

KNOWING THE LOVE OF GOD

Lessons from a Spiritual Master

Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.

Lighthouse Catholic Media

De Kalb, Illinois

Originally published under the title *The Last Writings of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange* by New City Press, 1969. Originally translated by Raymond Smith, O.P., and Rod Gorton. In this 2015 edition, there have been minor improvements to the translation. A new foreword and introduction have also been added.

NIHIL OBSTAT: MARTINUS S. RUSHFORP, PHD.
CENSOR LIBRORUM

IMPRIMATUR: † FRANCISCUS IOANNES MUGAVERO, D.D.
EPISCOPUS BRUKLYNIENSIS
BRUKLYNI DIE 7 MAII 1969

Cover art: *Return of the Prodigal Son*
by Bartolome Esteban Murillo (1617–1682)
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain

Cover Design by Geoff Butz and Christopher Murphy
Layout and Design by Denise Fath

© 2015 **Lighthouse Catholic Media**
733 Enterprise Ave., DeKalb, IL 60115, (866) 767-3155

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review, without permission from Lighthouse Catholic Media.

ISBN Number: 978-1-942759-00-3

Printed in the United States of America

Special Acknowledgment

Special thanks to Dr. Scott Hahn for enabling us to rescue this masterpiece from obscurity. This book would not be available without his tremendous help. Please remember Dr. Hahn, his family, and their intentions in your prayers.

FOREWORD

On the day of my ordination to the holy priesthood, my seminarian friend Michael Hendershott gave me a book as an ordination gift. On the first page Michael wrote: “May this book by our mutual friend serve to increase charity and truth as a token of gratitude for your help in increasing these in me.” The book was *The Last Writings of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance*, and the author was the man named in the title. Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance, O.P., was a French Dominican priest who lived from 1877 to 1964. A most faithful commentator on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and a staunch defender of the Angelic Doctor’s teachings, Garrigou-Lagrance was one of the greatest philosophers and theologians of the 20th century. In my seminary years, the many works of Garrigou-Lagrance brilliantly illuminated my philosophical and theological studies. Michael had this same experience, and, thus, could truly call Garrigou-Lagrance “our mutual friend.”

Despite my familiarity with Garrigou-Lagrance’s many writings, the book Michael gave me was one I had never seen before, largely due to its having been out of print for many years. *The Last Writings* (now titled *Knowing the Love of God*) is a collection of Garrigou-Lagrance’s retreat conferences as he preached them to his fellow Dominicans. Each chapter consists of one of these conferences, making this book a retreat in written form and the rich fruit of many decades of preaching, teaching, and profound prayer. Although I already had a plethora of books on my personal reading list, *Knowing the Love of God* was the first book I chose to

read after my priestly ordination. What I discovered therein was a precious gem of spiritual theology put forward in an intellectually engaging and widely accessible form. Garrigou-Lagrange is, perhaps, best known for his two-volume masterpiece on spiritual theology, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life: Prelude of Eternal Life*, at the end of which he offers an outline for preaching a retreat on progress in the spiritual life. *Knowing the Love of God* follows this outline almost exactly, treating the spiritual life in a theologically scientific manner which both enlightens the trained theologian and inspires the simple soul.

In *Knowing the Love of God*, Garrigou-Lagrange treats first the goal or aim of our spiritual life, namely, attaining supernatural happiness with God in Heaven. Next, he speaks of sin and its consequences as the obstacles to this goal and the impediments to our spiritual progress. He then considers Our Lord Jesus and His redemptive power as the source of our spiritual growth, a growth demanding death to sin and configuration to Christ. After discussing at length the various means for achieving this growth, he explains, finally, the union with God attainable in this life, a veritable foretaste of eternal beatitude.

