

CHAPTER XXVII

The Lord Prepares Most Holy Mary to Enter into Battle with Lucifer, and the Dragon begins to Persecute Her.

335. The eternal Word, already made man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and possessing Her as his Mother, was aware of the designs of Lucifer, not only by his uncreated wisdom as God, but also by the created knowledge of his humanity. He prepared the defense of his tabernacle, which was more estimable in his sight than all the rest of creatures. In order to clothe the invincible Lady with new strength against the insane daring of the treacherous dragon and his hosts, the most holy humanity of Christ rose to his feet in the virginal tabernacle as one opposing an enemy, as occurs in battle, incensed against the princes of darkness. In this posture He prayed to the eternal Father, beseeching Him to renew his favors and graces in his Mother, so strengthened anew She could crush the head of the ancient serpent who would be humiliated and oppressed by a woman, remain frustrated in his intentions and debilitated in his powers, and the Queen of heaven come forth triumphant and victorious over hell to the glory and praise of God himself and of the Virgin Mother.

336. The prayer of Christ our Lord was punctually fulfilled in the most blessed Trinity. Then in an ineffable manner her most holy Son was manifested to the Virgin Mother in her womb; in this vision the plenitude of graces and unspeakable gifts were vouchsafed to Her. Illumined anew with additional light of wisdom She recognized the highest and most hidden mysteries impossible to describe. She understood especially that Lucifer had prepared vast designs of pride against the glory of the Lord, and that his arrogance rose up to drink the pure waters of the Jordan (Job 40:18). The Most High, informing Her of these things, said to Her: “My Spouse and my Dove, the voracious fury of the infernal dragon against my holy Name and all those who adore it is so insatiable that he expects to overthrow all without exception, and to blot out my Name from the land of the living with audacity and tremendous presumption. I desire Thee, my Beloved, to take up my cause and defend my holy honor, battling in my Name with this cruel enemy. I shall be with Thee in battle since I am in thy virginal womb. Before I appear in the world I desire Thee to confound and destroy these enemies by my divine power, since they are persuaded the Redemption of men is nigh, and desire to come beforehand to destroy all men and gain all souls without exception. To thy fidelity and love I entrust this victory. Thou shalt battle in my Name, and I in Thee, against this dragon and ancient serpent” (Apoc. 12:9).

337. These words of the Lord and the knowledge of these secrets so moved the Heart of the heavenly Mother that I cannot find expression for that which then happened. When She understood her most holy Son desired Her to defend the honor of the Most High, She was so inflamed with divine love and filled with such invincible fortitude that if each one of the demons had been an entire hell and filled with the fury and malice of all its inmates, they altogether would have been only like a few frail ants and greatly debilitated in their opposition to the incomparable virtue of our Captainess. All of them She would have vanquished and destroyed by the smallest part of her virtues and her zeal for the honor and glory of the Lord. Her divine Protector and Helper ordained this glorious triumph of his most holy Mother over hell so the arrogance of his enemies could no longer lord it over us, nor rest assured of being able to destroy the world; rather, He desired to hasten its Redemption and put us mortals under obligation not only to the inestimable love of his most holy Son, but also to Mary, our heavenly Defender and

Reparatrix. She was to issue forth to battle, stop his progress, vanquish and suppress him, placing mankind on a proper footing for the reception of their Redeemer.

338. O children of men, dull and slow of heart! How is it you do not heed such admirable blessings? O most high King, who is man that Thou shouldst so honor and favor him as to bid thy own Mother, our Lady, to battle and labor for our defense? Who ever heard of similar happenings? Who has ever shown such force and ingenuity of love? Where is our intellect? Who has deprived us of the use of reason? What hardness of heart is this? What has drawn us into such vile ingratitude? How is it men are not confused, who though they claim to love and honor Her so much yet commit such vileness and such infamous ingratitude as to forget such an obligation? To thank Her and repay Her with our own lives would be the true nobility and honor of the mortal children of Adam.

