do not quarrel with peevish words.

37 PURE AND ENTIRE RESIGNATION OF SELF TO OBTAIN FREEDOM OF HEART
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

Some there are who resign themselves, but with certain reservation; they do not trust fully in God and therefore they try to provide for themselves.

Forsake yourself, renounce yourself and you shall enjoy great inward peace. Give all for all. Ask nothing, demand nothing in return. Trust purely and without hesitation in Me, and you shall possess Me. You will be free of heart and darkness will not overwhelm you.

38 THE RIGHT ORDERING OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS; RECOURSE TO GOD IN DANGERS
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, you must strive diligently to be inwardly free, to have mastery over yourself everywhere, in every external act and occupation, that all things be subject to you and not you to them, that you be the master and director of your actions, not a slave or a mere hired servant.

So you also should take refuge in the secret chamber of your heart, begging earnestly for divine aid.

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39 A MAN SHOULD NOT BE UNDULY SOLICITOUS ABOUT HIS AFFAIRS
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, it often happens that a man seeks ardently after something he desires and then when he has attained it he begins to think that it is not at all desirable; for affections do not remain fixed on the same thing, but rather flit from one to another. It is no very small matter, therefore, for a man to forsake himself even in things that are very small.

40 MAN HAS NO GOOD IN HIMSELF AND CAN GLORY IN NOTHING

Let Your name, not mine, be praised. Let Your work, not mine, be magnified. Let Your holy name be blessed, but let no human praise be given to me. You are my glory. You are the joy of my heart. In You I will glory and rejoice all the day, and for myself I will glory in nothing but my infirmities.

41 CONTEMPT FOR ALL EARTHLY HONOR
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, do not take it to heart if you see others honoured and advanced, while you yourself are despised and humbled. Lift up your heart to Me in heaven and the contempt of men on earth will not grieve you.

42 PEACE IS NOT TO BE PLACED IN MEN
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

You ought, therefore, to be so dead to such human affections as to wish as far as lies within you to be without the fellowship of men. Man draws nearer to God in proportion as he withdraws farther from all earthly comfort. And he ascends higher to God as he descends lower into himself and grows more vile in his own eyes. He who attributes any good to himself hinders God’s grace from coming into his heart, for the grace of the Holy Spirit seeks always the humble heart.

When you look to creatures, the sight of the Creator is taken from you. Learn, therefore, to conquer yourself in all things for the sake of your Maker. Then will you be able to attain to divine knowledge. But anything, no matter how small, that is loved and regarded inordinately keeps you back from the highest good and corrupts the soul.

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43 BEWARE VAIN AND WORLDLY KNOWLEDGE
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, do not let the fine-sounding and subtle words of men deceive you. For the kingdom of heaven consists not in talk but in virtue. Attend, rather, to My words which enkindle the heart and enlighten the mind, which excite contrition and abound in manifold consolations. Never read them for the purpose of appearing more learned or more wise. Apply yourself to mortifying your vices, for this will benefit you more than your understanding of many difficult questions.

I am He Who in one moment so enlightens the humble mind that it comprehends more of eternal truth than could be learned by ten years in the schools. I teach without noise of words or clash of opinions, without ambition for honour or confusion of argument.

The voice of books is but a single voice, yet it does not teach all men alike, because I within them am the Teacher and the Truth, the Examiner of hearts, the Understander of thoughts, the Promoter of acts, distributing to each as I see fit.

44 DO NOT BE CONCERNED ABOUT OUTWARD THINGS
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

There are many things, too, which it is well to pass by with a deaf ear, thinking, instead, of what is more to your peace. It is more profitable to turn away from things which displease you and to leave to every man his own opinion than to take part in quarrelsome talk. If you stand well with God and look to His judgment, you will more easily bear being worsted.

45 ALL MEN ARE NOT TO BE BELIEVED, FOR IT IS EASY TO ERR IN SPEECH
But You, Lord, and You alone, are entirely faithful in all things; other than You, there is none so faithful.

Vain, therefore, is hope in men, but the salvation of the just is in You, O God.

46 TRUST IN GOD AGAINST SLANDER
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, stand firm and trust in Me. For what are words but words?

For when you shrink from being abased and confounded for your failings, it is plain indeed that you are not truly humble or truly dead to the world, and that the world is not crucified in you.

