

CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES: NUMBER FORTY-EIGHT

THE LADDER OF MONKS
A Letter on the Contemplative Life

and

TWELVE MEDITATIONS

by

GUIGO II

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I. PROLOGUE

BROTHER GUIGO to his dear brother Gervase: rejoice in the Lord. I owe you a debt of love, brother, because you began to love me first;* and since in your previous letter you have invited me to write to you, I feel bound to reply. So I decided to send you my thoughts on the spiritual exercises proper to cloistered monks, so that you who have come to know more about these matters by your experience than I have by theorizing about them may pass judgment on my thoughts* and amend them. And it is fitting that I should offer these first results of our work together to you before anyone else, so that you may gather the first fruits of the young tree* which by praiseworthy stealth you extracted from the bondage of Pharaoh,* where it was tended alone, and set it in its place among the ordered rows,* once you had grafted on to the stock like a good nurseryman the branch skillfully cut from the wild olive.*

Cf. 1 Jn 4:10

Cf. Heb 4:12

Cf. Ps 143:12

Cf. Ex 13:14

Cf. Sg 6:3, 9

Cf. Rom 11:17,24

II. THE FOUR RUNGS OF THE LADDER

One day when I was busy working with my hands I began to think about our spiritual work, and all at once four stages in spiritual

**Sir 35:21*
†*Cf. Gen 28:12*

exercise came into my mind: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. These make a ladder for monks by which they are lifted up from earth to heaven. It has few rungs, yet its length is immense and wonderful, for its lower end rests upon the earth, but its top pierces the clouds* and touches heavenly secrets.† Just as its rungs or degrees have different names and numbers, they differ also in order and quality; and if anyone inquires carefully into their properties and functions, what each one does in relation to us, the differences between them and their order of importance, he will consider whatever trouble and care he may spend on this little and easy in comparison with the help and consolation which he gains.*

Cf. Gen 29:20

Reading is the careful study of the Scriptures, concentrating all one's powers on it. Meditation is the busy application of the mind to seek with the help of one's own reason for knowledge of hidden truth. Prayer is the heart's devoted turning to God to drive away evil and obtain what is good. Contemplation is when the mind is in some sort lifted up to God and held above itself, so that it tastes the joys of everlasting sweetness. Now that we have described the four degrees, we must see what their functions are in relation to us.

III. THE FUNCTIONS OF THESE DEGREES

Reading seeks for the sweetness of a blessed life, meditation perceives it, prayer asks for it,

contemplation tastes it. Reading, as it were, puts food whole into the mouth,* meditation chews it and breaks it up, prayer extracts its flavor, contemplation is the sweetness itself which gladdens and refreshes. Reading works on the outside, meditation on the pith:* prayer asks for what we long for, contemplation gives us delight in the sweetness which we have found. To make this clearer, let us take one of many possible examples.

*Cf. 1 Cor 3:2,
Heb 5:12;*

*Cf. Ps 80:17;
147:14*

IV. THE FUNCTION OF READING

I hear the words read: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'.* This is a short text of Scripture, but it is of great sweetness, like a grape that is put into the mouth filled with many senses to feed the soul. When the soul has carefully examined it, it says to itself, There may be something good here. I shall return to my heart* and try to understand and find this purity, for this is indeed a precious and desirable thing. Those who have it are called blessed. It has for its reward the vision of God which is eternal life, and it is praised in so many places in sacred Scripture. So, wishing to have a fuller understanding of this, the soul begins to bite and chew upon this grape, as though putting it in a wine press, while it stirs up its power of reasoning to ask what this precious purity may be and how it may be had.

Cf. Mt 5:8

Cf. Lk 15:18

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V. THE FUNCTION OF MEDITATION

When meditation busily applies itself to this work, it does not remain on the outside, is not detained by unimportant things, climbs higher, goes to the heart of the matter, examines each point thoroughly. It takes careful note that the text does not say: 'Blessed are the pure in body', but 'the pure in heart', for it is not enough to have hands clean from evil deeds,* unless our minds are cleansed from impure thoughts. We have the authority of the prophet for this, when he says: 'Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord, and who shall stand in His holy place? He whose hands are guiltless and whose heart is pure.'* And meditation perceives how greatly that same prophet seeks for this purity of heart when he prays: 'Create a pure heart in me, God',* and in another place: 'If I know that there is wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear me'.* It thinks what care the saintly man Job took to preserve this purity; when he said: 'I have made a pact with my eyes, so that I would not think about any maid.'* See how this holy man guarded himself, who shut his eyes lest he should look upon vain things,* lest he should perhaps unguardedly see that which afterward he should long for despite himself.

