

DAY 1: NOURISHED BY LOVE ¹

Then divine Goodness looked with the eye of his mercy upon that soul and said:

“You ask me to explain to you the image of the three stairs and to tell you how people must act to be able to escape from the river and mount the bridge... You know that every evil is grounded in selfish love of oneself. This love is a cloud that blots out the light of reason...I made the soul after my own image and likeness, giving her memory, understanding, and will...

The soul cannot live without love. She always wants to love something because she is made of love, and through love I created her.

The understanding is moved by affection, and it in turn nourishes affection. Affection is love’s hand, and this hand fills the memory with thoughts of me and the blessings I have given. Such remembrance makes the soul caring instead of indifferent, grateful instead of thankless.

...On the other hand, if sensual affection wants to love sensual things, the eye of understanding is moved in that direction. It takes for its object only passing things with selfish love, contempt for virtue, and the love of vice, drawing from these pride and impatience. And the memory is filled only with what affection holds out to it.

This love so dazzles the eye that it neither discerns nor sees anything but the glitter of these things...and understanding sees and affection loves them all as if their brightness came from goodness and loveliness.”

If “the memory holds on to my blessings and my goodness to the soul” and “understanding contemplates the unspeakable love I have shown you through the mediation of my only-begotten Son”, then the will, finally is joined with the memory and understanding loving Me and desiring Me, “your final goal”.

¹ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 103-104, 108

DAY 2: WET NURSE OF CHARITY²

“Discernment is nothing else but the true knowledge a soul ought to have of herself and of me, and through this knowledge she finds her roots. It is joined to charity like an engrafted shoot. Charity, it is true, has many offshoots, like a tree with many branches. But what gives life to both the tree and its branches is its root, so long as that root is planted in the soul of humility. For humility is the governess and wet nurse of the charity into which this branch of discernment is engrafted. Now the source of humility, as I have already told you, is the soul’s true knowledge of herself and of my goodness. So only when discernment is rooted in humility is it virtuous, producing life-giving fruit and willingly yielding what is due to everyone.

In the first place, the soul gives glory and praise to my name for the graces and gifts she knows she has received from me. And to herself she gives what she sees herself deserving of. She knows that all that she is and every gift she has is from me, not from herself, and to me she attributes all. In fact, she considers herself worthy of punishment for her ingratitude in the face of so many favors, and negligent in her use of the time and graces I have given her. So she repays herself with contempt and regret for her sins. Such is the work of the virtue of discernment, rooted in self-knowledge and true humility.”

² St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 40

DAY 3: FLOWERS AND PERFUME OF GLORY³

“The more the mystic body of holy Church is filled with troubles now, the more it will abound in delight and consolation. And this shall be its delight: the reform of good holy shepherds who are flowers of glory, who praise and glorify my name, offering me the fragrance of virtue rooted in truth. This is the reform of the fragrant blossoming of my ministers and shepherds –not that the fruit of the bride needs to be reformed, because it never spoils, or is diminished by the sins of its ministers. So be glad, you and your spiritual father and my other servants, in your bitterness. For I, eternal Truth, promise to refresh you, and after your bitterness I will give you consolation, along with great suffering, in the reform of holy Church.”

³ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 47

DAY 4: THE ENAMORED GOD ⁴

“Why did you so dignify us? With unimaginable love you looked upon your creatures within your very self, and you fell in love with us. So it was love that made you create us and give us being just so that we might taste your supreme eternal good.

Then I see how by our sin we lost the dignity you had given us.... Stirred by the same fire that made you create us, you decided to give this warring human race a way to reconciliation, bringing great peace out of our war. So you gave us your only-begotten Son, your Word, to be mediator between us and you. He became our justice, taking on himself the punishment for our injustices. He offered you the obedience you required of him in clothing him with our humanity, eternal Father, taking on our likeness and our human nature!

O depth of love! What heart could keep from breaking at the sight of your greatness descending to the lowliness of our humanity? We are your image, and now by making yourself one with us you have become our image, veiling your eternal divinity in the wretched cloud and dung heap of Adam. And why? For love! You, God, became human and we have been made divine! In the name of this unspeakable love, then, I bet you –I would force you even!– to have mercy on your creatures.”