He who trusts in Me, on the other hand, and who has no desire to stand by his own judgment, will be free from the fear of men. For I am the judge and discernor of all secrets.

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**47 EVERY TRIAL MUST BE BORNE FOR THE SAKE OF ETERNAL LIFE
THE VOICE OF CHRIST**

The hour will come when all labor and trouble shall be no more. All that passes away with time is trivial.

Peace will come on a day which is known to the Lord, and then there shall be no day or night as at present but perpetual light, infinite brightness, lasting peace, and safe repose.

For then death will be banished, and there will be health unailing.

There will be no anxiety then, but blessed joy and sweet, noble companionship. If you could see the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven, and the great glory wherein they now rejoice — they who were once considered contemptible in this world and, as it were, unworthy of life itself — you would certainly humble yourself at once to the very earth, and seek to be subject to all rather than to command even one. Nor would you desire the pleasant days of this life, but rather be glad to suffer for God, considering it your greatest gain to be counted as nothing among men.

Lift up your countenance to heaven, then. Behold Me, and with Me all My saints. They had great trials in this life, but now they rejoice. They are consoled. Now they are safe and at rest. And they shall abide with Me for all eternity in the kingdom of My Father.

48 THE DAY OF ETERNITY AND THE DISTRESSES OF THIS LIFE

If I love the spirit, I delight in thinking of spiritual matters. For whatever I love, I am willing to speak and hear about.

Blessed is the man who for Your sake, O Lord, dismisses all creatures, does violence to nature, crucifies the desires of the flesh in fervour of spirit, so that with serene conscience he can offer You a pure prayer and, having excluded all earthly things inwardly and outwardly, becomes worthy to enter into the heavenly choirs.

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**49 THE DESIRE OF ETERNAL LIFE; THE GREAT REWARDS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO STRUGGLE
THE VOICE OF CHRIST**

My child, when you feel the desire for everlasting happiness poured out upon you from above, and when you long to depart out of the tabernacle of the body that you may contemplate My glory without threat of change, open wide your heart and receive this holy inspiration with all eagerness.

And the purpose of it is that you may advance in virtue and in greater humility, that you may prepare yourself for future trials, that you may strive to cling to Me with all the affection of your heart, and may serve Me with a fervent will.

Ask, therefore, not for what is pleasing and convenient to yourself, but for what is acceptable to Me and is for My honor, because if you judge rightly, you ought to prefer and follow My will, not your own desire or whatever things you wish.

You must put on the new man. You must be changed into another man.

There is scarcely anything in which you so need to die to self as in seeing and suffering things that are against your will, especially when things that are commanded seem inconvenient or useless.

For instead of the little will that you now readily give up, you shall always have your will in heaven.

Bow humbly, therefore, under the will of all, and do not heed who said this or commanded that.

But as for you, rejoice neither in one or the other, but only in contempt of yourself and in My pleasure and honour. Let this be your wish: That whether in life or in death God may be glorified in you.

50 HOW A DESOLATE PERSON OUGHT TO COMMIT HIMSELF INTO THE HANDS OF GOD

Nothing happens in the world without Your design and providence, and without cause.

In such condition, it is well for you to apply yourself to humble, outward works and to refresh yourself in good deeds, to await with unshaken confidence My heavenly visitation, patiently to bear your exile and dryness of mind until you are again visited by Me and freed of all anxieties.

Grant me, O Lord, the grace to know what should be known, to praise what is most pleasing to You, to esteem that which appears most precious to You, and to abhor what is unclean in Your sight.

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**51 WHEN WE CANNOT ATTAIN TO THE HIGHEST, WE MUST PRACTICE
THE HUMBLE WORKS
THE VOICE OF CHRIST**

My child, you cannot always continue in the more fervent desire of virtue, or remain in the higher stage of contemplation, but because of humanity’s sin you must sometimes descend to lower things and bear the burden of this corruptible life, albeit unwillingly and wearily.

In such condition, it is well for you to apply yourself to humble, outward works and to refresh yourself in good deeds, to await with unshaken confidence My heavenly visitation, patiently to bear your exile and dryness of mind until you are again visited by Me and freed of all anxieties.

**52 A MAN OUGHT NOT TO CONSIDER HIMSELF WORTHY OF
CONSOLATION, BUT RATHER DESERVING OF CHASTISEMENT**

What have I deserved for my sins except hell and everlasting fire?