339. The obedient Mother, offering Herself to battle with Lucifer for the honor of her most holy Son, of the Holy Trinity, and our own, answered the Lord who had commanded Her, saying: "My Lord and highest Good, from whose infinite goodness I confess I have received being, grace and light, I am entirely Thine, and Thou, Lord, by thy condescension art my Son. Do with thy servant what shall be for thy greater glory and pleasure. If Thou, Lord, art in me, and I in Thee, who shall be powerful against the virtue of thy will? I shall be the instrument of thy invincible arm. Give me thy strength and come with me, and let us go forth against hell and battle against the dragon and all his allies." In the meanwhile Lucifer issued from the meeting, now filled with such hateful spite against Her that he considered the perdition of all other souls as of small consequence. If we could know his infernal fury as it is in reality, we would understand better what God says to holy Job (41:18), that *he esteems iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood*. Such was the wrath of the dragon against most holy Mary. And it is not less even now against Her and against souls; for if his arrogance estimated the most holy, invincible and strong Woman to be no more than a dried-up leaf, what will he do to sinners, who like empty and decaying reeds* do not withstand him? Living faith (Eph. 6:16) and humility of heart alone are the double armor which enable them to procure glorious victory.

340. In order to begin the battle Lucifer brought with him the seven legions with their principal heads whom he designated in his fall from heaven to tempt men to the seven capital sins (Apoc. 12:3). Each of these seven squadrons he charged with the duty of exerting their utmost strength against the immaculate Princess. The invincible Lady was occupied in prayer when the Lord permitted the first legion to begin the battle by tempting Her to the sin of pride, which was the special ministry of these enemies. They sought to approach the heavenly Queen by trying to cause changes in her natural passions and inclinations, for this is the ordinary way in which the demons find access to other mortals, and they thought She was infected in the same way as other men with passions disordered by sin; however, they could not come as close to Her as they wished, for they sensed an invincible virtue and fragrance of her sanctity which tormented them more than the fire which consumes them. In spite of this obstacle, and though the very sight of most holy Mary pierced them with raging torments, they nevertheless ignored their pains and lashed themselves into furious and ungovernable wrath in their obstinate endeavors to approach nearer to Her and exert upon Her their cursed and damnable influence.

341. There was a great number of demons, and most holy Mary was alone and a mere woman; yet She alone was as formidable and terrible against them as many well-ordered armies (Cant. 6:3). As far as they were able these enemies presented themselves before Her with most

* cf. Lk. 7:24 [Ed.]

iniquitous fabrications (Ps. 118:85); but the sovereign Princess, teaching us how to conquer, was neither moved nor altered, nor showed any change in her countenance or its color. She took no notice of them, nor attended to them any more than if they had been the weakest ants. She despised them with an invincible and magnanimous Heart, for this kind of battle, since it is a battle of virtues, is not accompanied by extremes of noise and excitement, but is fought in all tranquility, in outward and inward peace and modesty. Just as little could She be moved by the passions and appetites, for in our Queen these were not under the jurisdiction of the demon; in Her they were all subordinated to reason, and this again was subject to God, since none of her faculties had been cast into disorder by the first sin as in the rest of the children of Adam. Thus the arrows of these enemies, as David says, were like those of little children (Ps. 63:8), and their armories were like those which were without ammunition. Only to themselves were they harmful, for their weakness only brought upon them confusion. Although they were not aware of the innocence and original justice of most holy Mary, and hence did not understand She was not to be injured by the common temptations, yet in the grandeur of her countenance and constancy they could conjecture by her contempt of them how minuscule would be their success in harming Her. And not only did they have very little success, they had no success at all, because as the Evangelist says in the Apocalypse (12:16), and as I have mentioned in the first Part (*Con.* 129-130), the earth helped the Woman clothed with the sun when the dragon opened upon Her the flood of his impetuous temptations, meaning thereby the earthly body of this Lady had not been vitiated in its faculties and passions as those of others who had been touched by sin.

342. The demons then assumed corporeal shapes of the most horrible and dreadful kind, and they began to emit fearful howls, roaring with terrible voices, pretending to rush upon Her and threatening destruction; they shook the earth and the house, striving also by other furious assaults to frighten or agitate the Princess of the world so at least in this, or in making Her desist from prayer, they might seem victorious. But the invincible and magnanimous Heart of most holy Mary was neither disturbed nor moved in the least. It must be remembered that in order to enter upon this battle the Lord left Her entirely to the resources of her own faith and virtue; He suspended the effects of the other favors and privileges which She was accustomed to enjoy at other times. The Most High thus ordained it so the triumph of his Mother would be more glorious and honorable, besides the other reasons which God has in proceeding in this manner with souls, for his judgments and how He determines them are incomprehensible (Rom. 11:33) and hidden. At times the great Lady would repeat (Ps. 112:5-6): *Who is like unto God, who dwelleth on high, and looketh down upon the humble in heaven and on earth?* By these words She routed the hosts that opposed Her.