⁴ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p.49-50

DAY 5: RAPTURE ⁵

“God, like one drunk with love for our good, found a way to fire up an even greater love and sorrow in that soul. He showed her with what love he had created us and he said:

‘See how they all lash out at me! And I created them with such burning love and gave them grace and gifts without number –all freely, though I owed them nothing! But see daughter how they strike back at me with every sort of sin, but most of all with their wretched and hateful selfishness, that breeding ground of every evil, and with this selfish love they have poisoned the whole world. I have shown you how love of me bears every good that is brought to birth for others. By the same principle this sensual selfishness is the bearer of every evil.

...How many charges I could bring against humankind! For they have received nothing but good from me, and they repay me with every sort of hateful evil.

...Know that no one can escape my hands, for I am who I am, whereas you have no being at all of yourselves.

My creatures offend me when they love sin, which they should not love, and Hate me, to whom they owe love because I am supremely good and gave them being with such burning love.

...In spite of their wickedness, I will be merciful to them because of my servants and I will grant what you have asked of me with such love and sorrow’.”

⁵ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p.55-56

DAY 6: HE PRUNES⁶

“Do you know what course I follow, once my servants have completely given themselves to the teaching of the gentle loving Word? I prune them, so that they will bear much fruit –cultivated fruit, not wild. Just as the gardener prunes the branch that is joined to the vine so that it will yield more and better wine, but cuts off and throws into the fire the branch that is barren, so do I the true gardener act. When my servants remain united to me I prune them with great suffering so that they will bear more and better fruit, and virtue will be proved in them. But those who bear no fruit are cut off and thrown into the fire.

These are the true workers. They till their souls well, uprooting every selfish love, cultivating the soil of their love in me. They feed and tend the growth of the seed of grace that they received in holy baptism. And as they till their own vineyards, so they till their neighbors’ as well.”

⁶ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 62

DAY 7: CHRIST WAS THE ANVIL ⁷

“When my goodness saw that you could be drawn in no other way, I sent him to be lifted onto the wood of the cross. I made of that cross an anvil where this child of humankind could be hammered into an instrument to release humankind from death and restore it to the life of grace. In this way he drew everything to himself: for he proved his unspeakable love, and the human heart is always drawn by love. He could not have shown you greater love than by giving his life for you. You can hardly resist being drawn by love, then, unless you foolishly refuse to be drawn.

I said that, having been raised up, he would draw everything to himself. This is true in two ways: First, the human heart is drawn by love, as I said, and with all its powers: memory, understanding, and will. If these three powers are harmoniously united in my name, everything else you do, in fact or in intention, will be drawn to union with me in peace through the movement of love, because all will be lifted in the pursuit of crucified love. So my Truth indeed spoke truly when he said, “If I am lifted up high, I will draw everything to myself.” For everything you do will be drawn to him when he draws your heart and its powers.

What he said is true also in the sense that everything was created for your use, to serve your needs. But you who have the gift of reason were made not for yourselves but for me, to serve me with all your heart and all your love. So when you are drawn to me, everything is drawn with you, because everything was made for you.”

⁷ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 65-66

DAY 8: THE SOUL IS A GARDEN⁸

“It is true that the keeper of this garden, free choice, can cultivate it or let it grow wild, just as he pleases. If he sows there the venom of selfish self-centeredness from which grow the seven capital sins and all the others that sprout from these, he is in fact keeping out the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and depriving the soul of all virtue.

...She has become cruel to herself, so she cannot be devoted to her neighbors. Bereft of every good, she has fallen into the worst of evils.

What can bring her to life again? The Incarnate Word, my only-begotten Son. How? This gardener must use hate to uproot the thorns of sin (for unless he hates them he will never pull them out), and run with love to conform the soul to the teaching of my Truth by watering her with his blood. That blood is poured over her head by my minister when she goes to confession with heartfelt contrition and contempt for sin, making satisfaction and resolving not to sin again.

This is how the garden of the soul can be cultivated during her lifetime. For once this life is past there is nothing she can do.”

