

Life of the Spirit

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A DIURNAL FOR MARCH

BY

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THE more we fall back on God the more he will support us. Under us are Everlasting Arms. Into thy hands, O Lord, I come. Our hands are put together, clasped, when dying and when dead. A sign of complete dependence on him. Let us recognise now, before we are dead, that he is master. Do we fear death? We must comfort ourselves with the thought that he rules all the world—death is only the veil torn asunder—death lifts the veil and shows what has been there all the time. As though we passed through a strange country while we slept in the darkness and woke at dawn and saw wide stretches of wonder and beauty, close to us all the time, but unseen, unsuspected. Just so will death wake us—and we shall see.

2. Of ourselves we can do nothing, but supported by God we can face *everything*.

3. Sufficient for the day is the evil. Don't be anxious or get excited—it doesn't matter, *he* can't fail, and you can't possibly hear if you are in that tumult. He can command the storm and calm the waves; he did once, but it is his way to leave us to tranquillise our own storms. We must try earnestly to secure that peace. How are we to get it? Our Lord gives us the whole reason of our tranquillity and peace—'God is your Father, be not solicitous—Why are you troubled?'

4. The Rosary is daily teaching us some mystery in the life of Christ. 'This is my beloved Son, hear you him.' We are called into the kingdom of his dear Son. We must watch—listen. 'Come unto me.' 'Learn of me.' 'Follow me.'

5. It is part of our very duty to empty our hearts for God to take entire possession.

6. Hardness—difficulty? Walk on the hills following *him*, glori-

¹ This is a second selection of an anthology of Fr Bede Jarrett's sayings during retreats to a community in the north of England and set down by one of the community. Cf. LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, November, 1949.

fyng, praising. *Love* endureth all things. Love finds all possible because beyond hardness it sees a beckoning hand and hears a voice it knows—and it glorifies and follows.

7. The crown of thorns shows you how to suffer your responsibilities. You have others depending on you, your crown is edged with thorns. We see the cross he has to carry and we know that everyone who would be his follower must carry his own cross. Has he not said, 'If anyone will come after me he must take up his cross and follow me'? We are never free of suffering, we are never meant to be.

8. We are blind and stupid but if he really does want a thing of us he will go out of his way to put it in front of us. God's fatherhood will not only have the will that we should do something but he will *tell* us. A voice will whisper in my ear. This is the inspired description of life—the voice will tell me—'Turn to the right—turn to the left—this is the path, walk therein'. If he is our Father that will follow.

9. Meekness is tremendously strong, gets the greatest out of life, brightens it; there are no shadows, no fears. It has the greatest, it cannot lose, looks on the future with untroubled eyes, dreads nothing at all, you can never frighten it. It holds what cannot fail, takes life as it comes and leaves the rest—that's meekness.

10. Possess God—you will be poor but possessing all things.

11. Our Lord said 'Peace be to you' and showed them the wounds in his hands and feet and side. Peace was rather a dreadful thing to those twelve frightened men gathered in that upper chamber, 'for fear of the Jews'. It was only to be reached through pain and suffering and desolation. God's will for us; and peace is only to be won through union with God's will—obedience—that is peace.

12. Look up to God. If we only knew him we should be swept off our feet with love—that is what heaven is, just seeing God. Our whole heart cries out for God—to know him better—to love him more. More of God, less of self.

13. We must see God's will in every duty, in every child we come across, the most unattractive and troublesome, each one is chosen and sent by God *for me*. Each member of the Community—God's will for me. We are kept waiting for someone or something—again, God's will. God's will in all we come in contact with, in all we see or handle, God in the pen, God in the paper, God in *all*.

14. God has care of us and is ever talking to us. Your life has got to consist in listening. It is the idea of all the Gospels, God and you—God talking, you listening and then going away and doing what you have been ~~told to~~ do.

15. 'He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is his name.' She who was treated so generously has not forgotten, and she will treat us generously if we turn to her. It is the way of goodness to give whatever mercy has, and she is the supremest type of goodness and mercy, and she will give to us.

16. Holding him before us will as it were make us one with him. Building our spiritual life on hope and love, uniting ourselves to him, we shall see life through his eyes, judge as he judges, treat suffering and other people's distress as he treated it. We meet life with something of his joyousness, see the world as he saw it—the handwriting of his father. Life lived with Christ—he is the centre, the lasting reality amid a world of dreams.

17. Children are impressed not by what we say but by what we are. A child may be put off higher ideals by the failure of a teacher to aim high.

18. We know by faith the road, *he is the way*. In him, following him we shall arrive.

19. Contemplation. That is what we are doing when we say the Rosary. Actually watching his life as though we sat and watched a film, picture by picture passing on the screen before us. It is a film of the fifteen mysteries beginning with the Annunciation and birth of our Lord and ending with the crowning of his Mother. His life shown to us if we say it devoutly, the life of Christ. I must watch the Master and try to see as he sees and practise what he practises—I must try to live the Christ-like life.