343. Then these hungry wolves laid aside their terrible shapes; they assumed sheep's clothing, transforming themselves into angels of light, resplendent and beautiful. Approaching the heavenly Lady they said: "Thou hast conquered, Thou hast conquered, Thou art strong, and we come to assist Thee and reward thy invincible valor." Surrounding Her they protested their friendship in flattering and deceitful terms. But the most prudent Lady withdrew within Herself, suspended all the activity of her senses, and raising Herself above Herself (Lam. 3:28) by means of the infused virtues She adored the Lord in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23). Despising all the snares of these evil tongues and their deceitful lies, She spoke to her most holy Son: "My Lord and Master, my strength, true Light of light, in thy help alone I place all my confidence and the exaltation of thy holy Name. All those who speak otherwise I anathematize, abhor and detest." The workers of evil persevered in proposing their insane falsehoods against the Mother of knowledge and continued to extol Her beyond the skies, She who had humbled Herself beneath

the lowest of creatures. They protested they wished to exalt Her above all women and confer upon Her an exquisite favor: They would select Her in the name of the Lord for the Mother of the Messiah, and they assured Her that her sanctity would be greater than that of the Patriarchs and Prophets.

344. Lucifer himself was the author of this new plot, and his malice is here made known for a warning to other souls. But it was ridiculous to offer to Mary, the Queen of heaven, a dignity already her own. They themselves were ensnared and deceived, not only in offering what they neither knew nor were able to give, but also in being ignorant of the sacrament of the King so intimately connected with the most blessed Woman whom they persecuted. Because of all this the iniquity of the dragon was great, because he knew he could not fulfill what he promised. He tried to spy out whether perhaps our blessed Lady held that dignity, or whether She would give him some signs by which he could conjecture it. Most holy Mary was aware of this duplicity of Lucifer, and She despised it with admirable severity and composure. Amid the false adulations She continued her prayer, prostrating Herself on the floor. In confessing Him She humbled Herself, deeming Herself the most contemptible of creatures, more so than the dust under her feet. By this humble prayer and prostration She cut off the presumptuous pride of Lucifer as long as this temptation lasted. As for the rest which happened, the cunning of the demons and their cruelty and lying deceits on this occasion, it seemed to me I should not relate all, nor expatiate upon all that has been shown to me. Let this much suffice for our instruction, for not all can be trusted to the ignorance of weak and earthly creatures.

345. These enemies of the first legion fled dismayed and vanquished, and the second arrived in order to tempt Her, the most poor in spirit, to the sin of avarice. They offered Her great riches, gold, silver, and most precious gems, and so these might not seem empty promises they placed before Her a great quantity of these riches (though only apparent), hoping thereby the sensible impression would have great force to incite the will to desire this delightful present. They accompanied this offer with many deceitful words and told Her that God had sent Her all this for distribution among the poor. When they saw all this had no effect upon Her, they changed their tactics and urged since She was so holy it was a great wrong for Her to remain so poor, telling Her it was more reasonable for Her to possess these riches than having them remain in the hands of wicked sinners, for this would be an injustice and a disorder of the providence of the Lord for the just to be visited with poverty while the wicked enemies of God abound in riches and affluence.

346. In vain is the net spread before the eyes of the agile birds (says the Wise Man [Prov. 1:17]). This was true of all the temptations of our sovereign Queen; but the malice of the serpent was much more preposterous in regard to this temptation of avarice, for this phoenix of poverty was so far removed from the earth, and winged her flight so far above that of even the Seraphim, that such a vile and contemptible snare was entirely in vain. The most prudent Lady, though She possessed divine wisdom, never undertook to argue with these enemies, as in truth nobody should, for they battle against the manifest truth and will not admit defeat even when they must acknowledge its effects. Most holy Mary made use of some words of Holy Scriptures and repeated them with serene humility. On this occasion She selected the words of the 118th Psalm (v. 111): *Haereditate acquisivi testimonia tua in aeternum*, for my riches and inheritance I choose to keep thy testimonies and law, my Lord. She made use of many other passages, gratefully praising and blessing the Most High because He had created and preserved Her without her merits. In this most wise manner She rejected and overcame the second temptation to the confusion and torment of these workers of iniquity.