⁸ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 289

DAY 9: THE STONES OF A WALL⁹

“This bridge has walls of stone... do you know what stones these are? They are the stones of true solid virtue... By my power the stones of virtue were built into walls on no less a foundation than himself, for all virtue draws life from him, nor is there any virtue that has not been tested in him. So no one can have any life-giving virtue but from him, that is, by following his example and his teaching. He perfected the virtues and planted them as living stones built into walls with his blood. So now all the faithful can walk without hindrance and with no cringing fear of the rain of divine justice, because they are sheltered by [my] mercy...

So you see, the bridge has walls and a roof of mercy. And the hostelry of holy Church is there to serve the bread of life and the blood, lest the journeying pilgrims, my creatures, grow weary and faint on the way. So has my love ordained that the blood and body of my only-begotten Son, wholly God and wholly human, be administered.

At the end of the bridge is the gate which is the only way you can enter. This is why he said, “I am the Way and Truth and Life; whoever walks with me walks not in darkness but in light.” And in another place my Truth said that no one could come to me except through him, and such is the truth.”

⁹ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 66

DAY 10: SATISFIED YET HUNGRY¹⁰

“By the same principle, those just souls who end in loving charity and are bound by love can no longer grow in virtue once time has passed. But they can forever love with that same affection with which they came to me, and by that measure will it be measured out to them. They desire me forever, and forever they possess me, so their desire is not in vain. They are hungry and satisfied, satisfied yet hungry –but they are far from bored with satiety or pained in their hunger.

Forever they rejoice in love at the sight of me, sharing in that goodness which I have in myself and which I measure out to them according to the measure of love with which they have come to me. They are established in love for me and for their neighbors...and though they are all joined in the bond of charity, they know a special kind of sharing with those whom they loved most closely with a special love in the world, a love through which they grew in grace and virtue. They helped each other proclaim the glory and praise of my name in themselves and in their neighbors. So now in everlasting life they have not lost that love; no they still love and share with each other even more closely and fully, adding their love to the good of all.”

¹⁰ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 82-83

DAY 11: THE IMAGE OF THE EYE¹¹

“My servants’ chief happiness is in seeing and knowing me. This vision and knowledge fills their will: They have what their will longs for and so they are satisfied... Even in this life they enjoy the pledge of eternal life, since they have a taste of the very thing that satisfies them.

How do they have this pledge in this life? Let me tell you. They see my goodness in themselves and they know my truth when their understanding –which is the soul’s eye– is enlightened in me. Their pupil of the eye is most holy faith, and this light of faith enables them to discern and know and follow the way and teaching of my Truth, the incarnate Word. Without this pupil, which is faith, they would see no more than a person who has eyes, but with a film covering the pupils that give the eyes sight. It is the same with the eye of understanding. Its pupil is faith, but if selfish love pulls over it the film of infidelity, it cannot see. It may have the appearance of an eye, but it is sightless because infidelity has deprived it of light. So seeing me these souls know me, and knowing me they love me. And in loving me their selfish will is swallowed up and lost.

Having lost their own selfish will they clothe themselves in mine. But I will nothing less than your holiness.

...It is indeed the truth then that these souls have a foretaste and guarantee of eternal life even in this life... because they have known me, Good itself, and they have sought that goodness where it is to be found, in the Word, my only-begotten Son.”

¹¹ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 92-94

DAY 12: THE POINT OF A NEEDLE¹²

“They no longer have a selfish will...They bear everything with reverence, considering it a grace to suffer for me. And they want nothing but what I will.

If I send them suffering at the hand of the demons, allowing them to be much tempted in order to test their virtue, they stand firm. For they have strengthened their will in me by humbling themselves, considering themselves unworthy of spiritual peace and quiet and deserving of suffering. For this reason they pass through light joyfully, knowing themselves and untroubled by suffering.

They may suffer at the hands of others, or from illness or poverty or the instability of the world. They may lose their children or other loved ones. All such things are thorns the earth produced because of sin. They endure them all, considering by the light of reason and holy faith that I am goodness itself and cannot will anything but good. And I send these things out of love, not hatred.

Once they know my how I love them, they look at themselves and recognize their sinfulness. By the light of faith they see that good must be rewarded and sin punished. They see that every smallest sin would be deserving of infinite punishment because it is committed against me, infinite Good. So they count it a favor that I should want to punish them in this life, in this finite time. And thus it is that they atone for their sin with heartfelt contrition, at the same time meriting by their perfect patience, and their efforts are rewarded with infinite good.