Since reading *Knowing the Love of God*, I have been blessed to draw from its insights not only for my own spiritual life, but also for preaching, giving retreat talks, and providing spiritual direction. When I offered a copy of it to Mark Middendorf, President of Lighthouse Catholic Media, he found it so spiritually valuable that he wanted to have it reprinted. Due to the timeless clarity of his doctrine, Garrigou-Lagrange provides in these pages both an enduring contribution to spiritual theology and concrete spiritual guidance to clergy and laity alike. In an age when the duties of daily life make it difficult, if not impossible, for so many to spend several days away from family or work for a retreat, *Knowing the Love of God* affords the opportunity to make that retreat from home and thereby grow in the knowledge and love of Our Lord. It is my hope

and prayer that this work of spiritual wisdom, prepared on the fiftieth anniversary of Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange's passing from earthly life, will reap an abundant harvest in the hearts of many Catholics and aid them in obtaining life everlasting.

Rev. Timothy J. Draper
Holy Cross Catholic Church
Batavia, IL
Feast of St. Dominic

INTRODUCTION

The Formation of a Pope and Saint

When Catholics of the twenty-first century consider the life and legacy of St. John Paul II, they may be inclined to ask: *what type of formation and instruction contributed to this great man's spiritual legacy?* While one could list numerous significant influences, one thing is certain: St. Thomas Aquinas and those spiritual masters who studied and commented on the writings of the Angelic Doctor served as the robust foundation of John Paul II's Catholic formation.

Writing on the fiftieth anniversary of his priestly ordination, Pope John Paul II fondly remembered the “volumes of Saint Thomas with commentaries” that guided his priestly formation. “I was learning my theology, so to speak, from the ‘center’ of a great theological tradition.” This sacred learning was not merely intellectual. Indeed, it greatly shaped his spiritual life and inspired within the seminarian Karol Wojtyła “many hours of meditation.”¹

After his ordination, love for the truth led the twenty-six-year-old priest to travel the great distance from Poland to the Pontifical Athenaeum (now University) of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome. He explained that he enrolled at the “Angelicum” in order “to deepen my knowledge of the teaching of the Common Doctor.”²

1 John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 17.

2 John Paul II, “Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of Our

Specifically, the future Pope sought out the personal instruction of the faculty's most famous professor: Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (1877–1964).³ Fr. Wojtyła wanted to study St. Thomas and the Thomist tradition under the wise guidance of the Angelicum's beloved "Fr. Garrigou."⁴

The Pope would later explain that his choice of mentor was not based on passing sentiment. Three decades later—a little over a year after he ascended to the Chair of St. Peter—John Paul II returned to his Roman *alma mater*. On November 17, 1979, as he revisited the Angelicum classrooms of his youth, the Pope recalled with great fondness: "Every Saturday... we came to hear the lectures of Père Garrigou-Lagrange: a great theologian, a man expert in the spiritual sciences, who at over seventy years of age kept alive a surprising vivacity!" He was a professor "who showed by his living that he was always teaching."⁵ In the saint's estimation, Garrigou-Lagrange was not one teacher among many. He was a true master of the spiritual life.

Who Was Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange?

The Dominican theologian Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange was a unique blessing to the Church. Like many great men, he was revered even during his own day, suffered prejudice and neglect subsequent to his death, and has recently received renewed attention and interest.⁶ While it is clear that the instruction of

Times," *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 17, 1979: 6–8.

3 For more information about St. John Paul II's relationship with Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange see: Cajetan Cuddy, O.P., and Romanus Cessario, O.P., "Witness to Faith: George Weigel, Blessed John Paul II, and the Theological Life," *Nova et Vetera* 10, no. 1 (2012): 1–13.

4 For a concise summary of the Thomist tradition see Romanus Cessario, O.P., *A Short History of Thomism* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

5 P. Raymond Sorgia, O.P., "Record of an Unforgettable Saturday," in *John Paul II at the Angelicum* (Rome: Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, 1980), 38–39.

