

Life of the Spirit

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A DIURNAL FOR JULY

BY

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1. We must leave to him all our anxieties—the loved one whose faith seems almost to have failed, and be certain that love is in his heart still and that all *will* come right. You will not be afraid to live, for ‘neither breadth, nor length, nor height, nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come’, can separate you from the love of Christ. You will not be afraid to live, nor when the hour comes, to go down with him into the Valley of Shadow. How *should* you be afraid, for you can only say ‘I live: now not I, but Christ liveth in me’.

2. Prayer makes us in a sense divine. It is the magic wand of the fairy tale which changes the ugly duckling into a Prince, and we seem, as indeed we are, of the Blood Royal. Prayer gives peace, strength, takes self away and puts in its place God.

3. He is ours to see with the mind of faith, to love with the heart, but we must clamber up above ourselves and the turmoil of the world if we would hear the gentle wind of his approach, feel the stir of his presence. By our *faith*, not *feeling*. His powerful personality overwhelms us.

4. Sin, we must remember, need not spell failure. Sin is the motive not of discouragement but of greater *love*, for ‘to whom much is forgiven he loveth much, to whom less is forgiven he loveth less’. It was love that helped St Peter to climb back to his pedestal.

5. The Paschal supper—the Mass—the same banquet. The most intimate and familiar meeting under which any mystery could be veiled. The same radiant figure. The same Christ, even more real, comes to help us.

6. Our Lord is the great Apostle because he will never unburden himself to us, we feel it almost a lack that we speak and he never answers, that he seems so aloof there dwelling in that Tabernacle, and yet, you know, almost our greatest comfort is to find someone who will listen.

7. If in our prayer at Holy Communion gazing first at the exquisite beauty of his humanity and then pushing that aside and getting down, gazing somehow at the divinity—Oh! *that* would transfigure and change us, make us like himself. Who can live with a consuming fire? We can and be burned clean by it. Our past is the preparation, the getting ready, the pushing aside of thing after thing, getting down to the heart and centre of it, and then we must wait for God. All we can do is to build our altar, lay on it the dry sticks of our own prayer, place on it the victim and await the fire.

8. Some people are possessed of their possessions . . . give it up—it's holding you, not you it. You are one of its possessions, not it one of yours. It's all wrong isn't it? Isn't it dreadfully evident too in our lives. Things once a help, now a hindrance. It was *sacred*, a gift of God, now God asks it back for it is blocking our path, harmful to us, but if it does we are perfectly miserable. What is *anything* added to God, if you take *God* away you take everything, nothing else really matters except God.

9. Standing in our stalls we have stepped down into the arena of Christian life. 'Thy kingdom come', to further this we have contributed our share.

10. Forget yourself in God. He fills the world from horizon to horizon. He is surrounding us. See him in nature, hear him in the tramp of men, find him in our heart. Then our hearts will be the vestibule of heaven.

11. In prayer God will give you what he wants you to have—perhaps some single idea to carry about with you always. Ask him here in his human presence, ask the grace of walking with him always, living with him, seeing him in his Mass morning by morning. Have that intimacy with divine things. He is the centre of your day. Ask his grace to get yourself such graces as he has in store for you.

12. Someone has lifted me to himself, 'you are not servants, friends'. We *should* know his ways. We are lifted to those great heights. The Wisdom, power and energy of his life will carry us. Two men there were who built a house of stone, and the wind came and the rain—all the tumult and storm of our lives. And one house fell, and great was its ruin, because it was built on sand. The other—no better house—stood, it was founded on the rock. Christ is the Rock on which men building shall not build in vain.

13. The *Anima Christi* 'Passion of Christ strengthen me' is a fine little prayer in trouble. Why did our Lord bear his suffering so bravely. *Because he loved*. We have got to realise where he got

his courage. He got it from *where he loved*—and we shall get it there too.

14. Once he was preached by means of the Rosary, and we ourselves may learn yet more of him as our beads pass through our fingers, and when we have learnt let us go down and make him known to those whom God gives to our charge—our fellow men.

15. '*Sedes Sapientiae*'—she will teach us as we kneel at her feet reciting the Rosary, the greatest mysteries of faith.

16. The more complete our dependence on God the really easier life becomes—not easier to measure, but life really lived. God at one end of the telephone, we at the other. This was our Lady's way, listening, ready to obey. Detachment. There is only one thing necessary. Life so lived may be hard, but it is much easier. Look at the austere saints. They seemed to lead very hard lives—unhappy lives—whitewashed cell, no colours—yet interiorly they were extraordinarily happy. Happiness doesn't depend on external things. It doesn't make you, you make it. With bold energy mould it to your own ideas. Don't be bored—the world is a wonderful place to a child. Bored people have no life, no individuality—they can't amuse themselves. It is best to get along with very little—ideal. What we mean by Poverty. To be dependent upon externals means losing God. The less there is of you the more of God, the more undivided you are the more you will find God, and if you find God you will find life.

