

## THE SPIRITUALITY OF MOTHER THERESE COUDERC<sup>1</sup>

I HAVE in my hands the letters and intimate notes of Mother Thérèse and the testimonies of the nuns who knew her most intimately, and it seems to me that it will be useful to give in a sort of *précis* the spiritual teachings of the venerable Mother. It will be easy to correlate them if one bears in mind that her entire life was orientated towards the mystery of the Cenacle.

It was on the Day of Pentecost itself that Marie Victoire Couderc made her First Communion at the age of ten years. From that time began to be verified in her regard the Divine Promise: 'If you love me, keep my Commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever. The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth him; but you shall know Him; because He shall abide with you, and shall be in you' (St. John xiv, 15, 16, 17).

Her whole life, like that of her Institute, will be to reproduce the rôle of Mary in the Cenacle. Now the Blessed Virgin in the Cenacle gives herself up (*se livre*) entirely to God, lives with God without ever losing consciousness of His Presence, and enjoys that permanent habitation of the Three Adorable Persons within her which is a foretaste of Eternity. But the contemplation of the Divinity does not make her lose the remembrance of the mysteries of the life and passion of her Son, and the Mother who was martyr with Jesus upon Calvary longs to fill up in her own person that which is wanting to the passion of the Redeemer.

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the French of Père Edouard Hugon, O.P., 'La Vie Spirituelle, Ascétique et Mystique' (October, 1927).

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Constantly united with Him in thought and affection, she will also have the ineffable bond which is the Eucharist.

This rôle of Mary in the Cenacle, while hidden and spiritual, is none the less a benefit to the world, since she prepares the Apostles for their mission and exercises the most fruitful apostolate in the newly-born Church.

We shall discover the same fundamental traits in the spirituality of Mother Thérèse Couderc.

1. The entire oblation of oneself to God.  
(se livrer a Dieu).

The plenitude of gifts which Mary received in the Cenacle was, as it were, the consummation of her holiness, and this outpouring put the finishing touch to the utter surrender of her soul to the direction of the Divine Paraclete. To 'give oneself over' to the Holy Ghost—that is what Mother Couderc recommends above all as a means of sanctification.

This is what she writes in her intimate notes. 'Several times already Our Lord has made me understand how advantageous it is for the progress of a soul that desires to advance towards perfection to "give oneself over" (se livrer) without reserve to the guidance of the Holy Ghost. But this morning it has pleased the Divine Goodness to give me a quite special light on this.'

'I was preparing to begin my meditation when I heard the sound of the different bells which were calling the faithful to be present at the divine mysteries. At this moment I desired to unite myself with all the Masses that were being said, and directed my intention to that end. Then I had a general view of the whole Catholic universe and a multitude of altars on which at the same moment the Divine Victim was be-

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ing immolated; the blood of the spotless Lamb was flowing in abundance on each altar, which appeared to me to be surrounded by a very light smoke which rose up towards Heaven. My soul was swamped and penetrated with a feeling of love and gratitude at the sight of this plenteous satisfaction which Our Lord was offering for us, but I was also in very great astonishment that the whole world was not sanctified thereby. I asked how it was that since the sacrifice of the Cross once offered is sufficient to redeem all souls, yet, even though it is so frequently renewed, so many remain still unsanctified? This is the reply I seemed to hear: "The sacrifice is doubtless sufficient in itself, and the blood of Jesus Christ more than sufficient for the sanctification of a million worlds, but souls are lacking in correspondence therewith and in generosity."

'Moreover, the great means of entering into the way of perfection and holiness is to "give oneself over" to the Good God. But what does the phrase "to give oneself over" mean?' I understand all the significance of those words, but I cannot explain them. I only know that the meaning is very wide, that it comprehends both the present and the future. "To give oneself over" is more than to devote oneself, is more than to give oneself, it is even more than to abandon oneself to God. In fact, "to give oneself over" is to die to everything and to oneself; no longer to be occupied with oneself except in the continual orientation

<sup>1</sup> *Translator's note*: The French word used by Mère Thérèse is 'se livrer,' a verb of which there appears to be no exact equivalent in English. Father Martindale, S.J., speaking of this passage in Mère Thérèse writings in his book entitled *Marie Thérèse Couderc* (page 71) says 'se livrer'—the giving of oneself over, the utter giving 'of oneself to God: it is hard to find a brief English phrase which shall quite exhaust the meaning of the French.'