After meditation has so pondered upon purity of heart, it begins to think of the reward, of how glorious and joyful it would be to see the face of the Lord so greatly longed for,* 'fairer than all the sons of men',* no longer rejected and wretched,† not

Cf. Ps 26:8

*Ps 44:3.

†Cf. Is 53:2

Cf. Gen 37:22

Ps 23:3-4

Ps 50:10

Ps 65:18

Job 31:1

Cf. Ps 118:37

with that earthly beauty with which His mother clothed Him, but wearing the robe of immortality and crowned with the diadem* which His Father bestowed upon Him on the day of His resurrection and glory,* the day 'which the Lord has made'.* It thinks how this vision will bring it the fullness of which the prophet says: 'I shall be filled when your glory appears.'* Do you see how much juice has come from one little grape, how great a fire has been kindled from a spark,* how this small piece of metal, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God', has acquired a new dimension by being hammered out on the anvil of meditation? And even more might be drawn from it at the hands of someone truly expert. I feel that 'the well is deep', but I am still an ignorant beginner, and it is only with difficulty that I have found something in which to draw up these few drops.* When the soul is set alight by this kindling, and when its flames are fanned by these desires, it receives a first intimation of the sweetness, not yet by tasting but through its sense of smell, when the alabaster box is broken;* and from this it deduces how sweet it would be* to know by experience the purity that meditation has shown to be so full of joy.

But what is it to do? It is consumed with longing, yet it can find no means of its own to have what it longs for; and the more it searches the more it thirsts. As long as it is meditating, so long is it suffering,* because it does not feel that sweetness which, as meditation shows, belongs to purity of heart, but which it does not give. A man will not

Cf. Is 53:2

Cf. Sir 6:32

Ps 17:24

Ps 16:15

Cf. Sir 11:34

Jn 4:11

Cf. Mk 14:3

Cf. Ps 33:9

Cf. Qo 1:18

Jn 19:11 experience this sweetness while reading or meditating 'unless it happened to be given him from above'.* The good and the wicked alike can read and meditate; and even pagan philosophers by the use of reason discovered the highest and truest good. But 'although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God',* and trusting in their own powers they said: 'Let us sing our own praises, our words are our own.)* They had not the grace to understand what they had the ability to see.

Rom 1:21 'They perished in their own ideas',* and 'all their wisdom was swallowed up',* that wisdom to which the study of human learning had led them, not the Spirit of wisdom who alone grants true wisdom,* that sweet-tasting knowledge that rejoices and refreshes the soul in which it dwells with a sweetness beyond telling. Of this wisdom it is said: 'Wisdom will not enter a disaffected soul.)* This wisdom comes only from God; and just as the Lord entrusted the office of baptizing to many, but reserved to Himself alone the power and the authority truly to remit sins in baptism, so that John called Him by His office and defined it when he said: 'This is He who baptizes',* so we may say of Him: 'This is He who gives the sweetness of wisdom and makes knowledge sweet to the soul. He gives words to many, but to few that wisdom of the soul which the Lord apportions to whom He pleases and when He pleases.*

Ps 11:5

Rom 1:21

Ps 106:27

Cf. Jm 1:17

Wis 1:4

Jn 1:33

1 Cor 12:11

VI. THE FUNCTION OF PRAYER

So the soul, seeing that it cannot attain by

itself to that sweetness of knowing and feeling for which it longs, and that the more 'the heart abases itself',* the more 'God is exalted',* humbles itself and betakes itself to prayer, saying: Lord, you are not seen except by the pure of heart. I seek by reading and meditating what is true purity of heart and how it may be had, so that with its help I may know you, if only a little. Lord, for long have I meditated in my heart,* seeking to see your face.* It is the sight of you, Lord, that I have sought; and all the while in my meditation the fire of longing,* the desire to know you more fully, has increased. When you break for me the bread of sacred Scripture,* you have shown yourself to me in that breaking of bread,* and the more I see you, the more I long to see you, no more from without, in the rind of the letter, but within, in the letter's hidden meaning. Nor do I ask this, Lord, because of my own merits, but because of your mercy. I too in my unworthiness confess my sins with the woman who said that 'even the little dogs eat of the fragments that fall from the table of their masters'.* So give me, Lord, some pledge of what I hope to inherit, at least one drop of heavenly rain with which to refresh my thirst,* for I am on fire with love.