In truth, I confess that I am deserving of all scorn and contempt

In true sorrow and humility of heart hope of forgiveness is born, the troubled conscience is reconciled, grace is found, man is preserved from the wrath to come, and God and the penitent meet with a holy kiss.

To You, O Lord, humble sorrow for sins is an acceptable sacrifice, a sacrifice far sweeter than the perfume of incense. This is also the pleasing ointment which You would have poured upon Your sacred feet, for a contrite and humble heart You have never despised.

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**53 GOD’S GRACE IS NOT GIVEN TO THE EARTHLY MINDED
THE VOICE OF CHRIST**

My child, my grace is precious. It does not allow itself to be mixed with external things or with earthly consolations. Cast away all obstacles to grace, therefore, if you wish to receive its infusion.

Seek to retire within yourself. Love to dwell alone with yourself. Seek no man’s conversation, but rather pour forth devout prayer to God that you may keep your mind contrite and your heart pure.

Consider the whole world as nothing. Prefer attendance upon God to all outward occupation, for you cannot attend upon Me and at the same time take delight in external things.

The perfect victory is to triumph over self. For he who holds himself in such subjection that sensuality obeys reason and reason obeys Me in all matters, is truly his own conqueror and master of the world.

But because few labor to die entirely to self, or tend completely away from self, therefore they remain entangled in self, and cannot be lifted in spirit above themselves. But he who desires to walk freely with Me must mortify all his low and inordinate affections, and must not cling with selfish love or desire to any creature.

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54 THE DIFFERENT MOTIONS OF NATURE AND GRACE
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, pay careful attention to the movements of nature and of grace, for they move in very contrary and subtle ways, and can scarcely be distinguished by anyone except a man who is spiritual and inwardly enlightened. All men, indeed, desire what is good, and strive for what is good in their words and deeds. For this reason the appearance of good deceives many.

Nature is crafty and attracts many, ensnaring and deceiving them while ever seeking itself. But grace walks in simplicity, turns away from all appearance of evil, offers no deceits, and does all purely for God in whom she rests as her last end.

Grace, on the contrary, strives for mortification of self. She resists sensuality, seeks to be in subjection, longs to be conquered, has no wish to use her own liberty, loves to be held under discipline, and does not desire to rule over anyone, but wishes rather to live, to stand, and to be always under God for Whose sake she is willing to bow humbly to every human creature. Grace teaches, therefore, restraint of the senses, avoidance of vain self-satisfaction and show, the humble hiding of deeds worthy of praise and admiration, and the seeking in every thing and in every knowledge the fruit of usefulness, the praise and honor of God. She will not have herself or hers exalted, but desires that God Who bestows all simply out of love should be blessed in His gifts.

This grace is a supernatural light, a certain special gift of God, the proper mark of the elect and the pledge of everlasting salvation. It raises man up from earthly things to love the things of heaven. It makes a spiritual man of a carnal one. The more, then, nature is held in check and conquered, the more grace is given. Every day the interior man is reformed by new visitations according to the image of God.

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55 THE CORRUPTION OF NATURE AND THE EFFICACY OF DIVINE GRACE

The little strength remaining in it is like a spark hidden in ashes. That strength is natural reason which, surrounded by thick darkness, still has the power of judging good and evil, of seeing the difference between true and false, though it is not able to fulfill all that it approves and does not enjoy the full light of truth or soundness of affection. Let me find grace in Your sight, I beg, Lord, for Your grace is enough for me, even though I obtain none of the things which nature desires. If I am tempted and afflicted with many tribulations, I will fear no evils while Your grace is with me. This is my strength. This will give me counsel and help. This is more powerful than all my enemies and wiser than all the wise. This is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the consoler in anguish, the banisher of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nourisher of devotion, the producer of tears. What am I without grace, but dead wood, a useless branch, fit only to be cast away?

Let Your grace, therefore, go before me and follow me, O Lord, and make me always intent upon good works, through Jesus Christ, Your Son.

**56 WE OUGHT TO DENY OURSELVES AND IMITATE CHRIST THROUGH BEARING THE CROSS
THE VOICE OF CHRIST**

My child, the more you depart from yourself, the more you will be able to enter into Me. As the giving up of exterior things brings interior peace, so the forsaking of self unites you to God. I will have you learn perfect surrender to My will, without contradiction or complaint.