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of oneself towards God. "To give oneself over" is, moreover, no longer to seek oneself in anything either spiritual or for the body, that is to say, to desire no satisfaction for self, but solely the divine good pleasure. One must add that "to give oneself over" is also that spirit of detachment which clings to nothing, neither persons nor things, neither times nor places; it is to give allegiance to all, to accept all, to submit to all.

'But one will think perhaps that this is very difficult to do; one is mistaken, there is nothing more easy and nothing sweeter to practise. Everything consists in making once for all a generous act, saying with all the sincerity of one's soul: "My God, I desire to belong entirely to you, deign to accept my offering," and all is said.'

'Then to be careful afterwards to maintain oneself in this disposition of soul, and not to recoil before those little sacrifices which may help towards our progress in virtue, bearing in mind that one has "given oneself over."'

'I pray Our Lord to give to all souls who wish to please Him an understanding of this phrase, and to inspire them to adopt so easy a means of sanctification.'

'Oh, if only one could realise in advance the sweetness and peace one tastes when one no longer makes reservations with the Good God, and how He communicates Himself to the soul that truly seeks Him and that knows how "to give herself over" to Him. Let anyone make the experience, and they will see that there alone is to be found real happiness.'

'The soul "given over" to God has found paradise upon earth since she already has a share in that peace which constitutes a part of the happiness of the elect.'

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### II. UNION WITH GOD.

A soul 'given over' to God will infallibly be united with Him: through prayer, which is the ladder by which we ascend to God; by thought, which keeps us in His presence; by the will being conformed to the Divine Will; by the sentiments and affections, in order to love but God and only God.

Mary, who was always a soul of prayer, gave an example of it during the retreat in the Cenacle, as the Acts of the Apostles describe in this apt phrase: 'All these were persevering in one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus' (Acts I, 14).

Let us listen now to what is told us of Mother Couderc. After a day of recollection Mother Thérèse said, 'I have but one need, one thought, *to pray, to pray always*. The impulse is so strong in me that on Sundays I am like a soul in pain all the time I am not in the Chapel. . . . For my meditation, I often read over two subjects in preparing that provided for the Community, and I really do intend to meditate upon them the next day, but I find it impossible, because there are two thoughts which absorb me alternately, and which occupy all the time of my spiritual exercises.

'First, the holiness of God. I cannot think of anything else. My God, Thou who art *Holiness itself*. The *holiness* of God beyond all human thought! Everything is there for me, and I humble myself to the dust, repeating for hours, *Jesus I adore You, because You are holy, and holiness itself*. When I consider sin in the presence of this holiness of God and the obstacles which are put in the way of our personal holiness, it pierces my heart.

'The second thought is that of my utter worthlessness, and then I can only say one word: *Jesus have*

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pity on me! But this word is like a mirror which makes the needs of the whole world pass before me.'

The Blessed Virgin had a clear and continual contemplation of divine things, in such a way that Our Lord was the end of all her acts and she never lost the sense of the presence of God.

'The presence of God,' says Mother Thérèse, 'but we are always in it, we live in it, no one can take it away from us. Oh, how many graces the Good God bestowed upon me during an illness I had at Montpellier! . . . . At every instant I recognised the presence of Our Lord in my little cell. I performed all my religious exercises as if I were before Him in the Chapel. Oh! how I have blessed the Good God for His immensity, which makes Him present everywhere!' She adds in her intimate notes, 'It seems to me that a greater detachment is being operated in me, and that the spirit of God encompasses me, and fills me to such an extent that I feel all the powers of my soul and my whole being invaded thereby; I then say with a deep feeling of happiness and consolation, *my God and my all, all else is nothing, nothing*' . . . . How sweet it must be to holy souls to converse with the Adorable Persons who dwell within them. To *make a visit* to the Blessed Trinity is a highly fruitful practice, much to be recommended to whoever wishes to attain to perfection. Mother Couderc understood this well. 'The intention for which I offered my retreat was that of asking of God a more continual sense of His divine presence and of union with Him; for it seems to me that He is so utterly the centre of our soul that it can find no rest save in Him. Also I hunger to think of Him, to *visit* Him, to pray to Him, and to unite myself with Him in every possible way. This desire is habitual, and everything besides it is burdensome and distasteful. Nothing gives me pleasure save

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that which procures the glory of God, and makes Him known and loved.

