

# IN HIS STEPS

## A Popular Exposition of the Spiritual Life

## VI.

Sister Charitina had been unavoidably detained and as she entered the room where her class in Christian Perfection had assembled, she was pleased to find her pupils intent in discussing the subject of their last instruction—the Instrumental Means of Christian Perfection. After their greeting, Rosemary disclosed the topic of their conversation:

"We have been trying to decide, Sister, which was the first and most necessary of the Instrumental Means of Perfection."

"Well, Rosemary, it is not difficult to answer that question. What, for instance, do you think it is that spurs the business man on to success? What is the 'urge' that causes him to press forward in building up a big business, to pile up a colossal fortune, to make a great reputation for himself in his particular line?"

Without a moment's hesitation, Rosemary replied: "Why, Sister, he has the determination to succeed in his undertaking."

"You are right, Rosemary," replied Sister Charitina. "This business man has a strong and persevering desire to succeed. Now what is this desire? A desire, as you know, has reference to some good which we wish to attain, but do not as yet enjoy. This desire is an inclination of the will towards some good which it is possible and suitable for us to attain. Now, the business man we are speaking of, who desires to build up a successful business and make a reputation and fortune for himself, has certainly set his heart upon this and he will not stop at anything, in order to attain success. He has put his whole heart—his will—into this determination to succeed. And the stronger this desire and determination, the greater the efforts he will make to gain his end and consequently the greater will be his success. They will tell you that such a man is possessed of but one idea—success in business. He thinks of nothing else by day; he dreams of nothing else by night."

"Is it any wonder, then, that we have in this country men who control 'big business,' like Field and Wanamaker, and capitalists like the Rockefellers, the Morgans and others, who started out as poor boys without either capital or friends, but succeeded 'beyond the dreams of avarice,' simply because they had determined wills and resolute desires to succeed in their respective lines?"

"Now just as it is in the natural order, so it is in the supernatural order. There can be no success in the Spiritual life unless there is first a strong and persevering desire to become holy. Therefore this strong and persevering desire to become holy is

the very first and most necessary Instrumental Means of Christian Perfection."

"But," interrupted Vera, "I do not understand, Sister, how merely wishing to attain perfection can really make one become perfect or holy."

"This is easily understood, Vera," continued Sister. "Simply wishing for Perfection does not mean anything. There must really be a strong determination of the will to attain perfection. If a person's will does not go out in seeking after Christian Perfection, if one has not a strong and persevering desire for it, of course, that person can never hope to succeed. Why? Simply because there is no effort on the part of the will. The will is the seat of our desires. In order to succeed in the Spiritual life, the will must make a determined and persevering effort; it must overcome all obstacles that stand in the way of

must first of all desire to become holy; to be a Saint we must first of all desire to become a Saint. The great St. Augustine tells us that 'the life of a good Christian is one continual desire for Perfection.' And another great servant of God, St. Ambrose, tells us that 'we cannot have a better disposition for Christian Perfection than to constantly hunger and thirst after it.' And he goes on to tell us that so well pleased is Our Blessed Lord with this earnest desire that He fills such a devout soul with the greatest graces and favors."

"To show you how well pleased Almighty God is with the heartfelt and persevering desires of His saints for spiritual good, He has on certain occasions sent His Holy Angels to assure these Saints that their prayers were granted. Daniel, the Prophet, for years had prayed that his earnest desire for the coming of the Redeemer might be granted. In answer to his prayer, an Archangel came from Heaven to assure him that the Messias would come even before His time, 'because,' he said, 'Daniel was a man of great desires.'"

"I think, my dear children, that the story I heard of St. Thomas Aquinas is very appropriate here. St. Thomas, as you know, had a great desire to enter the Order of St. Dominic. Both his parents and his brothers opposed him in his holy designs and when he persisted in his determination to enter the Monastery, his cruel brothers cast him into prison. They did everything in their power to shake his determination and finally they sent his sister, whom Thomas loved very dearly, to visit him in his prison in order to dissuade him from his purpose. This sister instead of attempting to destroy his holy vocation, became so enraptured when she heard her young brother speaking of heavenly things that she became converted and finally asked him, 'What must I do, brother, to save my soul?' 'You will save your soul, my sister,' answered the Saint, 'if you desire to save it. You will become very holy, if you desire holiness.'"



St. Vincent de Paul

sanctification, and this means more than merely wishing to become holy."

"Hence, if we would reach the goal of Christian Perfection, so strong and persevering must be our determination to reach this goal, that in the words of the Gospel we must 'hunger and thirst after it.' 'Blessed are they,' says Our Divine Savior, 'that hunger and thirst after justice'—that is, Perfection—for they shall be filled."

"Everything, then, my dear children, depends upon this desire—this determination—if we would advance in holiness of life. The Saints all unite in teaching us that to be holy we

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