6 For example, see: Richard Peddicord, O.P., *The Sacred Monster of Thomism:*

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange exercised a formative role in the thought of St. John Paul II, we are led to ask: *who was Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange and what were his influences?*

Gontran-Marie Garrigou-Lagrange was born in Auch, France on February 21, 1877. The truth of God overwhelmed Garrigou while he was a young medical student. He experienced a life-changing conversion while reading a book by a French Catholic layman named Ernest Hello. "I saw in the blink of an eye that this was not a truth relative to our knowledge, but an absolute truth that will not pass away but will appear more and more radiant up until we see God face to face."⁷ Garrigou-Lagrange sought entry within St. Dominic's Order of Preachers and was clothed in the black and white Dominican habit on October 10, 1897. He received the religious name "Reginald" after the famed thirteenth-century Dominican priest, Bl. Reginald of Orléans.

Br. Reginald's intellectual and spiritual mentor in the Dominican Order was the wise Fr. Ambroise Gardeil, O.P. (1859–1931). Under Gardeil's tutelage, he was introduced to the rich philosophical, theological, and spiritual legacy of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Thomist tradition. The writings of theologians like Cardinal Cajetan and John of St. Thomas helped the perennially fresh teaching of St. Thomas to come alive in the mind and heart of the Dominican student. Garrigou-Lagrange was ordained to the priesthood on September 28, 1902. Following his graduate studies, Fr. Garrigou taught philosophy and theology to his Dominican brothers in France.

His brilliance quickly attracted the attention of the Master of the Dominican Order, Bl. Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier (1832–1916), and in 1909 Fr. Garrigou was assigned to the Angelicum

An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2005); Aidan Nichols, O.P., *Reason with Piety: Garrigou-Lagrange in the Service of Catholic Thought* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2008).

⁷ See M.-Rosaire Gagnebet, "L'œuvre du P. Garrigou-Lagrange: itinéraire intellectuel et spirituel vers Dieu," *Angelicum* 42 (1965): 9–10.

where he would teach for half a century. He wrote over fifty books and three hundred articles during the course of his academic career. Additionally, he served as a Consultor to the Holy Office (now the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) and as a theological advisor to popes from Benedict XV through St. John XXIII. He died in Rome on February 15, 1964—the feast day of the Dominican Rhineland mystic, Bl. Henry Suso (1300–1366). Garrigou-Lagrange lies buried in the Dominican mausoleum in the Campo Verano Cemetery in Rome.

A Spiritual Master

While a brilliant scholar, Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange was first and foremost a Dominican priest. Like all faithful sons of St. Dominic, the primary intent throughout his whole life remained the salvation of souls. Because of this zeal for the truth of God's love, Fr. Garrigou was not an ivory tower academic. He was a holy priest. He was known for his pastoral availability and personal approachability. He was a true spiritual father.

His classes were imbued with life and wisdom. One of Fr. Garrigou's former students remembered that he "was the consummate actor in the best sense of the word... I can compare him with the present Pope [John Paul II], with his charismatic, even prophetic gift of effective and provocative communication."⁸ Far from a dry, boring, or aloof professor, "in class, Garrigou's gestures, modulations, facial expressions, use of the blackboard, joviality and witty humor, etc., were truly masterful." "He was famous for the rich content and brilliant delivery of his lectures."⁹ Indeed, another

8 Fr. Joseph De Torre, "My Personal Memories of Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P." (Manila: 2001), 2. Though originally published as a booklet in the Philippines, an edited version of this essay was recently included as a chapter in the online volume: *Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.: Teacher of Thomism* (<http://educationatheoria.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/garrigou-teacher-thomism.pdf>).

9 Torre, 2.

student said that his “were probably the most fascinating lectures I have ever heard in Rome or elsewhere.”¹⁰

One former student recalled to the present author his final meeting with Fr. Garrigou. Towards the end of an oral final exam, Fr. Garrigou looked at the then young priest and said: “Father, may I ask you a question about the sacrament of penance?” The priest was surprised because this was not a topic they had covered in the course. Nonetheless, he agreed. The elderly Dominican then asked: “How often do you go to confession?” The young priest explained that he went with great frequency. And Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, pleased, said: “Very good: a priest can never be a good confessor without being a good penitent.” This was the final thing Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange ever said to the young priest. To this day, the priest fondly recalls this final encounter with Fr. Garrigou.