It is clear that intimacy with Our Lord could be neither lasting nor true, without at the same time a conformity to the Eternal Will. The Blessed Virgin is the ideal of consummate holiness because she always said her *fiat*, at the Annunciation, on Calvary, in the Cenacle, up to the very end, and it is certain that her last breath, which was a sigh of perfect love was also an act of perfect adhesion to the Divine Will.

The holy foundress regulated everything according to this principle. 'When my suffering was at its height, all my consolation was to say to the Good God that all I wished for was His Holy Will and good pleasure, and that if it were not His wish that this work (the Congregation of the Cenacle) should endure, neither did I desire it. St. Ignatius only required a quarter of an hour in which to make the sacrifice of his Company, I should also need the same if only I were as holy as he.'

She added later, 'I have begun my retreat with a real desire to become better, and it is with my whole heart that I have said these words: Behold, my God, your little servant, may it be done unto me according to your good pleasure. To-day I finished my retreat by saying these other words which I have learned from the Divine Master: My heart is ready, O Lord, to embrace all that you will: 'Not my will but Thine be done. That is my favourite prayer, which I desire to make every day so long as I have a breath of life, because it is that which gives and preserves in me the greatest peace of soul.'

From what has been said one can understand her maxim: 'There are some things which the Good God wishes us to ask for with submission: Lord *if* it be Thy Will . . . Thy Will be done, not mine.' 'Yes,

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I adore and desire this divine Will, for it is always just, always holy, and always worthy of our love.'

The Blessed Virgin was *one* with God by her will, she was *one* with Him in sentiment and affection, in such a way that there was not a fibre of her heart that was not full of love. Charity had penetrated to the very centre of her being: all in her was filled with tenderness and purity in order that she might be the Mother of Him Whose Father is the God of Love.

Need we be astonished to discover something of this outpouring of love in Mother Thérèse? 'I also give rein to this attraction to love which is always the most dominant and frequent impulse in me . . . . I was ill, I was confined to my bed; I was happy beyond anything I could describe to you, because God let me enjoy the sense of His presence and His love; my body was broken down, but my soul kept all its freedom, and my will all its strength to give itself up and to desire always to be united to the sovereign good which is God . . . . how wisely we act in letting Him do what He will, and abandoning ourselves to His divine guidance!' 'Without any effort on my part I find myself sometimes as recollected in the midst of a noisy recreation as in a profound meditation. I seem to hear sometimes within me a voice which ceaselessly repeats *My God, My God*, and I find myself then seized with a feeling of love and respect which gathers together all my faculties in Him. An irresistible attraction draws me towards recollection, silence, forgetfulness of all that is not God.'

This need for God does not exclude union with the Divine humanity since it is the Will of God that the soul be drawn upwards to the Father by Him whom He has sent, Jesus Christ.

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### III. DEVOTION TO THE HUMANITY OF JESUS AND TO THE EUCHARIST.

St. Luke, after having told of those scenes of the Nativity and Childhood of Jesus which are so full of beauty and sweetness, adds with fine supernatural psychology that Mary remembered all these things and pondered them in her heart. And would not these memories be the theme of some of her most cherished meditations in the Cenacle and all her life?

Thérèse Couderc was never weary of meditation on the profound mystery of the Incarnation and even the name of Jesus filled her with joy. 'I find so much sweetness in pronouncing this Holy Name that I often pass part of the time of my meditation and thanksgiving in repeating it, in meditating on it, in dwelling on its sweetness, in calling upon it, in blessing it. *Jesus* my life, *Jesus* my love, *Jesus* my all. In one's utter nothingness one feels such a great hunger for this sovereign good, this unique good, source of all good, and without which all other good things are but evils, that one feels impelled to call upon Him with all the strength of one's soul.'