They learn that all suffering in this life is small with the smallness of time. Time is no more than the point of a needle, and when time is over, so is suffering—so you see how small it is. Therefore they endure it patiently. The thorns they pass through here and now do not touch their heart, for as far as sensual love is concerned their heart has been drawn away from themselves and is firmly joined to me by the impulse of love.”

¹² St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 93

DAY 13: MARTYRS OF THE DEVIL¹³

“I have told you that the will alone is the source of suffering. And because my servants are stripped of their own will and clothed in mine, they feel no grief in suffering but feel me in their souls by grace and are satisfied. Without me they could never be satisfied even if they possessed the whole world. For created things are less than the human person. They were made for you, not you for them, and so they can never satisfy you. Only I can satisfy you. These wretched souls, then, caught in such blindness, are forever toiling but never satisfied. They long for what they cannot have because they will not ask it of me though I could satisfy them.

...They have taken up the devil’s cross, and taste the pledge of hell even in this life. Unless they reform, they go through life weakened in all sorts of ways, and in the end receive eternal death.

These are the ones who are hurt by the thorns of many troubles. They crucify themselves with their own perverse will. They are crossed soul and body, that is, they suffer pain and torment in soul and body but without any merit, for they bear their burdens not with patience but with outright impatience... Bereft of the life of grace or any impulse of love, they have become trees of death, and therefore all their actions are dead.

...Now you have seen how deluded these souls are, and how painfully they make their way to hell –like martyrs of the devil!... So you see that even in this life the lot of the just is better than that of sinners.

¹³ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 98-100

DAY 14: HISSES¹⁴

“Once the soul is so prepared, where is she to be lighted? At the flame of my divine charity, by loving and fearing me and following the teaching of my Truth. And she will take fire more or less intensely depending on the material she brings to this flame. For although you all have one and the same material (that is, you were all created in my image and likeness, and all of you who are Christians have the light of holy baptism), nevertheless each of you can grow in love and virtue as you choose and as I give you grace...

It is with this love that you come to receive my gracious glorious light, the light I have given you as food, to be administered to you by my ministers. But even though all of you receive the light, each of you receives it in proportion to the love and burning desire you bring with you.

...Each of you carries the light whole and undivided, for it cannot be divided by any imperfection in you who receive it or in those who administer it. You share as much of the light (that is the grace of the sacrament) as your hold desire disposes you to receive. But anyone who would approach this gracious sacrament while guilty of deadly sin would receive no grace from it, even though such a person would really be receiving me as I am, wholly God, wholly human. But do you know the situation of the soul who receives the sacrament unworthily? She is like a candle that has been doused with water and only hisses when it is brought near the fire. The flame no more than touches it but it goes out and nothing remains but smoke.”

¹⁴ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 208

DAY 15: THE SUN WAITS FOR THE WINDOW TO OPEN¹⁵

“It is to make the soul rise from imperfection that I withdraw from her feelings and deprive her of the comfort she had known.

When she was in deadly sin she cut herself off from me, and because of her guilt I withdrew my grace. Because she had closed the door of her desire, the sun of grace did not shine on her. It was not the sun’s fault. It was the fault of the one who had closed the door of her desire. But when she recognizes herself for what she is, and her darksomeness, she opens the window and vomits out the rottenness in holy confession, and then I return to her by grace. After that I withdraw from her feelings only, not withdrawing my grace. I do this to humble her and to exercise her in seeking me in truth and to prove her in the light of faith so that she may attain prudence. Then, if her love is without self-interest, she rejoices in her labors with lively faith and contempt for herself, for she considers herself unworthy of spiritual peace and quiet. [This is] how the soul comes to perfection, and this, [is] what she does once she has arrived.”

¹⁵ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 119-120

DAY 16: SECRETS FROM THE HEART AND SIDE¹⁶

“The perfect soul, as if drunk and ablaze with love, has gathered herself together and climbed the three ordinary stairs that I interpreted for you as the soul’s three powers, and also the three effectual stairs that I interpreted for you as the body of my only-begotten son, Christ crucified. Once she had climbed to his feet on the feet of her own affection, she reached his side, where she found the secret of his heart and came to know the baptism of water that has within it the power of the blood provided the soul’s vessel is ready to receive the grace of being joined and kneaded into the blood.