347. Then the third legion advanced, led by the prince of impurity who assails the weakness of the flesh. These made so much the greater efforts because they foresaw more clearly the improbability of success, and in truth they gained less than all the others, if one may speak of more or less in these different temptations of the Virgin Mary. They tried to suggest to Her vile images and produce before her eyes unspeakable monstrosities. But all their efforts vanished in midair, for the most pure Virgin, as soon as She recognized the first signs of this vice, withdrew entirely within Herself and suspended all the activity of her senses; hence not even the shadow of a suggestion or indecent image could enter her thoughts, since none of her faculties were in action. With the most ardent longing She renewed many times her vow of chastity in the presence of the Lord, and She merited more on this occasion than all the virgins who ever existed or will exist in this world. The Almighty furnished Her with such virtue that in comparison the sudden expulsion of the cannon ball from the cannon is but a poor image of the force with which these enemies were repelled from the presence of most holy Mary when they sought to touch her purity by their temptations.

348. The fourth legion undertook to test her meekness and patience, seeking to move this mildest Dove to anger. This temptation was most unpleasant, for the demons overturned the whole house; they broke and shattered everything contained therein, and in such a manner as could most irritate the most meek Lady; however, her holy Angels soon repaired all the damage. Foiled in this attempt the demons assumed the shapes of some women known to the most serene Princess. They flew at Her with greater wrath and fury than if they had been real women; they added outrageous insults, dared to threaten Her, and removed from her house certain things most necessary. But all these machinations were futile against one who recognized them as most holy Mary, since none of their gestures and actions escaped her penetrating understanding; She disregarded them altogether and despised them entirely, without giving any signs of being moved or influenced by them. The demons then chose a real woman of a disposition adapted to their purposes, whom they influenced by diabolical art against the Princess of heaven. For this purpose one of the demons assumed the shape of an acquaintance of this woman and began to tell her this Mary, the wife of Joseph, had slandered her in her presence and had accused her of many gross faults which this demon invented for the occasion.

349. The deceived woman, who was naturally very much inclined to anger, hastened furiously to our most meek lamb, Mary most holy, and hurled at Her the vilest accusations and insults. She, however, allowing the angry woman to pour out her wrath, gradually began to speak to her in words so humble and sweet that She changed her entirely,* appeased and softened her heart. When She had thus brought her around, She consoled and admonished her to guard herself from the demon. She added some alms, since this woman was poor, and dismissed her in peace. Thus also this attempt was foiled, just as were many others by which Lucifer tried to irritate our meekest Dove and bring Her into discredit. The Most High always defended the honor of his most holy Mother, making use of her own perfection, prudence and humility, and thus the demon could never succeed in harming her good name in the least. She always acted so prudently and with so much meekness and wisdom that the multitude of plots forged by the dragon for her destruction were completely without effect. The tranquility and meekness of the sovereign Lady during these temptations of the dragon caused the admiration of the Angels. Even the demons were full of astonishment (though of a different kind) at seeing such behavior in a mere creature, and a woman at that, for never had they seen the like.

* cf. Prov. 15:1 [Ed.]

350. The fifth legion followed with temptations to gluttony. Though the ancient serpent did not bid our Queen turn stones into bread (Mt. 4:3) as he afterwards presumed to do with her most holy Son (for he had not seen Her do such great wonders, since they had been withheld from his knowledge), yet he tempted Her like the first woman with the pleasures of taste (Gen. 3:1). They placed before Her a great feast, so with the appearance the appetite might be allured and awakened. They tried to influence the humors of her body in order to cause in Her a counterfeit hunger, and they used other means to attract her attention to what they were offering. But all their labor was in vain and without effect, for from all these material and earthly things the noble Heart of our Princess was as far removed as heaven is from earth. Just as little did She use her senses in order to enjoy the pleasures of taste, yea She never even took notice of them, for in all things She had set Herself to counteract what our first mother Eve had done. Eve incautiously and heedlessly had looked upon the beauty of the tree of knowledge and upon its sweet fruit, and then had reached out her hand to eat, thus beginning our woe; but not so most holy Mary, who withdrew and locked up her senses, though She was in no such danger as Eve. Our first mother was overcome for our perdition, while our Queen conquered for our rescue and salvation.