Ps 63:7

Ps 63:8

Cf. Ps 76:7

Cf. Ps 26:8

Cf. Ps 38:4

Cf. Lk 24:30-31

Cf. Lk 24:35

Mt 15:27

Cf. Lk 16:24

Cf. Sg 2:5

VII. THE EFFECTS OF CONTEMPLATION

So the soul by such burning words inflames its own desire, makes known its state, and by such spells it seeks to call its spouse. But the

*Cf. Ps 33:16;
1 Pet 3:12.*

Lord, whose eyes are upon the just and whose ears can catch not only the words,* but the very meaning of their prayers, does not wait until the longing soul has said all its say, but breaks in upon the middle of its prayer, runs to meet it in all haste, sprinkled with sweet heavenly dew, anointed with the most precious perfumes, and He restores the weary soul, He slakes its thirst, He feeds its hunger, He makes the soul forget all earthly things: by making it die to itself He gives it new life in a wonderful way, and by making it drunk He brings it back to its true senses. And just as in the performance of some bodily functions the soul is so conquered by carnal desire that it loses all use of the reason, and man becomes as it were wholly carnal, so on the contrary in this exalted contemplation all carnal motives are so conquered and drawn out of the soul that in no way is the flesh opposed to the spirit, and man becomes, as it were, wholly spiritual.

VIII. THE SIGNS OF THE COMING OF GRACE

Cf. Mt 24:3

But, Lord, how are we to know when you do this, what will be the sign of your coming?* Can it be that the heralds and witnesses of this consolation and joy are sighs and tears? If it is so, then the word consolation is being used in a completely new sense, the reverse of its ordinary connotation. What has consolation in common with sighs, joy with tears, if indeed these are to be called

tears and not rather an abundance of spiritual dew, poured out from above and overflowing, an outward purification as a sign of inward cleansing. For just as in the baptism of infants by the outward washing, the inward cleansing is typified and shown, here conversely an outward washing proceeds from the inner cleansing. These are blessed tears, by which our inward stains are cleansed, by which the fires of our sins are put out. 'Blessed are they who weep' so, 'for they shall rejoice.*' When you weep so, O my soul, recognize your spouse, embrace Him whom you long for, make yourself drunk with this torrent of delight,* and suck the honey and milk of consolation from the breast.* The wonderful reward and comforts which your spouse has brought and awarded you are sobbings and tears. These tears are the generous draught which He gives you to drink.* Let these tears be your bread by day and night,* the bread which strengthens the heart of man,* sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.* O Lord Jesus, if these tears, provoked by thinking of you and longing for you, are so sweet, how sweet will be the joy which we shall have to see you face to face? If it is so sweet to weep for you, how sweet will it be to rejoice in you? But why do we give this public utterance to what should be said in secret? Why do we try to express in everyday language affections that no language can describe? Those who have not known such things do not understand them, for they could learn more clearly of them only from the book of experience where God's grace

Mt 5:5

Cf. Ps 35:8

Cf. Is 66:11

Cf. Ps 79:6

Cf. Ps 41:4

Cf. Ps 103:15

Cf. Ps 18:11

Cf. 1 Jn 2:27

itself is the teacher.* Otherwise it is of no use for the reader to search in earthly books: there is little sweetness in the study of the literal sense, unless there be a commentary, which is found in the heart, to reveal the inward sense.

IX. HOW GRACE IS HIDDEN

Cf. Mt 17:4

Gen 32:26

Cf. Gen 32:25-32

O my soul, we have talked like this too long. Yet it would have been good for us to be here, to look with Peter and with John upon the glory of the spouse and to remain awhile with Him, had it been His will that we should make here not two, not three tabernacles,* but one in which we might all dwell and be filled with joy. But now, the spouse says, 'Let me go, for now the dawn is coming up',* now you have received the light of grace and the visitation which you asked for. So He gives His blessing, and withers the nerve of the thigh, and changes Jacob's name to Israel,* and then for a little while He withdraws, this spouse waited for so long, so soon gone again. He goes, it is true, for this visitation ends, and with it the sweetness of contemplation; but yet He stays, for He directs us, He gives us grace, He joins us to Himself.