Follow Me. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Without the Way, there is no going. Without the Truth, there is no knowing. Without the Life, there is no living. I am the Way which you must follow, the Truth which you must believe, the Life for which you must hope. I am the inviolable Way, the infallible Truth, the unending Life. I am the Way that is straight, the supreme Truth, the Life that is true, the blessed, the uncreated Life. If you abide in My Way you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free, and you shall attain life everlasting.

If you wish to enter into life, keep My commandments. If you will know the truth, believe in Me. If you will be perfect, sell all. If you will be My disciple, deny yourself. If you will possess the blessed life, despise this present life. If you will be exalted in heaven, humble yourself on earth. If you wish to reign with Me, carry the Cross with Me. For only the servants of the Cross find the life of blessedness and of true light.

My child, now that you know these things and have read them all, happy will you be if you do them. He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me. And I will love him and will show Myself to him, and will bring it about that he will sit down with Me in My Father’s Kingdom.

Thomas à Kempis
“The Imitation of Christ”
Book Three: Internal Consolation

57 A MAN SHOULD NOT BE TOO DOWNCAST WHEN HE FALLS INTO DEFECTS

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to Me than much consolation and devotion when things are going well.

Remain tranquil and prepare to bear still greater trials. All is not lost even though you be troubled oftener or tempted more grievously. You are a man, not God. You are flesh, not an angel. How can you possibly expect to remain always in the same state of virtue when the angels in heaven and the first man in paradise failed to do so? I am He Who rescues the afflicted and brings to My divinity those who know their own weakness.

If I may but attain to the haven of salvation, what does it matter what or how much I suffer? Grant me a good end. Grant me a happy passage out of this world. Remember me, my God, and lead me by the right way into Your kingdom.

Thomas à Kempis
“The Imitation of Christ”
Book Three: Internal Consolation

58 HIGH MATTERS AND THE HIDDEN JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE NOT TO BE SCRUTINIZED
THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My judgments are to be feared, not discussed, because they are incomprehensible to the understanding of men.

I am to be blessed above all things, and honoured in each of those whom I have exalted and predestined so gloriously without any previous merits of their own.

He who despises one of the least of mine, therefore, does no honour to the greatest, for both the small and the great I made. And he who disparages one of the saints disparages Me also and all others in the kingdom of heaven. They are all one through the bond of charity. They have the same thought and the same will, and they mutually love one another; but, what is a much greater thing, they love Me more than themselves or their own merits. Rapt above themselves, and drawn beyond love of self, they are entirely absorbed in love of Me, in Whom they rest. There is nothing that can draw them away or depress them, for they who are filled with eternal truth burn with the fire of unquenchable love.

Be careful, then, My child, of treating matters beyond your knowledge out of curiosity. Let it rather be your business and aim to be found, even though the least, in the kingdom of God. Therefore, whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.

All the saints are so much higher in glory as they are more humble in themselves; nearer to Me, and more beloved by Me. Therefore, you find it written that they cast their crowns before God, and fell down upon their faces before the Lamb, and adored Him Who lives forever.

Woe to those, therefore, who disdain to humble themselves willingly with the little children, for the low gate of the heavenly kingdom will not permit them to enter. Woe also to the rich who have their consolations here, for when the poor enter into God’s kingdom, they will stand outside lamenting. Rejoice, you humble, and exult, you poor, for the kingdom of God is yours, if only you walk in the truth.

Thomas à Kempis
“The Imitation of Christ”
Book Three: Internal Consolation

59 ALL HOPE AND TRUST ARE TO BE FIXED IN GOD ALONE

You are my desire and therefore I must cry after You and sigh and pray. In none can I fully trust to help me in my necessities, but in You alone, my God. You are my hope. You are my confidence. You are my consoler, most faithful in every need.

In You, therefore, O Lord God, I place all my hope and my refuge. On You I cast all my troubles and anguish, because whatever I have outside of You I find to be weak and unstable.

You, indeed, are the fountain of all good, the height of life, the depth of all that can be spoken. To trust in You above all things is the strongest comfort of Your servants.

Protect and preserve the soul of Your poor servant among the many dangers of this corruptible life, and direct him by Your accompanying grace, through the ways of peace, to the land of everlasting light.