Where did she come to know this honor of being fused into the blood of the Lamb as she was baptized in the power of the at blood? In his open side, where she came to know the fire of divine charity. This is what my Truth showed you, if you recall, when you asked him ‘Why, gentle spotless Lamb, since you were dead when your side was opened, did you want your heart to be pierced and parted?’

He answered, ‘There were plenty of reasons, but I shall tell you one of the chief. My longing for humankind was infinite, but the actual deed of bearing pain and torment was finite and could never show all the love I had. This is why I wanted you to see my inmost heart, so that you would see that I loved you more than finite suffering could show. By shedding both blood and water I showed you the holy baptism of water that you receive through the power of my blood’.”

¹⁶ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 137-138

DAY 17: THE FACE OF THE SPOUSE¹⁷

You, Eternal Word, desired to be lifted on high, so as to show us your love by your blood. In your blood you have revealed to us your mercy and generosity. In this blood you have also manifested the weight of man's sin. In this blood you have washed the face of your spouse, the soul, with whom you have united yourself through the union of the divine nature with our human nature. In this way, being naked, you clothed her, and with your death you gave her life.

Oh Passion! You take away every illness, if only the sick desires to be cured, since your gift does not deprive us of freedom. You, Passion, give life to the dead; if the soul is weakened by the devil's temptations, you free it; if it is persecuted by the world or assailed by their own fragility, you are their refuge, because in you the soul has tasted the summit of divine charity.

¹⁷ Obras de Santa Catalina de Siena, *El Diálogo, Oraciones y Soliloquios*, BAC, Madrid, 2011 p. 480

DAY 18: TEARS AND THE HEART¹⁸

“I want you to know that all tears come from the heart. Nor is there any other bodily member that can satisfy the heart as the eyes can. If the heart is sad the eyes show it. If the sadness is sensual, there will be hearty tears that give birth to death...

Life-giving tears [are] the tears of those who recognize their sinfulness and begin to weep for fear of punishment. Although they have not yet come to perfect hatred for sin as an offense against me, they do get up with heartfelt sorrow because of the punishment that must follow upon the sin they have committed...

When the soul begins to practice virtue, she begins to lose this fear...She rises up in love to know herself and my goodness to her, and she begins to hope in my mercy. In this her heart feels glad, because her sorrow for sin is mixed with hope in my divine mercy...But these tears are often sensual because she is not yet very perfect... because of the root of selfish love...a spiritual love in which the soul hungers for spiritual consolations

...Once she has gone along the way of my only-begotten Son's teaching and set her sights firmly on me, gentle first Truth, she comes to know what she has seen, and knowing it, she loves it.

...Her heart is united with me in affectionate love...When she feels the presence of my eternal Godhead she begins to shed sweet tears... Her sorrow does not mar the unitive state. No, it brings on tears of great sweetness because of the self-knowledge she finds in charity for her neighbors. For in that charity she discovers the lover's lament of my divine mercy and sorrow for her neighbor's sins, and so she weeps with those who weep and rejoices with those who rejoice.”

¹⁸ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 161-164

DAY 19: A BOILING POT¹⁹

“The soul is united with Truth and the flame of holy desire burns more fiercely within her. The devil flees from this desire and can no longer persecute the soul – not by assaulting her, nor by using spiritual or temporal consolations...

It is indeed true that the devil never sleeps but teaches you, if you are careless, to sleep when it is profitable to him. But his watching cannot hurt these perfect souls, for he cannot stand the heat of their charity nor the fragrance of their soul’s union with me... the devil flees like a fly from a boiling caldron...If the soul were lukewarm, he would enter fearlessly –though often enough he perishes there when he finds it hotter than he had imagined! So it happens with the soul when she first reaches perfection. The devil comes in, because she seems to him to be lukewarm, with different sorts of temptations. But if the soul has the least bit of knowledge and heat and hatred of sin, she resists him, binding her will steadfast with chains of hatred for sin and love for virtue.

Let every soul rejoice who suffers many troubles, because such is the road that leads to this delightfully glorious state.”