X. HOW, WHEN GRACE IS HIDDEN FOR A TIME, IT WORKS IN US FOR GOOD

But do not fear, bride of the spouse, do not despair, do not think yourself despised, if for

a little while He turns His face away from you. These things all work together for your good,* and you profit from His coming and from His withdrawal. He comes to you, and then He goes away again. He comes for your consolation, He goes away to put you on your guard, for fear that too much consolation should puff you up,* and that you having the spouse always with you, should begin to despise your brethren, and to attribute this consolation not to His grace but to your natural powers. For this grace the spouse bestows when He pleases and to whom He pleases; it is not possessed as though by lawful title. There is a common saying that too much familiarity breeds contempt. And so He withdraws Himself, so that He is not despised for being too attentive, so that when He is absent He may be desired the more, that being desired He may be sought more eagerly, that having been sought for He may at last be found with greater thankfulness.

Cf. Rom 8:28

Cf. 2 Cor 12:7

Then, too, if we never lacked this consolation, which is a mere shadow and fraction* in comparison with the future glory that will be shown in us,* we might think that we have here on earth our eternal home, and so we should seek the less for our life in eternity.* So, therefore, lest we should consider this present exile our true home, this pledge our whole reward, the spouse comes and withdraws by turn, now bringing us consolation, now exchanging all this for weakness.* For a short time He allows us to taste how sweet He is,* and before our taste is satisfied He withdraws; and it is in this way, by flying

Cf. 2 Cor 13:12

Cf. Rom 8:18

Cf. Heb 13:14

Cf. Ps 40:4

Cf. Ps 33:9

above us with wings outspread, that He encourages us to fly,* and says in effect: See now, you have had a little taste of how sweet and delightful I am,* but if you wish to have your fill of this sweetness, hasten after me, drawn by my sweet-smelling perfumes,* lift up your heart to where I am at the right hand of God the Father.* There you will see me* not darkly in a mirror but face to face,* and 'your heart's joy will be complete and no one shall take this joy away from you'.*

Cf. Deut 32:11

Cf. 1 Pet 2:3

Cf. Sg 1:3

Cf. Acts 7:55

Jn 16:19

1 Cor 13:12

Jn 16:22

XI. HOW MUCH THE SOUL MUST BE
ON ITS GUARD AFTER IT HAS BEEN
VISITED BY GRACE

But take care, bride of the spouse. When He goes away, He does not go far; and even if you cannot see Him, you are always in His sight. He is full of eyes in front and behind,* you cannot hide from Him anywhere, for He surrounds you with those messengers of His, spirits who serve to bring back shrewd reports, to watch how you behave when He is not there, to accuse you to Him if they detect in you any marks of wantonness and vileness. This is a jealous spouse.* He will leave you at once and give His favors to others if you play Him false with anyone, trying to please any more than Him. This spouse is fastidious, He is of gentle birth, He is rich, 'He is fairer than all the sons of men,'* and so He will not deign to take a bride who is not fair. If He sees in you any blemish, any wrinkle,* He

Cf. Ezek 1:18

Cf Ex 34:14

Ps 44:3

Cf. Eph 5:27

will at once turn away from you.* He cannot bear uncleanness of any kind. So be chaste, be truly modest and meek, if you wish often to enjoy your spouse's company. *Cf. Is 1:15*

I am afraid that I have talked too long of this to you, but I have been compelled to it by the abundance and the sweetness of my material. I have not deliberately drawn it out, but its very sweetness has drawn it out of me against my will.

XII. RECAPITULATION

Let us now gather together by way of summary what we have already said at length, so that we may have a better view by looking at it altogether. You can see, from what has already been said by way of examples, how these degrees are joined to each other. One precedes another, not only in the order of time but of causality. Reading comes first, and is, as it were, the foundation; it provides the subject matter we must use for meditation. Meditation considers more carefully what is to be sought after; it digs,* as it were, for treasure which it finds* and reveals, but since it is not in meditation's power to seize upon the treasure, it directs us to prayer. Prayer lifts itself up to God with all its strength, and begs for the treasure it longs for, which is the sweetness of contemplation. Contemplation when it comes rewards the labors of the other three; it inebriates the thirsting soul with the dew of heavenly sweetness. Reading is an exercise of the outward

Cf. Pr 2:4

Cf. Mt 13:44

senses; meditation is concerned with the inward understanding; prayer is concerned with desire; contemplation outstrips every faculty. The first degree is proper to beginners, the second to proficients, the third to devotees, the fourth to the blessed.