Thomas à Kempis

“The Imitation of Christ”

Book Four: An Invitation To Holy Communion

1 THE GREAT REVERENCE WITH WHICH WE SHOULD RECEIVE CHRIST THE VOICE OF CHRIST

Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you. The bread which I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world. Take you and eat: this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you. Do this for the commemoration of Me. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

THE DISCIPLE

Thanks be to You, Jesus, everlasting Good Shepherd, Who have seen fit to feed us poor exiled people with Your precious Body and Blood, and to invite us with words from Your own lips to partake of these sacred Mysteries.

2 GOD’S GREAT GOODNESS AND LOVE IS SHOWN TO MAN IN THIS SACRAMENT

You, the Lord of the universe, Who have need of nothing, have willed to dwell in us by means of Your Sacrament. Keep my heart and body clean, so that with a joyous and spotless conscience I may be able often to celebrate Your Mysteries and to receive for my eternal salvation what You have ordained and instituted for Your special honor and as an everlasting memorial.

3 IT IS PROFITABLE TO RECEIVE COMMUNION OFTEN

It is indeed necessary for me, who fall and sin so often, who so quickly become lax and weak, to renew, cleanse, and inflame myself through frequent prayer, confession, and the holy reception of Your Body, lest perhaps by abstaining too long, I fall away from my holy purpose.

4 MANY BLESSINGS ARE GIVEN THOSE WHO RECEIVE COMMUNION WORTHILY

O Lord, my God, favour Your servant with the blessings of Your sweetness that I may merit to approach Your magnificent Sacrament worthily and devoutly.

5 THE DIGNITY OF THE SACRAMENT AND OF THE PRIESTHOOD

For priests alone, rightly ordained in the Church, have power to celebrate Mass and consecrate the Body of Christ.

6 AN INQUIRY ON THE PROPER THING TO DO BEFORE COMMUNION

Teach me the right way.

Thomas à Kempis

“The Imitation of Christ”

Book Four: An Invitation To Holy Communion

7 THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE AND THE RESOLUTION TO AMEND

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

Above all, God’s priest should approach the celebration and reception of this Sacrament with the deepest humility of heart and suppliant reverence, with complete faith and the pious intention of giving honour to God.

Carefully examine your conscience, then. Cleanse and purify it to the best of your power by true contrition and humble confession, that you may have no burden, know of no remorse, and thus be free to come near. Let the memory of all your sins grieve you, and especially lament and bewail your daily transgressions. Then if time permits, confess to God in the secret depths of your heart all the miseries your passions have caused.

8 THE OFFERING OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS; OUR OFFERING

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

As I offered Myself willingly to God the Father for your sins with hands outstretched and body naked on the cross, so that nothing remained in Me that had not become a complete sacrifice to appease the divine wrath, so ought you to be willing to offer yourself to Me day by day in the Mass as a pure and holy oblation, together with all your faculties and affections, with as much inward devotion as you can.

But if you rely upon self, and do not offer your free will to Mine, your offering will be incomplete and the union between us imperfect. If, therefore, you wish to be My disciple, offer yourself to Me with all your heart.

9 WE SHOULD OFFER OURSELVES AND ALL THAT WE HAVE TO GOD, PRAYING FOR ALL

All things in heaven and on earth, O Lord, are Yours. I long to give myself to You as a voluntary offering to remain forever Yours. With a sincere heart I offer myself this day to You, O Lord, to Your eternal service, to Your homage, and as a sacrifice of everlasting praise. Receive me with this holy offering of Your precious Body which also I make to You this day, in the presence of angels invisibly attending, for my salvation and that of all Your people.

10 DO NOT LIGHTLY FOREGO HOLY COMMUNION

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

You must often return to the source of grace and divine mercy, to the fountain of goodness and perfect purity, if you wish to be free from passion and vice, if you desire to be made stronger and more watchful against all the temptations and deceits of the devil.

Do not remain away from Holy Communion because of a small trouble or vexation but go at once to confession and willingly forgive all others their offenses. If you have offended anyone, humbly seek pardon and God will readily forgive you. Yes, it is very hurtful to defer Holy Communion long, for it usually brings on a lazy spiritual sleep.