¹⁹ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 167-168

DAY 20: THE HEART, A VESSEL OF TEARS²⁰

“I have told you about perfect and imperfect tears, and how they all come from the heart. Whatever their reason, they all come from the same vessel, and so all of them can be called ‘heartfelt tears’. The only difference lies in whether the love is ordered well or ill, is perfect or imperfect.

...There is a weeping of fire, of true holy longing, and it consumes in love. Such a soul would like to dissolve her very life in weeping in a self-contempt and for the salvation of souls, but she seems unable to do it.

I tell you, these souls have tears of fire. In this fire the Holy Spirit weeps in my presence for them and for their neighbors. I mean that my divine charity sets ablaze with its flame the soul who offers me her restless longing without physical tears. These, I tell you, are tears of fire, and this is how the Holy Spirit weeps.

...This, it seems, is what the glorious apostle Paul meant when he said that the Holy Spirit weeps before me the Father ‘with unspeakable groaning’ for you.

...Such a soul should not be confounded, then, nor think she has lost me because she longs for tears and cannot have them in the way she wishes. She should rather want them in harmony with my will, bowing humbly to yes or no, whichever pleases my divine goodness... for I am the doctor and you the patients, and I prescribe for each of you what is necessary for your health and growth toward spiritual perfection.”

²⁰ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 168-169

DAY 21: THE EUCHARIST AS SUN ²¹

“This is how my gentle glorious ministers conduct themselves. I told you that I wanted you to see the excellence that is theirs beyond the dignity I have given them by making them my ‘other christs’. When they exercise this dignity virtuously they are clothed in this gentle glorious Sun that I have entrusted to their ministry.

...This is the key to the blood of my only-begotten Son, that key which unlocked eternal life, closed for so long a time because of Adam’s sin. But after I gave you my Truth, the Word, my only-begotten Son, he suffered and died, and by his death he destroyed your death by letting his blood be a cleansing bath for you. Thus his blood and his death, by the power of my divine nature joined with his human nature, unlocked eternal life.

And to whom did he leave the keys to this blood? To the glorious apostle Peter and to all the others who have come or will come from now until the final judgment day with the very same authority that Peter had. Nor is this authority lessened by any sinfulness on their part; nor can that sinfulness deprive the blood or any other sacrament of its perfection.

...*Christ on earth*, then, has the keys to the blood... I showed you this when I wanted to teach you the respect lay people ought to have for these ministers of mine, regardless of how good or evil they may be, and how displeased I am with disrespect.

²¹ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 214-215

DAY 22: THE WINE CELLAR WITH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST ²²

“I set before you the mystic body of holy Church under the image of a wine cellar. In this wine cellar was the blood of my only-begotten Son, and from this blood all the sacraments derive their life-giving power.

Christ on earth stood at the door of this wine cellar. He had been commissioned to administer the blood, and it was his duty to delegate ministers to help him in the service of the entire universal body of Christianity. Only those accepted and anointed by him were to thus minister. He was the head of the whole clerical order, and he appointed each one to his proper office to administer this glorious blood.

Because he has set them out as his helpers, it is his task to correct them for their faults, and it is my will that he do so. For by the dignity and authority I have bestowed on them I have freed them from slavery, that is, from submission to the authority of temporal rulers.”

“Oh gentle Word, Son of God! You have left this blood in the body of the holy church; you desire that it be administered to us through the hands of your vicar. The goodness of God has succored man’s need.”

²² St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 215

DAY 23: MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH AS THE SUN²³

“You shall see these glorious ministers who by their stewardship of the Sun have taken on the qualities of the Sun... They have taken on the qualities of the Sun, so that the fragrance of their virtues mitigates the stench, and their lightsomeness the dark. By this very light I would have you know more deeply the sinful darksomeness of those other ministers of mine.

...I have told you about Peter, the prince of the apostles, who received the keys of the heavenly kingdom. Just so, I am telling you about others who, in this garden of hoy Church, have been stewards of the light, that is, the body and blood of my only-begotten Son. He is the one undivided Sun, and all the Church’s sacraments derive their value and life-giving power from his blood. All these were appointed by rank according to their state to be stewards of the Holy Spirit’s grace.