XIII. HOW THESE DEGREES ARE LINKED ONE TO ANOTHER

At the same time these degrees are so linked together, each one working also for the others, that the first degrees are of little or no use without the last, while the last can never, or hardly ever, be won without the first. For what is the use of spending one's time in continuous reading, turning the pages of the lives and sayings of holy men, unless we can extract nourishment from them by chewing and digesting this food so that its strength can pass into our inmost heart? It is only thus that we can from their example carefully consider our state of soul, and reflect in our own deeds the lives about which we read so eagerly. But how is it possible to think properly, and to avoid meditating upon false and idle topics, overstepping the bounds laid down by our holy fathers,* unless we are first directed in these matters by what we read or what we hear? Listening is a kind of reading, and that is why we are accustomed to say that we have read not only those books which we have read to ourselves or aloud to others but those also which our teachers have read to us.

Cf. Pr 22:28

Again, what use is it to anyone if he sees in

his meditation what is to be done, unless the help of prayer and the grace of God enable him to achieve it? For 'every gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights'.* We can do nothing without Him. It is He who achieves our works in us, and yet not entirely without us. 'For we are God's fellow workers',* as the apostle says. It is God's will, then, that we pray to Him, His will that when His grace comes and knocks at our door,* we should willingly open our hearts to Him and give Him our consent.

Jm 1:17

1 Cor 3:9

Cf. Rev 3:20

It was this consent that He demanded from the Samaritan woman when He said: 'Call your husband.'* It was as if He said: 'I want to fill you with grace, and you must exercise your free choice.' He demanded prayer from her: 'If you only knew the gift of God, and who He is who says to you, Give me drink, you would perhaps ask Him for living waters.'* When the woman heard this, it was as if the Lord had read it to her, and she meditated on this instruction in her heart, thinking that it would be good and useful for her to have this water. Fired with the desire for it, she had recourse to prayer, saying: 'Lord, give me this water, that I may thirst no more'.* You can see that it was because she had heard the Lord's word and then had meditated on it that she was moved to prayer. How could she have pressed her petition, had she not first been fired by meditation? What profit would her meditation have been, if the prayer that followed had not asked for what she had been shown she should desire? From this we

Jn 4:16

Jn 4:10

Jn 4:15

learn that if meditation is to be fruitful, it must be followed by devoted prayer, and the sweetness of contemplation may be called the effect of prayer.

XIV. SOME CONCLUSIONS FROM WHAT HAS BEEN SAID

From this we may gather that reading without meditation is sterile, meditation without reading is liable to error, prayer without meditation is lukewarm, meditation without prayer is unfruitful, prayer when it is fervent wins contemplation, but to obtain it without prayer would be rare, even miraculous. However, there is no limit to God's power and His merciful love surpasses all His other works; and sometimes He creates sons for Abraham from the very stones,* when He forces the hard-hearted and reluctant to comply of their own free will. He acts like a prodigal father, or as the proverb has it, He gives the ox by the horn, when He enters where He has not been invited, when He dwells in the soul that has not sought Him. Although we are told that this has occasionally happened to St. Paul,* for instance, and certain others, we ought not to presume that it will, for this would be like tempting God. Rather we should do our part, which is to read and meditate on the law of God, and pray to Him to help our weakness* and to look kindly on our infirmities. He teaches us to do this when He says: 'Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to

Cf. Mt 3:9

Acts 9

Cf. Rom 8:26

you.’* For then ‘the kingdom of heaven submits to force; and the forceful take it by storm’.*

Mt 7:7

Mt 11:12

From these definitions you can see how the various qualities of these degrees are linked one with another, and the effects which each one produces in us. Blessed is the man whose heart is not possessed by any other concern and whose desire is always to keep his feet upon this ladder. He has sold all his possessions, and has bought the field in which lies hid the longed-for treasure.* He wants to be free from all else, and to see how sweet the Lord is.* The man who has worked in this first degree, who has pondered well in the second, who has known devotion in the third, who has been raised above himself in the fourth, goes from strength to strength by this ascent on which his whole heart was set, until at last he can see the God of gods in Sion.* Blessed is the man to whom it is given to remain, if only for a short time, in this highest degree. In truth he can say: ‘Now indeed I experience God’s grace, now with Peter and John upon the mountain I gaze upon his glory, now with Jacob I delight in the embraces of the lovely Rachel.’