351. For the sixth temptation the demons of envy approached, very dismayed at seeing the despair of the enemies who came before. Though they could not estimate the full perfection of the deeds of the Mother of sanctity, they nevertheless felt her invincible strength. They had seen Her so unmovable that they almost despaired of enticing Her to any of their wicked purposes. Nevertheless the insatiable hatred of the dragon and his immeasurable pride would not yield; they laid new plots in order to provoke the Lady most beloved of the Lord and of men to envy in others what She Herself possessed, and even what She abhorred as useless and dangerous. They drew up a long list of natural blessings possessed by others and denied to Her; and since they thought supernatural gifts would move Her more, they mentioned great spiritual favors and blessings which the Almighty had conferred upon others and not upon Her. But how could these lying representations move Her, who was the Mother of all the graces and gifts of heaven? For the blessings of all the creatures taken together were less than her single privilege of being the Mother of the Author of grace. Precisely because His Majesty had so favored Her, and because the fire of his charity burned within Her, She ardently desired the hand of the Most High to enrich and favor her fellowmen so much the more. How then could envy find room where charity abounded (I Cor. 13:4)? But the fierce enemies would not desist. They pictured to the Queen the apparent happiness of those who in their riches and good fortune considered themselves happy and exalted in this world. They induced several persons to approach most holy Mary and describe to Her the consolation of being rich and well to do. As if this deceitful happiness of mortals had not been condemned so often in Holy Scriptures (Ps. 48; Eccles. 5:9; Jer. 17:11; Mt. 19:24; I Tim. 6:9; etc.), and as if contempt of riches had not been the very science and doctrine which the Queen of heaven and her most holy Son had come to exemplify in their lives for the benefit of the whole world!

352. Those persons who came to our heavenly Mother were exhorted by Her to use the temporal goods and riches well and to give thanks for them to the Author of all good. She Herself fulfilled this duty, making up for the habitual ingratitude of men. Although the most humble Lady judged Herself unworthy of the least of the blessings of the Most High, yet in fact her own sanctity and exalted dignity gave witness to the words of Holy Scriptures saying in her name: *With me are glorious riches and justice; for my fruit is better than gold and the precious stone* (Prov. 8:18-19). *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue* (Ecclus. 24:25). In this exalted excellence of virtue She conquered all her enemies,

astonishing and confusing them by this new experience, for they were made to feel that where they had exerted their greatest force and their deepest cunning they gained the least and experienced the greatest repulse.

353. Nevertheless the demons stubbornly persisted and proceeded with the seventh temptation, which was that of sloth. They sought to cause in Her a corporeal indisposition, or a feeling of weakness and fatigue, accompanied by dejection of spirit. This is a little known trick of the demon, and under its cover the sin of laziness causes much ruin among souls and prevents much progress in virtue. They moreover suggested She postpone some exercises because of weariness in order to be able to perform them so much the better after having rested, which is no less cunning than many other tricks meant to deceive us, and we do not often discover them or know what to do against them. They also sought maliciously to hinder the most holy Lady in some exercises by means of human creatures whom they sent to visit Her at unseasonable times, trying to impede the performance of some of her holy exercises and occupations at the time and hour set for them. But all these delusions were detected by the most prudent and alert Princess. She evaded them by her wise precautions, without permitting the enemy to succeed in any of them, and acting in all things up to the standard of the most exquisite perfection. Her enemies were obliged to desist, hopelessly foiled and repulsed. Lucifer was full of rage against his companions and against himself. But renewing their rabid pride, they resolved to attack Her all together, as I shall relate in the following chapter.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY.

354. My daughter, although thou hast only very briefly summed up my lengthy battle against temptations, I desire thee from what thou hast written and knowest otherwise concerning these things to learn the manner of resisting and overcoming the powers of hell. The surest way of fighting the demon is to despise him, looking upon him as the enemy of the Most High, who has lost all fear of God and all hope of good, who in his stubbornness has deprived himself of all means of recovery and is without sorrow for his wickedness. Relying on this indubitable truth thou must show thyself far superior to him, exalted and unflinching in thy thoughts, and treat him as a contemner of the honor and worship of his God. Knowing thou art defending so just a cause do not let thy courage sink, but resist and counteract him with great strength and valor in all his attempts, as if thou wert fighting at the side of the Lord himself, for there is no doubt His Majesty assists all those who enter loyally into his battles. Thou art truly in good hope and in the way of eternal life and glory as long as thou dost labor faithfully for thy Lord and God.