...The sun warms and enlightens, and with its heat makes the earth bring forth fruit. So also these gentle ministers of mine, whom I chose and anointed... give-off within the mystic body of the holy Church the brightness of supernatural learning, the color of a holy and honorable life in following the teaching of my Truth, and the warmth of blazing charity. Thus with their warmth they cause barren souls to bring forth fruit, and enlighten them with their brightness of learning. By their holy and well-ordered lives they drive out the darksomeness of deadly sin and unfaithfulness, and set in order the lives of those who had been living disordered lives in the darkness of sin and the cold that came from their lack of charity. So you see how these ministers of mine are suns because they have taken on the qualities of me the true Sun. By love they have been made to be one thing with me and I with them.”

²³ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 221-222

DAY 24: ROSE AMONG THORNS²⁴

“The soul is either living in deadly sin, or imperfectly in grace, or she is perfect. Toward all I am generous in my providence, but in different ways, very wisely, as I see people have need.

...sometimes their heart conceives love for deadly sin or for creatures apart from my will. But I always pluck the rose from your thorns. So I deprive them of places and times for fulfilling their own wishes until they are so tired of the interior suffering their sinfulness has brought them when they cannot fulfill their perverse wishes that they return to their senses. And the pricking of their conscience and heartfelt compunction lead them to throw away their madness. It can truly be called madness because, while they thought they had set their affection on something, when they begin to see they find nothing there. True, the creature they loved with such a wretched love was and is something, but what they got from it was nothing because sin is a nothing. But from this nothingness of sin, an thorn that pierces the soul, I pluck this rose to provide for their salvation.

What constrains me to do this? It is love that constrains me, because I loved you before you came to be. Without having been loved by you, I loved you unspeakably much. This is what constrains me to do it, along with the prayers of my servants. For the Holy Spirit, my mercy, waits on these and gives them love for me and warm affection for their neighbors, so that with immeasurable charity they seek their salvation...with their humble tears and constant prayer.

...Thus it has been said that *I do not want the sinners to die but to be converted and live.*”

²⁴ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 297

DAY 25 THE SERVANTS OF GOD ARE LIKE THE DEW²⁵

Oh eternal Truth! Oh inestimable Love! How did you produce in us the fruits of the fire of love, of light and of prompt obedience, so that the soul is grafted in you so securely as to not worry about any other thing except your honor and the salvation of souls? By obedience: as one in love, you ran to the outrageous death of the cross and gave us those fruits on account of the union of your divinity in our humanity. By the graft that you made between your body and the tree of the cross, obedience produced fidelity, prudence and patience.

Unite us, eternal Truth, and graft into yourself those whom you have given me so that I may love them with a singular love, that they may produce fruits of life. I see, O infinite Goodness, that just as you send the dew of supernatural light to the souls united to you, giving them peace and a tranquil conscience, so too with the dew of your servants you will banish war and darkness and will give peace and light to your spouse.

²⁵ Obras de Santa Catalina de Siena, *El Diálogo, Oraciones y Soliloquios*, BAC, Madrid, 2011 p. 474

DAY 26 THE STOCK OF THE VIRGIN FOR THE INCARNATION²⁶

Mary is the earth that has brought forth for us the Savior.

Blessed among women for ever and ever, for you have given us of your stock. In the Incarnation the Divinity united to you and is so closely interwoven with our humanity that they shall never be separated, neither by death nor ingratitude. She has always been united to the Divinity by the soul, and to Christ by the body

In Mary is written the Word from which we receive the doctrine of life. All that is True has been written in her, but now without the cross of holy desire. As soon as he was conceived in her, he was infused and given the desire to die for the salvation of man, for this is why he had taken flesh. It was for Him a great cross to endure this desire for so long, while he would have wanted to accomplish it immediately.

²⁶ Obras de Santa Catalina de Siena, *El Diálogo, Oraciones y Soliloquios*, BAC, Madrid, 2011 p.479

DAY 27 AN INFANT RESTING ON ITS MOTHER²⁷

“The fruit of the fourth and last kind of tears, the stage of unitive tears, is not separate from the third. The two are joined together, just as charity for me and for your neighbors: They season each other. But the soul has grown so much by the time she reaches the fourth stage that she not only suffers patiently but gladly longs for suffering, so much so that she spurns every amusement, no matter what the source, simply to be able to pattern herself after my Truth, Christ crucified.