17. Am I *generous*? What would our Lord say? If I can answer that I am generous all is right—if not all is wrong. If you love people you are generous, if not you are selfish. Love is generous—a blaze—a thing which consumes, devours, a flame is love—something that burns—a dart on fire—is generous.

18. If you were to go through all your own particular troubles you would find more still of the same thing in the life of the Master. We are mere followers. The cross is what he aimed at, and so we should at least stifle our complaints.

19. The work, then, of the Holy Ghost is twofold: it is to inflame the love, and it is to enlighten the mind. Let me wait patiently for this illumination of my spirit by the Holy Spirit, putting no obstacle in the way, praying daily for that illumination which shall light as by a vision my view of life.

20. 'Our fellow in the manger lying, our food within the supper room, our ransom on the Cross, when dying, our prize in his own kingly home.' I must therefore always be conscious of his humanity. I must realise that my sorrows are akin to his, that my difficulties are such that he will understand that, though his strength is divine

and is upheld by all the force of his Godhead, his compassion is thereby not less human, that he is God indeed from all eternity, but man as truly from the moment of the Incarnation. Man to understand my experience, God to help: man to suffer and die, God that death and suffering may have infinite avail. Oh, the dignity of my human nature, that it, too, is clothed about the strength of God. Oh the real union achieved in the Blessed Sacrament when I am one with Christ! No wonder Lacordaire broke out in accents of human love in his address to his Redeemer: 'O Father, O Master, O Friend, O Jesus!' There is a real relationship of love between me and his humanity.

21. Let us count up in some leisure moment of prayer all the gifts we have, making a litany of them one by one—things—people—spiritual gifts, not merely to say these he gave me but to remember that I must give them back.

22. It behoves me to keep ever fresh in mind the passion of our Lord. How is this best to be done? By a tender devotion to the Five Wounds of Christ. . . . No one can be unmanned, made effeminate by the sight of a wound. The sight must steady me, give me the necessary sternness to meet life sturdily, yet it adds to all this strength the tenderness of love. At Communion and when I make my visit, and words and thoughts seem to fail, let me turn to these 'dumb mouths' that open their ruby lips to beg the voice and utterance of my love.

23. You read in the legends of the saints that Christ sometimes came to them carrying a crown of thorns and roses. The rose, after all, must fall to pieces and in your hearts when you pluck your rose, you may get a thorn as well. The old paganism pointed rather to the rose and in grappling it you were in danger of tearing yourself. Christ pointed to the thorns. If you choose the thorns there must be a rose with it, they go together, part of a whole.

24. God is the one thing necessary; busyness is not necessary—Mary chose the better part.

25. Love alone will help us to understand life's sorrow. Love will be on either side of thee—love's hands held out to thee—love will explain all to thee—thou wilt go down into the deep *with* love. 'Love is his token. Who told it to you? *Love*. Wherefore told he it to you? For *Love*.'

26. . . . to gaze at God and having seen him, to stir other to the wonder of his presence.

27. But all this activity in every direction supposes in every case an inner and divine life. The service of man is undertaken out of a love of God and because it is through love of man the

love of God finds one mode of its expression. Divine Office or shorter Offices in honour of our Lady are therefore part of the honorarium of the day—meditation, rosary, examination of conscience, exercises of one form of piety or another, to recall the purpose of life, its professional purpose to the nun; for God is her Lover and she is his spouse.

28. We have troubles because we fight for the first place; we are so anxious to get ahead; we shall only find happiness when we find it in doing the will of another, most of all God's; and we shall learn at least that life has no burden except for those who are frightened for themselves, but for those who are really living for others—perfect peace.

29. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart'—but in doing so we shall suffer anguish of heart. We are his followers and we must remember we are following one who walked with bleeding feet and a thorn-crowned head. Can we ask that our life should be *easier*?

30. Let us work round our cell, our room, let us count up the possible gifts we could make, the potential gifts, there are so many of them. We have all something we could give. Think of your room or cell. All are symbols, what do they stand for? Ambition? Hope? Friendship? They have gathered themselves together—so many things and people. And the widow's two small coins that she loved and gave—and the giving meant hardship and difficulty of life—and she gave it gradually—one after the other.

31. All life is just a divine gift to us. Our start in life, our progress and the things that hurt and pain, and all our friendships are his gifts to us. What a fresh world it would be if we could keep the memory of that thought—'I am the beginning'.