355. Remember then the demons detest and abominate that which thou dost desire and love, namely the honor of God and thy eternal happiness, and they are striving to deprive thee of that which they cannot restore to themselves. God has reprobated the demon, while He offers to thee his grace, his virtues, and his strength in order to overcome his and thy enemy and procure for thee the happy end of eternal peace, only thou must work faithfully and keep the commandments of the Lord. The arrogance of the dragon is great (Is. 16:6), yet his weakness is greater, and he does not represent more than a weak atom in the face of the divine power. Yet since his cunning and malice far exceed that of mortals (Job 41:24), it is not advisable to allow the soul to bandy words with him,* whether he is present invisibly or visibly, for from his darksome mind, as from a smoking furnace, issue the shadows of confusion, obscuring the judgment of mortals; if they

* cf. *Conception* 139 [Ed.]

listen to him he will fill their minds with deceits and darkness, and thus they shall neither recognize the truth and beauty of virtue nor the vileness of his poisonous falsehoods. Because of this souls do not know how to *separate the precious from the vile* (Jer. 15:19), life from death, or truth from error, and they easily fall into the clutches of this fierce and wicked dragon.

356. In temptation let it be thy invariable course not to attend to anything which he proposes, not to listen, and not to argue with him concerning anything. If thou canst withdraw and place thyself at a distance, so as not to perceive or recognize his wicked attempts, so much the more secure shalt thou be for thus looking upon him only at a distance. The demon always seeks to prepare the way for his deceits, especially in souls whom he fears will resist his entrance unless he can thus facilitate his approach. He is accustomed to begin by sadness, dejection of heart, or by some movement or force which diverts and distracts the soul from the attention and affection due to the Lord; then he comes with his poison, concealed in the golden cup in order to diminish the horror of the soul. As soon as thou dost notice in thyself any of these signs (for thou hast thy experience, obedience and instruction for a guide), I desire thee with the wings of the dove to direct thy flight to the high refuge of the Almighty (Ps. 54:7-8), calling upon Him for aid and presenting the merits of my most holy Son. To me also thou must flee for protection since I am thy Mother and Teacher, and to thy devoted Angels and to all the rest of thy advocates in the Lord. Quickly close up thy senses and consider thyself as dead to them, or as a soul already belonging to the other life, whither the jurisdiction and the exacting tyranny of the serpent does not reach. Occupy thyself so much the more earnestly in the exercise of the virtue contrary to the vice to which he tempts thee, and especially in acts of faith, hope and love, which dispel cowardice and doubt and weaken the influence of discouragement and fear in the human heart (I Jn. 4:18).

357. The arguments for overcoming Lucifer thou must seek in God alone, and do not disclose them to thy enemy lest he meet thee with fallacies and confusing pretenses. Besides knowing it to be dangerous, esteem it as unworthy of thee to argue with him openly, or to pay particular attention to him, who is not only the enemy of thy Beloved but also of thee. Show thyself superior and magnanimous against him, and offer thyself always for the practice of all virtues. Be content with this treasure and withdraw thyself, for the most skillful battle of the sons of God consists in fleeing farthest from evil. The demon is proud and is deeply hurt by contempt; in the presumption of his arrogance and vanity he desires above all the attention of men; for this reason he is so persistent in pursuing us step by step, for in his deceitfulness he cannot rely upon the force of truth, but on his persistent counterfeiting of the good and the true. As long as this slave of wickedness is not despised he never believes himself discovered, and he continues, like an importunate fly, to buzz about the spot tainted by the greatest corruption.

358. Not less warily must thou conduct thyself when thy enemy makes use of other creatures for thy destruction. This he does in two ways, either leading them on to immoderate love or to undue dislike or hatred. As soon as thou dost notice a disorderly affection in those with whom thou speakest, observe the same precaution as in fleeing from the demon, yet with this difference, that while thou hatest him as thy enemy thou consider the others as creatures of God, and hence thou must not deny them what in His Majesty and for Him thou owest them. Yet regarding withdrawing from them, act as if they were thy enemies, for in regard to the service which the Lord requires of thee, and in regard to thy present condition, it is the demon who operates in these persons in order to separate thee from the Lord and what thou dost owe Him. If on the other hand they hate and persecute thee, answer them with meekness and love, praying for them with inmost affection from thy heart (Mt. 5:44). If it becomes necessary, soothe the wrath

of thy persecutors with sweet words, and undeceive those who are led astray by false reports. Do this not in order to excuse thyself but in order to pacify thy brethren, and for their inward and outward peace; thus thou shalt at one and the same time conquer thyself and those who hate thee. In order to be well practiced in this way of acting it is necessary to cut off the very roots of the capital sins, tear them out, and die to the movements of the appetites, for in these appetites the seven capital vices to which the demon leads men are rooted, and in these disorderly and undisciplined passions he sows the germs of the seven capital sins.