A highly sought-after preacher and retreat master, Garrigou-Lagrange traveled the world during his summer vacations giving conferences and retreats to priests and religious men and women. The volume you now hold in your hands contains the conferences he gave. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange loved his Savior, Jesus Christ. Fr. Garrigou was devoted to him whom St. Thomas Aquinas called the “wisest and best friend.”¹¹ This love informed all of Garrigou-Lagrange’s study, writing, teaching, and preaching. More than anything else, Garrigou-Lagrange loved Jesus and wanted everyone to know fully the truth of God’s love.

Knowing the Love of God was originally published in 1969 as *The Last Writings of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange*. In many ways this was a fitting title. How appropriate that Fr. Garrigou’s final published words should be collected in a book that shows—like the truth he so loved, lived, and taught—that our only end is God.

This book is a genuine treasure. It is the fruit of many years of sacred study and holy contemplation. Even over fifty years after its

¹⁰ Msgr. John M.T. Barton, “Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.,” *The Tablet*, February 29, 1964, 237.

¹¹ *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 108, art. 4, sed contra.

initial appearance, this book continues to help those known and loved by God to know and love the same God.

Rev. Cajetan Cuddy, O.P.
St. Joseph's Church
Greenwich Village, NY

CONTENTS

Foreword	xi
Introduction	xv
Our Theme.	1
Chapter I — The Goal: Glory and Grace	3
The Reply of the World.	3
The Reply of Reason	6
The Answer of Revelation	7
The Way to Glory	8
Fundamental Identity of the Life of Grace with the Life of Glory	10
The Holy Spirit in Us	12
Chapter II — Sin	15
The Obstacle	15
Malice of Sin	17
Venial Sin.	22
Consequences of Venial Sin	23
Purgatory.	25
Mastery.	26
Chapter III — The Redemptive Power of Christ	29
Redemptive Omnipotence.	29
The Personality of the Incarnate Word	31
The Charity of Christ.	35
The Mystical Body.	36

Chapter IV — The Love of God	41
The First Commandment	41
Natural Love, Supernatural Love	42
The Love of God for Us.	44
The Response of the Saints.	48
Our Response	50
Chapter V — Fraternal Charity	53
Why the Love of God Ought to Extend Also to Our Neighbor	54
How to Practice Fraternal Charity	58
Chapter VI — Mortification.	65
Necessity of Mortification	68
Sublime Loftiness of the Supernatural End.	71
Ways of Mortification.	74
Effects of Mortification.	77
Chapter VII — Humility	79
Humility with Respect to God	80
Humility with Respect to One's Neighbor.	86
The Levels of Humility	88
Chapter VIII — Poverty	91
The Religious State: State of Consecration that Presupposes Separation	91
The Religious Value of Poverty	94
Chapter IX — Chastity	103
Separation	103
Consecration.	108
Chapter X — Obedience.	115
Separation	118
Consecration.	124

Chapter XI — The Cross.	129
Crosses of Sensibility	131
Crosses of the Spirit.	134
How to Carry the Cross	139
Chapter XII — The Efficacy of Prayer	143
Necessity of Prayer	143
Mental Prayer and Mortification	144
Efficacy of Prayer	144
The Source of the Efficacy of Prayer.	146
Chapter XIII — Mental Prayer	153
What is Mental Prayer?.	153
The Various Degrees	158
The Object.	159
How to Go About Mental Prayer	160
The Effects	163
Chapter XIV — Perseverance in Mental Prayer.	165
Necessity of This Perseverance.	165
To Trust.	167
To Allow Oneself to Be Led	175
Chapter XV — Docility to the Holy Spirit	177
The Movement of the Spirit	177
That Voice	181
To Follow the Voice of the Spirit	186
Chapter XVI — Zeal for the Glory of God and the Salvation of Souls	189
The Motive.	189
The Extension	193
How Is This Zeal to Be Exercised?	195

Chapter XVII — Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.	199
Why We Should Have a Great Devotion to the Holy Virgin	200
How to Practice This Devotion	206
The Fruits of This Devotion	209
Chapter XVIII — Union with God	213
What Is This Union?	213
Means to Obtain It	217
Conclusion.	221