She followed Our Lord through all the diverse phases of His life and bitter passion. 'I content myself with saying everything to Our Lord, and, especially when I am with Him in the Garden of Olives, I dare not complain, for His sufferings are so immeasurably greater than mine, which are but a tiny drop compared with the ocean of bitterness which overwhelmed Him at the moment of agony. He knows and compassionates my weakness.'

The thought of Our Lord sufficed to console her and made up to her for all she suffered. 'And we have Our Lord! . . . we desire but Him, we seek but Him. Let us beg our sanctification from Him, not

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for ourselves but for Him. May we have the joy of praising, blessing and glorifying Him!’

The true way of glorifying Jesus is to be always united to His most holy Will, and to pray in union with Him. For this reason Mother Thérèse begged for the grace ‘never to cease repeating the prayer He has taught me in the Garden of Olives.’

In order to render prayer and other actions meritorious it is necessary to graft them, so to speak, into the merits of the Saviour. ‘Well then, in my worst moments I offer the merits of Our Lord which are more than sufficient to supply for such utter poverty and insufficiency as mine.’

But in drawing upon these infinite merits one infallibly enters within the Sacred Heart. Therefore the Foundress desires ‘to obtain from the Heart of Jesus that my heart be enkindled with the fire of His love . . . every day I place it, this poor fragile heart upon the altar of holocaust, praying Our Lord to send down fire from Heaven to consume it and make it a perfect victim.’ ‘I cast everything into the heart of Jesus which is an abyss of mercy, and I beg Him in His goodness to repair all, to perfect all, to sanctify all.’

#### UNION IS CONSUMMATED IN THE EUCHARIST.

Mary was the first daily communicant, and writers love to place her amongst those who persevered in prayer and in the breaking of bread. (Acts II, 42). This sacramental presence of her Beloved recalls her transports of joy at the first moment of the Incarnation, and made the happiness of her Motherhood live again; once more Jesus showered all His love and graces on His Mother and the Blessed Virgin responded with overflowing love and gratitude.

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Let us listen to what eye-witnesses tell us of the devotion of Mother Couderc to the Blessed Eucharist. From her childhood she hungered for the bread of life. It was an hour and a half's walk from her home to the village church. The young girl was at Mass on Sundays, and again on Thursdays out of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, while her mother went on Mondays for the souls in purgatory and Fridays in honour of the Sacred Heart. In summer time it was often necessary to leave home at four o'clock in the morning and in winter to brave snow and cold in order to obtain this extra Communion. From that time onward she had a profound respect not only for the great act of Communion, but also for the ceremonies which preceded, accompanied and followed it; she could not bear the casualness of modern piety in this respect, which she attributed to a weakening in the spirit of faith. This respect extended from the sacraments to its ministers: when she was confined to the infirmary she did not wish the priest to come upstairs for her only and in the conflict between her love and her humility it was necessary for authority to step in and decide that Mother Thérèse should communicate every day.

She was speaking one day to a Mother about her thanksgiving. 'When I have received Holy Communion it is impossible for me to leave the Chapel as I do on other days. The time set apart for the thanksgiving of the Community seems so short that I am obliged to do violence to myself in order to follow them to the refectory. I go there, I take my breakfast, without knowing what I am doing, and without being for one instant distracted from the presence of Our Lord. When I go back to the Chapel and find myself alone, I can give myself up to the feelings which up till then I have suppressed, and often I burst into tears. . . . Formerly I used to make my spiritual

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reading with appreciation and consolation, now I can no longer apply myself to it, or find any rest from the attraction which draws me before the Blessed Sacrament.'

Even during the last years of her life, when she was overwhelmed with infirmities, she would be seen wending her way, leaning on a stick, to the tribune of the Chapel and from the tribune to her room, going, as it were, from God to God.

Mother d'Esparbès relates that 'when I had the privilege of accompanying the Blessed Sacrament to the room of our holy mother I was profoundly struck by the movement which she made to raise herself, and, as it were, go forward towards Our Lord. The movement was striking and I was greatly impressed by it.'