20. Lay *all* aside, or there might be something you might cling to. Look round on your life and see what things hold you. What do they stand for? 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy *whole* heart' is not a counsel but a commandment. All that religious life means is that we have a more literal interpretation of it.

21. Must our blessed Lord have always felt happy when he was doing his Father's will to the uttermost? *Must he?* Was it always easy for him because he loved? 'Have confidence, I have overcome the world', he said that evening at supper—and half an hour later he was in the garden of Agony, beaten, drowned, crushed by sorrow, the blood breaking forth on him, forced out by anguish. Could we have gone to him in the garden and taken him by the shoulder and said 'Are you happy?' Could we? And later—not easy, surely, for that breaking heart and thorn-crowned head. Happy!

22. We are followers of a crucified Master. All monasticism should have about it a certain lenten air, we being dignified enough to carry our own burden and keep our supreme friendship for him.

23. We are the living body, the head is Christ and through us

flows the rhythm of life affected primarily by our blessed Lord and secondly by ourselves. We are lowering the spiritual temperature of the whole world if we do not perform our duty. God was willing to spare the city for the sake of ten or even five *good* men, they would have raised the spiritual temperature of the city sufficiently. Now suppose in cities over the world Religious Houses are established and enabled to carry on their religious work by the people, suppose the religious *don't* carry out their obligations, the others have discharged their duty but those inside have not carried out their part. People in temptation, people needing the guidance of God, people who have to face trials, people in lack or need, these people are all going to be helped or hindered by the fervour or carelessness of the lives of the religious of the place.

24. Goodness does not always walk with eager stride. Our Lord says 'You love—do what I tell you—not *feel, do*. Go with dragging feet if you will, but follow me.'

25. Try to make other people's life easier. In a world so often overcast and rather dreary, it is possible for us to contribute some lightening. Don't talk of our troubles, our aches and pains, don't burden others with our tale of woe. We have a friend who is anxious we should unburden ourselves to him, he will always listen. It is better to walk one's own way *strong*—finding in him our friend, and content with our *Perfect Friend*.

26. Generosity is what he asks of us, that we should follow the Leader, and the Leader may ask of us something foolish, something even dangerous. He says 'Follow me' and foolish or dangerous you must follow—however dangerous. Foolish isn't it? But *follow your leader*; sometimes it will seem foolish, sometimes he will lead into danger, but always he will be generous and if you follow you must be generous. It is high, fine, noble.

27. God's greatest gift to man in the order of nature, and almost the greatest even in the supernatural plane, is the gift of making and securing friends.

28. Once a man has entered into a desert and bidden farewell to the noises and distractions of his fellows, the need for other defences against the world is less obvious and indeed less important. But plunge a man into the midst of these distractions, and the soul's need now for restraint and control is overwhelmingly apparent. Hence the friars put aside many of the safeguards that till their time had been considered essential, they were forced to adopt others that were newer and more intense. They renounced their cloister and created mysticism. They threw over the sanctuary of the cell

and formed another within their hearts where in faith and love they could remould the world, 'nearer to the heart's desire.'

29. He understands as no one else can possibly understand. He is our friend and we can find no better friend. He is the friend of the world and he is our friend because he is above us and reaches to the height of God, nothing lacking in him, no moment when he will fail us—he will not let us down whose arms are everlasting and will not weary as they carry us across the desert of life.

30. Fear! Fear creates so many evils, panic has been the cause of so much wrong; so many outrages in time of war and peace are done in panic, so many spiritual depths are never sounded and so many spiritual heights are never climbed because men have not faith. Almost, perhaps, the deepest need is to know that he is there, to be content that he is there to ask him for nothing so doing how can we be afraid!

31. If we have a heart empty he takes possession. 'Having nothing, yet possessing all things.'



SUFFERING AND HOLINESS

BY

DOM OSWALD SUMNER



ONE day at Segovia a picture of Christ spoke to St John of the Cross. "Brother John, ask me for what you wish, and I will give it you for the service you have done me". And I said to him: "Lord, what I wish you to give me are sufferings to be borne for your sake, and that I may be despised and regarded as worthless".

This little incident taken from the life of the Doctor of Mystical Prayer is a suitable approach to the question of suffering and holiness. We see at once that at the top of the ladder of holiness there are degrees where the one desire is to suffer and be despised, to be so torn to pieces by the tongues of others, by the bodily injuries they inflict on one, or by the ravages of disease, that the saint has reproduced in himself something of the sufferings of Christ. His suffering contains no element of egotistic self-pity but is lovingly embraced as the most perfect expression of his compassion and love for Christ.

All sufferings are the result of original sin which has brought about a disintegration of man in his spirit by the loss of supernatural grace, in his psyche, as we may call the higher functions of man that depend on his bodily organism, by the upsetting of his psychic functions.