OUR THEME

AT THE OUTSET of this retreat we wish to introduce the subject of our discussions. The fundamental theme we'll be progressing in is the spiritual life. The points to be developed are *the goal*: glory and supernatural life in Heaven; *the obstacles*: evil, sin, and its consequences; *the source*: Our Lord and His redemptive work. Next, we consider the spiritual growth of charity in terms of its two great movements, *death to sin*: by means of mortification, the practice of the three vows, and the acceptance of one's cross; and *configuration to Christ*: by means of prayer, docility to the Spirit of Christ, zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, and devotion to Mary. Lastly, we treat of *union with God*.

In considering these themes may the Lord grant us a spirit of recollection, supernatural attention, sincerity, generosity, and prayer. May the Holy Spirit inspire us all with the ardent desire for perfection, grant the author the faculty of treating his subject in a manner that is not too unworthy, and enable readers to penetrate the profound sense of words repeated and heard thousands of times. Finally, may the Holy Spirit grant us the grace of total self-giving in a perfect act of charity.

The Goal: Glory and Grace

They are the ones He chose specially long ago and conformed to become true images of His Son, so that His Son might be the eldest of many brothers—Romans 8:29

IN ORDER to understand what spiritual progress should be, we first must examine the end to which it tends. St. Paul expresses the idea in the text cited above, namely, a *configuration or conformity to the Word of God*. We have often been reminded of this divine doctrine but it is so sublime that we can never pretend to understand it sufficiently. Consequently, if we wish to penetrate its profound meaning we must gradually rise above ourselves. In attempting to determine our ultimate goal we shall proceed by exclusion, setting aside the lesser things that the spirit of the world proposes to us, until, after the necessary ascent, we arrive at a true formulation of our supreme end.

The Reply of the World

Why were we made? The world answers: "We were made for enjoyment, for pleasure, the pleasure of the body, the senses, the imagination, the intellect, and the heart." Enjoyment! This is to be the end, the rule, the motive of our activity. Such is the principle of paganism and every day it is becoming more and more that of

the present world. At times it is a temptation for Christians also, even for us religious.

Evidently such an answer to the problem of life cannot be accepted by the unfortunate of this world who justly feel provoked to anger and exasperation. What sense does it really have for other men? This ideal or norm of life in reality makes man a slave of the events that procure or take away his pleasures; a slave of his passions and his very desires; a slave of jealousy and anger that rise within him against his own will itself; a slave of other men who can snatch away the miserable goods that form his happiness. By attempting to place himself at the center of all and to reduce all to himself, the man ruled by pleasure becomes the slave of all. He finds only disillusionment and disgust in the miserable, fleeting possessions that he has made his ultimate end. Moreover, he destroys within himself the very dignity of his manhood because, animal-like, he lives only for his body. With death he will lose everything and, what is worse, often he does not take into account the terrible punishments that await him.

Some persons have sought to live this way even in the religious life. Common life became for them a torment, the religious observances an insupportable yoke. They suffered their whole lives and, seeking pleasure everywhere, they lost their souls.

Then the world corrects its maxim and says to us: "The goal of man is an ordered and well-conceived quest for his own interests, a thing not accomplished without work, effort, and sacrifice." To acquire for oneself a position in the world! Who would dare to deny that at times this is also a temptation for us? It happens that certain religious work long years to gain a position in the community and to attain some dignity. Everything they do is subordinated to such an objective. The drive is always present and it would end up having mastery if God did not restore these religious to the right road with an opportune humiliation.

Such an attitude comes from the coldest and most arid egoism. Yet the egoist is not happy. He knows only his pleasures and personal satisfactions but has destroyed the more noble aspirations of the heart. Everyone avoids him so that his end is sad and solitary. If he thinks about another life, every hope seems denied him. He has lived only for the world and now he must leave the world.