One can understand that they still show the little tribune in the Chapel of the Convent at Fourvières, where she passed such long hours united with God in the tabernacle, living His life, loving His love, and offering all for His Glory.

But since she desired to go to the extreme limit of love, she had also to penetrate to the limits of sacrifice and make herself victim with Jesus, the Redeemer, and with Mary, the co-redemptrix.

#### IV. THE VICTIM OF HOLOCAUST.

In the plan of the Redemption Our Lord appears to us as the Lamb destined for the bloody sacrifice in order to wash away the sins of the world. His name, Jesus, recalling to us that by His Passion He is our Saviour, reminds us that His sufferings and sorrows have surpassed all others both in duration and intensity, in order that He might be the complete super-abundant sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and obtain for mankind the fruits of eternal salvation. He, Who is all-powerful love, has willed to take a new

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title, and make Himself for us a *Victim of Love*. Hence it follows that all who aspire to the heights of sanctity must resemble Him and be transfigured in Him by immolation.

Mary was associated with Jesus in one same passion. Her heart—to quote the apt expression of St. Lawrence Justinian—was the cloudless mirror in which was reflected the passion of Christ as if all the sorrows of the Son were lived anew in the heart of the Mother. She is more than martyr *for* Christ, she is martyr *with* Christ; and even in the Cenacle and at every period of her life she continued her role of Co-redemptrix.

In order to resemble her twofold model, Thérèse Couderc, in her turn, had to be associated with the passion. She writes, 'Our Lord has called on us to drink of and to share in His Chalice. May He be blessed. We should be wrong in complaining at this, since He has been the first to drink of it.' Along with the Chalice one must also taste of the fruits of the Cross. 'The Cross is a *tree which bears its fruits at all seasons of the year*, and for every situation in which one could possibly find oneself in this life. One suffers therefrom, and sometimes greatly, but one loves these sufferings, and it is that which sweetens them.'

It was no light suffering that Our Lord asked of her; it was complete, universal sacrifice which was to consume the victim totally; in a word, a holocaust. 'I prayed, I offered myself to Our Lord as completely as I was able; I told Him I dared not offer myself as a victim, for victims should be pure in order to please Him, and I had so greatly offended against Him. Then He made me understand that nevertheless He wanted me and that He accepted me as a victim, and I distinctly heard these words "*You shall be a victim of holocaust.*" I experienced no revolt, I adhered to Him wholly, but I was trembling and speechless. I asked Our Lord what these words

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meant, *Victim of holocaust*, and Our Lord deigned to explain to me that the ordinary Victim was immolated on the Altar, and the remains distributed to the priests, and were thus used, but the fire from heaven descended on a *victim of holocaust* and consumed it so completely that even the ashes were scattered to the wind, and no trace nor vestige capable of any use should remain, for *all was for Him*; and she repeated these words: *All was for Him*.

The law of renunciation is moreover fundamental, and indispensable for whomsoever desires to tend towards perfection; and Mother Thérèse took to heart the doctrine laid down by the preacher of her retreat in 1868, 'that a religious ought to belong to God entirely and without restriction and reserve, and in order to attain to that, there must be devotedness, sacrifice, renunciation, death to nature and the senses, and to all the satisfactions of self-love; death, in fact, to all that is not God. And those who think to build up the edifice of their perfection and holiness on any foundation save that of this stripping of all things and of oneself, would be under a delusion and would never attain to perfection.'

She also explained that the cross, tribulations and suffering are the bread of the strong which gives strength to souls. 'This *bread of the strong* is not always to our taste, but all the same we must feed thereon so long as Our Lord wills, and say our fiat with great good will, in order to lose none of the merit which comes with it for us.'

She was united with Our Lord in His agony and sorrowful passion. The Mothers who knew her tell how she not only had constantly before her eyes her Jesus in the agony, but also the causes of these sufferings of the Man-God throughout the ages and in our own days; all the sins of men, all the perils on which innocent souls were yet to make shipwreck.

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The holy Mother's eyes filled with tears which flowed without ceasing for hours together. At times she could be heard sobbing. She felt the weight of the divine anger, the arm of the Lord ready to strike. She saw and experienced in herself the unspeakable suffering caused to Our Lord by the ingratitude of sinners, their blindness, and the apparent uselessness of His sufferings for a great number. She repeated with Jesus the words of His prayer: 'My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt. My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy Will be done.'

