



The Following of Christ—“Anyone who wishes to follow Me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mk 8:34).

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

IN FOUR BOOKS
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Jesus Opens Our Eyes to Follow Him—“Jesus said to [the blind man], ‘Receive your sight. Your faith has made you well.’ Immediately, he received his sight and followed Jesus” (Lk 18:42f).

BOOK 1

Useful Admonitions for the Spiritual Life

CHAPTER 1

On Following Christ Our Model

NO ONE *who follows Me will ever walk in darkness* (Jn 8:12). These words of our Lord counsel all to walk in His footsteps. If you want to see clearly and avoid blindness of heart, it is His virtues you must imitate. Make it your aim to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.

2. Christ's teaching surpasses that of all the Saints. But to find this spiritual nourishment you must seek to have the Spirit of Christ. It is because we lack this Spirit that so often we listen to the Gospel without really hearing it. Those who fully understand Christ's words must labor to make their lives conform to His.

3. To be learned and able to discuss the Trinity will get you nowhere if you do not have humility, and therefore displease the Holy Trin-

ity. Lofty words neither save you nor make you a Saint; only a virtuous life makes you dear to God. It is better to experience contrition than to be able to define it.

To be well versed in Scripture and all the sayings of philosophers will not profit you if you are without God's love and His grace. *All things are vanity* (Eccl 1:2). Nothing matters except to love God and to serve Him only. The height of wisdom is to set your goal on heaven by despising the world.

4. How foolish it is to seek and to put your trust in riches that will pass. How foolish to go after worldly honors and to set yourself above others. How foolish to follow the impulses of the flesh, or to covet those things which so soon will cost you a heavy penalty.

How foolish to wish for a long life, but not care whether it is a good life; to be concerned only with the present, with never a thought of eternity and the endless joy that awaits you.

5. Often think of the proverb: "*The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing*" (Eccl 1:8). Be determined to detach your heart from the love of visible things, allowing it to center on those unseen.

heavenly sweetness is poured into our souls, our minds are strengthened and we experience spiritual joy.

In the cross is the height of virtue and the perfection of all sanctity. Without the cross there is no salvation for our souls, nor hope of life eternal. Take your cross, then, and follow Jesus, and you will go into everlasting life.

Remember that Jesus has gone before you bearing His cross and has given His life for you upon that cross, so that you may bear your own cross and long to die on it for love of Him. For if you die with Him, you will also live with Him; and if you have shared His suffering, you will also share His glory.

3. Behold how in the cross there is all and how all depends on our dying there; for there is no other way to life and interior peace except by way of the cross and by daily mortification. You can go anywhere you will, seek whatever you wish, but you will not find a higher road above nor safer road below than the road of the holy cross.

No matter how you plan things and arrange them to your liking, you still will find something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly, and so you will always find the cross. Either you will suffer bodily pain, or you will endure in your soul tribulation of spirit.

BOOK 3

On Interior Conversation

CHAPTER 1

On the Way Christ Speaks Inwardly to the Soul

“**I** WILL hear what the Lord God will speak *within me*” (Ps 85:9), says a devout soul. Blessed is that soul who hears the Lord speaking within, and from His lips receives the words of comfort.

Blessed are the ears that heed the inner whisperings of the Lord, and pay no attention to the deceitful murmurings of this world; and blessed indeed are the ears which do not listen to the loud voices from outside, but instead are attentive to Him, Who inwardly teaches the truth. Blessed also are the eyes which are closed to things outside, but gaze intently on things within.

Blessed are they who acquire virtue and labor, by spiritual and corporal works, to receive daily more and more God’s inward inspirations