Cf. Mt 13:44

Cf. Ps 33:9, 45:11

Cf. Ps 83:8

But let such a man beware lest after this contemplation, in which he was lifted up to the very heavens, he plunged violently into the depths, and after such great graces turn again to the sinful pleasures of the world and the delights of the flesh. Since, however, the eye of the human heart has not the power to bear for long the shining of the true light, let the soul descend gently and in due order to one or

other of the three degrees by means of which it made its ascent. Let it rest now in one, now in another, as the circumstances of time and place suggest to its free choice, even though, as it seems to me, the soul is the nearer to God the farther it climbs from the first degree. Such, alas, is the frailty and wretchedness of human nature!

In this way, then, we see clearly by reason and the testimony of the Scriptures that the perfection of the blessed life is contained in these four degrees, and that the spiritual man ought to occupy himself in them continually. But is there anyone who holds to this way of life? "Tell us who he is and we will praise him."* There are many who desire it, but few who achieve it.* Would that we were among these few!

Sir 31:9

Cf. Rom 7:18

XV. FOUR OBSTACLES TO THESE DEGREES

There are commonly four obstacles to these three degrees: unavoidable necessity, the good works of the active life, human frailty, worldly follies. The first can be excused, the second endured, the third invites compassion, the fourth blame. Blame truly, for it would be better for the man who for love of the world turns his back on the goal if he had never known God's grace, rather than, having known it, to retrace his steps. For what excuse will he find for his sin?* Will not the Lord justly say to him: "What more should I have done for you that I have not done?*" When you did not exist I created you, when

Cf. Jn 15:22

Cf. Is 5:4

you sinned and became the devil's slave I re-deemed you, when you were going about with the wicked of this world* I called you away.* I let you find favor in my sight, I wanted to make my dwelling with you,* and you gave me nothing but contempt. It was not my words alone that you repudiated, it was my own self,* and instead you turned away in pursuit of your desires.*

Cf. Ps 11:9

Cf. Is 43:7-11

Cf. Jn 14:23

Cf. Ps 49:17

Cf. Sir 18:30

But O my God, so good so tender and kind, dear friend, wise counsellor, powerful support, how heartless and how rash is the man who rejects you, who casts from his heart so humble and gentle a guest! What a wretched and ruinous bargain, to accept evil and harmful thoughts in exchange for his creator, so quickly to throw open the inner chamber of the Holy Spirit, that secret place of the heart which so recently echoed with heavenly joys, to unclean thoughts, to turn it into a pig sty.* Adulterous desires press in upon the heart where the footprints of the spouse are still plain to be seen. How ill it accords, how unseemly it is, for ears which so recently listened to words which man may not utter,* so quickly to attend to idle and slanderous stories,* for eyes so newly purified by holy tears to turn their gaze so soon on worldly vanities, for the tongue which has scarcely ended its sweet song of welcome to the spouse, scarcely has made peace between Him and the bride with its burning and pleading eloquence, and has greeted her in the banqueting hall,* to revert to foul talk, to scurrility, to lampoons and libels. Never let this happen to us, Lord, and even if we do so

Cf. Mt 7:6

Cf. 2 Cor 12:4

Cf. 2 Tm 4:4

Cf. Sg 2:4

fall away through human frailty, never let us despair on that account, but let us hasten back to the merciful healer who lifts up the helpless ones out of the dust, and rescues the poor and wretched from the mire;* for He who never desires the death of a sinner* will tend us and heal us again and again.

Ps 112:7

Cf. Ezek 33:11

Cf. Hos 6:2

Now it is time for us to end our letter. Let us beseech the Lord together that at this moment He will lighten the load that weighs us down so that we cannot look up to Him in contemplation, and in days to come remove it altogether, leading us through these degrees from strength to strength, until we come to look upon the God of gods in Sion,* where His chosen enjoy the sweetness of divine contemplation, not drop by drop, not now and then, but in an unceasing flow of delight which no one shall take away,* an unchanging peace, the peace of God.*

Cf. Ps 83:8

Cf. Jn 16:22

Cf. Ps 4:9

So, my brother Gervase, if it is ever granted to you from above to climb to the topmost rung of this ladder, when this happiness is yours, remember me and pray for me. So, when the veil* between you and God is drawn aside, may I too see Him, 'and may He who listens say to me also: Come.'*

Cf. Ex 26

Rv 22:17