She had even to experience something of the state of abandonment of the Divine Victim upon the Cross, through the fear and apprehension from which she suffered so long. The year before her death she wrote: 'The impression of fear has grown greater, that of weariness and sadness is no less; they all come together, and I am convinced that it will be so up to the end. Therefore there is nothing to be done but to accept it with submission and even with joy, saying always and everywhere: 'My God, not my will, but Thine be done.'

In order to share in the immensity and universality of the Passion she was united not only with the moral sufferings, but also with the physical pain of the Redeemer.

During the last few years of her life she suffered such pain from illnesses and infirmity that her daughters felt they could quote without exaggeration, when speaking of her, the words of the Royal Prophet respecting Our Lord in His Passion—that there was no sound spot in all His body. Her whole body was but a mass of suffering. Her head, her hands, her feet, her side, caused her such pain that wherever she rested, either in her wooden armchair or on her bed.

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she experienced the sharpest anguish. She was swollen from head to foot, burning heat and unquenchable thirst consumed her. She prayed, she besought those around her to pray that she might be patient; she never complained, never asked for any alleviation.

We see her then united with the mysteries of the Passion, from the agony right on to the Crucifixion; and since she is a victim, she can be an apostle and exercise a lasting and fruitful action within the Church of Christ.

### V. SUPERNATURAL ZEAL.

#### APOSTOLATE IN THE CHURCH.

Mary, Queen of the Apostles and their support in the Cenacle and for long years afterwards, presided; so to speak, over the formation of the newly-born Church; and without in the least quitting her interior and hidden life, she contributed very greatly to the conversion of the world. Thérèse Couderc, so full of love for her place in the background, has worked wonders in the Church of God.

Her permanent apostolate, that which perpetuates her action in the world, is the inauguration of the work of retreats for women, the foundation of that Institute of the Cenacle which communicates to so many souls living in the world the love of the interior life and the supernatural spirit. And even after she was put on one side, she ceased not to be an apostle. 'Never,' so her daughters affirm, 'was she more useful for the glory of God and the good of her neighbour, to the Church and to our Society, than when she was apparently alone and unoccupied; never was she then more surrounded and less alone, for the whole supernatural world was, as it were, present, by Jesus, with Jesus, and in Jesus.'

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Her zeal embraces the whole world. 'The days seem to me too short in which to occupy myself with God and speak to Him. One has so many things to say, for oneself and for others, for the Church in general and all the faithful. I open my heart to all this when I feel myself so drawn. I am told that I ought to follow my inspiration. Well then, I do so, and I often speak to Our Lord even of the infidels who have not the happiness to know and share in the fruits of His redemption.'

It was a common saying at Fourvières that she was interested in everything, shared in the life of each one and the occupations of all, without one being able to see how she could have been so familiar with all.

It was above all towards the suffering members of Christ in this world and the next that this zeal exercised compassion. She forgot herself in order to look after the others who were ill. She was asked if she suffered much. She replied: 'One must pray much for those who are ill, lest they lose patience and in order that they may *suffer well*. All is in that—to suffer well!'

'I noticed many times her complete forgetfulness of her own sufferings and her charitable preoccupation with everything which concerned others.'

Her daughters have also affirmed that it would have been yet another torment for her if she had ceased to feel the pains of others and to suffer. She exercised these two offices for the Church Militant and the Suffering Church; she loved to suffer and sympathise with others, to fill up in the name of sinners and the captives in Purgatory, that which was wanting to the Passion of Our Lord, that is to say to the efficacious application of the fruits of the redemption.

Her daughters have constantly affirmed that she had frequent and intimate communications with the souls

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in purgatory particularly during the last years of her life. She saw them around her, and heard them sometimes imploring her help, and sometimes making reparation by ceaseless prayer and the recitation of the office of the Church for their faults and negligences in the service of God, and especially their negligences and imperfections committed during public prayer and in their duties of divine worship. She said that one day, after her communion, these souls prevented her from making her thanksgiving. Hardly had the priest placed the Sacred Host upon her lips when they intoned the *Te Deum* with such irresistible fervour and wonderful harmony that, in spite of the efforts of the servant of God to adore Our Lord according to her usual manner, she was forced to enter into their sentiments and repeat the hymn with them right to the last verse, the mere remembrance of which made her heart beat. 'In te Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum.'