Such as soul receives the fruit of spiritual calm, an emotional union with my gentle divine nature in which she tastes milk, just as an infant when quieted rests on its mother’s breast, takes her nipple, and drinks her milk through her flesh. This is how the soul who has reached this final stage rests on the breast of my divine charity and takes into the mouth of her holy desire the flesh of Christ crucified.

...You cannot walk without pain, but must achieve proven virtue through suffering. So the soul rests on the breast of Christ crucified who *is* my love, and so drinks the milk of virtue. In this virtue she gets the life of grace and tastes within herself my divine nature, which gives the virtues their sweetness. This is the truth: the virtues were not sweet to her before, but now they are because they are practiced in union with me, divine Love... for my honor and the salvation of souls.

See then, gentle daughter, how delightfully glorious is this state in which the soul enjoys such union at charity’s breast ... The soul is never without Christ crucified nor without the eternal Father...”

²⁷ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 179-180

DAY 28

THE LONELINESS OF THOSE WHO TRUST IN THEMSELVES²⁸

“[My loved ones] loved me unspeakably much. Because of their love, their trust in me was generous and they feared nothing. Sylvester was not afraid when he stood before Emperor Constantine, debating with those twelve judges in front of the whole crowd. He believed with a lively faith that since I was on his side, no one could be against him. So also were all the others fearless, because they were not alone, for those who abide in loving charity abide in me. From me they received the luminous wisdom of my only-begotten Son; from me they received power to be strong and forceful against tyrannical rules of the world; and from me they had the fire of the Holy Spirit and share in the mercy and burning love of this same Holy Spirit. And for anyone who would share in it, this love was and is accompanied by faith and hope, by courage, true patience, and perseverance even to the moment of death. So you see, these ministers of mine were not alone; they were in good company and therefore they were fearless.

The only ones who are afraid are those who think they are alone, who trust in themselves and have no loving charity. They are afraid of every little thing because they are alone, deprived of me. For it is I who give complete security to the soul who possesses me in love. These my glorious loved ones experienced well that nothing could harm their souls. ..This was because I responded to the love and faith and trust they had put in me.”

²⁸ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 226-227

DAY 29: 'MAD' LOVER ²⁹

Then that soul was as if drunk with love of true holy poverty... She was so transformed in the abyss of his supreme and immensurable providence... and she spoke to the high eternal Father:

“O eternal Father! O fiery abyss of charity! O eternal beauty, O eternal wisdom, O eternal Goodness! ...O mad lover! And you have need of your creature? It seems so to me, for you act as if you could not live without her, in spite of the fact that you are Life itself and everything has life from you and nothing can have life without you. Why then are you so mad? Because you have fallen in love with what you have made! You are pleased and delighted over her within yourself, as if you were drunk [with desire] for her salvation. She runs away from you and you go looking for her. She strays and you draw closer to her: You clothed yourself in our humanity, and nearer than that you could not have come.

And what shall I say? ...I thank you now, high eternal Father, for the measureless kindness you have shown me though I am miserably undeserving of any favor.”

²⁹ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 325-326

DAY 30 MILK THROUGH THE FLESH³⁰

“If their desire and searching is fixed only on consolations and visions, then they will fall into spiritual bitterness and weariness when they find themselves deprived of these. They think they have lost grace when sometimes I withdraw from their mind... I have told you how I go away from the soul and then return. I go away in feeling only, not in grace, and this to bring the soul to perfection.

...They should not be foolish or let themselves be so deceived by that spiritual selfishness which does not know the truth. Rather they should know me in themselves, that I am that supreme Good who supports their good will in time of conflict lest for the sake of pleasure they turn back. So they should humble themselves... This is precisely why I withdraw from them... I want them not only to receive the milk of tenderness that I poured out before their souls, but so to attach themselves to the breast of my Truth that they may receive meat as well as milk. In other words, I would have them draw to themselves the milk of my love through mediation of the flesh of Christ crucified (I mean his teaching), of which I have made a bridge for you to reach me.”

³⁰ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, (Paulist Press, New York, 1980) p. 132