Thomas à Kempis

“The Imitation of Christ”

Book Four: An Invitation To Holy Communion

11 THE BODY OF CHRIST AND SACRED SCRIPTURE ARE MOST NECESSARY TO A FAITHFUL SOUL

Certainly in Your sight, before Your holy angels, my whole heart ought to be inflamed and weep for joy. For, hidden though You are beneath another form, I have You truly present in the Sacrament.

I shall have, besides, for comfort and for the guidance of my life, the holy Books, and above all these, Your most holy Body for my special haven and refuge.

You have given me in my weakness Your sacred Flesh to refresh my soul and body, and You have set Your word as the guiding light for my feet. Without them I could not live aright, for the word of God is the light of my soul and Your Sacrament is the Bread of Life.

12 THE COMMUNICANT SHOULD PREPARE HIMSELF FOR CHRIST WITH GREAT CARE THE VOICE OF CHRIST

I AM the Lover of purity, the Giver of all holiness. I seek a pure heart and there is the place of My rest. If you wish that I come to you and remain with you, purge out the old leaven and make clean the dwelling of your heart.

Receive the Body of the Lord, your beloved God Who deigns to come to you, not out of habit or necessity, but with fear, with reverence, and with love.

You come to be sanctified and united with Me, to receive new grace and to be aroused anew to amend. Do not neglect this grace, but prepare your heart with all care, and bring into it your Beloved.

I am He to Whom you should give yourself entirely, that from now on you may live, not in yourself, but in Me, with all cares cast away.

13 WITH ALL HER HEART THE DEVOUT SOUL SHOULD DESIRE UNION WITH CHRIST IN THE SACRAMENT

I pray for this, I desire this, that I may be completely united to You and may withdraw my heart from all created things, learning to relish the celestial and the eternal through Holy Communion and the frequent celebration of Mass.

There is nothing I can give more pleasing than to offer my heart completely to my God, uniting it closely with His. Then shall all my inner self be glad when my soul is perfectly united with God.

Thomas à Kempis

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14 THE ARDENT LONGING OF DEVOUT MEN FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST

Mmny devout persons who, in their great desire for Communion and intense heart love, could not restrain their tears but longed from the depths of their souls and bodies to embrace You, the Fountain of Life.

15 THE GRACE OF DEVOTION IS ACQUIRED THROUGH HUMILITY AND SELF-DENIAL

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

As soon as you have given yourself to God with all your heart and seek neither this nor that for your own pleasure and purpose, but place yourself completely in His charge, you shall find yourself at peace, united with Him, because nothing will be so sweet, nothing will please you so much as the good pleasure of His will.

16 WE SHOULD SHOW OUR NEEDS TO CHRIST AND ASK HIS GRACE

Most kind, most loving Lord, Whom I now desire to receive with devotion, You know the weakness and the necessity which I suffer, in what great evils and vices I am involved, how often I am depressed, tempted, defiled, and troubled.

To You I come for help, to You I pray for comfort and relief. I speak to Him Who knows all things, to Whom my whole inner life is manifest, and Who alone can perfectly comfort and help me.

17 THE BURNING LOVE AND STRONG DESIRE TO RECEIVE CHRIST

With greatest devotion and ardent love, with all affection and fervor of heart I wish to receive You, O Lord. Accept, O Lord my God, my promises and desires of giving You infinite praise and boundless benediction, which in the vastness of Your ineffable greatness are justly due You. This I render and desire to render every day and every moment of time, and in my loving prayers I invite and entreat all celestial spirits and all the faithful to join me in giving You praise and thanks.

For as often as he devoutly calls to mind the mystery and passion of the Incarnate Christ, and is inflamed with love for Him, he communicates mystically and is invisibly refreshed.

18 MAN SHOULD NOT SCRUTINIZE THIS SACRAMENT IN CURIOSITY, BUT HUMBLY IMITATE CHRIST AND SUBMIT REASON TO HOLY FAITH

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

Submit yourself to God and humble reason to faith, and the light of understanding will be given you so far as it is good and necessary for you. Go forward, then, with sincere and unflinching faith, and with humble reverence approach this Sacrament. Whatever you cannot understand commit to the security of the all-powerful God, Who does not deceive you. Human reason is weak and can be deceived. True faith, however, cannot be deceived. All reason and natural science ought to come after faith, not go before it, nor oppose it. For in this most holy and supremely excellent Sacrament, faith and love take precedence and work in a hidden manner.