Her devotedness towards the members of the Church Suffering, her apostolic zeal for the Church Militant in no way hindered her intercourse with the Church Triumphant whose veil she seemed almost to pierce during the last period of her mortal life.

Eye-witnesses speak as follows: 'She, who no longer went to the parlour, who received no letters, who could no longer hear the voice of her directors, penetrated into the designs of Divine Providence in the conduct of human things, the ways and thoughts of God of which it is said that they are neither our ways nor our thoughts. We urged her to pray with special earnestness when the interests of religion seemed to us in great peril, we tried to console her by telling her what we held to be good news, but by her words or by her silence, by the expression in her eyes or her smile, it was easy to see that she saw further, that she knew better.'

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Her love of the Church and of souls is personified in this phrase which sums up all her prayer, '*Thy Kingdom come,*' may it be glorified by all the designs which it pleases God to accomplish therein, and may the will of God be done *in all souls and by all souls.*

She also, then, has had her share in the marvellous work of the redemption, she has shown by her acts the truth of these fine words of a doctor: 'There is nothing more divine than to be co-workers with God by the Apostolate.'

Here we have in broad outline the spirituality of the Servant of God, Thérèse Couderc; to reproduce the life of Mary in the Cenacle, and for that, to give oneself over entirely to God, to unite oneself with God, to live with Jesus in the mysteries of His life and of the Eucharist; to make oneself a victim of holocaust, to burn with supernatural zeal for the Church and for souls.

The constant execution of this supernatural ideal has resulted in the uninterrupted practice of Christian virtues. To give oneself over and to unite oneself with God in the manner we have described, pre-supposes the minute practice of the theological virtues; to preserve this just appreciation of events and to regulate all one's life in view of one's last end is to put in practice the prudence of the saints; to know how to make oneself a victim of holocaust, and yet not to be cast down by adversity, and to preserve faithfully in spite of difficulties from within and from without, is to show all the energy of fortitude; to preserve a complete detachment from all things, to carry the virtue of humility even to the extreme of the love of being forgotten; to establish in the powers of the soul, even those which are inferior, the harmony, the peace which is the *tranquillity of order* that is the triumph of the cardinal virtue of temperance.

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When the cause is brought before the Court of Rome, it will not be difficult to demonstrate that the servant of God practised the Theological and Cardinal virtues to that high degree which is styled heroic.

We declare that we do not attach to the words and facts quoted any other value than that of private testimony and we wish to conform ourselves in all to the decree of Urban VIII and to the other rules of the Church concerning the beatification and canonisation of the saints.

EDOUARD HUGON, O.P.

Rome, Angelico. April 1927.

### BOOK REVIEWS

A HISTORY OF THE LEAGUE OR SAINTE UNION, 1576-1595. By Maurice Wilkinson, M.A. (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie & Co.; 10/6 net.)

Here is a book that will serve both the student of sixteenth century European politics and the lover of the history of France. A scholarly piece of work, written in a style that makes good reading and enlivened by the comments of an author at ease with his subject. Often the comments are provocative. 'Catholicism and Royalism are historically inseparable in France,' declares Mr. Wilkinson at the very beginning of his story of the League; and with grave hurt to religion and monarchy it might be added when the abuses complained of by the French bishops in 1579 are considered. 'Over 800 abbeys were in the gift of the King and not more than 100 of them were occupied by regular abbots; all sorts of persons, many of bad character, held the rest *in commendam*, and 28 bishoprics were vacant and their incomes appropriated by laymen.' The Church was helpless in the matter, the author adds; 'those who were to blame were Francis I and Leo X who made the Concordant of Bologna.' More provocative is the *obiter dictum*: 'Democracy is merely the tyranny of a vulgar caucus in the place of the tyranny, if tyranny there be, of a sovereign who at least has the