Not even this maxim is satisfactory and so the world proposes a third: the respect of one's own dignity, that is, fulfilling one's individual and social duties. Such is the indifferent reply which stems from human pride. Man is made to develop his own intellectual and moral personality. In recent years, under the influence of Modernism we have seen this doctrine upheld even in religious circles. The passive virtues of humility, obedience and patience have been quite depreciated, while the active and social virtues that affirm personal initiative have been exalted.

This attitude contains a misapprehension. The man who pretends to love the good through the love of both his own dignity and his personal judgment concerning the good of his own personality, in reality does not love the good but rather adores himself and believes himself to be a god. If he truly loved the good he would certainly love even more than himself, and above everything else, the source of every good and of all justice, that is, the Good that is God.

Pride is always something hard and cold. The person that more or less consciously refuses to humble himself, to obey, to rise above himself to the love of God is not able to find happiness, which does not, in fact, exist in any finite good. Perhaps this person recklessly spends himself in external works both for the pleasure of spreading his ideas and of dominating. One day or other this life has to end and for those lacking charity, death appears as something absurd that comes to destroy in an instant the moral edifice constructed with the efforts of a lifetime.

The Reply of Reason

To know and to love God. The light of reason alone shows us that the ultimate end of man consists in knowing God and loving Him above all things. If we had been created in a purely natural state, with an immortal soul but without grace, our ultimate end would be precisely that of knowing and loving God. However, like the great pagan philosophers, we would have known Him only through the perfections that exist in His creatures. God would have been for us only the first cause of the universe, the supreme intellect that governs creation. We would have loved Him as the author of nature, with a love that exists between inferior and superior. There would not have been any intimacy, only admiration, respect, gratitude, without that gentle and simple familiarity that is in the souls of the sons of God. We would have been the servants not the sons of God.

Such a natural ultimate end is in itself something sublime, and could be pursued and possessed by all. Furthermore, the possession of God on the part of one would neither impede another's possession nor generate the least jealousy. It consists of a knowledge that cannot produce satiety, in a love that cannot exhaust the heart. This natural knowledge of God would leave unanswered many mysteries concerning the manner in which the divine perfections are interrelated, for example, the most inexorable justice with the most gentle mercy. The human intellect could do nothing less than exclaim: "Oh! If only I could see this God, source of all truth and goodness! If only it were given to me to contemplate this flaming sun from which the life of creation comes, the light of intelligence, and the energy of the will!"

The Answer of Revelation

Our true end, according to revelation, is to know God as He knows Himself, to see Him face to face as He sees Himself, directly and not through creatures. God was in no way obliged to grant us

participation in His intimate life but He could do so and through pure mercy wished to do so.

“We teach,” says St. Paul, “what Scripture calls: ‘the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him’ ” (1 Cor. 2:9). What the great men of this world and the masters of human wisdom have not known, “these are the very things that God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit reaches the depths of everything, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). St. John writes: “And eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God” (Jn. 17:3), and “My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He really is” (1 Jn. 3:2). “For me,” explains the Psalmist, “the reward of virtue is to see Your face, and, on waking, to gaze my fill on your likeness” (17:15).

This face-to-face vision of God is infinitely superior to the most sublime philosophy. We are destined to contemplate all the divine perfections, concentrated and harmonized in their first principle, to understand how one and the same love gives life to the most gentle mercy and the most inflexible justice, thus uniting in itself seemingly opposite attributes. We are destined to see how this love is identified with pure wisdom; how it embraces nothing that is not infinitely wise, and how all wisdom is changed into love. We are called to see this love that is identified with the Supreme Good that has been loved from eternity, to see divine Wisdom that is identified with the First Truth that has always been known. We are called to contemplate this eminent simplicity of God, this absolute pureness, the epitome of all perfections.

Who will be able to tell the joy that such a vision will produce if even now we are already entranced by the reflection of God’s perfections, scattered as they are in some small measure among

His creatures, by the enchantment of the sensible world, by the harmony of colors and sounds, and still more by the splendor of souls as revealed in His saints?

Finally, we are called to see the infinite fruitfulness of this Divine Nature which subsists in Three Persons; to contemplate face to face the eternal generation of the Word, splendor of the Father and image of His substance (Heb. 1:3); to see the ineffable Spiration of the Holy Spirit, this torrent of spiritual flame, the mutual love of Father and Son, which, from all eternity, unites them in a most absolute reciprocal self-giving.

Such a vision will produce in us a love of God so strong, so absolute that nothing can ever destroy it nor even diminish it. It will produce a love built on admiration, respect, and gratitude, but above all on friendship, with the simplicity and familiarity that this love presupposes. Through such a love we will enjoy above all else that God is God, that He is infinitely holy, infinitely merciful, infinitely just. It is a love that will make us adhere to all the decrees of His Providence in view of His glory, urging us to subject ourselves to what pleases Him so that He may reign eternally in us. Everlasting life for us will be to know God as He knows Himself, to love Him as He loves Himself.

The Way to Glory

Looking at this more thoroughly makes evident that such a knowledge and love cannot be realized in us unless God first deifies us in a certain manner in the depths of our soul. In the natural order man is capable of intellectual knowledge and of an illumined love superior to corporal love only because he possesses a spiritual soul. The situation is the same in the supernatural order where we are incapable of divine knowledge and divine love unless we first receive something of the very nature of God, unless our soul is deified in some way, that is to say, transformed in God. The blessed in Heaven can participate in the divine operations, in the very life of God,

precisely because they have received this nature from Him, just as a son receives his nature from his father.

From all eternity God necessarily generates a Son similar to Himself, the Word. He communicates to Him His nature without dividing or multiplying it; He makes Him God of God, Light of Light, the splendor of His substance. Purely gratuitously, He has wished to have other sons in time, adopted sons through a sonship that is not only moral but real since the love of God for His creature adds a new perfection. He has loved us, and this creative love has made us participate in the very principle of His intimate life. “They are the ones He chose specially long ago and intended to become true images of His Son, so that His Son might be the eldest of many brothers,” says St. Paul (Rom. 8:29). In this is found precisely the essence of the glory that God reserves for those He loves: “the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9).

The elect will become part of the very family of God as they enter into the circle of the Holy Trinity. In them the Father will generate His Word; the Father and the Son will issue forth Love. Charity will assimilate them to the Holy Spirit and meanwhile the vision will assimilate them to the Word, who in turn will make them similar to the Father whose expression He is. At that time we will be able to say truly that we know and love the Trinity that dwells in us as in a temple of glory, and we shall be in the Trinity, at the summit of Being, Thought, and Love. This is the glory, this is the goal to which our spiritual progress tends—configuration to the Word of God.

Fundamental Identity of the Life of Grace with the Life of Glory

The spiritual life is able to tend to such an exalted end only because it presupposes in us the seed of glory, that is, a supernatural spiritual life which is basically identified with everlasting life.

The acorn could not become an oak unless it were of the same species and had essentially the same life as the grown tree; the child could not become a man unless he already possessed a human nature, even though in an imperfect state. In the same way the Christian on earth could not become one of the blessed in Heaven unless he had previously received the divine life. To understand thoroughly the essence of the acorn, it is necessary to consider this essence in its perfect state in an oak tree. In the same way, if we wish to understand the essence of the life of grace in us, we must consider it as an embryonic form of everlasting life, as the very seed of glory, *semens gloriae*. Fundamentally, it is the same divine life but two differences are to be noted. Here below we can know God only obscurely through faith and not in the direct light of vision. Moreover, through the inconstancy of our free will we can lose supernatural life, while in Heaven it is impossible to be lost. Except for these two differences it is a question of the same divine life. The Holy Spirit already spoke through the mouth of Ezekiel (36:25–26): “I shall pour clean water over you and you will be cleansed. . . I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you.” To the Samaritan woman, Jesus spoke: “But anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life” (Jn. 4:14). “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me! Let the man come and drink who believes in Me! As Scripture says: From His breast shall flow fountains of living water” (Jn. 7:37–38). “Mine is not a Kingdom of this world” (Jn. 18:36); “For, you must know, the Kingdom of God is among you” (Lk. 17:21). Like the grain of mustard seed, the leaven that ferments the dough or the treasure